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An Exploration of
The Relational Experiences of Adolescent Girls

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore adolescent girls' experiences of relationships with important others in their lives, from the point of view of the participants.

Eleven adolescent girls, aged 12-16, participated in a series of three dialogal interviews conducted in a manner consistent with feminist principles and the canons of phenomenological research methodology. The interviews were audio-taped, and transcribed, and the protocols were analyzed in accordance with Colaizzi's (1978) model of data analysis. Age-mate, same-sex friendships proved to be of particular importance and do not support a negative stereotypic view of adolescent peer groups.

Relationships that facilitate healthy psychological development and a sense of self are those in which adolescent girls feel listened to, heard, understood and therefore known. Implications for developmental theorists, therapists, youth workers and related professionals are discussed. Further avenues of inquiry are suggested.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to eleven fascinating young women:

ANN, BARBARA, CONNIE

DIERDRE, ELAINE, FIONA,

GAY, HOLLY, JESSICA

KERRY and LAURIE

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The world we live in can be seen to be one of interaction between people; a world made up of interpersonal relationships within which we, individually and collectively, develop physically, socially, emotionally and mentally. Yet when we turn to the scientific theories of human development, particularly psychological development, this observable "truth" becomes a perplexing issue.

Traditional developmental theorists appear to unwittingly support a contradiction and it is this: they talk of interpersonal relationships and their role in human development yet they forsake their own observations and experiences in favour of the reification, as psychological phenomena, of Western cultural mores, and pre- and proscriptions (Cushman, 1990; Sampson, 1977, 1985). Here I specifically refer to the primacy of separation and individuation as both process toward and marker of maturity; an agenda that simply reflects Western androcentric ideology of individual autonomy and independence. The end result is that many men fit psychological developmental theory (although that may be debatable) and most women do not. Women's lack of conformity to the separation/individuation developmental model is explained in terms of female inadequacy, pathology, and/or deficiency.

More recently, studies of women's psychological development by theorists who reject the female inadequacy/pathology/deficiency models of women's development, postulate a developmental pathway that is a better fit for women. This pathway is described as relational. By this I mean that women's development occurs in the context of relationships and women's sense of self is, at one and the same time, both psychologically separate and connected. This model is informed by the construct *relationship/differentiation* (Jordan, Surrey, & Kaplan, 1983).

Traditional adolescent developmental theory postulates adolescence as a period in which self-identity is acquired through processes of individuation and separation; that is, through a psychological withdrawal from significant others (Blos, 1979; Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1925; Havighurst, 1972). More recent research into adolescent girls' development suggests that, contrary to an epigenetic process of psychosocial separation, adolescent girls actively strive to build and maintain relationships with others (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Rogers, & Brown, 1990; Lyons, 1990; Stern, 1990). Much of this recent research focused on the experiences of adolescent girls in attendance at elite American private girls' schools, and took place within the schools themselves. Girls' patterns of resolution of hypothetical moral dilemmas have been a prominent feature in these studies.

Nona Lyons, in a discussion concerning the future direction of research into adolescent girls' development, identified three factors important to future investigations. Lyons pointed to the need to expand the studies to populations other than those comprised of privileged adolescent girls in attendance at elite private and day schools. She also identified a need to move away from the potential influence of the school environment on the process of conducting the research and to explore the relationships adolescent girls have with others who are not part of that context. Such an approach would include, but would not be exclusive to, relationships with parents, siblings, and friends. Lyon's third factor pertains to the focus on the resolution of hypothetical moral dilemmas found in the earlier work of the aforementioned researchers. Lyons seemed to suggest that it was also time to move beyond that focus. (N.P. Lyons, personal communication, June 18, 1993).

Purpose of This Research

The purpose of this research is to explore adolescent girls' experiences of relationships with important others in their lives. This study, anchored in the voices of the girls themselves, was conducted within a qualitative inquiry framework using a phenomenological methodology.

In a discussion of the qualitative/quantitative compatibility debate, Glesne and Peshkin (1992) point out that these two approaches are anchored in different

philosophical assumptions about "... the nature of the world ..." (p. 9). Each paradigm makes possible knowledge and understanding of "... different things about the world." (p. 9). These authors also point out that, although custom dictates that the choice of a research paradigm should be defined by the research question, the process is a more complex one. In their view the research question itself is shaped by the researcher's "... socialized worldview." (p. 9) and that this worldview also influences the choice of a research methodology.

My socialized worldview includes the following assumptions: reality is a social construction; understanding as a research goal is more important than are prediction and control; the participant's point of view is a worthwhile and primary source of knowledge; the researcher is the research instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990); and human beings and their interactions are complex, convoluted and contextual. These assumptions are consistent with the qualitative paradigm, thus rendering it consonant with my socialized worldview.

The selection of a phenomenological methodology from within the qualitative paradigm for this inquiry provides the opportunity for exploring specific phenomena from the participant's point of view, in this case the experience of relationships. Phenomenological methodology, with its emphasis on description and understanding was the methodology

of choice in seeking the answer to the research question "How do adolescent girls experience and describe their relationships with those who are significant in their lives?"

The exploration of adolescent girls' relationships from their own viewpoint, as expressed in their own voices, may enrich our understanding of the "...structure and essence of this phenomenon for these people" (Patton, 1990, p. 69). This understanding not only adds to the body of knowledge, it also may have important implications for individual and family therapy.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Adolescence is generally considered to be the period between 10/12 and 22/23 years of age and is defined by a variety of distinctive, theory dependent assumptions and characteristics. As I indicated in the introduction, traditional theories of adolescent development, like traditional psychological theories in general, evolved in a gender-blind positivist atmosphere that supported the definition of the male experience as universal and therefore as normative. Female behaviors were evaluated against that norm and, invariably, women were found wanting (Weisstein, 1971).

Feminist scholars challenged the androcentric bias of traditional psychological theories, including those pertaining directly to adolescent development. Nevertheless these flawed theories of adolescence continue to have a strong influence in the discipline.

Male-Centered Theories of Development

G. Stanley Hall, the father of the scientific study of adolescence, proposed a stage/crisis theory of development which defined the time span between ages twelve to twenty-three as adolescence. It is a time of *Sturm und Drang*, during which young people go through a crisis characterized by conflict, and by emotional and mood lability (Hall, 1904; Santrock, 1984).

In light of copious and compelling data that refute the notion of turmoil as normative in adolescence and yet acknowledges that, for some adolescents, difficulties arising in childhood continue to be problematic in adolescence (Peterson, 1988), few mainstream theorists continue to view adolescence as a period of crisis in Hall's sense of the word. Most prefer to describe this period as one of transition from childhood (at age ten) to adulthood (at age twenty-two), during which cognitive, physical and social changes leading to social maturity occur (Santrock, 1984). Such a transition framework encompasses both stage/discontinuous and non-stage/continuous developmental theories.

Stage theories require the following assumptions: that particular issues inevitably come to the fore during a specific age period (Muuss, 1988; Santrock, 1984); that certain unique skills are acquired, and specific tasks are mastered at explicit points in "normal" development; and that the process itself is at least minimally discontinuous. Stage theories also tend to place significant emphasis on genetic, as opposed to environmental, influences on behavior (Santrock, 1984).

Three traditional stage theories that continue to influence adolescent developmental theory, and are representative of their genre, are Erikson's theory of

identity development, Blos' modern psychoanalytic theory, and Havighurst's task mastery model.

Erikson (1968), in his theory of psychosocial development, postulated adolescence as a time in which identity formation is the issue or crisis to be resolved. Explicit in the resolution of the identity issue is separation and independence from important others, including peers and parents. Individuation is the marker of maturity; absence of individuation leads to role confusion and a delay in the formation of a clear identity. Development, in Erickson's theory, is epigenetic, and identity is, at least as far as females are concerned, biologically determined. For women, identity and intimacy are fused; her identity is determined by her attractiveness, and her ability to attract a man who will give her a mature identity as his wife and the mother of his children (Erikson, 1964).

Blos (1962) in presenting a "modern" (Muuss, 1988a) psychoanalytic model of adolescent development postulates adolescence as a period of recapitulation of (psychoanalytically) significant preadolescent experiences; in particular the resolution of the Oedipal complex. The goal of this "second individuation" process is to complete the resolution process, separate oneself psychologically from one's parents and to disentangle oneself from immature attachments with significant others and, later on, from peers who serve in an interim capacity as "family" following the

breaking of familial ties. This process ultimately leads to the formation of a social, personal and sexual (more explicitly, heterosexual) identity in late adolescence. It is interesting to note that Blos (1979) does subscribe to the *Sturm und Drang* theory of adolescence.

Havighurst (1972), in his model of task mastery, outlined eight tasks to be mastered during adolescence. These tasks are: achieving new and more mature relations with peers; achieving a sex-specific gender role; accepting one's physique and using one's body effectively; desiring and acquiring socially responsible behavior; achieving emotional independence from parents and others; preparing for an economic career; preparing for marriage and family life; and acquiring an ideology. Havighurst, like Erikson, viewed emotional separation as a goal in the acquisition of maturity.

Cognitive social-learning theory (Bandura, 1964) and Maslow's (1971) humanistic perspective are two current non-stage/continuous approaches that specifically address adolescence. Non-stage descriptions of adolescence, while they do not deny the role of biology as contributing to some adolescent behaviors, emphasize the role of the environment to a far greater degree than do stage theories (Bandura, 1964; Muuss, 1988a; Santrock, 1984).

Bandura (1964) does not support the contention that adolescence is a "stage" in the life cycle that can be

uniquely defined or delineated; rather he sees it as part of a continuous flow of sociobehaviorial learning that begins in childhood and continues throughout adulthood through the process of reciprocal determinism (behavior both partly constructs and is constructed by the environment). Muuss (1988b) therefore suggests that Bandura's approach is not legitimately a theory of adolescence. However, other writers in the field (e.g. Santrock, 1984) are not so particular.

Contrary to Erikson's notion of separation/individuation as an issue requiring resolution in adolescence, Bandura (1964) reported that the adolescent boy had, over time, "emancipated" himself from his parents and childhood dependency was now a non-issue. Bandura, like most current adolescent theorists, both stage and non-stage, does not subscribe to the storm and stress myth of adolescent behavior. Although he does acknowledge, as do most adolescent theorists, that some adolescents have a stormy time, Bandura views such behavior as "... lawfully related to, and consistent with, pre-adolescent social behavior." (Bandura, 1964, 1980; in Muuss, 1980; p 30).

Maslow (1971), grounding his theory of human development in the humanistic tradition, postulated a five-level human needs hierarchy and ascribes to the adolescent the responsibility for achieving the final two levels: a high level of self-esteem, followed by self-actualization. This final level is characterized by personal autonomy and

independence. The self-actualizing individual is "growth motivated", and autonomy in this context refers to the use of one's full self, free from conventionality (Maslow, 1970).

While the aforementioned theories do not exhaust the domain of adolescent theory, they are representative of the various traditional approaches. What is clear is that no one theory adequately accounts for the complexities of the experience of adolescence (Santrock, 1984). What is equally clear, is that, for all their theoretical diversity, two factors are common to all these theories, stage and non-stage alike:

1. Psychological separation-individuation is both the process and the marker of maturity at, or immediately following, the time span labeled adolescence.
2. Most female adolescents do not conform to the separation-individuation developmental agenda (Chodorow, 1978; Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1925, cited in Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1984, 1986; Surrey, 1985).

Chodorow (1978), for instance, believes that adolescent girls view themselves as connected with, rather than totally separate from, others as required by a separation-individuation agenda. Erikson (1968) tacitly acknowledged female adolescents' absence of conformity to a separation-individuation developmental agenda when he proposed that women's identities are provided by a male partner.

Gilligan (1982), Miller (1984, 1986), and Surrey (1985) in their various studies of female experience point to the importance of relationships in female development. They reject the separation-individuation agenda as a male normed theory that, at best, simply ignores the relational nature of female development and, at worst, pathologizes lack of conformity to the separation-individuation developmental agenda.

Much of traditional psychological theory has evolved in the absence of any supportive empirical evidence, and, when research has been conducted, the populations used have been, virtually without exception, all males (Weisstein, 1971). When women's experience did not fit the theory, the problem was attributed to the research subjects, not the theory (Gilligan, 1982; Miller, 1986; Weisstein, 1971). When one considers that most traditional theories of adolescence also conform to this pattern of theory development, it would be surprising if they described the female adolescent experience in normative terms.

Harry Stack Sullivan (1950) initially appears to be a notable exception to the "separation-individuation" agenda as a process and marker of maturity in adolescence, in that he referred to unique individuality as a delusion. Sullivan viewed the "self" as consisting of the "reflected appraisal" of others. He used the term reflected appraisal to describe a two-fold process of identity formation in which the way one

is appraised by significant others over an extended period of time eventually becomes the individual's mode of self appraisal. Sullivan proposed a stage theory that focuses on the nature of interpersonal relationships. The process of forming a personality is one of learning increasingly sophisticated interpersonal skills that ultimately lead to the ability, in late adolescence, to establish a mature repertoire of increasingly complex interpersonal relationships, particularly those of an intimate nature. This process is characterized by the anxiety associated with inevitably changing relationships. With increasing maturation the childhood need for a large group of playmates gives way to the need for an intimate, one-on-one friendship with a same-sex peer; this need, in turn, gives way to the need for an opposite-sex relationship and the opportunity for developing the ability to form mature, mutually respectful intimate relationships. Yet for all Sullivan's focus on the interpersonal, in the end he seems to support the separation/individuation agenda.

Muuss (1988), in a summary of Sullivan's works, suggests that it is unfortunate that Sullivan chose to focus on male development because the "... female picture is more complicated and I have less material on it" (Sullivan, 1953, p. 248). It is interesting to speculate on the direction that adolescent developmental theory might have taken forty years ago if Sullivan had followed up on his sense of a different

process for women, since his interpersonal theory has elements in common with the emerging theories of women's development.

Women-Centered Theories of Development

In addition to the foregoing extant theories of adolescent development, there is a body of women-centered literature of particular relevance to this project. Chodorow (1978), Conarton and Silverman (1988), Gilligan (1982), Brown and Gilligan, (1992), Jordan (1983), Kaplan and Klein (1985), Gleason (1985), Lyons (1990), Miller (1984, 1986), and others present a relational as compared to a separation-individuation developmental process and goal for girls and women. The relational approach to women's development has been developed in response to the prevailing female deficiency/pathology models of female development derived from the androcentric assumption of the male as normative. This assumption is played out, for example, by pathologizing as immaturity the absence of separation, autonomy, and independence in adult women's development (Notman, Zilbach, Baker-Miller, & Nadelson, 1986).

The most significant evidence in support of relational developmental theory for women comes from theoretical consensus and similarity of empirical findings in three overlapping areas of research on women's development. These areas include the importance, for women, of relationships and the need for personal authenticity, and the importance of

mutual caring and interdependence within relationships. These requirements are revealed in studies of moral and self-development by Gilligan and her colleagues; in studies on women's identity and in women's mental health issues by the Stone Center theorists and practitioners; and in studies of women's epistemic development (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986).

Research and clinical support for the Stone Center theory of women's development (self-in-relation theory, now relational theory) is provided by Gleason (1985), in an empirical study of older adolescent women and their mothers and in the successful application of the theory in psychiatric hospitals in the Boston area. Belenky et al. (1986), in their research into how women "know" and perceive themselves as knowers, provide empirical support for the importance of a mutually supportive, "connected" learning/teaching environment in women's epistemic development.

Relationship models of women's development, however, are not problem-free. Enns (1991), for instance, while recognizing the contribution of feminist research in redressing the inadequacies of traditional developmental approaches, points to the need to view women's relational capacities as existing in a cultural context of women's subordination, and to be aware of the potential for biological determinant attributions. She also points to the

limitations of the focus on the mother-daughter relationship to the exclusion of other influences such as the father's in relational theory.

Hare-Mustin and Maracek (1990) point to the potential for alpha bias in gender differences research and charge the relational theorists with representing "... differences between men and women as essential, universal (at least within contemporary Western culture), highly dichotomized, and enduring." (p. 23).

Female Adolescence

Chodorow (1978), while still loyal to much of the psychoanalytic tradition, reframes the mother-daughter relationship as one from which adolescent girls emerge with "a basis for 'empathy' built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. ... girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and more related to the external object-world." (p. 167). According to Chodorow girls do not view themselves as totally separate from others, but rather as psychologically connected in ongoing caregiving relationships with others. This perspective is acquired through emulating their mothers.

Miller (1984), within her treatise on the development of women's sense of self as relational beings, describes adolescence for females as a period, not of greatly increasing capacities, as the prevailing traditional theories

would have it, but as a period of shutting down, of "contracting"--a phenomenon noted a long time ago by Thompson (1942). This shutting down is manifest in the psychological divorcing of parts of herself; a process that occurs in response to the opposition encountered when the adolescent girl tries to bring all parts of herself to relationships; that is to fulfill her sense of self as " ... an active agent - in the context of acting within a relationship and for the relationship.-..." (Miller, 1984, p. 9). The adolescent girl's sense of self as a fully functioning individual in the context of increasingly complex relationships, which has been developing since infancy, is distorted in adolescence when, increasingly, she is exposed to, and internalizes, social pressures to conform to societal prescriptions of exclusive service to others. She will opt for the relationship at the expense of being an "active being-within-relationships" (Miller, 1984, p. 9). In essence, the adolescent girl remains true to her sense of herself as relational and in so doing loses her sense of agency; that is, her capacity to use her powers in all ways. For example, she may constrain her own academic development and achievements if high academic performance in a competitive environment threatens her relationships with friends, male or female (Horner, 1972; Winchel, Fenner, & Shaver, 1980, 1974).

Surrey (1985) postulates a "self-in relation" theory of women's development that has application for understanding

the adolescent experience. Self-in-relation theory incorporates the construct "relationship-differentiation" as a contrast to the notion of "separation-individuation". Differentiation in this context is not psychological separation from others, rather it is a "... dynamic process which encompasses increasing levels of complexity, structure and articulation within the context of human bonds and attachments" (p. 10). Differentiation is about being separate AND connected. The relationship in this construct is one of mutually empathic connection; each person within the relationship not only understands and responds to the other(s), but feels heard, understood, and responded to by them. The developmental pathway in this model is relational and continuous; the goal is relationship and a differentiated self.

Surrey (1985) postulates that the adolescent girl does not necessarily want to distance herself (separate) from her parents, for instance. What she does want to do is change the nature of that relationship in ways that acknowledge and affirm her own changes, personal growth and expanded repertoire of non-familial relationships.

Gilligan (1982) in *"In a Different Voice"*, a treatise addressing moral and concomitant identity development, reports that when one begins with a study of women (as distinct from generalizing to women from studies of men), a different voice from that outlined by Freud, Piaget and

Kohlberg is heard in the framing and in the resolution of moral dilemmas. These theorists conceptualize moral development as a process associated with cognitive development, toward a personal ethic of fairness and individual rights in the identification and resolution of moral dilemmas. This ethic is grounded in the separation/individuation model of human development, in theories of abstract and formal thought, and is embedded in a worldview of presumptive rights and the primacy of individualism.

The "different voice", one which Gilligan (1982) states, quite categorically, is not gender specific but appears to be gender related, informs a description of moral development in terms of care and responsibility for others and characterized by a mode of thinking that is context- and narrative-oriented. The ethic of care and responsibility is grounded in a relational developmental approach, is characterized by a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative, and is embedded in an interpersonal and context-oriented worldview.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) report that, in Gilligan's earlier work, privileged men spoke as if they did not live in connection with others; rather they lived a self-governing existence and were essentially free to do as they pleased. Women, on the other hand, tended to speak in terms of connection with others, both to their satisfaction and to their distress. That distress appeared to come from the need

to give up the self, to silence the voice in order to be in relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982). In order to understand why this should be so, Gilligan and her colleagues, Brown (1991a, 1991b), Lyons (1990), Rogers (1993), Stern (1991), and Tolman (1991) embarked on an ongoing study beginning with womanhood and going back into women's experiences of adolescence and childhood. This research journey has revealed a developmental path in adolescence that at times shares features of the traditional path (increasing autonomy and 'separation') yet has distinctive features that appear to illuminate uniquely female developmental experiences.

From the data acquired by listening to the voices of women and girls as they spoke about themselves and about morality in several studies, Gilligan (1990) identified three concerns--survival, goodness and truth. These three themes became developmental levels in a three-level theory of women's development. Two transitions between the levels complete the model. In this model, survival (an exclusively self focus) yields to or sometimes replaces a concern for "goodness"; goodness being equated with care for, or taking on the cares of, others. There is no presumption of linearity in this model; survival usually yields to goodness but goodness can itself be replaced by survival, that is, by a return to a self focus. Goodness involves sacrificing the self in hopes of being loved and cared for in return. These

two concerns reflect a struggle with connection and an either/or dilemma of choosing self or others. Gilligan suggests that this dilemma "... marks an impasse in female development, a point where the desire for relationship is sacrificed for goodness or for survival" (Gilligan, 1990, p. 9). The two transitions involve repairing relationship by rectifying an exclusion of self (goodness) or an exclusion of others (survival).

The third level, "truth", addresses the reality of relationships and is characterized by the awareness of the psychological truth that relationship implies the full presence of both self and other if it is to be an authentic, as opposed to, a false relationship.

Gilligan proposes that since this developmental sequence is not seen in "younger" girls, it is not rooted in childhood. She states that it "... seemed to be a response to a crisis, and the crisis seemed to be adolescence." (p.9).

The young girls on the edge of adolescence in this collection of studies speak out with clarity of thought; they speak of pleasure and pain in relationships; they speak from a perspective of love and care and one of injustice and inequality, as do their male age mates. They speak in terms of personal freedoms, of having choices and of being and doing whatever one wants to be or do. They actively resist the norms of conventional femininity and speak the unspoken when describing relationships in other than idealistic terms

(friends do fight and friends do hurt you and get hurt in return) (Rogers & Gilligan, 1988) and are often labeled "unruly" when they do so (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hammer, 1990). The dilemma of self-other choice is not heard in the voices of these young girls.

When attention is focused specifically on the voices of seventh and tenth grade girls (Rogers & Gilligan, 1988) and the language therein is translated into a new language that represents female development, two developmental themes emerge. There is a pattern of cognitive and emotional development reflected in their use of self-consciousness and of reflective thought; they do well academically and their ego development is confirmed on Loevinger's ego development scale (Rogers & Gilligan, 1988). The traditional developmental themes of separation, and autonomy and the ethic of justice are clearly heard. Quite clearly girls in both age groups speak in the language of traditional developmental theory. There is a second developmental theme to be heard in these voices, however. This theme reflects a concern for relationships and connection with others, together with an ethic of care and responsibility for those others.

In addition, when these girls speak the language of the second developmental pattern an intriguing phenomenon appears. Together with themes of relationship and connection and the ethic of care, there is, for some, a perplexing

pattern of loss; loss of innocence, of clarity, and of confidence and courage. New themes of resistance, capitulation, self-assertion and self-abnegation appear that illuminate these losses.

The younger girls, as outlined above, for the most part, speak clearly, with courage and confidence and resist conformity to the feminine "ideal woman/girl" image. The voices of the tenth graders in this study spoke in confusion as they tried to respond to their own voices of self care and self knowing and to the voice of society as it defined women's role of caring only for others. Resistance to the demands of the good girl/woman role gave way as these girls capitulated in an effort to maintain important relationships (Brown, 1991a; Gilligan, 1991; Gilligan, Rogers, & Tolman, 1991; Stern, 1991; Tolman, 1991). The self assertion apparent at the edge of adolescence gives way to self-abnegation and loss of voice; themes of self gradually disappear from the voices of the older girls and are replaced by themes of responsibility to and for others (Gilligan, Brown, & Rogers, 1988).

The problems facing adolescent girls are problems of connection, not problems of separation (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1990; Lyons, 1990; Stern, 1990). In our culture at least, adolescence seems to signal the onset of a crisis in relationships for girls (Gilligan, 1990); a crisis that does not appear to occur for adolescent males.

Support for the importance of relationships in female adolescence, as well as for Gilligan's work in particular, is found in a variety of studies. Romig and Bakken (1992), in a study of intimacy, companionship and leadership found that middle adolescent females value closeness more than males do; the latter place greater value on autonomy. They also confirmed Lyons' (1990) observation that, in middle adolescence, girls who previously exhibited strong and competent leadership qualities abdicated those roles in relationships in favour of friendships.

Berzoff (1989), although she seems to support the separation/individuation developmental path, reports that adolescent girls describe friendships as a context for differentiation and friends as instrumental in the establishment of a sense of self.

Greely and Tinsley (1988) in a study of autonomy and intimacy in 441 (222 male, 219 female) college undergraduates reports "Gilligan's theory is supported by numerous results in this study ..." (p. 519), and points to intimacy as the best predictor of autonomy (identity) for the women in the study. In addition, Greeley and Tinsley (1988) found that the female participants' intimacy scores were significantly higher than their autonomy scores as Gilligan predicted. These findings, they suggest, indicate that women may be more relationally oriented than men are.

Although much of the Greeley and Tinsley (1988) data support the relational nature of female development, other data bring into question the prevailing notion that males develop intimacy only after they have developed autonomy. Males in the study, like their female counterparts, had higher intimacy scores than autonomy scores; a finding not predicted by Gilligan or Erikson. Equally puzzling was the finding that the males' autonomy scores were not higher than those of the females in the study. It may well be that, for males, the development of intimacy precedes the development of autonomy (Greely & Tinsley, 1988) or that intimacy and autonomy develop in tandem.

In studies of adolescent coping behaviors Frydenberg and Lewis (1993) and Shulman (1993) report gender related differences in coping. The former states that boys turn to sports and physical relaxation whereas girls turn to others and make more use of relationships in their coping behavior. Shulman (1993), in a study limited to the "distinctive contribution" of close relationships in internal coping (internal analysis and interpretation of information) and in active coping, found that while close relationships of family and peers are important factors in coping with stress for both males and females the significance changes across gender in adolescence. For male adolescents the establishment of independence and responsibility is paramount (asking others for help would not be seen as the best way to cope) whereas

close relationships account for a significant proportion (25%) of female adolescents' coping behavior.

Linn (1991) in a study of Israeli adolescent girls from city and kibbutz provides further support for Gilligan's work. She found that, on the one hand, these girls viewed their ability to grow as an expansion of the self in the context of relationships; yet on the other hand, they feared the potential for loss of an authentic self in relationships with boyfriends.

In a quite different vein, Hotelling and Forrest (1985) point to the value of sharing with clients in therapy, Gilligan's discovery of the two complementary voices that stem from different gender related developmental paths. The authors contend that discussion of the two voices, one that speaks of care and responsibility to and for others, and the other that speaks of individual rights serves as a powerful aid to understanding oneself. Hotelling and Forrest (1985) suggest that in couples counselling, issues often reflect the use of different languages. Translation and interpretation become the focus of therapy and the introduction of the concept of two complementary voices aids in the process of understanding one's self, one's partner and the dynamics within the relationship.

There has not been universal acceptance of Gilligan's theory; her early work has been criticized, for instance, on methodological grounds, for theoretical eclecticism, for

unwarranted emphasis on sex differences and for essentialism (Davis, 1992; Kerber, Greeno & Maccoby, Luria, Stack, & Gilligan, 1986; Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990; Walker, 1984, 1986).

Gilligan (1982) is criticized on methodological grounds as follows: the use of a study on abortion and the concomitant decision-making process as a basis for proposing that women exhibit a distinctive tendency to see moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities. Kerber (1986) challenges Gilligan's conclusions on the bases of what she sees as the inherent conflict of responsibilities embedded in any decision on abortion and on the absence of any data from men facing comparable challenging decisions. It is I suggest, unfair to criticize Gilligan on her use of an abortion study as data for her theory since I view the husband-druggist-wife dilemma as one of conflicting responsibilities as well. In addition, Gilligan is criticized for the absence of any quantitative data to support her claims and for her allegations of female gender specific voices (Greeno & Maccoby, 1986). Gilligan (1982) has also been criticized for the lack of any distinction between theoretical speculation and discussion of data (Luria, 1986); and on the focus on white culture (Stack, 1986; Tronto, 1987) although Stack supports the concept of a care voice based on the data presented. Certainly some of these criticisms were appropriate at the time that *In a Different Voice* (1982) was

published; for example the use of an abortion study as the basis for the initial postulation of a distinctive, female view of moral dilemmas as conflicts of responsibility. The issue of race/class/culture does not yet appear to have been adequately addressed beyond acknowledging a bias. For example, although Gilligan (1990), in notes to the Harvard edition of "Making Connections" places the study of adolescent girls at Emma Willard School (an elite private girls' school) within a larger study that included boys and girls in neighbourhood schools in Boston as well as another elite girls' school in Cleveland, the voices of privilege from the private schools appear to be those solely and/or predominately used in both "Making Connections" and in "Meeting at the Crossroads".

Walker (1984) rejects the notion of sex differences in moral reasoning stating quite categorically that there are none that cannot be accounted for by controlling for educational level and that there is no evidence to the contrary. Baumrind (1986) refutes Walker's claims by challenging his interpretation of the studies he reviewed, and by providing a re-analysis that generally confirms sex differences.

Muuss (1988b) who describes Gilligan's theory of two gender related moral orientations as "intriguing" nevertheless describes the empirical basis of the theory as "weak" primarily because empirical support from other

researchers interested in sex differences in moral reasoning is weak. Without reviewing the relevant evidence refuting and/or supporting Gilligan's theory because it is "... too extensive..." (p.242), Muuss concludes that there are no data to support the unequivocal sex differences in moral reasoning as he believes Gilligan's theory implies.

Gilligan (1982) is also criticized for her political affiliations (Davis, 1992). She has been criticized for man-hating separatism (Walker, 1983, cited in Davis, 1992), for an anti-feminist stance by Tronto (1987), and by Auerbach, Blum, Smith, and Williams (1985) for the lack of attention to the social construction of women's lives. Tronto (1987) suggests that a theory of gender-related ethic of care precludes viewing an ethic of care as a condition of women's subordination. Auerbach et al. (1985) argue that establishing an ethic of care as female-centered is an anti-feminist stance and provides ammunition for keeping women from positions of power.

In a somewhat different vein, Clopton and Sorell (1993) raise the question of whether or not gender differences in moral reasoning reflect stable intra-psychic traits or whether they reflect situational characteristics. They conclude from their study on parenting that since men and women did not differ in their use of care or justice orientations, differences in moral reasoning are situational, not stable gender related characteristics. They suggest that

Gilligan's theory, although accurate, may simply reflect the differences in women's and men's lives.

On a less scientific note, theorists of women's development (including Gilligan) have been criticized for implying that women's ways are superior (Kerber, 1986). Yet Gilligan makes it quite clear that the ethic of care and responsibility and the ethic of rights and justice are complementary. The use of both orientations is the marker of moral maturity (Gilligan, 1982).

Davis (1992), in an excellent summary of the debate about Gilligan's (1982) research, suggests that underlying the rhetoric of scientific inadequacy surrounding Gilligan's work is a hidden agenda. "The critics of Gilligan mounted their attack, first and foremost, because they did not like her findings" (p. 225).

Despite the criticism--specious and reasoned--of gynocentric research and theorizing, there is sufficient evidence to support the need for further research into the relational nature of women's development. As indicated earlier the intention of this research was a phenomenological exploration of adolescent girls' experience of relationships with important others in their lives.

Consistent with qualitative inquiry, a further review of the literature, directed by the data collected, was conducted and is reported in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The term *methodology* is used to introduce this chapter because it describes more accurately the content of the chapter than does the term *method*. The latter term is described by Van Manen (1990) as a certain mode of inquiry that is consistent with a particular epistemological or philosophical perspective, whereas *methodology*--the "how" of the pursuit of knowledge (Guba, 1990)--is an inclusive term, the components of which provide the philosophical framework of the research project.

In a similar vein, Cohen and Omery (1994) in their discussion of method and methodology describe methodology as "... theoretical understanding and articulation of methods ..." and research methods as those "... specific techniques or steps ... performed" (p. 152). In their view, issues of methodology take precedence over concerns about method when, for example, the practicalities of the research situation do not permit absolute adherence to a specific mode of inquiry. The methodology of the project, then, is the theory behind the method.

Methodology includes an account of the worldview of the researcher--her/his view of mankind and of knowledge (Van Manen, 1990); that is, her/his approach (Ray, 1994).

"Approach" here refers to "... the fundamental viewpoint toward man and the world that the scientist brings, or

adopts, with respect to his work as a scientist, whether this viewpoint is made explicit or remains implicit" (Giorgi, 1970, p. 126).

In addition, methodology includes the "... methods and procedures developed in preparing to conduct the study, in collecting the data, and in organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing the data" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 184); that is, the mode of inquiry, the method.

This chapter includes a discussion of the basic assumptions of qualitative research, the philosophical origins of phenomenological research methodology; detailed descriptions of the nature of the participants and of myself as researcher; an explicit account of my approach and my rationale for choosing phenomenology as the mode of inquiry in this study. The methods and procedures for conducting the study are outlined in detail. My previous research experience is described. Before beginning this process, however, a brief digression to address the issue of language usage is necessary.

Paradigmatic Language

Paradigmatic consistency and clarity of meaning in the language used are important aspects of any research project (Ray, 1994). Qualitative inquiry, previously declared as the overarching framework for this study, presents some semantic challenges. While some terms used in qualitative studies are common to more than one research paradigm, meanings may vary.

"Interviews" in quantitative studies are more apt to have considerable structure; in qualitative studies less so. In addition, some terms common to one paradigm acquire idiosyncratic variations depending on, amongst other things, the discipline within which the research is being conducted and/or who is conducting the research. For instance, *convenience sampling* is defined by Diers (1979) in a treatise on research in nursing practice as taking all the sampling units (patients) one can get in an allotted period of time. Chinn (1986), on the other hand, defines *opportunistic*, *volunteer*, and *convenience samples* as consisting of participants who simply were available and willing. Yet Lincoln and Guba (1985) in *Naturalistic Inquiry* define the same term as sampling conducted in a manner which requires the minimum amount of money, time and effort. Although these meanings are not mutually exclusive they are not the same.

In an effort to avoid the pitfalls associated with multiple meanings of certain terms, the specific meaning of those terms as they are used in the context of this study are outlined below. The definitions are consistent with the language of qualitative inquiry in general and with phenomenology in particular.

"Interviews" are "dialogal interviews" as outlined by Colaizzi (1978) and are characterized by "imaginative listening" (Sheridan, 1975, cited in Colaizzi, 1978).

The term "participants" refers to those whose experience is the focus of this inquiry (Moon, Dillon, & Sprenkle, 1990).

"Convenience sampling" refers to the acquisition of participants using the simplest, least time-consuming and least expensive yet productive way (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

"Experience" refers to the subjective experience of the participant (Patton, 1990).

The term "phenomenology" is not synonymous with the term "qualitative" as is implied by Lincoln and Guba (1985); although there is a phenomenological element to all qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1990; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) not all qualitative research is phenomenological (Ray, 1994).

Basic Assumptions of Qualitative Research

There is considerable variation in the definition of the term "qualitative research" to be found in the literature with definitions ranging from "... any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17) to an unwillingness to define the term since it "... defies comprehensive definition." (Stiles, 1993, p. 594). There is, however, agreement among researchers that "Qualitative inquiry is not a single thing with a singular subject matter" (Patton, 1990, p. 65) but is an umbrella term for a collection of numerous different methodologies (Bogdan

& Biklen, 1992; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Hoshmand, 1989). Qualitative inquiry assumes a generally accepted set of ontological, epistemological, and methodological research canons that provide a framework for such research. In addressing the ontological question " what is the form and nature of reality?", for example, qualitative inquiry assumes multiple constructed realities based on people's perceptions; others may or may not share these constructions or elements of them. Reality is dynamic, changing as perceptions change (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stainback & Stainback, 1988).

In response to the epistemological questions "what and how are things known?", qualitative inquiry assumes the person (the researcher) is the primary instrument for data collection (Patton, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1988). The collection of data by the researcher is accomplished through direct interaction with the participants in order to hear their perspectives (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative inquiry's orientation is toward discovery (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1990; Stainback & Stainback, 1988); and its purpose is understanding the participants from their point of view, in particular the meanings they attach to events and interactions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hoshmand, 1989).

When it comes to the question of "method"--of how one goes about collecting data--the strategies and processes used are more apt to be methodology specific, that is, specific to one of the numerous methodologies within the qualitative framework. In ethnography, for instance, the main mode of data collection is participant observation. Interviews, however, appear to be a dominant method of data collection in many qualitative studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, 1992; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Qualitative methodology has numerous other characteristics that are relevant to this discussion. This approach is considered both descriptive (Van Hesteren, 1986) and interpretive (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Hoshmand, 1989); yet interpretations are negotiable (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Qualitative researchers acknowledge pre-suppositions in the form of personally held beliefs, biases or assumptions but, as previously implied, they usually do not enter the research process with a set of hypotheses to be tested (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

Patton (1990) provides a useful summary of the elements of qualitative inquiry. In addition to those already mentioned, his summary includes the following characteristics:

1. Qualitative research designs are "naturalistic" in that the topics under study are real-world situations not subjected to manipulation.

2. Qualitative inquiry data are comprised of "thick" (detailed) descriptions of the phenomenon provided by the study participants.
3. The process of data analysis is inductive as opposed to deductive; no hypotheses are formulated or tested.
4. The perspective taken is holistic, the people and the situation are viewed as a whole and the whole phenomenon with all its complex interdependencies is the focus of study. Phenomena are considered to be greater than the sum of their parts, and efforts to reduce them to discrete elements and/or cause-effect relationships are rejected.
5. Qualitative researchers are context oriented; findings are invariably placed in social, temporal and historical context (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Any attempts to generalize across time and space are treated with scepticism.

As previously stated all qualitative researchers reflect, in some way or another, a phenomenological perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Patton, 1990; Ray, 1994; Taylor & Bogdan, 1984) as compared to conducting a phenomenological study (Patton, 1990). The term phenomenological perspective can mean :

... either or both (1) a focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world (in which case one can use interviews without actually

experiencing the phenomenon itself) or (2) a methodological mandate to actually experience the phenomenon being investigated (in which case participant observation would be necessary) (p. 70).

A phenomenological study however, focuses on the "... essence or essences to shared experience ..." (Patton, 1990, p. 71).

Philosophical Origins of Phenomenological Research

Methodology

Ray (1994), in her discussion of credible qualitative and phenomenological research, points to the confusion surrounding the term phenomenology and its misuse, something she believes can be avoided if the researcher is not only versed in the philosophical roots of the phenomenological tradition but also communicates that understanding to the reader; a position supported by Cohen and Omery (1994). This requirement proved to be no easy task, since "As you know phenomenologists are not noted for their clear language ..." (Cohen & Omery, 1994, p. 136). This criticism directed at phenomenological philosophers, I suggest, is equally applicable to phenomenologists involved in social science research.

The following discussion of the philosophical roots of phenomenological research into human behavior is derived from two major sources: translations of original works and (primarily) secondary sources that struggle with the task of

making phenomenological philosophy more comprehensible to the non-philosopher.

Present day phenomenological research is not characterized by a unified body of thought, yet each variation has its roots in phenomenological philosophy; particularly the phenomenological philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Because these two philosophers are considered to be the key influences on contemporary phenomenological research in the social sciences (Becker, 1992; Cohen & Omery, 1994; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 1990; Ray, 1994) this discussion will be limited to the philosophical canons each one espoused.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), was a German mathematician-turned-philosopher who studied under the tutelage of Franz Brentano. Brentano was interested in reforming philosophy and believed that philosophy in the service of humanity could fill the gaps left by the philosophical questions organized religion could no longer answer (Cohen, 1987). Husserl, like Brentano, wanted to reform philosophy but his motivation for reform grew out of a concern for philosophy's loss of primacy and status among the sciences (Jennings, 1986). Husserl proposed phenomenological philosophy as the "... ideal of 'rigorous science' in pursuit of absolute knowledge of the world" (Jennings, 1986, p. 1232) through the process of "... getting back to the things themselves". Husserl, considered to be the father of phenomenology and a major figure in the

Phenomenological Movement, committed himself throughout his lifetime to the establishment of phenomenological philosophy as a rigorous science focused on human concerns (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Omery, 1994).

Husserl's phenomenology situates the focus of inquiry in people's descriptions of their experiences, in the firm belief that "... human experience contains a meaningful structure." (Cohen & Omery, 1994, p. 137) and, free from research presuppositions, is a valuable source of knowledge. It is the search for, and discovery of these meaningful, universal, essential structures or essences of conscious experience that is the work of the phenomenological philosopher (Cohen & Omery, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989; Ray, 1994). Husserl believed that, in order to uncover the essences within people's experience of events in the everyday world and thus gain invaluable knowledge, the phenomenologist must return to observing people's experience in the world and to suspend personally held assumptions, beliefs and knowledge of the life world. Husserl termed this suspension of beliefs "epoche" and believed that it, along with deep self-reflection, was necessary for the revelation of knowledge based on nonrelativistic evidence (Ray 1994). The crux of Husserl's notion of essences was their universality and their absoluteness and therefore their independence from historical time (Jennings, 1986). The goal of Husserlian phenomenology is a comprehensive description of the phenomenon untainted by

preconception. The Husserlian tradition can be seen to be epistemic, eidetic (descriptive), and "transcendental" where transcendental refers to the suspension of presuppositions about the world and "... can be understood as conferring meaning by the knowing ego, or self, reflecting on itself" (Ray, 1994, p. 119).

Although aspects of Husserl's philosophy changed over time, his concepts of phenomenology as rigorous science; of human experience as a source of knowledge of universal essences (*philosophic radicalism*); of humans as being self-reflective and responsible for self and the culture (*ethos of radical autonomy*); and of *epoche* remained constant (Cohen & Omery, 1994). His views on consciousness (what we know is that which is in our consciousness) and on the intentionality of consciousness where intentionality is the internal experience of being conscious of something (Moustakas, 1994) also remained unchanged.

Martin Heidegger, like Husserl, saw phenomenology as a means of redefining philosophy. However, although he continued to explore consciousness and knowledge using Husserl's phenomenological method, he rejected several foundational elements of Husserlian tradition. Heidegger rejected Husserl's epistemological focus in the belief that the primary focus of this new philosophy should be ontological. The emphasis, Heidegger believed, should be on

understanding, not description, as Husserl proposed (Cohen & Omery, 1994).

While he accepted human experience as a source of knowledge, Heidegger rejected the notion of essences as pure knowledge. To him the focus of phenomenology should be on the meaning of Being, where Being is presence in the world. Heidegger, like Husserl, recognized the importance of preconceptions and presuppositions. He believed, however, that rather than suspending or eliminating awareness of the world (presuppositions) in order to reveal pure knowledge as Husserl proposed, such presuppositions only need uncovering for they are "... what constitute the possibility of intelligibility or meaning" (Ray, 1994, p. 120). Being, or presence already in the world, makes for interpretation as a way of understanding, of making meaning.

Heideggerian tradition, as indicated above, includes the concepts of Being, and being there (Dasein); that is the person is always in the world, not simply of it as Husserl seems to suggest (Becker, 1992). In his philosophical pursuit of Being, or more accurately the meaning of Being (Spiegelberg, 1982) and time, Heidegger united existential philosophy with phenomenological method (Becker, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1989). The Heideggerian tradition can be seen to be interpretive (hermeneutic), and ontological.

The foregoing discussion of the philosophical roots of phenomenology as a research approach, limited as it is to the

key elements of the philosophies of the two major philosophers involved in the inception of phenomenology, is intended to provide a background for future sections of this dissertation that address my choice of a phenomenological method for use in this study.

The Nature of the Study Participants.

In accordance with Ray's (1994) criteria for excellence in phenomenological research, the following is an explication of the nature of the participants (including myself as an active participant in the study).

The adolescent girls who participated in this study (eleven in all) ranged in age from thirteen to sixteen years old; one was thirteen, four were fourteen, five were fifteen and one turned sixteen during the participant selection process. These participants came from diverse social, economic and racial backgrounds including both majority and visible minority ethnic origins. Seven of the girls were Caucasian and four were Oriental (one participant was Chinese, one was Vietnamese and two were East Indian).

The participants were distributed among grades seven, nine and ten in three different urban schools where grade seven is the entry level of junior high school, and grade ten is the entry level for high school. One participant was in grade seven, three were in grade nine and seven were in grade ten.

The school attended by six of the participants is a combined junior/senior high school located in a mixed socioeconomic neighborhood and draws students from across the city. One participant attended a parochial high school and the remainder attended a public high school noted for its academic excellence. This school serves the older middle class urban area within which it is located, as well as some newer upper middle class suburban developments. In addition to their regular schooling, some of the participants were involved in extracurricular educational endeavours such as music, drama and dance classes, and dance and language training specific to their cultural/ethnic heritages.

None of the participants reported having academic problems; comments such as: "I do OK in school but umm, I'm not a high achiever or anything." and "Most people think I'm smart but I'm not really that smart; I'm an OK student." made by Gay and Ann are representative; although Jessica said (somewhat shyly): "I think I'm pretty bright because I get good marks in school."

All the girls in the study lived in two-parent families; nine of the participants lived with both of their biological parents and two were parented by their biological mother and a stepfather. With one exception, the family home is shared with one or more siblings. Five of the participants live with one or more brothers or half-brothers but no sisters; four live with one or more sisters and no brothers; one lives with

both a brother and a sister and one participant has step-siblings but they do not live in the family home. Two families include one or more resident grandparents.

Each of these participants can be seen as a risk taker merely through the act of volunteering for the project. That characteristic was further manifested by their willingness to share the intricacies of their relationships with me, someone they did not know and, with one exception, had never met before. This willingness to participate went far beyond simply answering questions; these young women went to great lengths in helping me understand their lives in the context of their relational lifeworlds and part of that process was teaching me the latest adolescent jargon. These adolescents were, for the most part, astonishingly frank and open; the stories they told to describe and/or explicate incidents in their relational experience were often recounted with a great deal of wry humour; some with much poignancy and all with much trust in me. These features are demonstrated in the following conversational excerpts: Barbara, (talking about her family).

My family. Well my wonderfully annoying little sister is eleven. Now, eleven, one plus one adds up to two so I figure terrible twos and eleven gotta be somewhere related.

and Laurie, talking about her relationship with her mother:

...me and my mother, you know (aren't) too, you know, close or anything so, well in my opinion, she probably thinks we are but (pause) she really makes me mad a lot; but with friends, I don't know, I think I'm closer to my friends than my parents right now.

In my role as researcher I was an active participant in this project and as such contribute to both the process and the content of the research project. As the researcher I am not only the research instrument that collects the data, I am also the one who formulates and asks the questions. Who I am is also part of that contribution.

I am wife, mother and grandmother, once a female adolescent like my adolescent participants but in another long ago time and place. I was well trained in the social tradition of the female role. I have mothered three daughters and a son through adolescence in yet another sociohistorical time. Relationships with significant others were taken for granted in those other times and, I believe, were not an overt part of the majority sociocultural ethos of the times as they are today. Relationships were just there; initiated, nurtured and maintained by women; they were not, at least to any great degree, the focus of attention in the popular or the academic climate.

I am also student, teacher, and researcher. I have been trained in the positivist tradition in the course of completing a degree in chemistry and mathematics. Only

recently I began formal study in what is referred to as human science (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 1990). The positivist research methodology to which I continued to be exposed in this new discipline rarely made any sense to me. As a context-oriented thinker, I was always aware of the role of physical, historical and social context in human lives and baffled by its absence in studies of those lives. My question was always "But what about?". I also knew that my personal experience rarely, if ever, fit psychological theory.

Then I began to read feminist psychological literature and things began to make sense both from the standpoint of theories about women and the standpoint of how and from whom the information from which theory evolved, was acquired. Simply listening to women talk about their existence rather than theorizing about testable hypotheses and thereby imposing a biased view of that existence appealed to my sense of the complexities in human interactions and the impossibility of conducting bias- and value-free research in human science.

From my own experiences I knew reality as one person's reality that might or might not be shared by others; that what I knew said as much about me as it did about something known or knowable, that there was a relationship between the knower and the known (Guba, 1990). My world view includes a

set of feminist principles that direct my life in its entirety. These principles are:

1. The Personal is Political
2. Egalitarian Relationships
3. Valuing the Female Perspective (Rave & Larsen, 1990; Sturdivant, 1980; Worell & Reimer, 1992).

This ontological, epistemological, methodological and moral world view suggests that I would not choose a positivist methodology nor would I choose a research topic that necessitated such an approach (Colaizzi, 1978; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The particular processes of making those two choices will be described in a subsequent section.

Previous Research Experience.

My involvement in a research project entitled *The development of young girls: Themes of connection and responsibility* provided experience in qualitative inquiry and a focus for this project. In that previous study, I interviewed four young girls, aged eleven to thirteen, an average of eight times over a period of eighteen months. These participants attended mixed gender public elementary and junior-high schools that serve a diverse economic, social, and ethnic population in an urban setting. The interviews were conducted in the school setting. The data acquired in that study point to the importance of connection with others for these adolescents and reflect the relational aspects of adolescent development, including the struggles

between survival and goodness reported by other researchers (for example: Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990. Exemplars taken from that data are:

Betty:

But June was a very bad month for me

[What happened?]

I got in a really big fight with my friend and it just, for a few weeks it just seemed that the whole entire world was against me.....

...I broke all connections with my friend....I had been so stressed out probably from staying up late studying plus the fight and everything. I had gotten chicken pox....I was so stressed I couldn't enjoy my summer holidays or anything. But I called my friend and said that I would still like to be friends with her. Anyways that like kind of helped me a bit.

Betty: (Referring to her grandmother and a foreign exchange student who were both visiting the family at the same time)

July was my month of others. And it really didn't help me because I wanted to focus on myself and everything because I was having a lot of trouble with my friends.

Genevieve:

I believe studying is like, you need, you need to study, you need good grades. But if you spend your whole life on that you'll just be, you'll be lonely I guess.....

But I don't feel that's right (to not want friends) I feel that you need friendship, you need some contact and stuff.

[What goes on in your thinking when you say I'll take this one, no, I'll take this one ?(referring to choosing partners for school projects)]

Alexandra replied: "Well, um, kind of, I don't want to make this person feel upset, but I don't want to make this person upset either."

[When you are feeling depressed what helps you to feel a little better?]

Sasha's reponse was:

I don't know. Well actually, um, I know that there are people who care about me and stuff. Well, I thought when she, my mother was drinking she didn't care about me and at all and stuff. And um, now she's just starting, now that she's stopped drinking, two years ago, now she's really starting to care about me. And (when) my mother was drinking for three years, my sister was my mother.

This earlier project also provided an opportunity to listen to young girls' voices through the use of picture collages constructed by the participants and photographs taken by them. The discussions around these projects served as triangulating data for the interview material.

The findings in this study quite clearly supported the findings of Carol Gilligan and her colleagues who propose a

relational developmental pathway for women; a pathway that, in early adolescence, begins to diverge from that previously shared with male peers (Greggs, 1992).

Rationale for Using a Phenomenological Methodology

Working on that earlier project led me to wonder about the participants' experience of their relationships with others who were important to them. Would they, for instance, describe relationships with friends in the same way as they described those with family members? If differently, how? The research question then became "How do adolescent girls perceive and describe their relationships with significant others in their lives?" From this question a second one evolved. "What methodology would best reveal the answers to the research question?"

Reflections on how best to accomplish the research task produced several points that were deemed to be essential to the research process:

- 1). The preferred source of the information had to be adolescent girls themselves.
- 2). The methodology of choice would have to be consonant with personally held ontological and epistemological beliefs, in other words, my "socialized worldview" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 9).
- 3). The preferred research design would foster, rather than silence, the voices of the adolescent participants (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

- 4). The preferred mode of data collection would be one that is as free from researcher bias as is possible.
- 5). The methodology would need to include the potential for flexibility such that the researcher, if necessary, could be responsive to the participant, the process and the protocols as the research progressed.

For these reasons a qualitative, as contrasted with a quantitative methodology, was the research paradigm of choice.

There are numerous variations within qualitative inquiry, one of which is "phenomenology." Phenomenology itself, is not a unified body of thought as noted earlier in the discussion of phenomenology's philosophical roots. There are, however, commonalties within its variations (Patton, 1990). What adds to the confusion is the need to distinguish between philosophical phenomenology and phenomenological psychology; the foci of discovery in the former are universal structures that are "... required for the appearance of consciousness itself" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 43). In phenomenological psychology the foci of inquiry are the structures of the phenomenon under study that are typical for groups of people. The emphasis in phenomenological psychology is on the descriptions given by participants whereas in phenomenological philosophy the inquiry places great emphasis on the self-reflection of the inquirer (Polkinghorne, 1989).

Patton (1990) provides a plain language definition of phenomenological inquiry that is particularly helpful to the neophyte phenomenological researcher. He states "... phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" He goes on to say "...a phenomenological study (as opposed to a phenomenological perspective) is one that focuses on descriptions of what people experience and how it is that they experience what they experience" (p. 71). Polkinghorne (1989) also limits the notion of universal essences to phenomenological philosophy and talks in terms of phenomenal structures that "...are typical or general for groups of people" (p. 43). Given my own approach, what I wanted to explore and how I wanted to explore it, phenomenology was chosen as the research methodology.

Research Criteria.

Phenomenological researchers do not use the positivist language of reliability and validity; rather they speak of "truth". Phenomenology holds that "... truth is in the experience or the perception of the experience" (Ballou, 1990, p. 27). "Phenomenological 'truth', then is neither coherence nor correspondence. Rather, it is expressive disclosure of the immediate experience" (Brockleman, 1980, p. 66). The focus is on understanding the investigated phenomenon (in this study, the girls' experience of their relationships) as a criterion for research knowledge;

understanding that is not intended to "...master, control, or dominate it" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 56). In the phenomenological approach to psychological research, "...objectivity is fidelity to phenomena. It is a refusal to tell the phenomenon what it is, but a respectful listening to what the phenomenon speaks of itself". (Colaizzi, 1978, p.52).

Colaizzi (1978) states "...methodology rests in philosophy" (p. 54); a position supported by Ray (1994). Thus the measure of success and fruitfulness of any qualitative research methodology can not be determined by the standards or criteria established by methodological philosophies other than its own (Kirk & Miller, 1986). The measure of success of phenomenological research is grounded in phenomenological philosophy and, therefore, is determined by the degree to which the methodology accomplishes its own aims (Colaizzi, 1978; Kirk & Miller, 1986). Simply put, those aims are descriptive identification and understanding of phenomena.

Because the intent of this study is to gain understanding of the relational experiences of adolescent girls through listening to their voices, a phenomenologically based *understanding-descriptive* method, specifically Colaizzi's (1978) procedural model, became the method of choice. Colaizzi (1978), states that "...there is no single (phenomenological) method or procedure, but only methods and procedures of description." (p. 53) and suggests that since his model is not definitive it is appropriate for other

researchers to modify his procedures to fit their approaches and the phenomena under investigation. The strategies and procedures used in this study, however, remain essentially true to those outlined in Colaizzi (1978).

In preparing to conduct this research, I engaged in a process of self-reflection, the main purpose of which was the identification of personal inclinations, preconceptions and biases as related to the phenomenon under investigation (Colaizzi, 1978; Hoshmand, 1989); that is, adolescent girls' experiences of relationships. This process of interrogating my collection of presuppositions about this phenomenon made it possible for me to summarize them in a formal statement:

It appears to me that there is a strong relational component in adolescent girls' psychological development and that their experience of their relationships with others important to them is an integral element in that development.

Method

Participant Selection

The sampling process begins, in qualitative research, when the researcher clearly delineates "...the characteristics of the participants and their place in the social setting" (Field & Morse, 1985, p. 94). These characteristics are the criteria that form the "sampling frame" (Diers, 1979, p. 79). Colaizzi (1978) specifies only two criteria for participation in his model of

phenomenological inquiry: experience with the phenomenon under investigation, and articulateness. The sampling frame in this study, however, also included the following stipulations: Participants had to be female, aged 12-15, willing to participate, and had not participated in the earlier study on relational development. Parental consent for participation was required.

Convenience sampling was used to recruit eleven participants for the study. I contacted several of the participants in the earlier study and asked them to talk to their friends about my study. Nine of the participants were recruited in this manner; two volunteered after hearing about the project from outside sources. Initial willingness to participate was confirmed by telephone; then each potential participant and her family were given a letter outlining the project (Appendix A). A consent form was included with the letter (Appendix B).

Data Collection

Two means of collecting data were used: audio taped "...dialogal interviews ..." (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 62) and pictures taken by the participants using disposable cameras provided by me. Dialogal interviews are those in which the interviewer employs imaginative listening (Sheridan, 1975, cited in Colaizzi, 1978) that is, the researcher must be "... attentive to the subject's nuances of speech gestures ..." (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 62); of listening with "... more than his

ears; he must listen with the totality of his being and the entirety of his personality" (Colaizzi, 1978, p. 64).

Photographs taken by participants as a complement to dialogal interview protocols had proved valuable in prior research (Bach, Clandinin, & Greggs, 1992; Bach, 1993).

Two data gathering interviews and a third interview for the purpose of confirming the findings of the study were conducted with each participant. The data gathering interviews varied in length from forty five minutes to one and a half hours, the variation being participant driven. These interviews took place in the participant's home in a room of her choice that accorded sufficient privacy to maintain confidentiality. Two tape recorders were used, one as a back-up in case of equipment failure.

In the first interview, in order to focus on the phenomenon under investigation, each young girl was asked two general questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Colaizzi, 1978; May, 1989). The questions addressed self-descriptions and relationships with others (Appendix C) and evolved from reflections on the works of Carol Gilligan, Nona Lyons, Lyn Mikel Brown and others; from reflections on the interviews conducted in the previous study; and on my presuppositional statement about the relational worlds of adolescent girls derived from those reflections (Colaizzi, 1978; Hoshmand, 1989). No other questions were predetermined; any supplemental questions were for the purposes of

clarification, focusing, and greater elaboration and evolved in a "... clue and cue-taking ..." process (Ray, 1994, p. 129) that characterizes phenomenological interviewing (Becker, 1992; Ray, 1994).

At the end of the first interview, each of the participants was given a disposable camera and asked to take as many or as few pictures as she desired of anything important to her.

Following each of these first interviews, the audio tapes were transcribed and a summary of the descriptions of relationships given in each protocol, was prepared for use in the second interview.

The second interview began with the participant reading her own summary for accuracy and completeness, then moved on to any unfinished issues from the first interview and from there to a discussion of the snapshots she had taken. The audio tapes were again transcribed.

A third interview, for the purposes of confirming and assessing the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings, was conducted after ten of the eleven participants had been given a copy of the first draft of the research findings for her perusal and feedback. (One of the original participants had moved overseas and could not be contacted for this final step). Prior to distributing the draft copies each remaining participant was contacted by phone and a method of distribution was arranged. Guidelines for feedback were

discussed and a summary written copy of the discussion was included with the draft copy of the findings (See Appendix D). At that time arrangements were made for feedback to be provided in a telephone interview format. These final interviews were of short duration, lasting a maximum of five to eight minutes; the participants reported being satisfied with the findings. No new information was acquired.

Data Analysis

Data analysis, in one sense, began during the first interview and continued throughout all the interviews in that certain statements, words or manners of expression seemed to stand out in my mind. This informal process also occurred during the transcription of the tapes.

The formal data analysis was conducted as outlined by Colaizzi (1978) in his seven step model of data analysis. This process involved:

- 1) Listening to the tapes, and simultaneously reading the transcripts (protocols);
- 2) Returning to the protocols and extracting material that directly pertained to the investigated phenomenon--
"*... extracting significant statements*" (p. 59);
- 3) Spelling out the meanings of each statement--
"*...formulating meanings*". (p. 59);
- 4) And organizing these meanings across the protocols into
"*... clusters of themes*". (p. 59) The themes were then referred back to the protocols for validation.

- 5) The results so far were integrated and
- 6) The findings were turned back to the participants for confirmation and validation and feedback.
- 7) An effort was made to formulate an exhaustive description of the investigated phenomena (the experience of the relationships with others important to the participants).

Compliance With Ethical Standards

The purposes of the study and the logistics of the interviews were discussed with the potential participants and their parents before the study began; participants and parents had the opportunity to meet with the researcher in person if they so desired, before the study began. Parents were required to sign a consent form (Appendix B) and were invited to contact or meet with the researcher at any subsequent point during the life of the project. The participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time.

To protect the identity of the participants, interview notes, photographs, tapes and transcriptions were assigned a pseudonym and no list of identity/pseudonym correlation existed. The formal written account of this project employs a second set of pseudonyms as further protection of the identity of the individual participants.

All the tapes, photographs, notes and transcripts of the interviews were available only to the researcher and her

supervisory team. The participants were given a set of their own photographs in the second interview and had access to their own research protocols following the completion of my research. The tapes, notes, transcripts and the sets of photographs are being kept in secure facilities and will be destroyed within five years of their acquisition.

Ethical standards in psychological research require vigilant sensitivity on the part of the researcher to indications of psychological distress being experienced by any participant. Signs of distress include indicators of any pre-existing condition revealed in the protocols. In the initial interview with one participant there were indicators suggesting the existence of a pattern of disordered eating and distorted body image of sufficient severity to be indicative of an incipient eating disorder. This information was given to my supervisor immediately and after consultation with her I discussed my concerns, first, with the participant and then with the participant and her mother. Her father, a health care professional, declined to be present at this meeting.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The sheer volume of data (some six hundred and fifty pages of protocols), together with the depth and richness of the data; and the complexities, the contradictions and the commonalties within and across the protocols created two major dilemmas for me. The first dilemma centered on how best to present the data while remaining true to Colaizzi's (1978) model of conducting an *understanding-descriptive* study. The second (and perhaps the more important) dilemma centered on how to do justice to the wealth of data provided by the participants given that this study is a doctoral dissertation, not a life's work.

This second dilemma, in a sense, remains. Choices had to be made about what to include or what to leave out; yet these choices had to be made without losing the essence of the participants' experiences of relationships and their concomitant psychological development of a sense of self. The degree to which I met this challenge successfully cannot be measured easily and I remain concerned about inadvertently silencing the voices of the participants.

Colaizzi presented one means of resolving the first dilemma when he described his procedures for analyzing data as merely "... typical, and are by no means definitive; ..." (1978, p. 59). He suggests that appropriate modifications can be made without compromising the results of the study. I am

assuming that Colaizzi would be equally flexible about the presentation of the findings and have made a modest change in the presentation of my data. It appeared to me that two types of findings--thematic findings and process observations are to be found in the protocols. The thematic findings are those that pertain to the phenomenon under investigation, and the process observations are my observations and identification of significant elements, or factors that occurred as part of the interview process. Both types are reported.

It seems to me that one cannot fully appreciate the significance of the themes pertaining to relationships and to the development of self as revealed in this data without first acquiring some general sense of the nature of the relationships in which these adolescent girls participate. In other words, how do the girls describe their individual personal relationships?

In order to set that context I have chosen to begin this chapter, grounded as it is in the interview protocols, with general descriptions of the nature of the particular relationships experienced by the participants. The chapter then moves to the identification and description of themes pertaining to the phenomena under investigation, that is, relationships and development of a self; themes that resonate through and across the protocols. This section of the chapter culminates in a comprehensive description of the phenomena under investigation as is mandated in Colaizzi's model of

phenomenological research. This description, the goal of the research, is derived from the clusters of closely related themes revealed in the data analysis. The chapter concludes with the description of the process observations.

General Descriptions of Relationships

There is no significance to the order in which the following relationships are presented.

Fathers

For the most part fathers seem to be merely a physical presence in the lives of these young girls. By this I mean that fathers were physically present to a greater or lesser degree but did not involve themselves directly with their daughters in anything other than a superficial way. Some of the participants talked of their relationships with their fathers using such words as "close/not close" (most frequently the latter); and talked about not knowing them very well. As Dierdre put it:

... a lot of times we talk, to get, to each other to only if we have to or for, like no one else is there to talk to. We're not very close, we never, well we were when I was younger but not like since about grade 3 or 4.

Barbara on the same topic says:

He's not around a whole lot so that makes it hard to get really close to him and open up to him and stuff like that so it makes it difficult to get to know him.

She goes on to say that when her father is home he keeps to himself preferring TV to spending time with the family.

Other participants describe their fathers' role as that of the family jokester who keeps everyone laughing. Holly, in describing her father's role in the family in this vein, states quite categorically "I thinkthat is our relationship basically." Still others focused on the fact that father was generous to the point of being indulgent with money and material things. Some fathers are variously described as "... trying to understand me" and to "... help make stuff better for me." For all that many of these father-daughter relationships were not considered by the participants to be "close" the girls (with one exception) were quick to qualify their comments by declaring that they loved their dads and knew that "... he will be there for me." The exception to this pattern was Connie who, over time, has become estranged from her biological father. She perceives him as not really caring: "I don't think my dad really cares. He doesn't, I'm not really on his priority list." On the other hand she knows that her stepfather with whom she lives "... wants the best for me kinda thing."

Mothers

The descriptions of the mother-daughter relationships to be found in this study differed in several important ways

from those of the father-daughter descriptions. Although there were some exceptions, the mother-daughter relationships appeared to be more intimate, more inclined to be described by the participants as close, with more emotional involvement between the two women. Ann expressed it this way: "I have always been closest to my (with emphasis) Mom because she's my Mom and everything." This *taken for granted attitude* about mothers was reflected in several protocols, yet was not found in the descriptions of the father-daughter relationships.

Barbara, who described her relationship with her mother as close, talked of sharing tears with her mother when she (Barbara) learned that a classmate was contemplating suicide and of how she and her mother used the incident to talk about the difficulties of being a teenager today.

Some of this closeness centered on shared gender. Same gender allowed the participants to discuss their biological development and "girl things" with their mothers, something they could not do with their fathers. For a variety of reasons, not one of the participants, however, felt able to share everything with her mother. The most common "off limits" topic was "guys." Several of the participants described incidents in which mother became an advocate for her daughter when father and daughter were at odds whereas father-as-advocate was not mentioned by any participant.

These mother-daughter relationships were not conflict free. For the most part, however, the participants were not particularly concerned about the arguments, describing them as a normal part of mother-teenage daughter relationships. What was of concern to three of the participants was how infrequently they actually felt close to their mothers. Laurie says "...but my mom, me and my mother, you know (aren't) too you know close or anything so, well in my opinion. She probably thinks we are but...;" and goes on to say that they don't really talk, they just yell at each other.

Siblings

Although all but one of the participants lived with either younger or older siblings or both it appears that the nature of sibling relationships did not easily lend itself to description and/or constancy. I suggest this may be because these relationships are in a constant state of flux over time. By this I mean that, in sibling relationships, gender and the relativity of age differences, separately and in interaction create a state of flux or continuous change in the relationship. The descriptors, "close" and "not close" when used at all were used more frequently to describe individual (and often infrequent) incidents rather than the sibling relationship as a whole. This pattern occurred more frequently when the sibling was an older brother; and whatever degree of closeness developed did so when the

conversation revolved around some topic of interest to him. An exception to this pattern can be found in Dierdre's transcripts when she says: "When we were younger we used to be like close, (her emphasis) We'd play like together and that" ... "but now....we, we just don't want to have anything to do with each other." Here, she clearly talks of the relationship with her older brother in general rather than incident specific-terms.

Jessica, on the other hand, talks of telling her brother "...stuff, like about my personal, like my friends and he listens most of the time, but he doesn't tell me any of his so he's just a person there..."

Relationships with younger siblings were frequently described in somewhat less than flattering terms. "Pests", "nuisances", "gets on my nerves", are representative descriptors for both younger brothers and sisters. Sisters, in particular, could not always be trusted with secrets not meant for parents to know. Frustrating though this was, sisters were still good to talk to and to mentor. Few of the participants spoke about their siblings with any significant degree of affection; yet for all the tensions in these relationships they did acknowledge that they loved their siblings and would be "upset" if something happened to them. Three of the girls had assumed the task of improving relations with younger brothers.

Friends

The data clearly indicate that these girls inhabit a relational world with their age-mates. It is a world of shared experience; a context in which they invest themselves in their friends. The casual observer of this world might be tempted to classify the relationships between these age-mates simply as friendships. Yet the participants in this study rarely talked in terms of friends and friendship in any generic or general sense; rather they talk in terms of "my best friend(s)", "my close friends", and "my ordinary friends" or "plain friends". Thus individual relationships with age-mates fall into one of three categories: "best friendships", "close friendships", or "ordinary friendships".

Two interrelated factors, the degree of intimacy and depth of personal disclosures and the perceived extent of risk to confidentiality associated with the disclosure, serve to differentiate between the three categories.

Best friendships provide a safe environment for full disclosure of any personal matter or problem without any risk of such confidences being betrayed.

Close friendships require judicious selection on an individual by individual basis in the disclosure of personal matters and there is an element of threat to the maintenance of confidentiality.

Ordinary friendships are not often characterized by intimate personal disclosures and "extreme" care is taken in what is told to whom in the rare instances when personal disclosures are made to "plain friends". In these ordinary friendships the topics of conversation are, for the most part, limited to casual queries about school matters and contact with ordinary friends is limited to that which occurs at school.

Ann and Kerry echo their fellow participants' comments in the following excerpts:

[Do you think there is a difference (between a best friendship and ordinary friendship)]?

Kerry:

Oh ya, there's like a big difference between those two. Best friendship is something that, like, you know, is totally precious, you know, I think I value best friendship more than I do friendship.

[What makes it precious?]

ummmmm, it's because, with my best friends I know that they'll always be there whenever I need them, you know, like they, I know that they won't turn their back on me and stuff and I can just tell them anything, anything that's going on in my mind and I, I know that or anything that I say that they wouldn't get mad at me or anything you know. With my (best) friends I'm open and I tend to be humorous with them and stuff; but with just

friends, you know, I, I won't open up that much, I'll open up but not as much as I would with a best friend about what I think and stuff, my thoughts.

Ann:

Well, just plain friends, you can't tell them everything, you have to be extremely careful what you tell them and like friends are for school and stuff like that, close friends are for weekends and parties and stuff like that, but friends like Wendy (her best friend) are for life.

The nature of best friend relationships goes beyond a set of shared interests, or the simple desire to be best friends with a particular individual. Shared interests are important but are not a priority; however, being able to understand each other is. Holly describes it this way:

Well I think it's because, ummm I classify them as my best friends because umm well we can, we can relate to each others' lives because, because we understand each other's personalities, I guess, so, so we can ummm we can like help each other and because we know, we know each other so well that we know what the other person was gonna do or say so easily.

An empathic connection that is variously described by individual participants as being more "emotional"; "being on the same wave length"; "a cosmic tie being able to connect, like become one in a way", must exist between the

individuals. Best friends are described as " ...like a second half... definitely not a better half but a second half"; "... my darker (rebellious) side"; fitting together like a "jigsaw" and in one case "She's who I want to be."

In addition, the following personal attributes and relational elements must be displayed by both participants in a best friend relationship: Trust and honesty are two important elements. As Ann says: Best friends " ... can not lie." (to each other). Best friendships place no limitations on what one can discuss or share; each person is a confidante for the other and as such does not betray secrets through disclosure to outsiders. A best friendship provides a safe environment for personal authenticity. A best friend accepts the authentic you without reservation or judgement and, because she knows you and understands you better than anyone else (family included), she can be relied upon to give you the reaction you need at the time. Ann's best friend "... always knows what to say to me if I'm feeling sad or something."

Although the data reveal that many characteristics of best friends and best friendships are to be found in the relationships with close friends, there are major differences described by the participants. These differences are usually a matter of degree rather than of content. For example, the expectation of an absolutely safe environment for "telling anything" in a best friendship loses strength when it comes

to close friends. The decision to share a secret with a close friend is made on an individual-by-individual basis and only after the degree of intimacy of the disclosure and the trustworthiness of the individual to whom the disclosure is to be made are weighed judiciously. Barbara's description of this process is found in her reflections on her relationship with her close friend Sally.

. . . and plus she happens to blab things that were told her in strict confidentiality. 'Sally, if you tell anybody this, I swear I'll kill you OK? Now don't blab anything to anybody.' Somehow, somebody happens to find out, hmmmmmm, I know I didn't tell this person and since Sally is the only other person I told hmmm I wonder how they could have found out?

[What does that sort of thing do to your friendship with Sally?]

I hold back a lot of things . . . So I just really hold a lot of what I could tell her, well maybe I should tell her, what I'd like to tell her because I don't know whether I can trust her.

Laurie makes the same point:

Well, like you do stuff with them and you talk to them and everything but you don't tell them like stuff like that you don't want anybody else to know really. And you don't like, you know, expect them to tell you stuff about them.

Close friends, like best friends, are easy to talk to, but you do not share your deepest thoughts with them; like best friends "... they, they can't 'back-stab' you" as Connie puts it.

All the participants identified one or two people as best friends (including one mother) and for the most part had a considerably larger group of close friends. These friends were almost invariably school mates who socialized together both at school and on the weekends. For a variety of reasons a best friend might not be a member of this group; for instance some attend a different school or now live in a different city.

Best friendships, with one exception, were limited to relationships between girls, whereas most of the participants talked of having both close and ordinary friendships with girls and guys.

The female-male best friendship was described in much the same language as the female-female best friendships were; that is, in terms of freedom to be one's self, trust, confidentiality, mutual sharing and the like. Some participants qualified close and ordinary friendships with guys as not being the same as the corresponding relationship with girl friends. Establishing a friendship with a guy, for example, can be an uncertain and complicated process to determine just how your approach to a guy is being construed "... because sometimes they take it the wrong way;" that is,

they think that the girl is looking for a different kind of relationship; "... that you 'like' them or something." This assumption on the part of guys has to be addressed before the relationship can develop on the girl's terms; that is, a non-romantic friendship. Once the friendship is established, however, there are few if any differences between the genders.

Friendships with guys serve a particular purpose that relationships with other girls cannot provide. These male friends become sources of information about male adolescents in general and about certain boys in particular.

The foregoing thumb-nail sketches of various relationships important to the participants are intended to introduce the reader to the relational worlds of a particular group of adolescent girls and to do so in a descriptive manner.

Identification and the Description of Themes

The purpose of this research is broadly postulated as an exploration of adolescent girls' experiences of relationships with important others in their lives. Themes pertaining to the phenomena under investigation as revealed in the data have been arbitrarily divided into three categories for presentation purposes only. The categories, general descriptions, themes pertaining to relationships and themes pertaining to the development of a self, and the themes, themselves, overlap and/or are inextricably bound in the

participants' accounts. Dividing the themes is not intended to imply that they are, in any way, differentiated or discrete; it simply reflects the parallel processes that occurred in the interviews. The participants' accounts moved back and forth between descriptions of self and descriptions of relationships.

Themes Pertaining to Relationships

Girls as Active Agents in Relationships

Girls are active agents in the establishment, maintenance, nature and quality of their relationships; shaping them and orchestrating them in order to foster their own development and that of their friends. Some participants talked of having to make a concerted effort to get to know new people since other people did not approach them. Some of the girls felt that maintaining relationships with girlfriends was hard work especially when special male friends--boy-friends--became part of the picture. The participants clearly managed their relationships, particularly those with friends. Mutual caring was the criterion for continuing a friendship and, as Fiona and Laurie put it, "if they don't care, I don't care".

Other participants talked of the difficulties of maintaining a relationship with their fathers as they got older, their own interests changed and they no longer shared their fathers' interests. Barbara, who describes her relationship with her mother as close, is clearly taking the

Table 1.

Clusters of Themes

I. General descriptions of relationships

1. Father as emotionally distant
2. Mother as intimately involved
3. Siblings as variable
4. Friendships in the adolescent subculture

II. Relationships

1. Girls as active agents
2. Relationships as balancing acts
3. Interconnection of trust and intimacy
4. Friendships and the interplay of trust, disclosure, confidentiality, and mutuality
5. The friendship group as a buffer zone
6. Peer parenting

III. The Self

1. The self develops in a relational context
 2. The self is experienced relationally
 3. Essential elements to development of an authentic self
 4. Protection of the authentic self
-

initiative in this relationship when she senses that her mother is annoyed with her:

...like we're close. Except for some reason, every week I might do the smallest little thing , and I'm not quite sure necessarily what I do but I seem to be getting into a lot of trouble lately, and I don't know what I did wrong. Hmmm. That's something I am going to talk to my Mom about because I don't really understand it but I seem to be out in the cold for some reason. Hmmm I don't know what it is but I better find out.

A Balancing Act: A Descriptor for Relationship

Relationships are balancing acts, or a constellation of balancing acts. This theme manifests itself in the data in a variety of ways. In each relationship, girls actively work to balance their own needs with the needs and demands of others. In mother-daughter relationships, for instance, most of the girls talk of not being able to talk about "guys and things" because their mother would not be able to handle it. As Jessica explains "...I don't think she would be comfortable with that." Holly's concern for her mother is reflected in this excerpt: " I don't tell her things which I think might upset her." and, when asked to amplify her comment, says: "Ummm, things about like which guy I like or something because I'm not allowed to date" The mother's need not to know is recognized by her daughter and enters the relationship equation.

Relationships with peers, on the other hand, often require making choices between the need or desire to belong and a tolerance (or lack of tolerance) for social isolation. Several of the participants spoke of the need to present an inauthentic self, one that they thought would be acceptable to the peer group, in order to gain acceptance. Jessica's graphic description of how she tries to cope with her feelings of social isolation follows:

... so like I talk their language and I pretend like I'm really cool and stuff around my friends, I just try to be what they are, you know because I know they don't understand me, so I try to be what they are.

[Do you do that in the hopes that they will ultimately understand you or just?]

Just, just like, to like me because they think I'm like them so ..

For other participants the balance between the needs of self and the demands of others (friends in particular) is challenged when the demands of others lead to self sacrifice. Kerry describes the process of "... getting really passive...because it's really hard for me to say no to anyone." Even when she has

...lots of homework and stuff"...and she has "to get it all done and they ask me to go pick up a book or something for them, I'm like oh I don't really want to do that. I guess I will, you know, I can't say no to

this person and stuff cause I feel like, I don't know, I guess I feel really bad if I say no so...

Relationships Involve the Interconnection of Trust, and Intimacy

The degree of mutual trust between those in the relationship determines the level of intimacy in that relationship. The depth and substance of personal thoughts, feelings and problems disclosed to others are measures of intimacy. Intimacy as used here presumes the exposure of the of the real or authentic self to the other in a deliberate and self-conscious manner. Kerry, in a reflective monologue on differences between best friends and just friends says:

Ummm, mostly for me it's the truth and honesty sort of thing cause I know that they, like I've never lied to them. They, I know they'd never lie to me. I guess we're really truthful with each other, like I know. (her emphasis). It's just the fact that I know that I can tell them anything and they would, they wouldn't go around telling everyone else, you know, they and they're there to help me with my problems and stuff when I, when I need them, you know, so and that's what makes it just like the truth and honesty and you know if they're there or not.... With my group of friends ... I'm hesitant about telling them some stuff that's going on but with my best friends I'm, like I'm not like I know that I can tell them, I think that it's just about like my

hesitancy and the fact that I don't know everything about them, you know.and they have like, they have trust in each other and they're honest with each other and open about their feelings and stuff.

Relationships as an Interplay

Relationships with trusted friends are experienced as the interplay of trust, disclosure and confidentiality, safety, risk-taking, physicality, and mutuality.

This theme overlaps and builds on the interconnection of trust and intimacy. When Kerry, in the above quotation, speaks so emphatically about a mutual proscription on best friends lying to each other, she is setting the boundaries for mutual trust in her best friendships. With that mutual trust in place she feels free to tell them anything, knowing that her confidences will not be betrayed. Thus she ties together trust, intimacy, disclosure and confidentiality.

It's just the fact that I know that I can tell them anything and they would, they wouldn't go around telling everyone else, you know, they and they're there to help me with my problems and stuff when I, when I need them. Her hesitancy in being completely open with other friends is, she says, a result of not knowing them well.

With my group of friends ... I'm hesitant about telling them some stuff that's going onI think that it's just about like my hesitancy and the fact that I don't know everything about them, you know.

References to the role of mutual trust in the complicated matrix of peer friendships are found in virtually every transcript and include, as Kerry did, the association of trust with intimacy, disclosure, and confidentiality.

Holly, for instance, describes the most important part of her relationship with her best friend, Penny, in the following words:

I would say that (she hesitates) well, because I would say that I can, I can tell her anything and I know that she won't make fun of me and she won't, she won't go tell someone else about it just so she can have a story to tell or just for the fun of it, or for any reason; she won't, she won't go like that. So I think, I think with Penny, it's mostly trust.

In this excerpt, Holly introduces the notion that the risks associated with disclosure go beyond breaches of confidentiality when she defines trust to include not being made fun of by Penny.

Ann also raised the issue of being laughed at when she revealed too much of herself to a close friend. She described having a crush on a TV star, sharing this part of herself with one friend who laughed at her and of being afraid " ... that they (other friends) might make fun of me if I told them."

By piecing these excerpts together, safety and risk-taking in relationships can be seen to join trust,

disclosure, and confidentiality in interplay. Yet as Ann discovered, revealing even part of one's authentic self through verbal disclosure can entail risk when the depth of mutual trust is misjudged.

In addition to being able to tell all in the safe environment of best friendships (and to a more modest degree in close friendships) some of the participants spoke of feeling able to express themselves in a physical manner within the safety of their friendship groups. The term they used to describe this expression of physicality was "hyper" and, although the individual descriptions of "hyper" varied somewhat, they included conspicuous physical behavior. Gay, who described herself as "... hyper sometimes but most of the time I'm pretty quiet" explained that being hyper was "just like totally running around and like pushing people but like, like, cause my, my best friend and me we always get like so hyper together like sort of like pushing one another..." In a similar vein, Barbara describes a friend as hyper because "... she's just, she's always on the go, she has to be doing something, she has to " (Barbara's emphasis).

Being hyper is not limited to physical action. For Dierdre, for instance, being hyper has a strong emotional content:

Like you know, just totally happy, like everything's like you've forgotten about everything and you're just totally like, you know, like cleansed and all that and

you can just like (she pauses) think freely and like, you can like do whatever, you're just not afraid to do whatever, you know and then you can, like that's when it is easy to speak your mind and I don't know, you just be able to do whatever, and have fun and that.

There is little risk associated with being hyper within the safety of the friendship group, and, as Dierdre put it, with her friends she "... can be like totally, like totally be myself; it doesn't matter what I do..."

A final component in relationships with trusted friends is mutuality. Mutual sharing of experiences and of telling all is a mode of "bonding", and "Bonding is where you feel like you know the person better and that like you connected somehow." "... cause they know more about you and you feel confident that they like you more". Holly fashions her sense of the importance of giving and taking in relationships by pointing out that such behavior does not have to be an even trade. When it comes to helping friends with problems she gives more to one friend than another because that friend has more problems, yet she knows "...like if I had a problem then I know, I know that Ruth, Pat and Agnes (who are all close friends with Holly and each other) would all help me. And I think it's a two-way thing, it's mostly a two-way thing."

Without mutual sharing and caring, friendships, in Fiona's experience, in the end, dissolve. In talking about a friend she had last year she says:

Last year she was (a friend) but ummm, they don't seem to care so I don't bother with them anymore. If I show them that I care and they don't respond I don't (she pauses) give anything really, it's give and take you know. I'm not just going to give them

The Group as a Buffer Zone

The circle of friends that defines those peers with whom each participant spends most of her time serves as a buffer zone between the individual and the larger world of the school population. In other words it is a safe climate from which the individual ventures forth and to which she returns. This safe climate has more to do with mind set--knowing that friends will always "... be there for me no matter what." than it has to do with a particular physical location although Fiona and her friends have "... our own personal place ...where we connect and stay and talk ..."

The concept of the friendship group as a buffer zone evolved as I reflected on my growing awareness of the school environment as a sometimes difficult, and potentially lonely place. Accounts such as these below precipitated that awareness. Some teachers, for instance, are "indifferent", others "... don't really care about your feelings." Holly describes herself as being

... sensitive about teachers I guess, a little bit, because if a teacher like yells at me or ticks me off in front of the class , then, then, that's like I can't

stand that because it's sort of humiliating me in front of my friends...

Some of the participants talk of classrooms in which they cannot speak out for fear of saying something wrong. This fear is usually associated with who else is present in the class. "It depends who I'm in class with, like who's in my class and if someone that I like, so to speak, then I kind of feel like I say something wrong, I feel really bad ...".

When the focus is moved from these and other difficulties that arise in the larger world of the school to the idea that friends serve as a buffer zone, the data are compelling. Holly's account is just one example of how the familiar serves as a safe haven.

And ummm, friends are an important part of my life because I spend, I spend most of my time in school and so, and that's where I spend my time with my friends ... Well, we can, we can relate to each other's lives because, because we understand each other's personalities I guess, so, so we can umm, we can like help each other because we know, we know each other so well that we know what the other person was gonna do or say... .

What Holly is describing here is a process of validation and normalizing that can only be provided by those living out the same or similar experiences in the same world.

Mutual Peer-Parenting

Much of the work done in the establishment and maintenance of peer relationships bears an uncanny resemblance to parenting. There is an assumption of shared values in the group and there are expectations associated with moral standards. Kerry is referring to shared values when she says:

... the stuff like important to us, like umm, like popularity and stuff at school we all have the same answers to it I guess you could say. Like none of us like do drugs or smoke or something, we all have the same opinion on that kind of thing....

Fiona describes how painful it was for her when her best friend did "something bad".

She's kind of like my lifeline, if she does something bad, it's like, like ummm she's going out with Y for two months now and after the first month they had sex and she told about it and I almost started crying 'cause I was just so disappointed in her I could tell all weekend that she was hiding something from me and when she told me I was very, very, very disappointed.

The participants turn to each other for advice on numerous issues from homework to family strife. Whereas Barbara is quite comfortable in role as advisor Jessica, in particular, struggles. She is "...pretty sure of the advice I'm giving them..." referring to her best friends and finds

it easy to advise both best and ordinary friends when she has faced the same problem but she worries about not knowing "... if it's always right, like the right advice I'm giving them."

They look for validation of their experiences and their "take" on what those experiences mean from these peers. When the roles of advice giver/receiver are reversed for Jessica, she believes that friends "... should just accept you for what you are (her emphasis), and they, like whatever you do, but they tell you if you do something wrong, they tell you, they give you advice and they trust you."

The participants found it easier to discuss these experiences with peers because they all share the same world; a world that they perceive as being one their parents do not and cannot understand. In other words friends are actively involved in bringing each other up. Peer parenting, however, is not a replacement or substitute for parental care giving; rather it complements it. These girls still turned to their parents for guidance as well.

The participants in this study worked to balance their desire for closeness (intimacy) in their relationships with their need for self protection. Closeness requires disclosure, yet disclosure poses a threat since one of their greatest fears is of being laughed at as Ann implied when she said "... I was afraid that they might make fun of me if I told them...".

Themes Pertaining to the Self

The Development of a Self Occurs in a Relational Context

Relational overtones are found throughout the protocols especially when the participants are talking about themselves. When asked to describe themselves, for example, the participants more often than not did so in relational terms, using friends as referents. Fiona, for instance, began her self description with the statement: "I like everyone." Barbara hopes that she "kind of comes across to most people as a person they can talk to"; a point made by several of the girls. Both Kerry and Holly imply that a sense of self is contingent upon the relational context they are in. Kerry, in describing herself says: "It depends who I'm with because with people I don't know or that I'm not very close with I tend to be really shy but if I'm with my friends or my family or my cousins" and Holly concurs:

....I guess I'm the kind of person who if I first meet you I, I'm pretty shy and quiet and every thing but after I meet them for awhile then I try to change, like I'm a bit more outgoing and like loud and stuff

These adolescent girls also speak as active agents in their self development. They are not passive recipients of a self. They are responsive to the reactions of others yet they are also responsive to self knowledge. They are aware of the influence others can have on one's sense of self but do not accede to that influence when it is in conflict with

confidently held self knowledge. Several self descriptions included such comments as: others think that "I am absolutely smart but I'm not, I just work hard to get what I want." "Most people think I'm smart but I'm not really that smart," and the like.

In a somewhat different vein, Connie skillfully presents her view of the development of a sense of self as a blend of self knowledge and the influence of others. She stands firm in her knowledge of her self as, for instance, having a strong personality "... that's just pretty well there" and "if you don't like it that's OK, whatever" she goes on to say:

... relationships with other people essentially ummm makes you have an idea of who you are yourself; d' you know what I mean? Like what other people think of you ummm will influence your own views of yourself. So I feel that if you have lots of friends and there's trust between your relationships and you feel confident within yourself that people, people know that you are a good person then you in return will have a liking for yourself but if you feel that no one, no one loves you and trusts you or wants you around you probably won't feel like a very decent human being yourself.

Parents are seen as a source of family values that play a part in the development of a self although some of these values may no longer be important to the adolescents

themselves. The data reveal an interesting dimension in identity formation that is mentioned principally by the participants who are not Caucasian. These girls have and display a strong sense of their cultural heritage in response to the influence of their parents, especially their mothers. These mothers, for example, keep the family language and customs alive and their daughters consciously add elements of that heritage to their identity. Holly describes herself as:

... pretty aware of my cultural background too, because my parents keep bringing it up about that and they make sure that I, I kept in touch with my, my culture so I guess I'm pretty culturally orientated too. ...I think it's probably because of my mom because she made sure that umm, that me and my sister, we went to India, like quite often so we saw what it was like, and she, she speaks the language a lot and then she, she used to make me watch umm movies and stuff in that language and still does a little bit but now, now I do it because I like watching them, more too like she's making me, and she makes, she makes, she makes that kind of food and stuff so she like, she tries to bring it into my life as much as she can so it sort of became an important part of my life.

Holly goes on to say that if her mother had not made her family language important to her "...I probably wouldn't have done it myself because I live here and it's not, it's not

like something that would be part of my life unless she made it."

Some of the participants, in their self-descriptions, spoke of being "independent", yet this did not translate into the "separation" of the separation/individuation agenda at the expense of relationships. Independence was associated with a dislike for being told what to do, and did not refer to separation/individuation and linear development of the sense of self. Rather, they talk of expanding and increasingly complex relationships that challenge their existing conceptions of who they are. They did not talk of moving away from others in any psychological sense. The mutual process they describe is one of increasing depth and intensity of relationship in an interplay of being listened to, understood and therefore known; not just known by others but by themselves as well. The self they are referring to is a "real self"--an "authentic self".

Relationships, then, are the context in which an authentic self develops. They are also the context in which only part of the authentic self is exposed. In other words the process of developing an authentic self can be facilitated, hindered or distorted by relationships.

Relationships facilitative to the development and exhibition of an authentic self--"who I really am" whether they are with parents, siblings, friends, or other significant people have common elements. These elements, so

aptly outlined by Connie in an earlier quote, are: being respected, loved and cared for. When these qualities are present in a relationship "being heard" can happen, which in turn leads to being understood, and to being known through a mutual act of listening. It is when they feel known that the participants risk exposing their authentic selves. They can say anything, do anything; they can do dumb things without being judged. They can be "hyper"; a term that describes a state of mind and/or a set of physical and emotional behaviors as previously outlined, and reiterated here for emphasis and clarity. For Gay being hyper means "just like totally running around" whereas Dierdre explained it this way:

Like you know, just totally happy, like everything's like you've forgotten about everything and you're just totally like you, you know cleansed and all that and you can just like...think freely and like, and you can like do whatever. You're just not afraid to do whatever, you know and then you can, like that's when it's really easy to speak your mind and, I don't know you just ...be able to do whatever, and have fun and that. Joke around a lot.

It follows that the absence or the perception of the absence of these elements leads to a sense of not being known and to a need to protect one's authentic self.

Protecting the Self

The data contains numerous references to the need to protect the real self from harm and hurt and to strategies or coping mechanisms used to provide that protection. The process of protecting the self involves another variation of the balancing act; just how much of the real self is it safe to reveal and how much has to be kept hidden. Inherent in this process is continuous monitoring of their own and others' behaviors, including expressions of emotion, and physicality.

The expression of one's opinions and/or knowledge in a classroom, for instance, may leave one vulnerable to derision and loss of face. In other settings the concern may be acceptance or rejection by an individual or group. Gay describes the uncertainties of accurately determining whether her desire to be friends with someone is reciprocated. "... but it's kind of hard to define who is your friend because like, like you (her emphasis) can be, like they can be your friend but you don't know if you're their friend." "...if they want your friendship. Like rejection is like sss-so-oo bad. " "... like you just don't wanna be refused by people, you don't want to be like, like, like brushed off."

The threat to the self associated with not being known is enormous when not feeling known is a part of the family dynamics. Fiona's voice rises and falls to a whisper as she revisits some painful confrontations with her father. In one

such incident she suddenly realized that, at that moment, she hated her father who was insisting that "... if we all went to (a restaurant) everything would be better but I didn't want to go because I still hated him and I didn't like that because I really love my father but I just that moment I was, I hated him." She goes on to say that even though she told him that she needed "... to deal with it really bad...." he paid no attention. She continues: " Ummm, I'm not much into my family, though I love 'em very much but I just feel like (she hesitates) they don't care to know who I really am." Again the issue of being heard comes up: "I'm very scared of confronting them, they don't listen and if they do, barely hear me. I get into trouble."

Protective behaviors included silencing the self, protective coloration (chameleon effect), developing an 'attitude', 'psychological divorce' and denying or being divided from one's own knowledge.

Silencing the Self

This protective strategy is an act of literally keeping silent, of saying nothing, when the risk to the self is perceived as high. Statements such as; "I tend to keep things to myself, you know; if I have something to say I probably won't say it" or "I don't know like when I want to say something I just think that they (friends, in this case) are not going to take it seriously so like I don't say anything at all" are sprinkled through the participants' protocols.

The Chameleon

Several participants talked of assuming the protective colouring of the group by imitating the group's characteristics for the purpose of gaining admission and acceptance. Jessica, who views herself as a "unique" person who does not "fit into any categories" describes what this process is like for her as she interacts with the various groups at school. When she is around different people "then I have to put myself in that situation ... and I have to talk their language" and act the way they do. She goes on to explain that "I just like try to be what they are, you know, because I know that they don't understand me; so I try to be what they are"; then she will be liked "because they think I'm like them". She does not like having to do this, she'd rather be accepted for who she is but she stands firm in her belief that "... it just doesn't happen in the real world so I just have to cope with it."

"Attitude"

Protecting the authentic self in relationships is not limited to relationships with friends. Three of the participants talked of not being able to be who they really are within their families and of how that is anchored in a sense of not being understood and therefore not known. One of these three participants described her way of protecting her authentic self as developing an "attitude" where attitude is manifested as "totally like talk back," "yelling," and "not

talking calmly, like hearing both sides of the stories, just thinking you're right and you just wish everybody would leave you alone and let you do what you want to do."

Emotional Divorce: Beyond the Family

Some of the participants who felt that they were not known in the family and that they could not safely reveal their real selves within the family found that they could do so in what might be termed surrogate families; that is some of their friends' families. Others fell back on their friends. Comments such as: "...they understand me better." (referring to friends' families) and "I feel closer to my friends right now" mark active and deliberate efforts to acquire a relational context in which they could develop and reveal the real self without risk.

The data, however, suggests that neither the surrogate family nor friends adequately compensate for the loss of a sense of connection with family members, particularly with their mothers. The three participants whose voices revealed such an ongoing loss of connection also talked of being involved in interpersonal situations that placed them at considerable personal risk. Such risk-taking was not evident in the protocols of the other participants. This suggests to me that an ongoing feeling of loss of connection with immediate family members and a search for connection with outsiders may well lead to subsequent personal vulnerability, both physical and psychological, through poor choices in

other relationships. It is important to note that the data does not support a strong sense of loss of connection on the part of the participants simply because they did not feel they could talk about "everything" with their parents. This loss or absence of a sense of connection was associated with long standing perceptions of being misunderstood, not known and not really cared about.

Denial of Self Knowledge

Denial of self knowledge refers to the denial of, or being divided from that which one "knows" in her heart to be true. To do otherwise threatens one's sense of self. Inherent, for example, in Fiona's realization that she hates her father, yet she loves him, is a challenge to her sense of herself as a loving daughter. But how can this be if she hates him? As she says "But it's confusing because I really love my father, but then at times (her voice drops) I just really hate him." Fiona recounts an incident where, in order to make peace, she apologized for something she had not done only to have her father spit at her. She described it thus: "... and he just spit in my face and uh he has a horrible temper but he is a good father." (emphasis is mine). To see her father as a good father is to deny what she knows in her heart--his behavior is not that of a good father.

The Self is Experienced Relationally

A sense of self not only develops in a relational context, that self is continuously experienced relationally.

In the following exquisitely voiced text Laurie is trying to describe herself acontextually and, finding it impossible, wonders who she would be without others or if she would even be at all in the existential sense. Being without friends is too awful to contemplate and she drops the topic.

I don't know, my personality would be like I guess ... I don't really knowin a way independent but also dependent on other people at the same time like, but you know if I didn't have anybody, like if I'd never had anybody I'd probably be OK. But you know I can't think of myself any other way than I am right now like you know with my friends and my family and everything and I guess like I'm caring because you know I care about my friends too, you know if my friends wouldn't be my friends anymore hopefully that will never happen.

Some girls in this study talked of the inter relatedness of selves that occurs in best friendships. As stated earlier, they use descriptors like "second half", "parts of a jigsaw", "my darker side" and the like when referring to these friends. In other words, they experience the self in what might be considered a symbiotic relationship. That is not to say they are "fused" or "merged" in any maladaptive sense; they remain quite clear about the existence of a separate self. Ann, for example, used the jigsaw metaphor in which she and her best friend shared many characteristics "and we sort of get together like a jigsaw puzzle because I fit into her

places where she is very weak and she fits into my places where I'm really weak." Barbara saw herself as having two halves, she is one and her best friend is the other. The friend was not a "better half", but she was a "second half"; and Fiona, envious of her best friend's rebelliousness, describes the friend as "her darker" (that is, rebellious) side". The self, then, is experienced relationally in best friendships and is complemented by the best friend's self.

Summary

Quintessential to the development of an authentic self is to feel understood and thus to be 'known' by self, and by significant others. To be understood and thus known requires being listened to, which in turn requires being respected, loved and cared about.

As indicated in chapter three, the study participants came from diverse social, economic and racial backgrounds including both visible minority and majority ethnic origins. yet these variations are not generally reflected in the thematic or the process findings. The content of the findings, for the most part, crosses both ethnic and class lines with one important exception. Participants who are not Caucasian have and display a strong sense of their cultural heritage as part of their identity; the Caucasian participants did not talk about their ethnicity.

Description of the Phenomenon

Adolescent girls' psychological development, specifically, the development of a sense of self, does not just happen. The sense of "who I am" evolves in a relational context comprised of important people in their lives. The adolescent girl is an active participant both in the formation of her sense of self and in the establishment and maintenance of relationships conducive to the development and use of that authentic self. To facilitate the development of a sense of an authentic self the context in which this psychological development takes place (relationships) must be one in which each person is listened to, understood and therefore known to the other and to oneself. Such processes will only occur when the relationship is anchored in mutual respect, love and caring. When being listened to, understood and known are missing or perceived to be missing from the relationship over time, confidence in that sense of "who I really am" is threatened and the relationship no longer serves a facilitative purpose.

Process Findings

A "Hook"

In the course of preparing for and conducting the various interviews, several process issues became obvious, one of which was how I could get the participants "hooked" into the project as co-researchers, not just as data producing objects. What worked well occurred either in the

informal conversation about the project that took place in the process of setting the stage for the interviews or in the initial phase of the interview itself. Faces lit up and eyes sparkled when I suggested that although a great deal of material had been written about adolescents, it had been produced by adults, and I was not sure how much of it accurately reflected the adolescent experience, and that I wanted to talk directly with adolescents to get their views.

"I don't know"

The phrase "I don't know" was used by all the participants during the interviews. In some cases it seemed to be a natural and straightforward response to a question posed by me or by the participant herself as she described an event or situation. At other points in some of the interviews the "I don't know" response seemed to be incongruous since the response was followed immediately by an answer; one that was often thoughtful and rich in detail. I suggest that, although this pattern of speech might just be a habit, it might also be an indicator of a self that for some reason is denying, or is divided from, its own knowledge as is described by Gilligan (1990).

Right/Wrong Answers

I was equally puzzled by a third "I don't know" response that occurred when I asked a participant to describe herself. When pressed she simply said that she did not judge herself and so she did not know. I returned to the topic of self

description toward the end of that interview and discovered that the real reason she "didn't know" was that she did not "want to say the wrong thing." When assured that there were no right answers and no wrong answers she was able to begin. This discovery occurred in the third of the first round of interviews and was incorporated into subsequent interviews when I sensed that an observed uncertainty on the part of the participant might reflect a right answer/wrong answer quandary.

The Signal

Some of the participants provided advance notice of important disclosures or complex explicatory stories by a variable sequence of verbal and body languages. The sequence is: a deep breath, and postural change, followed by an emphatic verbal "O.K." and the beginning of the disclosure or the explication (although the deep breath sometimes followed, rather than preceded, the O.K.). This signal focused my attention, not so much on the words themselves, but on the probability that what came after the signal was more important to the participant than the actual words spoken might suggest.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

What began as an exploration of the relationships adolescent girls have with significant others in their lives and the role those relationships play in their psychological development gradually, in one sense, took on a life of its own and became both a revelation and a celebration of adolescent girls' relational skill development and an indictment of prevailing (traditional) psychological theory and of the science that served as its empirical base.

This chapter includes a discussion of prevailing traditional developmental theories in light of the findings in this study and a discussion of the resonance between evolving theories of women's development and those findings. Friendships are singled out for particular attention. The requisite discussions of the limitations of this study, its utility and its contribution to the body of knowledge as well as directions for further research complete the chapter.

Traditional Theories and the Voices of Adolescent Girls

Traditional developmental theory with its focus on separation and individuation as both a process and goal of identity formation and psychological maturity does not appear to describe women's developmental experience. This observation led Miller (1984) and others to pose the question "Do only men have a self, and not women?" (p. 1). Miller goes on to identify two major problems with prevailing Western

psychological thought that contribute to this absence of fit. One is the invisibility of what she calls " ... the intricacies of human interconnection" (p. 1) in traditional developmental theory building. Although Erikson, Blos, Sullivan, Maslow, and the like appear to acknowledge the reality of human interpersonal relationships, the significance of such relationships in human development and in particular in the development of a sense of self, seems to disappear.

Erikson's model, for instance, stipulates that the formation of an identity must precede the development of the capacity for intimacy and Sullivan's interpersonal theory insists that interpersonal skills (the capacity for intimacy) must precede the formation of an identity. Yet these two theorists (and others) apparently do not give credence to the possibility that these processes actually occur simultaneously as they fall back on the assumption of separation/individuation as the only healthy model of psychological development. This is particularly puzzling in light of the fact that Sullivan (1950) seems to imply that there is no such thing as individualism.

Separation/individuation theorists do not appear to make the connection between the canons of such a theory and the cultural ideology of Western social thought which valorizes a mythical "independent", "autonomous" individual as the

epitome of maturity and whose characteristics can be seen to describe the ikon of the white professional male.

The second and related problem Miller identifies is theory blindness to women's developmental experiences. Gilligan (1989) in the preface to *Making Connections* draws these two points together when she points out that adolescent girls' knowledge and experience of human interconnection is conspicuously absent from descriptions of psychological development.

Evolving Female-Centered Theories and the Voices of Adolescent Girls

Interwoven throughout this research are descriptions of relationships and of adolescent girls' psychological development or more specifically the development of a sense of self, within the context of those relationships: accounts that do not support the androcentric notion of development through a process of psychological separation from others. An overarching theme throughout the data is one of a relational context in which interpersonal skills are honed and a sense of an individual or differentiated self evolves.

Laurie's eloquent musings on who she would be, or even if she would be in the absence of relationships, and her sense of herself as a caring person (relational) because she cares for her friends is just one exemplar.

Other themes in the data include the importance of mutuality in connection with others and the potential for

individual growth within relationships. These factors fit well with important elements in relational theory such as Surrey's (1990) self-in relation theory, Gilligan's (1982) theory of women's moral development (1982) and Miller's (1988) treatise on connections, disconnections and violations.

Friendships

When I stepped back from the individual protocols and reflected upon the data as a whole I was struck by the participants' focus on their age-mate friendships and their investment of themselves in those relationships. As reported in the findings, friends and friendships were variously described as part of the process of self definition; of providing a context for feedback, for reflection, for validation, for safety, and for peer-parenting amongst many other things. It appeared that it was primarily within the context of friendships that these girls developed and refined their relational skills.

As a consequence of this observation, and in accordance with the parameters of qualitative research, a further data-driven literature review was conducted; one that focused on female same-sex friendships. What little research was available seemed to be divided between studies of friendships between older women and/or were gender comparative studies of friendship. Nevertheless, some friendship elements identified in these studies as important in female same-sex friendships

were also singled out by my participants as important, for example, trustworthiness, shared disclosures (Konopka, 1983), confiders and trustables (Babchuk & Anderson, 1989), and emotional sharing (Aukett, Ritchie, & Mill, (1988); intimacy, enjoyment and nurturance (Sapadin, 1988).

One notable exception to the older woman/gender comparative research foci was Becker's (1987) phenomenological study of best friends. Although her participants were somewhat older than those in this study (twenty-one and in college) there are numerous commonalties. In formulating a structural description of friendship Becker summarizes her data as follows:

Friendship is a loving relationship that develops in a shared world created between the friends. For women, friendship consists of an evolving dialogue based on attributes of care, sharing, commitment, freedom, respect, trust and equality. It is a relationship that enables each woman to be engaged in her own pursuits, her friends' experiences and her other relationships. As such, friendship provides a context for each woman becoming herself, personally and interpersonally (p. 65).

These elements--loving and caring, respect, trust, a shared world, a personally and interpersonally enabling environment--encompass the importance of being known to self and other and run through the clusters of themes identified

as integral to the experience of relationships with friends in this study.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are addressed on two levels: the methodology of choice and the study itself.

Methodology of Choice

Qualitative research methodology in general does not foster generalization, in the statistical sense, to other populations and it would be inappropriate to do so. Rather the focus is limited to the study participants themselves and the findings are not assumed to be applicable to any other individuals or groups of individuals.

Issues of reliability and validity in qualitative research do not conform to the canons of the quantitative research paradigm. Replicability, that is, coherence or correspondence is not a criterion for evaluating qualitative research (Brockleman, 1980). What is a criterion for such an evaluation is whether the findings make sense to readers when they adopt the researcher's viewpoint (Giorgi, 1975,); and, in addition, to the readers, to the participants and to other investigators (Stiles, 1993).

Phenomenological research focuses on the identification and description of the phenomenon under investigation rather than on the participants per se, that is, on the essential nature of the phenomenon. Thus the findings may be seen to be generalizable. By this I mean that those essential aspects of

the phenomenon will be seen in other groups taking part in studies of the same phenomenon regardless of the group composition (Georgi, 1971). Becker (1978, 1987) adds to Giorgi's (1975) evaluation criterion in the following statement pertaining specifically to phenomenological research:

...the validity of one view of an essential structure of a phenomenon lies in how well it resonates with the reader's lived experiences of that phenomenon, and whether it gives the reader a better, holistic understanding (Becker, 1987, p. 69).

Limitations of This Particular Study

The data were collected at a point in time in a developmental process that, had that data been gathered over time, might have revealed important nuances of change. Related to this point is the fact that a full year elapsed from the time of the interviews until the findings were made available to the participants for their input. The feedback from two of the participants while supportive of the findings in general, did indicate that that was then and they, themselves, had changed in the interval.

As the researcher I had little or no detailed information about the participants' family dynamics or previous developmental experiences; factors that have been found to be important in self development (Carlton, 1992).

On a more philosophical level, this study did not take into consideration two factors that I believe need to be considered in any research into women's experience of relationships and self development. One of these factors pertains to the socio-cultural-historical milieu in which these young girls and I as a participant/researcher live. The participant's relationships are in the tradition of our time. By way of explaining what I mean by this statement it is important to be aware that, prior to World War II women's development, for the most part, took place in the "home" be it the biological home or the work home that is, the home-like environment of domestic service (Wynne & Frader, 1979). Certainly this is not the case now. The second and related factor is that theories in psychology can be seen to be culturally driven (Sampson, 1977, 1985).

This study is also limited by my inexperience in conducting a phenomenologically based research project. Phenomenology is not easy for the neophyte!

Utility of This Study

Adding to the Body of Knowledge

Despite the limitations outlined above, this study contributes to the understanding of adolescent girls' relationships, particularly their same-sex friendships, and the manner in which these friendships impact on the development of a sense of self. The classification of friends as best friends, close friends and ordinary or plain friends

and the corresponding classification of friendships provide insight into the complexities of those relationships. In addition this study provides a structure for understanding the essential aspects of the particular friendship categories.

Because this study specifically involved adolescent girls, it broadens the support for the inclusion of friendships as essential to any theory of women's development by adding a younger and more diverse group of participants to the existing literature.

Theory Development

If, as has been implied by Gilligan (1990b) researchers and theorists are indeed "... enroute to a new psychology of adolescence and of women" (p 5) it is essential, I believe, that women's relational skills and their friendships be situated in women's developmental theory. In a like manner, any new psychology of adolescence will need to include adolescent girls' capacity to form meaningful friendships as a marker of the developmental process. Without such recognition a major task undertaken by girls during adolescence will remain hidden from view in the scientific literature.

Therapeutic Interventions: Family, Group and Individual Therapy

The insights into adolescent girls' relationships, particularly their friendships, gained in this study have the

potential to expand the horizons of clinical practitioners. The notion of peer or age-mate groups as positive influences on adolescents and as serving as a training/learning ground for the development of interpersonal social skills challenges the prevailing assumption of peer groups as somehow inherently harmful (Greggs, 1988).

Having a confidante--invariably a best friend-- was of particular importance to the participants in this study. In light of this finding, clinicians and youth workers may want to assess for the existence of a peer friendship group including a best friend in the lives of troubled adolescent girls with whom they work, given the connection between depression in women and the absence of a confidante in their lives (Brown & Harris, 1978; Costello, 1982).

Insight into the importance, during adolescence, of being heard in order to be understood and thus known may assist family therapists working on family and individual developmental issues.

Further Avenues of Inquiry

Participant Group Size

This study involved eleven participants who provided a rich body of data, the common elements of which appeared to cross ethnic and class lines. Was this an artifact of the participant group size? Would a larger participant group, for instance, have exposed as simplistic some of the findings by

making visible nuances not obvious in an eleven-member research participant group?

Troubled Adolescents

For the most part, the participants in this study appeared to be fully functioning adolescents. They were age-appropriately successful academically; some held jobs and many were involved in extracurricular activities. This observation raises at least two questions; what would a group of troubled adolescents reveal about their friendships in particular, and, if these relationships were different, how might that knowledge be useful to the clinician or the youth worker?

Parent/Adolescent Interactions

Lopez (1992) points to the dearth of work done on parent/adolescent interactions; if we are to understand adolescent girls' development (and boys, for that matter) this deficiency needs to be addressed.

Process Findings

Four process findings were reported in Chapter Four, three of which, I suggest, merit further study. These are: participant use of the phrase "I don't know", the related issue of right/wrong answers and participant use of a signal to indicate a forthcoming important disclosure or an explication of a salient experience. The question is: "Were these behaviors merely artifacts in this particular study

that, perhaps, resulted from some unobservable interaction of my interviewing style, the participants' response styles, the inherent demand characteristics present and the like?"

A Comparable Study of Male Adolescents

Probably the most urgent avenue of further inquiry is a companion study of adolescent males' friendships. Just as knowing more about the essential nature of friendships for adolescent girls makes it possible and desirable to situate friendships in women's developmental process (Becker, 1987) so too, I suggest, would knowing more about adolescent boys' friendships be helpful in determining whether or not, the same case could be made for the inclusion of same sex adolescent friendships in male development. Such a determination might answer the question of whether the essential nature of adolescent friendships is directed more by gender or, for instance, by simply being an adolescent.

In summary, information gained in this study illuminates a fascinating world of adolescent girls' relationships, particularly their same-sex friendships; a relational world that has received little positive attention from developmental theorists. The information gained supports the current contention by women-centered theorists, that any theory of female adolescence or any theory of women's development in general, must make adolescent girls' relational capacities and competencies visible. The information gained has implications for clinical, guidance

and research practitioners. If, as counsellors, mentors, youth workers and the like, we are to understand the lived experiences of adolescents in our care it is imperative that we listen to their descriptions of their experiences spoken in their voices. Only then will they be known.

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Appendix A
Letter to Parents

Dear parent,

Over the past two years I have been involved in a research project entitled *The development of young girls: Themes of connection and responsibility* conducted by Dr. Kathleen Cairns of the University of Calgary and Dr. Jean Clandinin of the University of Alberta. That research is serving as background information for a second study in which I will be exploring, in greater depth, themes of connection and responsibility in the lives of adolescent girls.

The purpose of this letter is to request your support should your daughter be willing to volunteer for this new project.

This second study will require eight adolescent girls who are between twelve and fifteen years of age, who attend area schools and who were not part of the original project. Beginning in June, 1994 I will be conducting three interviews with each of the girls at a time and place most convenient for you and for them.

Prior to beginning work with the girls, an extensive discussion about the project will be held with you and your daughter, at your convenience. If you are willing to have your daughter participate, the attached parental consent form is the one you would be asked to sign.

I will take every precaution to ensure that confidential information about your daughter is protected, should she volunteer for the project.

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Calgary and my work in this project will be supervised by Dr. Kathleen Cairns, Associate Professor, University of Calgary.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely yours,

Robin Greggs

Appendix B

Parent/Guardian Consent Form

I/We, the undersigned, grant permission for _____ to participate in the research project entitled 'An Exploration of the Relational Experiences of Adolescent Girls', if she is interested in taking part.

I/We understand that such consent means that _____ will participate in three interviews of one-two hours in length to be held at a time and place of your and her convenience; that a full description of the study will be discussed with you before it begins; that I/We and she will be able to contact/meet with the researcher at any time before, during and/or after the project; that I/We will not have access to any interview materials; that my/our consent is required for participation; that she may withdraw from the study at any time; that her identity and confidentiality will be protected as previously outlined; and that she will assist in the verification of the findings pertinent to her interviews.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian

Signature: _____ Date: _____
Participant

Appendix C

Questions

The questions listed below served as guidelines for the interviews and were supplemented with such prompts and clarifying questions as were appropriate in each dialogue.

How would you describe yourself to your self?

In whatever way you wish, please, tell me about your relationships with the people in your life that were or are important to you.

Appendix D

Letter to Participants Accompanying Findings

Hi.

At long last here is a first draft of the findings from our interviews. As I mentioned on the phone would you read this and give me some feedback, please. Here are a few ideas for feedback that you might think about as you read:

- Is there anything missing and if so what is it?
- Is there anything that you think should be left out and if so what?
- Do any points need more or less emphasis?

I may have included points that were not part of your own experiences in your relationships with people important to you. If that is so, do these points make sense to you based on what you know about other relationships?

It doesn't matter if things have changed for you since we did the interviews; what is important, however, is that the feedback relates to how things were at the time of the first two interviews.

Any questions? Please feel free to phone me at 283-8679. Many, many thanks for doing this for me.

Robin.

APPENDIX E

Sample of Data Analysis

Protocol	Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Clusters of Meanings
Ummm..mostly for me it's the truth and honesty sort of thing cause I know that they, like I've never lied to them. They, I know they'd never lie to me. I guess we're really truthful with each other, like I know it's just the fact that I can tell them anything and they would, they wouldn't go around telling everyone.	Truth and honesty	Friends	Relationship cluster
	Really truthful with each other	Mutuality	Relationship cluster and self cluster
	I can tell them anything	Mutuality	

Protocol	Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Clusters of Meanings
...it's because with my best friends I know that they'll always be there whenever I need them you know, like they, I know they won't turn their backs on me and stuff and I can just tell them anything. Anything that's going on in my mind and I, I know that anything I say that they wouldn't get mad at me or anything you know. With my best friends I'm open and I tend to be humorous with them and stuff. But with just friends, you know, I won't open up that much. I'll open up but not as much as I would with a best friend about what I think and stuff, my thoughts.	best friends always are there	distinction between types of friends	Relationship cluster
	they wouldn't get mad at me	acceptance	Relationship cluster
	with my best friends I open up	being herself	Self cluster
	I'm open, but with just friends I wouldn't open up that much	differences between types of friends safety	Relationship cluster

Protocol	Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings	Clusters of Meanings
...like we're close. Except for some reason every week I might do the smallest thing, and I'm not sure what I do but I seem to be getting into a lot of trouble lately. I don't know what I did wrong. Hmmm. That's something I'm going to talk to my Mom about because I don't really understand it but I seem to be out in the cold for some reason. Hmmm. I don't know what it is but I'd better find out.	I don't know what I did wrong.	Personal responsibility	Self cluster
	I'm going to talk to my Mom	Active agent	Self cluster Relationship cluster
	I'd better find out	Active agent	Self cluster Relationship cluster