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An Interpretive Inquiry Into the

Meaning of Mentoring in the Lives of Adolescent Girls

By

TOUPEY M. LUFT

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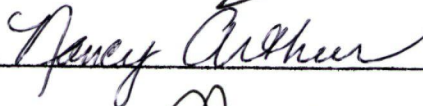
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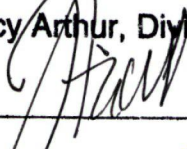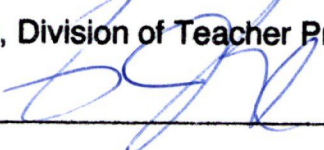
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# UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

# FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "An Interpretive Inquiry Into the Meaning of Mentoring in the Lives of Adolescent Girls" submitted by Toupey M. Luft in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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# Abstract

I undertook this investigation in order to illuminate more fully the event of mentoring as it pertains to the lives of adolescent girls. I settled upon interpretive inquiry, guided by hermeneutics and feminism, as a way to approach the topic. I spoke with five young women living in Calgary, Alberta about their mentoring experiences; both in formal mentoring programs and with informal mentors. Their stories of being mentored represent a collective experience of figuring out questions of identity; questions surrounding their meaning for themselves as well as their meaning for others. There were five common dimensions related to identity expressed in varying ways in each participant's narrative, and these dimensions were outlined and explored. A look at implications for counselling, further inquiry, and interactions with young women in our lives was also included.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people who helped facilitate the conception, working through, and completion of this project.

First and foremost, I wish to express my gratitude to the five young women I spoke with about mentoring. I appreciate your willingness to provide me with a glimpse into your lives and to speak so openly about your experiences. I would also like to acknowledge that, without you, there could not have been such a meaningful inquiry.

Next, I would like to thank my supervisory committee: Mike Boyes, Nancy Arthur, and Jim Field. Each of you has provided guidance to me along this journey and you have each, in your own way, become a mentor to me. Thank you for that.

Third, I would like to thank my colleagues and friends who helped in a myriad of ways: Veronica Horn, for inspiring me; Joe Warren, for friendship and support; Sharon Crozier, for general encouragement and career advice; Ann Laverty, for paving the way; Lois Sapsford, for her passion and knowledge; Tania Dufault for providing a safe space to turn ideas over, and Shannon Fleming.

Last, I would like to express my gratitude to the mentors I have had in my life: Erika Pearce, my mother, Lynn Harbaugh, and my teacher, Jill Tynan. Thanks to each of you for shaping my life in immeasurable ways.

# DEDICATION

For Chris Anderson, who embodies wisdom and light without even knowing it.

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# CHAPTER ONE – LIFTING THE ANCHOR

The photograph was taken the day after I drowned.
I am in the lake, in the centre of the picture, just under the surface.
It is difficult to say where precisely, or to say how large or small I am:
the effect of water on light is a distortion
but if you look long enough, eventually you will be able to see me.
(Margaret Atwood, 1998, p.3).

## Introduction to the Project

This particular project is about an aspect of life that, in my opinion as counselor and advocate for the wellbeing of young women, is in need of further exploration. The aspect of living this project is concerned with is the event of mentoring between women and teenage girls. Mentoring in general is a topic that is starting to be explored with great fervency in the academic literature, including the disciplines of psychology and education; disciplines I am the most familiar with (Sinetar, 1998). Overall, I found that most academic writing concerning mentoring tried to draw conclusions about its components and its effectiveness. I found that this type of approach focused on comparison studies and end results did not help me to understand the "nature or essence" (Van Manen, 1997, p.10) of mentoring relationships. I wanted to know more about what mentoring means to those who participate in it; specifically, what is it like to be for an adolescent girl to be mentored by a female mentor?

In considering how to approach the topic of mentoring and adolescent girls, I was struck by Van Manen's description of hermeneutic phenomenological research as "a search for what it means to be human". Specifically, I desired to grasp more fully what it means to be teenage girl in the world, to glimpse some of

the possibilities for living in the world as a teenage girl (Van Manen, 1997). My reasons for focusing on teenage women only as participants are varied and I will outline them further later on in the document.

I have chosen to highlight some aspects of my own experiences as they pertain to my mentoring relationships as an adolescent. I have done this intentionally because I believe it is important for me to acknowledge that I come to the research with a particular set of assumptions and foci, which are shaped by my experiences as a teenage girl in Calgary interacting with certain mentors. Following Van Manen (1997), I conceive of these personal experiences as an important starting place, because they allow me to orient myself to the topic as well as to the whole research process. Writing down these experiences allows me to make sense of what has struck me about the phenomenon of mentoring, with the penultimate hope that my "own experiences are also the possible experiences of others" (Van Manen, p.54). Further, to describe my own experiences with the topic allows me "to leave open questions which continue to press in upon me " (Laverty, 2001, p.2). By this I mean that the meaning of my experience might overlap with others' experiences and allow us to understand more fully what mentoring means. My own reflection is not enough – it must be only the jumping off point for further questions that must be attended to for richer understanding of the event.

In addition to writing my recollections as a teenage girl, I have also chosen to write the rest of the document in first person. The intention behind this is to

not disappear behind my writing or behind the guise of researcher, because I recognize that I am implicated in this project by nature of my humanness as well as having lived through the experience that I am asking the participants to describe. However, just because my voice is present in the use of "I" language, I realize that it would not be helpful for understanding mentoring if I turned this document into a personal journal by troubling "the reader with purely private, autobiographical facticities of one's life" (Van Manen, p. 54). Still, I have attempted to show my "mind at work" (Jim Field, personal communication) in the writing while attempting to limit my voice so that it does not dominate the conversation. I desired that the voices of the participants as well as other texts on mentoring, would play central roles and would be sounded clearly throughout the project.

## Synopsis of hermeneutics

I sought an approach that would allow me to connect understanding about mentoring back to the event itself. As I learned about hermeneutics as a mode of interpretive inquiry, it seemed to be an appropriate choice for the goal of understanding mentoring as a social event and its existential implications. I would like to briefly outline three relevant points about hermeneutics that helped guide the writing of this document. Further on, in the methodology section, I expand further on related hermeneutic philosophy with regard to interviewing and listening.

First and foremost, a hermeneutic approach assumes that language is the way that humans make sense of the world (e.g., Gadamer, 1998, Risser, 1997). Thus, in order to begin to understand our own and indeed others' experiences, we must somehow have a conversation about the topic or question at hand. This particular feature of hermeneutic research is why I chose to have conversations with participants instead of other means of "data" collection. Since my goal was to further understand the lived event of mentoring, conversations with those who had lived that experience seemed appropriate.

Within hermeneutic inquiry, each party involved in a dialogue about a topic or question has his/her own unique perspective based on present circumstance and past experiences. Hermeneutic proponents believe that each party's understanding of a question can shift and expand in the process of conversing about that question (Grondin, 1994). I attempted to use this point as a guidepost for the project. Specifically, I tried to keep in mind the idea that in this inquiry, I was trying to understand mentoring better, along with the young women who were describing their life experiences.

A third assumption made by hermeneuts is that humans interpret the world around them through language. With regard to interpretations, some are better than others. Interpretive research is thus judged on whether the written description that emerges is an evocative (some might even use the word poetic) one – one that might be connected to wider circles of meaning and indeed the human condition (Van Manen, 1997). This assumption came into play during the

writing of this document, as I had to constantly evaluate whether the interpretations made about mentoring made sense and evoked a sense of wonder and possibility about the meaning of mentoring. I showed my writing to my committee members, colleagues, and some of the participants and sought input. The chapter on dimensions that emerged went through many incarnations before it seemed to pass the evocativeness test, based on input from those I shared the writing with. Having outlined the manner in which I approached the writing of this dissertation, I would like to begin with some stories from my life as a teenage girl, as well as moments when my teenage experiences were especially poignant in my recollection, as they overlapped with my work as a counsellor and mentor to young women.

Beginnings – Reflecting on my Life as an Adolescent Girl

There are moments of elation and moments of despair when I reflect upon my experiences as a teenage girl growing up in suburban Calgary. Even now, with fifteen to twenty years distance between the present and that time, thinking back has the power to evoke strong emotions and reactions in the present to what I remember as significant moments from the past. I began this chapter with a quote from Atwood's (1998) poem "This is a Photograph of Me" because it speaks to how I felt many days when the despair had clouded my world; that I was in danger of drowning. To me, the image of drowning was an apt way to frame what I was experiencing. I sensed that I had to keep parts of myself hidden from others and this was a new sensation for me. I am not certain where

all the pressure to keep myself "under water" came from, but from my extensive

reading of works on young women and psychological development, I am

convinced that part of the explanation is to be found in the social context in which

I lived as a female person. I will talk more about that later in this chapter. First, I

would like to invite you to catch a glimpse of my life as a teenage girl as I

describe an incident that seemed to be the impetus for my perceiving that I could

not reveal parts of myself that I had freely expressed in the past.

My clearest memory about how I began to censor and hide myself

concerns an incident that occurred when I was eleven years old. In the summer

before Grade 7, while riding in my parents' station wagon, I glimpsed a distorted

image of my body in the station wagon passenger window. That summer marked

the full blossoming of my body into puberty and I felt as though my body had

betrayed me by becoming fuller in the hips, breasts and stomach. When I looked

into the car window, I saw a bloated image, in which the larger, rounder areas of

my hips and thighs were accentuated. I began to fixate, that very moment, on

having to lose weight. During that summer vacation trip, I began to worry about

what I ordered in restaurants; a behaviour which was atypical for me and had the

effect of confusing both my parents and my younger sister. I continued to be a

physically active girl when school began again, but I was self-conscious about

how my body appeared to others when I ran, threw, jumped and stretched. At

the beginning of the school year, I made a "conscious" choice to wear only

jogging outfits to school. I continued with sports and life, with the satisfaction of knowing that my body was hidden under baggy athletic clothes.

Somehow I survived the self-conscious feelings associated with my body. I was able to wear pants and skirts again and not just jogging pants without obsessing about how I was appearing. However, I continued to struggle to decide what parts of myself (emotional, psychological, physical) I would show to other people. I would say that it was a constant battle to try and discern who I was becoming and whether to question things people were telling me; whether to talk about my thoughts and feelings; in essence whether to decide to "speak my mind by telling my heart" (Rogers, 1993). I am aware as a student of developmental psychology that adolescence is a time where parts of a person's self or being change and new parts emerge to take their place (e.g., Santrock, 1992; Weiten & Lloyd, 2000). I think that some aspects of myself began to change during puberty and that those changes were a good thing. For example, the shyer, more serious me began to slip away and was replaced by the more outgoing me. I was comfortable with the emergence of this new aspect of myself. However, I continued to remain troubled by the parts of myself that changed and brought anguish and internal questions about what others were thinking of me. I think that some parts of myself that I had relied on slipped away; such as my tendency to speak my mind; to not obsess over what others thought of me; to not worry about telling someone if they had hurt my feelings. It

was problematic for me when I felt that I could not get parts of my prior identity *back.*

I had heard echoes of my experiences (for the most part not realizing why it struck such a chord with me) in the formal readings I had done for various school projects. I discovered that, for many adolescent women, the feeling of the self slipping away is expressed through problems such as depression, eating disorders, and self-destructive behaviours (e.g., Larkin, 1994; Sapsford, 1997). In her book, "Ophelia Speaks", teenage author Sara Shandler (1999) writes candidly about the struggles faced by her, her friends, and teenage girls she has interviewed and quoted throughout the book. The young women in Shandler's book tell stories about abortion, dealing with death in the family, attraction and crushes, abuse and rape. Although not all of the events I read about are in my direct experience, I can certainly relate to all of them. I have heard similar stories in the voices of my friends while I was growing up, in the literature on adolescent women (e.g., American Association of University Women, 1992; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; de Beauvoir, 1952; Fine, 1992), and in the voices of young women I interviewed who had been sexually harassed at their schools (Luft & Cairns, 1999).

Making the Connection – Moving Towards the Question

As mentioned above, I have tried to put some space between my current life and some of the more anguish-filled moments of my adolescent days. I knew that I was grateful to have survived those times and considered the possibility

that I would have to return eventually to the events of those days in order to understand my life in a clearer way. However, I did not think that the experience of self-examination would happen as the result of embarking upon a dissertation project for my Ph.D. in Applied Psychology. I had believed that re-visiting my adolescent days would happen eventually, and that it would probably take place in a private setting in which I was perhaps seeing a counsellor. I definitely did not anticipate that I would begin to recollect my memories as the result of working on what I considered to be an academic project. I saw my interest in what had happened to me as a girl as something that I could keep separate; could hold at bay from my academic work.

Academically speaking, I have always been drawn to study the lives of adolescent girls. I have taken many classes in feminist counselling, education, and developmental psychology in which I specialized in doing presentations and writing papers about topics relevant to adolescent girls. I initiated a study about young women's experiences with sexual harassment in the Calgary school system and interviewed 10 teenage girls for a master's thesis project on this topic. I did not pause in the busyness of academic pursuits to consider why the lives of adolescent women were of such interest and passion to me.

The seeds of this inquiry were planted when I was writing a proposal for a graduate studies competition and needed a topic. The potential to examine teenage girls and mentoring landed in my mind and seemed to fit, and I saw no need to look at what in my own context had influenced the arrival of such an

idea. Although I considered counselling young women and investigating their psychological development to be my areas of "specialization", I remained unaware of how my own experience played into the development of my passion.

I learned through the course of this inquiry that my "school" understanding and specialty areas could not be separated from my life experience (e.g., Gadamer, 1998; Van Manen, 1997). I began to prepare for the research project by doing some reading about hermeneutics and phenomenology and was struck by the work of Van Manen (1997), who explains how our questions arise from those things we are "standing in the midst of" (p. 43). Further, he states "to truly question something is to interrogate something from the heart of existence, from the centre of our being" (p.43). I began to be excited about the possibility that my school work could be enhanced by my personal experiences, and vice versa. In a way, it seems like I was walking two separate paths in my perception; and both paths merged with beginning to question why I was so drawn to the topic of mentoring in girls' lives.

As I learned more about interpretive work, I began to read my own life just as I continued to read texts about mentoring and adolescent girls. I kept coming back to several questions: How had I been able to work through my discomfort with my body? How was I able to reclaim some parts of my life that had once brought me joy but that I had felt were lost for a time? I also asked myself why I was getting in touch with my girlish experiences once again after so many years of distance from them? I searched for a "fecund instance" (Jardine, 1992) in

which my adult self collided with my teenage self; and I found the moment when I was certain I wanted to pursue the topic of mentoring in the lives of girls because it spoke to both aspects of myself – the professional feminist counsellor and the girl who had struggled and overcome some trying circumstances.

Worlds colliding. There was a specific moment when I sensed that I wanted to help some girls and prevent them from wholly drowning in a metaphorical sense. I desired to help them, not just because I was familiar with the "client population" from counselling, but because their concerns tugged at my heart. I felt a kind of kinship (Jardine, 1992) with the experiences they described to me. The way that I reacted in the particular situation called to mind the possibility that I chose to take what Gilligan (1991) and others might call (Pipher, 1994; Rogers, 1993) "the road less travelled" in my interactions with some young girls.

I was volunteering at a summer camp and had gone back to the cabin with two of the girls I was staying in the cabin with. I was feeling a little bit rushed as there were several responsibilities that I had that evening that I still had to prepare for. In the cabin, I asked the girls how their day was going so far. I asked this with the original intention of filling space while I got my items together for the night's activities. I certainly was not prepared for their answer. They began to tell me how they felt that they didn't belong at the camp, how they were younger than most of the other girls, how they had sacrificed how they

really felt for the sake of maintaining the few connections they had made at the camp. My heart began to ache for them.

I heard echoes of instances of my own childhood. I heard reminders of being at summer camp and calling my parents to come and get me because I didn't feel like I was fitting in. I heard echoes of some of my clients who stayed friends with people so that they would not have to risk telling them they were not treating them very well. I heard murmurs of worrying how the other kids would think of them. I also heard academic echoes of my reading of Gilligan (1991) and the description of girls'.and women's tendency to stuff their own feelings down for the sake of preserving relationships. Their tendency to "not rock the boat" for the sake of friendships. These girls were actively engaged in a process of questioning what they were going to do and what the outcomes would be. I took a breath.

In the space of that breath, I also knew I had an important choice to make in the moment. I had to decide if was going to be genuinely present for these girls; to be willing to hear their stories and to guide them in their decision-making. I knew that it was going to take a great deal of energy. However, something told me that this was important and that the camp activities could wait. In essence, I had to decide whether I was willing to take the road less travelled with these young women and with myself. I had to risk the energy needed in order to understand and also to be honest with them about similar experiences in my own life.

As we talked and listened, their tears began to flow.  They spoke of how their dilemma was not isolated to their relationships at camp.  It was connected to a variety of contexts, including their lives at school.  They sobbed as they recalled how friends had treated them with incredible cruelty and how they had felt unsure of how to address the cruelty.  Sometimes they had done nothing at all and had continued to search for kindness from people who kept on treating them poorly.  I asked them what the cost would be for being honest.  They did not seem to be sure of the answer.  I sensed that perhaps they had decided (on some level) that expressing real feelings was not even an option.

We began to talk about how they might begin to do that in small steps.  We made a plan for how they were going to handle interactions with several girls for the rest of the camp.  We made a pact that they would come discuss their feelings again with me.  I felt like I had been part of a new understanding that was beginning to emerge in their minds.  I am certain that this emergence would not have taken place had I not had the courage to suspend my own agenda for the evening and to take the time to listen.  I am also certain that it took a great deal of courage for these young girls to inform me how they were genuinely feeling when I asked them how things were going so far.  Like Fiumara's vision of what listening can facilitate, (1990), our interaction had provided a fertile ground for new growth in our conception of how to be in relationships with each other.  This was the instance in which my academic training and life as an insecure girl collided and sent me headlong into a journey to understand mentoring and its

place in my life and in the lives of some other young women; the people who

agreed to participate in this inquiry.

How Mentors Fit Into the Picture

This project is about an event that I have found to be a powerful force

during and beyond my adolescent days: the event of mentoring. I set out with

the intent of understanding more about mentoring relationships and eventually

realized that in like fashion to my writing about what being a teenage girl is like, I

had to start by outlining and understanding my own relationships with mentors.

Who were my mentors? What had they taught me? How had they played roles

in helping me overcome some of my self-doubts and struggles?

I started by interpreting some of my struggles through the eyes of some

influential authors who write about how people (women in particular) develop a

sense of themselves. I came to see that writers like Bartky (1990) and others

(e.g., Bordo, 1993, de Beauvoir, 1952) would likely interpret my concern with how

others perceived my body as a reaction to "the gaze" of the culture. Foucault

(1983) might take it one step further and recognize that the pressure I subjected

myself to might be linked to an oppressive system having done its job superbly

without having to apply direct pressure to enforce adherence to certain norms.

Through the help of several key women in my life, I was able to change

my own self-perceptions and to make different choices about how I could be-in-

the-world. I think I was able to re-interpret my experience in a less self-

destructive way. I don't mean that I never struggled again with my own image of

my looks or my body. I mean that I have new possibilities for being myself in the world, for considering my looks and for reflecting who I am as a woman. I believe that several key women in my life catalyzed this transformation.

First, there was Mrs. Tynan, my physical education teacher and coach throughout my junior high years. She was a very strong and fit woman. She did not have a marketably attractive body type, by society's mostly unattainable standards (e.g., Wolf, 1991). When she demonstrated various sports to us, she appeared remarkably unconcerned with how her body might have appeared in motion to others. She could out-run anyone in our class, including the male phys. ed. teacher. For a lot of the girls in the class, it meant a lot that she could beat a man at his own game, so to speak. But even more meaningful was the way she was an embodied strong woman in our world. Her carefree nature and grounded attitude had a large impact on me.

With her encouragement, I joined several sports teams. I didn't stop worrying about my weight altogether, but my obsession with body appearance faded into the background. Mrs. Tynan also had us do an assignment in health class, in which we were to think of three adult women whom we admired. We wrote down our list, and then had to name the most important characteristics of the women we admired. I noticed that none of the characteristics I thought were significant had anything to do with body type or with what society might consider attractiveness. To this day, I do not know what her purpose was in giving the class that exercise, but it spoke volumes to me. There was a rupture in my

thinking about the importance of body weight. The rupture occurred because one woman I knew was not afraid to be herself and to be active. She taught me that when I look into the mirror, I don't have to see just one portion of the picture (i.e., a negative perception due to fixating on one part of my body). Instead, I get to see the totality of myself; including the beautiful and loving (as well as the not-so-beautiful) aspects of my personality, my aspirations, and my body too.

A second woman who influenced me to see myself in a new light was my mother. My mom was, and continues to be, a highly intelligent and sensitive person. Her life has been marked by tremendous courage. She has overcome an abusive background. She left an unhealthy marriage after 20 years in order to develop her own sense of self and her own wisdom. In the past ten years, she has done a lot of personal work through counselling in order to heal from some of the events in her life.

Throughout my life, my mother has always supported me and encouraged me to be my own person. She has listened to my dreams, my desires, my troubles, and has truly celebrated my successes. Her values of insight and healing have influenced my decision to become a counselling psychologist. Her willingness to do self-examination has been a catalyst for me to do the same. In my eyes, my mom is a person who does not succumb to the expectations that the patriarchal society has for women. She has refused to define herself in relation to men, as evidenced by her decision to seek her own healing after a non-nurturing relationship. She also does not do the standard things that women

do in terms of her education and career. She has her master's degree, and has worked extensively in her field of adult education. By living her life in these ways, she has shown me that it is okay to be unconventional; specifically it is possible to live in this society as a female and to live a life that is not defined by traditional gender expectations (i.e., of having an identity only through affiliation with a man, keeping quiet about my opinion). My mother has influenced me to see a fuller picture of myself when I look in the mirror. The image I see is rich with potential and is also ripe with hope for the future.

At the initial stages of reflecting on my mentoring experiences, I had a more limited conception of the meaning that Mrs. Tynan and my mother have held in my life. Earlier on in my writing, I had concluded that their role as mentors had consisted largely of teaching me to resist patriarchal expectations. I had thought that these women had inspired me to resist patriarchal assumptions and to "fight" against them. That conclusion makes sense and is "true" to some extent, but does not provide as meaningful a description as considering how they encouraged me to try out more than just one way of reacting to inequality.

Initially, I sensed that, through the example of the way in which they lived their lives, my mentors provided me with a space in which I could become aware of gender inequality and the self-confidence to battle it. Considering the question more fully, I see, as described above, that they also presented me with new ways of seeing and valuing the different parts of my personhood. Originally, I felt that

my mentors had held up a mirror for me, and that in the reflection I had only seen myself reflected as someone who was against an oppressive system.

I can now consider the possibility that it is not enough to be "against" something; that to set up dichotomous ways-of-being (i.e. you can either be supporting the patriarchy or against it) might be just as harmful as pandering to the cultural gaze (e.g, Bordo, 1993; De Beauvoir, 1952). I thought my mentors had only opened up one other option in the face of sexism; to be constantly against it and to publicly proclaim your opposition. But it seems from ruminating further on my own experience, that my mentors highlighted the fact that I did have some sort of choice about how to act. The internalization of that message was a turning point in my life and the foundation for getting through adolescence without drowning altogether, as I had initially feared I might.

Seeking More Understanding

While I believe my narratives of my struggles with adolescent womanhood and the importance of mentors in my world are powerful stories, they are not the final word on all mentoring experiences. Instead, they are the impetus for further questioning in order to understand mentoring more deeply. Van Manen (1997) reminds us of this foundational dimension of hermeneutic-phenomenological work:

> The point of phenomenological research is to "borrow" other people's experiences and their reflections on their experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of

an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole human experience (p. 62).

I need to "play" (Gadamer, 1998) and wrestle with the meaning of mentoring as it is told to me by others so that I can eventually portray a deeper, richer version of its meaning (some of which I hope to convey in this document). Van Manen says we hear other people's accounts of the experience we want to understand "because they allow us to become more experienced ourselves" (p. 62). Writing about my own experiences is only the start of the quest to find out more about how mentoring fits into adolescent girls lives; what it means to have a mentor as a teenage girl.

Developing Some Guiding Questions

Inquiries based on interpretive approaches, like this project, attempt to keep questions of meaning relevant to the lifeworld that surrounds the experience in question (Grondin, 1994). I desire to uncover a fuller picture of mentoring and thus I attempted to create my questions to reflect this emphasis on uncovering meaning. Inspired by questions that were the bases of other interpretive inquiries (e.g., Laverty, 2001; Mosher, 1999; Van Manen, 1997), I developed the following questions to guide this undertaking: What is it like to be mentored? What is meaningful/significant about the relationship? What is the event of mentoring for (as a social practice) (Smith, 1991)? What makes a teenage girl's relationship with her mentor different from other relationships?

In this chapter, I have attempted to make explicit my stance and position with regard to how I approached the writing and reflection essential to this project on understanding mentoring. First, I outlined my reasons for writing this dissertation in a particular way. Next, I highlighted some of the assumptions of hermeneutics that guided me along the journey of this inquiry. Lastly, I desired to illustrate the intersection of my experiences at the borders of being a teenage girl, being a counsellor, and being a reader of texts concerning mentoring and how I have come to make sense and relate those experiences to the development of the research question. Next, I would like to outline further how my own particular views on mentoring have been influenced by tradition, as well as to trace the evolution of the meanings associated with mentoring historically. The purpose in doing this is to see where we've (I use "we" here to signify myself as writer, you as reader, and also to other voices that have spoken about mentoring) come from, so to speak, so that new meanings might come forward as we continue to converse about mentoring.

CHAPTER TWO - MAPPING PAST VOYAGES

Just as the arrival of a particular question implies a certain historical perspective on the part of the questioner, so too does the understanding of a particular event imply a particular tradition on behalf of the person or culture that understands it. Gadamer (1998) reminds us that while we must read our own experiences in order to understand them, we must also listen to the voice of tradition so that we might understand our place within it; as well as our place in relation to the topic in question. From my understanding of Gadamer (1998), listening to tradition is not the same as merely documenting what has come before, like we might do in a traditional literature review. Rather, it involves considering where something "came from, how it arrived, and to whom we owe its arrival" (Mosher, 1999, p. 8). We need to consider that both the interpreter and the topic itself belong to particular traditions that have shaped how the topic is viewed and understood.

Initially, it was difficult for me to consider what "listening to the voice of tradition" might mean practically for reading literature about mentoring. However, I was inspired to follow the work of fellow graduate students who (bravely) undertook hermeneutic endeavours and examined the historical nature of their topics within their writing. First, I was guided by Mosher's (1999) questions, as outlined above, and adapted some of them for my own exploration. Where does the idea and meaning of mentoring come from? How has it evolved in our historical understanding? I also wish to acknowledge Laverty's (2001) work, in

which she asked the following questions: What is known about this experience? How have we come to know what we know? (p. 18). My consideration of the questions she used to guide her interaction with the evolution of the understanding of her topic helped me, in turn, frame my reading and interpretation of the history of mentoring.

I attempted to pay attention to the voices that had contributed to our understanding of mentoring. I also tried to discover the silences in what had not been written or acknowledged about mentoring. Lastly, I tried to acknowledge how I stood in relation to certain ideas in the mentoring tradition. This meant recognizing what was familiar to me in the historical texts I interpreted (i.e., what spoke to me because of my perspective), as well as recognizing what was not so familiar and still allowing such texts to speak to me. Gadamer (1998) reminds us that "...it is in the play between the traditionary text's strangeness and familiarity" that understanding may be found (p. 295).

In addition to exploring the tradition of mentoring in this chapter, I chose also to examine the way in which mentoring is reflected in our historical understanding of adolescence for girls. In essence, I would like to look at what tradition has to say about female adolescents because they are the central participants of the mentoring event I wish to understand in a richer way. Whenever possible, I desire to make the revelations that arise from my interpretation of the mentoring tradition as "jumping off points" for further exploration of how adolescent women fit into the bigger picture. In essence, I

would like to weave these threads together throughout this chapter (indeed throughout this document) and to not pretend that they only exist separately from each other.

<u>The Origin of "Mentor"</u>

The meaning behind the experience of "mentoring" is derived from the name Mentor, who was a figure in Greek mythology; in the story of Odysseus in particular. The goddess Athena (who oversaw creative expression, battle strategy, and arts and crafts) took the form of a mortal, named Mentor, in order to help out Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope. Odysseus was called to fight in the Trojan War and thus had been separated from his family for ten years. In his absence, Athena, in the form of one of his father's trusted friends, became somewhat of a surrogate father to Telemachus and aided him in learning what it means to become a man. According to Schwiebert (2000), Mentor's relationship with Telemachus involved both nurturant roles as well advancing his career by introducing him to people could help him on his journey to become a leader.

After providing such support for about ten years, Mentor "...inspires Telemachus with courage and sends him off to seek news of his father" (March, 1998, p. 370). Telemachus sets out on a journey, accompanied by Mentor, to find out about his father and his whereabouts. He discovers Odysseus is alive and there is a joyful reunion. March (1998) explains how "...Telemachus takes his father in his arms and they both weep for all the lost years since their parting"

(p. 370). In a later part of the journey, Mentor supported Odysseus in a fight for revenge against the suitors, who were a group that had wronged him. He also helped make peace between Odysseus and another group, the Ithacans.

In my conceptualization, the story of Mentor and Odysseus opens up some particular evocative possibilities related to mentoring while it closes off others. I was moved by the idea that a male human being received "divine guidance" from a female goddess. To me, this part of the story speaks to the possibility that cross-gender mentoring can be a central part of a person's development. However, I found it interesting that the female goddess Athena had to be embodied as a man in order for Telemachus to receive her guidance. I questioned what was at work in ancient Greece that contributed to this part of the story. Would Odysseus's family have rejected Athena's help because she was a female; and therefore the implication was that she did not have valuable wisdom or insight to offer? Or, was her becoming a man necessary because the protege would not have recognized or related to an ethereal being, regardless of whether that being was a god or goddess? How did patriarchy play into the story's focus and outcome? I understand the story to show good intentions regarding the possibilities of women being able to mentor men, which opened up my mind to the more general possibility of cross-gender mentoring relationships working in other times and places. However, in ways to be outlined further below, it seems to me that through time, a historical understanding of mentoring has lost sight of the possibilities of mixed gender mentoring that is promised in the Myth of

Odysseus and Mentor.  Indeed, I think that in some ways, the myth itself lost sight of this possibility because the goddess had to transform into a man for her mentoring mission.

The second evocative piece of the myth for me is the notion that the person being mentored needed the guidance to come from a family friend, someone *familiar*, in order to acknowledge Mentor's influence and to accept his help.  I wondered what connections might be found between this idea and modern-day mentoring experiences.  I thought about the importance I have placed on young people's needing to relate somehow to their mentor in order for it to be a relationship that facilitates development and/or self-discovery.  What helps those in a mentoring relationship have a sense of familiarity with one another?  I think that the sense of the familiar can arise from a number of factors; but the main thing for me is sharing a part of the social context as represented by age, gender, cultural background, and occupation to name a few.  I do not mean to say that just because someone shares one of these factors with a young person that they will automatically relate well together.  Still, the concept of familiarity I heard in the story of Mentor seemed to ring a chord in my understanding of mentoring.  Specifically, in terms of women mentoring girls, it seems to me that girls can share a sense of the familiar with women in part because of biological similarity but also by virtue of sharing the status of the marginalized group in a patriarchal society.  Apter and Jossellson (1998) talked

poignantly about this kinship arising from a shared gender in their book exploring women's and girls' friendships:

> "Friends can understand in a way no one else can because only someone sharing similar pressures and goals can be available as an alter ego, and this is why friendship with a girl (or woman) has unique qualities that cannot be duplicated in a friendship with a boy (or man). Friends share a "lay of the social land and social meanings of moves and gestures" (p. 101).

In a way, my understanding of this part of the Mentor myth helped clarify for me why I believe the event of women mentoring girls can be powerful; they share some similar experiences. Like Bartky (1990), I believe that being aware of and naming particular oppressive conditions allows an individual or group to begin to make choices in the face of such conditions. If mentoring could allow such awareness and choice-making to develop, I think that would be a positive thing for the individuals involved and for society.

Another evocative segment of the story of Mentor and Telemachus is the idea that Mentor leads him on a journey to find his father. In the story they undertook a physical quest but I wondered what the journey might represent symbolically. I think we are in dire need of bridging the emotional and psychological gulf that exists between many children and their parents in today's world. In the current social climate, I am often reminded how far children are from their parents in terms of connecting on a psychological or spiritual plane. I

have seen, both in a counselling setting and in the lives of my friends, many parents who feel alienated from their kids because of time and economic pressures that force them to work longer and to spend less time with their families. I have encountered teens facing different challenges and more pressure to succeed in academics and employment than their parents faced. Some cultural critics focused on the lives of teenagers (e.g., Hersch, 1998; Pipher, 1994) also remind us that alongside these challenges are influences (some might be called temptations); once hard to find and not openly discussed that have now become commonplace. For example, access to drugs, cigarettes, violent and/or sexually explicit entertainment, and pressure to engage in sexual activity at a younger age. Pipher (1994) alludes to the shift in attitudes and expectations in this quote from her reflections:

> The peer culture is much tougher now than when I was a girl. Chemicals are more available and more widely utilized. Teenagers drink earlier and more heavily....Most teenagers are offered drugs by seventh grad. Marijuana wafts through the air at rock concerts and midnight movies. Gangs operate along the interstate, and crack is sold in the suburbs (p.69).

How do we as a society teach children to cope in the world? Who will they listen to? Can/should parents do most of the socializing? Echevarria (1998) acknowledges that no parent can be everything to his or her child. She believes that mothers can only do so much for their daughters while she also

acknowledges that the job of parenting is an essential piece to helping guide girls through adolescence. However, the contextual environment in which girls grow into women is "not a particularly comforting one" (p.6) and thus "...external support from a nonparental female role model is an essential-and far too frequently ignored-requirement for healthy development in girls and young women" (p.7).

Finally, I found there to be silences in the story of Mentor and Telemachus. I found it troubling that I did not hear anything about Telemachus's relationship with his mother. I also did not hear his mother's (Penelope) perspective on what her life was like without her husband for ten years. I also wondered what it was like for her to have Mentor essentially be the sole person teaching her son about the word of work and relating to other people. What was that like for her? How involved in her son's life was she? The silence of her perspective in the story perturbed me. Gadamer (1998) has said that stories and texts are a response to something. I wondered what the lack of attention paid to Penelope in the Greek story was a response to. Was it a devaluation of women and their roles in the family that covered over her perspective and voice? Was something else going on? These are questions that likely have no definitive answer. Still, they have left me curious about how the first mentoring story has come to be understood without hearing much from one of the central players of the family in the story.

When digging deep into the literature, I found an author named Sarah Mitchell (1997), who also asked questions about Penelope's experiences and what kind of mentoring role she might have played for her son and husband. Mitchell (1997) expands upon a small part of the story of Odysseus that is told from the perspective of his wife, Penelope, who stayed home to tend to the home and to raise Telemachus during Odysseus's absence. Mitchell explains that the relational dialogue between characters is barely mentioned. I agree that there is not much airtime given to outlining how any of the characters use dialogue to attend to the feelings and experience of the other person. Thus, it makes sense to me that Mitchell decides to re-tell the story from Penelope's perspective in order for readers to begin to focus in on what seems to be a forgotten part of the story. Upon her husband's return after an extended absence, Penelope struggles to recognize him as she once knew him; to get to know him again after many years. She wants to talk aloud with him about the reminders of shared intimacy they once had in common; to converse with him in order to begin to recognize him as a person again. In Mitchell's conception of history, the voices of women are faint; we have to dig a little deeper to find them and to "tune into" the perspectives that we have historically devalued. Mitchell (1997) believes we need to take the time to seek out Penelope's story, as it reflects women's focus on knowing the other "through naming and renaming of experience" (p. 5).

In my interpretation of Mitchell's (1997) work, she is claiming that only women mentor others (both women and men) through relationships; "through

intimacy rather than distance." (p. 5). I think to make this assertion is somewhat essentialist and I think that everybody is relational and interconnected to some degree, regardless of gender or other factors. I agree that women have been socialized to over-emphasize this way of being in the world. Despite not wholly agreeing with her primary claim, Mitchell's dissertation was helpful to my understanding because she wrote about the relational component of mentoring that I had not been able to give a name to until I read about it. I had a general sense of what was important to me about mentoring (based largely on my experiences), but I needed to hear that talking with others and building intimacy was a central part of someone else's experiences as well.

Mentoring Throughout History

Mentoring appears to have been perceived in a fairly narrow fashion throughout most of time, since its inception in 1200 B.C., at the time of the Odyssey (Murray & Owen, 1991). The event of mentoring has been defined historically as a wise old man instructing a novice (University of Alberta, 1999). Stories of mentoring through time have focused on an older man passing on skills and knowledge to a younger man so that the younger man becomes proficient in his particular occupation or trade. Authors who write about mentoring often cite examples from the middle ages; they describe how blacksmiths and carpenters passed on the skills of their trades to young novices and in doing so continued the tradition of mentoring (e.g., Levinson, 1978; Murray & Owen, 1991). Mentoring was also quite common during the renaissance period as a

way of educating students in the arts and sciences (Wickman, 1997). We are not told whether or not the students were male or female, but the patriarchal tone of the time suggests that mentoring was limited to male teachers guiding their young proteges, as women did not engage in intellectual training or pursuits.

There is little historical reference made to women guiding women through the maze of their responsibilities. Throughout history, women's daily living has been focused largely on child-bearing, child-rearing, and domestic responsibilities of cooking and maintaining a space to live in (Prentice, Bourne, Brandt, Light, Mitchinson & Black, 1988). When the event of women passing on skills to other women happened, it was not accorded the status of "mentoring" in historical writings. Often, the handing down of practical knowledge in a female-to-female relationship is construed as something that women do naturally with each other anyway (Prentice et al., 1988). Women may pass on expertise and knowledge by talking to each other telling stories about the issue at hand; often called the "oral tradition" by feminist historians (Reinharz, 1994). However, such oral traditions throughout Western culture have been given the implicitly derisive labels of "old wives' tales" or "just women's talk" (Reinharz, 1994). Thus, they have not often been documented, let alone looked at in research.

It has not taken a large stretch of my imagination to link women's invisibility from the historical arena of mentoring with a patriarchal culture that tends to silence women and to devalue their connections. As mentioned, I think the fact that a female goddess assumed a male form to guide a younger son

speaks to the patriarchal state of Greece at the time that Homer wrote the Odyssey. I also think the myth forms the basis for the assumption that exists throughout history; that boys are entitled to men who will guide them toward adulthood, but we often don't value girls or women implicitly enough to ensure that they receive guidance as well (Sullivan, 1996).

The Current Socio-Cultural Context of Mentoring

Our society has, in many ways, come to be characterized by "black and white" thinking (Shlain, 1999). Socio-economically speaking, the gap between rich and poor is widening; people are either those who "have" or those who "have-not". According to writers like Lips (1993), in terms of understanding gender, we have come to associate masculine characteristics with men and valued such characteristics (e.g., competition, self-reliance, in control of emotions). In like fashion, we see women as possessing traditionally feminine characteristics; those that we have typically devalued (cooperation, interdependence, expressive of emotions). The context in which we exist, including political climate and how females and males are perceived has an impact on how we view particular ideas or events, such as mentoring (Lips, 1993; Shlain, 1999).

Similar to the black-and-white thinking prevalent in our society, the manner in which we describe mentoring in today's academic literature and in our mentoring experiences seems also to be characterized by polarized ways of

seeing.  As I will outline below, mentoring is seen in a dualistic fashion with regard to age, gender, and culture.

Mentoring is generally characterized by a relationship between "older and younger persons" (Klaw & Rhodes, 1995, p.552).   In general, we view the older person as the mentor, and the younger person as the protégé, or mentee.  The mentor is usually described as someone who is a wise advisor, a friend, or teacher who brings inspiration, clarity and focus to someone else's life (e.g., Kern, 1998; Levinson, 1978; Merriam, 1983).  I found, in my journey through the literature, only minimal references to mentoring relationships that were formed in order for a younger person to pass on his or her wisdom to someone older. Specifically, Paludi, Meyers, Kindermann, Speicher & Haring-Hidore (1990) suggested that older women re-entering post-secondary institutions after absence for child-rearing and working in the paid work-force might be better served in mentoring relationships by their peers in their classes, who might be of any age.  Paludi et al. (1990) see this "age-blind" style of mentoring as an opportunity for older women to get help navigating the academic world, but also for their classroom peers to potentially gain wisdom from them as older people with more life experiences.

I wondered why we did not consider this type of peer or "networking mentoring" (Swoboda & Millar, 1986) more often.  It strikes me as more egalitarian and acknowledges that teaching and learning are not merely unidirectional events.  I think in some ways we see older people as being able to

teach others simply because they have lived longer. I think in some ways it makes sense that older people would have more experiences to draw upon and talk about in a mentoring role. However, I believe we should acknowledge the possibility that younger people might have the ability to pass on knowledge and wisdom to older people, as well as receive it. The ironic part about this situation is that we do not always value the older people in our world, and yet we tend to thrust them into mentoring roles where they are expected to pass on some kind of wisdom or experience to a younger person. No wonder both younger and older people might feel adrift – we idolize and glamorize youth and then we try and emphasize the importance of "adult" knowledge while at the same time minimizing the importance of elders in our society. Smith (1991) turns our attention to the need to balance the integrity of an idea in the world while simultaneously inquiring about how to best alleviate our pains while living in the world. How do we develop the potential of the event of mentoring without polarizing it because of age or other differences? For me, the polarization of young and old that is reflected in our mentoring relationships represents social trouble that needs to be transformed so that we might value the contribution of both groups in relation to each other; especially with regards to mentoring.

If we are guilty of viewing mentoring in such a bifurcated fashion with regard to age, then we are also culpable in terms of how we have reflected upon mentoring related to gender. As touched on above, mentoring relationships have been viewed primarily as a male domain throughout history. It is only in the last

fifteen to twenty years that we have come to think and to write about the potential importance of mentoring in women's lives. However, in doing so, we have (in the fashion of polar opposites) constructed a particular version of mentoring that is relevant only for women and girls and one that is relevant only for men and boys. We have come to divide/deconstruct mentoring into its components; those that match feminine characteristics and those that match the masculine. We have come to understand the two main elements of mentoring as contributing either to one's career enhancement or one's psychosocial development but not usually both (e.g., Ervin, 1995; Keyton & Kalbfleisch, 1993; Schwiebert, 2000). It should come as no surprise that career enhancement functions are very often associated with male mentoring interactions and psychosocial functions are viewed as the purvey of women's mentoring relationships (Keyton & Kalbfleisch, 1993). The "career enhancement" component is typically understood as perpetuating the hierarchical model of mentor/protégé interactions that involve a more experienced "expert" passing on his expertise to his student. Within such a model, it is understood that verbal interaction takes place, but that it is aimed at bringing the protege to a certain level of career confidence and efficacy. The personal and/or emotional support that might go along with the process takes a back seat in this particular view of mentoring. I think we miss out on understanding mentoring more fully when we do not acknowledge everything that is going on in a mentoring relationship.

I find the message within such a limited perspective to be one of fear of the emotional realm; we are afraid to be too personal or relational in our work and business interactions. When reading accounts of mentoring based on the "vocational progress and promotion model" (Schwiebert, 2000, p.14), there appears to be little place for talking about and revealing emotions. This troubles me as I believe that emotional expression is central to a person's psychological and social development. However, it seems that emotions are often viewed as clouding rational decision-making and indeed may affect the bottom line of profitability in the corporate sector (Scandura & Ragins, 1993).

Mentoring and Psychological Development

I would like to explore psychological development a bit further, as I think that mentors probably have an influence on how it proceeds in the lives of their mentees. Schwiebert (2000) has reminded us that one of the functions of mentoring is "psychosocial development" and so I think it fitting to take a closer look at the topic. Traditionally, psychological development has been equated with becoming less reliant on the people around you; becoming independent from your parents, your peers, your teachers (Greggs & Cairns, 1990). Further, individuals are judged to be psychologically healthy when they can think for themselves, act on their own desires, and pursue their own dreams (Weiten & Lloyd, 2000). In my conception of this type of thinking about development, it seems like, taken to the extreme, the healthy person is the person who needs no one; the person who relies only on himself. I wonder if the mentoring relationship

has traditionally been one in which the mentee is encouraged to become more self-reliant. In reading several accounts of mentoring, I found this perspective to be shining through. For example, in "The Seasons of a Man's Life", mentoring is described as passing through predictable stages, and is a successful endeavour only when the relationship has been terminated (Levinson, 1978). I interpret the termination of the relationship to mean that the mentee has succeeding in becoming more independent and less reliant on the mentor and thus has progressed developmentally. Hamilton & Darling (1989) also characterize the mentor's job as one that is aimed at helping a younger person become more competent so that they can do things for themselves, eventually. According to Hamilton & Darling (1989), when this is achieved the mentor's help will no longer be necessary.

What if a person wanted to continue on having a relationship with their mentor after they had learned certain skills? Would there be a purpose in that? It strikes me that viewing mentoring as an interaction aimed only at increasing a person's psychological development by achieving the goal of independence is quite one-sided; and probably leaves out an important part of what mentoring means to the people involved. Thus, I think there would be great purpose in having a mentoring relationship for the sake of learning about relationship; to grow through dialogue and getting to know the other person. When learning particular competencies or skills are required, I certainly think it appropriate for mentors to teach them. I am just concerned that if this is the only focus of a

person's development, we lose sight of other areas that might need to be developed, such as learning how to relate to other people.

I believe this type of relational development is what feminist theorists such as Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986), Josselson (1987), and Jordan (1997) have been turning psychologists' attention towards in the past several decades. The authors above propose that connections with others in relationships are a crucial part of psychological development and wellness. I agree that this aspect of development, particularly in the context of mentoring, has been neglected. I question some parts of the earlier writings of relational theorists (e.g., Gilligan, 1982) who claim that it is mainly women who thrive on connection and who "define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care" (p. 164). I find myself beginning to think in dichotomies by buying wholeheartedly into the theory that all women identity more with relationships than do all men. I begin to equate independence with masculinity and relatedness with femininity and I think this is problematic. I agree with Enns (1997) that as theorists we need to focus more on "the ways in which the capacities to be independent and nurturing are available to all individuals" rather than saying one gender is "naturally" good at one way of being and the other gender is naturally good at the other. If we're not careful as researchers and writers in the area of psychological development, we might well end up creating more dichotomies even though our aim might be to abolish them. I must note that several of the theorists mentioned above have revised their theories to look

at the importance of relationships and connectedness in men's lives (e.g., Bergman & Surrey, 1997; Clinchy, 1996; Harding, 1996). I think these revisions have been a very significant step in opening up the conversation about how psychological development fits into the creation of a healthy and loving society where individuals are allowed to express the varying qualities they embody and be accepted for them.

In reviewing the mentoring literature, I have found that understanding mentoring as a relational experience has not been a popular perspective. I did not find much work devoted to understanding how relationships between the mentor and the mentees evolved. There are few studies that examine the personal qualities of the mentor and mentee and link it to an evaluation of the mentoring process. I think it would be helpful to determine if there are particular qualities or traits that allow for more dialogue and self-disclosure in the mentoring relationship. I suspect that part of the reason for the paucity of research on mentoring as a relational event might be the fact that what happens in relationships is hard to quantify. I think many find it difficult to inquire about experiences when there is not a theory already in place and findings may be hard replicate.

Acknowledging diverse metaphors. Although I found there is a scarcity of studies examining mentoring as a relational event, I did find some texts that offered me hope that some of the polar opposite perspectives might be brought into conversation with each other. The first was a piece by Abbey (1998), in

which she explored the more traditional goals of mentoring (choosing a career) and how this goal fit into how she mentored a young woman in her life. A complicating factor, which I believe she discussed honestly and thoughtfully, was the fact that she was also the young woman's mother. Abbey (1998) speaks of a journey in which she experienced success as a mentor in the career sphere. Abbey is an experienced teacher and she described encouraging her daughter to also become a teacher and how she passed on her approach to pedagogy. She went to observe her daughter in a teaching setting and was pleased to find that "...many of my daughter's teaching practices mirrored my own" (p. 25). Abbey believes that the encouragement she offered her daughter was an essential part of her development as a teacher. However, she began to be doubtful of her mentoring abilities when her daughter decided to leave the teaching profession. She eventually came to explore the quality of her relationship with her daughter and decided that parts of their relating to each other could be re-cast as important parts of mentoring as well. Specifically, she conceives of the mentoring relationship as a space in which each person learns to care for herself and for the other. With regard to being a maternal mentor, she writes about recognizing the important connection between herself and her daughter and not blaming herself (Caplan, 1989) for wanting to be involved in her daughter's life. Overall, I found Abbey's writing showed how different styles of mentoring are important and an acknowledgement of the complicated nature of the mentoring relationship.

A second piece of writing that spoke to me of the potential for balancing varying perspectives on mentoring is Sullivan's (1996) work. She has theorized that it would be useful to expand upon the metaphors used to understand mentoring historically. Sullivan (1996) proposes that in addition to the mythical figure of Mentor, we consider the utility of another figure in Greek mythology for understanding what mentoring relationships are all about; that of the Muse. Sullivan outlines how the Mentor figure from the Odyssey is a useful way to portray mentoring relationships that she describes as "instrumental". She explains that instrumental mentoring relationships are for the most part one-way interactions that are aimed at bringing the protege to a level where they no longer require the mentor (because they've acquired certain skills and knowledge). This characterization of instrumental mentoring seemed to me to fit well with the career enhancement functions of mentoring described by Schwiebert (2000). It also reminded me of the developmental goal of separation touched on above in which a person acquires certain skills in order to accomplish certain tasks.

Sullivan (1996) contrasts the Mentor/instrumental perspective on mentoring with that of the Muse and what she calls an "evocative" way of doing mentoring. In evocative mentoring, the focus is on the mentoring relationship itself and when evocativeness is being expressed, the mentees feel free to speak at will; the mentors are able to listen, understand, and to help those being mentored work through or process their own feelings and experiences. She finds the symbol of the Muse to be appropriate for an evocative approach to

mentoring. "Muses were women in mythology who acted as sources of inspiration; their role was to recognize and to help spark or draw out the genius or artistry of their charges" (p. 226-227). An evocative perspective assumes a more egalitarian approach in the mentoring relationship; both mentor and mentee may grow from their interaction together. As the Muse is described as drawing out inner resources of the mentees, I found the Muse/evocative perspective to be reminiscent of the "psychosocial" function of mentoring described by Schwiebert (2000). I also discovered echoes of the centrality of relatedness highlighted by some of the feminist writers mentioned above (e.g, Belenky et al., 1986; Josselson, 1987).

Sullivan called for a need to balance the images of Mentor and Muse according to the needs of mentoring relationship. She believes that much of cognitive, educational, and career development is well served by instrumental mentoring goals. For example, communicating facts about health and directly answering questions about sexuality are important instrumental roles that mentors could fill. However, as Sullivan (1996) describes, "the social and emotional health and development of girls (and perhaps boys as well) may not be equally well served by a primarily instrumental mentor relationship" (p.229). Based on my interpretation of Sullivan, I see that something like learning how to negotiate relational tensions and conflicts is an area in which the evocative part of mentoring relationships is likely best suited to the task.

Sullivan's work (1996) is aimed at finding a mentoring symbol that might fight better for the experiences of urban girls she spoke with in her research. Although girls were her focus, I was impressed that she wrote about the need of both kinds of mentoring to address different challenges in the lives of both boys and girls. Her text gave me hope that although I am choosing to focus on the experiences of girls in this study, there might be some parts of the participants' experiences that speak to other groups, including boys and other girls as well.

The Details of Mentoring/How We Have Come to Know What We Know

The practice of mentoring has become a very popular one in the 1990's and into the new millenium. In my lifetime, I have watched the concept of mentoring become a popular phrase associated with a number of varying meanings, and I have seen its popularity grow in leaps and bounds, especially in the fields of career development and education. Many businesses, schools, and training programs have formal mentoring opportunities in place for employees, students, and trainees. There has also been recognition on the part of community administrators and organizers of the potential benefits of mentoring for the community. This acknowledgement is seen in the proliferation of programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Canada and in the United States, the Adopt-A-Grandparent program prevalent in the U.S. (Schwiebert, 2000), the Alberta Mentor Foundation for Youth here in Alberta, and the Starburst Program for Girls located in Calgary.

Studies that have informed the development of these programs have focused almost exclusively on what I call the "details of mentoring". The details of mentoring means that mentoring can be broken down into its components and each of these can be evaluated for its effectiveness. Studies concerned with the details examine and expand knowledge in relation to questions relevant to the topic of mentoring. There are studies that determine to what degree youths' drug addictions diminish after being matched to a mentor (e.g., Grossman & Tierney, 1998) or if they become less depressed, as measured by a self-report scale (e.g., Rhodes & Davis, 1996). There are those that look at what activities and processes are most common in mentoring relationships (e.g., Woodd, 1997; Wright, 1992). There are investigations that centre on how inner-city youth might benefit from particular components of mentorships (e.g., Hritz & Gabow, 1997; Reglin, 1998). There are also models based on research that outline how programs differ between urban and rural centres with respect to a variety of factors (e.g, Freedman, 1993). Finally, there are examples in the literature that focus on the differences and similarities between older mentors and peer mentors (e.g., Dearden, 1998; Rogers & Taylor, 1997), and the list goes on. The methodologies are largely quantitative; using statistical comparisons of survey data, measuring participant satisfaction through scales, looking at mentor/mentee change by assessing behavioural components.

I think that there is definite utility to be found in these studies that focus on the details of mentoring. Overall, the studies above all seem to conclude that for

the most part, mentoring "works", depending on what is focused on as the change factor. The types of studies identified above are important because they help us understand if mentoring is a constructive event for the parties involved. They help us determine if we should approach mentoring programs in a particular way in order to meet the needs of various participants. In essence, these studies are all different answers to questions that concern how the particulars of how we "do" mentoring in certain contexts; studies that answer if we have been successful in meeting certain goals associated with mentoring.

While writing concerning the components of mentoring continues to expand, there are also efforts that focus on uniting some of these components into a unified theory of mentoring processes. However, there are fewer examples of this type of focus in the literature. Abbey (1998) points to this fact by stating "...in spite of all the current literature on mentorship, few studies examine "how" mentoring processes operate, change, or endure between individuals or attempt to theorize "what" the parties learn from their experiences together" (p.23). Most often, the theories developed are unique to a particular group (e.g., a theory of women mentoring women), although there is some movement afoot to outline a theory that could speak to everyone's experience (Schwiebert, 2000).

Much of the work concerning mentoring that focuses on deconstruction of the event into details and subsequently building these details into theories and models miss out on people's everyday lived experiences of mentoring. My sense is that researchers seem to have made mentoring into a quantifiable concept that

has been developed from numerical analyses of people's behaviour in mentoring situations. There are fewer studies that are aimed at understanding the lived experience of mentoring. Few inquiries have asked, "What is it liked to be mentored?" Instead, inquirers have tended to ask instead, "What is mentoring?" "What are its processes?" "What are the event's similarities and differences for particular groups?" There has been a loud hue and cry over the possibility that women's experiences do not fit into the traditional mentoring model (e.g., Garner, 1994; Paludi et al., 1990; Sullivan, 1996), but lesser fuss made over what women's experiences in mentoring relationships are like. In other words, we understand less about what mentoring might mean and how it might be significant for marginalized groups if understood the phenomenon of mentoring more fully. Mentoring, when broken down only into participant satisfaction scales and the like, seems decontextualized from the living, breathing world of those who participate in it. Thus, there is a need to bring a fuller picture of mentoring to the table so that we might incorporate knowledge about its functions with an understanding of what it means and what it could mean.

Adolescent Girls and Mentoring

Although, as I mentioned above, research has tended to shy away from the experiences of women and girls with regard to mentoring, things do seem to be shifting, in my opinion. There seems to be a growing number of studies that talk about the importance of mentors in the lives of adolescent girls. To illustrate, consider the American Association of University Women Study (1992) that

looked at what variables were connected to mental health for adolescents. One of the factors that was closely associated with good mental health, especially for girls, was a connection with a trusted adult; identified as parents, teachers, or mentors in the study (AAUW, 1992). The findings of the AAUW study are congruent with both my experience as a teenager and with research I have done with adolescent women. I found that my self-esteem and self-knowledge were definitely enhanced by the presence of the trusted mentors in my life. In work I have done concerning adolescent women and sexual harassment, there was a connection between how the participants I spoke with responded to harassment and the presence of mentors in their lives. I heard stories of how girls who had been sexually harassed were able to name their discomfort, speak out against what was happening, and to feel more in control of their lives in part because of the support and encouragement they received from a trusted adult, (Luft & Cairns, 1999). Part of the reason I chose to delve into the meaning of mentoring in adolescent girls' lives for this inquiry is because of how prominent mentors (the majority of which were women) seemed to be in the sexual harassment study (Luft & Cairns, 1999), even though the focus of that investigation was on understanding harassment.

Some authors and educators claim that there exists a unique connection between women mentors and the girls who are the mentees (e.g., Berzoff, 1989; Echevarria, 1998; Mahony, 1989; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). According to these writers, mentoring relationships between women and girls provide

something for girls that they cannot receive from parents, peers, or male mentors. Part of the uniqueness of the connection, in my interpretation of the texts, seems to centre around the idea of identifying and relating based on shared gender and experiences of socially constructed expectations for women. Some of the experiences that women and girls often share, according to the writers named above, are those of being abused, harassed and put down by some men. I think that because violence in North America is definitely not gender neutral (e.g., Kashcak, 1992, Larkin, 1994) there is some definite utility to talking about violence with other women who have experienced it and using the strength of a relationship or group in order to have support for deciding how to live in response to violence. I think that a female mentor who had experienced abuse and was willing to speak about it openly might be an invaluable resource for a girl who has also been abused and might feel shame (Mirkin, 1994) about what has happened to her. I think girls might feel more comfortable discussing violations of their bodies with someone who shares the same body parts, and more importantly the social condition in which having a female body signifies being "less than" and also a sexual object (de Beauvoir, 1952).

> I guess I'm struggling to make myself heard. I don't want to say anything too controversial. Not because I'm afraid but because I want people to hear me. I want to say it in such a way that people won't blow me off....I feel very lucky. My mom has become very accepting and I've always had friends that are really accepting....and I've never been attacked, verbally

or physically. (Sarah Lindsley, teenage girl, quoted in Hughes & Wolf, 1997, p. 99-100).

Like Sarah above, lots of young women are beginning to speak and write about their experiences more publicly than they ever have (e.g., Hughes & Wolf, 1997; Rossiter, 2001; Shandler, 1999). And in many of their musings on life, including identity and sexuality; violence and abuse, and gender roles, they describe important teachers, mentors, parents and friends who have an influence in their worlds. I think it important to continue to explore the contexts of adolescent girls' lives, with a view to understanding how mentors influence them.

Reflections on the Sounds and Silences of Mentoring

Perhaps one of the steps we need to take in order to view mentoring in a more balanced fashion is to reclaim the power of the original story from the Greek legend. In the story, Mentor embodies characteristics that are associated with traditional masculine and feminine ways of being (e.g., he is assertive in battle and is able to develop relationships). He not only possesses these qualities, but he helps his protégé develop characteristics that are a balance of masculine and feminine as well. He demonstrates knowledge of battle strategy and travelling, but also demonstrates understanding as a surrogate parental figure. I think the story represents the potential for cross-gender mentoring, if we consider that Mentor was originally a female goddess. However, I think the story also represents a caution against not hearing the perspectives of women on mentoring. Overall, though, the characters in the myth seem able to express

different parts of themselves as the situation calls for it. I propose that this is the type of "outcome" we might be searching for when we ask as psychologists, researchers, and parents, what kind of role mentoring can play in our lives and the lives of children and teenagers.

I think it so unfortunate that our conception of mentoring has become so splintered; so non-inclusive of various facets. We have distanced ourselves from its potential full and rich meaning by viewing it as an idea that is expressed only in polar opposites. Many of those who seek to understand mentoring see it within one particular framework of limitations; an older person has to mentor a younger person; a woman can't offer much to a man as a mentor; mentoring only helps a person develop their career, not any other areas of life. I hope that this work might help us interrupt the dominant way of seeing mentoring in such limited ways.

Research with a more positivistic focus can tell us what mentoring is, if it helps self-esteem, how it works (i.e., the details), and more interpretive work might tell us what mentoring means, what it is for, and why our understanding of it might need to shift and/or be improved (Jim Field, personal communication). We need many perspectives for a rich, full understanding of mentoring. We also need to accentuate the possibilities inherent to mentoring that might help us acknowledge the beneficial aspects of mentoring, while at the same time focusing on the alleviation of some of the pain of living in this often unjust world. I think it important to also make space for understanding the parts of mentoring

that might also be unpleasant or hard to hear about as well. Tuning into the silences, even if they represent negative experiences, is essential in order for us to fully understand mentoring. If we begin to understand, we can begin to draw attention to, and if necessary, change the social practices surrounding mentoring.

The purpose of this chapter was to document how the phenomenon of mentoring has been perceived since the creation of the word. Further, I wanted to make explicit some of the areas in which other conceptions of mentoring overlapped or were discrepant with historical themes. Included among other conceptions of mentoring were my own reactions to pieces of writing on the subject. Also, I attempted to quote writers such as teenage girls, who have traditionally been marginalized, in an effort to hear what they had to say about the topic of mentoring.

## CHAPTER THREE - CHARTING A COURSE

This chapter further outlines my footsteps on the path of this undertaking. My intention here is to demonstrate to you, the reader, how I went about preparing for and then diving into an inquiry about the meaning of mentoring experiences for adolescent girls. I hope to illuminate the choices I made and to make explicit my reasons for doing so. I would also like to show through my writing how I wrestled with my own fears and expectations and how these influenced the decisions I ended up making about how to proceed. I have already outlined briefly, in the first chapter, why I believed hermeneutics to be a suitable approach for exploring the topic. Here, I would like to further explain the processes of making my decision, as well as some relevant points about hermeneutics that have helped to guide the way I went about doing this work. Lastly, I aim to document how my feminist beliefs were woven into the process of interpretive inquiry.

### Deciding Upon a Way to Proceed

I have long been troubled by the discipline of psychology's tendency to study human behaviour through the scientific method alone. I find that behaviour is often equated with human experience and then is reduced to digestible bits in the form of statistical analysis. When I read studies that tended to quantify most aspects of human existence, I was struck by the underlying message that there is nothing of human experience that could not be inferred from watching behaviour and by categorizing people's thoughts or feelings into models or statistical

analyses. Further, events and relationships did not appear to be anything greater than the sum of certain formulaic components that could be broken down and examined separately. While I appreciated the utility arising from certain aspects of these studies, I felt they did not bring matters of humanity alive and make them relevant to our everyday existence. I wanted psychology to include a way of seeing that brought back the relevance of context and how we experience our world in that context.

I had taken a graduate nursing class on "qualitative research methodologies" that I felt had given me a solid foundation for beginning my journey as an interpretive researcher. However, it wasn't until I enrolled in a graduate survey course concerning interpretive inquiry that my desire to reconnect psychological phenomena with their humanity blossomed. Throughout the duration of the course, I began to think further about how I would like to understand more about mentoring. The final project for the course helped me to realize what I needed from the process of inquiry in order for the research to have meaning for me, and hopefully, for others.

First, I came to the realization that the topic will always have something to say about how you look into it (Gadamer, 1998). I conceived mentoring relationships to be full of complex interaction and meaning for all of the people involved. I thought that in order to preserve some authenticity regarding the experience, I would need to talk to those who had gone through such experiences. In that regard, verbal interviews or conversations seemed like an

appropriate choice (Kvale, 1996). Second, I wanted a way to do this work that would allow me to have flexible conversations with participants, rather than structured surveys or "interviews" as they are understood in the traditional sense (i.e., one person asking pre-appointed questions, and the other person answering). Again, interpretive work, with an emphasis on conversations as outlined by Kvale (1996) seemed an appropriate match to get to know people/participants and to learn from them. Kvale's perspective on interview conversations is that they should focus on the lifeworld or experiential world of the participants, with a view to listening for the meaning of these lived experiences. Third, I was drawn to a hermeneutic methodology, because I believed my interpretations of my own and participants' mentoring experiences (as well as their interpretations of their experiences) would be how I would understand this topic in a richer way. I thought that the hermeneutic necessity of digging deep to find new layers of meaning (e.g., Van Manen, 1997) fit well with my investigative nature.

Finally I wanted an approach that would allow me to remain true to my feminist perspective. I found congruence between my feminist outlook and hermeneutics, strengthened by the writings of Bowles (1993) and the work of Warnke (1984). Specifically, the scholars named above outlined several ways in which hermeneutic methodologies are a good fit for feminist perspective. First, they both value experience as something inextricable from understanding. Bowles (1993) outlines that both approaches recognize that all events are value-

laden and are not troubled by this possibility; in fact this becomes the jumping off point for inquiring into a particular experience. Feminist researchers recognize, as do hermeneuts, that we are "intimately involved with what we claim to know" (Bowles, 1993, p.187). Feminists have called attention to this connection to knowing in the slogan "the personal is political". Van Manen (1997) also acknowledges the connection between personal experience and social context. He writes that changing your understanding of a lived experience comes with the responsibility to act more carefully and tactfully in the world in response to the understanding you have gained.

As I tentatively settled on hermeneutics as a way to approach this work, I was drawn to particular aspects, to be outlined below, which further confirmed the "good fit" between hermeneutics, feminism, mentoring, and my own outlook for this inquiry.

Living With a Way to Proceed – Digging Deeper

Outlining Personal Horizons

In hermeneutic approaches to inquiry, preconceptions about and experiences with the topic at hand are seen as inseparable from how we understand the topic (e.g., Gadamer, 1998; Smith, 1991). Further, personal and cultural biases are the lenses we look through in order to facilitate understanding. Within this philosophical view, researchers are an intimate part of that which is researched. There is no need for an unbiased or detached researcher, as hermeneuts believe that we understand things in a particular way because of our

b eliefs and unique experiences (e.g., Gadamer, 1998; Grondin, 1994). Further, hermeneutic researchers believe that understanding is created in relation to other voices, be those the voice of written texts, conversations with people, and the "voices" of events that humans experience. Each person involved in an interaction (with a text, another person, etc.) participates in, and is partially located in the tradition or context that surrounds his or her particular understanding.

Thus, there is a great deal of utility to exploring what one's beliefs and perspective are because these can show us what we already understand, as well as areas we may need to delve further into. A person's experiences open up particular questions and foci, but simultaneously conceal other understandings. This is both the blessing and the curse of personal experience (Jim Field, personal communication). As previously discussed, proponents of hermeneutics do not assume that one can separate oneself from one's thoughts/beliefs and gaze upon them from a removed position. Rather, outlining personal understanding is a question of locating oneself in relation to texts, conversations, and the like. In examining my own experiences and conversations with the event of mentoring, I have tried to see how my perspective both facilitates and limits my understanding about mentoring, to visualize it clearing the path for new perspectives to emerge in dialogue with other voices. In particular, writing about my mentors during adolescent experience and talking about this writing with others has been helpful for me to recognize some of my own assumptions or my

"horizon" (as Gadamer (1998) would call it). The process has helped me to locate how I stand in relation to the question of mentoring and its meaning. My consideration of the interaction has also aided in the grounding of this inquiry within a realm of possibilities for how I might proceed intentionally and carefully.

Moderate Hermeneutics

Smith (1991) reminds us that all approaches to interpretive inquiry involve hermeneutics, as it is understood in the most basic sense as "the activity of interpreting our lives and the world around us" (p. 187). However, under the broad umbrella of "hermeneutics", several approaches have emerged that are distinguished by the areas that their proponents choose to focus on as essential to hermeneutic philosophy. I have chosen the "moderate" hermeneutic approach as it seems the most appropriate choice for guiding my journey with this topic. I found I did not relate as well to the conservative hermeneutic approach, as it contends that there is one possibly universal truth to be found if a person does his or her work properly (Gallagher, 1992). I guess I did not want my own laziness or incorrect procedures to be the reason that I might not be able to produce some sense of objective truth for this study. I also found that I was not as familiar or as comfortable with the radical hermeneutic approach because I felt it was too sceptical about the power of language in the lives of human beings (Gallagher, 1992). Although I am a critical and suspicious thinker at times, it seems like it would take a lot of energy to never take anyone at his word; to not trust what a person was saying to at least some degree.

Moderate hermeneutics is most often associated with the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer; a German writer, teacher and philosopher who was influenced heavily by the teachings of Heidegger. Gadamer's take on hermeneutics is unique because of its emphasis on several ideas to be outlined further below. By locating myself within the moderate hermeneutic tradition, I intend to remain true to the key assumptions associated with this tradition to the best of my understanding throughout my work in this inquiry.

Humans make sense of the world in language

At the heart of moderate hermeneutics is the inescapable influence of language upon human existence. Gadamer (1998) brought to light the idea that language is our central way (indeed our only way) for us as humans to make sense of our experience. Gadamer used the metaphor of conversation to illuminate how people understand or make sense of the world. Conversations take place in face-to-face verbal interactions, but also, as mentioned above, between interpreters and texts. Texts also represent lived experiences, and can further our understanding of a topic. Gadamer (1998) explains how, just as the people we interact with as speakers in a verbal exchange, the world also speaks in its own way and we must listen to this as well. In my conception of hermeneutics, this is where Gadamer (1998) and Van Manen (1997) tie in the significance of social action; our interpretations of the world point to areas of social trouble that require more understanding and possibly rectifying.

Gadamer's perspective really spoke to me, as I desired a philosophy and way to proceed that would focus on the importance of meaning as it emerged from conversations. It seemed that his philosophy pointed to the possibility that understanding language is not just a means to an end in an interpretive methodology. Instead, it constitutes our very existence as people. I liked the potential for guiding my study by philosophy, rather than the rules of a particular method. I saw parallels between the interpretive nature of language and Kvale's (1996) writing about inter-views. Specifically, according to Kvale (1996) the focus of conversations is the lifeworld of the participants. The only way to access their experiences is by talking to them (so says Gadamer and I agree). Kvale (1996) also highlights the idea that "the main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say" (p. 31). This reminded me of Gadamer's thoughts on understanding occurring because of a "fusion of horizons" in which meaning emerges. I thought moderate hermeneutics would make space for a methodology in which talking with participants was enough for creating understanding and for allowing new ways of looking at mentoring to come forward.

A related assumption is the idea that all conversation centres around "goodwill" on the part of the participants. I knew that I wanted to approach the interviews with faith; faith that they could offer me (and themselves) some new interpretations about mentoring. Gadamer (quoted in Grondin, 1994) tells us that goodwill means there is the possibility for transformative understanding of the

topic to occur. In essence, "the possibility that the other person may be right is the soul of hermeneutics" (p.124). Thus, I began with the assumption that the young women I would speak with were not setting out to deliberately deceive me, although this assumption did not mean that I would not question what the young women said about their experiences. I would make deliberations about what we conversed about; I just would not spend any time worrying if they were telling the "truth" or not.

## The nature of understanding

I wanted this undertaking to focus on the many understandings that are possible for the event of mentoring. I knew that I would not set out to prove that there is just one "right" way for understanding mentoring. However, there is likely a way that we can understand in order to represent girls' lived experience more fully. I sought an approach that would honour the many possible interpretations of mentoring's importance and meaning in young women's lives. I wanted this project to be a creative endeavour for both myself and for the girls I spoke with. I wanted us to co-construct our understanding together. I knew these were complex and perhaps unattainable hopes to aim for, but I needed an approach that would allow for these things to come forward. I found moderate hermeneutics to be encouraging for my intentions. First, because the moderate hermeneutic position allows for each person involved in the conversation to understand the topic; there is not a privileging of one perspective over another within a hermeneutic dialogue (Gallagher, 1992). Second, I found

encouragement in the notion that I could move beyond my present conceptualization of mentoring through the possibility that "only in conversation, in confrontation with another's thought...can we hope to get beyond the limits of our present horizon" (Grondin, 1994, p.124).

Hermeneutics is about understanding an event or experience through conversations, and participants in the conversation can demonstrate "inherent creativity" in understanding the topic before them in a new way (Smith, 1991). "Hermeneutics is about creating meaning, not simply reporting on it" (Smith, 1991, p. 201). I was drawn to such a perspective, as I perceived it to be a good fit for the intentions I had stated. Further, I believed that in hermeneutic conversations and writing, different voicings concerning the topic exist simultaneously and with space for each to exist. I thought this to be unlike the mindset of our culture that seems to centre on the superiority of one idea over the other; where the existence of one idea implicitly negates the tenability of an opposite or contradictory idea.

A second idea about understanding that I was drawn to and wanted to live out in my research was that of understanding being something that one participates in, rather than something that one constructs (Risser, 1997). This possibility appealed to me because it fit with my feminist beliefs about trying to build respect and collaboration in researcher-participant relationships (see below). Also, viewing understanding as a way of being rather than only as a way of knowing reinforced for me the commitment I had made to not be the detached

observed who objectifies her subject matter and her subjects. Gadamer (1998) thought of understanding through interpretation to be part of the human condition. Thus, it made sense to proceed with participating in understanding by talking with people. Somehow, it seemed closer to the world that we experience everyday than survey data or statistical analyses when we talk with others and make interpretations. As time went on, I discovered it felt more natural to me to see myself as a participant in the construction of meaning by virtue of my experiences as a person whose way-of-being-in-the-world involves communication. I think that looking at something meaningful to humans demanded a philosophy and method sensitive to how meaning might emerge.

The hermeneutic circle

After reading further about Gadamer's take on the nature of understanding, I became a little fearful about the implications surrounding his concept of the hermeneutic circle (1998). For Gadamer, understanding is not at a destination that one suddenly arrives at; it is not predictable but it is an event that occurs through interpretation. For Gadamer, understanding is always "on the way", meaning that there is not one absolute truth to arrive at in interpretive work. There is the possibility that new understandings will emerge, but they are never the final word on any question. In fact, glimpses of understanding will likely open up novel questions and more inquiry. The submerged positivist in me was somewhat disheartened by reading about this before beginning my work of interviewing participants, and I wondered how I would know when "enough was

enough" if understanding could never be concretely achieved. I continued to struggle with the ceaseless interplay between myself and the interviewees and their transcripts, which will be outlined further in chapters to come.

The circular nature of understanding refers to the idea that both the interpreter and the text participate in constructing understanding. The interpreter may have expectations of the text, and the text may answer back and say "no" or "yes" to particular expectations. From these initial wanderings, new questions are asked of the text and possibly of the participants in the inquiry. From these new conversations, new insights are illuminated by both the interpreter and the text, which in turn shine the spotlight on different glimpses of understanding; and the cycle continues. Despite the fact that entering the hermeneutic circle means a great deal of interpretive work, I did eventually appreciate the inherent respect of the *process* of inquiry that the circle represented. I knew that I would not be satisfied with my dissertation if I was not required to dig deeply into the topic, its history and myself in relation to the topic; as I believed the hermeneutic circle demanded of me. I could likely have come to some conclusions about mentoring under the umbrella of a philosophy or methodology that was not so fatiguing with regard to the amount of creative thinking, speaking and listening required. For the most part, though, I cherished the opportunity to engage in interpretation; to focus on the moment by interpreting and analyzing and writing possible conjectures about the event of mentoring as experienced in the lives of the participants.

<u>Listening as Midwifery</u>

In order to become an effective and astute listener who was in many ways immersed in the hermeneutic circle, I had to conceive of listening in a way that I had not previously considered much in my role as counsellor. I discovered that listening in counselling and hermeneutics are not exactly the same events. The purpose of the listening is different. In counselling, we (as counsellors) often listen with the hope and goal of helping someone live better (e.g., Egan, 1998). We attempt to understand the person and his or her problem and to provide some strategies for alleviating discomfort (e.g, Cormier & Cormier, 1991). Listening in the dominant models of counselling tends to be somewhat of a means to an end – listening to what a client says in order to conceptualize a plan for helping him/her move forward. Ultimately, as counsellors and clients, we desire to construct a grasp of the issue at hand so that the client can live life in a more aware fashion. I think we need to listen systematically and carefully in counselling so that we can hope to understand the other person's trauma, pain, or crisis. We need to utilize our listening skills to assess and treat the problem that the person is struggling with. I see listening in counselling as the base for providing some transformation in the way the person decides to live her life. My interpretation of listening in counselling is to alleviate a person's pain by instilling hope (Egan, 1998). I believe this is a worthy goal, but it is not the focus of hermeneutic inquiry. I needed to remind myself of that when embarking on interviews and tried to challenge myself to listen differently as researcher.

The central difference between listening in hermeneutic conversations versus counselling ones lies in the idea that in hermeneutics, the co-participants are trying to understand a topic together. This is in contrast to counselling, in which the counsellor listens in order to understand the client herself. The client listens to what the counsellor says, also in order to develop self-knowledge and perhaps to collect some of the knowledge that the counsellor may be passing on. The client is not focusing on understanding the counsellor's interpretations of the counsellor's experiences. However, in hermeneutics, this may be the case; that each is trying to understand the other in relation to the topic in question (Fiumara, 1990). The hope in this type of listening is that something transformative will happen in trying to understand the topic (versus the client) at hand.

I loved Fiumara's metaphor of listening as midwifery (1990). She explains that the listener encourages another's conceived thoughts to be born through conversation and remains present at the birth of these thoughts into words. To do this is a risky endeavour, for thoughts expressed are like children that leave the safe haven of the womb and find their way into the world. There is a mutuality implied in her vision of listening; each person engaged with the topic can bring forward new thoughts or ideas for birth. I felt challenged to leave behind the safety of the counselling skills I had come to rely on and tried to nurture listening as my way-of-being in the upcoming conversations about mentoring. I felt I had to learn to become a creative midwife engaged with all aspects of the experience instead of a knowledgeable doctor who listened in order to make a diagnosis.

## Feminist Commitment to Inquiry

There does not appear to be one definitive article or handbook that tells us how to "do" interpretive feminist research. There are some common themes, however, that are outlined in the works of feminists who have attempted to remain true to their feminist beliefs while undertaking any variety of projects. Below I will outline the salient feminist principles that I aspired to adhere to throughout this project.

### Privileging the perspectives of women and girls

I have had to consider the question of why I have chosen to only interview young women for this project. I think that for too long, in psychology and other disciplines, we have developed models that are based on assumptions that white, heterosexual men are the normative people on whom we construct our theories and understandings. If women (or gay men or people of color) do not demonstrate behaviour that fits into these models, they are seen as deviating from the norm and often are blamed for the ways in which they deviate from the norm. This type of alienation can lead to a propensity to shame deviant people by insisting that the reason they are "deviant" lies within them and is not linked to systemic injustice (Jordan, 1997). Feminist writers seem to agree on the idea that for most of history, research has either ignored the experiences of women, or has concluded that women and girls do not fit into the dominant models and thus are deficient in some way (e.g., Allen & Baber, 1992; Enns, 1997; Fine, 1992; Maguire, 1987; Mies, 1983).

There are many different kinds of feminisms and varying approaches to feminist interpretive work. For some interpretive feminist researchers, whose ways of doing feminism range from the liberal to the cultural to the radical (Enns, 1997), there is a shared assumption that context and systemic factors matter (e.g., Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Brown, 1991; Gilligan, 1991; Horn, 1998; Luft & Cairns, 1999). Further, individual behaviour does not exist in a vacuum; but rather is influenced by peoples' relationship to the world that surrounds them. In feminist interpretive work (e.g., Bach, 1993; Bowles, 1993; Warnke, 1984) the focus is on reclaiming the importance of lived experience; recognizing that examining "facts" under a microscope without considering context represents a stripping of the experience from its everyday surroundings. There is recognition amongst feminist researchers (e.g., Fine, 1992; Horn, 1998; Leadbeater & Way, 1996) that women are not automatically "abnormal" or "deficient" if their experiences do not fit into a theory that has been based solely on the experiences of men (Anderson & Jack, 1991).

With the above philosophy in mind, I wanted to ask girls about their experiences of mentoring. I intended to allow space for the possibility that their experiences of mentoring might not fit into the hegemonic model that focuses mainly on the passing on of knowledge and skills. I wanted to approach them with an attitude of openness; of being willing to hear about their life contexts and how those have affected what they have lived through. What I mean to say is that I strove to be open to their ideas without judging where they came from, or

thinking of them as "less than" because of their gender. This attitude of openness is congruent with a feminist interpretive stance, according to Bowles (1993). I wanted to make the effort to listen to some voices representing a group too long minimized or excluded altogether from the conversation (e.g., Holmes & Silverman, 1992); those of young women.

## The question of empowerment

Part of feminist obligation in research, according to some influential thinkers in the area (i.e., Fine, 1992; Reinharz, 1994) is to attempt to "empower" the people who participate in research projects. The concept of empowerment has been questioned historically (e.g., Alcoff, 1994; Flax, 1990) and I have also wrestled key questions about empowering participants. Can we as researchers empower those we interview? Is the power ours to "give" to someone else in conceivably a less powerful position?

Mitchell (1997) proposes that we do not give power to others as feminists, but that we help foster conditions so that people can claim their own power. Mitchell believes that relationships that are characterized by respect and an attempt to understand the other person's perspective is an essential condition for a person to be able to claim their own power. Part of claiming personal power, for Mitchell (1997) and for Jordan (Atco Centre Presentation, 2001) is to learn to relate to others more completely; by bringing more parts of oneself that may have been hidden out of shame or fear into the conversation. Further, it strikes me

that a person would be more likely to feel powerful if he or she knew she had some more choices or strategies for dealing with particular situations.

I think the above position on empowerment fits for what I want to accomplish as a feminist in this work. I do not presume to be a power philanthropist, handing out power as a reward to my loyal subjects/participants. Rather, I will sincerely try to respect and understand what the young women have to say, and encourage them to tell parts of their life that they may have been worried about being judged or put down for. I am not sure if I can/should have any role in raising their awareness about having more choices or strategies in their lives. That possibility seems to fit more with my role as a counsellor than as a researcher. Suffice it to say that I think creating an environment in which the participants might feel truly heard and listened to and respected is a powerful thing. I want to create such a space. I do not know if they will feel any more powerful in their lives as a result, but my hope is that they will sense that I have heard them.

## Link to social action

In beginning this project, it was (and still is) my hope that somehow and in some small way this work might disrupt the power relations inherent to the patriarchal structure. At the heart of feminist research, according to Miichelle Fine (1992), a feminist who is quite inspirational to me, is the desire to subvert the sexist social order. This subversion means different things to different kinds of feminists. I define myself as a radical feminist, because I believe that in order

to eradicate sexism, dramatic transformations of institutions such as schools and the family must occur. I also identify with radical feminism because I think that society must be changed at its very roots or foundation. Thus, I seek to create research that has the potential to change institutions. I think part of this change can stem from seeing events, such as mentoring, in a new light, and applying this vision to change the way things are typically done in some families or in some schools.

Part of the transformation of institutions will likely involve informing people involved with institutions such as mentoring agencies and the school system about what the participants have said about mentoring. Both of these groups may benefit from a greater understanding of mentoring; especially the positive things remembered by the participants that may be incorporated into program development. If the participants agree, I would like to make the discoveries stemming from this study available to agencies that provide mentoring services to young women. Also, I would like to offer the written project to schools around Calgary that may be interested.

I recognize that wanting to link an inquiry to social change or action brings up some issues. First, there is the question of whether this work can contribute to social change if those who work in the institutions are not willing to use it to that end. I know I cannot force groups like mentoring agencies to use the research for social change, but at least I can provide a place for them to start reading and possibly wondering and asking questions. Fine (1992) explains that

transformative scholarship revolves around 'attaching what is to what could be"

(p.5). I intend to communicate the discoveries about mentoring to groups that

might benefit from a different vision. Second, I am aware of the conundrum that

arises from wanting to do feminist research that changes the system with

participants who may not share my vision of social change; indeed they may not

see themselves as feminist or wish to be labelled as such (e.g., Borland, 1991). I

think the best I can do is be up front about my intentions to share the "findings"

with certain groups and my reasons for doing so. Ultimately, if they are not

comfortable with their words being available for viewing, I will respect their

wishes over my own desire to instigate some kind of social action.

## Collaborative relationships

In current thinking, most feminist researchers acknowledge that it is

largely impossible to maintain totally power-free relationships with participants in

the process of inquiry (e.g., Cotterill, 1992; Hall & Stevens, 1991; Horn, 1998). I

knew it would be naïve to assume that, compared to the young women I spoke

with, I did not have more power and control over this process of trying to

understand mentoring. After all, I was the one who came up with the topic, I who

have determined what questions will guide our conversations, and it is I who

ultimately decided how I represent our conversations in written form.

Although I held more sway over the interpretations that emerged from the

conversations, I did decide to be intentional about constructing collaborative

relationships between the participants and I. Our relationships were co-

constructive in the sense that both parties were each bringing their different kinds of knowledge and experiences to the table; and that these were respected.

My understanding of feminism as it applied to this inquiry also included at its core a responsibility to invite the participants' involvement throughout the varying phases of the project. In terms of how this belief in collaboration manifested itself in our interactions, I strove to communicate my gratitude to each participant for her willingness to share her story. Also, during each interview I stated that the reason I wanted to talk to them was because I believed that they are the experts on their own experience. Further, I also tried to communicate to each young woman that we would try and understand mentoring better together; in conversation, in reviews of transcripts, in questioning, and in listening. I also tried to involve each young woman throughout the phases of the inquiry. I made certain that each participant had the opportunity to ask any questions at any time throughout her involvement in this project. I also made sure that each young woman had the chance to review her transcript from the previous interview before we met again. We discussed each of our interpretations that arose from each interview and I was conscious of trying not to put words in the girls' mouths or from announcing my grandiose ideas as the be-all end-all of potential descriptions for mentoring.

Finally, my identification with feminist collaboration meant that I needed to be willing to talk about my experiences as an adolescent girl openly and honestly with the adolescent girls I spoke with. I also thought it imperative to have some

boundaries around the sharing of such information. I wanted to tell the participants what it was like for me growing up in adolescence so that I didn't hide behind the role of researcher. I also believed quite strongly that I needed to be vulnerable in sharing intimate details of my life in order to build trust and to contribute to our journey of understanding mentoring. However, I did not want to dominate the conversation and make it all about me and my experiences. I tried to balance my own speaking and listening. I hoped that this give and take contributed to the building of trust and understanding of the topic we were trying to look at together.

Beliefs Around Mentoring and Female Adolescence

As described earlier in a previous chapter, writing about my experiences and struggles as an adolescent for a final course project helped me to zone in on mentoring as an important topic for inquiry. I have also, as a result of such reflection, been able to gain more insight regarding my assumptions about mentoring relationships and how adolescence is for girls in our society. Of course, in the spirit of hermeneutics, I recognize that these assumptions are continuing to take shape as I complete this work and will continue to evolve over time. Outlined below are some of the assumptions that have emerged from my interactions with my experiences as an adolescent, and from my readings on girls and adolescence, and from talking to adolescent girls in various settings. As I mentioned earlier, I cannot hold these out and look "at" them, but I can look "with" them for this project. As Gadamer (1998) reminds us, we only become

aware of what prejudices or beliefs are "constantly operating unnoticed" (p.299) when we encounter a provocation; an encounter with the text of mentoring. This encounter for me took place in writing about my experiences as an adolescent girl as well as my experiences during that time with mentors in my life. These ideas represent my personal horizon on mentoring before I encounter new horizons in my conversations with participants.

- I view adolescence as a time when cultural messages about gender are particularly salient for both girls and boys. I think that society begins to put increased pressure on girls to conform to expectations of femininity. In my mind, sexual maturation is often linked with the potential to define girls as objects; as physical characteristics signify being available for the needs of others in sexual and emotional ways.

- I think that girls recognize and wrestle with the expectations that others impose on them in terms of their sexuality and their relationships. Often, the struggle is manifest and expressed in "problems" such as depression, self-harming, and addictions.

- Because we live in a patriarchal system (still), I think that adolescence is a qualitatively different experience for girls than it is for boys. I think that boys face their own particular struggles in adolescence, but an investigation of these is beyond the focus of this project.

- I believe that a teenager's peer group exerts more force on their journey of self-discovery and identity formation in adolescence in comparison to childhood.

- I also view the media and popular culture as significant influences on young women's lives in terms of providing images of what to look like and what it means to be a woman in the world.

- I see a need for relationships between adolescent girls and adults who are not their parents. This proposition is not to deny the importance of the parent-daughter bond, but to recognize that there are some things that a teenage girl might prefer talking about with someone other than her parents (i.e., a mentor)

- I think that adult women make the most powerful mentors for adolescent girls. I believe that older women provide the most salient examples for how to make choices in the face of a patriarchy that often devalues girls and their dreams.

- I believe that the experience of being mentored is open to interpretation and may involve relationships between women and girls involved in a formal mentoring program and those that are in touch on a more informal basis.

- I think that the new meanings and understandings that may develop from this inquiry have the potential to add to fields where work with adolescent girls is prominent, including counselling psychology, education, and policy development for agencies that have girls as clients.

## Beginning the Conversations

As aforementioned, it was very uncomfortable for me to jump into conversations with participants without having some kind of predetermined methodological structure to fall back upon. When I wanted to start interviews, I encountered several delays that were beyond my control (e.g., waiting for 10 weeks for the ethics committee to meet and grant me approval; mailing out letters of information and getting no responses). I experienced frustration at these events but a small part of me was grateful for the setbacks, as I could delay starting the inevitable amorphous interviews. I wrote about some of my mixed emotions in my interpretive journal:

> I feel like I'm fighting bureaucracy and the end result is that I doubt myself.
> I doubt my connection to my own knowledge from my experiences as an
> adolescent girl – not that I can speak universally for anybody but I do have
> the hope that something about the culture we live in will be reflected in the
> stories we build together. I am almost scared to get started now that I have
> formal approval. (Journal entry, September 5, 2000).

In the end, I needed to begin the conversations in order to understand human experience – talk with those whose lives you want to know more about. But paradoxically, this "simple" act was both fear-inducing and capable of yielding such a rich and complex harvest.

I had to remain conscientious about not going out and confirming what I already thought to be true about adolescent girls and mentoring. I had laid out

my preconceptions and beliefs (stated above) with the hope that I could go

beyond these and understand mentoring and the participants' lives more deeply.

I was inspired to read that it "is only in conversation, only in confrontation with

another's thoughts that...we hope to get beyond the limits of our present horizon"

(Grondin, 1994, p. 124). I needed to strike a balance between knowing what my

philosophical positions were, and also allowing new meanings to be created

through listening to the young women who participated speak about their worlds.

Part of finding the balance involved learning to listen in a new way, as mentioned

above.

Finding Participants

Having reflected on how to listen in hermeneutics, I felt more prepared to

seek out those who would be willing to participate. I approached several

agencies that had formal mentoring programs for girls of varying ages in place.

In the end, I connected with one community-based agency providing services for

girls "at risk" of dropping out of traditional public school and of prostitution. The

co-ordinator of the mentoring program became my liaison, responsible for

approaching potential participants on an individual basis and asking if they would

be willing to receive more information about the project in the mail. Specifically, I

used a letter of introduction (see Appendix A) to explain the context of what I was

setting out to understand and my intentions in undertaking the project. For the

two young women who agreed, I sent out letters of information and sample

consent forms (see Appendix B) to the address they gave to the co-ordinator. I

also included handwritten notes of greeting that encouraged them to phone me and that re-iterated that I was willing to discuss further any questions or concerns about their potential participation. I waited anxiously for them to contact me by phone. Several weeks went by and I decided to phone the liaison contact to ask that she remind the girls to give me a call if they were still interested in participating. Both of the girls she approached ended up calling me and we discussed the project and my intentions further over the phone. The whole experience was a good reminder for me that these young women had busy lives and that they were doing me a favour by participating, not vice versa.

I also asked a counsellor who is well-known in the counselling community for her work with adolescent girls to assist me in locating participants. The process went forward in a similar fashion to the process described above involving the community agency. The counsellor approached girls whom she felt might want to converse about the topic of mentoring. All of the young women she asked about participating were her former clients. I sent out letters of information and sample consent forms to three young women who expressed interest. In the coming months, I was contacted by telephone by two of the young women the counsellor had approached on my behalf.

Two of the participants also referred friends who they thought might be interested. In this case, the interviewees acted as my contact people and they approached their friends about participating. I then sent out letters of info, etc,

and waited for them to call me. I ended up interviewing one of these people out of the two who were referred by participants.

There were discrepancies between what I had originally intended about finding participants and what occurred. I originally had in my mind the "magic" number of ten people to interview; an expectation arising out of my master's thesis work where I had interviewed 10 girls. I had to eventually let go of this expectation and trusted the process of hermeneutic inquiry – I recognized that I needed to converse with different participants to varying degrees until I felt I had a sufficient understanding of the experience of being mentored in adolescence. It turned out that I conversed with 5 young women individually.

In the spirit of wanting to include diverse voices from the margins in my work, I also intended to try and talk with people from a diverse background in terms of race and class (Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996). Overall, I am not convinced that the group represented diversity if looked at in terms of race/ethnicity alone. I ended up speaking with four white girls and one girl of colour. I did not want to presume to label their race or ethnicity, and so asked them how they would describe these aspects in their own words. Lastly, I set out wanting to speak with girls who were still in "adolescence". Although the definition and age scope of adolescence has expanded in recent years (Weiten & Lloyd, 2000), I settled upon speaking with girls who were still in their teenage years. I realized that this was likely an arbitrary distinction, but everyone that had volunteered for the project fit into this category. In three out of the five cases, I

was asking the young women to reflect on mentoring experiences that occurred between one and three years ago in the past. For the remaining two participants, they chose to tell about mentoring relationships that they were currently involved with.

Embarking on Conversations

When I met with each participant individually, I brought her the consent form (See Appendix B) and asked her if she had any questions for me about the project. Most of the concerns that arose were about confidentiality. I answered questions from several participants with regard to what would happen to the final written document; including mentioning the possibility of it being published and being presented at conferences. I re-iterated that any identifiable parts of the transcripts would be taken out, and that the only name to be associated with transcripts and actual quotes would be a pseudonym, which they could choose. Before I began to audiotape the conversations, I also assured them that they could stop the interview or tell me to turn off the tape at any time. For most of the interviews, I stated briefly why I was interested in the topic of mentoring and talked about some highlights from my own days as an adolescent with my mentors. Following Cotterill (1992), my intention in starting out this way was to begin to build an atmosphere of trust and to communicate to the participants that the topic was not something removed from the context of my life just because I was the researcher. I also recognized that it would take great courage on their part to discuss relationships in such a frank way, and I wanted to honour the

young women that sat before me by showing that I too was willing to "take the plunge" and explore this topic as well. Following this, I asked them if I could begin the taped portion of the conversation.

I began the taped portion of the interview by asking each participant to briefly describe someone that they would consider their mentor. As I mentioned previously, I did not want to impose my own vision of mentoring on the girls, but remained hopeful that in our discussions some new understandings about it might emerge. In some conversations, I reminded them that they could talk about mentors they had met through formal mentoring programs, or they could talk about other influential women in their lives. I left the decision up to them. Once they had told me a little about their mentor, I asked them "What has it been like for you to have been mentored?" In most of the conversations, this question prompted the young woman to tell stories about her experiences of being in a mentoring relationship.

In a minority of the instances, the young women were unsure of how to proceed and would respond to my "conversation-opener" with statements like, "so you just want me to tell stories and stuff?" (Leanne) I attempted to assure them that "stories and stuff" from their perspective was exactly what I wanted to hear, and that I wanted to know about her experiences, in her own words. Several other young women appeared tentative to begin talking about their mentors, so I decided to tell them about some concrete instances in my life where I had salient memories about my mentor. They seemed relieved to hear

me talk in what I felt was a free-flowing way. After my description, they seemed a little more relaxed about describing how they met their mentor, and circumstances in their lives that they remembered about their relationship with their mentor.

As each young woman told me her story, I tried to listen in a hermeneutic sense, to let something new be born (Fiumara, 1990) from each of us, forming our thoughts into ideas by using words. Off and on, I was uncertain about what the person across from me was trying to say, and when that occurred, I would ask a question for clarification about what they were describing. I intentionally tried to keep my questions to a minimum, though. For the rest of the time, in the spirit of spontaneity, I tried to trust that the conversation would take us where we needed to go. In one interview, responding to an intuitive prompting, I asked the young woman if there was a particular song, poem or piece of art that reminded her of her mentor. We had both been struggling with the conversation up until that point. When I asked this question, she became quite animated and led me through a very evocative description of a painting her mentor had given her and why it was so meaningful for her.

### Dwelling With the Text

Once the first round of conversations with the young women were complete, conversations with the transcripts generated from the interviews began. Steeves and Kahn (1995) remind us that, in hermeneutic research, there is not one "set of detailed procedural steps that predefines an order of research

events" (p.186). However, the way to proceed once the texts have been generated is to interpret the conversations you have participated in as inquirer, and then to incorporate the "resulting interpretations" into an evocative, rich understanding of the experience (Steeves & Kahn, 1995). It sounded deceptively simple to me at first. As time moved forward, I learned that dwelling with the text generated from my interviews with the young women was an undertaking not to be trivialized nor embarked upon without the greatest of reverence for the topic and the understanding that might result from our "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1998).

My interpretive journal became a cornerstone for my reactions to the conversations. I wrote in the journal prior to each conversation, and after each conversation was completed. I wrote about my expectations and fears before I met each participant face to face. I documented what our initial phone contact was like from my point of view. After each interview, I wrote without editing about the evocative moments I remembered from our conversations: things that struck me, moved me, related to my own understanding, things I wanted to know more about.

After writing in my interpretive journal, I would transcribe the audiotaped conversations verbatim using a word processing computer program. Throughout the transcription process, I stopped and scribbled notes and further comments on parts of the conversation that stood out for me. Once I printed the conversations out in hard copy, I left space in the margins for my wonderings, questions, and

interpretations. I would write about what evocative parts had caught my "listening midwife's ear" and would relate these interpretations to my own understandings of mentoring and adolescence, as well as to writing (e.g., books, articles, memoirs) from a number of disciplines that spoke to the interpretation at hand. I would then incorporate my understandings into a coherent piece of reflective writing and discuss emergent ideas with colleagues. Part of this discussion was informal; the other involved handing in writing for feedback to my supervisory committee. From there, I was inspired to examine new possibilities with regard to where the interpretive writing was going. I was also encouraged by colleagues to read various texts that related to the emerging interpretations. In many cases, the book or piece of writing they suggested was incorporated and woven into my interpretive writing.

Overall, the process of interpretive writing required my imagination and my abstract and concrete thinking abilities. Throughout, I intended to remain true to the spirit of hermeneutic inquiry. Specifically, I was guided by Peter Blum's (1984) perspective on interpretive writing; that it "provoke new ways of seeing and thinking within a deep sense of tradition, bringing about new forms of engagement and dialogue about the world we face together" (quoted in Smith, 1991, p. 202). I returned to reflect upon various segments of the transcribed conversations at various times as my understanding grew. In writing, I wove in the voices of the participants, my own voice by way of journal and prior

experience, the voice of historical texts on related topics, and indirectly the voices of the people with whom I had conversations about interpretations.

As I continued with reflection, writing, and more reflection, it became apparent that further conversations with certain participants might yield a greater understanding about particular parts of their experiences related to mentoring. I was aware that, in all of the cases, four to five months had passed since the initial interview. I felt unsure about how I would approach them again to talk about mentoring for a second time. My interpretive journal held some of my concerns about this contact:

> I am worried about dropping into L's life again after several months of not being in touch. I feel like I am just contacting her only when I need something; although these past months I have been wrestling with her words and my own thoughts so in a way I feel I have been in touch with her. I am hoping what I wrote about our conversation makes sense to her and that she might be willing to talk further about the parts that intrigued me. (Journal entry, March 12, 2001)

When I phoned each of the two young women I wanted to talk with again, they were both gracious, and I perceived we eventually returned to a comfortable rapport on the telephone. I explained that I would mail or drop the transcripts off, along with a brief summary of some of my reflections.

I found that the second conversations I had with the two young women tended to flow more evenly in comparison to our first meeting. I believe that this

was partially due to the possibility that we were both more relaxed having already spoken once before. In my situation, I felt more focused on the emerging understanding and had more faith in the hermeneutic process. I was also less worried about asking the "right" things or responding in the "right" way; I had faith that the conversation would go where it needed to, with a minimum of prompting from me. Both of the participants talked about things they had remembered or that had struck them since we last met. They were both comfortable with the transcripts that had been presented to them, and such did not request any changes.

I handled the text generated from the second round of conversations in much the same manner as the first. Both of the second conversations helped to illuminate particular evocative moments that appeared in each young woman's story, to greater and lesser degrees. The way I have re-presented their words and understandings in writing in the following chapter is affected by the contexts we have been and are living in and living through (Kvale, 1996). Although the completion of the written dissertation represents the end of the formal requirements for my doctorate, I will continue to think about and "play" with the idea of mentoring. Specifically, I will live with what it means now and what it might mean in the future. For the present moment, I hope my writing captures, in a meaningful way, how we (the participants and I) stand in relation to the topic. In hermeneutics, understanding is always on the way (Risser, 1997). I hope to

have contributed one piece of the puzzle in this exploration – both in this chapter and as I move into more interpretive pieces in the chapters to follow.

Thus far in this section of the chapter, I have explained the manner in which I approached finding participants, honored university ethical requirements, contacted participants and had conversations about the topic of mentoring and how it pertains to their lives. In addition, I have tried to capture how I lived and worked with the text generated from conversations and how in some cases, this process lead to second verbal interviews with the participants.

I recognize that it is somewhat arbitrary to stop writing about methodology now, and to start writing about analysis in the next chapter. In many ways, these events are fluid and all take place at various times during the inquiry and after the inquiry. In hermeneutics, the conversations with participants, the reflections on those conversations and the writing and re-writing of evocative moments are interdependent and often simultaneous processes (Van Manen, 1997). However, for the sake of organization, I have chosen to present the dimensions that emerged from the transcripts generated from the conversations with participants as well as ideas about the poignant dimensions that help flesh out what is meaningful or important about mentoring for Chapter Four. In doing this, I have tried to bear in mind that all the writing in an interpretive study is a particular reflection on the world, whether or not it concerns the interview transcripts directly.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPLORING THE DEPTHS OF THE SEA

I found the process of reflecting on the transcripts and on my interpretive research journal entries to be full of challenges and frustrations. There were so many voices and subtexts between and within each interview that I felt overwhelmed. I wondered, especially in the initial stages of listening to tapes and pouring over transcripts, how I would be able to create any order out of what I perceived to be a chaotic jumble of words. Reflecting back, I think I was impatient, and wanted some "gem of truth" to emerge right away from the first round of interviews I participated in with two young women. I was anxious for them to give me, through their descriptions of their experiences, a theme that I could cling to for the duration of the project; something that would guide my thinking and help me put other interviewees' lives into the same box or context. In re-visiting the texts generated from our conversations, I tried to keep in mind that texts are always a response to something (Gadamer, 1998). This re-membering helped me to focus on each interview for its own message that could eventually (hopefully) contribute to a larger framework for understanding.

Each time I listen to an interview or re-read a transcript, I hope for some kind of understanding. There is always a little glimmer of possibility; some seed that might grow into something else, given some more intellectual attention. I've also had to come face to face with the certainty that there is not going to be one common theme that screams to me, "I am the

experience that represents all experiences for these young women and for all young women everywhere!!". If I can tie some strands together so that there are some common echoes, some aspects of "shared kinship", as David Jardine (1992) talks about, that will be powerful and maybe it will be enough. I am also struggling with how to present each woman's experience as her own, despite the common elements. (Journal entry, August 20, 2001).

I noticed that I began, after lots of digging, to see some moments across interviews that sounded like each other, some common threads. Also, I tried to appreciate the unique themes that characterized each young woman's story; the elements that made her words distinct from the others. I had to decide how to write about these - how to have the elements of kinship and distinctiveness make sense. I am indebted to my colleague Anne Laverty (2001), who showed me through her writing, and through her encouragement, a particular method of presentation that would work well for what I was trying to show through my work. Thus, I have chosen to present analysis in this chapter in a way that shows echoes of both commonality and of individuality.

When listening for common threads in the transcripts, I tried to conceptualize, as a hermeneut is wont to do, of each young woman's story as a response to something. I felt like I was on "Jeopardy" and had to come up with the question knowing the text that formed the response or the context for what was to be revealed through it. When considering the stories as a collective

whole, there was an overall experience of being mentored that emerged. The written understanding to follow begins with a description of what constitutes this collective experience and then shifts to explore more specific various elements that are relevant to the overall understanding of the experience of being mentored by an adult woman. These various elements will be brought to life through the words of the participants, my reflections on my own experience, and echoes found in relevant writings.

While weaving the various pieces together, I tried to remain cognizant of the idea that, though there are echoes of commonality, each young woman expressed some ideas that were not echoed in the other participants' stories. To reflect this individuality, I developed descriptive titles for each participant's unique story. These titles helped me remember the uniqueness of their mentoring experiences. Sometimes they were phrases they used in the interview that really struck me. Other times, the title was from my own perception of what was important and evocative about what they had described; a way to "sum up" their encounters with a mentor. As a reader, you will notice that I introduce each young woman into the writing by use of these bold titles.

This chapter is meant to be a reflection on possibility. David Jardine reminds us that new possibilities and ways-of-being are part of the character of effective interpretive writing:

"Writing of this incident is not a matter of passing on information to a reader, but of evoking or educing a different self-understanding in the

reader. The goal of interpretive work is not to pass on objective information to a reader, but to evoke in the reader a new way of understanding themselves and the life they are living (1992, p.60). Thus, I hope that you will bump up against your own moments of wonder, and form your own questions, queries, and conclusions about the meaning of mentoring and how it relates to the stories you have lived. I aspire to show you something new in the interpretive writing, to illuminate the event of mentoring and demonstrate how it's connected to wider circles of meaning. To illuminate new connections is to remain true to the spirit of hermeneutic and interpretive writing (Jim Field, personal communication).

You will notice that I alternate between using "I" language and utilizing the pronouns of "we" and "our". My intention in using these words is to encourage interaction with the text of this document. As I mentioned, I invite the text to move, inspire, or trouble you. Secondly, my intention in using these words is to suggest our shared kinship with the concept of mentoring (Jardine, 1992). We have all been teenagers and have had influential adults in our lives. Hopefully the writing allows for glimpses of familiarity relevant to our own stories.

Who I am on the Inside and the Outside

Writers who examine the subject of identity such as de Beauvoir (1952) and Cooley (1922) suggest that it is humanity's nature to search for a sense of identity, a sense of place, a notion of how one might fit into the larger scheme of things. In my opinion as a counsellor, our sense of who each of us is as an

individual affects most aspects of daily living, including the choices we make, how we feel about ourselves, and how we interact with other people. The concept of identity has received a lot of attention from scholars in various disciplines, but especially in psychology, where the focus of study is often the individual self. Identity is generally understood as a psychological term that revolves around "having a clear and stable sense of who one is in the larger society" (Weiten & Lloyd, 2000, p. 136). The focus on identity as a way to understand who one is as an individual, one's meaning for oneself "on the inside" has become the dominant way to understand the concept, according to Leadbeater and Way (1996). However, they draw attention to the necessity to consider another aspect of identity, one's meaning for others (figuring how to act on the "outside", in interaction with others and their perceptions of the individual).

In considering what the participants' stories were collectively a response to, I was struck by the idea that each person involved in the study, in some fashion, was trying to figure out questions relevant to both aspects of identity outlined by Leadbeater & Way (1996). Questions like "Who am I?"; "How do I feel?"; "What do I stand for?"; "How should I act?"; "Who are my friends?"; "How do I get along with others?"; "How do others see me?" all seemed to be whispered behind the evocative moments of the transcripts. Indeed, these themes came up in some of my initial contacts with the participants.

Leanne, the first person that contacted me about a possible interview seemed to have some concerns about what I would think of her. I sensed she

was uncomfortable with the possibility of her troubling background being included in our interview or in the presentation of the work through writing. We discussed how the words she spoke would be used and that she would be given the opportunity to delete anything from the interview or transcripts that she was not comfortable with. Still, I don't think it was a question of ethical procedure, but rather a matter of her wondering how she was going to be perceived by me. There were concerns (on both our parts) about how our unique identities would be expressed in the current and subsequent conversations and if we would find one other acceptable. She asked me, "So you want me to tell you stories and stuff". Something in me resonated, and I said, "Yes, that's exactly what I want". It sounded as if she was concerned that I would judge her for the kind of stories that she would be trying to tell. Reflecting on our initial phone conversation, I think she was wondering, even in the space of that first contact, how she would appear in my eyes during the interaction and if I would find her acceptable.

The initial conversation with Leanne described above also raised some of my own concerns about how I would be perceived and how I would interact with the participants in this project. In my initial phone contact with Leanne, I ran headlong into my own problems concerning self-doubt and the potential impact of power differentials between her and I. When she left me a message in order to set up an interview, I found myself wondering whether I was as in touch with the topic and with adolescent girls as I had purported to be during the process of writing the research proposal and waiting for formal approval.

When I phoned Leanne back, I hoped that I would "still" sound as if I knew what I was talking about. In a way I wanted to hide behind the role of being the "expert" of the subjects of mentoring and adolescent girls. However, I quickly realized in the moment that that particular stance was not going to move the project forward. Still, it had been so long since I'd actually reflected on mentoring or adolescent girls that I felt somewhat dissociated from the whole experience. Further to my own insecurities, I found myself wanting to cater to this young woman, to assuage her fears that I was competent. Of course they weren't actually her fears but *my* fears that I would be judged badly in relation to the research process and writing of this dissertation. (Journal entry, October 16th, 2000).

When I met Leanne face to face, she struck me as a resilient person who had been through a lot in her short life. At the time of the interview, she was nineteen years old and had been in a formal mentoring program for several years, beginning at age fourteen. The mentoring relationship she focused on during the interview was between her and the formal mentor the program had matched her up with. Her sense of identity as an adolescent had been skewed by some hurtful messages from family members. Her experience of being mentored was one in which the relationship with her mentor became a strong (and encouraging) influence on her developing identity; one in which she described her mentor as **the wise woman inside my head.**

Leanne described many of her teenage years as being a time where she "never had anybody to talk to about it...I just kinda learned it on my own, and screwed up, fixed it". In figuring out significant decisions about sexuality, drinking, and smoking, Leanne was learning about who she was "on the inside", but she recalled that she did not receive a lot of guidance with regard to important issues from the outside (teachers, parents, friends). Thus, she learned to only "dwell with herself" as she described it. Traditional developmental theorists might interpret such a statement as evidence that Leanne was accomplishing the healthy task of becoming "individuated" by passing through an identity crisis (e.g., Erikson, 1968). Yet Leanne mourned having to become so independent and self-possessed as an individual. She was crying as she told me during the interview, "If I wanted to grow up, I had to do it myself."

I think it is helpful for people to have the chance to develop and reflect on their identity as a solo activity, perhaps in solitude, to get a sense of their strengths and weaknesses. However, it is also essential that people develop in the context of feedback from others. We too often conceive of identity development as being a process that is "an activity of the self, by the self, and for the self" (Jopling, 2000, p.135). However, as Jopling (2000) rightly points out, we need the perspectives of others in order to gain insight into ourselves. Otherwise, all of our self-knowledge developed solely through our own reflection becomes a unidimensional picture of the complex and multilayered phenomenon of personality or identity. For example, Leanne developed a unidimensional

image of herself that was based on her believing that she was not worthwhile, because her mother did not, in her mind, encourage her. When I asked her what allowed her to survive and get over her one-dimensional picture of herself as being a bad person, she replied, "definitely D's (her mentor's) support with the little and the big things. My family's never been there, so it's never been my family support."

Another young woman in the study, named Justice, described the mentoring experience as something that disrupted the way that she saw herself for much of her life prior to beginning a relationship with her mentors (which was often in a negative light). Justice commented that, "just being a teenager, you tell yourself negative things". She saw her mentors as people who were able to interrupt some of these negative ways she saw herself.

> My mentors helped me, first off, by telling me how they see me. Saying, you have these qualities...telling me things I was really good at or how my personality was. I guess at the time I didn't really think about how I was, or what kind of traits I had, or the good stuff about me. By hearing them say it, and starting to think about it, I realized who I was and what kind of things I did, and the good things about me.

From my conversations with participants and the transcripts, I began to see mentoring as a type of dance in which the young women moved closer to their mentors in order to gain insight into their identity and then moved away again to test out this knowledge in the world. Haley, who described her

mentoring relationship as one in which her mentor **holds up a mirror so I can see myself**, talked about this dance in an evocative manner. Haley described mentoring as an event that opens up several possibilities for living in the world as a teenage girl. For her, mentoring was important for her developing identity because it helped with decision-making in her life. For example, she spoke about her mentor being "...a good sounding board" who helped her with "decision-making, confidence, and she really built up my self-esteem". When it came time for Haley to practice her newfound confidence in decision-making in her life, she told of how her mentor "gave me space to do that."

> It strikes me that getting involved with a mentor takes great courage for these young women. It is an admission that they need some help and guidance; that they don't have all of the answers, even though they may project an image that is just the opposite. Having a mentoring relationship shows reverence for the idea that life happens in the context of our relationships with others. (Journal entry, December 16, 2000).

For each of the participants, mentoring seemed to facilitate the development of self-insight (learning about qualities they expressed which they had not seen or acknowledged before), which was catalyzed by the suggestions, advice, and stories told by the mentor. The relationship between the young women and their mentors also seemed to be an orchard where ideas about identity in relation to other people began to grow and ripen. The young women whom I spoke with had questions related to relationships with significant people

in their lives (to be outlined further in this chapter). The mentoring relationship was described as a place of safety to consider these questions, and to learn how to balance getting along with other people with a respect for individual needs and wants.

Treasure, the third young woman I spoke with for an individual interview, shed light on how being involved with her mentor provided her with an example of how healthy relationships might work. She characterizes her relationship with her mentor as one in which **me and her relate a lot**. She felt that her mentor is "really respectful of my boundaries" and "always makes me feel good about myself". Treasure seeks her mentor's advice about relationships with others while continuing to develop her own unique relationship with her mentor so that it is built around honesty and closeness. She describes the process of getting closer to her mentor: "...then after we kept hanging out and getting to know each other, it's become deeper, like with any relationship."

According to the participants, part of the overall experience of mentoring (specifically the idea of considering questions about who one is on the "outside") involves developing a sense of the world of relationships and how one can act and grow in such a world. Several theorists come to mind when thinking about engendering possibilities for relational knowledge and growth. The first is Jopling (2000), whom I've already introduced. He writes that learning about the social or relational dimension of one's self is not possible unless one participates in the social arena, which necessitates devoting attention to relationships.

The second group of theorists who have ideas that resonate with the social dimension of identity (with a focus on women and girls) are those developmental psychologists who have developed a relational approach to psychological development; theorists at the Stone Center. These psychologists have disrupted traditional Western notions of the "self" as a separate, autonomous entity and have challenged us to think of the self as an evolving being, in which development is enhanced by increasing authentic connections with other beings who are "in relation" (Miller, 1986) to each other. In the relational perspective, the outcomes of psychological development shift from increasing self-sufficiency and autonomy over one's internal and external world to participating "in increasingly empowering relationships" (Jordan, 1997, p.27) in which the focus is on the "relationally emergent nature of human experience" (p.15).

The participants in this study reminded me about the importance of relationships for learning about ourselves. They interrupted (for me) the dominant way of seeing the self as a separate, disconnected object, and drew attention to the lived experience of mentoring, which involves figuring out how to do the dance of the self in relation to other. I heard Jordan's, (1997) focus on speaking our own truths while receiving and respecting other people's truths, even though those ideas may be hard to hear, or we may not agree with them in Leanne's story of how she struggled with an important relationship in her life and

relied on her mentor to help her work through it. She identified this event as being on of the most meaningful in her mentoring experience:

Toupey: What was it about that that really meant a lot to you?

Leanne: Well, that someone actually listened to my feelings about the situation. Cause I know I was young, but I still have a brain and I still have my own opinions and feelings. And she really listened, you know, and felt for me and understood that it's hard.

Having outlined the emerging understanding of the overall experience of mentoring as one of discovering questions of and developing answers about identity, I will now move into exploring the particular constitutive dimensions that have emerged from this inquiry. I intend that these dimensions will help bring to light certain understandings of the mentoring process, as touched on by the participants.

Some of the Things I've Been Through With My Mom

There are many circles of meaning in this inquiry. Gallagher (1992) reminds us that there is always interplay between the general and the particular. The circle relevant to this specific part of the writing is one of focusing on how the young women and I understand the importance of mother-daughter relationships and the special instances they described going through with their moms. The larger circle surrounding this dimension is that of the dance of self and other; which is what is learned and enhanced within the participants' mentoring relationships. From many of the young women's descriptions, the mother-

daughter relationship represents a delicate dance, full of potential problems and possible blessings.

I had not expected to hear much about mothers and daughters in conversations about mentoring. Looking back, I see this was perhaps naive on my part. Maybe I did not want to hear about it; maybe I had made some assumptions, based on my own experience. I had neglected to try and understand how my own mentoring experiences had influenced my relationship with my mother. Further, I had not considered beyond a minimum of effort how my relationship with her as a teenager might have shadowed my interactions with my mentors at the time. As an adult, as you have read in the first chapter, I consider my mother to be one of my mentors. I had experienced her as both mom and mentor, but the two roles seemed quite separate. I had kept the two on different planes in my mind, and was guilty of assuming that those roles would not be intertwined or "mixed up" with each other in the lives of the people I spoke with. However, in re-reading the transcripts, I could not ignore that they were replete with wonderings and longings about mothers; and with questions about how mothers fit into the significance of mentoring relationships. I was drawn into their words and left with an ache in my being to understand the way in which mother-daughter relationships might weave themselves into the mentoring tapestry.

Some stories about mothers, such as those told by Haley and Treasure, left me feeling unsettled and sad for the experiences of the young women

relating the stories. Haley wanted to live with her mother at the age of 11, but "had to leave my hometown because I was charging my dad with sexual abuse". I was saddened that relations with her mother were strained because of this situation. In another anecdote, Treasure described how her mother's suicidal behavior influenced her to also attempt suicide:

When I was starting at (the agency), she was just getting out of the hospital for trying to kill herself. She slit her wrists…and she's a role model in that for me, cause I ended up slitting my wrists a couple of times.

I was concerned that Treasure had emulated her mom in an act that was potentially lethal. I felt sad that Treasure had been through a suicide attempt with her mom.

Freddy's story about her mother, on the other hand, left me hopeful because it seemed to be encouraging for helping her work through challenges and learn more about herself. She described how she saw her mom as "always there" for her: "If I'm really upset about something, she's always there, no matter what it is. And she'll always be there to give advice, or just for a shoulder to cry on." With regard to working through what she might choose a career, she spoke of what her mom has taught her.

My mom taught me that no matter what I want to do, if I really want to do it bad enough, there's always a way. She'll always find a way-there's always got to be a way to do it. She's always told me that , no matter what, she'll be proud of me.

Lastly, some descriptions, such as Treasure's, below, left me feeling confused because they seemed contradictory. I wondered why talking about her mom seemed to elicit a range of emotions, often with two contradictory feelings being expressed at the same time. For instance, Treasure spoke about how fearful she is of her mother's "explosive blowouts" while simultaneously wanting to take care of her by asking another adult "can you please support her and make sure she's okay".

Below is an exploration of some of the evocative moments of the interviews; a look at the mother-daughter relationship and some of the problems and blessings that were described by participants. Throughout the text below, I have attempted to intersperse some echoes of familiarity that pertain to mothers and daughters in writing from the disciplines of psychology and human development.

<u>Growing up too fast</u>

Treasure spoke about having to grow up too fast in large part because of how she related to her mom, who had worked as an escort:

> I guess some of things I've been through with my mom and that, because of her job and stuff, she hasn't really been there. So, it made me grow up a lot faster, because I knew about a lot of things that most Grade Sixers don't know. (several moments later in the interview)..Like my mom's sleeping with these peopole. And it's having to deal with them...and it makes you grow up a lot faster.

Leanne echoed a similar feeling about having to grow up faster than some of her peers; she relied on herself for a lot of her teenage years, as she saw her mother as simply emotionally unavailable. Throughout the interview, she kept coming back to the strained relationship between herself and her mother. At the beginning of the interview, she said, "me and my mom have never had a good relationship, ever." Later on, she characterized the quality of her relationship with her mom by saying "me and my mom were never close, you know?" and that "I never had anybody to talk to...I just kinda learned it on my own, and screwed up and fixed it".. Leanne's story sparked in my mind the possibility that maybe girls who have less fulfilling relationships with their moms might need mentors all that much more.

<u>New ways to relate to mom</u>

Hancock (1989) writes that the mother-daughter bond is one that must be transformed in every daughter's life, no matter how well the two may have related in the past. The realignment of the mother-daughter relationship is not merely about reaching the traditional developmental goal of separation. Instead, it is about a daughter figuring out how to become less dependent on her mother (and both her parents) while still recognizing the importance and interconnectivity that will always be involved in the relationship (Hancock, 1989). In other words, it is about striking a delicate psychological balance centred on learning how to meet one's own needs in the relationship while respecting the other's limits in terms of their own needs.

In addition to acknowledging the centrality of the mother-daughter bond, we must also consider the cultural context in which this relationship exists. Hancock (1989) poignantly elaborates that mothers, on a number of levels, pass along messages about female powerlessness to their daughters, "...like an unwanted family heirloom" (p.189). The internalization of such messages sets up a devaluing of most things female, which Hancock believes are qualities of mutual empathy, ability to sustain relationships and cooperation. When a daughter looks at her mother through the hegemonic lens of the culture, Hancock argues, she is likely to focus on those qualities which society deems weak and unworthy. Further, she may denigrate her mother for embodying these qualities and may be suspicious of women as a whole. I heard this idea resonate in part of Leanne's transcript where she describes how she was suspicious about her mentor because her strongest female role model to that point had been her mother.

> That was also another tough thing with me, because I never had a good relationship with my mom, I thought all women were like that...and be all bitchy and stuff. So when I met D., I thought...I was kind of scared, because it's a woman figure that I've never really had in my life, either. It was hard to bond with her, for most of my whole life it was...it was because I never had a good relationship with my mom.

In Hancock's writing are stories of daughters who have come to a different place in their relationships with their mothers. This evolution does not

necessarily mean that they get along perfectly with their mothers now, but that they have thought things through and have done what they have needed to do in order to express their own needs as adults within the relationship. For some, the stories of transforming the mother-daughter interaction involved a direct confrontation. For others, it involved a gradual realization and growing awareness over time. Justice, whose mentoring experiences were encapsulated by the phrase **I obviously wouldn't be the person I am today**, echoed this idea of gradual evolution in her description of her relationship with her mom:

> When I started getting into trouble, my mom was there for me, but I pushed her away, because that was my parent, it was weird, and I can't talk to you about this stuff. But I think because I had that time away, and my mom never gave up on me, we always talked...and now, me and my mom are like best friends again; like when I was a little kid. And I can talk to my mom about lots of stuff that I wasn't able to before.

Freddy is the only young woman out of the five that identified her mother as one of the mentors in her life. Her experiences with her mom and with mentoring were encapsulated by her words that explained what both had done for her: **helped me see who I am on the inside.** Like Treasure, Justice, and Leanne, she spoke about the contradictions that characterized her relationship with her mom. She was able to see many of her mom's positive qualities and to try and emulate these in her own life. She responded to my question about what her mentors have taught her with this description of her mom:

My mom taught me that no matter what I want to do, if I really want to do it bad enough, there's always a way. She'll always find some way; there's always got to be a way to do it. She's always taught me, well, she's always told me, that no matter what, she'll be proud of me.

Later on in the interview, I felt she demonstrated some great insight when she recognized that her mom was not perfect and that there were some things that she did that Freddy did not like and would not choose to do herself. For example, in arguments with her mom, Freddy acknowledged that:

Sometimes when she talks things out, she just...she says what she thinks you want to hear. And you *know* it. And she'll just be like, "Well, I think that..."; she'll never say what she actually thinks, or what she feels. Sometimes she'll say what she feels, but she'll never give her honest opinion if you're really mad.

Freddy's description seemed to me to speak of the dance of self and other, which becomes especially tricky when it involves the relationship she has with her mom. Freddy's admiration and love for her mom is clear in the first quote above and throughout the interview. I sensed that Freddy's desire to emulate her mom's positive qualities was an important way for her to connect with her mom. Likewise, her recognition that her mom was not being genuine with her seemed to point to a need to be a separate, unique person that does things differently in those types of situations.

In considering Freddy's transcript, I was reminded of the many layers of meaning surrounding the mother-daughter relationship that Pipher (1994) writes about. Regarding her own relationship with her mom, Pipher said, "My relationship with my mother, like all relationships with mothers, was extraordinarily complex, filled with love, longing, a need for closeness and distance, separation and fusion" (p.102). For Freddy, she wanted to be close to her mom, but also to proclaim her own individuality by not acting like her in arguments. For Treasure, she struggled with taking on a parenting role with her mom when she overdosed on drugs. For Justice, she felt estranged from her mother while she lived on the streets, but was grateful to be able to discuss religion with her openly. It was clear from these stories about the participants' mothers that contradictions and complexities abound in their relationships with them.

History of relationship with mom

Freddy's words also left me wondering to what degree moms make good mentors; ones that facilitate healthy development for daughters. I think that because parent-child relationships represent a history of connection/disconnection, love, care and possibly neglect or abuse, (Kaschak, 1992), the mother-daughter relationship has the potential to be a powerful force; perceived differently by teenage girls than relationships with mentors they meet through an agency or in their neighbourhoods or schools (e.g., Echevarria, 1998). Given the history of connection described by Echevarria, I wondered how

the participants might be affected by troubled patches of their mother-daughter relationship, compared to disappointments and conflicts in other relationships. Haley has had to live with feeling abandoned by her mother since the age of three, as illustrated by her comments below:

> I was adopted when I was three by my mother's parents, and I've always...sometimes now, even to this day, hold a little resentment towards her....
>
> Toupey: Your mom?
>
> Haley: Yeah.

Haley's perception of her mom abandoning her holds sway over some parts of her life in the present. She describes herself as having "abandonment issues", and "having a hard time confiding and trusting and connecting" with people.

Some participants seemed to find solace in their mentors, at times realizing that their mentors fulfilled functions that for a variety of reasons, their mother could or would not. For example, Freddy acknowledged that there are some dilemmas she does not want to seek her mom's opinion about, such as how to get home from a party that she described as "a bad situation". If she thinks she's going to "get in trouble" from her mom for being at the party, she phones another mentor to come pick her up and keeps it a secret from her mom. I think in some ways, the participants' mentors meant a lot to them because they represented an adult that could be counted on, in ways that their moms may not have been able to. Indeed, for Treasure, she was able to work through some of

the complexity with her mom with her mentor. In describing her mentor's support, she said, "...well, if I had a bad day with Mom or whatever, I go with her."

As much as mothers may cause harm intentionally or otherwise, I maintain there is also the potential for mothers to exert positive influence as mentors to their daughters. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, I learned how to make intentional choices as a woman in the world in part because of the mentoring influence of my mother. However, like with Freddy, Justice and their mothers, there were also rough spots in our relationship that we had to negotiate. In other words, just because I thought of my mom as a good mentor does not mean that there is an absence of conflict and working through of issues. Further, Abbey (1998) reminds us of the positive possibilities inherent in mentoring by mothers. "Mothers can serve as powerful role-models for daughters not just with respect to the act of caring and advising but also with regard to consciously living a balanced life" (Abbey, 1998, p.24). Justice addressed such a conscious balance in life by describing how her mother facilitated the growth of her thinking around religion.

> She didn't just say, 'I'm Catholic, so you're going to be Catholic and that's just it.' My mom let me make my own decisions around what I wanted...what religion I wanted to have - if I wanted to have any at all. Left it up to me to decide.

Like Justice, I think my mother in some ways provided me with an example of how to live consciously by teaching me how to question the unjust parts of society and to resist where appropriate. I would hope that mothers might provide some insightful moments; although for many of the girls I talked with, this was not reflected in the ways they spoke about their experiences.

## Reflections of Self in the Mirror

One of the most poignant moments of the inquiry came when Haley showed me a painting that her mentor had given to her. When I asked her if there was a song, poem or piece of art that reminded her of her mentor, she pointed to a drawing on her wall. The drawing depicted a woman sitting in front of three mirrors, facing the mirrors. I could not make out the woman's eyes in the reflections in the mirrors, but there was enough of an outline to determine that a female figure was being reflected back in each of the three mirrors. When I asked her to describe the picture, this is what she said:

Haley: When I look at that picture (pause), it's almost like I see a reflection of myself. She kind of gave me that....

Toupey: Gave you the mirror...to hold up so you could see?

Haley: Yeah, yeah.

(several moments later)

Toupey: How would you describe it...you can tell me what it's about, but in your own words.

H: Well the person sitting there…that to me symbolizes me, um..you can see her face in the mirrors, right, and that's where I kind of see her.

T: Your mentor…

H: Yeah, my mentor. That's what I mean by she's a reflection of me.

T: Oh, oh, okay, I didn't get that. So she's holding up a mirror so you can see yourself but then you look in, you see her too, is that what you're saying?

H: Yeah.

This interchange with Haley ignited many questions for me. I was struck by considering the mirror and its associated language of reflection as a way to consider mentoring. How was the mirror related to the girls' developing identities? Who was providing the reflections? Were there discrepancies between their images of themselves and others' images of them? What were the messages? Did the participants act on these messages? The act or process of mirroring also came into the conversations with the participants, and it seemed to involve other people giving them feedback about how they perceived them. Justice explained the process of mirroring as "my mentor people helped me by telling me how they see me".

Culture as mirror

My conversation with Haley lead to many questions about the importance of mirrors as symbols for identity development and specifically for teenage girls. After asking several other participants to comment on what mirrors meant to

them, I began to wonder how young women's experiences of mirrors and mirroring might have a special significance. After reading different works on the subject (e.g., de Beauvoir, 1952; Edut, 1998; Kaschak, 1992; Pipher, 1994; Wolf 1991), it became clearer that many women see themselves in a splintered fashion because of the symbolism the culture (particularly in North America) has ascribed to the mirror and femininity. Although I am aware that psychoanalytic and object relations scholars (e.g., Kohut, 1977; Lacan, 1977; Rosenberg, Rand, & Asay, 1985) have their own take on the "mirror" phase of human development, I found that these theories did not allow me to write as clear an interpretation as the more sociocultural works (named above). I also looked briefly into works by feminists who sought to revise traditional psychoanalytic notions of mirroring (e.g., Irigaray, 1985; Kristeva, 1982). However, the fact that these approaches focus on pre-verbal development was problematic for me. Although the participants' early experiences of mirroring with their caretaker or significant adult likely affected their lives in some way, I was unsure of how I would make the connection between an early phase of development and their current relationships, especially since the inquiry focused on their experiences as adolescents, not infants.

I found that De Beauvoir (1952) was able to explain how individuals' meaning for themselves is bound by their meaning for others, especially when the meaning for others is defined largely by the demands of the larger society. She expands further on Lacan's (1977) conception of the mirror stage by

explaining that a child trying to live up to what he has seen in the mirror projects his "existence into an image, the reality and value of which others will establish" (p. 269). In essence, under the gaze of others who will judge her image, a child begins to regard herself as an object. For de Beauvoir (1952), living life to a large degree as the object of others' perceptions is a common experience for women in Western societies. In terms of gender, de Beauvoir posits that, generally speaking, boys eventually grow out of the mirror phase and learn to embrace their own subjectivity, whereas girls in adolescence learn that their existence will be perpetually tied to definitions of themselves that represent the foreign "Other". Becoming an adult woman means learning to become defined by what society and those around them see as appropriately "feminine" qualities. With regard to the mirror, she explains,

> "Man, feeling and wishing himself active, subject, does not see himself in his fixed image; it has little attraction for him, since man's body does not seem to him an object of desire; while women, knowing and making herself object, believes she really sees herself in the glass (p.631)."

The Otherness of being female explained by de Beauvoir (1952) was apparent in the context of several of the participants' stories. Several of the girls had been prostitutes; and I would argue that in general, prostitution represents a cultural tendency to objectify women as bodies existing for others' pleasure, especially sexually (e.g., Dworkin, 1997). I must state that I do not know if any of the girls I spoke with would view the situation in the same way. One of the

participants also casually described an incident in which her math teacher called her a "whore" in front of the rest of the class. I felt that she was in some way wondering if she might have brought the comment on by saying that she was wearing a revealing outfit. I wondered, but did not ask, if she was dressing in a particular way to be noticed, or to explore/express her sexual self. However, the bottom line for her was clearly that she was not dressing to invite degrading comments.

> This teacher should not be in a classroom, calling her students whores. Like whether she likes me or not, she's getting paid to teach me, so she has no right...Yeah, I was wearing a little skimpy dress yeah, it was kinda short, and a little revealing.

I was really concerned about the message being sent to this young woman when she described this incident. I wrote about it in my journal:

> I didn't quite know how to react in the interview when she disclosed this to me. She just kept talking like it was a casual affair. A couple of times, I asserted that it was "totally inappropriate". Afterwards, I felt like I hadn't communicated that I was sufficiently outraged. I think at the time I was a little stunned. I hope to be able to address this in a follow-up interview (December, 2000).

The teacher drew this young woman's attention to the objective nature of her (only) physical being by calling her a whore. I was concerned that an influential adult like a teacher would mirror such negative expectations to her student.

Beauty and lookism. I heard echoes of struggles with being defined through others' eyes, specifically by physical qualities such as body size and beauty in the participants' stories. Justice described how, at times, she was dissatisfied with the physical part of herself. "Some days I'll look in the mirror, and I'll see myself and say I feel fat today, or I look fat, or whatever. Or, I look awful today." Treasure spoke of how she was initially afraid to approach a girl that eventually became her friend because she had a different physical appearance than many of her crowd. "She's got all the weird clothes and the hair and makeup, and she looks really scary."

Pipher (1994), who has interviewed countless teenage girls, labels one of the primary cultural expectations as "lookism"; an inordinate pressure to appear a certain way in order to be accepted. While she acknowledges that lookism affects both girls and boys, she maintains that a lot more girls than boys describe their sense of self as inextricably bound up with their appearance. Freddy acknowledged the constraint of the standard of beauty that is expected of females in the quote below. In response to the question how her life would be different if she was a boy, this was part of her reaction: "...they have it so much easier. Like they don't have all the pressure to do the make-up in the morning, get the new hairstyle, and all that good stuff. They just roll out of bed, throw on a hat...."

I know from both experience and working with young women in a variety of contexts that most adolescent girls typically are not satisfied with themselves

when they look in the mirror. Often, mirrors in girls' lives are symbols of standards that they cannot possibly live up to, including standards of beauty and behaviours (Association for Awareness and Networking Around Disordered Eating, 1998). The quote below suggests how problematic the pressure of living up to the limits and desires imposed by the culture can be:

> In the room of mirrors, girls stand in front of each mirror and practice smiling, practice widening their eyes, practice cocking an eyebrow, practice walking, practice moving. They must practice until their movements achieve spontaneity....They are invisible to each other, invisible to themselves. (Burton, 1988, p. 43)

The negative connotation associated with the mirror likely stems from the possibility that the mirror represents the male gaze. The gaze expects women and girls to "appear" a certain way in order to fit in with cultural prescriptions of femininity and feminine beauty. Women who do not ascribe to certain dimensions of the cultural ideology are often labelled deficient in some way (Crowley-Long & Long, 1988). Thus, reflected back in the mirror of the culture, the woman finds her own image distorted by the expectations of others (e.g., Bartky, 1990; Berger, 1977; Bordo, 1993; Kaschak, 1992; Wolf, 1991). Berger (1977) illustrates the phenomenon in his book "Ways of Seeing":

> Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves.

(p.47).

It seems, in Berger's (1977) conception, along with others (e.g., Brown & Jasper, 1993; Wolf, 1991) that the gaze of patriarchal society has come to be focused on appearance as a measure of women's worth. I assert that this fixation on appearance manifests itself in two particular types of messages to women. First are the types of messages focused on the idea that women are somehow innately inferior as embodied beings and therefore they must spend large quantities of time and money to rectify their appearance in order to be acceptable (e.g., Bartky, 1990). The second stream of messages has been discussed above in terms of the dominant discourse available to teenage girls, and is highlighted by MacPherson & Fine (1995). These messages are aimed at telling women they can do whatever they choose to do in the world (including being physically powerful, being superwoman juggling career and family, etc) but that they still better look good while doing it. This group of messages seems to be more positive for encouraging our daughters, but when we look more closely, we see that the cultural prescription to aspire to a certain standard of appearance and perfection is still there. For me, this standard is often portrayed in the world of animated female video heroes. The "new women heroes" in such games may be able to kick male characters' asses, but inevitably are animated with huge cleavage and have an hourglass figure also. When the mirror reflects back to young women only two options for the self, it can mean struggles with eating

disorders, dieting, and depression as they try and inevitably fail to meet the standards (e.g., Larkin, 1994; Sapsford, 1997).

Providing alternative reflections

I wondered how mentors' reflections of them might have positively influenced Haley's and the other young women's images of themselves. I wondered how metaphorically seeing a mentor reflected back in the mirror has impacted on the development of their sense of self. In reviewing transcripts from our conversations, I began to hear how mentors provided some alternative conceptions to the lookist expectations of the culture. For example, Leanne described an instance in which her mentor told her that it wouldn't matter what she looked like, she would still support Leanne. "I could say to her, 'I shaved my head" and she'd say, 'Oh, good for you'." I also began to hear that mentors provided some feedback about qualities the young women were not aware of expressing; qualities that were, in Justice's words, both "good and bad".

As the participants told their stories (to be outlined further below), some talked about how their mentors shifted their attention away from the importance of beauty and provided other ideas about their worth as people. Justice felt comfortable discussing her feelings of being fat with one of her mentors.

There's some people in my life, like mentor-type people. I feel like I could talk to them about it – like "I feel really fat". They were just good to talk to....they made me feel better about my body.

I asked Justice what kind of responses her mentor had when she would tell her

she was feeling fat. Her mentor would say "you're not fat." Sometimes, Justice explained, this was enough for her to stop worrying about it. If she returned to the issue with her mentor in the conversation, her mentor said something like "it doesn't matter what you look like." Overall, Justice stated that these were helpful statements that interrupted her keeping her body image worries to herself.

Treasure did not describe specific instances in which she had struggled with feeling "less than" in terms of physical appearance, but she did comment on her mentor turning her attention towards developing qualities that have nothing to do with appearance. She explained that she liked being admired for being a good person, rather than for superficial qualities:

I like it when people can say a lot of good things about me, because it makes me feel good. And that's the way I get my confidence now. Before it used to be, "oh, I did this many drugs, and I drank this much".

In addition to reflecting positive qualities to the young women, some mentors also provided feedback about how they saw them, even if that was not necessarily in a good light. Justice said that her mentors told both about her "good" qualities, and also told her "these are things you might need to work on". I think this kind of information needs to be delivered tactfullly, and would probably not be well received if the young woman did not trust the person.

I think that a mentor has the potential to participate in mirroring by helping a young woman find a balance between her own subjectivity and the needs and expectations of others. This concept of balancing expectations shows up in

Jordan's (1997) work on desire. Jordan believes that society's understanding of

desire has become unidimensional; the concept of desire has become

synonomous with the "self-determining, autonomous, Western adult" (p.57)

acting on his wants for his own gratification. In this case, he represents the

subject who moves towards attaining an object (many times the object is another

person). My reaction to this definition is that it lacks any acknowledgement of the

fact that our wants and/or desires as people are socially embedded. We always

affect other people when we desire something. In other words, "acting on our

'felt needs' has an impact on another person and occurs within connection"

(Jordan, 1997, p.59). It strikes me that mentors could help young women clarify

what their own desires are, and could also help them outline how acting on those

desires may affect their relationships. In this fashion, I see mentors as able to

disrupt the traditional associations of the word "desire" with objectivity and to

encourage the subjectivity of those they mentor.

How To Be In the Patriarchy

In thinking further about identity development, I was struck by the idea that

part of identity involves figuring out how to situate oneself within the social

context. And, because I am a feminist, the social condition that caught my

interest the most during my conversations with the participants is that of

patriarchy. Each of the young women that spoke about their lives outlined

various mentoring stories in which their mentors taught them how to exist as a

female person in a patriarchal world. In using the word "taught", I mean that they provided examples of potential ways or possibilities to live in the world as a female person. The examples the mentors provided came by way of the young women observing how their mentors acted in *their* lives, and then trying out some of these ways to see if they fit for them. As with the "common" or general pieces or components we've looked at so far, existing in the patriarchy was expressed in a myriad of different ways within each mentoring relationship.

There was one thread that each of the participants mentioned with regard to the experience of developing their identity given the patriarchal context in which they live. The thread seemed to be learning about how to have relationships with people that allowed them to enact a balance between their own needs and the needs of others. As will be outlined below, the mentoring relationship provided a space in which to explore this and related questions.

## To carry oneself as a woman

I guess I'm a junior, just starting out. But I think I've picked up a lot of things from D., over the years, and it's important to me. I hope when I'm older that I will be a strong woman also. I think the most important thing about being a woman is how you carry yourself.... (Leanne)

What does being an adult woman mean? How does a person live as a woman in the world? I heard these questions being whispered underneath the

words of much of the conversations I had with the participants. Talking about poignant moments in mentoring meant talking about growing up as teenage girl into a female adult; learning how to "do" womanhood. It also meant talking about the expectations that they faced as teenage girls and the choices they made in the face of such expectations.

I found, from listening to the young women in this project, that the meaning surrounding carrying oneself as a woman had little to do with physical appearance, although several of the participants mentioned being aware of pressure to look a certain way. According to Leanne, carrying yourself as a woman has to do with "how you live". She talked about her mentor's hobbies, her lifestyle, and her willingness to be assertive and "to the point" when she wanted something as examples of how to live.

Treasure also admires her mentor for carrying herself and living her life in a particular way. It came to light that her mentor inspires her to also think outside the box, and to try new things, to embrace being unique. I sensed that she views her mentor as a person who disrupts conventional expectations and thus encourages Treasure to think for herself in many situations. One person, Justice, used the word/label "feminist" to describe her mentor and how she had influenced her developing identity. She said,

"One was a really strong feminist...in that kind of way, and I kinda got into

that. I think me being a strong believer in equal rights, and women being just as good as men came from one of my mentors, and her…just believing that and teaching me different things."

I was struck by the reality that some of the participants recognized that they could not simply adopt the actions of their mentors as their own, without questioning them to some degree. It seemed like they acknowledged that not every idea their mentor put forward or every way a mentor "lived her life" would necessarily fit for them, their personalities, and the emerging understanding of how they themselves wanted to live as young women. For example, although Justice's mentor showed her "different things that maybe otherwise I would've never been shown", such as going to women's rights marches, she also talked about how she did not unequivocally accept every experience or way of thinking as something that she would choose to do. "There was some stuff they taught me that I wasn't interested in, and I took what I wanted and left the rest." I was impressed by this mature statement and her outlook in general, and wondered if her reflection would have been the same had I spoken with her at age 13, rather than now, at age 20.

Reflecting on to what degree the young women were influenced to make the same choices as their mentors brings up, for me, the question of what should we mentor towards. Should we (as mentors and adults in adolescent girls' lives)

encourage them to become whoever they want to become? Or, should we mentor girls towards learning to make wise, discerning choices in the face of an oppressive system that will enhance their personal growth while at the same time contribute to a better world? I wonder if there is some kind of balance point between these two extremes. Is it too lofty a goal to encourage or expect girls to make choices in the face of patriarchy that contribute to the "good of society"?

Making choices under pressure to be a good girl

In some participant descriptions, part of carrying themselves as women, seems to be the ability to disrupt notions of traditional femininity. The young women's adult mentors appear to provide examples of how to do this, and also provide a "safe space" or sounding board for the young women to try out various choices that represent, in my interpretation, breaking out of some of the patriarchal expectations for how girls should behave. In the interviews, many of the evocative moments were about disrupting the traditional idea that women of all ages should keep silent unless they can say something "nice" that does not hurt anyone's feelings. In Justice's case, her counsellor (whom she identified as one of her mentors) helped her learn how to be honest with herself and to verbally ask for help with getting off the streets.

While I was at treatment, to my counsellor there, I said, 'I still have problems', because I was still working on the streets- so...I asked her to

find me something that would help me deal with that aspect. But I wanted

to quit, too, I just didn't know how.

For Treasure, the debate about being a good girl at one's own expense came to

light when she spoke about how she ends up worrying more about her friends

than her schoolwork.

Normally, when I'm actually in a classroom, I'm a huge socializer. I'm like,

oh, I gotta worry about my friends. But I'm working on it..and hopefully I'll

be able to stick to it, that when I go into my high school, that I'll be able to

focus on my work, and my work will come before my friends.

In considering how the girls of the project handled these dilemmas of

relationship, I am reminded of research that demonstrates, for urban girls (mainly

white and middle class), responding to patriarchy has typically meant "going

underground" (Brown, 1991; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan,

1995). Going underground, according to Brown and Gilligan (1992) is a response

to the expectations imposed on girls and women in a male-dominated culture.

This type of reaction involves girls questioning and silencing themselves in order

to stay within the conventions of what it means to be a "good" woman. For

Brown and Gilligan (1992), traditional femininity is held up as the standard for

girls to aspire to; "...specifically we are referring to the encouragement of self-

sacrifice or self-silencing and the holding out of purity and perfection as

conditions for relationship and the mark of good women..." (p.30). Concurrent to

this standard is the act of pretending that relationships do not involve conflict or

the necessity of disclosing or discussing differing opinions and feelings.

According to a number of popular theorists (e.g., Apter & Jossellson,

1998; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995), girls around the

ages of 12 and 13 begin to show a "split" in their knowing. They experience a

conflict between what they are expected to do in relationships (not make

anybody angry, don't rock the boat) and the reality of relationships (conflict, open

discussion of problems). Thus, in an effort to connect with others, many girls

disconnect from themselves. Behind such a choice is a realization that

patriarchy expects girls to act a certain way, and if they do not, there are very

real consequences. They may be shunned, harassed, called "bitches" for

speaking their mind, denied attention from teachers and peers in school, and so

forth (Larkin, 1994; Luft & Cairns, 1999; Pipher, 1994). Treasure's story of being

called a whore by her math teacher shows that there are consequences for

behaving (or dressing) in a way that is not seen as appropriate for a girl.

I heard echoes of this type of "split knowing" in the words of Freddy,

Treasure, & Justice (specific examples are outlined below). But unlike the trends

described in Brown & Gilligan's work, the young women from this study seemed

for the most part to be capable of making choices to express themselves to other

people. However, they were certainly able to articulate the pressure they felt in

relationships to keep everything going smoothly so as not to disappoint people.
They were very conscious about other peoples' reactions as they came up in the
course of relationships, but usually remained committed to speaking their mind.

Freddy, for instance, spoke of the debate between choosing to not tell her
mentor the whole story about something if she thought she might risk losing her
respect and accepting her mentor's reaction to the truth. In this case, the mentor
she was talking about was her mother.

Well, it depends on the subject. Like if I got in trouble at school, and my
mom was livid with me, and she was like, 'you are so in trouble', and
sometimes she'll be like, 'let's just talk about this". And I'll be like, "fine,
fine". And she'll be like, "did you do this because of this?" And I'll be like,
"yes", cause I won't want to talk about it. Or cause I don't want her to get
mad at me for why I really did it.

But if it's like...if I know I've done something wrong, she asks me why, and
if I've hurt someone or said something really rude that I shouldn't have,
then I'll be like, "well, I said it because of this, and hmmm, you're right."

For Treasure, her relationship with her mentor has been a place in which
she can become increasingly confident about speaking her mind to both friends
and family members. She talked poignantly about being estranged from her
biological father:

Well, with my dad, I don't see my dad. He has another family ever since I
was two. And I don't see him anyway, because I don't agree with him.

And I just...I don't get along with him, because of the things that he's done in the past. ...It's like he has no sense, and he doesn't care about anybody but himself.

We conversed about how she shares this particular similar life circumstance with her mentor; "...like with the dad thing, we can both relate to not having a dad". Lately, Treasure described feeling very angry with her father and also being able to speak her mind with him, with support from her mentor as the backdrop for some of her dad-daughter confrontations.

I'm very straightforward like that with my feelings. I'm always like, "hmm, this is how I feel, so...and whether you like it or not, I'm telling you how I feel-so like if I offend you, oh, I'm sorry, but I can't help how I feel."

Treasure also acknowledged that she is bolder now in her mid-teens with regard to speaking her mind to her friends. In a phrase I loved (underlined below), she told me about how she knew she would risk losing her friends by explaining how she did not want their relationship to focus only on drugs and alcohol. She recognized that she might have outgrown these friends whose lives revolves around drugs and drinking. She stated it this way: "They're still there and I'm beyond that." She felt en-couraged by her new support network (of which her mentor is a part) to set limits with them, knowing that it would likely lead to her being excluded from the group.

I just broke up with those people, a couple of weeks ago....I'm not like that anymore. And they're like, "we're going to a party and we're getting

pissed, everyone's drinking, blah blah blah." I'm like, "hey I'm not going....I don't want to be around a bunch of other people who are drinking."

Justice also described how one of her mentors "taught me to work through things in relationships, and to talk things out, work through it; figure it out". Ironically, Justice found that the very same person that had blessed her life with an example of a woman speaking her mind in the relationship later became someone that was not willing to work things out with her. She described how she remained true to what her mentor had modelled for her in the past, despite an awareness of her mentor not practicing what she preached.

> What I did, was we just left it, and (the mentor) escaped for a while. And I called her one day, and I said, "are we ever going to talk about this stuff?" And she was like, "no, that's it, done, over with". And I said, 'you're the one who taught me to work through things in relationships, and to talk things out, work through it, and figure it out, and here you are just saying no, that's it'. But I can't make her..........

In considering how the individual choices of girls fit into the larger expectations of society, I am reminded of the work of Ignatieff (2000), who has written and lectured extensively on the conflict between individual rights and group rights. He maintains that all relationships between people call for sacrifices on each person's part. For example, he examines relationships within families:

"And family life is based on sacrifice: parents devoting years to the care of children when they might prefer to be furthering their own interests, and husbands and wives devoting themselves to each other when other persons and possibilities beckon" (p. 97).

Ignatieff argues that these sacrifices can pose harm to an individual's psychological and moral well-being when they are *unequal* in the relationship; meaning that one person is sacrificing her own identity at the expense of others. Such sacrifices, Ignatieff argues, are unjust because they require being inauthentic, and I would agree. I think we can frame girls' tendencies to stuff their own feelings down for the sake of preserving relationships as problematic if their authenticity or ability to act on their own behalf is being shut down. For example, I think it would have been problematic if Justice was not able to be truthful about still working as a prostitute on the streets for fear of upsetting her counsellor.

The mentoring relationships described in this project seem to be places in which the young women can examine their sacrifices and make intentional decisions about which sacrifices are worth making for the sake of relationships, with a view to keeping their own sense of self in balance. For Treasure, the sense of balance involved recognizing when her friends were doing things that were destructive, and that she wanted no part of.

I hang out with the people who aren't going to get me in trouble and who I'm going to be safe around, you know? People who are real friends, not

people who are going to go and do drugs. Cause that's what my friends did a lot.

She attributes her ability to discern which sacrifices are worth making in part to the mentoring relationships she's encountered: "And I've made a lot of changes, I've changed so many things. And that's the whole thing about _____(the name of the mentoring program)."

Evolving Mentoring Relationships

I tried to remember, throughout the process of the hermeneutic circle of analysis, that this piece of writing is a work in progress; that it evolves according to my own horizon and the multiple horizons of the young women in the conversation (Gadamer, 1998). When I framed the flux of assumptions and meanings of this inquiry as part of the circle, it helped me to shine a light on parts of participants' transcripts in which they spoke about their mentoring relationships as part of a similar circular process. Each participant, through her own story, described how, over time, the mentoring relationship changed. For Leanne, it's become "more like friends, less than a contract that was signed". For Haley, "things started to change" between her and her mentor when "I had my first daughter at seventeen and my life completely changed". For Justice, her mentoring relationship evolved as "we just kept hanging out, and got closer" and then her mentor "moved back to North Carolina". The meaning of mentoring in each girl's life was a work in progress. It twisted and turned in concert with the

life circumstances (such as childbirth and geographical relocation) of both mentor and mentee.

Beginnings

For some of the participants, their initial encounters with their mentors reminded them of the betrayal that they had felt from other relationships; with both adults and peers; and thus they talked about feeling cautious and wary about beginning another relationship that had the potential to end up hurting them. For example, Haley, who described her mentor as a "wonderful lady", acknowledged that "I have a hard time confiding and trusting, and really connecting with a person", even though she said "she hit if off right away" with her mentor. Leanne had experienced painful relationships with grown-up women, especially with her mother, and echoed Haley's worry about trust as she described the rocky start with her mentor.

> So when I met D., I thought....I was kind of scared, because it's a woman
> figure that I've never really had in my life, either. It was hard to bond with
> her, for most of my life, it was.....because I never had a good relationship
> with my mom.

Justice spoke of the beginning of the relationship with one of her mentors being awkward when they first met up. "At first it was weird, though, going out with her, like when we first met. Just because I didn't know her." However, she explained that all new relationships are somewhat "awkward because we didn't know each other".

Both Freddy and Treasure had different experiences of beginning

relationships with their mentors. Freddy identified her mom and sister as two of

her main mentors, and talked about the continuity of support in her relationship

with them over time. She explained that her mom has taught her a lot,

throughout her life, "...ever since I was a little kid." And being the younger sister,

she has known her sibling since she was born. For her, there was not a specific

initial moment of meeting her mentor; they have been cohabiting for her

childhood and adolescence. She used the word "always" many times when

talking about the importance of each of these women in her life.

Treasure felt an instant bond with the woman she identified as her mentor.

She felt comfortable with her the first night she met her, and voiced this opinion

aloud that same evening. The volunteer co-ordinator of the program

accompanied them as a facilitator.

> I went out for coffee one night to meet her, and J. came with me, and I
>
> really liked her. I was like, 'I really like you.' So we made appointments
>
> for more visits......I really enjoy being with her.

The above participant quotes encouraged me to consider how central the

idea of the relationship with the mentor is in each of the young women's

conceptualizations of mentoring. The evolution of the relationship is what they

focused during our discussions. In a traditional conceptualization of mentoring,

the relationship serves mainly to help the protégé get to a new level of skill or

knowledge; becoming competent to the degree that they do not need the

guidance/tutelage of the mentor any longer (e.g., Levinson, 1978). As touched

upon in a look at the literature, the event of mentoring tends to centre upon the

outcomes of the relationship. I began to think about how when the meaning

revolves around the mentoring relationship itself, the focus shifts away from

achieving particular goals to learning about the ebb and flow of human

interaction.

Turning points – deepening relationship

Each young woman interviewed described moments that were very

significant for the development of their relationships with their mentors. The

turning points described were diverse, as you will see outlined below. However,

each young woman, in her own way, identified such moments as being important

for the process of building relationship; getting to know the mentor, building trust,

and verbally sharing their own experiences and thoughts as teenage girls. For

Justice, part of the turning point in the relationship was learning how to do things

for herself that she had previously relied on her mentors to do for her.

And they also helped teach me the skills I needed to do it on my own. Not

to just be there all the time for the rest of my life to do it for me. Different

skills of...the one lady taught me the skills I needed to stay clean and

sober.....they taught me how to do it myself, how to work through my

depression, on my own.

Both Treasure and Leanne talked about how they appreciated the way

that their mentors limited their discussion of their own problems and focused on

what was going on in the lives of the mentees instead. Treasure explained that it was helpful to have someone that she didn't feel like she had to take care of as a mentor.

> She doesn't really talk about herself, unless it's like I'm asking questions, or I want to hear about something. Or, I'll be like, 'how's your husband'? Just like little questions, but it's not like I'm, okay, spill all your problems to me.

For Leanne, it meant a lot to her that someone like her mentor was willing to take the time to become involved in her life. At one point in the interview, I asked, "What does it mean that D.'s been there for you?" In response, she said, "It means that someone cares, someone's not so stuck up with their own life that they have time to spend with someone else".

Each participant had to struggle with particular problems. Each talked about struggling with one or more of the problems of prostitution, drugs, alcohol and abuse. Justice and Treasure spoke of how they appreciated being able to let their guard down while with their mentor, to not have to worry about addictions or problems at home for a while. Justice said that her mentors were good "...just to have fun with, and try new things with." One of the light-heated times with her mentor involved going snowboarding for the first time. "And I'd never been snowboarding before. We both fell on our asses all day."

For Treasure, the lighter part of life was illuminated in instances where her mentor encouraged her to try new things. Specifically, trying a new style of food

represented an opportunity for taking a risk that was healthy, rather than destructive.

> Toupey: Well, one last question to think about. Say, 10 years from now, you're 25 years old. Tell me about one moment that you're always going to remember with her. In 10, 15, 20 years......
>
> Treasure: I think the first time I ever tried sushi with her.
>
> Toupey: Great, that'll stand out for you?
>
> Treasure: That was quite...experimental (laughs). She came over and I was like, "let's go to McDonald's or something." I wasn't being too experimental. And she's like, "well, why don't we try something different – wanna try sushi?" And see, I'm taking a risk, this is one of my healthy risks.

For Haley and Leanne, the evocative moments in the evolving mentor-mentee relationship did not always revolve around lightheartedness. For Haley, one of the events that stood out for her was being able to call on her mentor for support when she was in trouble and really needed help. She phoned her mentor after her boyfriend and the father of her daughter beaten her.

> I had to leave and go to a woman shelter. Our relationship took a turn because I wasn't the same girl that needed her guidance....I just needed a friend. I think that's when our relationship took a turn.

Leanne echoed a similar story about trusting her mentor to take care of her after a fight with her mother.

I guess last Easter, me and my mom had gotten into a physical fight. And so I left the house and I went to a pay phone and phoned D. So she went out of her way and took me in for a week...let me stay at her place while she went to work...And things got settled down, and I phoned my mom.

Overall, I felt like my understanding of what a mentor's support means burst open and arrived at a different level – I had not previously conceived of mentors being someone you could call at any hour of the day or night. Leanne and Haley in the quotes above were faced with incredibly demanding situations and it seemed like the women they counted on did not let them down when it mattered most. I was shocked to hear how calmly the girls talked about the dark life circumstances they had faced. For example, Treasure described a situation and stated the words very matter-of-factly, in my perception:

> You do cocaine once, and you're addicted....I don't want to get addicted to that shit. I've seen my mom do that. She overdosed three different times, in front of me. Everyone would be like, "what's wrong with your mom?"
>
> The ambulance would come, they'd see my mom, and everything......

At times, also, I felt ashamed that I could not relate to some of the heavier and abusive experiences they had gone through.

> I know cognitively that my mentoring experiences are not "less than" those of people like Leanne and Haley. Yet somehow, I am reminded that some of my privileges have allowed me to escape from some of the violence they have faced. I wonder who my mentors might have been if my

circumstances were different.... would I have been able to call on them if I had just been beaten up? (Journal Entry, April 2001).

The moments described as memorable varied between each participant considerably, but each moment seemed to allow the mentor and the mentee to learn about each other; their strengths, their weaknesses, and in doing so they seemed to build connections that were increasingly characterized by trust.

Where to go from here

"Sometimes your time with the girl simply ends; you're not certain whether or not you made that big a difference in her life, or you feel a sad and quiet place in your heart when you realize you really miss a friend" (Echevarria, 1998, p. 278).

The young women of this inquiry described the evolution of the relationship with their mentor as something that could not be predicted. It was a situation without many guidelines, except for those laid out by the particular agencies that most were initially involved with. Even after the formal time commitment outlined by an agency had been fulfilled, contact between the young women and their mentors continued on in a less formal way. Leanne commented on the shift over time:

Cause at first it was we'd see each other once a week, or once every two weeks, or whatever it was...that's what (the agency) wanted, for one year. And then after a year, me and D. didn't have to see each other anymore, but we did, ...Now we're kinda more like friends, more than a contract that

was signed. So it's not as often, but I do make sure I talk to her at least once a month, to update her and let her know I'm still alive and stuff.

Others spoke of recognizing that things were changing once the volunteer commitment required by the agency was fulfilled. For Haley, the change was characterized by thinking of the important woman in her life as "less of a mentor, more of a big sister." When I asked what a big sister meant to her, she highlighted the activities they did together.

> We'd go for coffee, we'd go for lunch...she would always take me to her home...I always went shopping with her...we did a lot of things together, I went to her wedding.

There seemed to be a sense of freedom and of mutual interaction when Haley talked about how their relationship was currently more like a "sister" interaction. So again, it's not "a contract that was signed" (Leanne), but a process that occurs because "they're doing it because they want to, not because they're getting paid to do it" (Justice).

At the time of the interviews, each young woman was still in contact with her mentor, even though for some, the formal part of the relationship was no longer in effect. Only one participant, Justice, had actually ended contact with one of the women who had mentored her. As mentioned in another section, she ended up working at the same place as her mentor and they encountered some fundamental disagreements over issues originating at work.

> The politics were horrible...you have to work with it, and I was working
> against it, and it just did not end very well. And we're not friends anymore
> because of that. That was really hard for me, because she was such an
> important person in my life.

I was struck by Justice's ability to stay true to her values and beliefs about the
issue at her job. I think her opinions represented some of who she is on the
"inside"; her meaning for herself (e.g., Marcia, 1980). She spoke quite
articulately about recognizing that remaining true to herself, in this case,
necessitated her dissolving her relationship with a person she considered to be
very influential in her life. She recognized the irony inherent in the situation – the
woman she could not work things out with was someone that had contributed to
her learning how to "do" relationships in the first place.

> And she always said, 'I'll always be around for you, I'll always be here for
> you, I'll always be in your life.' And that was really hard, like you promised
> me you'd do that and then you didn't. (several moments later in the
> interview) And I was, 'you're the one that taught me to work through things
> in relationships, and to talk things out, work through it, and figure it out,
> and here you are just saying, no, that's it'.

I regret not having the foresight to ask the participants to expand further
about saying goodbye to their mentors at some point in their lives, or conversing
about what type of interaction they might have in the future with mentors as they
continue to develop into young adults. But given what they had said without

much prompting from me, I wondered what was at work in their descriptions of how their relationships had evolved over time.

I came across a saying that Echevarria (1998) refers to in her writing on mentoring that seemed to fit for my ponderings about the evolution of the relationship expressed by the girls in the inquiry. The saying was "life is a casting off" and I interpreted it to mean that life is about being able to let go of people and experiences as we grow and change. Julia Cameron (1999), well-known for her work on understanding creativity and artistry, echoes the idea that life is a series of letting go of old relationships while allowing new people to come into our lives. One of her main concerns about the world is that people struggle with accepting relationships or events that evolve and change. She explains that "so often we try to live through our changes without experiencing them" (1999, p.x). In the context of the evolving mentoring relationships that the participants described, I wondered if part of the struggle might also be about learning *discernment* with regard to knowing when to become more or less involved with the people they consider to be mentors.

At appropriate times in each interview, I asked each young woman if "having a mentor ever got in the way". Although I had not yet considered the "relationship ebb and flow" dimension that has come forward through the analysis, my intent in asking about this was to examine when the help of the mentor might hinder their development; to see if there were situations or contexts where they might just need to do things on their own. In response, each young

woman made unique comments on her growing realization of the importance of striking a balance between relying on themselves and relying on their mentor. Justice acknowledged that at the beginning of her journey of getting off of the street and ending her addiction to drugs her mentors would help her track down resources and make phone calls for her. However, as time went on, both her and her mentors felt it was important that she begin to take more responsibility for her own healing. She spoke about her mentors doing some of the work and then eventually doing things for herself.

> I think in the beginning, it was needed. But I think after a while, you know...after a while, they taught me the skills and things like that. But doing it for me is not going help me in the long run, right? You need to learn how to do it yourself.

Haley discussed her need to have space from all of the people in her life, and her mentor was no exception. She described her mentor as being particularly adept at "reading cues" if Haley needed her space. When asked if there was a time she "just maybe needed to go it on her own", she replied that her mentor "gave me space to do that". For Leanne, she felt she had already relied too much on herself throughout her teenage struggles and welcomed her mentor's presence in her life to relieve some of the burden. She needed to let go of "finding her way" solely on her own and commented in response to my question that she "always liked meeting with D., and it was like...my second home". Each of the above parts of the conversations seemed to reflect the

changes inherent in life and in relationships. The mentoring relationships the participants had formed provided the context for negotiating some of these changes.

<u>She who was mentored becomes the mentor</u>

In further discussions of the evolution of their relationships, four out of the five participants discussed their desire to help others as the direct result of having been inspired by their mentor. The care and concern of the mentor was a point of origin in our conversations about how the participants currently helped others and how they planned to continue in the future. When I listened to them talk about their current relationships and future dreams, it seemed like a cycle of mentoring; where a young woman in need of care and guidance from an older person received what she needed and had a desire to help others in much the same fashion as she had been helped. I asked Justice, who currently works with teens, if "cycle of mentorhood" would be an appropriate way to describe her experiences. She explained that mentoring would have been foreign to her if she had not experienced it herself and that being the case, she would likely not have been drawn to being a mentor for others.

Yeah, cause who knows if I wouldn't have had these mentor kind of people in my life, would I be doing what I'm doing now? Would I want to help kids too? Because I would've never learned that. Yeah, I think a cycle...like I think if you don't even know about this kind of stuff, or never

had it; you don't really know what it's about....I don't know if I'd want to do it, if I hadn't had it in my life.

Freddy spoke of how the influence of her mentors has helped her realize her strengths in both music and in problem-solving with people. She described a situation where she acted as an advocate for a friend had been abused by her mom's boyfriend.

I took her to the office; we talked to the guidance counsellor; and she talked to her mother, and her mom's boyfriend found out what was happening and all this stuff has happened since.

It was unclear what the exact outcome of Freddy's story with her friend was, but what was clear to me was that she knows who she is on the inside with regard to her values and beliefs around injustice and she is willing to take some action on behalf of other people.

In part because she felt like she survived some rough parts of her own life because of her mentor, Treasure expressed a desire to "when I'm older, I would like to work with teens". She acknowledged that becoming a mentor for others involves gaining their trust and with that comes a sense of responsibility towards those you are helping.

I like making a difference in people's lives. It makes me...not only does it make me feel good because I'm doing something for somebody else, it makes other people feel good.....(several moments later)....And if people

trust you, you get a lot of trust. It's kind of a responsibility in some ways.....

I wondered if part of wanting to become a mentor for other people was related to the power of shared experiences that some of the young women alluded to throughout the project. Several participants (Haley, Treasure, and Leanne) asserted how important it was for the mentor to have actually experienced some of the same circumstances in life in order to build a relationship in which both people could relate to and communicate with each other. Part of the reason that they respected and responded to their mentors was the fact that they had also been through struggles with addiction (Haley); or had spent time living on the streets (Leanne); or had an absent father (Treasure). Haley commented on this dimension very succinctly: "I'm a strong believer that you can't fully comprehend...really...understand a person unless you've been through the same experience."

I felt that several of the participants were wise beyond their years when they talked about knowing that some of the horrendous things they had endured could serve as common ground on which to meet others who may be trouble or at risk psychologically or otherwise. For example, I was impressed by Justice's perspective that everything, including her time on the streets and with addiction, happens for a reason.

You know, I wish all that shitty stuff never happened. But if it wouldn't have happened, would I be the same person I am today? Would I have

met all these great people along the way?  Not that I would ever wish what happened to me on anybody else, because it's horrible, but it happened for a reason and I am who I am today because that stuff happened.

Also, I was impressed by Treasure's commitment to wanting to help her friends as she had been helped by her mentor. "I've done a lot for them...they've gone through a lot of suicidal times, and I've gotten them help, and I've helped them with family problems...I've got two of my friends social workers and help with their family." Even though the context Justice and Freddy had survived was difficult, it allowed them to, as Apter and Jossellson (1998) put it, "share a lay of the social land" and connect with others who had been through similar circumstances..

It is almost as if, with time and the influence of our mentors, the negative experiences become events that illuminate the possibility of aiding those that find themselves in similar situations.  The mentoring relationship has allowed these young women to develop a sense of their meaning for self and others so that they can help initiate and develop this sense in other people.  Mentoring has been a very real and tangible presence for them and in some ways has allowed for a cycle of self-discovery to continue.

<u>Evolving As A Sexual Person</u>

As I scoured through the first round of transcriptions, and continued to talk to my colleagues and some of the participants in subsequent meetings, it started to become clear that questions and wonderings about sexuality were a central dimension of the participants' search for identity.  Our conversations about

mentoring included questions about what sexuality meant to them personally; . including thoughts about intimate relationships and sexual orientation. Leanne spoke about how she wished she had been educated about sex and its emotional implications before she became sexually active:

> Toupey: You said something about the sex issue. I'm not sure what you mean...
>
> Leanne: It's just that I never had anybody to talk to about it...I never did..I just kinda learned on my own.
>
> T: Do you think at that time when you were trying to figure that out, that it would have been helpful to talk to somebody like D?
>
> L: Definitely it would have...I think I would have taken a different path than the path I did. And, it would have helped...to learn more about it, and be more careful.

## In the presence of intimate adult relationships

In most of the interviews, the participants talked about how mentors fit into the sexuality puzzle they were trying to fit together for themselves. In some ways, the relationships the mentors had with their significant others served as "role model" (Schwiebert, 2000) relationships for the young women they mentored. There seemed to be an almost magical sense of wonder surrounding the participants when they talked about their mentors' boyfriends and husbands, and I wondered if they were perhaps idealizing these relationships; seeing only the good parts and remaining blind to the potential negative aspects.

I wonder if the relationships Haley, Leanne, Treasure, and Justice describe are actually as "perfect" as they seem to be from their descriptions. Each of their mentors are romantically and sexually involved with men, and I wonder if they have had such unpleasant experiences with men to this point that anyone who is a little bit decent might get put on a pedestal and labelled the "greatest guy". (Journal Entry, November 2001).

I would like to outline some of how the young women named above described their mentor's relationships in order for you to get a better picture of why I was a little troubled about this particular exploration. Each girl talked about her mentor's romantic affiliations to varying degrees, but my overall impression was one of them wholeheartedly admiring the men their mentors were involved with; possibly without questioning the potential problems of the relationship.

Leanne did not talk much about her mentor's marriage, but she did comment that her mentor "has this great marriage". She also emphasized that her mentor had not had a "perfect life" and that "she's been married before". I was glad she mentioned this, as I interpreted that she was not just focusing on everything positive about her mentor's experiences with men.

Haley recognized that it must have been hard on her mentor's husband to support his wife in her dealings with Haley. Haley was concerned that some of her own issues might have triggered some of her mentor's discomfort with similar circumstances from the past.

He's um, even though she was my mentor, I had a lot of respect for him as well. I'm sure I'd be very trying on her too, how similar our lives were. There had to be some repercussion for what I was talking about, whether it be she was having her own memories....and being all bummed out. He was really good about it...so I had a lot of respect for him.

She later paints another complimentary picture of the husband. "He treated her very well...he's a wonderful man. Very compassionate, very caring, very giving, loving."

Treasure also seems to be enamoured of her mentor's heterosexual relationship. Throughout the interview, she spoke of how she really admires her mentor for breaking out of convention in various situations, and her recent wedding was no exception: "She just got married, and instead of having a wedding ring, they got matching tattoos on their finger." She referred to the marriage tattoos as being "so cool".

In contrast to the three young women quoted above, Freddy seems to view romantic relationships between her mentors and others in a more critical and somewhat disparaging light. She spoke of strongly believing that one of her mentor's (not her mom) romantic relationships was an unhealthy match. Freddy expressed her opinion about her disapproval of her mentor's boyfriend's behavior many times. "Oh, I've told her about a million times, if he's done it now, he'll do it again." In contrast, she showed her appreciation for another mentor (her mother) by stating that part of what she admires about her mom as mentor is the fact that

she has made it through life thus far because, as Freddy puts it, "she relies on herself". When I asked about how her mentors had played a role in the development of her understanding about intimate relationships, she replied that her "mom really hasn't had relationships like that – well, that I can recall".

In general, Freddy seems wary of relationships with boys that are based on physical attraction. She definitely is not going to put up with an interaction in which she gets treated poorly. I was moved by her awareness in this regard and by her declaration of her limits.

I have so much in my life, like music and school and this and that and friends, and I don't have time for a guy that's going to treat me badly. ...Like some guys they're great to have as friends. But dating them? Never in a million years. It's not necessarily cause they're not attractive, it's just...some of them are just like, 'yes, this is my girlfriend, she is my property'.

Toupey: You're not going to go along with that?

Freddy: NO, no. I'd be like, I'm an individual, if you would like to be part of my bubble, you can ask.

I think that in some ways it fits that Leanne, Haley and Treasure would speak of their mentor's sexually intimate relationships in a somewhat idealized way, holding them up as relationships to be proud of and to strive for. To me, it seems logical that you would be cautious about getting involved with men if you had been a prostitute for men, or had been abused by a male partner. Thus, it

make sense that these three young women might look to other relationships for better models of how to have relationships. I was concerned, as I mentioned, though, that these young women sang only idealized praises of their mentor's boyfriends or husbands. Maybe some kind of balance between the possibilities and realities of relationships is needed. I regret not having the opportunity to explore this aspect further with them. I will continue to ponder the influence that such observations will have on how they embark on intimate relationships with men in the future.

Who am I attracted to?

Mentors were involved to varying degrees as the young women talked about deciphering some of their evolving feelings about what type of people they are sexually attracted to. Freddy made it clear that she was not comfortable asking her mentors for advice about attraction. "I don't really look to mentors for relationship advice". Freddy appeared more comfortable discussing how boys were easier to have as friends in some cases, and when I pressed her to talk more about her feelings about "guys", she jokingly said, "boys have cooties". I wondered if she was not comfortable divulging much information around this topic to me.

In Justice's case, mentors were involved in the development of her identity insofar as they had supported her during her declaration of being gay. I asked her if the mentors had helped her embrace who her sexual identity, despite the pressures she faced to be straight. By embracing her identity, I mean she would

be comfortable with being gay, and would resist messages that she was lesser than or inferior because she does not fit the dominant paradigm of sexuality (e.g., Ryan & Futterman, 1998)

> Cause when I told them, they weren't like, "oh my god, I'm not talking to you anymore." They didn't do that kind of stuff, and they were very understanding and open-minded. It helped me too to feel okay with it....it always helps.

We did not talk much further about her intimate relationships, but she seemed to be secure in the meaning that being gay had for herself and she trusted her mentors to be a safe starting point for building the meaning of her identity for those around her.

I began this subsection with a quote from Leanne in which she expressed that she would have benefited from the influence of a mentor to help guide her through some of the questions she had about sexuality. She described herself as learning about sex without talking to anybody about it; just "dwelling with herself" to figure it out. Leanne also believes that with her mentor's support, she may have made better choices about becoming sexually active. She thought she was "really young" when she first experienced sex, and this was troubling for her. She commented on how a mentor's input could have been invaluable for her during early sexual experiences.

I guess reassurance that it's okay to be the only one in the crowd who's not having sex; more support on waiting; and the importance of waiting until you're married or finding the right person – someone to tell me that. We also talked briefly about sex education and some of its pitfalls. For Leanne, the "facts" provided in sex education were not sufficient to help her make decisions about sex. She stated "I don't think it's enough. When I have kids, I'm really going to stress...if you find the right person, you know?"

There seemed to be some silent spaces in the participants' stories about emerging sexuality. Freddy joked about it to change the topic; Leanne saw it as something she was isolated in learning about; Justice mentioned it mainly in the context of her sexual orientation. I wondered if part of the reluctance to talk about sexuality with me and in other relationships is related to what Fine (1988) calls "the missing discourse of desire" in the lives of teenage girls. Fine (1988) argues that girls' sexuality is usually silenced in our North American culture. When it is talked about, it is within specific confines, such as equating girls' sexual activity with victimization or abuse. Or, when girls are viewed as making their own decisions about sex and attraction, the "consequences –emotional, physical, moral, reproductive, and/or financial" (p.33) are emphasized over their own desires and wishes for exploring what feels good and bad in a sexual relationship. In essence, Fine believes society's views and values regarding teenage female sexuality rob girls of their own subjectivity. What is needed, according to Fine (1988), is "the naming of desire, pleasure or sexual entitlement

for females", which "barely exists in the formal agenda of public schooling on sexuality" (p. 33).

I also acknowledge that it was not fair to expect the participants to open up to me about such an intimate topic when we only conversed twice at the most. I am grateful for the glimpses into this topic they were willing to share with me, despite the fact that we were only beginning to develop rapport and intimacy in our conversations.

The Dance of Understanding

The symbolism of the hermeneutic circle has become increasingly representative of my journey of exploring the "depths of the sea". By depths, I mean engaging with participant transcripts, current writings, my colleagues, my mentors in the writing process, and further conversations with participants themselves. It has become steadily more clear to me that the five dimensions that emerged and spoke the most to me are interconnected; they make more sense and are richer in terms of our understanding if we consider them together. The five dimensions are: Some of the Things I've Been Through With My Mom; Reflections of Self in the Mirror; How to Be in the Patriarchy; Evolving Mentoring Relationships; Evolving as a Sexual Person. The smaller circles of specific meaning (from the five dimensions) are in my mind connected to the larger circle of identity; figuring out one's meaning for oneself; one's meaning for others, and living this through mentoring and other relationships. Likewise, the meaning of

identity as understood in this inquiry is made fuller and clearer by considering the five evocative elements surrounding it.

I recognize that the interplay between the general and particular circles could go on indefinitely (Risser, 1997). However, I have had to reach a place of pause in the interpretive process and to trust that you as reader, I as writer, and hopefully the young women in the conversation have realized something new about mentoring as a result of engaging with this text. The formal conversations have to stop in order for my own practical purposes: to wrap up the writing and to get my Ph.D. Although there is still much work to do in furthering our understanding, I still believe that there has been a back-and-forth conversation between the young women and I; between you as reader and as colleagues and I; between us and our understanding of mentoring; and although you have not spoken directly with them, I believe, in the spirit of hermeneutics, that you have in some ways heard what the young women had to say through the texts that are represented in this document.

Time, practicality, and psychological energy considerations have dictated the number of participants I spoke with for the project, as well as the fact that we only met for one or two interviews. I shared my initial writing and wonderings with my core committee, and several colleagues. This led to revisions of the hermeneutic writing; adding in the voices of the participants to a greater degree, wondering and reading about relevant work published; and then, in three cases, having another conversation with the participants. Van Manen (1997) reminds us

that it is hard to know when conversations should end. Sometimes, conversations reach their end in silence. However, it is not necessarily awkwardness that characterizes the silence, rather it is often a feeling of fulfillment, stemming from the satisfaction of the momentary sense of completion that arises from each person saying all they have to say. I am not sure that the conversations of this project have come to an end because each person has said all she or he has to say. However, I needed to complete this project and accept the understanding I have gained as good enough for now.

In some ways, I have experienced fulfillment in realizing that outlining the five elements has helped me conceive of mentoring in five richer ways; which does not mean that there are not further points to be analyzed, but that for now, I have to cease writing further about girls and mentoring for many practical purposes, including my desire to finish my Ph.D.

In a hermeneutic mode of looking at the world, understanding of experience is re-shaped continually and there is never one endpoint for it. This is what Gadamer (1998) means when he explains that understanding is always on the way. However, there are moments of insight and reflection; where our understanding is transformed; where it has become something new. For me, the creation of this chapter represents many of those moments with regard to understanding the meaning of mentoring in the lives of the participants. I hope it has allowed you as reader similar moments of seeing mentoring and your related experiences.

This chapter aimed to describe the elements of mentoring that were meaningful, from the participants' perspective, and from my perspective. The next chapter provides a place to consider what the implications of some of these elements are for daily living and for thinking about and acting on ideas about mentoring and adolescent girls.

## CHAPTER FIVE – JOURNEYING ONWARD

> There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest. This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside through the conduits of plumbing-learning. This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out.
> (Rumi, 1995, p.178).

At some point, after wonderings and questions are momentarily paused, new questions arise concerning the future: What should I/we do with this new understanding? How do I/we move forward from and with this consciousness? After deciding to wrap up my writing in the previous analysis chapter, I was struck by the awareness, as the quote above from the poet Rumi expressed, that a new way of knowing about mentoring had emerged from this work. I think that this novel understanding happened in part because of me, but also in spite of me. The quote above spoke to me because it seemed to fit with my experience of this inquiry. I sensed that Rumi's reference to "knowing" does not connotate knowledge as in hard facts, statistics, or cognitive/intellectual mastery, but "knowing" in terms of having understood something in a fresh way as the poem describes; both a relational and bodily experience.

I intend, in this final chapter, to examine the ways in which this new knowing, this new awareness will open up doors into the future. It seems appropriate to me to continue the writing interpretively or hermeneutically; to examine what is present in the possibilities of this text and to suggest what meanings might be associated with understanding mentoring as a lived event for

young women. At the end of this particular journey of seeing mentoring in relation to the participants and to myself, I seek to begin to address the question "Where do we go from here?" To do this, I will re-visit written texts that speak of mentoring as well as texts that speak of the lives of adolescent women and see how the understandings gleaned in this inquiry fit with such texts. Also, because part of my being-in-the-world is to practice counselling, I will attempt to envision how this project might illuminate some "fresh" ways to engage and work with young women and the experience of mentoring in counselling. Finally, I am aware of the limitations of this inquiry, and think it important to outline these as well.

<div align="center">Turning Again to Other Voices</div>

The hermeneutic circle of interpretation has no definitive stopping point; just moments of ebb and flow of entering in and continuing to engage with the topic and grasping glimpses of its meaning (Packer & Addison, 1989). Thus it is important to examine what the discoveries of this project might mean in relation to how we understand the topic of mentoring and its place in the world of adolescent women. To do this, we need to return to what is known about the topic as represented in current texts; writing summarizing other conceptualizations and other experiences.

To begin this process, I revisited the first four chapters of this document. I realized that my own ideas about mentoring have changed immeasurably. I will now bring this novel perspective to another examination of the literature about

mentoring and adolescent women. In hermeneutics, understanding is dynamic and thus a look at other texts now is a different exercise than looking at the texts before engaging in the project interviews. This is what Gadamer means when he says that when tradition speaks, it is always in a new voice (Risser, 1997). In a sense we are continuing on the journey of interpretation, but the destination has shifted because of what we have read and how we currently understand mentoring. Let us tune in to reflect upon some of the current understandings about mentoring and young women and how they may relate to what has been created by talking to young women about their lived experiences for this project. I intend to examine what Laverty (2001) calls "connections and disconnections" between the stories of this project and the stories we hear within the literature on mentoring and girls.

Mentoring as Identity-Building

There have been some acknowledgements in current and past writings that characterize mentoring as an event in which the mentee, or protege, learns more about him or herself as a result of having a mentoring relationship (e.g., Hamilton & Darling, 1989; Levinson, 1978). As we explored in Chapter Two, mentoring has been conceptualized both as a social practice and as a psychological process having individual psychological effects on the people engaged in the mentoring relationship. Schweibert (2000) notes that recent research has identified one of mentoring's components as a function aimed at enhancing the "protege's self-worth, competence, *identity*, and effectiveness"

. (emphasis mine, p.21). This type of understanding seems consistent with mentoring viewed as an event that has the potential to enhance, or at least affect what we traditionally understand to be intrapsychic factors, such as identity and self-worth. In this regard, it seems like some of the literature is acknowledging the possibility that mentoring can contribute to the development of a person's . meaning for her or himself. I think research about mentoring could go further into exploring how a person's identity (as it is traditionally understood as an individual act of building a sense of who one is) is understood differently as a result of being mentored. We could examine how a person might understand him/herself differently by being in relationship with adult mentors; with same-gender mentors; with opposite-gender mentors; with mentors that are peers age-wise.

Although more texts are beginning to speak about the importance of identity development in mentoring, there are still a few areas that seem to disconnect from the stories told in this inquiry. First of all, it seems that learning about the self or constructing one's identity is not viewed as the primary goal of mentoring; rather it is a byproduct that happens without it having been the original intent (Leadbeater & Way, 1996). The participants described herein thought it was valuable for mentors to be intentional about their interaction with them as mentees, as they were aware that their mentors would have a significant impact on their reflections to the questions "Who am I?"; "What do I stand for?"; "What do I believe?". I re-visited Justice's words as she outlined what she would recommend as essential mentoring characteristics.

I don't think they're going to find anybody who's a perfect mentor, but someone who can be a good role model and who can be there for that person, or that youth. I think that's pretty much all you can do. As long as you're open-minded and <u>you actually care</u>.

The stories of the young women in this project remind me that there is too much at stake to take mentoring lightly; to approach it haphazardly without honouring the possibility that the relationship will influence a person's life and sense of self in some way.

A second way that the literature on mentoring is incongruent with the framework of this project is in the lack of attention paid to the importance of the social context embedded within ideas about identity-building. Theorists such as Jopling (2000) and Jordan (1997) have emphasized that one's identity is not built in isolation from others, or even only within a singular relationship. Quite the contrary - other people are essential to the way we shape our personalities and identities. Within current understandings of mentoring in relation to identity development, we are only beginning to recognize that "identity development involves reciprocal recognition, in which an individual's commitments to a career or set of values are sustained by her family's and community's willingness to affirm these choices" (Leadbeater & Way, 1996, p.3).

The participants in this inquiry very quite vocal about the central roles that mentors played on their journey towards figuring out identity. They also spoke of

the centrality of other relationships; such as those with mothers, peers, and romantic attachments for evoking questions and reflections about who they are.

There is more terrain to travel in terms of understanding identity, its formation, and how mentors fit into the picture. Future interpretive work could focus on the meaning that other relationships have in the development of self-understanding in young women. Also, it seems important to look more closely at the meaning of sexual identity in the lives of youth and how mentors are implicated in this particular dimension (Ryan & Futterman, 1998).

Mentoring as Relational Practice

For the young women I spoke with, relationships were the ever-present context of mentoring and all of its associated activities. As discussed at length in Chapter Four, mentoring relationships seemed to be a safe space in which the participants could try out new ways-of-being in relationships; both with their mentors and with other people. In some cases, the young women we heard from in this text wanted to emulate their mentor's style of doing relationships. For example, Leanne admired her mentor for speaking assertively to people she came in contact with, and Freddy spoke of how her mentor was a role model who showed her how to "always try and talk first" in relational conflicts. In addition to this emerging understanding of mentoring as a way to learn about interacting by emulating, this study also revealed the mentoring process to be one in which verbal wisdom concerning relational questions figures prominently. Even when they did not have opportunity to observe and imitate their mentor's way-of-being

in relationships, there was opportunity to learn, through dialogue, about how relationships are.

In many instances, writers of current works have conceptualized mentoring as a forum for learning about relationships (e.g., Huang & Lynch, 1995; Keyton & Kalbfleisch, 1993; Mitchell, 1997; Sullivan, 1996). Mitchell (1997) explained, in her analysis of women's faculty-student mentoring relationships, that "women mentor women through relationship – through intimacy rather than distance" (p.5). Likewise, in current ideas about counselling adolescent girls, many counsellors believe that adolescent women claim their self-esteem and an awareness of their personal power because of relationships with others, including mentors (Lois Sapsford, personal communication). Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan (1995), along with Gilligan (1991), emphasize themes of connection and disconnection between adult women and girls. Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan (1995) have explored the necessity for women to stay connected to their own self-knowledge in order to be able to create genuine relationships with girls. By genuine relationships, they mean ones in which the girls are encouraged to stay connected to themselves in order to "be in relation to" others. Jordan calls this relational capacity empathy, meaning to experience both oneself and another person as subject, not object. Gilligan (1991) warns us of the psychological and relational dangers of disconnecting from oneself. In her work, I hear echoes of many of the participants who were highly attuned to sensing when their mentors appeared to be disingenuous with and were disconnecting from them.

There is work emerging that is beginning to shed light on the importance of relational interaction for men and boys and their development (e.g., Bergman, 1991; Hughes & Wolf, 1997; Rohr, 1998). However, despite the emerging theoretical work, there is still a paucity of interpretive projects exploring the meaning that various relationships have in men's and boys' lives. I think that investigators such as Hughes & Wolf (1997) are on the right track. They ran focus groups for both girls and boys to talk about various issues – including relational development and communication within and between genders. They begin to summarize some of the understandings of their project in the book "Daughters of the Moon, Sisters of the Sun", but the reflection on boys and relationships is subsumed under an exploration of girls and their mentors. Specific inquiries could focus on uncovering the meaning of mentoring in boys' lives. Should boys be mentored by men alone? What do men teach boys about themselves? What do boys learn about gender and gender roles from their mentors? These questions are all potential starting places to open up further inquiries about mentoring.

<u>Mentoring and the Status Quo</u>

The voices of the women of this undertaking reflect, in my estimation, the power that mentoring has to affect not only individuals, but also our larger communities and possibly society as a whole. Each young woman that spoke made it clear that she had been transformed by her experiences of mentoring. Personal choices and relationship turning points were discussed, as well as

some glimmers of recognition that the communities surrounding them would also experience the ripples of change; although the change might be less immediate and not as clearly linked to mentoring. Also, the participants acknowledged that mentoring is a powerful event, capable of catalyzing both good and bad metamorphoses for them and for the communal contexts they live in and live through.

Recent conceptualizations of mentoring have tended to focus on the impact of mentoring as an individual, psychological process. Researchers such as Rhodes & Davis (1996) and others (Haensly & Parsons, 1993; Hutton, Gougeon, Mahon, & Robertson, 1993) have sought to measure changes in a person's self-esteem as the result of being involved with a mentor. Further, there is a trend towards examining if people are more or less psychologically resilient as a result of being mentored (e.g., Hamilton & Darling, 1989). Although I realize the political significance of showing "results" in order to keep mentoring programs "accountable" and funded, I still think it's important to recognize that personal change is political change because we are interconnected as citizens. I did not hear much acknowledgement in the studies named above and others like them of how mentoring can play a part in transforming or maintaining the status quo.

There has been one area in which I see that the individual processes related to mentoring are strongly linked to the social practice of mentoring – that of mentoring in the workplace. A growing body of writing is beginning to address how mentoring is linked to the community and the status quo; specifically the.

workplace community. The focus of such research and theories, to me, seems to be on enhancing people's self-esteem at work; building relationships as colleagues; with the underlying motivation being that happy or efficacious workers are more productive. Articles with titles such as "It Works – Mentoring Drives Productivity Higher" (Silverhart, 1994) and "Organizational Benefits of Mentoring" (Wilson & Elman, 1990) are problematic in my opinion. They are tricky to interpret because they purport to have the business community's best interests at heart. However, the bottom line seems to be that they want a strong and psychologically healthy group of individuals in the workplace in order to make more money. I view these voices from the business world as using mentoring to further the cause of profit. Thus, I think that the status quo is being maintained as opposed to transformed in terms of economics. In the case of business organizations, mentoring appears to be an event that serves the corporate agenda of generating more income.

In some organizational contexts (e.g., Kram, 1986; Viator, 1991) mentoring has become a means to an end; an end which we need to examine. Do we want, as a society, to use the social practice of mentoring in order to keep workers productive so that they make more money? The particular understanding of mentoring as a way to increase profits seems very discordant from the voices of the participants of this project, who focused on making the world a better place through giving back to their community in several contexts, including working with teens and children, advocating for those less fortunate, and wanting to vounteer

at community agencies. The idea of corporate profit did not enter into our discussions at all. The young women and I came to talk about mentoring as a way to help those who had been marginalized, often by conditions that included struggling with issues of money. I saw many of them as being less privileged than I as well as other young women I have worked with. I was struck by their desires to help others as they had been helped. Almost all of them spoke of being dissatisfied with the status quo, as represented by social services programs (Justice), unfairness in families (Freddy), and raising children in an abusive environment (Haley).

Mentoring to encourage resistance? The adolescent girls of this project helped me to see that mentoring has potential to encourage awareness of social issues such as gender inequity and the pursuit of social justice related to those issues. I believe there is more work to be done in order for mentoring to fulfill this kind of role in our communities. Further research could focus on how mentoring relationships have contributed to both mentors' and mentees' social consciousness. Inquiry might be initiated in the area of finding out who community leaders' mentors are and what they have meant to them. There is space within the field of feminist identity development to examine the role of feminist mentors (Horn, 1998). Beyond adolescent girls, I think it would be illuminating to ask women of all ages about their experiences of being mentored. Inquirers could also focus specifically on the links between being in a mentoring relationship and willingness to engage in what Brown & Gilligan (1992) call

"political resistance"; "the insistence to know what one knows and the willingness to be outspoken, rather than to collude in the silencing..." (p.41).

This project has planted the seeds of further inquiry with the aim of understanding mentoring more fully. The stories of the participants have provided insight into the event of mentoring and have acted as springboards into areas that need more exploration. In many ways the young women's words echo some of the conceptualizations of mentoring heard in current texts. There are also a number of places where their words disconnect from dominant ways of viewing mentoring.

## Existing With Limitations

I embarked on this inquiry with the hope that, in concert with the others involved, I might help to bring to light some understandings about adolescent girls and mentoring that have thus far been lost or have been largely hidden from view. I think in some ways this has happened, and in other ways, the understandings that emerged from this inquiry represent only a limited picture of the mentoring process. I am aware that although I intended to capture the meaning of mentoring in a clear and evocative fashion, language is always incomplete. In essence, the words that we use always tell a story about future possibilities and conceptions of meaning, some of which I have tried to outline in the above section. As Grondin (1994) tells us, words signal "...the interminable desire for further understanding and language" (p.123). I know I have not created the final word on mentoring. There is no such thing in a hermeneutic

world; only the author's (my) longing that I have contributed one small offering to the ongoing conversation.

Experience reveals and conceals

One of the ways that this writing represents a limited perspective on the idea of mentoring relationships is in the focus on women and girls alone. While I continue to believe that men's and boys' voices have often drowned out female utterances, especially in the discipline of psychology, I also have come to consider the importance of re-viewing the concept of mentoring and its meaning in different men's lives. I recognize that there will not be one universal experience of mentoring that applies to all males everywhere, but I think it important to examine some of the themes that emerged from this study in the context of men mentoring boys to puzzle over particular areas of connection and disconnection in our understanding. I think it would be helpful for continuing the conversation about mentoring; what it is for, how it is linked to social awareness, and how it might be helpful or harmful for young people, including girls and boys. I specifically wonder how the "evocative" type of mentoring explored in Chapter Two might be intertwined with boys' experiences of mentoring.

The inquiry focused on the experiences of girls who had been referred to me by agencies or counsellors working with adolescent women who were considered "at risk". Practically speaking, the "at risk" label meant that four out of the five participants had spent time living on the streets; four out of five had been involved in prostitution; three out of the five had been addicted to drugs; and one

out of the five considered herself an alcoholic. I wonder how these circumstances influenced their particular views of mentoring. The dimensions we discussed were talked about in unique ways by each of the participants. I wonder how interviewing a different demographic of young women would have influenced what dimensions came forward in their stories. With more time and attention, I hope that other stories about mentoring in girls' lives can come forward and be received by researchers, parents, and teachers.

I am convinced that a different understanding of mentoring would have emerged from this project if I had experienced my relationships with my own mentors differently; or if I had not had anyone in my life that I would have considered to be a mentor. I am not implying that I ruined the inquiry because I had particular experiences, only that other types of understanding would have emerged had I had different experiences. I believe that my own experiences have led me to conceive of mentoring in a certain way over time. Although my experiences opened up my unique interplay with the participants' texts and eventual interpretations from our conversations, I know that other interpretations have remained hidden from view. My history in relation to mentoring conditioned me to speak, listen, and ask questions in particular ways of myself, the paritcipants, and the material I reviewed. Thus, I think it important for people with different backgrounds than mine to speak about their own mentoring experiences in order to allow different questions and interpretations of mentoring to come forward.

Lastly, I believe this project would have illuminated more about the topic if there had been the time, space, and resources to interview and interpret conversations with the mentors themselves. They are obviously an integral part of the mentoring relationship and I believe that there should be more interpretive work that looks at the relationship and its meanings from the mentors' perspective. Ultimately, I would be interested in interviewing mentors and mentees together about their experiences; and writing about areas of kinship in their stories.

## The question of time

Each person is always moving towards future possibilities of being; is always understanding herself in a new way. The quote below speaks to the dynamic, flowing nature of understanding over time.

> Rather, the individual moves forward to a presence yet to be realized, to a self that is not yet. In recollecting foward, in this temporal movement of the self towards its future possibilities, one recommits oneself to the possibilities that are recognized as one's own (Risser, 1997, p.38).

The young women who participated in this work reflected on mentoring relationships that they were currently living with and relationships that had occurred in the past. Each of the accounts given by the young women represented various lengths of time that had passed between their lived experiences and their current reflections on those experiences. I am concerned that what they remembered from the past might in some ways, have been an

idealized or a more unidimensional version of the mentoring story. I wonder what

has been concealed by their memories and what has possibly been glossed over

in their descriptions. Also, I am curious about interviewing girls whose ages

ranged from 15 to 20 at the time of the interviews. How had the chronological

time they had lived impacted on how they understood mentoring? Would it be

helpful to interview a group of young women who were all the same age and for

whom the same amount of time had since they had become involved with a

mentor? How were their conceptions of themselves and their "future

possibilities" (Risser, 1997, p.38) constrained by temporality? I continue to

wrestle with these possibilities as I wonder how the question of time plays into

what emerged from this study.

## The utility of the word "mentor"

As I continue to consider how certain circumstances have constrained

what has been outlined in this document, I am left wondering about the

appropriateness of the word mentor to uncover meanings about relationships

between people. As outlined in Chapter Two, mentor has a particular

connotation in our understanding of the world. I wonder what experiences the

participants might have focused on had I used alternative language. I could have

asked them to tell me about a relationship they had with an adult woman that

meant a lot to them. I could have asked them which relationships were the most

important to them in their lives, and to explain why they were so significant. I

might have left the word "mentor" out of the conversation altogether. I wonder if

some of the same dimensions would have emerged from our dialogue. I ponder how other themes relevant to relationships with adults might have presented themselves if I approached the questions to guide the inquiry with different words.

A final note about universality

Finally, I think as researchers (I am implicated in this), we have a tendency to polarize our perceptions based on "difference" (e.g, male and female; white people/people of colour; rich/poor). At varying times throughout this process, I found myself thinking that the participants' experiences were representative of all females, and that they were a group unto themselves based on gender. I have had to keep myself in check from making universal claims based on difference. Hermeneutics teaches us to look for overlapping circles of meaning where we can truly meet and relate to those who might be different from us. I hope that can happen in future conversations that seek to unite people of varying backgrounds who might share through discussion some common elements of their mentoring experiences.

Considering Counselling Implications

Thus far, in this chapter, I have presented how the dimensions of mentoring encountered in this project are reflected or not reflected in other writing on the topic. Also, I have summarized the limitations of the study as I view them. Now, I would like to examine some of the implications that this project has for areas of social practice, specifically the practice of counselling. I

intend to outline the areas of overlap between counselling and mentoring, as well as write about how my understanding of mentoring will inform my work as a counsellor.

Parallels Between Counselling and Mentoring

There are a number of ways in which counselling shares elements of kinship with mentoring. First, I see overlap in the qualities that make a good mentor with those that make a good counsellor. As discussed in Chapter Four, the participants in this project appreciated various personal qualities about their mentors, describing various mentors as someone who listens well, helps a person acknowledge parts of herself, someone with a sense of respect for others and respect for herself, someone who communicates in a genuine manner. Each of these qualities has been documented in research on counselling to be a necessary characteristic for a counsellor to have and to express (Todd & Bohart, 1994), Several questions emerge out of this comparison for me: Is it possible to train people to become better mentors or better counsellors? Can we instill these qualities in someone if they are not developed in someone? How would we go about doing that? These questions constitute a place to start in thinking about where counselling and mentoring converge.

A second area of overlap between the two events can be found in the importance of the relationship for effecting a change in someone's life. The young women I conversed with for this study kept highlighting the importance of their development as an individual as a relational experience. They learned

about themselves and decided to behave in new ways based on the input and advice from their mentors. It was in concert with another human being that they described growing and changing. I am reminded of the study in counselling that concluded that the only concrete factor that could be linked to change in therapy was that of the *therapeutic alliance*, which basically means the strength of the relationship between the therapist and client (Todd & Bohart, 1994).

Finally, there also seem to be specific skills that are associated with both mentoring and counselling that seem to go hand in hand with personal qualities. For example, Justice described how one of her mentors showed her where to find the phone numbers of agencies that would help her with her drug addiction. So, in addition to being an empathic person, her mentor also knew how to teach her how to, as she called it, "do things for herself". I think it is in this area that we can borrow from the mentoring idiom in order to think about training counsellors to become more effective at what they do.

As explained in the writing looking at mentoring from a historical perspective, Sullivan (1996) has suggested that the traditional idea of mentor passing on skills and knowledge is best described by the idea of instrumentality. And the metaphor of muse as someone who inspires and teaches about relationship is best encapsulated by the idea of evocativeness. Mentoring has typically been a process focused on helping the inexperienced protege overcome gaps in knowledge, skills, and experiences (Sullivan, 1996). The mentor's role in many cases was to help the protege develop particular abilities and skills so that

he or she no longer required a mentor. It strikes me that counsellor training programs could also be called instrumental processes, as they have traditionally emphasized a skill-based approach in teaching students how to be counsellors (Cummings, 1998). Overall, I think instrumentality should be a necessary component of counselling. Further, I think that micro-skills such as probing and reflecting and higher order skills such as assessment and group facilitation are essential components of learning how to become an effective counsellor.

However, I do not believe that focusing only on the instrumental side of the equation is enough, either for mentoring, or for counselling. Evocativeness focuses on encouraging those being mentored or counselled to access their own inner resources, develop their own ideas, and to continue to move towards self-awareness. Evocative relationships are characterized by the mentor or counsellor's ability to understand and to help the mentee process his/her feelings and experiences. In the counselling field, we have began to pay attention to evocativeness in the recent emphasis placed on building students' self-awareness and personal growth (e.g., Shulz, 2000). I believe that teaching students to be reflexive and self-aware, so that they might develop their own ideas and identities, should also be a necessary component of educating counsellors. As mentors and as counsellors, we need to be able to incorporate elements of both instrumentality and evocativeness into our practice.

## Informing My Practice With These Reflections

As a counsellor who has worked with adolescent girls in the past, and who aspires to do more counselling with this group in the future, I am obliged to consider how this inquiry will affect the kind of counsellor I will be with young women. So far in my counselling practice, I have understood that counselling, like mentoring, has the potential to help adolescent girls exist in ways that allow them to continue the dance of self and self-in-relation as they move toward a genuine self. Genuineness, as we have heard (e.g., Jordan, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1998), is understood as a balance between a person's needs and those of others; to be able to express one's own desires and values while remaining comfortable with receiving the desires and values of others. My conceptualization of the possibility that an understanding of mentoring can augment the counselling process has been guided by my reading of counselling and development literature, and by my own experiences with mentors who helped me consider the question "Who am I?" and what the meaning of the answers to this question could be for myself and for others connected to me. I have also considered the overlap between the roles of mentoring and counselling and will outline my thoughts below.

## Encouraging a genuine self

As a result of taking on this inquiry, I have come to view counselling in a new light. The young women in this study have reminded me of the importance of relationships for tackling questions of identity. Further, I have come to believe,

as Judith Jordan has emphasized, that problems of living are the result of people's troubled connections to themselves and to the others. Jordan and her colleagues at the Stone Center (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) have shown in their work that relationship struggles are sometimes more prominent in women's lives as the result of female socialization. I believe that counselling can be an opportunity for people of all genders to learn how to be in genuine relationship with both themselves and others.

How do we make the above theoretical and philosophical understandings relevant for counselling practice? I think it is a difficult task. However, I am going to suggest some ways that I will try to work with adolescent women in order to uncover problems or distress related to relationships. I feel compelled to note that I will seek to honor each person's story; I am aware that everyone expresses existential dilemmas in their own particular ways. However, I believe there are elements of familiarity between stories if we examine them within the familiar context of relationships.

Movement towards congruence between inner and outer experience is a goal often sought in psychotherapy; as is the goal of personal knowledge. We develop a sense of personal authenticity largely in relationship and, paradoxically, as we move into relationship, coming to know the other more fully, we also greatly expand our knowledge of ourselves (Jordan, 1997, p.141). There are a number of exercises that I think are beneficial for helping young women who come to counselling move towards congruence in their inner and

outer experience. I believe helping clients discover what their inner and outer experiences are is likely the most logical first step. To do this, I ask them to describe themselves, their most significant relationships, and the sources of sadness, anxiety, and fear in their lives. I inquire about how others see them; I ask how they see themselves and how the two images match up. If adolescent girls have a hard time verbalizing their lived-worlds, I ask them to bring in a poem, a piece of art, or a musical recording that means something to them. We look at, read, or listen to the piece together and I ask her to explain to me why it is meaningful. In order to further facilitate getting in touch with the inner realm of thoughts, feelings and beliefs, I encourage each young woman to keep a daily journal which she can choose to focus on to varying degrees during the therapeutic sessions. Lastly, I maintain that the body provides us with clues about our experiences and is perhaps the only modality that does not lie about what we are feeling (i.e, the head can rationalize, the heart can deceive). I encourage clients to identify bodily sensations and to link these to external memories and situations representing both well-being and areas of disconnection.

The young women in this inquiry spoke of struggling with choices in relationships. In the spirit of therapy focused on the person-in-relation, I think that many adolescent girls can benefit from an exploration of their limits with themselves and with other people. One practical way to explore limits is through boundary work, based on the counselling practice of Integrative Body

Psychotherapists (Rosenberg, Rand, & Asay, 1985). In order to accomplish this exploration, I encourage clients to draw physical space around their own bodies with string, chalk, tape, etc. I then ask them to notice what it is like to have a demarcated space visually around them. I link their reactions to body sensations, and other memories that come up. I also draw my own space around me and ask what their reaction is to that. We continue to talk about how her boundary might change depending on whom she is talking or relating to. If there is a particularly problematic relationship that she is struggling to be in, I ask her to imagine that person in the room and to adjust her boundary accordingly. The purpose of the boundary work is to help the young woman to develop a sense of her own limits; and to encourage her to begin to verbalize some of those questions related to what she will choose to do and what she can choose to do in the context of relationships. I perceive that this type of exercise is helpful for clarifying how one can stay genuine to one's own "bottom line" while learning how to build or re-build healthy interactions with others.

The importance of the therapeutic relationship

I have been influenced by the voices of the young women I spoke to with my researcher hat on. This influence has spilled over into another part of my being; that of a counsellor. I was familiar with the theoretical work and interventions associated with a relational approach to counselling (e.g., Jordan, 1997; Miller & Stiver, 1998; Rosenberg, Rand, & Asay, 1985). However, I had previously used some of the interventions just because I thought they were

interesting or because others had claimed they worked, without understanding the centrality of relationships in human lives and the link to human suffering. Having listened to the voices of those who live with and through relational dilemmas, I have become more aware of how essential the counselling relationship is for healing wounds of other relationships in a person's life.

Inspired by Judith Jordan's counselling workshop (Atco Centre, Calgary, 2001), and by the words of the participants, I am able to define part of my job as counsellor is to help a person move out of isolation and back into connection. The counselling relationship must become a safe place to do the work of self-discovery and to try out different ways-of-being. To me, the word relationship implies a two-way street. I should aim to contribute to the client's growth in part through the way that I am; by the qualities I act on and express in a therapeutic setting. If I purport to teach clients how to relate authentically, I better be willing to relate authentically with them.

Two of the qualities related to the therapeutic context that resonated for me from Jordan's (2001) presentation are empathy and authenticity. Empathy is an attempt to see another person as a subject instead of an object; to recognize that "here is another person I can understand, in some ways different from me, but also like me, like all people" (Jordan, 1997, p.144). Jordan's conceptualization of empathy, to me, seems to parallel the idea of weaving the general and particular together in hermeneutics. I will try to enact this concept in my counselling work by being intentional about listening. I will attempt to listen to

people's stories in ways that affirm their uniqueness, but also will try to see how their words fit into the larger context. Authenticity, according to Jordan (1997), requires that I be committed to learning about my own areas of struggle and disconnection in relationships; places of "stuck cognitive and emotional growth", as Jordan would call them. Authenticity also means that I am able to react to someone honestly in a counselling relationship; to have my own limits and to communicate my reactions to what the client has said. It does not mean that I blurt everything out with abandon. Rather, authenticity as a way-of-being implies that I search for the one true thing to say in the moment that will further the development of our relationship and the client's self-knowledge (Jordan, 2001, Atco Centre Presentation).

Overall, the stories of the participants have inspired me to take relationships more seriously and to consider in what ways disconnection and isolation might be playing into a young woman's distress in counselling. The dimensions that emerged from this inquiry made space for me to consider identity as a journey of meaning for self and meaning for others. I have attempted to articulate how some of the revelations will inform my counselling practice in the future.

Reflecting Back, Moving Forward

I began this journey to understand mentoring more completely with an experience in which the topic "called me" (Gadamer, 1998); an incident in which my teenage girl self merged into the consciousness of my adult counselling self.

I began to be curious about how I was able to overcome certain challenges in adolescence. I realized that mentors played a large role in helping me find my way. I desired to speak to other adolescent girls to find out what role mentors had played in their lives, with a view to understanding mentoring more fully.

My understanding of mentoring has expanded over the course of this project, and I anticipate it continuing to expand as I continue to reflect on my own experiences, and the stories of the participants who so graciously participated in this work. I have come to frame my own adolescent questions as concerns about identity; ponderings about what I could/should mean to myself and what I could/should mean to others.

I think back to how I thought of the possibilities of mentoring before I began this work and I can see that my vision has expanded, shifted, and changed. My preconceptions of the event of mentoring, though a necessary starting place, seem to be limited reflections compared to the rich, multi-layered complexities of mentoring revealed by the participants. The concepts of "self", "identity" and "relationships" seem infinitely more alive to me than ever before. I hope this dissertation represents another starting place for someone else to continue the hermeneutic circle of understanding. I encourage you, and I encourage myself, to explore the dimensions of mentoring that are, as C.S. Lewis (1956) says, "farther up and farther in ". I hope our understanding and the new connections to be made reflect how our world might be "like an onion:

except that as you go in and in each circle is larger than the last." (Lewis, 1956, p. 163).

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APPENDIX A: Letter of Information

Dear participant and parent or guardian,

My name is Toupey Luft. I am a graduate student in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Calgary. I am doing a research project under the supervision of Dr. Mike Boyes as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. degree. I am writing to provide information regarding my research project "The Meaning of Mentoring in the Lives of Adolescent Girls" to see if you/your child might be interested in participating.

The purpose of the study is to better understand the meaning that mentors have in the lives of adolescent girls. In other words, the aim is to understand the experience of mentoring and the impact of this experience on aspects of girls' psychological development so that we can learn more about supporting girls in their development. There is no requirement to be involved in a formal mentoring program, but if you are, you may talk about those particular experiences of mentoring if you wish.

Your (or your child's) participation in the study would involve two interviews of approximately one to two hours in length each, and a group interview with other participants and myself, which will take approximately 2!/2 hours. The purpose of the group interview is to discuss what insights are emerging from the project, so that the participants can give me feedback on my analysis and on the research process. As a participant, if you wish, I will meet with you individually to discuss the analysis and to get feedback on the process of research.

Each of these interviews will be audio-taped and the content transcribed. All of the information will be kept strictly confidential and you/your child will in no way be identified in my dissertation or in any subsequent presentations or reports stemming from this research. I will ask each girl to choose a pseudonym that I will use to identify her on the audio tape, in the transcripts and in writing up the research. Further, each participant will have the opportunity to view the transcripts from the interviews and add anything they feel is appropriate or delete any information they feel might identify them.

For the interviews, I will be asking you (the participant)/your child to talk about her experiences with a trusted adult in her life (i.e. a mentor). Given the nature of the subject matter, there is some possibility that some issues or concerns may be raised that may cause some discomfort. The structure of the interview is such that you the participant/your child is able to direct the conversation and to reveal only what you/she is comfortable revealing. I will

provide support throughout the interview should any concerns arise, and you are free to withdraw from the study or interview at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Further, if you/your child is affiliated with an agency, I will make arrangements for you to speak with their counsellors to debrief any discomfort or concerns that may have arisen. Possible benefits of choosing to participate in this research are: a chance to talk about your life and focus on whatever is important to you, a sense of personal satisfaction from having increased your self-awareness by reflecting on your experiences, and a chance to meet with other young women and talk about your shared perceptions in the group interview.

The transcripts and audio tapes of the interviews will be identifiable only by the pseudonym which you will choose and this will also be used throughout the body of my dissertation and in any other presentations of the research material. The tapes, the consent forms and the transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet accessible only by me and my supervisor until the dissertation is finished. At that point, everything except for the transcripts will be destroyed. The transcripts will be kept in order to facilitate future presentations and reports of the research. Again, they will not contain any identifying features.

If you are interested in participating and/or have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 541-0510. If you have any questions you may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Mike Boyes at 220-7724. I have attached two copies of the consent form. It contains much of the same information of this letter, as well as important information supplied by the University. Please return one signed copy to me should you choose to participate and keep the other copy for your records.

Thank you for your cooperation.


Yours sincerely,



Toupey Luft, Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B: Consent Form

Consent Form for "The Meaning of Mentoring in the Lives of Adolescent Girls", being undertaken by Toupey Luft, doctoral student in Counselling Psychology

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participaion will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and understand any accompanying information.

I/We, the undersigned, hereby give my/our consent for

_____

Insert participant's name here
to participate in a research project entitled "The Meaning of Mentoring in the Lives of Adolescent Girls".

I understand that the purpose of the study is to better understand the meaning that mentors have in the lives of adolescent girls. Thus, participants will be asked to talk about someone they would define as a mentor in their lives. I understand that taking part in the study will involve two audio-taped interviews of approximately one-two hours each in length. I understand that if I so choose, I can participate in a third individual interview with the researcher instead of a group interview.

I understand that I/my child will be asked to talk about the experiences of mentoring in her life and that the interview is structured in such a manner as to allow her to talk about what is relevant for her, and what she is comfortable with. Should any discomfort arise, I understand that the researcher will provide me/my child with support in the interview and has made arrangements to access other counsellors if more debriefing is required.

I understand that possible benefits of participating are a chance to talk about your life and focus on whatever is important to you, a sense of personal satisfaction from having increased your self-awareness by reflecting on your experiences, and a chance to meet with other young women and talk about your shared perceptions in the group interview.

I understand that all data will be kept in the strictest of confidence. The transcripts and audio tapes of the interviews will be identifiable only by the pseudonym which you will choose and this will also be used throughout the body of my dissertation and in any other presentations of the research material. The tapes, the consent forms and the transcripts will be stored in a locked filing

cabinet accessible only by me and my supervisor until the dissertation is finished. At that point, everything except for the transcripts will be destroyed. The transcripts will be kept in order for 3 years to facilitate future presentations and reports of the research. Again, they will not contain any identifying features. You the participant/your child will also have the opportunity to add or delete any sections from the transcripts once they have been completed.

I understand that the researcher and the participant/your child will agree on a system (ie., phone, mail) for receiving updated information about the project, and arranging further interviews. The investigator will, as appropriate, explain to your child the research and her involvement, and will seek her ongoing cooperation throughout the project.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you have further questions concerning matters related to this research, please contact Toupey Luft at 541-0510 or Dr. Mike Boyes at 220-7724. If you have any questions or issues concerning this project that are not related to the specifics of the research, you may also contact the Research Services Office at 220-3782 and ask for Mrs. Patricia Evans.


Participant's Signature                                  Date


Parent/Guardian Signature                               Date


Investigator's Signature                                Date


Witness' Signature                                      Date