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The University of Alberta


Peer Support Training as Affective Education: A

Phenomenological Anaylsis


BY

Margaret Sharon (C)


A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend
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## DEDICATION

To Jordon - for his technical expertise.

To Jana - for her patience and independence.

To Geoff - for understanding.

# ABSTRACT

Thirteen junior high school students were interviewed following participation in a peer support program. The focus of the study was the exploration of their lived experiences of the program. A phenomenological analysis was employed in order to identify some of the basic shared meanings of the process, and to further the understanding of how group processes create change for individuals.

The present research suggested that peer support programs can be used effectively in the classroom as an affective education program. The interviews with the students suggested that students appreciated learning experientially through group process activities. Self-awareness and communication training skills were facilitated in the context of the students' lived-experiences of self, friends and family. A common structure of the training experience was abstracted from the students' training experiences regarding personal awareness and change. This study found that a supportive environment, felt-need, raised consciousness, and systemic influences such as the family were important factors in the learning and changes that took place within the students' life-worlds as a result of their experiences.

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INTRODUCTION

The growing popularity of Peer Support Programs in the schools within the last two decades has resulted in an increasing interest regarding the effects of these programs. School counsellors and other professionals who are interested in promoting the mental health of children and adolescents are organizing these self-help ɔups with increasing frequency (Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1972). Although there are various methods of group functioning, and program organization, all training programs promote communication enhancement and the teaching of problem solving skills. Today, one of the roles of school counsellors is to work toward the enhancement of a positive interpersonal climate by increasing effective communication among all members of the school (Wittmer & Loesch, 1974).

In North America peer support programs have become a natural extension of the various human development programs which evolved in the 1960's. Their popularity is increasing as government agencies such as AADAC (Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission), community service clubs, and school boards provide funding for the training of peer support leaders and students. Many agencies who work with youth in a preventative or therapeutic capacity now see this humanistic, developmental counselling trend as providing a major thrust in developing personal skills which will enable youth to make strong mental health and healthy lifestyle decisions. My personal interest in peer support programming came about as a result of a personal phenomenological research project in which one student's experience of being involved in a peer support program was analyzed. The effects of the program as described by the student were promising in several

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specific areas associated with psychological well-being. I decided that instead of continuing to train a small group of students who would benefit from an extracurricular peer support program at our school, I would train an entire class using a similar training process.  The present study focuses on the experiences of thirteen children who were part of the twenty-eight student group. The following research is based upon the students' descriptions of the processes involved in an individual context as well as in the context of their group or class experiences. This research is intended to assist with the understanding of the primary processes at work before, during and after the implementation of such a training  program.

## Overview

Within the last 20 years there has been an increasing amount of interest in peer support programs in the educational mileu (Editorial, 1983). Much of this interest has come about through the positive evaluations of various peer support programs that have been implemented in secondary schools for the purpose of increasing counselling services for minority and other special groups (Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1972). Usually, the purpose and certain essential aspects of the program's functioning are described, followed by a program summary and/or evaluation. There has been no research which utilizes human science methodology in order to document the essence of the peer support training experience.

This literature review will define and discuss the essential characteristics of peer support training and programming. It will examine some of the issues associated with this type of training. Peer support and related research will be reviewed with reference to research methodology.

## Peer Support Defined

Peer support counselling as defined by Carr & Saunders (1980, p.4) is " a process in which trained and supervised students offer listening, support and other verbal and non-verbal interactions but little or no advice to students." The methods may vary from program to program but all training programs tend to concentrate on the development of communication, self-esteem, and beginning counsellor-skills (Samuels & Samuels, 1983).The most popular form of peer support occurs when a

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number of specially selected students in a school are trained in the helping process in order to act as peer helpers to other students who may be experiencing maladjustment or individual crisis. Roles for student or peer counsellors may include leading or co-leading discussion groups, being assigned as a helper/ friend to a particular student, acting as a tutor, counselling in an informal or drop-in center, orienting new students, and assisting with educational activities and social events that encourage and promote school communication and spirit (Mastroianni & Dinkmeyer, 1980; Canning, 1983; Guttman, 1985).

Through skill building and/or group process training sessions, which are fifteen to forty hours in duration, the students learn self awareness, communication skills, and peer-helping strategies. The nuturement of a positive identity, responsible independence, leadership training, and social interest is encouraged throughout the training as students learn ways of experiencing more control over their environments (Davis, 1986).

## Types of Peer Support Programs

Specific types of peer support programs are usually categorized by purpose or training methodology. Peer support programs have been organized for a variety of specific purposes including peer tutoring, peer counselling, peer leadership training, friendship building, and/or school spirit. Some of the programs are preventative while others are more therapeutic in nature. For example, programs have been adapted to meet specific needs of individual students such as in one-to-one tutoring or individual counselling for social and/or emotional concerns. Other programs with more general objectives include training participants with the primary purpose of focusing on adjusting attitude

toward inter-racial understanding, interpersonal communication enhancement, or school atmosphere. For example, Mastroianni and Dinkmeyer (1980), reported on a peer support program that resulted in peer-led groups which met weekly to discuss beliefs and feelings.

All of the student support training programs appear to be humanistic in their philosophical orientation, in that they contain objectives which positively promote the welfare and ideals of man. However they can be organized, depending on the counselor's orientation, into programs with an Alderian, (Kern & Kirby, 1971) Rogerian, Behavioral, or Eclectic flavour (Campbell, 1983). Campbell (1983) suggests that the peer support program should reflect the schools in which they are established in terms of needs, attitudes and values. Appendix A outlines the program that was used in this research project.

Peer support team selection. Selection of students for the peer support program usually involves selection based on a particular method which assesses various personality traits such as interest in people, empathy, openness, honesty, and trust. Peer selection, teacher nomination, volunteering by those wishing to participate, and /or counselor interviews are all methods for selection. McCann (1975) used a sociometric method to determine peer perceptions of helping skills, and Gumaer (1973) used a sociogram to select natural helpers in the classroom. Anderson (1976) suggests that students with average ability, concern for others and openness tend to become effective peer support members.

Training. Training involves increasing self-awareness and the understanding of others. Objectives usually include the

teaching of basic counselling skills such as listening, reflection, empathy, genuineness, and problem-solving strategies. Most often this occurs by way of a practiced experiential approach. Community resources and information are frequently accessed by the program leader(s) in an effort to increase the student's awareness level of particular adolescent issues and interests. Students are also encouraged by discussion and self reflection  to explore relevant counselling topics such as drugs, human rights, and family issues which may come up in their peer counselling (Hamburg and Varenhorst, 1972). After the initial training program the students' helping skills are practiced and/or updated on a continual schedule. Weekly meetings are often utilized to discuss difficulties and/or issues that require further clarification (Varenhorst, 1973; Raiche, 1980). Serious issues or crisis work is often closely supervised and may be taken over by the trained school counsellor at any time.

Hamburg and Varenhorst (1973) have noted that a few of the training programs reviewed contained some reference to the ethical responsiblities of student peer counsellors in relation to maintaining confidentiality, respect of personal opinion and attitudes, and established cultural norms and school procedures (Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1973). However, safeguarding ethical considerations has been primarily left to the program developers, program trainers, school administration, and the counsellors themselves. These parties have sought parental, school and student consent usually after informational meetings which outline the objectives and content of the program to be implemented.

## Historical Development of Peer Support Programs

The humanistic oriented interpersonal counselling programs begun by Carl Rogers in the late 1960's provided the philosophical basis for the beginnings of the peer support programs. Rogers (1962) proposed then that the basic helping posture which was most able to provide for positive psychological well-being should include strong listening skills, empathy, positive regard, and congruence. His assertion that a positive self-concept is the most important prerequisite for learning (Rogers, 1969) has been verified by a study on achievement and self-concept (Bayer, 1986). Rogers (1970) also noted that aloneness and devaluation of self are increasing in today's complex technical society. He prescribes that counselling should involve the greatest respect for clients and the potential of clients.

Carkhuff (1969), by systematically outlining and detailing the basic helping process introduced by Rogers, began the popularization of this form of counselling by noting through research that trained peer helpers could effect significant positive change in clients. Carkhuff's research and writing efforts were increasingly focused toward helping professional and lay counsellors in school and community settings. His Human Resource Development Program (1972), utilized a developmental skill-acquisition model that emphasized specific behavioral skills which can be taught and practiced. Another example of helper skill building training models include Ivey's (1971) microcounselling model.

The development of lay counselling has led to a dramatic shift in some areas of counsellor training. Substantial efforts are now being directed into developing 'trainer' skills whereby the natural skills of lay helpers can be utilized more effectively (Brammer, 1985).

Microcounselling programs have increased in popularity as a way of meeting the counselling needs of a wide range of diverse groups and patient populations (Ivey & Authier, 1978). Futurists predict that the growth of self-help groups will multiply and extend in new directions as a universal, inexpensive means of promoting and maintaining healthy mental well-being.

In school counselling, interest in psychological education as a means of promoting social and emotional well-being in adolescence was renewed as detailed human development curriculum and programs such as peer counselling were advocated (Mosher & Sprinthall et al, 1972). Danish and Brock (1974) in their review of four helper training programs which train paraprofessionals, observed that two elements - content, and the manner in which the content is taught - should be considered when reviewing such a program (1974). They go on to conclude that there is a difference in training procedures that should encourage trainers to examine all programs for a "goodness of fit" even though the goals and philosophy of these training programs often overlap (Danish & Brock, 1974, p.302).

Although peer support programs were originally designed for the purpose of uplifting the atmosphere of settings characterized by chronic negativism such as correctional institutions and ghetto schools (Calia, 1974), these programs are now being utilized on a universal basis to promote understanding and communication in interpersonal relationships. If counsellors are to be effective in increasing interpersonal communication and assisting in enhancing the social atmosphere of schools, then they must be able to train significant

numbers of others in the human relations skills of listening, communicating, values clarification and problem solving.

Myrick and Bowman (1983) have emphasized that student helpers are not substitutes for counsellors, teachers, or psychologists. They are trained helpers whose goal is to promote interpersonal growth in other students through positive social relationships. Without a change of focus toward more preventative interventions, school counsellors may remain ineffective in promoting positive affective education for the majority of students within a school (Gray & Tindall, 1974). Kern and Kirby (1971), have also cited the increasing shortage of qualified counsellors as a reason for increased use of the peer support programs in schools. Paraprofessionals are being increasingly utilized in response to increasing student needs as the role of the school counsellor or psychologist changes (McManus, 1982). With serious counselling personnel and /or budget shortages the one-to-one counselling of students must be reserved for serious or crisis problems.

Theoretical Issues in Peer Support Programs

Similar to all psycho-educational programs the peer support program (PSP) warrants consideration and discussion from a theoretical perspective. The potential significance of such a program in the lives of adolescents justifies careful consideration by the implementor(s). The orientation or philosophy of the helping process, the methodology or training procedure, and the expected goals or outcomes of the program should be carefully considered. An understanding of the adolescent stage of developoment and an openness toward the issues facing adolescents today is also important. The theoretical discussion which follows focuses upon a brief socio-historical perspective of adolescence, peer

culture and socialization of adolescents, the helping process, and the learning process.

## Social-Historical Perspective of Adolescence

In assist in understanding of the psychological needs of adolescence it is necessary to outline briefly the socio-historical beginnings of adolescence. Except for the physiological changes associated with puberty, prior to the fifteenth century the term adolescence did not exist (Bakan, 1976). Mead's study, "Coming of Age in Samoa" observed that transitions from childhood to adulthood in Samoans were nearly invisible except for typical biological maturation (Mead, 1961). Similarly the child-miners of England and the apprentices of Middle-Age Europe merged into the adult world without 'identity' problems because their identity was preordained historically by birth within the close family, economic, and social structure of those times (Van Den Berg, 1964).

Westernization and the establishment of compulsory public education in the late nineteenth century inadvertently placed youth in a new developmental pattern that increasingly differentiated childhood from adulthood. From within this nebulous extension of childhood arose a specific media promoted adolescent sub-culture which took root in the post-war economic boom. Transitory fashions, fads, and heroes enticed adolescents to look outward, not inward for identity and acceptance. Values and qualities of human living were not as defined within the more relaxed family living patterns that prevailed. The adolescent's natural urge to exert his or her independence has become more difficult in the 1980's. Individual detachment, and alienation are becoming more

widespread due to factors such as increased unemployment, prolonged schooling, and personal uncertainty.

Bandura 's social psychology theory recognizes that the stresses and strains of adolescence are largely the result of difficulties begun in pre-adolescent social experiences, and not necessarily a direct result of the struggle for independence and identity (Crain, 1980). Coie (1983) in his intensive longitudinal research on children's social status supports this view by concluding that rejected children generally do not develop a more positive social status over time. Mitchell (1979) in his study on adolescence has found that early adolescents are more concerned with developing interpersonal and social skills whereas older adolescents are more involved in personal decision-making issues.

Human science psychology also emphasizes the importance of inter-subjective reciprocal communication of the individual within his/her environment. It recognizes the importance of shared communication which begins as primal sharing or bonding between mother and child. These primary sharing experiences develop into personalized inter-subjective communication bonds that continue throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Their quality determines the future meaningful experiences of the adult within his/her world (Schmidt, 1983).

## Influence of Peer Culture on Socialization

Whenever any groups of individuals live together they develop relationships of influence with one another. In Western society family and peers are two such primary groups. Secondary groups such as sports clubs do not have the socializing influence on children that these two primary groups do (Schaefer, 1980).

According to family structure parents typically provide for the love, security, and values of children while peers fill friendship, social direction, and acceptance needs. Difficulties arise when children lack the support from either one or the other of these primary groups. Bronfenbrenner"s (1970) research indicated that peer orientated children who spent minimal time with parents, were more influenced by their peers because of a perceived lack of attention and concern for them at home. They rated themselves and their parents more negatively and reported engaging in more anti-social behaviors than 'parent oriented' children (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). Driekurs' broad classification of children's misbehavior into power, attention, revenge, and inadequacy categories further illustrates that children will seek to assert themselves in negative ways if positive behavior is not encouraged. (Dreikurs, Grunwald & Pepper, 1971). Research has also clearly established the influence of modeling upon children. For example, the passive attending of an anti-social act is likely to be interpreted as positive attention by the actor (Bandura & Walters, 1963).

With the decline of parental influence via parental-child communication and time spent in common everyday living patterns, recent studies in age trends are indicating that peer influence is becoming stronger with younger children (Bronfenbrenner, 1970). To redirect the anti-social, negative behavior patterns that dysfunctional children exhibit is a momentous task which can only succeed if pre-adolescents and early adolescents can be encouraged to become more self-aware and proactive in their lives. Mastroianni and Dinkmeyer (1980), in their report of a peer support project, stated that their purpose was to

facilitate children in acquiring significantly more pro-social behaviours. Family counselling and a positive peer culture approach to counselling are two additional recent approaches designed to develop positive acceptance and values with delinquent children. These programs have been utilized in an effort to counteract the negative sub-culture that can be reinforced within the peer group (Schaefer, 1980). The latter program is closely related to the peer support programs in that it focuses upon the development and enhancement of peer relationships to invite personal change and growth.

The increase in self-help groups for a wide range of difficulties and/or interests such as alcohol, parenting, health difficulties, and working mothers indicates that the social atmosphere in peer groups is comfortable and supportive enough to warrant many people to seek support from such groups. Studies in which adolescents rated accessible and preferred sources of help for themselves showed that peers and family members proved to be most popular (Raiche, 1979). When college students were polled regarding sources of help for personal problems, counselling centers were rarely a first choice. Peers, particularly friends, appeared to be the most popular source of assistance for students experiencing personal problems (Tryon, 1980; Christensen & Magoon, 1974). Although students felt that the counselling services were a worthwhile resource to have, three reasons were given why they did not utilize this service. They felt that they knew too little of the nature of the service and/or they were concerned about confidentiality issues. A third reason why students would not go there themselves was because of the stigma attached to some one seeking professional psychological help (Tryon, 1980).

## The Helping Process

A fundamental understanding of peer counselling or PSP involves examining some of the basic constituents of the helping process. The helping process consists of an inward or self-relective phase and the phase of 'emergent directionality' where understanding begins to be translated into constructive action (Calia, 1974). The first facilitative phase of training in peer support concentrates therefore on empathy, respect, self-awareness, and concrete self-expression (Farrell & Donnelly, 1987). It involves the exploration and expression of the trainees' own phenomenological field and is a necessary prerequisite to facilitating one's understanding of others.

The second phase includes increased authenticity, helper participation and responsible decision making based on the helper's personal view of him/herself and the particular situation or context he/she is experiencing. In this manner the helping process and helping process training can be defined as developmental processes. Students experience self understanding and personal interactions which lead to new courses of actions or growth, which in turn impact further upon the individual and his/her life-world. As with any genuinely experienced event this experience has the potential of influencing one's view of the world and thus one's consciousness of the world and self. Fundamental to an understanding of the helping process is an awareness of the uniqueness of individuals' experiences of their common, historical, and global environments. There is a reciprocal relationship between understanding oneself and others (Yalom, 1975).

An important part of the helping process is the ability of the helper to communicate effectively. Communication skills training,

through personally meaningful communication activities, is a mechanism which is used to sharpen the awareness and sensitivity of the helper. Training helpers should be a dynamic learning process in which the helper as an individual becomes a fundamental part of the helping process (Combs, 1976). Trainees learn to listen, be empathic, and promote self-direction in others by being listened to, being the recipients of empathy, and promoting self-direction among themselves. Specific skills are not an end unto themselves. In all microcounselling and counselling training, specific skills are transcended by the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the helper and the helpee. There are individual personal qualities, contexts, or "intentionalities" (Ivey & Authier, 1978) that exist in any experience. An awareness of this intentionality of humans is essential by the trainer and trainee in PSP training process.

Combs (1976) explains intentionality within the framework of perceptual psychology. All experience is subjective and is channelled through our perceptual apparatus. He states that "...psychologists have come to believe that the ultimate capacities for more effective behavior and functioning can be realized by enriching and broadening a person's perceptual field" (Combs, 1976, p.248). In this context the helping process would involve the ability to promote new perceptions or directions of being for the helpee in his/her own life-world.

The Learning Process

The process of learning during peer support training must cater to individual differences. Trainers should also consider whether the behavioral application of rote skill training or enhancement of personal meaning is the objective of PSP training. Hills states that all

training programs must be examined for this theoretical basis (Hills, 1985).

With the popularization of helper programs such as PSP comes the danger that a technique approach will inadvertantly misrepresent the experiential learning approach that is necessary in any helper training programs. Hence, it is important to realize that the learning and acquisition of helper skills is reflected in the helper only within the boundaries of his or her person. meaning (Combs, 1976). Plum (1981) goes further to say that "the es .. ° of personal communication is the understanding and expression of meaning ...Learning certain behavioral skills guarantees nothing about the meaning this behavior will have in actual interpersonal situations" (p.7). It is the context and perceptions of the individual within his/her environment that will shape and give meaning to communication or learning.

Perceptual theory recognizes five general areas which affect learning and which can be outlined as one's general frame of reference, one's perceptions of self, ones perceptions of others, one's perceptions of the nature of learning, and one's perceptions of methods. (Mahon & Altman, 1977). Increasing interpersonal effectiveness requires that the training process sharpen the helpers' perceptual framework and orientation toward the intrinsic process of helping. Such a training program means that the goals and objectives of training are experienced by the facilitative communication processing of various skills.

Comb's perceptual theoretical basis for interpersonal communication has strong implications for all helper training programs including PSP. Although the primary focus may be to train students to help others there must be the theoretical understanding that

communication-skills training and helping skills training must be experiential and process oriented in order that effective learning and personal integration of information is achieved (Hills, 1985). If the meaningfulness of the communication and helping skills training has not impacted upon the trainees in a personal way there is a danger that they may be superficially regurgitated as behavioral skill training.

Bayer (1986) found in his research on affective education program implementation that psychological growth was greatest in the group which was allowed self-direction and self-selection as a result of an open, non-directed facilitative style of teaching. Through statistical analysis he found that self-concept levels were significantly higher in a grade seven class where 'facilitative' leadership of an affective education program was demonstrated; rather than in a second class where a similar program was taught using a 'directed approach' to group discussion. He described the facilitated class as one where no class activities were planned and students were encouraged to interact with each other in meaningful ways on a variety of topics (p.125). Bayer (1986) concluded that trust on the part of the facilitator and the students in themselves, and in each other, allowed interactional reciprocity to occur. Such an atmosphere was regartded as the one most likely to promote genuine wholistic learning. In another study Slavin (1980) summarizes various research on cooperative or group learning with particular note to the positive social cohesiveness and self-esteem which routinely occurred in spite of the success of the teaching topic or content objectives.

An important consideration in any learning process is the personal functioning of the counselor or trainer. Through covert and tangible

ways they may convey confidence or anxiousness, establish rapport or mistrust, and teach or talk about new skills (Kottler, 1980). Bandura's modeling theory has significant implications in this process particularly if PSP trained students model appropriate group behaviours and facilitate understanding of and interpersonal communication with other students (Anderson, 1976).

## Review of Peer Support Programs

Skill-training programs for the enhancement of interpersonal communication include Carkhuff's Systematic Human Relations Training (1969), Ivey's Microcounselling (1971), and Kagan's Interpersonal Process Recall (1972). These programs generally assume that interpersonal communication can be defined in terms of skills which can be focused upon and enhanced during process training (Mahon & Altmann, 1977). More specific peer support program training manuals for schools reflect the aquisition of skills similar to the helper training models previously mentioned. There has, however, been a recent trend to supplement earlier manuals, which are more systematic and leader-directed (Carr, 1979), with manuals that emphasize the importance of experiential learning through group process activities (Davis et al., 1987).

In general, the summaries of various student support programs reported in this literature review were enthusiastic and supportive of the peer support concept. Pine (1974), concluded that the results of studies on the effectiveness of training programs in teaching inter-personal and problem solving skills were impressive. (p.95). Altmann and others (1986) stated that research procedures should assess the effectiveness of the program in meeting its goals particularly when

program validation can ensure continued support and encouragement for a program to continue. Evaluative research should include an assessment of the helper, of knowledge and skills taught in the helping process and of student outcomes (Altman et al, 1986). Dougherty and Taylor (1983) reported on four methods of researching peer support programs. These include the pre-post group comparisons, the experimental-control group, the self-report assessment, and the case study. Natural scientific approaches to program evaluation were most often utilized in the research literature on PSP.

<u>Natural science oriented research.</u> Evaluative summaries of PSP were generally ambiguous and/or piecemeal in their approach. Deven-Sheehan et al, (1976) in their extensive, critical review of evaluative research on children tutoring children concluded that a broad range of students may benefit from acting as a tutor: however "...Research to date on tutors and tutees has been haphazard and unsystematic" (p.377). Within the student support evaluations statistical summaries often acknowledged that the data provided incomplete information (Frank et al, 1975; Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1972; Kern & Kirby, 1971; Vogelsong, 1978; Gray & Tindall, 1974). Occasionally, brief descriptions of student behavior were included to supplement the statistical data (Gray & Tindal, 1974; Vogelsong, 1978). There were research studies which, while not achieving statistical significance in proving or disproving their major hypotheses, concluded that the program had been generally effective (Authier & Gustafson, 1975; Kern & Kirby, 1971).

Ware and Gold's (1971), peer counselling project indicated that the counselees' attendance and academic achievement had improved. Positive results in terms of self esteem and self confidence were also noted by

Gartner, Kohler, and Riessman (1971). Frank and others (1975) found, through the use of inventories and checklists, that the student counselors benefited less than the student clients they were seeing. Reasons cited for this difference were that the student counsellors were required to take on more responsibility and leadership which triggered uncertainty and personal re-evauluation as they integrated new experiences into their own life-world.

Frank and others (1975) utilized pre- and post-test personal inventories which measured student attitudes toward self, school, peers, and family; as well as a positive response checklist which was administered to the counsellees only. Although they did not provide scientific statistical data the results indicated positive affective changes on the part of counselees and to a lesser degree on the part of the student counselors (Frank et al, 1975, p.270). In a relationship enhancement training project with ten year old students Vogelsong found an increase in measured empathy after ten sessions of training (1978). He found the qualitative anecdotal responses were perhaps more positive and encouraging than the measured quantitative results, and concluded that further research was necessary to establish how much elementary students can profit from interpersonal skill training.

In a large student support program in the United States where 155 students completed the program offered to 12 schools within a school district it was found that the program represented a positive experience in personal growth for the student participants, although the impact of the program upon the individuals and schools varied (Hamburg & Varenhorst, 1972). Specific criteria for evaluation included attendance records, retention level and personal recruitment of other students into

the program. Hamburg and Varenhorst (1972) also provided descriptive examples of specific student behavior which impacted the program positively. For example, these authors concluded that peer counselling was mutually beneficial to both the counsellors and the counsellees, particularly in cases of lonely or unmotivated students. Their future evaluation plans include the use of social indicators and self-esteem scales to measure program effects.

Gartner, Kohler, and Riessman (1971) reported that training students as peer tutors resulted in indications of positive inter-personal growth for the tutors themselves. This finding was supported by Gray and Tindall (1974), and Varenhorst (1974). Both studies found that peer counselors who were involved in a PSP communication training model were better able to discriminate and to communicate their ideas. They also displayed relatively more self respect than students in either a control or group counseling group. A study that measured the effects trained peer counsellors had in group counselling found that peers can effectively assist the counsellor in working with maladjusted children (Kern & Kirby, 1971).

Leaders in a Canadian student counselling project developed three separate statistical instruments to measure the effectiveness of their peer counsellors (McIntyre, Thomas & Borgen, 1982). A peer counsellor effectiveness inventory was administered to counselees, a peer counsellor group evaluation form was administered to student participants in peer-led groups, and a peer counsellor evaluation form was administered to teachers who had referred children for student counselling. The results of this study indicated that the students, the student community, and the facilitators felt that the project was a

success with the peer counsellors reporting a substantial gain in personal growth as a result of the training and experience.

Generally, the quantitative evaluative research of specific effects of various peer support programs concluded that future PSP implementation is warranted. Many researchers noted that their evaluation efforts were not indicative of the apparent success of the program and that future efforts should concentrate on the ability to measure for maximum effectiveness of the program. Further evaluation could also allow for consideration of holistic and transcendental meaning which was not acknowledged in the statistical research.

## Qualitative descriptions of peer support programs

Qualitative Evaluations of PSP included in a few of the PSP reports were descriptive or case-oriented, but did not utilize a comprehensive human scientific methodology of description and analysis. Delworth and others (1974) reported that the volunteer counselors' enhanced feelings of competence and self worth was probably the most important aspect of the student help programs. Mastroianni and Dinkmeyer (1980), chose to conclude their peer support program description with an interesting case study of a socially maladjusted boy whose behavior and attitude changed over the several months during which he was involved in peer-led discussion groups. Bowman and Myrick (1980) used teacher reports and student comments as well as a pre/post self-concept scale to indicate positive affective development.

Self-reports by the peer counsellors as well as summative evaluations by their student clients provided the basis for the evaluation of a student support program that was conducted by Guttman

(1985). Guttman's research indicated that student support members could fill teaching and leadership roles along with individual and group counselling roles.

McCann (1975) utilized informal individual student comments and student attendance at an informal drop-in center as evaluation tools. On this basis he concluded that the program was beneficial. McManus (1982) also found that informal anecdotal information offered valuable information to the peer support program evaluation in which he was involved.

Although quantitative research of PSP is widely recognized and pursued, there is a growing realization on the part of some researchers that the use of statistical data alone is insufficent. These researchers have chosen to punctuate their statistical results with qualitative or summative descriptions of the PSP experience. Foster (1985) recognizes the inconclusiveness of statistical instrumentation in measuring the holistic experience of PSP, but concludes that "...in an age of accountability it is not sufficient to merely present observations and journals as a means of substantiating achievement and growth" (p.2). There is an apparent need for further exploration and development of qualitative methods of description that can reliably measure the essences of the PSP experience.

Discussion of Issues:

The literature on peer support programs brings up the issues of prevention versus therapy, group supervision, and a directed or facilitated learning approach. These issues are discussed in the following.

Prevention versus therapy. Implicit in the research which discussed the training of PST groups is the question of whether or not PSP groups function as a model of preventative education or therapeutic intervention, or whether there is a varying continuum of both elements present. This issue is important because it affects decisions regarding the selection or composition, and leadership of the group.

School counsellors are realizing that they may make more of an impact in the school by shifting their priority from individual counselling to the facilitating and training of students in peer counselling. The multiplier effect of training student helpers could be beneficial when one considers the demands and numbers of students whom present-day school counsellors must serve. One could envision an ideal situation in which all students in the school could be trained in PSP, even though not all participants would become therapeutic helpers in a formally organized way such as the peer support team.

A secondary issue is whether PSP members should be trained with the intention of enhancing their present relationships and friendships rather than as "miniature counsellors". Should PSP training be moving away from the counsellor training and problem solving model to the communication and relationship enhancement model of helping? The peer counsellor can easily befriend the student client because of the common peer group and the lack of professional conflict (Tucker & Cantor, 1975). Should leaders of peer support groups be looking at ways of establishing a more equal relationship between student counsellor and student client? Should there be a differentiation between the helping relationship and the social relationship? In some schools there has been a movement away from the use of the "peer counselling" term to one

of "student helper" or "student support team" because of the negative connotations assigned to the word counselling by students.

Could student support be offered to the entire school population as a preventative/therapeutic program? There is a growing amount of evidence which suggests that the peer counsellor benefits in ways similar to people going through therapy (Reissman, 1965). In fact, the premise behind some volunteer help programs such as tutoring is that the helping process will promote positive affective growth and skill development in the student helper as well as assisting the client in the process.

Supervision of student support helpers. In a study of supervised and nonsupervised microcounselling training sessions Authier and Gustafson (1975) found that non-supervised training produced questionable program results. Frank and others (1975) pointed out that student counsellors, during and after training, experience various uncertainties in their own personal lives as they seek to integrate what they have learned with their own lived experiences. For this reason close counsellor supervision is recommended. Canning (1983) supports these views by recommending that group sessions led by PSP students always be attended by a counsellor. Anderson (1976) suggests ways in which PSP members can support each other and enhance their helper skills through group supervision sessions. He points out that the counsellor is often the only direct means of overall program supervision and evaluation.

Skill training versus group program facilitation

Mahon and Altman in their discussion of skill training programs conclude seemingly ambiguously that "... it works and it doesn't work." They go on to surmise that, "One way of understanding this discrepancy is to

examine carefully, both the research methodology associated with skill training and the ingredients of the process itself" (Mahon & Altmann, 1977, p.44). Human Development Programs such as Magic Circle (1972) and Development of Understanding of Self and Others (1970) were organized from the same theoretical perspective as PSP in that, all of the programs centered on enhancing affective growth in students. However, their implementation was left in many cases to the classroom teacher who was not necessarily familiar with the approach or the philosophy underlying it.

PSP training cannot be reduced to a mechanistic process of teaching the separate overt skills of attending, listening and reflection. There are personal elusive qualities underlying these skills that must be emphasized. Ivey (1974) and Combs (1969) seem to have recognized the dangers of a teacher-directed step by step approach. This fear is also echoed by other professionals who feel that a recipe or rote skill approach to learning helping skills is a gross misrepresentation of the helping process which can best be learned by experience (Hill, 1974; Calia, 1978). The inherent danger of directed teaching is primarily that little, if any, learning will occur unless this learning is experienced first hand.

## Conclusion

Generally, the research on PSPs are based on various methodologies depending upon the philosophy and objectives of each program. The research studied here has not been conclusive as to whether content, group process, leader competencies or other unidentified factors provide the impetus for change. It is unknown why and how programs or parts of programs work specifically. Measured statistical research of particular

criteria in student support trainees indicated that they had increased their self-esteem, self-confidence, self-awareness, and social competence. Yet this information explains very little about the actual dynamics of the process.

Furthermore, Kern and Kirby (1971) noted," It would be interesting to determine whether the the total psychological climate of a classroom in the areas of adjustment, sociometric status, and group cohesiveness could be changed..." (p.75) by the counselor working indirectly with the class through peer helpers. It is difficult enough to assess the impact of a program on a participant. How can we accurately evaluate the impact on the group, the classroom, the school?

Carkhoff (1966) concluded that, "There are no well designed, controlled, and implemented studies which assess the efficacy of (helper) training programs (p.361). He stated that we must rely on the generally positive reviews of literature in this area although a few systematic studies have provided pre/post training measurements. Carkhoff goes on to suggest that because of the great variability in the interpersonal dimensions of the helping process we may never be able to measure the whole experience (Carkhoff, 1966).

Moreover, Altman and others (1986), in their report on evaluation of peer support programs concluded that there is lack of documentation of the nature and pattern of affective and social relationships that developing in the peer counselling process. The "how" and "why" questions about the process remain unanswered (Fogarty & Wang (1982) as cited in Altman et al, 1986). Although it is not known how specific criteria such as leadership, group membership, or program content affect the group process in its role as a catalyst for change, there is

agreement that beneficial change may result. The quality and quantity of change however, seems to fluctuate from group to group, and from individual to individual.

Programs included in this literature review did not take into consideration the historical, social, cultural, and economic contexts which provide the environment in which the individual co-exists. If group process and experiential training provides the impetus for change, then does this change continue within the lived-experience of the person? To date there have been no longitudinal studies which accurately measure the long-term impact of these programs.

Other than brief descriptions, few studies have tried to review the impact of peer support programs by studying the participants' descriptions of the program. How do they describe the process and how did it work or not work for them? If behavior is intentional, then genuine change must occur within one's belief system or consciousness. In order to investigate this phenonema further we can use descriptive methods to investigate the lived-experience of members who have experienced peer support training. As a research method this descriptive approach must be differentiated from the natural scientific approach to research. However, as an alternative research method that preserves the holistic nature of human experience, it may help to further our understanding of PSPs.

The areas of concern in this research include:

1. What does it mean to take part in or to experience a peer support training group?

2. What changes, if any, take place within the group during and after the experience, if any ?

3. What processes and/or experiences are most meaningful for the
   participant and the group?

Elucidation may or may not appear in the data.

# CHAPTER 2: PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF METHOD

## Introduction

Generally, all research involves a formulation of the research situation or question, the formulation of the data, the data analysis procedure and the interpretation and communication of the outcome. There are various research methods which can be utilized in psychological research. Before a choice is made to use one particular method, it is necessary to formulate the situation and question that is to be addressed in one's own study. As outlined in the conclusion of chapter one, the particular questions that I chose to study are related to the personalized experiences of individuals involved in a group PSP training experience. I chose to utilize the phenomenological research process because its methods are best suited for describing the holistic, qualitative experiences which I attempted to document. Before embarking on the actual descriptions of the phenomena I sought to investigate, it was necessary to outline the two major methodologies of psychological research, the philosophy and presuppositions of phenomenology as a human science research methodology, and the reasons why a phenomenological study best suited the purposes of my study.

## Human Science and Natural Science

Because human beings are permanently immersed in a continuum of developmental self-interpretation (Taylor,1985) there is natural justification for a dialectical development of humanity. Giorgi (1975) recognizes this when he points out the reciprocal relationship between quantity and quality and notes that as particular dimensions or values, one can not replace the other. Human science and natural science are based on two such differing ontologies or dialectic world

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views. The latter evolved earlier with the philosophical subject-object dualism as defined in Cartesian duality (Polkinghorne, 1983). Its popularity was both intensive and extensive in scientific circles because of the positivist and "realistic" approach it offered in the resolution of many questions. Natural Science offers the methodology to view both nature and humanness through one objective perception or lens. As such it ignores wo/man's consciousness and the wholistic spirit of wo/man (Polkinghorne, 1983). Its ontology or belief system is embedded in the existence of one set of truths or universal laws for mankind. Natural science methodology relies on the construction of controlled specifications for internal validity or verification of the process. However, its external or content validity generally is weaker because the experimental situation is rarely reflective of true human experience (Valle and King, 1978).

Human science ontology refutes the view that it is possible to study wo/man through the single perceptual reality of objectivity that was developed originally for the study of the natural world and pure science. Its ontological perspective of wo/man is that wo/man is multidimensional as well as multiperceptual. Therefore, a variety of research methodologies must be employed to preserve the wholistic nature of wo/man. Human science focuses on the individual person's experience and the manner in which s/he co-constitutes within her/his lived world experiences. Its belief system includes the study of consciousness and intentionality as it relates to wo/man's own view of her/himself and his/her world (Colaizzi, 1978).

In psychology today there is increasing acknowlegement that each paradigm offers a distinct methodology for research that reflects a

particular world view of the nature of wo/man.  Natural science
perceives the human as having basically a neutral nature which follows
certain laws of natural science. These laws can be clearly delineated,
quantified, and operationalized and thus form the basis for new linear,
mechanistic descriptions of wo/man. The traditional method of studying
wo/man in natural science is through experimentation and causal
analysis. Human science, on the other hand, views wo/man as having
purposeful inner qualities that cause him/her to create his/her own
world view through his/her own inner shared-world experience. He/s
intentionally co-exists with his/her environment and within the
historical, and cultural context which further enrich this context.
Human science methodology is essentially descriptive. (Colaizzi, 1978).

The human science and natural science methodologies both involve
situations, a collection of data, data analysis and a summation or
communication of outcome.  However the approach to either methodology is
contrasting (Giorgi, 1986).  Researchers in quantitative research assume
a subject-object posture and contrive an experimental situation which
defines the constructs in an objective, unbiased manner.  They work with
measurement, laws and rules to determine the effect of variables by
statistics, instrumentation, and the measure of internal and external
control (validity and reliability). Empiricism in the natural sciences
refers to the detached objectivenss that is sought as a result of the
researcher assigning numerical quantities and specific dimensions to
constructs and variables in isolation.

## Human Science Methodology and Approach

Valle and King (1978) outlined certain assumptions about the
human individual which are crucial to the understanding of the human

science research methodology. These included the ideas that the human individual must be studied in his/her own context and within his/her own lived experience; that human science seeks to understand the most basic structures or essence of human experience; and, that human science seeks to describe qualitative ideals or states of consciousness such as joy or indifference which cannot be measured or physically observed (Valle & King, 1978).

In human science researchers are concerned with preserving the life-world and experiences of the subject instead of reducing the phenomena to brute data. The researcher, through rapport building and acceptance, encourages accurate and personal descriptions of the co-researchers lived-experience. Interviews, films, personal anecdotes and other sensory media are used to record the reflections of primordial experience (Becker, 1986). Data analysis becomes the process of accurately describing the basic structures or constituents of the experience, while recognizing that the wholistic integrity of the experience must be preserved. According to Taylor, it beomes the job of human science to break into the hermeneutical circle in order to further the intersubjective and common meanings that exist. (Taylor, 1985). Brockelman (1980) terms this type of research as an attempt to make the "implicit" more "explicit".

Validity in this qualitative process occurs by having the researcher bracket his/her preconceived beliefs in order that she/he may entertain all aspects of his/her subject's or co-researcher's descriptions as freely as possible. To validate further the phenomenological descriptions, co-researchers are asked whether or not the descriptive analysis of their experience actually validates their

experience. As Aanstoos (1986) states, validity in the human sciences is associated with "...the disclosive power that is brought to bear." (p.3) upon the phenomena.

## Phenomenological Research

The phenomenological approach to human science research, although sometimes equated with human science research because of its emphasis on the subjective aspect of wo/man is only one of several approaches used to study data from a human science perspective. Other approaches which are chosen to illuminate upon the nature and understanding of phenomena include the experiential, phenomenographic, hermeneutic, imaginal, perceptual, and dialectical approach (Aanstoos,1986).

MacLeod (1964) gives four general postulates of phenomenological research: the subject (data) must be embedded in life-world experience,the researcher suspends his/her biases by bracketing in order to extend his/her perceptual range, a vigorous analysis of the data is required in order to bring out the fundamen₂ structures of the phenomena, and in some way the outcomes may contribute to the understanding of the human science epistomology (Macleod, 1964).

The researcher in phenomenological study begins to identify data by turning to lived experiences of phenomena as they exist in the everyday world (Aanastoos, 1986). Conforming to the principles of human science philosophy, the descriptions of the experience given by the co-researcher are recognized to be contextual and blend with the common meanings of the historical, social, and cultural situation. For this reason the researcher must actively engage the co-researcher throughout the research by ensuring that a valid description of the phenomena is portrayed.

It is the task of the researcher to describe the phenomena with the purpose of explaining and illuminating the essential structures of the phenomenon without destroying the wholistic meaning that the phenomena provide. This process of reduction, according to Polkinghorne, is necessary in order to expose the essential meaning of the phenomena being studied (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Phenomenology provides for alternate approaches to human science 'reduction' depending upon the nature of the phenomena to be studied. In chapter three the specific approach to data analysis that best suits a phenomenological understanding of the PSP experience will be outlined.

After selecting or lifting out the essential structures of meaning from the coresearchers's descriptions, the researcher examines them for intentionality or pre-reflective meaning. These are then themed according to more general structures which are then reflected back for verification from the co-researcher.

Validity and reliability are as important in human science research as in natural science. Truth becomes an ideal that is sought through rigorous self-reflection, bracketing, imaginal reflection and co-researcher verification.

## Human Science Research and Peer Support Education

There has been considerable interest in the effects of PSP groups and various studies have outlined some of the effects of the program on peer support team members, the students they have worked with, teachers, parents, and the general school atmosphere. Almost all of the studies have focussed on the utilization of natural science methods for assessing outcome. Pre/post tests, scales of achievement, and checklists are most often cited as the instrumentation used in the

evaluative process. In a few instances self-report measures and a case anecdote were included (Mastroianni & Dinkmeyer, (1980); McManus, 1982)

Studies which could illuminate the actual hows mechanism of the peer support helping process and the area of program evaluation were limited, and were seen as areas for future research, (Varenhorst, 1987). In natural science research the formulation of an a priori hypothesis does not readily promote the discovery or description of process. The term 'process' implies holistic dimensions and requires holistic perceptions which are not found in the linear analysis of natural sciences. Phenomenological research attempts to lift the most basic structures of the process without reducing the holistic nature of the experience into a single dimension. For this reason it would seem to be the most suitable of all research methodologies to utilize in promoting further understanding of the PSP experience. The active participation of the students as co-researchers ensures that further understanding of the phenomena could be undertaken as a process. In this way this study may be utilized to enhance the present perspective that has been garnered from research on PSP.

Conclusion

This chapter has differentiated the distinct ontologies, approaches, and methodologies of human science research and natural science research. Although this study has been approached through the human science perspective, an effort has been made to establish a basic understanding of both processes. Human science and natural science can each contribute to the overall understanding of the psychological nature of wo/man. However, at this time phenomenological research is necessary in order to increase our understanding of PSP.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter will describe the methodological process which includes the rationale for study, orientation and bracketing, description of co-researchers, and interview format.

## Rationale for Study

In order to further the understanding of the nature of the PSP experience and analyze any effects it might have on the participating students' world-view, the researcher must be prepared to go to the source of the experience. By studying the students' descriptions of their experiences in psp training one might become more able to understand the dynamics of this complex interactive process. The holistic descriptions of the students' experience in this study became the raw data for analysis. Phenomenology was chosen as a research methodology in order that the basic structures of the process could be "lifted" out of the data or descriptions intact (Polkinghorne, 1979).

My personal rationale for a phenomenological study arose out of a pilot project I had conducted with a male student who had been involved in a student support group for one and a half years. The positive description of his experiences as a member of the program centered upon the personal emotional and social benefits he acknowledged as the result of PSP training. The research project concluded that the personal benefits of the program to the participating peer support members were more extensive than the benefits to the general school population (Sharon 1987). Questions that were entertained as a result of the research project were as follows: Was the organization and implementation of the program elitist, in that only a small number (ten)

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of the school population got to benefit directly? Would it be a
feasible idea to share the PSP training program with an entire class?
Would training an entire class cause any positive growth in the
lived-world experience of the average "unselected" student, the class
involved in the project, or the general school climate? Could
counsellors rely on the program to fulfill some of the developmental
work required in affective education at the pre-adolescent and/or
adolecent age level? More important how does positive affective change
occur in individuals? These questions resulted in the present research
being undertaken.

As stated previously phenomenological research does not include a
'recipe' or prescription for implementation. Its philosophy calls for
an adherence to the basic philosophy of the human social sciences and
humanistic education, although the specific method is dictated by the
nature of the phenomena to be studied. In this study the work of Giorgi
(1970), Colaizzi (1978), and Polkinghorne (1983) provided the basis for
the methodology. Weisgarber (1988), and Monson (1988) offered
phenomenological studies that were illustrative of various research
approaches to specific phenomena.

In this research process the raw data for analysis was provided for
by the students' verbatim descriptions. Meaning units for each
significant statement made by the student were assigned a number
(appendix A). Themes were then elicited for each of the student
protocols. These themes provided the basis for the within-protocol
analysis which reflected the basic structures of the PSP experience for
each student. Theme clusters were then considered across all of the
protocols in order that the general structures of the experience may be

made more explicit. These general structures of experience are further described in a verbal synthesis which reflects the student experiences.

## Orientation and Bracketing

Orientating oneself to the process of phenomonological research requires that both the researcher and the co-researcher have an 'engaged' attitude toward the phenomena to be studied. Phenomenology recognizes the difficulty of the researcher in putting forth a neutral world-view. After all, most research is pursued, not because of incidental interest; but because of subjective interest in a specific topic. Giorgi (1970) states that the most effective way in overcoming researcher bias or subjectivity " ... is for the viewpoint itself to be made specific, so that its validty may be circumscribed." (p.189). Through this bracketing process the researcher is able to identify and record expectations, attitudes, beliefs and values, and hypothetical hunches (Colaizzi, 1978). In this way the reliability and validity of the research process is enhanced because both the researcher, and later the audience is conscious of these preconceptions throughout the study (Becker, 1986; Salner, 1986).

My own interest in PSP training as an alternative self-help or human development program began out of my long term interest in the emotional development of adolescents. As a special education junior high school teacher for learning disabled students with average to above-average ability, I made several experientially based observations. The emotionally and/or socially maladjusted students experienced less academic progress, and seemed more preoccupied with their own inadequacies and inabilities. They had less motivation for school tasks and fewer skills to assist themselves in identifying or seeking help for

their problems. Fortunately, spontaneous, daily "talk " times developed within the classes. The students were allowed to discuss any topic they wished. Unknown to myself at that time, these group discussions were instrumental in creating the trust, confidence, and openness required for the students to begin sorting and solving their own personal problems, as well as setting new goals. The students valued this experience as indicated by the vigorous reminders I received when I had forgotten to let them "just talk". It was at that time that I felt that I required more specialized counsellor-training in order to understand and work with the more challenging students in my class. I had come to realize that, at the ages of twelve to fourteen years, most of these children could begin to compensate adequately for their learning disabilities if they had a strong sense of psychological and social well-being. In fact, with many children this emotional well-being was the prerequisite to further academic progress.

My belief in the importance of self-awareness and personal meaningfulness as a prerequisite to learning led me naturally into my present position as a full-time school counsellor. In this role I felt I could be more instrumental in developing and implementing affective education programming for all students within the school. My experiences with pre-adolescents and adolescents indicated that affective educational programming for the enhancement of psychological well-being is no longer a curriculum frill. It is a necessary lifeskill which must be encouraged in our complex and changing world.

I began using the PSP training model two years ago. After completing a phenomenological research project with one student who had participated in this small group program, I decided that the benefits to

the participating individual were such that all children should have the opportunity to benefit from a similar program. To begin with I relied upon <u>Peer Counselling Project Starter Kit</u> (Carr & Saunders, 1980) and <u>Peer Support, Designing Interpersonal Skills - A Training Plan</u> (Davis et al, 1987) as the mainstay of my program.

After completing an advanced level training workshop in helper skill training, I realized that my interest was more inclined toward the group communication process of program delivery. It became important for me to facilitate self-help learning groups where students could become introspective about themselves, their families, and their friends. They could be provided with the opportunity to think about their own values, beliefs and practices. And they could be given the communication skills and opportunities necessary to begin a life-long awareness and enhancement of themselves in their life-world. When reflecting upon my work with adolescents I realize that I hold certain biases or presuppositions which come into my awareness and may or may not be valid. These are outlined now...

1. The adolescent life-world can best be described as an interactional systemic progression of life. On a micro (private self) and macro (ecological) level, humans must co-constitute with their life-world (environment). Focusing with a systemic view of human behavior, we can understand how difficult it is for adolescents to implement basic structural change in their world-view and in their lifestyle patterns. Change is viewed as a complex process; particularly within the family, social, economic, and cultural interactional system over which the adolescent has little recognized authority or individual power.

2. Children are in increasing need of communication skills and self

awareness training because of today's increasing societal pressures and relaxed family structure. Values, beliefs, and attitudes which provide the intentionality and impetus for human behavior are often inadvertently clouded or misplaced in families because of extraneous media impact, time constraints, and increasing family mobility. Adolescents are often dissatisfied with their condition in life without being able to identify their difficulties and/or ways of working toward effective change.

3. Peer relationships are becoming more important in providing social/emotional support and security as children transcend "family and self" to "world and self". Smaller families, dysfunctional families, and employment demands on parents are contributing to the transfer of this security base from the home to peers and school.

4. Group work provides a strong therapeutic form of counselling and human relations training. Human sociability is at the very core of human existence and can be defined as an interactive and integral part of wo/man's co-constitutionality. Through facilitated group sharing and the experiencing of new interactional approaches, adolescents can be provided the comfort, support, and encouragement to learn new ways of being in our world. Our inter-connectedness with each other provides natural comfort as well as strong common themes for existence.

5. Each participant, because of wider ecological concerns such as historical, cultural, and past life experiences is most capable of determining his/her own needs. Based upon private beliefs and values, as well as the strong natural instinct to thrive, individuals will accept experientially only that which is congruent and progressive within his/her world-view. Therefore the activities and interactions of

others will affect wo/man only if he/she is able to develop some 'personal meaning' from the process. In this way group involvement can encourage personal participation which in turn promotes genuine personalized learning.

6. Self awareness, communication, and problem solving strategies can make a difference in the way we perceive and act upon our world. In particular, PSP training can be utilized effectively as part of an adolescent affective and communication skills training program. Its structural similarity to a self-help group extends the benefits and practicality beyond that of the early human development programs such as DUSO and Magic Circle. Within this study I attempted to maintain as neutral an outlook as possible in regard to this particular value and bias.

7. The group facilitator or leader must be trained in a theoretical understanding of therapeutic group process and learning theory. S/he must be skilled in both communication and group motivation dynamics and they must respect the life-world of the student and work toward the goal of increasing self-awareness and not specific contrived behaviors.

8. The small group implementation of the peer support program may be elitist in that the benefits to students throughout the school could be more extensive if the program were implemented as part of the regular school health curriculum.

## Research Implications

The bracketing process assists the researcher in his/her awareness of conceptual presuppositions and potential blind spots. Although I became very aware of my belief in peer support training as a viable part of affective education I am still unaware of the process or the nature

of the impact specifically. Do the students think of the program as an integral part of their education or is it a time filler and/or a socializing event? If the students do gain some self-awareness and problem-solving skills, are they too weak or ineffective to bring about by themselves some impetus for change in their world? Should one be focusing the training program on the family system more? Was I working with the appropriate age-group which could benefit most from the experience? Did the group process method I facilitated produce appropriate positive outcomes or was more directive teaching still necessary? Was my personal consideration of ethical boundaries too broad or too narrow? And finally would the process be considered valuable enough by the students and the staff to warrant implementation on a universal basis to all grade seven students at our school?

The data in this study was not anaylzed with any specific theory of adolescence in mind. With hindsight, if one were to describe it, it could be considered most related to humanistic psychology with dialectical, and perceptual theory considerations. The aim, however, was to lift the data out (Polkinghorne, 1983) so that it could reveal its own basic structures. As a researcher I co-existed with the data and proceeded to analyze it knowing that I had the above discussed biases and preconceptions. As Giorgi stated, all research is embedded in researcher biases and to become engaged in our research we must continuously reflect and be aware of these natural biases (Giorgi, 1970).

Procedure

Preliminary approval for this research was obtained from the grade seven 'A' class health and language arts teacher, the school principal,

and the district office curriculum department. The course involved
approximately 21 forty minute class periods and included a one and one
half day long retreat at a resort camp where the children were involved
in 6 additional training sessions of 1 to 1 and 1/2 hours duration.
Curriculum time was accounted for within the language arts and health
curriculum programs because the PSP training addressed both
communication and health topics.

Although the original PSP project plans had included the
participation of the grade seven health and language arts teacher as a
co-facilitator this was not practised after the first session. The
absence of any professional training or experience in group process
facilitation led to this personal decision on the part of the teacher.
The teacher however continued to participate as a class supervisor on
the training retreat.

Before the course was undertaken, approval for it's implementation
was given both by the participating students who were introduced to the
general nature of the course beforehand, and by the parents who attended
an evening presentation on the philosophy, goals, and content of the
course. The actual program that was utilized for the student support
training course was a personalized version of several resources. The
Peer Counseling Starter Kit (Carr & Saunders, 1980) and Peer Support,
Designing Interpersonal Skills - A Training Plan (Davis et al., 1987)
were used as  the framework of the program. A  wide variety of personal
materials and activities from various sources were also utilized by the
facilitator. These materials included trust exercises, self-relaxation
techniques, and other group process and awareness activities.

## Co-researcher Selection

The selection of co-researchers for this research project was made after all class members had been interviewed in regard to the student support experience. Because I was dealing with 12 and 13 year old students I was not able to ascertain how well the students would be able to verbalize their experiences. Would I be able to get a rich description of their experiences? Becker (1986) states that it is the researcher's responsibility to determine how many subjects are required to satisfy the particular goals of research and suggests that usually any number from one to ten will suffice. I felt that by interviewing all the participants I would be able to gain in insight from everyone's comments. Simultaneously, this procedure would help to dispel the feeling that I had ignored some particularly poignant data. Involving the whole class in the initial interview also assisted in giving me a wholistic feel for the project. After these initial interviews I chose thirteen students whose descriptions could contribute most to a deeper understanding of the training process. These students provided the descriptions upon which I based my data analysis.

Although the co-researchers knew that they might be asked to participate in an interview some time after the completion of the course they were not asked to prepare for it in any way. I purposely collected my description data three months after the completion of the course. I felt that the long-term essential structures of the experience should still be a part of the student's lived-experience if the course had made any significant impact on the student's world view. In the three months after the course I purposely limited my contact with the class. Two students did approach me for personal counselling and on eight

occassions I was informally invited by individual or small student groups to continue with more training for the class. Approximately three-quarters of the class volunteered to be involved in an extracurricular PSP group during the following school year.

## Description of Co-researchers

The thirteen co-researchers that were chosen to participate in this study came from various cultural, historical, and family backgrounds. The students lived in traditional, blended, single-parent, or foster homes. They were all grade seven students who attended a neighbourhood school in a suburban city located near a major city. Some of the children were experiencing personal problems at the time of the training. Three children had regularly attended counselling for problems involving social unacceptance, family difficulties, and unsatisfactory academic progress after retention. Table I presents summary data concerning each of the participants. None of the participants recalled having participated in a course or project of this nature.

TABLE 1

Tabular Description of Co-researchers

| NAME | AGE | SEX | FAMILY STRUCTURE |
|------|-----|-----|------------------|
| Darryl | 13 | male | traditional |
| Rick | 13 | male | traditional |
| Joanne | | female | traditional |
| Kari | 13 | female | single parent |
| Tom | 13 | male | blended |
| Jill | 14 | female | traditional |
| Tara | 13 | female | traditional |
| Verna | 13 | female | traditional |
| Kam | 14 | male | traditional * |
| Marlene | 13 | female | single parent * |
| Amy | 13 | female | traditional |
| Jen | 13 | female | traditional |
| Liza | 13 | female | traditional |

* Students were involved in personal counselling throughout the year.

## Interview Format

At a class meeting in early June I announced that I would be interviewing on audio-tape all the students who had participated in the PSP training project. I assured the students that each interview would be confidential and that they were not to prepare for it. I also assured them that I would be asking open-ended questions and that they were at liberty to discuss anything they wished to, in relation to their experience before, during, and after the training. Honesty was the only prerequisite for their descriptions.

I began the individual interviews in my counselling room at school. After signing consent for the audio-taping of the interview (Appendix C), the students were encouraged to share their experiences through open-ended questioning such as the following-:-

> This year you and your class have been involved in a student support training project. Now that it has been over for several months can you describe your personal experiences and feelings about the program?... What were you aware of before the training, during the training, after the training? ...Is there anything you remember about the program, anything you now do differently?... Can you describe how the experience was for you personally... For the class?... Did you learn anything?... Did it help you in any way ?... In regards to your family?... In regards to your friends?... In regards to your class?... What are your feelings about continuing in this type of program?

Less open-ended questions were used for clarification and for encouraging the co-researcher to elaborate further upon a particular description. Rapport was a fundamental part of the interview as it

provided the atmosphere necessary for the interviewees to expose all
aspects of their life-world experiences (Becker, 1986). When each
student completed the interview s/he were told that s/he could be called
back for further clarification. Student verification of his/her own
description occurred after I had studied the data and organized each of
the protocols with respect to their essential meanings. The students who
were chosen as participants were all given a pseudonym to ensure
anonymity. The interviews lasted were from five to twenty minutes in
duration.

# CHAPTER 4: PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

## Introduction

This chapter presents the analyzed results of the research data as experienced by the grade seven students   involved in the PSP program. Because my aim is to allow the research to speak for itself the data anaylsis must illuminate the most basic and meaningful structures of the experience without distorting the context in which it was originally experienced.  A flow chart indicating the specific stages of the process developed for this research analysis is outlined in Table 2.

Table 2

## Progression of Research Analysis

| (1)<br>Individual<br>Protocols | > | (2)<br>Meaning Units<br>For Each Protocol | > | (3)<br>Themes<br>Within Protocols | > |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (4)<br>Within Protocol<br>Analysis | > | (5)<br>Theme Clusters<br>Across Protocols | > | (6)<br>Verbal Syntheses<br>Across Protocols | |
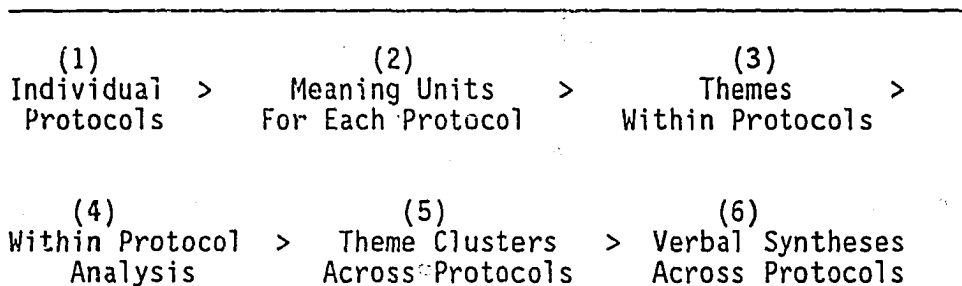
Note: Steps 5 and 6 include research data from all protocols

The following procedures were utilized in the completion of the data analysis:

## Verbatim Transcript to Meaning Units

After the audio-taped interviews were completed, each description by the co-researcher was transcribed into verbatim statements for each of the co-researchers. These descriptions were then read, listened to twice on tape, and reflected upon for interpreted meaning. These formulated meanings were my initial understanding of each particular

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verbal description that had been extracted from the verbatim text of

each of the co-researchers. These meanings were numbered and transcribed

adjacent to the verbatim descriptions which are recorded in Appendix B.

To establish validity of this method, all the initial meanings were

shared with each co-researcher for their confirmation.

## Emergent Themes: Within Protocols

Once the formulated meanings had been transcribed, each of the

co-researcher's descriptions or protocol were analyzed and organized

into themes or subject areas common to each co-researcher. Because

there were no preconceived categories for labelling, the researcher was

required to go through all the (numbered) formulated meanings and

account for each of them. A within-protocol analysis for each of the

co-researchers was developed by priorizing and differentiating the

particular meaning units, as well as by grouping them into common themes

(See Table III). Each particular numbered unit meaning in Appendix B is

thus represented in the thematic meaning units which follow in Table

III.

It is also at this time that the researcher confirms or validates

the formulated meanings within each of the descriptions by taking them

back to the co-researcher for verification, validation and further

explication. A check is made to see if any additional information

concerning the experience is forthcoming.

Table III:

Emergent Themes:   Within Protocols

The numbers following each thematic statement represent  particular units of meaning which have been lifted out of the verbatim transcipt (appendix A).

Darryl:

1. Friendship

   a) D. can expand upon his own world-view by talking to others (1,8,11).

   b) Wo/man is a social animal and cooperative socializing enhances the quality of life (3,1,5,7)

II. Personal Communication

   a) Openness creates a greater awareness of self and others as expressed in the mutual sharing of feelings (2,13)

   b) There is a realization and respect for self-other reciprocity (10,11,7,).

   c) D. learned to overcome fear enough to risk initiating new social relationships (12).

   d)  Enhancing communication can encourage a better relationship with family members (9,10).

   e)  Responsibility for communication within the family is reciprocal and makes demands on both the speaker and listener (9,10).

III. Group support

   a) Improved communication can provide more support and a sense of belonging. (14,15,16)

   b) Improved communication and understanding leads to a reduced  conflict between others (6,4).

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Rick:

I.   Personal Communication

   a) Practicing communication skills and problem solving strategies in personally meaningful situations can

be a meaningful, constructive process (18,19).

b) Self awareness is important in personal communication and problem solving (22,23).

c) Resolution of personal difficulties can assist indirectly in enhancing sibling relationships at home (21).

11. Friendship

a) R. learned about some of the qualities of friendship (20).
b) Respect for the feelings of others is an important aspect of a relationship (23).

III. Group Support

a) Comfort and closeness occur when one shares experiences (24,17).

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Joanne:

I. Self-Awareness

a) Respect for others and respect for oneself are related (reciprocal) in that increasing one can impact upon the other (35,39,45,).

II. Friendship

a) Sometimes you have to give shy people a fair chance in the beginning of a relationship (26).

b) J. learned that sharing your feelings with your friends is helpful if you are upset (27,28).

III. Group Support

a) Increased respect for individuals in the class has resulted in a noticeable decline in the harsher treatment (teasing, putdowns) of students (29,31).

b) This positive experience could be extended throughout the entire school (31).

IV. Problem Solving

a) This experience has contributed to more harmonious friendships with less conflict among students (30).

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Kari:

I. Self-Awareness

a) Positive individual self-esteem can promote group spirit and trust (45,33).

b) Doing unique things brings recognition and builds self-esteem (32,33).

II. Family Communication

a) Improved communication with my mother assists in avoiding confrontations (40,41).

b) Communicating with my mother increases the understanding between us and closes the age-gap (41).

III. Group Support

a) Trust is required before a group can become supportive (35,39).

b) Total group participation increases the benefits to the individual as well as to the group (35,34,31).

c) Enhancement of group identity through the program could improve school atmosphere (44,45,43).

IV. Friendship

a) Cliques and snobbery are detrimental in the development of healthy friendships (35).

b) Respect for others is an important prerequisite to friendship (29,26)
c) Close companionship and socialization is a beneficial experience (42,).

V. Problem Solving

a) K. learned to recognize and deal with problems now rather than leaving them to work themselves out (36,38).

b) Conflicts are not as severe and K. doesn't lose friendships over them now (38).

VI. Communication

a) Communication skills training enhanced K's understanding and the intensity of K.'s friendships (37,34).

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Tom:

I. Class Communication

a) The training taught the group skills which facilitated communication among students (46,49,53).

b) Increased communication promotes friendliness and a better atmosphere (47,48,).

II. Group Support

a) The friendly and relaxed atmosphere made a noticeable difference in minimizing feelings of anger and tension (48,56).

b) This program helped K who felt it could help others to live more comfortably (55,57,46).

c) Once the training classes were over the special atmosphere that was created seemed to dissipate as everything moved back towards the old norm.

III. Communication

a) Talking without giving advice can be helpful when friends are experiencing difficulties (50).

b) It's easier to communicate if you have some learning experiences that focus on communication (51).

c) Improved communication promotes friendship and minimizes isolation (53).

d) The program helped T. in his relationship with his brother (54).

e) T. learned not to be act quite so aggressively with his brother(54).

------------------------------------------------------------------
Jill:

I. Self-Awareness

a) J learned that she could be confident with her own unique individuality without being embarrassed (59).

b) The experience was valuable to her personally (58).

II. Group Support

a) The class members have become closer and friendlier (61,64,60).

b) There is less ridicule of classmates (61).

III. Communication

a) Honesty promotes friendship and closeness (62).

b) By going through the project J. learned to trust the other kids more (60).

c) J feels she has learned to listen more effectively which has enhanced her communication level (64).

IV. Friendship

a) Although J. already had a few friends she appreciated the opportunity to strike up new friendships (62,60).

b) J's longstanding friendships have become more intense and enjoyable as her friends developed more trust in her (65,64).

V. Change/Problem Soving

a) J has learned less aggressive communication strategies for conveying her feelings to her siblings (53).

b) J. noticed that some of her anger and temper toward her brothers has been resolved by new communication patterns.

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Tara:

I. Group Support

a) The retreat experience made the class closer because we learned more about each other (66,68).

b) Everyone seemed to increase their circle of friends (70,68,71).

c) We don't rely on small cliques for friends as much (70).

d) This program could have more of an effect if other classes and schools had the program (73).

II. Personal Awareness

a) This experience changed T.'s perceptions about other people (67).

b) The class learned by being together and talking all the time (66,68).

III. Family Communication

a) T. noticed that she and her sister are not fighting as much (72).

b) Our family shares our feelings more and I try to understand and explain myself better (72).

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Liza:

1. Self-Awareness

a) Through the program L. realized that she had low self-esteem and is working to improve this (75).

b) Self esteem is affected by the way you feel about yourself (75).

c) L. felt that the program developed alot of empathy and respect among classmates which decreased the number of putdowns (79).

d) L. feels she could benefit from continuing in the program (81).

II. Friendship

a) L. feels she developed a better understanding of friendship and realizes she has monopolized her friends (77).

b) Improved communication skills can enhance the quality of friendship (74).

III. Communication

a) The acquisition of communication skills has assisted in facilitating L's communication with her parents as L. was too shy to talk with them before (76).

IV. Group Dynamics/Support

a) L. noticed that there is less fighting in class among students (78).

b) L. is being teased less about her ethnic origin in class (79).

c) There are less sarcastic putdowns (80)

d) With less conflict the class atmosphere is improved (79,80,78).

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Verna:

I. Self-Awareness

a) The experience was beneficial and enjoyable. (85,82,89).

b) V feels she has become more assertive and proactive in her life (84,89).

II. Friendship

a) V. is working on dealing with disagreements as soon as they surface (84,83).

b) Instead of talking about other people, such as members of the opposite sex, the girls now talk with them (88).

III. Communication

a) V. learned that communicating skills and a higher level of trust have made her more comfortable and assertive (86,89).

b) It is better to be assertive and stand up for yourself than to just try and forget bad experiences (90).

c) V's relationship and feelings towards her brother have improved (87).

d) V. feels that she respects him more; and spends more enjoyable time with him lately (87).

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Kam:

I. Self-Awareness

a) The course was beneficial to K. and he could benefit from participating in it again (91,98).

II. Friendship

a) K. feels that he and his friend have enhanced their interpersonal communication by talking and listening to each other more (91,92,94).

b) Having a friend who has taken the program has encouraged K. to utilize the skills and stategies he had learned in the program (94,92).

III. Communication

a) K learned about how to help himself and others with problem solving (91,93,94).

b) It was easier to implement different communication patterns with K's younger sister than with his older brother (95).
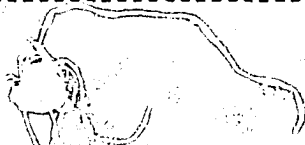
IV. Group Dynamics

a) Classmates became more understanding with K.'s own personal circumstances (96,97).

b) K. felt that he was teased less because the class grew more tolerant from the experience (97).

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Marlene:

I. Self Awareness

a) M. feels more self confidence about herself now. (101).

b) M. would like more of this type of program next year (108).

II. Communication

a) M. learned communication skills, cooperation, and respect for others (101,99,100,102).

b) M. also learned how to talk to people when they are feeling down (103).

c) Because of her learning experiences in the program M. finds it easier to communicate with her mother (107).

d) M. was able to help her sister gain new friends by teaching her some of the communication skills she had learned (106).

III. Group Dynamics

a) M. observes that the class developed a closeness and friendliness that is unique in comparison to other classes (105).

b) The retreat was enjoyable partly because the class learned more about each other (104,100).
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Amy:

I. Self Awareness

a) The program was beneficial and A. thinks others could benefit although she didn't feel that way about the program in the beginning (109,114).

b) A. notes that her respect for individual differences among people has increased (113).

II. Communication

   a) A. learned about openness, communicating and understanding others (110,114,111).

   b) A. learned that improved listening skills can lead to a better relationship with others (112).

III. Group Dynamics

   a) A. observes that other classes notice that we are friendlier to each other (115).

   b) After the program was finished you could communicate with anyone in class (114).

   c) A. observes less putdowns in class and more universal support for class members (117).

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Jen:

I.  Personal Awareness

   a) The experience made J. more understanding of people (122).

   b) It is hard work talking to people who are unfamiliar but J. really felt understood by them (129,130).

   c) The camp experience was best even though there was alot to learn and I felt overtaxed by all the work (118,131,128).

II. Group Dynamics

   a) Being at camp as a group increased the identity and bonding of the group (118).

   b) The openness of the group incr.a d the trust level (119).

III. Learning Process/Communication

   a) J. enjoyed learning by talking, amd recognized that the classes were taught using a process unlike regular teaching (133,132).

   b) The course didn't feel like school. It was a special experience that made J. feel privileged (132).

IV. Communication

   a) When J. used the skills she learned with her siblings she was obviously doing things differently because they noticed (121,124,125).

b) J. experienced that it is difficult to change sibling relationships particularly when patterns are established (121,125).

c) J.'s parents were more responsive to J's efforts in increasing communication (123).

d) Because J talks and listens more effectively to her parents now, she feels she understands and respects their ideas more (123).

V.  Group Support/Friendship

a) J. feels that the program would be beneficial to other classes (126,127).

b) J. feels the other grade seven class was disappointed in not being a part of the program (127).

c) The openness and trust facilitated J. in relaxing and participating freely (119).

d) J. recognized that alot of her classmates were practicing the communication skills they had learned     (120).

c) J. liked being understood so well by the people she conversed with at camp (130).

## Within-Protocol Analysis

While preserving the essence of the orginal description for each of the co-researchers, the essential constructs of the experience are synthesized into a narrative. Details are accounted for within these essential constituents and redundancies are eliminated. In an effort to elucidate and clarify the basic meaning structures recognized in the verbatim text, substantial use is made of examples and direct reference. The general descriptions of the data for each of the co-researchers are presented below.

## Analyses:

### Darryl:

For Darryl the student support program was a socializing experience. He enhanced his living enjoyment by initiating meaningful conversation with other students and thereby making new friends. Darryl enjoyed the cooperative spirit of the group and noted that he even found the mundane living arrangements and tasks "fun". Personal realization of self-other reciprocity increased Daryl's comfort level and sense of belonging in the group. For Darryl the communication training was beneficial in helping him realize that communication is a two way process. By sharing one's feelings and ideas with others one could come to respect and value individual differences.

Darryl perceived that the class atmosphere had improved. He observed that there was a lack of conflict among students at camp and that he, himself, didn't get into any disagreements or fights. This was encouraging to Darryl who felt more secure about striking up a conversation with any one of his classmates.

The student support experience seems to have acted as a catalyst for personal change. Darryl's shyness was overcome by new perceptions of his classmates and a realization of the personal advantages in enhancing his relationships at home and at school. Darryl's protocol illustrated this isolation versus belonging theme many times.

### Rick:

Rick found the student support training enhanced his self-awareness and assisted him in developing communication strategies for solving personal problems. He states that the course was personally meaningful because " It taught me to deal with my ideas, thoughts, and problems. It helped to bring answers to my problems." Rick notes that the experience developed his self awareness and that he got to know, "what I(he) was really like inside".

Socially Rick felt that he had become more sensitized to the particular qualities of friendship. He valued the comfort and openness that the group experience at camp provided him. Rick learned that respect for other peoples's feelings is an important part of any relationship. This realization helped him to control his temper and act more respectful toward his sister.

### Joanne:

Joanne summarized the PSP training as being a significant experience for herself personally as well as for the effect it had upon the group. Joanne felt that she had benefitted because her self-esteem had improved since the training. She recognized the positive effect that learning to respect others had upon her own self-esteem. She noted that often people, including herself, do not give more reticent students a

fair chance to participate. Joanne found it encouraging that she could talk to friends about her feelings and is reassured to know that she can count on them or others to help her deal with her problems. She notes that she has observed a decrease in the amount of interpersonal conflict experienced by herself and her friend.

Joanne felt that her classmates have an increased sense of respect for themselves and each other. She indicated that they do not treat each other as harshly as they used to. She further states that, "We don't put them (our friends) down as much". Joanne remarked that the entire junior high atmosphere might undergo a positive change if all students could participate in a similar program.

### Kari:

Kari found that through participating in this program she and her classmates felt a sense of positive recognition. Kari's statement, "... we got to be people, not like everybody else in this school" suggests that she enjoyed the special attention and benefits this unique experience provided her class.

Personally Kari noticed that she communicates on a more intense level with her friends now and feels closer to them. Although there were still disagreements among the girls in the class, problem solving stategies and honest reciprocal negotiation by the parties involved usually led to an early resolution of the difficulty. Kari noted that this strategy is preferable to the practice of merely letting things go or ignoring negative behavior.

Kari's reluctance to trust others may be related to her familial experiences with divorce and alcohol. However through participating in group activities she observed that she did learn to trust the group.

and was not as preoccupied with 'control' issues as she had been before the training. At home Kar₁ notices that increasing communication helped her to avoid negative confrontations with her mother. There was recognition of the reciprocal need of both mother and daughter to be understood and respected. As Kari observes she has been working toward understanding and appreciating her mother more.

Kari commented on the high level of individual participation at camp. She noticed an absence of cliques and proudly stated that, "we even got to involve other people who are not so popular." Although Kari feels she could benefit from having the program again she recognizes that school spirit and trust among students could be enhanced if other classes had the opportunity to participate in the experience.

### Tom:

For Tom PSP was helpful in enhancing communication and improving the social atmosphere of the class. Tom realized that improved communication skills can help in promoting friendships and minimizing isolation. He enjoyed the camp experience because the atmosphere there was relaxed and as he observed, "people weren't tense or mad". After the training Tom noticed that he and his classmates were more willing to communicate and to try to solve problems among themselves without outside help. As Tom stated, "Sometimes it's a lot easier to communicate when you know how."

Although Tom enjoyed the special atmosphere the class training provided, he noted that once the training ended the "training-sensitized" class atmosphere reverted more towards the norm.

Tom indicated that his respect for others was enhanced by the training. For example, he is working at home toward improving his

relationship with his younger brother. He acknowledges that he "... used to get mad at him a lot. But I now lower my voice and try not to push or shove." Tom also learned that respect for others means that there is less imposition of personal views upon others and more acceptance of varying life syles.

### Jill:

Jill felt that the PSP experience increased her social competence and confidence. She remarked rather surprisingly that, "the kids were nicer than I thought they would be". This change in Jill's perception of her classmates may have contributed to her own personal growth as well as to the sensitized, supportive group dynamics developed during the training.

At school Jill observed that there was less ridiculing of classmates and that everyone has become friendlier and more supportive of each other. Although she was reluctant to participate in the trust activities, Jill felt that the growth of openness and honesty within the group contributed to an increased sense of personal comfort.

Jill's improved sense of worth aided in enhancing her perceptions of the feelings of her classmates towards hersef. Communication has improved between Jill and her friends. She attributes this to her enhanced listening skills and her friends' higher level of trust in her confidentiality.

At home Jill has attempted to implement some of the problem solving stategies she experienced in training to decrease sibling conflict. She feels that she is more in control of her temper and spends more time developing positive communication patterns instead of regressing to negative and/or authoritarian behavior.

<u>Tara:</u>

For Tara PSP training acted as a catalyst in changing her perceptions of her classmates (e.g.," I think I look at them through a different perspective"). Recognizing some superficiality in her past relationships, she felt that the program helped her to realize that these relationships can be nurtured in order to become more meaningful and rewarding. Tara felt that a degree of personal learning occurred simply by "being" with her classmates. As they co-existed within the group they learned more about each other's ways. Tara observed that because of the comfortable atmosphere everyone has increased his/her circle of friends. There has been less reliance on small cliques for friendship.

Tara's concluded that her classmates have increased their respect for each other and that there have been fewer conflicts within the class compared to the beginning of the year. She predicted that PSP could be positive in ameliorating school atmosphere if other classes and schools had the program available to them. The friendlier attitude encouraged by the program could minimize inter-school rivalry and competition as well as promote universal understanding among students.

Within her own family Tara acknowleged that she and her sister are not as aggressive towards each other. As she stated "When she's mad I try to understand why and when I'm mad at her I try to explain things to her. It works out".

<u>Liza:</u>

PSP was meaningful for Liza because through self awareness she became aware that she had a lower self-esteem (e.g.,"I never used to think of myself as a normal person. I used to think of myself as aside.

Now I think I feel better about myself"). Liza, who is a member of a minority group at school, perceived herself as suffering from an inferiority complex. Several months after awareness, self- acceptance, and self-directed action toward the personal enhancement of her self-esteem, Liza noticed that she did not feel as insecure and unhappy. She observed that she feels less jealousy when her friends spend time with other people. She has developed a more secure and comfortable understanding of friendship.

Another contributing factor to Liza's perceived higher self-esteem could be the result of changes in the class atmosphere. A notable decrease in fights, teasing and sarcastic put-downs in class may have also assisted Liza in feeling better about herself. She concluded that the program has resulted in good feeling and understanding among all class members.                                                                        With regard to her own family Liza indicated that before taking the program she used to be too shy to communicate at any great length with her parents. She found that her sharpened communication skills and her enhanced self-esteem makes it  easier for her to develop a closer communication bonding with them. In retrospect Liza felt positive enough about the program to want to repeat it again next year.

### Verna:

Verna found the student support training experience to be beneficial and enjoyable. She learned that it is better to be assertive and stand up for oneself than to try and ignore a bad experience when it occurs. Verna felt that she is more assertive and proactive in her life particularly when she encounters difficulties. She felt that she has been involved in fewer disputes with her friends since the training.

When disputes do occur Verna stated that they are resolved more easily and readily. Verna found that this pattern of reduced conflict and earlier resolution of problematic situations also extends to her relationships out of school.

Verna explained that her relationship and feelings towards her brother have improved because she learned to respect his independence and felt that he has reciprocated with more respect for her. She noted that "We used to fight over the stupidest little things". Verna remarked that she is now more willing to spend time with her brother and that their relationship has become more enjoyable.

Verna felt that she and her classmates are more comfortable with each other as exemplified in the new communication patterns that have developed. For example, the girls in class have begun to talk with the boys instead of talking about them, as happened previously. Verna felt that the skills she and her classmates learned encourage trust and assertiveness which enhanced the comfort level of everyone.

### Kam:

Kam had been in group counselling for academic motivation and peer concerns. He had also been involved in psychometric and audio assessments for further diagnosis and treatment of his hearing difficulties. He was repeating the academic year and felt unrealistic pressure from both himself and his peers to perform at a more than adequate level this term. He felt PSP was beneficial to himself because he learned how to communicate more effectively and how to cooperate with his friends in helping each other solve personal problems. Kam developed confidence that his friend, who has also taken PSP, is a good person to guide him through his problem solving (eg. "Me and my friend, we listen

more and we talk"). Kam felt that he has become a better friend. He was aware that although he is still teased in school by a few students, (in regards to his size and grade retention) his classmates have become more understanding of the fact that he is repeating the grade.

At home Kam used the communication training he experienced at school in an attempt to enhance his mediocre relationships with his younger sister and older brother. He found that it was easier to facilitate needed changes in relationship patterns with his younger sister than with his older brother who acts, in an authoritarian fashion, sometimes "...like a bully", and is rarely at home. It seemed that Kam's desire for change and enhanced skills were not enough to bring about any significant change in more negative and more established systemic family patterns. In conclusion, Kam felt happy about some of the changes he has been able to implement in his life but emphasized that he could benefit from being involved in the program again.

Marlene:

Marlene, who was referred for counselling because of her shyness, withdrawn behavior and low self-esteem found that she experienced a boost in her self-confidence as a result of her experiences in the program. Primarily, she felt that she benefitted from the listening and communication skills taught throughout the training, and from the cooperative interpersonal activities she was involved in during its duration. Because of her socially impoverished background Marlene benefited from the social modeling that she was able to observe while at camp. (eg."I learned how Kara acts when her mother is around").

Marlene stated that "I learned to talk to people and understand them and to open up." She also felt that she learned more about

approaching people and dealing with them when they are feeling depressed or down. At school Marlene described how her classmates are closer and friendlier with each other than students in other classes. She acknowledged that this friendliness extends out of school to the neighbourhood mall where she observed students from her class greeting and speaking to each other at every opportunity. Marlene verified that she has benefited from this friendliness because students are interacting with her more.

Recognizing her sister's social ineptness, Marlene was able to help her make new friends by teaching her some of the communication skills and stategies she had learned. She proudly related that, "My sister has a few new friends now because I told her about F.E.L.O.R.(communication strategy). One day she even brought this friend over and they seemed to have a very good time." After her experiences in the program, Marlene found it easier to communicate with her mother when she has a problem.

### Amy:

Amy was pleasantly surprised that the PSP was personally meaningful to her. She thought of it as "just another class" until she found that she was actually learning more about openness, communicating, and understanding others. Amy noticed that her respect for individual differences among people increased and she came to realize that each individual's uniqueness is "neat". Improved listening skills on Amy's part have resulted in a more enjoyable relationship with both her family and her classmates. In retrospect, Amy described how she was able to change a specific annoying behavior pattern of her mother's simply by reflecting upon the situation and adjusting her own understanding of the situation accordingly.

Amy felt that after the program was completed she could communicate with anyone in the class and they would make an effort to understand her. She observed less 'putdowns' of students in the class and more universal support for class members (eg."Even now in track when you're running and losing, they (the class) will yell and cheer you on".). Amy also noted that other classes within the school have observed how much friendlier her class is to each other.

### Jen:

Jen found the student support experience to be personally meaningful for several reasons. She enjoyed the open and trusting atmosphere that the group experienced and felt that this atmosphere encouraged her and her classmates to relax and participate more freely. Jen enjoyed being understood so well by the various people she communicated with at camp (eg."I talked to people that I hardly even know. And it was weird because they understood you perfectly. It was nice, you know.").

At home Jen attempted to implement some changes in her relationship patterns but met with only moderate success. She found that her parents were more willing to accept her efforts to enhance interpersonal understanding and communication. Because she can now relate to her parents at a more satisfying level, Jen feels that she can reciprocate by considering and respecting their ideas more than previously. However in her sibling relationships, Jen initiated too drastic a change in her behavior patterns. As a result she experienced both her sister's and her brother's rebuke for behaving differently. Her siblings' need or desire for change did not match that of Jen's.

Although other trainees were aware of the different teaching approach that the PSP training program utilized Jen alone pointed out that this "talking" and learning process was unlike teacher directed instruction. She stated that the program differed significantly from regular school in that the students were encouraged to talk in pairs and groups. Learning occured by immersion in individual and group activities. Although Jen acknowledged that it was hard work communicating with students who are unfamiliar and have experiences different from her own, she felt that there was much to be learned. Particularly, she revealed that she was overwhelmed by the number of sessions at camp. Jen disagreed with the perceptions of other classes not involved in the program who had concluded that the program was fun and "free time".

Jen enjoyed the change in group dynamics that occurred during and as a result of the program. She found that the identity and bonding of the group increased because the class participated as a separate group away from the larger school environment. Jen noted however, that students from the other grade seven class were disappointed at not being involved in the program and she felt that both classes should be included in the project next year.

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

Once the analytical description of each protocol has been completed the thematic units from every protocol (table 3) are studied in order to observe common elements or basic structures among the protocols. These are then organized in tabular form under a general topic or issue in Table 4. Because the elements of the Within-Protocol analysis have been lifted out from the original meaning units they will be transferred and

preserved in the Across-Protocol Analysis as holistic elements of experience. These elements will provide the essential structures or essences of the peer support training experience from the entire spectrum of the within-protocol themes.


Table 4  ( here )

Table 4

Tabular Summary of Themes: Across Protocols

| GENERAL THEME STRUCTURES | Darryl | Joanne | Karl | Tom | Jill | Tara | Liza | Verna | Cam | Marlene | Jen | Rick | Amy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I. Group Support** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| empowering / proactive | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| trusting | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| cooperative | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | |
| accepting | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| personally comfortable | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **II. Communication** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| beliefs and values | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| raised consciousness | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| meaning of self | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| overcoming fears | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| new ideas and experience | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| skill acquisition | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| **III. Personal Awareness** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| dissatisfaction | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| consciousness to action | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| individual isolation | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| self-esteem | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| blocks to change | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| conflict resolution | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| **IV. Group Dynamics** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| security | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| connectedness | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| freedom to risk | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| reduced peer pressure | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| learning process | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| **V. Friendship** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| empathy/respect | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| acceptance | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| enhanced communication | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| reciprocal support | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| understanding | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |

Table 4 continued . . .

Tabular Summary of Themes:  Across Protocols

| GENERAL THEME STRUCTURES | Darryl | Joanne | Karl | Tom | Jill | Tara | Liza | Verna | Cam | Marlene | Jen | Rick | Amy |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| VI. Change/Problem Solving | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| respect for uniqueness | x x | | x x x | x x | x x x | x x | x x x | x | x x x | x x x | x x | x x | x |
| negotiation | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| supports change | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| frustration | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| system effect | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| conflict resolution | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Structure of the Experience: Across Protocols

Once the descriptions and comparisions of individual protocols have been reflected upon, certain structural essences of the experience are elicited. These structural essences are otherwise taken for granted in everyday human experience where thought is primarily focused on the final result and not on the actual psychological processing (Polkinghorne, 1983). Giorgi (1970) refers to this subjective consciousness as the "internal viewpoint" which is more difficult but not impossible to grasp" (p.184). Through the phenomenological "... uncovering of relationships, contexts, and meaning ..."(Giorgi, 1970, p.192) insights of qualitative structures of knowledge are identified. These are then described by the researcher in the across- protocol analysis of all the data. The boundaries of each of these structural essences described must be definitive yet broad enough to include all variations of the co-researchers' experience with the phenomena. For this reason imagined variation and the utilization of examples help to illuminate and reinforce the validity of the essential structures.

In the PSP experience the essential structures of the experience can be narrated through the interactions, experiences and descriptions of the co-researchers. Every student's experience is unique because his/her interactions with his/her classmates, friends, and family are congruent with his/her life-world. What was common to every description however, was that changes were noticed by all of the participants of the program. A summative description of the more common or essential structures of the experience from across protocols follows:

## 1. Group Support

The level of individual participation in the PSP training was one of friendliness, support, openness, and acceptance. All students indicated a willingness to participate although most students initially had few positive expectations for the course. (e.g. Amy: "At first I thought, 'Oh! it's just another class ..."). Others saw being involved in the program as a special privilege (e.g., Kari:" ... We got to be 'people' not like everybody else in the school"). Initial appeal for the students' support of the program was also due to the knowledge that students would be allowed time out of regular class and that an overnight retreat was part of the program.

Empowerment. Each student entered the training program with specific attitudes, values, needs, temperaments and skill levels; each of which is embedded in a singular historical and cultural context. For some children the internal felt need to find answers for specific problems was not as great as for other students. For example, children like Darryl, Marlene, Kam and Liza found that the training classes assisted them in confronting their own social inadequacy. Two of these students had been receiving counselling for socialization difficulties. Other students like Jill and Amy, who have less difficulty socially, focused less on themselves and described other dimensions and effects of the program. It would seem that as the PSP experience unfolded everyone interpreted, learned and acted according to their own personal world-view and felt-needs.

Acceptance. Regardless of personal perspective, all the students found the training climate to be accepting and supportive of personal initiative. A trusting and cooperative atmosphere in the training

sessions was recognized by a majority of the students and many stated
that this facilitated an awareness both of themselves and others. Tom
describes the atmophere during training as "... special because people
were more friendly." Jill found that "... the kids were nicer than I
thought they would be and that they were easier to get along with.", and
Jen noted that "It was more open so you could trust people more. There
was no one around who would go telling people things". Students noted
that they weren't afraid to talk more intensely about themselves because
of the high level of understanding exhibited by others, a similarity of
interests, and universal participation. Tom acknowledges, "It was more
relaxed so people weren't nervous to talk."

Although several children did not comment specifically upon the
training atmosphere their personal descriptions reflected a awareness
which would validate this essential structure of the experience. For
example Darryl's statements that he enjoyed, "talking to people that he
never talked to before." and, that "he could talk to them and share his
feelings." implied a warm, inviting environment where students could
feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with others.

## 2. Communication

Although most of the students did not have preconceived
expectations of the PSP project it became clear as they experienced the
activities and skill sessions, that they were discussing ideas and
skills that had the potential to act as change agents in their lives.
Many students in their descriptions expressed dissatisfaction with
personal relationships. As a result all the students interviewed stated
that they had invested some of what they had learned in the program
toward improving personal relationships with siblings and/or friends.

Raised Consciousness  Whether or not this common dissatisfaction with personal relationships was as obvious to the students before the training is unclear. The training objectives, while focusing on enhancing communication and awareness may have indirectly been used by the students as a measure of their own personal competency and social satisfaction. Many of the co-researcher's descriptions contained varying levels of awareness of relationship difficulty.  For example, Kam articulates quite clearly that he was having difficulty with peer expectations and put-downs because he was repeating the school term. However; he and Marlene had been involved in group counselling and a weekly self-esteem program throughout the year where they had many occasions to participate in self-awareness sessions. On the other hand, Liza, who had always been described by teachers and friends as well adjusted and happy, stated that"... (she) learned that (she) never used to have much self esteem..." Her description indicated that she became aware that she had a definable problem during and/or after the training. Recognizing this personally provided Liza with some natural impetus for self-initiated change.

Many students had a 'felt need' which was rooted in a latent dissatisfaction with some aspect of personal meaningfulness in their lives. Darryl described a common 'felt need' to extend his friendship to other students not involved in his immediate friendship circle or clique. His description however did not directly reflect his inner n, for friendship as much as it described the positive effects and benef, of enhancing one's friendship circle.                    Irrespective the awareness level of their dissatisfaction all students were able to begin the "consciousness to action" process of change.  It seemed that

whenever their personal 'felt need' and opportunity for action coincided, the students took advantage of the opportunity to put some of the ideas they had learned into practice. Particular spheres of their life-world in which they acted upon included themselves, their families, their close friends, and their classmates. Correspondingly, all of the students illustrated an inner sense of positive belief in the change which was confirmed by the positive feelings they demonstrated for the experience. Again, the extent of this belief was indicative of how successful they felt they had been in promoting positive change.

New Ideas and Experiences. Several students became intrinsically aware of the advantages and disadvantages of promoting change within a systemic organization such as the family or school. Kam and Jen expressed the idea that their isolated efforts to improve relationships with their older siblings were in vain because the other parties were not interested and held more authority in the relationship. The power differiential in these relationships seemed to be unbalanced in such a way that the less powerful party could not promote successful change alone.

Several students suggested that the program should be offered to other classes and other schools in an effort to increase friendship and decrease rivalry among schools. Approximately half the class became more aware and appreciative of the advantages of support systems and were demonstrating an effort to decrease their isolation particularly when they experienced a problem. As Joanne states," I learned not to deal with all my problems by myself".

Changes that were most positive and extensive occur ; within the class itself. All students who had participated in the 'common' training were similarly motivated and educated in the possibilities and dynamics of change as demonstrated by the training. After the training the class felt a heightened sense of community within itself. Here again the co-researchers' awareness of the school as a system was reflected in descriptions that recognized that PSP had set their class apart from the other classes (e.g., Amy: "When we see each other in the hall we say "hi" and everyone else (students from other classes) sort of look at us".) About half of the co-researchers spontaneously expressed a desire for other classes to have a similar program so that the positive sense of community that was experienced by Class 7 A could be extended throughout the school. This desire by the students to extend the program may be founded in the wish to appear less notireable within the school as well as for alturistic motives. As Tara- po; .t," It would be good to do this with classes all the time because then we wouldn't just have one peer support team. The whole junior high school would be a peer support team." This understanding and appreciation of the need for support within one's community was a common structure of experience for several students.

## 3. Personal Awareness

PSP training offered opportunities for the students to put aside their common day to day existence and to reflect upon themselves and their world(s). Community living and small group interaction at the retreat enhanced the social intimacy of personal discussion and many of the PSP activities encouraged students to reflect upon their origins, their families, their friends and themselves. Some students reported

they had learned more about the meaning of self. For example Rick stated," the most important thing is that 1 learned what I was really like inside." Joanne stated that she noticed that she feels better about herself as she learns to respect others more. Her comments reflected a positive sense of social reciprocity as well. Liza stated that through the training experience she was able to connect her feelings of being "different" and feeling inferior (e.g., "an aside") with having a low self-esteem.

All of the co-researchers reported a heightened awareness of personal values and beliefs regarding relationship building and friendship. Kari, who has an alchoholic father and lives with her mother was concerned with issues of trust; while Darryl, who is shy socially, concentrated on building confidence by conversing with peers. Upon self-reflection many students felt that they had gained from small group sharing (e.g., Amy: "I learned to talk to people and understand them, and to open up."). In this way the class began to model acceptance and closeness, not unlike a family. Generally every student's comments indicated awareness of the inter-connection between positive self-growth and social reciprocity.

Consciousness to action   Although often not formally expressed, student self-reflection was nevertheless evident in the 'raised consciousness' that provided the impetus for personal change and growth. Amy's description is typical: "At first I thought, Oh! it's just another class. And then after that, ... you could talk to your friends. After peer support, well you could talk to just about anybody in your class and they would listen or they'd talk back." Amy's description followed the normal pattern of focusing upon the resultant behavior and failing

to concentrate on the shifting in values and interactional comments that must have occurred to effect such a change.

For many students self-reflection occurred as a result of the new ideas and new experiences in which they were involved. New experiences and new ideas within a unique and supportive environment provided many students with the resources and encouragement necessary for long term self-reflection and growth. For example, the training activities reinforced the program's objective of self acceptance as well as respect for individual differences. Three months after the program's completion, Liza reflected that this realization was helping her deal with her feelings of inferiority as well as with her jealousy of others. <u>Individual Isolation</u> For some students self-reflection was tied up with the recognition and acceptance of certain fears. Fear of trusting, sharing feelings with others, approaching parents or siblings, and getting assistance for personal problems were often cited during the interviews. Experiencing a higher level of acceptance and trust during the PSP discussions, many of the students began to realize that there are common struggles in life. By cooperatively sharing personal experiences they could acknowledge and begin to deal with some of these issues in regard to their own lives. Personal isolation was replaced by a sense of community and enhanced social reciprocity. The stereotypic 'cool' adolescent who 'has it all together' had, in some degree, been redefined.

## 4. Group Dynamics

All the students experienced a felt sense of belonging to a group that was involved in something unique. Kari explains, "We got to be people, not like everybody else in this school." This felt sense of

authenticity was noted by all participants and can be best explained as a strong need for non-judgmental, common acceptance of self and others that is reminiscent of man's social ability. Although group belonging and group identification began in the classroom training sessions its' presence was intensified during the retreat. Darryl points to the lack of conflict at camp and several students noted the exceptional level of cooperation and trust that was readily detectable within the group. All students indicated that the experience had increased their level of security within the group as well as within themselves.

Connectedness or the feeling of being related to a larger part was another essential feature of the group-dynamics structure of experience. Almost every student indicated a widened sphere of friendship which resulted from conversation at a more intense level with other students. Jill explains, "The class is closer now ... It's like we're all, almost best friends now." Through enhanced personal communication the group was able to share common concerns and topics of discussion. As one of the female students pointed out after a session, "I really didn't know that boys have similar problems and feelings as girls do and that you can really talk to them." Verna notes in her description that attitudes toward the opposite sex have changed. She states, "Before in class the boys would be on one side and the girls on the other. But now we just all talk. It's better that way... The girls just don't talk about the boys."

The security of belonging to a group provided the necessary impetus for each student to risk improving his/her condition. Open communication intensified social relationships. Joanne, Darryl, and Jill were students who risked becoming closer with others. Jill and Kari, and Tom

were examples of students who worked on increasing their trust of others. Jill in particular notes, "I found that the kids were nicer than I thought they would be and that they were easier to get along with." This security was necessary before Jill could entertain any risk during the training and was underlined by her initial shyness and her refusal to participate in the initial trust activities."

## 5. Friendship

Support and understanding ultimately provide the warmest and most active forms of acceptance and encouragement for individuals. It is important to note that this structure of the PSP experience resulted in the most dramatic and meaningful effects as decribed by the students. Every participant felt that PSP had enhanced their understanding of the value of reciprocal support and friendship. They felt that they were able to intensify the meaningfulness of their own personal communication sphere; first through empathy and respect for themselves and others; and on a deeper level, through the clarification and understanding of their own and others' ideas, beliefs, and attitudes. Kari talked of being able to "get more into the conversation with her friends." In Jill's perception, "It's like we're all almost best friends now". Tara described how the experience intensified her long standing relationships, yet widened her circle of friends. And as Kam stated, "Me and my friend, we listen more and we talk".

The enhanced communication and interactional experiences among the students indirectly became the catalyst for further awareness and respect of others. Darryl's descriptions about how good it felt to reach out to others, even in terms of learning seemingly inconsequential details, reflected how the majority of the class felt. Sharing common

everyday experiences such as eating, doing chores, and sleeping in a different environment (camp) had impacted upon most everyone who later commented on the cooperative and friendly atmosphere that had prevailed especially during and after the camp experience. As Jen described, "I talked to people that I hardly even know and it was weird because they understood you perfectly."

The enhanced feelings of acceptance and reciprocal understanding awakened feelings of rejuvenation and motivation for the majority of the students. Whether their action was directed toward further communication, deeper understanding or conflict resolution, these students were united in describing personal actions or changes in their life-world experiences with others that had resulted because of the training process. Verna reflected how the training had been personally meaningful and motivating for her as she strove to reduce the conflicts in her life with her friends at school, her friends away from school, and her sibling. She described that she has reduced the conflicts with her brother and she has also enjoyed initiating activities such as swimming with him.

## 6. Change/Problem Solving

Respect for Uniqueness. For the majority of the students the student support training was meaningful because it provided for new ways of understanding and being within the family. Almost everyone noticed that they had made changes in their own attitudes and behaviors through the training experience and that these changes had further impact in enhancing understanding and respect for their parents and/or siblings. It would seem that there was a natural transfer of experience from the class to the family and this was substantiated by a number of students

who described how the program had impacted them in respect to their family. An enhanced respect for individual differences among family members translated into a common observation by the students that sibling conflict had diminished in the three months following the training program. Marlene, who herself has been involved in personal counselling for social inadequacy, made the transfer from helpee to helper when she spontaneously trained her shy sister in communication skills in order to assist her in finding friends. She later proudly reported that her sister had brought home a playmate and connected this with her ability to assist her sister.

Support for Change. Many students saw a need to become a change-agent within the family stystem in order to improve their own relationships with family members. The training process had begun a self-awsareness process which naturally extended to an examination of their life-world with respect to their family. As a result many students took a more active, rather than passive role within the family. Many students acquired tools for communication from the course and were eager to utilize them on their own accord within their familiy. For instance, Amy learned that her mother's annoying behavior was related to her own inability to listen. Jill was representative of a majority of students who stated that they were not as easily angered or frustrated by their siblings after the training. New negotiation skills, personal happiness, confidence and/or enhanced respect for themselves and others contributed in greater or lesser degrees to an 'enabling' or 'empowering' feeling. This intrinsic motivation within students had precipitated new, less confrontational ways of handling sibling disagreement.

System effect. Several students' descriptions indicated an awareness of the effects of the systemic processes which occur in familial relationships. Two students described the frustration that came with the realization that change was dependent upon a systemic process within the family and that support from individual members is important to effect systemic change. Kam found that he had more control and direction over the quality of his relationship with his younger sister than with his older brother, and Jen talked about the frustration of not being able to sustain long term change in her relationships with her siblings. She acknowledged that she had more luck with her parents who were more open and supportive of her efforts.

## Conclusion

The interviews with the students involved in the PSP were conducted approximately three months after the completion of the training. If the training had indeed provided personally meaningful experiences its' scope and intensity should still be accurately recalled with the natural passage of time, further experience, and reflection. This time lapse between the end of training and the data collection was intended to diminish the euphoric afterglow that comes after a training experience where positiveness is naturally intensified because of the common, contrived training atmosphere with a closed group.

The entire student group acknowledged in its descriptions that the PSP had been personally meaningful and had been responsible for some proactive change in their lives. Whether it involved a change of attitude, an enhanced understanding, or a resolution of conflict, the program was considered a meaningful positive experience by all the

students. All of the students who had participated in the program had personally recognized changes in themselves and in the class which they directly attributed to the program. Four students described encountering roadblocks which diminished the effects of the changes they had hoped to make. Although formally unrecognized approximately one half of the students described experiences which reflected an awareness that they exist as a part of something larger than just themselves (Tillich, 1967). Almost all the students indicated in their descriptions that there is a need for a continuation of this program in their class or with other classes. Two students extrapolated further on the cooperative benefits which might accrue from getting other schools involved in the program.

The experiences of the thirteen co-researchers in this study were varied and complex. There were several common themes of the PSP experience which naturally unfolded through the phenomenological analysis. This study attempts to describe these themes in such a way as to promote the understanding of this complex, dynamic phenomena while preserving a holistic sense of perspective. Each child described his/her experiences in a personally meaningful way. As with all human experience, historic, cultural, systemic, and personal factors simultaneously contributed to the richness of the experience which came to light through the data. The range and intensity of subjective experience could not have been represented by statistical data. Therefore personal narrative was particularly useful and meaningful for the researcher as well as for the co-researchers.

Through the PSP experience the natural attitude of the student was transcended by new thoughts, ideas, and experiences. The training acted

as a catalyst in assisting the students with changing their way of being-in-the-world. Self-growth through personal learning and social interaction helped clarify attitudes, beliefs and values in regard to communication and relationships. Group belonging and group acceptance nutured self-appraisal and self-acceptance. The children enjoyed participating in the program and there were requests for continued training.

The group experience continued to be valued by the students three months after the training had ended. The common shared-class experience nurtured understanding, support, and confidence within the students and enabled many to effect change and promote growth in their social relationships. However in less supportive environments, where a willingness to make changes in one's living style was neither supported nor accepted, several students experienced frustration and a sense of defeat in their efforts. Whether these children will continue to press for positive change or whether they will be overwhelmed by the systemic effects of their envirnoment is open to further study. Implicit in their experiences is a challenge to create a more supportive ecological system in order that personal acceptance and self-growth may be enhanced and provided for through the daily living process.

## CHAPTER 5: GENERAL DISCUSSION

### Relationship of the Present Study to the Field of Adolescent Affective Development

The nature of the process as described by the participants in this research suggested that students can experience a change in world-view through group interaction and mutual support. Many of the individual students experienced personal and dynamic changes within their friendships as well as within their family systems. Although there was a wide variety of needs and levels of needs expressed by the individual participants, each individual took from the experience that which could fulfill his or her greatest area(s) of deficiency.

The evaluation of this experience is inexplicable in terms of a linear model of change. Rather this research represents a contextual and holistic model of change where the student, by sharing common experiences, is actively involved in his/her learning. In this context the personal meaningfulness of an experience is fundamental as it naturally provides the motivation for and initiates the dynamic changes that occur. Personal comfort and a sense of gestalt completion are gained as a result of this personal learning experience. Although individual responsibility for change is acknowledged there is a sense of relief and bonding that comes from the mutual sharing and caring of the group.

In examining the psychodynamics involved in existential psychotherapy as described by Yalom (1980, p.8) three of the four concerns: isolation, meaninglessness, and freedom are themes which emerged continuously from within the data of the co-researchers involved

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in this study. Yalom suggests that existential personal conflict, which all people experience in varying degrees, is rooted in the ways that we are preoccupied with issues arising from these common concerns. For example our concern with isolation centers on our knowledge that although we are absolute in our isolation from each other we strive to bond and become a part of the larger whole. Meaninglessness, according to Yalom relates to "... what meaning life has? Why we live? How shall we live?" (1980, p.9). Freedom, Yalom's third construct, concentrates on the responsibility we have in creating our life-world through our unique personal perceptions, choices, and actions. It seemed that the PSP training naturally provided a supportive environment for the students to reflect and touch upon these existential issues as they were elicited from the student descriptions over and over again.

The PSP training course satisfied a present need for students. The group process analysis identified self- awareness, felt need, personal empowerment or responsibility for change, skills and interactional growth, group belongingness, and group support as the essential components of the experience which enabled change to occur. It also provided for the clarification of personal, familial, and cultural based ideas, attitudes, beliefs and values. Dynamic group interaction appeared to normalize feelings of inadequacy and frustration, as well as encourage reciprocal feelings of acceptance and sharing. The group itself, acted as a dynamic catalyst for the possibility and/or implementation of self-change.

In discussing the relationship of the present project to the field of affective development it is necessary to consider the following issues:

## Voluntary or Non-Voluntary Participation

The implementation of this program was unlike many other self-help and/or support groups in that voluntary participation in the project was sought by the facilitator from the group as a whole. Individual members of the class were given the opportunity to discuss pros and cons of the program, raise questions and issues, and indicate their willingness or unwillingness to participate. Substitute class arrangements were considered in the event that some students chose not to participate in the project or parental consent for the program could not be obtained. Fortunately in this project all the students of the grade 7 A class chose to participate. Group pressure may have been a contributing factor in the final decision of a few of the students who felt some uncertainty about participating. Irrespective of this, it is important to underline that the "special" nature of this project allowed the students to feel that they had a choice in participating or not participating in the program.

This freedom to choose or maintain some control over one's destiny is an important need of adolescents (Mitchell, 1979) as well as all individuals (Yalom, 1980). The personal investment and ownership of the project by the students was thereby enhanced and similarly affected their level of participation positively.

## Facilitation and Instruction

Throughout the PSP project's implementation it was clear that group process facilitation of experiential learning through discussion and activities provided an important element of the program. This type of facilitated instruction was a novel experience for the students who observed that by utilizing this approach everyone participated and

contributed their personal experience to the program which in turn enhanced the meaningfulness for all students. Students were encouraged to discuss topical issues and practice skills among themselves. For example, the evening's entertainment, an impromptu amateur concert, resulted in high risk experiential learning by group members.

The holistic, integrated nature of group process training is particularly suited to the adolescent stage of human development. It's optimism and nondiscriminatory acceptance of personal differentiation normalizes human behavior and thus provides relief to the overanxious early adolescent who is just beginning to develop a sense of personal identity. Student elicited content allows adolescents the freedom to choose subject matter as well as the capacity to make choices and experience creativity and identity development (Mitchell, 1979). According to a humanistic view of the adolescent need structure as outlined by Cantril (1964), adolescents require order, certainty and security in their lives; yet crave the freedom and experiences which allow them to exercise the choices they are capable of making (Cantril, 1964 as cited in Mitchell, 1979). The focus of current group process work is geared toward this positive life-enhancing direction rather than toward a problematic or illness approach.

## Therapeutic Change

Throughout the evaluation interviews many illustrations of therapeutic growth and/or change were provided. Through mutual support and group interaction many of the participants experienced a change in world-view in their individual being and/or their social interactions.

The present study found that the changes which were initiated by the student participants were subject to the environmental context of

each individual student.  Changes which occured were therefore not reflective of a linear or cause/effect model. They were more the result of a dynamic and holistic process which involved the student, his beliefs, attitudes and values, and  his/her peers and family relationships.

A major insight which surfaced in this present study was that the students began to see themselves as a responsible agents in the therapeutic change process. This self-empowerment resulted from a combination of factors: group support, self-awareness and felt need, and assertive communication skill training. Because the subject content for many of the training exercises originated from the students they were able to practice and talk about issues that affected them directly. The comfort and security of the group encouraged students to practice new ways of being.  Individual changes that the students reported were the result of ongoing personal self-assessment that seemed to be a covert but ever-present part of the PSP training. This personal learning and integration process was the most significant therapeutic benefit of the PSP project and was reflected in the descriptive data of the co-researchers.

The power of problem solving skills and negotiation in resolving differences was actively learned by both authentic re-enactment and role playing activities.  In this project it appeared that the students were able to integrate their learning on an experiential level quickly and effectively.  They actively sought and achieved change, particularly with their peers who were involved with them in the program and perhaps more predisposed to the context for change. It seemed that a higher level of personal consciousness was achieved in the program and the

students utilized this to achieve a correspondingly greater level of personal comfort and security for themselves.

Although homeostatic systemic dynamics in some families did not encourage change in every instance, many of the students reported success in relieving stress and dysfunctional behavior among themselves and other family members. The students reported more instances of success in improving their relationships with their parents and/or younger siblings than with older siblings.

Change is difficult alone and particularly without a supportive environment. Although this study was conducted several months after the completion of the training it is unknown whether the initiated changes which the students enacted in their lives evolved into new long term behavior and interactional patterns or whether outside influences eventually re-established the old 'normative' behavior. The common request by many of the students for further training and the training of other students could possibly be interpreted as a felt need on behalf of the students for continued support and a more encouraging environment.

Table 5 provides an outline of some of the key concepts this research reflected in the therapeutic process that provided for change in the lives of the students in the PSP training. Because this study presented a humanistic and integrated view of affective development in students it presupposes a contextual and multidimensional approach to wo/man. It assumes that wo/man is aware, wo/man has choice, and that wo/man is intentional (Yalom, 1980). Consequently this outline cannot be viewed in a linear, mechanistic manner but rather as an outline of elements which may interact in many ways to provide for growth and change.

Table 5

Essential Structures of Learning in Peer Support Training

---

self awareness

    *

felt need

    *

support and security of group

    *

raised consciousness

    *

skills and leadership

    *

personal empowerment

    *

interactional exploration of alternatives

    *

choice to act in context

    *

awareness of effec: in context

    *

new support and/or expansion of new consciousness

<u>Implications of the Study</u>

<u>For Affective Education and Counselling</u>

This particular project demonstrated that PSP training meets an existing need for all participant students. The program was originally designed for small group utilization where students are pre-selected on the basis of helping skills and sociability. In this type of program utilization, a small number of students, perhaps ten to twenty students of an entire school population, would actually benefit from the training process. The remainder of the school population would receive indirect benefit as a result of contact with individual peer helper(s).

The present study indicated that students do not need to be pre-selected to participate and that each participant, regardless of helping skills and socialization level can benefit directly from the program training. In fact the therapeutic benefits seemed noticeably pronounced for students who were experiencing social and/or personal difficulty in their lives before the training period. It was also these students who expressed their appreciation for the program and a desire for the continuance of PSP training. It appeared that the program provided a structured, comfortable setting in which these students could identify personal and social learning deficiencies. Clarification of ideas and a sense of relief in knowing that experiencing difficulty and uncertainty is normal also benefitted these students.

<u>Preventative Model of Affective Education</u>

Because PSP training programs have been viewed as preventative in nature there is an increasing interest in this model as a health promotion tool for adolescents. Alcohol and Drug Abuse Agencies as well

as volunteer community groups are developing similar drug and alcohol prevention programs which are geared toward empowering adolescents to increase control over and improve their physical and mental health levels (A.A.D.A.C., 1989; Quest Program for Adolescents, 1988).

In examining the illness/wellness continuum as outlined in the Wellness Workbook, (R. Ryan and J. Travis, 1981) the treatment model for illness focuses on signs, symptoms and disabilities, whereas the wellness model concentrates on awareness, education, and growth as a preventative and health enhancing concept of wellness. New definitions of health as promoted by the World Health Organization also concentrate on the process of enabling people to increase control over and to improve their health. By their definition as a preventative program, peer support programs could be considered health promoting and as such could be considered as part of the health and counselling curriculum in schools.

Prescribed Curriculum or Volunteer Participation

Voluntary or involuntary consent for program participation raises serveral issues when one begins to consider the implementation of this type of affective education program in the field of adolescent education. For example, if one were to prescribe a similar program as part of the Junior High School health curriculum  significant aspects of the program could be lost. The idea of voluntary participation and the 'special' nature of the program were factors in developing personal enthusiasm and investment in the program. This element of choice and personal ownership over one's destiny requires consideration in future school implementation of similar programs. In this project PSP training

was offered through counselling services as a pilot project in affective education.

## Training of Group Process Facilitators

Group process learning and facilitation has not been a teacher training priority in the past. Counsellors may or may not be trained in this approach dependent upon the compulsory or elective nature of the courses offered. For example at this time it is possible that masters level students in counselling and/or school psychology could complete their program requirements with only passing reference to group process counselling (University of Alberta Program of Graduate Studies for Educational Psychology, 1988) When one studies the implementation procedure of affective education programs such as PSP it is apparent that some of the difficulties in program implementation could be a result of inexperienced teachers who were not properly trained in this specialized approach to personal affective learning.

### Research

This research has attempted to answer some of the questions regarding the effectiveness of PSP. However there are large voids in the research which raise new questions and concerns. There are as yet very few longitudinal studies into peer helper trainer programs and the benefits that may accrue to both the trainee and the people around him/her. Another possible area for exploration might involve the examination of peer support training upon the school and/or the workplace. Further study in these areas would assist in the understanding of the dynamics of personal learning, social understanding, and in particular peer support.

It is important that new research centers upon the personal experiences of the peer support trainees or students. Their rich experiential data not only provides the basis for evaluation but determines new directions and approaches on the basis of new information and/or unfulfilled needs. This study illuminated how the student is co-constituted with his/her world. Although most of the course content was easily understood and appealing to the students it was difficult to evoke change in the family system and with the general school population who had not participated in the affective training program. As we gain understanding and competence in the dynamics of social interaction and change we can engage in a more wholistic approach to affective education which could involve family support training as well as school wide peer support programs.

Further research in the area of personal learning and the integrated approach to life skill development would also aid in our understanding of the integral processes at work during social skills training. Personal values and issues continually define our experiences which are reflected in our unique world-view. This provides the basis for future perceptions, designs and action. The dynamics of interaction of our being-with-our-world is another interesting area for study. The currect study reflected the experiences of the early adolescent in a peer support training program. It would be interesting to investigate whether the present findings can be extended to other developmental ages and populations. Does family status and description play a role in the outcome of the training program? Our understanding of the transition process from student trainee to life-world has only begun to be understood.

## Methodological Concerns

In undertaking summative or evaluative research it is necessary to address the philosophical basis for the particular research methodology being utilized. The current study is only a beginning investigation of the qualitative nature of the processes involved in affective educational programs. There are limitations to this method as it involves a multi-dimensional contextual approach to research which at times becomes difficult to transcribe into a description which adequately reflects all the various aspects of the particular experience. Checklists and behavioral observations are an alternative methodology. However the rich data source provided by the student trainees could not be replaced. The data analysis sprung directly from the units of experience which the students had described in their interviews. Individual meaning units were lifted out of the descriptions and sorted into themes which were then validated by the co-researchers. More general themes and structures of experience were then organized from across the various individual protocols. Each stage of the reserach demanded an objective, suppositionless attitude from the reseracher. The results contributed to part of the ongoing interest in peer support training and affective education for adolescents.

## Conclusion

This phenomenological study described the experience of thirteen early adolescent students who participated in a peer support training program conducted in a grade seven class. Its intention was to understand the experience from the students' perspective, describe what happened as a result of the training, and identify some of the processes involved in the experiential learning of the students.

The descriptions given by the co-researchers indicated that past and present experience make up unique world-views of each student. These unique perceptions in turn establish the need for change which is affected by environmental support and skill level. Personal growth and interactional growth in peer and familial relationships were described. Interestingly, the inter-relationship between the two was implicit from the student descriptions. Self-assessment and felt need provided the basis for action which then determined a new context for a new experience.

Peer support or affective development programs must be sensitive to the needs of the student as well as the environmental context in which that student lives. Creating a supportive environment where adolescents can learn to enhance their emotional and social well being involves an interactional view of the student-in-his-world. New information expands one's choices and the student learns to negotiate with himself and his world as he develops new levels of consciousness and action. Peer support training as an affective educational tool has merit on the basis of this study. However fundamental issues await further investigation and may lead to a more comprehensive and improved psychoeducational program for adolescents-in-their-world.

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APPENDIX A

The peer support training program utilized in this project was a combination of numerous resources and materials which originated from various workshops, books, periodicals, and informal sharing. Two resources that provided the framework for the training experience came from: The Peer Support Starter Kit (Carr & Saunders, 1979), and Peer Support - Designing Interpersonal Skills - A Training Plan (Davis et al, 1987). Other resources included: QUEST Affective Development for Adolescents (Lions Club, 1988) and Youth Helping Youth: A Handbook for Training Peer Facilitators (Myrick & Erney, 1979).

General Objectives for the Training Program included the following:

I.     Non-verbal and verbal attending

II.    Awareness of Self and Others

III.   Feelings/Confidentiality

IV.    Empathic listening

V.     Expressing and Receiving Feedback

VI.    Communication Roadblocks and Peer Pressure

VII.   Intensifying Communication: I and You messages

VIII.  Questioning Skills- open and closed questions

IX.    Problem Solving

X.     Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs

X.     Ethics and Referral to Outside Resources

XI.    Self Relaxation Training for Youth

See Chapter 3 for more information on program implementation.

APPENDIX B:


VERBATIM TRANSCRIPT

| Verbatim Transcript | Formulated Meanings | Number |
|---|---|---|

**DARRYL:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Well, I thought it was fun and I learned a lot...like when I was talking to people that I never talked to before.  I could talk to them and share my feelings with them. | I can learn new things from talking to  new people. <br> I can share my feelings when I talk to others. | 1 <br><br> 2 |
| And we had fun camping.  We got to do chores with other people. | I had fun socializing when I work | 3 |
| And I didn't get into fights with anybody there or anything. | I didn't have any personal difficulties at camp | 4 |
| I slept with everyone in the same room.And we all took turns listening to the same music. And we didn't get into fights or anything like that. | I like the sense of community at camp and the cooperation <br><br> I liked the lack of conflict. | 5 <br><br> 6 |
| And we all cooperated.I learned one thing there too, cooperation. | I learned cooperation by the experiencing cooperation first hand. | 7 |
| The biggest thing was talking to people I rarely talk to. | The most rewarding thing for me was talking to people I hardly know. | 8 |
| I remember FELOR when I'm talking to my brother at home. I watch to see if he's looking at me when I talk to him. If I don't pay attention to him I know he's not going to listen to me. | I learned to use better listening skills at home with my borther <br><br> Communication is a two-way street. | 9 <br><br> 10 |
| When we had the scavenger hunt I learned where people came from, that I wasn"t the only one that came from Ontario.I learned how old people were,and lots of other things too... like what their favourite color is,and | I learned that others have similar experiences like yourself and other people like different things and live in different ways from you. | 11 |

their favorite T.V. shows,and
that some people don't even have
T.V.s like Tom.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| It helps me talk to the people that I didn't talk to before. Like Ann,I never talked to her and now in French I was just talking to her.I can share my feelings better with other people. | I benefitted from the experience because I learned how to strike a conversation with new friends | 12 |
| | I learned how to share my feelings. | 13 |
| In my opinion the class has changed. I got to know people better. | The perience affected the class atmosphere. | 14 |
| | I'm closer to my class-mates. | 15 |
| It would help new students like Tim to fit in right away. He got to know people right away so he didn't have to sleep by himself. | Student support would help new students feel close to others quicker. | 16 |

---

Rick:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| It was pretty good. I think you should continue it.It taught me how to deal with my ideas, thoughts, and problems, and to help other people. It helped me bring the answers to my problems. | The experience was generally positive. | 17 |
| | It helped me to deal with my own personal issues and solve my personal problems. | 18 |
| When I have problems now I use all the stuff that I learned like FELOR. | I use the skills I learned like listening to solve my own problems. | 19 |
| It helped to show me the difference between what a good friend is like and one who is not. | I learned about some of the qualities of friendship. | 20 |
| It's helped me to be nicer to my sister at home. I don't get so angry with her anymore. | I can control my temper better around my sister. | 21 |
| The most important thing is that I learned what I was really like inside. | The most important thing for me was self-awareness. Getting in touch with myself and my feelings. | 22 |
| I also learned that people have feelings too. | I became more aware of other people's feelings. | 23 |

| | |
|---|---|
| I liked the camp because everybody was together and could express their feelings. | I experienced comfort from others and enjoyed everyone expressing their feelings   24 |

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**Joanne:**

| | |
|---|---|
| After we had the classes I felt better about myself because I learned respect for people I wasn't really friends with.  Some people like Maria, no one really gives them a chance because they're quiet and everything...well I learned to respect her and everything. | My self-esteem improved   25 because I learned to think better of others.<br><br>You should respect people even though they're   26 different. Sometimes people don't give others a chance. |
| I learned that when you are upset you shouldn't really keep it to yourself...that you should share your feelings with your friends or something. | Talking about your problems and your feelings 27 with others is a way of dealing with them. |
| I learned not to deal with all my problems by myself...to go get counselling with a friend or something like that. | I learned that I can get help for my problems   28 from a friend or others. |
| People in our class have more respect for their friends now,than people in other classes. We don't treat them as bad as we did and we don't put them down as much. | Our class learned to have more respect for others.   29 We show more respect than the other classes by not others as harshly as they do. |
| Before we started this me and Kim used to get in fights quite often but now we don't as much. We're getting along now really good. | My friend and I used to fight a lot but we fight   30 less often now. |
| If all grade sevens got this class then it would be a better junior high. | This experience could improve the atmosphere   31 of our school. |

---

**Kari:**

| | |
|---|---|
| At the beginning we thought "WoW",we get to get out of class,but as we went along we found it was fun because | At first we thought this was going to be a holiday   32 from schoolwork but it was fun because we got to do |

we got to do everything.

We got to go to camp and we
got to have fun and we got to
be "people",not like everybody
else in this school... You know
... be somebody.
We got to know each other and
we even got to involve other
people who are not so popular.

At camp we learned that we could
trust everybody. There was no
"don't come near us". We
involved everybody.

Some of the guys,I don't think
it helped but it sure helped
us girls. When we get into fights
and stuff, we work things out.
We work things out properly,
not just think that it should
fall into place. We worked
things out, not just leave it.

I learned how to communicate
better with everybody. When
I talk to Joan I get more into
the conversation now when I phone
her.

At Teri's party Joan and I
got into a fight but we can
talk and be honest with each
other. We made up.

I learned that you can trust
groups because at camp I
didn't think the group could
pull me through (in a trust
exercise) but they did.
I knew I could trust them
after that.

We haven't been fighting with
my mom at home much. I just
talk to her and everything and
she says "Kari, I just want to
have a good relationship with
you." (laughter)
I talk with her more and it
helped me realize that she's
not as old and she knows what
I'm talking about.

different things.

We got to do different
things and stand out as        33
individuals.

I got to know others and
learned how to communicate  34
with people I didn't know.

Everyone participated at     35
camp.  There were no cliques
nor snobbery.

I don't know if it was a
benefit to everyone but
it helped us girls.            36
We don't leave our problems,
thinking things will work
out on their own. We try to
solve them.

The communication skills     37
helped me understand others
better.  I feel closer to
my friend.

My friend and I still fight
but we can talk about our     38
disagreements and still be
friends.

Through the activities I
learned to trust the          39
group more

Talking helps me to
avoid confrontations          40
with my mom.

Talking with my mom helps  41
me understand her frame of
reference and she understands
me more.

Camp was alot of fun because
we got to be together and
fool around and sleep and eat
in that room.  We learned
how everyone acts when they're
not at home and
what they look like when they
wake up in the morning.
I would have like a longer camp.

I enjoyed the companionship
from living together at      42
camp. I learned more about
my classmates personally
and wanted to spend more
time in this setting.

The program should be with
grade eight next year so we
could get it again.(laughter)
No I think it should be with
the grade sevens next year
so we could build up the trust
and the spirit in the school.
Also there wouldn't be as
many problems if every class
has it.

I could benefit from more
of this program but I see    43
where another class could
benefit.

The program would enhance   44
school spirit and trust
if more classes participated.

Before people were embarrassed
and didn't think their school
was good enough but now they
can trust each other and have
alot of fun.

The program helped build     45
the esteem of the class and
encouraged more trust and
class participation.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------

Tom:

Some of the things we learned
in class made it easier to
talk to the other kids in class.

The student support classes
facilitated communication
within the class.            46

Once the class ended the
atmosphere wasn't the same.
The atmosphere in our classes
was special because people
were more friendly. It was
more relaxed so people
weren't nervous to talk.

The atmosphere of the
classes were different        47
from other classes.

The classes promoted a
friendly and relaxed          48
atmosphere.

I think it helped some of the
other people in the class
too.It helped them to
communicate better.

I noticed that other
classmates were able to       49
communicate better.

I learned that when kids have
problems you just have to
let them talk.  You can't
force them. When I'm talking
to kids that have problems
it's easier to not force

I learned that you can't
force your ideas on others
when they talk to you        50
about a problem and you
try to help them.

them when you're helping them.

Sometimes its a lot easier to
communicate when you know how.
When you taught us FELOR it
helps us to communicate...
you can just think back and do
all the things we learned.
That helped me and it helped
alot of other kids.

Communication skills
training can be helpful        51
in promoting better
commun'·ation.  It helped
me an(' ·thers.

Sometimes kids if they have
a problem will try to now
solve it without help.

After the training I
noticed that classmates        52
will try to solve a
problem themselves now.

It helped kids who didn't
know each other. They wouldn't
talk to each other. Now they
talk to each other and don't
feel like outsiders.

The program helped to          53
improve communication
within the class because we
got to know each other more.

It helped me at home with my
brother.  I used to get mad
at him a lot. But I now lower
my voice and try not to push
or shove.

The experience helped me
in my relationship with my 54
 brother.  I try to control
my anger with him

If more classes got this
program it would help to
spread it and it would
make it easier for everyone.

This program could also        55
help others to live more
comfortably.

Camp was relaxed. People weren't
tense or mad.

The atmosphere at camp was 56
relaxed and I noticed others
were not tense or angry.

I would go through the same
program again next year.

I could benefit from           57
taking the program over.

---

Jill:

I think the program was good
and you should continue it.

It was a worthwhile         58
experience for me

It taught us to be ourselves
and that we can be honest
without being embarrassed
about it.

I learned to appreciate
and respect myself           59

I found that the kids were
nicer than I thought they

I learned/tc trust other
classmates·more and they  60

would be and that they were
easier to get along with.
the kids talked to me more
and we got along more and
stuff.

talked and cooperated
more.

The class is closer now.
Nobody  kinda of makes fun of
each other now.  It's like
we're all almost best friends
now.

The class feels warmer      61
because there are less
putdowns and we all feel
like friends.

At camp I learned about honesty
and we all became closer there.

I learned that honesty      62
and friendship are
important.

At home I try to work on eye
contact with my brothers when
I'm mad at them. I actually
try to be more nice with them.
I try not to yell at them or
threaten them with telling
Dad on them. I don't blow a
spas with them...I'm more in
control over my temper now.
I talk to them more.

I've learned different       63
strategies for dealing
with my brothers when
I'm angry with them.
I talk more with them
instead of getting upset.

With my friends, they were
pretty close to me already.
With some of them it helped
like when they talk to me I
can listen better and I think
they notice that because they
keep on talking to me.

I realize I have close
friends but I learned
to listen better and        64
that has helped our
communication.

My friends trust me more with
their problems and they can
come to me whenever they want.
They know I won't tell anyone
else.

My friends trust in me      65
has increased because
they trust my
confidentiality.

---------------------------------------------------------------------

Tara:

It was a good place to get to
know each other better. After
the program was done we
seemed to be more friendly
and we knew about each other
more. We seemed to know about
each other more because we
everything together. We
were together all the time.

We became closer because
we knew more about each  66
other and we participated
in various activities
together.  We talked and
lived together,doing
things in groups.

We did all the talking
together and we did everything
in groups.

Before I think I looked at
people one way but after the
camp I think I looked at them
through a different
perspective.  Before  I would
just say Hi to people but now
everybody's talking a lot more
and we're more comfortable.

The experience changed    67
my perception about people.

Everyone seems friendlier
and more comfortable       68

In class everybody's treating
each other alot better and
there are not so many fights.
At the beginning of the year
you sort of just hung around
with your best friend but now
everyone is like one big group.

We respect each other     69
more.  There are less
fights.

We don't rely on our       70
close friends so much
for friendship. The class
interacts more.

With my own friends it brought
us closer together but we also
made alot more friends.
Everybody made more separate
friends.

Our relationships with
our friends became        71
closer and we increased
our circle of friends.

At home things changed
between me and my sister.  We
used to fight alot but now we
don't fight as much because
when she's mad I try to
understand why and when I'm
mad at her I try to explain
things to her. It works out.

I try to understand my
sister's feelings and     72
try to explain my
feelings more to her
so we fight less often
and our relationship
is better.

It would be good to do this
with classes all the time
because then we wouldn't
just have one student support
team.  The whole junior high
would be a student support
team.It would make a
difference in the school
because every body would be
more friendly. Every school
always thinks they're the best
but by every school doing this
all schools would be equal
and everybody would be more
friendly and equal.

We should expand on this
learning so that it        73
could affect the whole
school. In would increase
a friendlier attitude.
It could cut down school
rivalry and competition
if all schools had the
program.

Liza:

It helped me because some
of the stuff we learned was
how to communicate with your
friends. How to talk with
them better.

The program was helpful 74
to me because I learned
how to communicate better
with my friends.

Well, I learned that I never
used to have much self esteem
but since we started this
program my self esteem has
gone up. I never used to
think of myself as a normal
person. I used to think of
myself as aside. Now I think
I feel better about myself.

I realized that my self
esteem was lacking and
I'm working on it. I     75
used to feel inferior,
not normal.

We learned how to communicate
and we learned FELOR. Before
I used to be shy to talk with
my mom and dad but now I can
talk to them.

The communication skills 76
we learned is helping
to facilitate communication
with my mom and dad, as I
used to be shy to talk with
them.

With my friends, I used to be
jealous of my friend when she
was with others in the class,
but now I can understand
that she can't always be
with me.

I've developed a better  77
understanding of friendship
and know I can't monopolize
my friends

We've had examples in the
classroom where people
fight but this has helped
them.

I've noticed that there is    78
less figting in the class
among students.

It's helped with teasing
because alot of people used
to tease me cuss I'm dark and
now they sort of understand.
This program sort of has
(develops) feeling
toward other people so it
helps...

I'm getting teased less
about my color because I       79
feel they understand me
better and this program
develops a lot of respect
for other people's
feelings.

It's changed the class attitude
because alot of people used
to bug each other sarcastically
but now they don't. It's
just...quite nice.

I've noticed a nicer          80
atmosphere in the class
because there are less
sarcastic putdowns.

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes, I would like to do this program all over again in grade eight. | I would probably benefit from doing the program over    81 |

------------------------------------------------------------------

**Verna:**

| | |
|---|---|
| I think the project was worthwhile.  I got a lot out of it. My friend and I used to fight alot but ever since this program started we don't fight as much. My other friend and me haven't got into any major fights either. I find that I get along really well with other people too, even friends out of school. Me and my friend P.J., when we get in fights now it's alot easier to handle.  It's not like a week long fight . We can handle it right away. | I personally benefited from the program.    82

I seem to be having less fights with my friends, and less major foghts.    83

I am working on dealing with or solving my disagreements as soon as they come up so they don't last as long.    84 |
| The camp, I thought was very good.  The things we did there, like for trust and stuff made us feel comfortable around each other.  I can speak up for myself now.  I enjoyed it. | I enjoyed and benfitted from the camp experience.    85

I learned skills like trust which made mo comfortable and more assertive.    86 |
| At home I really think I get along better with my brother. I really think that I do. Like we used to fight over the stupidest little things. Now he does his own thing and I do mine, and we do lots of things together like I'll take him swimming now. Before I wouldn't let him come swimming with me. We get along better. | My relationship with my younger brother has improved.  I respect his independence but we do more things together and have less fights. My feelings toward him have changed.    87 |
| Before in class the boys would be on one side and the girls would be on the other. But now we just all talk. It's better that way. We all talk.  The girls just don't talk about the boys. | We are more comfortable as a class with talking to members of the opposite sex. Instead of talking about the boys we talk with them.    88 |

I think this program should
continue.  It made me more
comfortable with my friends
and now I stand up and
speak out for myself more.
When we were in a fight I
won't say anything;
I'd try to forget about it
but now I speak out for
myself.

The program was beneficial
for me.  I have learned     89
to be more assertive and
stand up for myself.

It's difficult to forget  90
about your problems. It's
better to talk for yourself.

---

Kam:

It was a good course cuss I
learned how to communicate
better and how to be a better
friend...help others with
problems.

The course was beneficial     91
because I learned to
communicate more effectively,
how to be a better friend
and how to help people
with their problems.

Me and my friend, we listen
more and we talk.  You don't
tell them how to solve
problems; you ask them what
they can do to solve their
own problems.

do.

My friend and I have         92
learned to listen and talk
more effectively.

I learned how to help others
solve their own problems.
You don't tell them what  93

When I have a problem and I
go to my friend who took this
course, he would ask me what
could I do and what have I
done to try and solve the
problem and then it would
get solved.

I experienced my friend
using the skills he          94
learned in this course
helping me with my
problem.  I recognized
these skills and they
helped me with my problem.

At home it doesn't help with
my brother, only my sister.
My brother sort of acts like
a bully so I just try to
ignore him or else I get beat
up.  I don't really talk to
him because he's not around
much and when he is we don't
talk.

I've tried using some of
the strategies at home.
I found it worked with
my younger sister, but       95
not with my older
brother who is a bully.
He and I have a poor
relationship.

In the class it made a
difference because before
the kids thought that just
because I failed that I

I felt that my classmates
became more understanding  96
about the fact that I was
repeating.

| | |
|---|---|
| should know everything, but as a matter of fact I don't. That's why I'm doing it all over.  They became more understanding.There  are still some kids that bug me. | They tease me less.                97 |
| I think it would be good to do again, definitely. | I could benefit from being involved with the program again.                       98 |

-------------------------------------------------------------------------

Marlene:

| | |
|---|---|
| I  learned how to use Felor and I learned how Kara acts when her mother is around. I learned how to cooperate with other people when you are doing things. | I learned how to use some communication        99 skills and I learned new things about my classmates. I learned about              100 cooperating with others. |
| I am more confident and I learned that you must not put down anybody. And I learned how to talk to people when they are feeling down.

they feel down. | I feel more confident         101 about myself. I learned to respect others more.                   102 I learned how to approach people when        103 |
| I had alot of fun at camp. | The retreat was fun even though we worked.           104 |
| It made a difference in our class because I noticed that whenever any of our class go to the 7-Eleven store after school or at night we always say hi to anyone from our class but when the other grade seven class see people from their class they never say hi unless they're close friends. | Our class has developed a closeness and          105 friendliness that can be differentiated from the other grade seven class that wasn't involved in the program |
| My sister has a few new friends now because I told her about Felor. One day she even brought this friend over and they seemed to have a very good time. | I thought my sister could 106 benefit from learning some of the communication skills I experienced so I taught her and I notice she has more friends. |
| It's helped when I talk to my mom when I have a problem. | Experiencing the program has helped facilitate      107 |

It's easier.

communication with my mother.

Next year we should have more
classes with the grade eights.

Our class could benefit 108
from more of this kind of
program.

------------------------------------------------------------

Amy:

I liked the program. I liked
it alot and if I was to have
any say I would say run the
program again so that other
people could have this
experience.

I think alot of people 109
could benefit from this
program.

I learned to talk to people
and understand them, and to
open up. I learned how to
listen better. My mom , she
bangs on the wall because my
bedroom is next to the kitchen.
I hated it and she doesn't
do it anymore cuss I learned
to listen better.

I learned about 110
communicating and
understanding others.

I learned how to talk 111
about my feelings.
The way I listen 112
determines how other
people may act towards me.

I liked it alot. People are
different. Everybody is neat.

At first I thought oh its
just another class.And then
after that like you could
talk to your friends. After
peer support, well you could
talk to just about anybody
in your class and they would
listen or they'd talk back.

I learned that people are
different. My respect 113
for people increased

I didn't think the program
would be as good as it 114
was. I liked how the
program increased the
friendliness and communication
level in the class.

When we see each other even
in the hall we say "HI" and
everyone else sort of looks at
us.

We,as a class are friendlier
in the hallways and other kids
aren't used to behaving that
way. 115

It changed the class because
people used to put each other
down. Now like even in track
when you're running and losing
they will yell and cheer you on.

There are less putdowns in
the class. 116

I notice more support now 117
from my classmates even if
I am loosing in track.

------------------------------------------------------------

Jen:

It was pretty good. It was
fun. I liked the camp best.
It was fun to have the whole
class together and see how
they acted without the other
class around.

The camp experience was    118
best because we could
develop our own identity,
and it increased the group
bond.

It was more open so you could
trust people more. There was
noone around who would go
telling people things.

The open atmosphere promoted
trust. We could let our
guard down.                119

I learned that after the
Felor everybody started using
it, you know.

I observed people
using the communication    120
skills that were taught.

I tried to talk with my sister
and it didn't really work cuss
she said 'What are you doing."

I tried using the skills    121
that I learned at home but
my sister noticed I was
doing something different.

It kind of made me more
understanding. Now I know
more how to talk to my mom
and dad, instead of just saying
...uh...uh. Because we know
how to talk to them and we
respect their ideas more.
We sort of know how to listen
to them and think about their
ideas. With brothers and
sisters, as far as I know it
doesn't work.

It enhanced my understanding
of people.                 122
I know how to share my
ideas more with my parents. 123
And because we talk more
I listen and think about
what they say more, and
respect them more.

I haven't been successful    124
in increasing communication
with my brothers and sisters.

I talked to my brother you
know and it worked for a while.
He started listening to me
and then he realized that I
was talking to me and then
he got mad at me again.

I was able to increase my    125
communication with my
brother only until he
realized he was talking to me.

I think you should run this
program again. Run it in both
classes this time because
this time everybody in the
other class got mad because
we got to go camp and they
didn't. They got mad because
you were always going into
our class and never into theirs.

This program would be a     126
benefit for both classes
and the other class wouldn't
feel so left out if you involve
them.

I noticed some disappointment
in the other class because   127
you spent more time with us.

And it helps if the other class
understands what you are trying
to do.

They thought it was free classes
but what they didn't realize
was that we had to work in
this class.  Like I was talking
to people that I would have
never talked to.  I talked
to people that I hardly even
know.  And it was weird because
they understood you perfectly.
It was nice you know.

Camp would have been better
if it was longer instead of
trying to jam everything in
one day, five sessions the
first day.

We  didn't think of the course
as an extra school course.
It was like a special privilege.

What was neat was that we spent
the whole time talking.  There
was no teaching like a regular
course.

I think they should be
told about the program so
they could understand.

Although it looked like a   128
free class we worked hard.

It's hard work talking to   129
people who are unfamiliar.

It felt strange because these
unfamiliar people really   130
understood what I was saying.
I liked being understood by
by others.

There was lots to learn at 131
camp and   felt overtaxed
by all t   sessions.

The course didn't feel like
regular school.  It was a   132
special experience that
made us feel privileged.

I enjoyed learning though
talking because I realize   133
the whole course was
talking and didn't involve
formal teaching.

APPENDIX C

MAY 15, 1988

THIS IS TO GIVE PERMISSION TO MARGARET SHARON TO AUDIOTAPE AN INTERVIEW
WITH ME. THIS TAPE IS FOR RESEARCH PURPOSES ONLY AND WILL BE DESTROYED
WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF THE DATE. ANY TRANSCRIPTS MADE FROM THIS TAPE WILL
BE ANONYMOUS.


SIGNED:_____

SCHOOL:_____

DATE:_____