FRIENDSHIP PROFILES IN SCHOOL CLASSES*
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Abstract
Relationships between peers are extremely important in school, and the lack of friendship relationships or long-term difficulties in those relationships, alongside many other, may be reflected in a pupil's success, mastering of new subject matter, and result in a negative emotional reaction. The quality and quantity of their friends affect the pupils’ self-image, their self-perception, social status and success. Peer relationships with classmates may be diagnosed using the dimension of acceptance and rejection and using the dimensions of popularity and friendship. The authors of this study studied the dimension of friendship in the category of "best friend", in order to establish the variables which affect the choice of best friend. They defined the friendship relationship as a specific, mutual and two-way relationship between pupils, which is a reflection of the relationship between individuals, expressed in closeness and security.

The aim of the empirical part of the study was to establish the profile of friendship relationships within a class, in the category of "best friend" formulated in the main research question as: "What is the profile of friendship relationships in the category of best friend?"

The reply to the research question was considered through the variables of assessment of the number of friends, the ease/difficulty of choice of best friend, age and differences in age, the duration of friendships, experience of breaking up with a best friend, and establishing the causes. The participants in the research were elementary school pupils. The empirical part of the study was based on a qualitative methodology, and the instrument was an interview structured as replies to the survey questions asked. The results of the research indicate the difficulties pupils have in determining the number of friends, which is mainly between 10 and 20, the ease of choice of a best friend, the formation of same-sex friends in ten-year-olds, the preference for friends of the same age, and the class as a significant factor, where the first long-term best friends are acquired.

Key words: peer relationships, friendship quality, school class

1. Introductory Thoughts

Friendships are one of the group of relationships which we value very highly in our lives (alongside marriage, love and family relationships), and are defined as close relationships. Friendship relationships in a school class are specific, mutual and two-way relationships between pupils, which are a reflection of the relationships between individuals, expressed in closeness and security. Although the number of friends may change significantly over a lifetime, the number of best friends is significantly lower and is the privilege of carefully chosen people. The period of elementary school education is the one in which the first long-lasting friendships are formed. The developmental course of a friendship from a pedagogical

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point of view may be divided into three categories: friendships in early childhood (pre-
school), friendships of middle childhood (elementary school), and friendships of adolescence
(high school). Parker & Asher (1993) categorized the developmental course of friendships in
three periods, according to age: early childhood (from 3 to 7 years), middle childhood (from
8 to 14 years) and adolescence (from 14 to 18 years) Friendships in elementary school are in
the category of friendships of middle childhood and have specific characteristics. For
example, pupils in the first grade of elementary school emphasize the importance of play as
an important characteristic of a friend, whilst pupils in the final years of elementary school
emphasize the importance of intimacy, loyalty, confidence and closeness as important
characteristics of a relationship with a friend. (Turnball, Blue-Banning & Pereira, 2000). In
the high school period the person is called a best friend in whom the child has the most
confidence, who is prepared for cooperation, providing protection and support, and
sympathy. (Berndt, 1996; according to Klarin, 2006). Some research into adults has shown
the same fact: that about 20% of lasting and life-long friendships began in elementary school.
(Huć & Smolčić, 2015)

The relationships between peers are extremely important in school, and the lack of friendly
relationships or long-term difficulties in those relationships, alongside many other
difficulties, may be reflected in the pupils' success, their mastering of new subject matter, and
may result in a negative emotional reaction in a pupil. The quality and quantity of friends
affect the pupils' self-image, their self-perception, social status and social success (Saenz,
2003). Research has shown that there are differences, which are relevant for social adaptation
within the class, between the social characteristics of pupils who have and those who do not
have friends in their class, (Trbojević & Petrović, 2014).

Bukowski & Hoza (1989; according to Klarin, 2006) stated that acceptance and friendship are
the basic dimensions of peer relationships. Acceptance amongst peers is defined as the
relationship status of a child within the peer group, which is determined by the degree to
which the child is liked or not liked by the members of the group (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989,
Ladd, 1999, according to Žic Ralić & Ljubas 2009). Peer relationships with classmates may
be diagnosed using the dimension of acceptance (the degree of liking and attractiveness) and
rejection (the degree of non-sympathy and not liking), and using the dimensions of popularity
and friendship. School educators are most often helped in this by the use of sociometric
techniques. They are also one of the most frequent ways of establishing the status of a pupil
within a class, where the position of an individual in the class is defined by their degree of
acceptance by the other pupils. There are different techniques for doing this, and one of the
most common is the technique of nomination. The sociometric criteria are divided by some
authors into general (Who do you like most? Who do you like least?) and situation specific
(Who would you like to sit with? Who do you most like working with?) (Putarek & Keresteš,
2012). When establishing friendship relationships within a class, the most complete insight
into friendship relationships is given by the sociometric technique which requires the pupils
to evaluate their relationship with each pupil in the class using a five point Likert scale. This
relationship is in a range from: I want him to be my best friend, through I want him as a
friend but not my best friend, to a neutral attitude, and the status of rejection in two
categories: I do not mind that he is in my class but I don't want to have contact with him, and
I don't want him to be in my class. This technique emphasizes the affective component of
social relationships within a class. Studying the status of a pupil in the categories of liking
and disliking, several pupil statuses are differentiated, depending on the authors. So, Coie's
Classification (according to Klarin, 2000.) differentiates five categories of pupils (popular,
rejected, neglected, average and controversial), whilst other authors (MacDonald, 1991,
Legault, 1993, Torrey & Wright, 1996) say there are four categories according to the degree
of rejection or liking by peers. So, a pupil who has a large number of negative nominations is a rejected pupil. A pupil who has a small number of positive nominations and few negative nominations is isolated. We say that pupils who have a large number of negative and positive nominations are controversial. A pupil with a large number of positive nominations is called the star pupil (Kolak, 2010).

Apart from the sociometric status of pupils within a class, it is interesting to discover which pupil characteristics affect their popularity and the decision to choose them as best friend. Research has shown that pupils choose pupils as best friends on the basis of the principle of similarity (Trbojević & Petrović, 2014). Therefore, it seems necessary and interesting to establish the profile of the desirable characteristics of pupils who become someone's best friend within a class, with respect for the facts that we do not all have the same criteria, that some make this decision easily, that some may change their mind and have the experience of disappointment and the break-up of their friendship, and that some in the class may not be able to find a best friend. There are not always enough opportunities, while the pupils are spending time together within one classroom and are in spatial closeness, for pupils to feel connected to one another in order to build a friendship. Elementary school pupils spend most of their free time with their peers. In a peer group they meet their need for intimacy, they build their self-image, they acquire social skills, and they learn to help, share and cooperate (Klarin, 2006). Hartup (1984, according to Klarin 2000), emphasizes the importance of peers in middle childhood, saying that this is a time of changes in terms of quality and quantity in pupil-pupil interaction, but also a time when peers in a pupil's life have a key place. Since pupils spend increasing amounts of time with their peers, it is very important for them to be accepted by the group (Asher & Parker, 1989). One of the important factors that affect the choice of friends within a class is sex. In terms of sex differences, the results of research mainly indicate the existence of differences, but these differences are not unambiguously confirmed. Boys prefer independence in friendship more than girls, and they are more prepared to end a friendship if they feel a loss of independence. Girls have more stable and firmer friendship relationships (they more often choose one as a best friend) (Cillessen & Rose, 2005) and have fewer friends than boys. They focus more on intimacy, emphasize feelings, exclusivity, shared activities and sincerity as important features of friendship, whilst boys are more focused on shared activities (Aukett, Ritchie & Mill, 1988; according to Berndt, 1982). Girl show a higher level of evaluation and support, helping, problem solving and intimacy in comparison to boys, which explains the differences in the organization of friendship relationships. In their friendships they are more focused on the actual relationship. In view of the fact that single-sex schools exist, which are intended for only boys (boys' schools) or only girls (girls’ schools) it would be interesting to examine the experience of friendship in these schools.

2. The methodology of the empirical part of the study

The aim of the empirical part of the study was to establish the profile of friendships within a class in the category “best friend”, formulated mainly in the research question which read: What is the profile of friendship relationships in the category of best friend? The reply to the research question was considered through the variables:

- assessment of the number of friends
- the ease/difficulty of choice of a best friend
- sex
- age and age differences
- the duration of friendship
- experience of break-up with the best friend and establishment of its cause.
The empirical part of the study was focused on a qualitative methodology and the instrument was a standardized interview with open-type questions, which related in structure to the research question set, with respect to the variables mentioned. The aim of the interviews was to gather data and obtain a sample of opinions from the participants in the research, on the basis of which we could find the profile of the best friend. We decided to use an interview because our aim, apart from collecting data, was to obtain opinions and discussion by the participants in the research, and their definition of situations related to the research question in their own personal way. When conducting the interviews, we were guided by the principles of creating confidence, mutual curiosity and naturalness. The standardised interview with open-type questions included the precise manner of asking the questions and their order was defined in advance. All participants were asked the questions in the same order and all participants had the same basic questions. In this way the possibility was increased of comparison of their replies, and the organization and analysis of data was facilitated. In order to reduce the weaknesses of this type of interview, that is, the standardised form of asking questions may narrow and restrict the naturalness and relevance of the questions and answers, the interview in some aspects had the character of a guided interview but the problems that arose during the interview were specified in the form of a set framework which was defined by the given and newly arisen situations. The subject of the interview was the participants' world and their relationships in the category of "best friend". The participants were also asked to interpret the significance of this category. An attempt was made to obtain open, nuanced descriptions of different aspects of friendship relationships, as well as descriptions of specific situations. We were open to new and unexpected replies, which also occurred during the interviews.

The interview consisted of the following types of questions: descriptive questions, questions about experiences, questions about behaviour, questions about emotional reactions and about their own past, and demographic questions. We were guided by ethical principles in our conduct of the interviews, where only those subjects were included in the research sample for whom the parents had given a written statement and consent to the conduct of the interview. The sample was formed on the principle of accessibility or availability for the research, which made it non-probability, non-random, convenience sampling, and it comprised twelve pupils from a single third grade class of a Zagreb elementary school, of which six were girls and six were boys. All the pupils in the sample were in the category of middle childhood (from 8 to 14 years) according to Parker & Asher (1993).

Table 1. Research sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>EBF</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>S12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No. - the number of the subject of the research
S - sex
A - age
EBF - experience of best friend
D - designation
The analytical process of analysis of the interviews covered the phase of familiarization (learning information, listening to the audio recordings, reading the transcribed content of the interviews), the phase of identification (specific sub-categories within the categories set), the phase of indexing and coding, the tabulation phase (counting, sorting, and organization of sub-categories), and the phase of linking and interpretation.

3. Results and interpretation of the results

The results of this research will be presented as the replies to the research question set. Since the profile of "best friend" was considered using six categories, we will present each profile separately.

The first profile of friendship relates to the number of friends, the second to the sex of the best friend, which we presented as the sub-categories: the same sex as me, and different from me. The third profile of friendship relates to how the subjects found their best friend, which we defined through the choice of best friend and the process of arriving at the best friend. The fourth friendship profile related to the age of the best friend, which was defined in three sub-categories, and the fifth to the duration of the best friendship. The sixth profile related to the experience of a break-up of the best friendship, and establishing the reason for the break-up.

Table 2. First profile of friendship relationship - number

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 1</td>
<td>Assessment of the number of friends</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>up to 10.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21 – 40</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 40</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. gives an overview of the replies to the first friendship profile relating to the number of friends. The subjects were unprepared to reply to this question and were very indecisive, requiring supplementary questions. From the conversation with the participants in the interviews it is clear that it was difficult for them to define the word "friend". There were some pupils who saw all the pupils in the class as their friends, and those who were aware that friendship is a mutual relationship. The issue of number is seen in the fact that the pupils had to include friends from different settings. One category comprised friends from school, another friends from pre-school (kindergarten), and also friends in the category of family friends, neighbourhood friends, and pupils who had the experience of friends from other schools and sporting activities outside of school. The largest number of pupils had between 10 and 20 friends. Thirteen was the minimal value and 100 the maximum.

Research has shown that girls and boys have approximately the same number of "best friends" in peer groups, although girls require a higher level of intimacy in their friendship relationships (Benenson, 1990; Cairns, Perrin & Cairns, 1985; Ray, Cohen & Secrist, 1995, Erwin, 1993)

Table 3. Second profile of friendship relationship - sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 2</td>
<td>sex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>same</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second profile shows the identical response to the research question related to the variable of the sex of the best friend. The participants in the research in this sample confirmed that they all chose a best friend of the same sex as them. None of the participants in the research chose a person of the opposite sex as their best friend. The ten-year-olds, who formed this sample, decided unanimously for same-sex friendship. This is also confirmed by the research by Morgan (2003), which states that between ten and thirteen years of age the peak of segregation occurs between the sexes, and later decreases.

Table 4. Third profile of friendship relationship - difficulty of decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 3</td>
<td>Difficult of decision of best Friend</td>
<td>Easy 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hard 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The choice of friends is a process which offers the possibility of choice and respects various criteria. The decision process is not simple because it is a matter of a relationship which is specific, mutual and bilateral. In view of the specific character of the choice and the different criteria of evaluation, various pleasant and unpleasant emotional reactions are possible. One of the most unpleasant is the feeling of rejection in comparison to the emotional reaction of acceptance, which falls into the category of pleasant reactions. From the examination of the participants' replies in the identification phase we created three sub-categories of replies. The first category comprised the participants who expressed that the process of choice of best friend was easy and simple.

S2 "It was simple for me to choose my best friend"

S12 "It was easy for me to choose my best friend"

The second category consisted of replies that were indecisive and those who could not define this process as either easy or difficult and the third category were those pupils who defined the process as hard.

S11 "Hm, I have more than one best friend..."

S1 "Yes it was hard, but I still made the decision".

In the friendship profile in this section, ease of choosing a best friend was dominant. It is necessary to mention that most of the best friends in this sample stemmed from the time when the pupils were seven-year-olds.

Table 5. Fourth profile of friendship relationship - age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 4</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Younger 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Same age 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Older 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10
The profile of age in the friendship relationship produced quite simple responses. Most pupils in this sample had a best friend of the same age, and they were all pupils. The only exceptions were two girls who chose an older or significantly older person as their best friend.

S4 "My mother is my best friend"

S6 "My best friend is 2 and a half years older than me... she is my father's girlfriend's daughter... we are like sisters... my dad introduced us."

Apart from these specific answers by these two girls, age was seen to be a significant predictor of friendship. The replies to this research question indicate the need to establish family and relative relationships within the category of best friend, as well as the parental influence on the choice of friends. S4 obviously did not differentiate the relationship with parents from relationships with friends, and there is also the possibility of negative transfer of attitudes about friends which could arise under the influence of parents or the environment. This response and attitude are possibly the product of the parents' form of upbringing, with the emphasis on a friendly relationship avoiding strictness and demands, prompted by a rebellion against the parents' own parents, who used a stricter form of behaviour and upbringing. In S6 the desire is visible for the creation of closeness with a new person in her life, probably occurring as the result of her father's expectations.

Table 6. Fifth profile of friendship relationship - duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 5</td>
<td>duration of friendship</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long-term</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short-term</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The duration of friendships is specific in view of the age of the participants in the study. Since in this category all the subjects were of the same age, this made the comparison much easier. The class was seen to be a specific factor that influences the choice of best friend, that is, the environment in which the pupils find themselves. The class was shown to be a significant predictor of the choice of friends, in view of the fact that most participants said that they met and chose or attained their best friend in the school they attend, that is, in their class. The class in this research confirmed its important and significant function in the pupils' development. It has a protective, compensatory and socializing function. The profile of the duration of friendship in this sample corresponds to the length of time of attending school - that is three years. The results indicate that the first best friends are acquired in school.

Table 7. Sixth profile of friendship relationship - experience of change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friendship relationship profile 6</td>
<td>Experience of change of best Friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exists</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does not exist</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the process of selection of friends, it is important to emphasise that there were some pupils who did not have a best friend. These pupils were not selected for this sample. It would be interesting to discover the reasons why this was so, as well as the profile of pupils who did not have a best friend. In this aspect we were interested in whether pupils had the experience of breaking up with their friends in the category of best friend. Pupils expressed this
experience descriptively, and we were able to categorize all their replies dichotomously into two groups, that is, the replies indicating the existence of this experience and those negating it.

The results showed that two-thirds of the subjects had had the experience of change, and one third had not. The experience of change in a friendship may be accompanied by strong emotional reactions which reflect their social status and, in view of the fact that classes are the places where best friends are acquired, it is very important to trace this socialization function in peer relationships in the field of school pedagogy. For that reason, we were interested in the reasons for the break-up of best friendships in the category of subjects who confirmed this experience.

Table 8. The causes of the break-up of best friendships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Sub-category and frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Experience of change</td>
<td>Causes of break-up</td>
<td>Change of pre-school/school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of best Friend</td>
<td>with best friend</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The causes of the break-up of best friendship were the final research question in the empirical part of this paper. From the analysis of the results we found that a decisive factor in the choice of a best friend was contact or closeness. A change in educational establishment (in our case the move from pre-school kindergarten to elementary school) was shown to be a significant factor. The pupils stated that friendships from kindergarten became less intense over the course of time due to the decreasing number of mutual interests they shared, and the decreasing amount of time they spent together. None of the subjects had a best friend from their time in kindergarten, although they had had them during their time in pre-school. In view of the fact that spatial closeness proved to be a significant predictor of friendship, a new research question arises related to spatial closeness outside of school as well, such as for example neighbours. Two pupils mentioned mutual disagreement and arguments as the cause of the break-up of their friendship, that is, problems in their relationship.

4. Concluding Remarks

Alongside the limitations which inevitably arise in research of this type, in this research the profile of friendship in the category of best friend was projected very clearly. It is clear that sex was a significant predictor, where a same-sex friendship was significantly preferable in ten-year-olds. The profile of age is quite clear, where ten-year-olds mainly decide for friends of their own age. Where this was not the case, the choice was for someone older, and not younger. The number of friends is a category which did not give a clear profile, but the number of friends mentioned was mainly between 10 and 20. The differences in the replies were certainly also the result of the insufficient understanding of the concept of friendship, because it was clearly defined more widely and more narrowly within the sample in this research. The ease of making a best friend mainly depended on the individual characteristics of the person who took part in the research, but we could conclude that ten-year-olds relatively easily decide who will be their best friend. The main conclusion that stems from this research is that the class is the place where the first more long-term and true friendships are made. The duration of friendships and the experience of change also point to the class and school as significant predictors of making friends. Therefore, we may define the class not
only as the place where children acquire their best friend, but also the time from which best friendships originate. This is no wonder, if we take into account the fact that pupils spend about 7000 hours in elementary school with their class, and that teaching strategies and forms of teaching in a class have a powerful effect on the creation of social relationships in peer groups. In view of the importance of observing and studying these relationships, we point out that school pedagogues should nurture and use many techniques and procedures that help diagnose and prevent activities in the pedagogic relationship, such as sociometry and observation of relationships in peer groups.

This research opened up many new research questions. In the profile of establishing friendship relationships, the need arose to examine the existence of blood relationships between friends, and parental influence and inclusion in the choice of friends. Spatial closeness in terms of housing (e.g. neighbourhood) was shown to be an interesting factor for research. Special research interest is also aimed at inclusion in family life of the best friend, as well as the number of children in the family. It may be assumed that single children have different needs for best friends than children who grow up in families with several children. It was also found to be interesting to establish the quality and quantity of time spent with friends both in out-of-school activities and during school holidays and at weekends. Special interest is directed at research into the quality of peer relationships in terms of friendships which may be factors in care, assistance, emotional support, fun and socializing, recognition, problem solving... this will certainly be a subject of our interest and study in further research work, which requires a different methodological approach. Establishing a hierarchical structure between the dimensions offered is a research challenge, as well as answering the question relating to the description of the characteristics of an ideal friend, and a comparison of the characteristics of the best friends the subjects have.

The importance of the choice of best friend was enhanced even more by this research. For us as researchers this research enriched our experience and led to new insights into our own life experiences, which have also been confirmed by other research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007.). We conclude our considerations with a thought that ran like an invisible thread through the replies by our subjects and has its roots in a folk saying, which states that friends are the family we choose for ourselves.

5. Literature