THE CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY
IN EARLY ADULTHOOD

by

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ABSTRACT

Researchers and theoreticians consider identity to be a particularly salient feature in the lives of young adults. A large body of literature on identity in young adults addresses issues from a positivist perspective and does not consider the role of individual volition. The constructivist orientation of the present study takes the view that individuals are active in their construction of identity through making meaning of their experience. The purpose of this study was to examine the processes through which identity is constructed by young adults. Because young adults live in society, the cultural construction of identity was also accessed.

Six volunteers between the ages of 19 and 21 participated in two individual interviews. In the first interview, the participants were asked to describe the person he or she is at present and to tell the story of how he or she came to be that person. They were requested to bring personally significant photographs to this interview in order to aid in the telling of the story. In the follow-up interview, participants critically reviewed a summary of the first interview prepared by the researcher. Both interviews were audio recorded.

The narratives were transcribed and then analyzed using a phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1975). Individual elements of each story, called meaning units (Giorgi, 1975), were identified and reduced to one or two words that described the core meaning. Common core meanings were grouped together and edited resulting in seven themes which described the young adults' experience: The experience of self awareness, the experiences of closeness and separateness, the experience of place, the experience of tension between opposing forces, the experiences of
change and continuity, the experiences of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience and, the experience of considering the future.

The narratives were then reread in light of the identified themes. One question was asked of each meaning unit: "What role does this experience hold in the context of the identified theme and in the young adult's construction of identity?"

This study shows that by taking a constructivist approach, the researcher was able to address issues of identity in young adults as they are experienced by the individual. Additionally, the experiences of young adults can be employed to ascertain the individual and cultural constructions of identity.

The findings illustrate constructions of identity by young adults and the processes through which young adults construct identity. Support is given to constructs suggested by ego psychology, developmental, family systems, and cognitive models of identity. Questions are raised regarding gender differences in young adults' future projections.

The study illustrates the need for practitioners to attend to the meanings that young adults make of their experience rather than approaching young adults with counselling agendas and preconceived notions based on theories that may not accurately reflect the young adults' experience. While research theories and therapeutic orientations can assist the practitioner, they should emerge in response to the communicated experience of the client rather than attempt to predict them.
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Who knows even if this "category" [of self], which all of us believe to be well founded, will always be recognized as such? It is formulated only for us, among us.... We have a great possession to defend. With us the idea could disappear (Marcel Mauss, 1979).

One of the founding principles of Western society is our notion of identity. The emergence of the idea of identity has been variously attributed to the 17th century with the transition from feudalistic to capitalistic economies (Slugoski & Ginsberg, 1989) and to the 12th century when autobiographies first appeared (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Since that time the notion that individuals "have" identities has become fundamental to the way Westerners experience self and other. It is difficult for a member of Western society to conceive of experience independent of the unique, integrating, organizing, perspective-taking self that has come to be known as identity.

Because identity has come to be seen as a governing principle of Western experience there is a tendency to universalize the idea and approach it as nearly a biological fact rather than as a construction rooted in social history. Evidence indicating that the construct identity has a finite history conflicts with the idea of identity as an a priori necessity for experience (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Other evidence suggests a broad range of conceptualizations of identity. For example, during earlier epoches explications of self differ from those employed in contemporary culture. When asked for accounts of the self, members of contemporary Western culture appeal to emotions, ideas, plans and memories, while members of previous societies appealed to Godly inspiration, demon possession or cardinal humours (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). Moreover within
Western society, the construction of identity varies with age (see review by Hart, 1988). Children most strongly locate the self in their physical nature while older children call upon their typical activities, young adolescents their social relationships and, young adults and adults their psychological makeup.

Notions of identity are culture-bound (Harre, 1981). In small non-industrialized societies individuals locate identity in social relationships and location in a social network rather than in individual psychology as is the case in Western industrialized societies.

Recent changes in the cultural construction of identity in Western society can be noted. The idea of identity during the Romantic period of the 19th and early 20th century was perhaps quintessentially represented in Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace* (Tolstoy, 1966) by the character Pierre Bezukhov. Through Bezukhov, identity is seen to emerge from deeply felt emotions and the tortured soul. Modernist culture, fuelled by technological changes, assumed a mechanistic view of identity. Willy Loman in the novel *Death of a Salesman* (Miller, 1967) exemplified the tragedy of this shift. In the end it was said by his son that he never really knew who he was. Individuals were motivated by biological and social drives and defined by their social functions, that is, worker, parent or other roles. While there was a plethora of available social definitions of the self, individuals lost a sense of the inner self as a source of identity. Psychologist Donald Morgenson (April 17, 1993) notes that this is evident in present day culture.

Each of us has to define for ourselves (with some help from our friends) what kind of somebody we want to become. We too often look to the outside world to form an idea as to our worth, our identity. We study the images in other people's eyes and for the sake of such images clothe ourselves in unmentionable rubbish, fashionable colors, status symbols,
brand names and other dimensions of eggshell fragility. (p. b1)

Contemporary post-modernist culture is defined in part by a further alteration in how identity is constructed (Gergen, 1991). The focus has shifted away from recognizing oneself in the context of community and those with whom one has personal contact. Instead, contemporary identities are seen to be associated with the commodities one chooses. Sociologist Scott Lewis (1993) notes that lifestyle is replacing personality, character and social function as the foundation upon which an individual's identity is commonly defined.

Life today sometimes seems to consist merely of making consumer choices. We choose how to dress. We choose which music to listen to. We choose which television, movies and videos to watch, which magazines, books and newspapers to read. In a society like ours, permeated by advertising and promotion, we are defined, individually and as groups, by those patterns of consumption.... We recognize ourselves and others by lifestyle and consumption patterns...Ordering a cappuccino conveys a very different meaning from ordering a mere cup of coffee. (p.c8)

Community once contributed to an individual's sense of self through group identification and affirmation of belonging (Spivack & Shure, 1976). The shift in defining identity can be attributed to technological changes that have impinged on the nature of community. The community with which one interacts in modern urban Western society is increasingly populated by computers in place of individuals as industry and services adopt technology. With modern transportation family, friends and colleagues become more dispersed. Enormous increases in social contact have resulted from technological developments such as radio, television, newspaper, mail, telephone, fax, and electronic mail. With increasing interaction with machines, the extension and dispersal of one's social
environment and, degradation of connectedness to the community in which one lives, more lifestyle possibilities present themselves and with little coherence (Gergen, 1991).

Media in particular has wielded great influence on the way we imagine and see ourselves by bringing us images of foreign cultures and different lifestyles which then become part of our experience of what is possible. The recent proliferation of television "docu-dramas" where real life individuals and stories are recreated by actors and scriptwriters but presented as a documentary obscures the boundaries between reality and fiction. In addition by separating experience from the visually represented, media instill an uncertainty, self consciousness and critical attitude towards our own lifestyles (Berger, 1980). The visually reproduced presentation of events is considered by many to be more authentic and compelling than the event itself (Gergen, 1991). The documentation of one's vacation gives it substance, marriages and political events are staged for camera and video, sports fans prefer television because it is more lifelike than the distant view from the stands. It is the media rather than perception that is appealed to for definitions of what is the case.

The modern individual is saturated by social contact and populated by a multitude of selves (Gergen, 1991). This expansion and decentering of a unified self can be seen in what is commonly conceived of as "the good person". Whereas previously it sufficed to be seen as sincere, reliable and productive, presently, middle class men and women strive to attain proficiency in a multitude of activities such as work, sex, parenthood, hobbies, fitness, culture and, cooking among many others.

In the past, gender has been a sure source of identity definition (Gergen, 1991). The recent promulgation of alternative sexual orientations
and gender identifications, for example transsexualism and homosexuality, has impacted one of the most ancient "facts" of biological existence; that there are two sexes, male and female. Gender identification has also become a lifestyle choice.

If these vast changes to the understanding of who we are occurring on a societal level, then young adulthood, the life stage commonly associated with identity development (Erikson, 1959), must certainly reflect this. Indeed, the impact of changing sexual mores and the influence of the media can be observed in youth culture. Sexual orientation as a lifestyle choice brings an added challenge to young adulthood where sexual orientation self-labelling first occurs. The young adult may find a conflict between personal sexual desires and status quo ideology which can inhibit the expression of these desires and consequently retard identity formation (Malyon, 1982) by making it difficult to integrate aspects of the self and pursue a purposive life course (Fleming, 1984).

According to Lewis (1993, March 6) the personalization of media icons is a prominent feature of young adulthood. Musicians, athletes, movie stars and television characters become not only role models for young adults but the community which they inhabit and in which they grow. For the young adult, a sign of maturation might be the shedding of solidarity with one rock group and the adoption of another. The concomitant change in wardrobe may signal this change on a public level (Michelman et al, 1991). "Many adolescents feel deeply connected to pop stars, and sometimes are able to make sense of confused teenage emotions that way" (Lewis, 1993, March 6, p.c8).

These icons that compose the very fabric of young adult lives are media constructed images and fuelled by marketplace economics. The image that is being sold may be most succinctly represented in music.
videos designed specifically for young adult consumption. These videos seldom follow a linear narrative and are composed of a rapid succession of discontinuous, unrelated images that catch postcard perfect, momentary glimpses of the subject matter, human or otherwise (Kaplan, 1987). Discrete gesture, for example, the "high five" handshake, replaces story as the criterion for knowing. As Bergen (1991) notes, coherence and continuity, two traditional markers of identity, give way to:

simply being within the ongoing process of relating .... there is no individual essence to which one remains true or committed. One's identity is continuously emergent, reformed, and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships. In the case of "Who am I?" it is a teeming world of provisional possibilities (pp. 134, 139).

Television serials popular with young adults also reflect and perhaps advance this transitory, multiple, and destabilized identity form. Traditional television fare features a single storyline, often centering on a single hero or heroine and moving ineluctably toward a single, commodious ending. In contrast, the newly emerging multidrama launches an array of stories, partial stories, and tangential scenes, interspersed and interwoven, which simultaneously wend their way toward occasional conclusions. Perhaps the most tightly knit of the multidramas is Hill Street Blues. Within less than an hour, the viewer may be challenged with scenes from a half dozen stories of crime, friendship, love, competition, and race relations. Although typically related by virtue of common protagonists, the scenes are heaped one upon another, and many of the stories are left uncompleted by traditional standards (p. 132).

Parental influence has also been seen to be an important aspect in the development of children (Young, Friesen, & Pearson, 1988). Socio-demographic shifts in family configuration such as commitment, working mothers, mobility, lack of nearby extended family, decreased support
networks, increased separations, divorces and remarriages and increased child maltreatment (see review by Garbarino, 1979) may therefore impinge on the how young adults see themselves and how identity develops.

While some of the most influential writings on the subject of young adult identity development are now more than two decades old (Blos, 1967; Erikson, 1959), these societal changes are relatively recent. Some recent research (Cote & Levine, 1989; Fregeau & Barker, 1986; Hansen, 1971) is based on earlier definitions of identity that emphasize the Eriksonian constructs of continuity and unity of self concept. Other research (Jones & Hartmann, 1988; Watson & Protinsky, 1991) is based on discrete categorizations of identity status and commitment to relatively few social variables, for example, work, values and sexual identity. Neither taps this transitory, continual metamorphosing and re-formulating identity formation described above. A reconsideration of young adult identity in light of these societal changes is therefore appropriate.

These recent cultural changes have altered the way we understand identity and in particular how young adults' sense of self may be influenced by familial and cultural experience. The writers describe the basis for the difficult challenges that face young adults but are mute as to how individuals make sense of the multitudinous array of impinging social factors. Many empirical studies for example, Kalter, (1987); Smith, (1990); Widaman, (1992) have focussed on discrete aspects of young adult self concept, such as, academic level, ethnicity, gender and the effect of parental separation and divorce. The findings of these studies are not related to the young adult life course as a whole but rather isolated young adult attributes, socio-political influences or single events. In order to
better understand the subject under investigation, these elements must be seen within a broader biographical context (Faltermaier, 1992).

The Western Notion of Identity

Rosenberg (1979) reviewed various references to identity found in the literature; "self", "ego", "inner nature", "essential nature of man", "the experience and content of self-awareness", "the individual as known to the individual", "a constellation of attitudes having reference to 'I', 'me', or 'mine' experiences", "individual identity and continuity of personal character", "a set of mental processes operating in the interest of satisfying inner drives" "the person" and, "self-concept". In contemporary Western society identity is often associated with the distinct, emotional, cognitive and behavioral entity that sets one person apart from another (Mitchell, 1986). "Uniqueness" is a unifying characteristic of each of these conceptualizations. According to Kilpatrick (1974), finding a unique identity leads to a certain richness and complexity of character, to autonomy and individuality. Western culture holds identity to be a roughly consistent belief or experience of self over a personally significant extent of time. Self is considered to be the distinct individual we take ourselves to be. A sense of self identity is established through one's usual activities (habitus) and an integrated experience of one's personal history (Kerby, 1991).

The Western notion of identity includes a delineation of the process by which a unique identity is formed. Family and parental influence is seen to be an important aspect in the formation of identity (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). A central task in the formation of identity in early adulthood is separation: the transition from family to community (Hoffman, 1984). Concomitant with this process is an evolving sense of individuality or sense of distinctiveness of self from other known as
individuation (Mazor, 1990). The attainment of adulthood is conterminous with the achievement of separation and individuation (Moore, 1987).

Young adult separation is defined in the West as a process of physical and emotional transition from a predominant identification and co-habitation with family to an increasing association with the larger society outside of the family of origin (Anderson & Fleming, 1986). The process of separation is characterized by both an increasing differentiation of self (individuation) which enables independence and a continuing and evolving social bond (connectedness). Both processes are said to inform identity and lead to adulthood (McDermott et al., 1984).

Individuation is seen as a process that encompasses both interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of young adult development. Interpersonally, the term refers to a progressive experience of self as unique, particularly with respect to one's significant others. The intrapersonal aspects of individuation involve the experience of an evolving self concept (Fleming & Anderson, 1986).

The constructs individuation and connectedness differ in their focus on self or relationship. Individuation concerns the process that leads to a sense of uniqueness, distinguishing of self from other and, the ability to attribute personality characteristics to oneself. In essence one becomes increasingly able to say that this is what I am and this is how I am different from or similar to others. In contrast, connectedness, which has also been found to be viable in separation (Hoelter & Harper, 1987), refers to the quality of bond and relatedness of self to other. Connectedness encompasses the experience of interdependence. While early research on identity and separation emphasized the process of individuation leading to independence (Erikson, 1959), recent studies have found that connectedness also plays an important role (Franz & White, 1985).
Positivist Research on Identity

While the western notion of identity has been considered to be a "peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures" (Geertz, 1979, p. 229), writers in the field of psychology continue to support and bolster the dominant view as being an objective universal fact rather than a construction tied to Western ideology, beliefs and values (Sampson, 1989). Research in the field of psychology is characterized by an a priori acceptance of this dominant view of identity. Efforts are undertaken (Blos, 1967; Marcia, 1980) to amplify and fine tune theories about the correlates of identity, for example, career resolutions, and what effects various influences have on the development of identity for example mother/infant bonds.

Research into identity formation within the positivist orientation is characterized by the use of objective measures (Garbarino, 1988). Typically individuals are asked to fill out questionnaires, respond to open-ended questions which are then coded or choose among alternative descriptions of themselves and others that reveal their picture of self. Results are then organized according to various demographic data (i.e., race, social class, parental behavior, age, gender).

Positivist orientations associate identity formation with intrapsychic drives and mechanisms (Blos, 1985), socio-cultural factors (Donovan, 1975), relational structures (i.e., family history, birth order), biology (i.e., survival) or environmental influence (i.e., parental child rearing practices, socialization)(Gabarino, 1988). These factors are seen to function without regard for the subjective response of the individual. The positivist tradition asserts that:

...external objects (or some properties) exist independent from an observer and that careful, objective application of
the scientific method enables an observer to confirm the truth about objective reality (Berzonsky, 1993, p. 171).

Generally early adult identity is viewed, in the positivist tradition, to be a product of various impinging factors that are said to function as objective units of influence. The positivist approach accounts for identity by considering prior influences be they distal (i.e., mother-child separation) or proximal (i.e., reinforcement). Identity is thought to ensue as a result of environmental influences, without regard for how they are perceived and processed by the young adult.

A strength of the positivist mandate is that results of research on identity in adolescence are considered meaningful for the population of adolescents. A second strength of positivist research is the use of statistical analysis for the identification of discrete factors and the relationship between factors that are associated with identity.

However, the methodologies of positivist research are not suited to address identity issues from the perspective of the individual experience because of the positivist orientation of making generalizations to broad populations. Secondly, the positivist orientation of identifying discrete factors that influence identity means that this orientation is not suited to discussing how individuals resolve identity challenges or the process of moving on to undertake further identity challenges.

Such a global approach to assessment permits a determination of the extent to which a person has established a clear sense of identity but does not provide information on the processes by which identity elements were developed (Waterman, 1982, p. 342).

In order to address these issues, the individual must be considered in the context of his or her evolving experience.

Constructivism
While each orientation in the positivist tradition has enlarged and refined our understanding of identity by identifying various factors that may influence early adult development, the positivist tradition is not suited to account for the meaning that young adults make of their experience.

The constructivist orientation places the active interpreting abilities of young adults at the center of research (Lemer, 1981). Rather than taking the view that family members, developmental achievements, cultural factors, communication styles and other variables are objective units of influence, the constructivist approach considers that the social environment can not be parcelled out, discretely defined and comprehended in and of itself. From this perspective, environment and subject form an interpenetrating system whose meaning can be accessed through the communications of the subject. According to the constructivist approach, it is the meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences that drives action. Therefore, rather than being considered a recipient of environmental influences, the young adult is viewed as an agent in his or her own development. This approach considers that the individual as agent is capable of producing his/her own development through the formulation of experience within the social milieu. This approach therefore affirms that individuals are volitional and are "producers" rather than the "receivers" of their identity (Brim in Lerner, 1981).

The Present Research Orientation

The premise upon which the present research is founded differs from the traditional positivist approach. This research is based on the notion that identity in young adults can be addressed through the communications of the meaning that the individuals themselves give to their experience. This infers that whatever peers, family and parents may do and whatever
events have occurred becomes part of the ongoing story that young adults call upon to explicate themselves. And finally, that their explications of self can be accessed in order to expand our knowledge of young adult development and identity formation.

Identity here is thought of as a story or personal narrative that emerges in early adulthood.

We all do it a little differently, but it's at this time in our lives that we begin to think about what we do in the present and what we've done in past and what we may do in the future as all being connected within some grand narrative scheme. And this narrative scheme - this evolving story - helps us define who we are (McAdams in Kotre & Hall, 1990, p.187).

In addition, because this constructivist view holds that there is an interpenetration of society and the individual (Turkle, 1978), these narratives also reflect the cultural construction of identity.

Rather than taking the view that the social environment is the prime influencer of development, the present approach begins with the social as experienced by the subject of study. In the present study, young adults were asked to communicate, in discussion and in talking about their family photo album, their perceptions of their past, their family experience, their experience of transition away from family and into the larger society, their current self perceptions and, their future goals in order to discern how young adults construct identity.

The constructivist approach affirms that making meaning of experience is an activity that individuals enact and that the very nature of human existence is one of meaning making (Kegan, 1982). This approach assumes that the impact of intrapsychic, familial and socio-cultural factors is dependent on the meaning making activities of the subject of inquiry, in this case the young adult. This approach assumes that the framing of experience within a social milieu guides the course of action.
The present orientation contrasts with deterministic perspectives by affirming that (1) identity is manifested in the framing of experience rather than through the achievement of various theoretically or empirically identified psychological or developmental milestones, (2) identity is manifested through an active evaluating process of past, present, and future rather than through the cumulative effects of influence, and (3) personal hypotheses regarding how identity is formed structure the continuing reformulation of that identity.

For the purposes of this study identity is defined in the constructivist tradition of Kegan (1982) as a process in which making sense of experience is an intrinsic aspect of the developing individual. In the present study, identity is considered to be the meaning that individuals make of their experience and is reflected in comprehensive life stories as told by young adults. An assumption is that identity is always in flux as a result of the ongoing meaning making processes individuals enact (Kegan, 1982).

Research Questions

From the constructivist perspective one can ask how young adults conceive of and author their development through reflecting upon and evaluating their social experience. Specifically, what meaning do young adults ascribe to their family, past and current experience, transition into community, and future? The purpose of this research was therefore to identify, through a constructivist approach, the processes through which young adults construe identity. It was expected that the results would extend our understanding of early adult development and in particular early adult separation, individuation and relationship to family.

The motivation for this research was sparked by a concern for society's frequent failure to recognize and respond to the needs of young
adults as they make the transition into social roles beyond their family of origin. While each young adult has his or her own unique blend of personal history, attributes and vision of his or her future, there are widely understood underlying structural features that are seen to comprise identity formation. One challenge of this research was to establish a bridge between young adults' unique experiences and established theoretical principles. A second challenge was to establish identity themes that might not intersect with established identity research but which emerge from the constructivist perspective in that they were derived from the communicated experience of young adults.

By taking a constructivist approach, one is able to understand how young adults author their identity because one is appealing directly to the experience of the young adult. Because language is a cultural construction (Harre, 1983) it was expected that these conversations with young adults would reflect a construction of identity that was rooted in shared experience. One would therefore be better positioned to observe how constructs commonly associated with identity such as separation, individuation, young adult's movement into society, and the nature of the continuing family bond are constructed by young adults. It was expected that one would also be able to describe constructs of identity previously unidentified. Finally, through encouraging a narrative accounting of young adults' experience it was expected that one would be able to understand how identity is informed by developmental activity.

A more fully informed conceptualization of the meaning of this process for the young adult may provide future researchers and practitioners with a clearer understanding of what the young adult is experiencing and may thereby lead to advances in support systems oriented to young adults.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretical Models

In this chapter, four models which address identity are critically reviewed and similarities addressed with a view to suggesting how present knowledge may be extended. From ego psychology we gain an understanding of identity as an intrapsychic resolution. From the developmental perspective we understand that identity evolves through a sequential evolution of task achievements. The perspective that individuals are not isolated in their development, but exist in a social world is addressed by systems theories. Here identity is found in relationships rather than in the individual. And finally the cognitive perspective speaks to the ability of young adults, for the first time in their lives, to consider, judge and reflect on their experience and form an integrated understanding of their lives.

A sense of who one is at present and how one came to be thus can form a story that is considered herein to be a construction of identity. "Identity is a creative integration of past identifications, future aspirations, and contemporary talents and abilities that is formed within a context of cultural expectations and demands" (Newman & Newman, 1988, p. 552). This constructivist approach to identity has not been reflected in empirical investigations. Ego, developmental, systems and cognitive models from which much identity research emerges have tended to spawn positivist investigations. However, as longstanding orientations these models embody to some degree constructions of identity that have become embedded in the Western culture. A glance at titles concerning self discovery found in the self help section of book stores supports this
contention. Family Ties that Bind (Richardson, 1984) emerges from systems theories, Lost in the Land of Oz: Befriending Your Inner Orphan and Heading for Home (Kolbenschlag, 1988) is tied to the psychoanalytic tradition, The Life of the Self (Lifton, 1983) supports a developmental perspective and, The Courage to Heal Workbook (Davis, 1990) support the use of cognitive exercises to resolve emotional turmoil.

These models differ from the present approach in that they suggest mechanisms which act upon the individual to produce identity rather than focussing on the actions of the individual in constructing identity. However, because many of their observations have emerged in folk psychology, and we are interested in tapping the culturally constructed view of identity, a review of ego, developmental, systems and cognitive models is appropriate.

**Ego Psychology Models**

Ego psychology theories (including psychoanalytic and object relations theories) consider identity development in the context of the mother, the nurturing object or certain selfobjects that are achieved through intrapsychic processes (Josselson, 1980). For these theorists, one's internal psychic representation of others holds at least as much significance in the resolution of identity issues as the actual person (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). This orientation suggests that what was present early in life merely becomes more pronounced in time. Identity is viewed as a static collection of unfolding traits or personality characteristics rooted in biology or the distinguishing of self from other.

Some researchers (e.g., Kalter, 1987) have examined the correlation between characteristics of infant/mother separation and young adult identity. This research concerns the relationship of self to other and on the psychological effects of this relationship on young adult identity.
From this perspective, the quality of young adult separation has been said to be influenced by the nature of the earlier infant/mother separation (Fisher, 1989). Separation in childhood is an "emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother" (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975, p.4). In early adulthood attachment bonds are severed and movement is towards an autonomous self (Josselson, 1980).

Individuation in the psychoanalytic tradition refers to the development and interplay of the id, ego and superego. It is an internal, subjective process resulting in the development of ego identity (Anderson & Fleming, 1986). Therapeutic interventions concern the recapitulation and reworking of sexual tensions (Freud, 1905).

The process of infant/mother separation and individuation has been delineated by Mahler (1968). Infants progress from no awareness of external objects (autistic phase), to gradual awareness of mother as an extension of the infant's self (symbiosis), to awareness of mother as a separate person (differentiation), to exploration of the environment (practicing), to awareness of mother as a person in her own right and attempts at re-engaging her as a psychic extension (rapprochement), and finally to achievement of individuality and a degree of object constancy (libidinal object constancy). While Mahler did not speculate on the implications of infant negotiation of these phases for early adulthood, Blos (1968) found similarities between these phases and the phases that young adults undergo as their identity coalesces. Generally, he notes the similarity between young adult disengagement, regressive behaviors and shedding of dependencies from internalized parental figures with infants' gradual separation from mother, rapprochement and growing sense of an independent self. Early adulthood is viewed by Blos as a "second individuation phase" in which childhood traumas are revisited and
reworked. He states that successful integration into character of residual childhood traumas results in increased self-esteem.

Blos (1985) understands the development of sexual identity in young adults in the classical psychoanalytic tradition of resolution of Oedipal issues. The challenge for young adults is to resolve their unconscious desire for union with same sex-parent. He states that it is only with a re-experiencing and final resolution of the childhood phallic stage that mature heterosexual interests can emerge.

Blos (1979) notes sex differences in the formation of a sexual identity which stem from the fact that for both males and females the first object of infantile love is the mother. Females must relinquish attachment to their initial object of sexual affection (mother) and shift to the father in order to experience fulfillment of her femininity. The shift for males is less challenging because they can fulfill their masculinity through identification with their initial object of sexual affection. Girls are therefore more ambivalent in their Oedipal resolution then their male counterpart. In order to fully develop, girls must tolerate continued same-sex identifications in the course of engendering heterosexual relationships while boys can progress towards adulthood in a less encumbered state.

Blos (1971) identifies four sequential, intrapsychically rooted phases of identity growth in early adulthood. "Latency" is a time for re-integration after the Oedipal crisis. The ego and superego gain control over instincts. Sexual and aggressive drives and decreasing ego control mark the "preadolescent" phase. Separation from earlier object ties is a feature of "early adolescence". Loosening of parental ties are associated with diminishing superego controls. Attention is directed to extra-familial relationships in which same-sex friends represent one's ego
ideal. Homosexual fears soon bring closure to these relationships. "Adolescence" sees a growing genuine interest in individuals of the opposite sex and consolidation of a heterosexual orientation. "Late adolescence" is a time of stabilization of sexual identity where the self and others are firmly represented and autonomy is developed. The transition to adulthood is characterized in "postadolescence" by the locating of a satisfying position within the larger social system. This is mediated by sexual drives.

Therapies emerging from this tradition seek to uncover early life issues concerning the manner in which separation was achieved, thwarted or distorted. Unresolved residual issues form the basis of life themes which emerge once again in the second separation phase (Blos, 1962). In order to accomplish identity resolution in early adulthood, earlier psychological traumas must be re-experienced and worked through or they will continue to require defending against throughout adult life. Successful resolution of these issues enables "ego continuity" which refers to the integration of events into a comprehensive, meaningful personal history. The self styled story takes the place of internalized parental representations. This integration is necessary for young adult development to continue, and leads to a sense of wholeness (Blos, 1976).

There is a lack of empirical support for Blos' characterization of early adulthood as a time of psychological upheaval. Blos' observation of extreme anxiety in early adulthood resulting from the Oedipal crisis likely reflects the clinical population from which his theories derive rather then the general population to which it is applied (Adelson & Doehrman, 1980). Rather, normative development of identity in early adulthood is characterized as a gradual evolution. Rather than the repudiation of parents suggested by Blos, normative development includes a continued
connectedness with family in addition to autonomy (Josselson, 1980). Quintana and Lapsley (1990) echo the above conclusion by observing that attachment to parents and the retention of a unique sense of oneself form a unidimensional construct that is associated with ego development.

Further, empirical evidence indicates that individuation is a phenomenon of later rather than middle adolescence as Blos suggests (Adelson & Doehrman, 1980). While causal evidence linking the events of infant separation to young adult separation is lacking there is some empirical support for the contention that young adults undergo similar differentiation processes as infants (Kroger, 1990). Finally, Blos' failure to account for homosexuality as a mature resolution of sexual identity is contradicted by current evidence (Sohier, 1986).

**Developmental Models**

Central to the developmental approach is a concern with "the human life cycle with an emphasis on the importance of considering the future or what can be expected in the life cycle as well as the past and the present" (Toews, Prosen, & Martin, 1981, p. 287). A core belief of developmental models is that "organic systems evolve through eras according to regular principles of stability and change" (Kegan, 1982, p. 8).

One of the developmental tasks of early adulthood is to negotiate a degree of separateness from parents and family while establishing a personal identity in the larger community (Kegan, 1982). Although features of this process resemble infant separation/individuation it is considered to involve stage specific issues. "The evolutionary model permits one to observe recurring phenomena of similar colour and tone throughout the lifespan without having at the same time to regard such similarities as regression or recapitulation" (Kegan, 1982, p. 180).
The view that human life is a developmental sequence from infancy to adulthood in which completion of one developmental stage establishes the possibility of undertaking succeeding stages has been supported by several writers. Piaget's (1969) cognitive theory, Kohlberg's (1980a) moral development theory and Freud's (1905) psychosexual stages are some of the formulations that have taken this perspective.

Erikson (1950, 1956, 1959) extended Freud's theories by proposing that not only biologically determined sexual drives, but also the personal organization of experience within the social and cultural milieu contributes to the meaning of one's existence. Erikson's descriptions of the nature of identity is multi-dimensional (Kroger, 1989). It appears in his work at different times as a structure, a process, a subjective experience, or an unconscious entity. Erikson's eight bipolar crises, which humans are said to encounter as they age, reflect this view by highlighting the conflict between personal and societal forces. Erikson views developmental crises as hierarchical, sequential, and to a large extent invariant. As a rule, positive resolution of any one stage is contingent upon previous successes, enhances subsequent healthy personality growth, and favorably predisposes the individual to implement the next.

In consonance with ego psychology, Erikson believes that identity has its roots in childhood identifications with others but differs in his view that it continues to change throughout the life cycle. "Having roots in infant trust, identity is also present in the integrity versus despair conflict of old age. Identity formation during early adulthood thus reflects developmental resolutions to all preceding stages and serves as base for personality developments that lie ahead" (Kroger, 1989, p. 32). It is during early adulthood that identity formation becomes a crisis of conflicting forces. Identity provides a sense of sameness and continuity for the
individual. The challenge for the young adult is to attain a sense of integrated ego identity while overcoming identity or role confusion. The resolution involves the reconciliation of societal expectations with personal interests, talents and values (Erikson, 1959).

While Erikson's notions of the interaction of the individual and society in young adults' negotiation of identity may be valuable, the attention he gives to the role of gender in this formulation has been criticized as outdated or inaccurate (Kroger, 1989). Erikson's work has been criticized for being gender biased. For Erikson, women's identity definition is dependent upon union with a suitable partner. This notion contradicts contemporary social realities where many women choose to value the pursuit of career (important to self-definition) above or in conjunction with marriage and procreation. Some writers (e.g., Gilligan, 1982) suggest that Erikson's stages do not reflect the experience of females due to its emphasis on the role of individuation in the early stages and the issue of relationship occurring only in adulthood. Modification of the stages to encompass both genders has been suggested (Logan, 1986). Erikson's strongly individualistic orientation which emphasizes differentiating self from others contrasts with collectivist ideologies which emphasizes development as harmony and integration (Franz & White, 1985).

While Erikson's emphasis views identity and intimacy (the psychosocial "virtues" emerging from his stages 5 and 6) as equal in value his emphasis on the antecedents and consequences of identity means that his theory fails to do justice to the coherence and interrelatedness of both sets of processes. (p. 224).

Cross-cultural studies indicate that not only can individualism, independence and autonomy lead to alienation rather than identity resolution (Rotenberg, 1977) but, as evidenced in Japanese families,
in institutional and familial dependence, affiliation, nurturance, and obligations are associated with identity achievement (DeVos, 1973; Doi, 1973).

Erikson's description of the crisis experienced by young adults has been operationalized and elaborated by James Marcia (1966, 1967). While in Erikson's view, identity consists of a balance between commitment and confusion about one's roles in society, Marcia identified two distinct types of commitment and two of non-commitment. "Achieved" and "foreclosed" individuals have both made commitments to social roles; however "achieved" individuals have done so following a crisis or decision making period, while "foreclosures" have adopted parental values. The non-commitment types differ in that "moratoriums" are currently undergoing a period of search for suitable roles while "diffusions" are not. One's commitment type is referred to as identity status. Identity status is tapped through a semi-structured "ego identity status interview". This instrument requires responses to questions concerning vocational and ideological commitment and, in more recent revisions (Grotevant et al., 1982), sex role commitments, friendship and dating.

Empirical studies arising from Marcia's work indicate that the quality of relationship to other varies according to identity status. Moratoriums have volatile and intense relationships (Donovan, 1975). Achievers have intimate relationships (Marcia, 1980), are able to perceive parental strengths and weaknesses and have parents who support young adult autonomy (Grotevant & Cooper 1985; Jordan 1971). Foreclosures accept parental values (Marcia, 1980) and have very close relationships with parents (Jordan, 1971). Diffusions are not involved in intimate relationships (Marcia, 1980) and tend to be distant and withdrawn (Donovan, 1975).
Erikson's work has led to valuable advances in understanding identity in adolescence. His emphasis on the salience of the task of negotiating a role in society and resolution of identity confusion and commitment remains valid and has spawned research that extends that view. Criticism of Erikson's treatment of gender suggests the necessity of further research into the roles of autonomy and relatedness in how young adults negotiate identity in the context of leaving family and entering the larger society.

The above cited identity status studies that evolved out of Marcia's ego-identity status assessment (Marcia, 1966) consider the behavioral correlates of identity and do not explore identity as a process. They do not indicate how one's experience metamorphoses from one form to another. This is generally true of developmental writers who have emphasized the delineation of hierarchical and discrete ego organizations and attend less to developmental movement (Kegan, 1982). Research that enables an understanding of the experience of developmental movement may shed light on this issue.

By enabling young adults to fully express their experience which may include Marcia's constructs such as commitment to social roles, the nature of young adult crisis, the decision-making period, and relationship to parental values, our understanding of early adult identity may be enhanced. By utilizing an open ended interview procedure in which significant events are told within a context, constructs may emerge that suggest the nature of developmental movement.

**Family Systems Models**

Family systems orientations locate identity in relationship rather than in individuals as ego psychology and developmental models do. This orientation is premised on the observation that individuals live in a social
world, and thus it is inappropriate to parcel out one component of this "relationship system". Family systems orientations consider identity in the contexts of family communication systems (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986), family roles (Stierlin, 1981), and family relations (Elder, 1963), and achieved through interpersonal processes (Koman, 1985).

Family systems include family norms, rituals, and practices (Elkind, 1967). The aggregate of rituals, rites and taboos composing a belief system is defined as the myth. Myths can be universal, cultural, personal and familial. Personal mythologies are said to evolve as we negotiate various developmental tasks associated with individuation and strivings to achieve our potential. Family myths are composites of each member's personal mythologies, parental unit mythology, each parent's conscious and unconscious ideal for each offspring, intermember mythologies that support various interactional systems, and family group myths whose genesis is in family unit shared experiences (Bagarozzi & Anderson, 1989).

Family systems orientations view the development of identity in young adults as the attempt to locate a compromise between personal and familial needs - between aspirations and obligations - between conflicting personal myths that are the product of family myths. The resolution is a distillation of these conflicting demands (Andolfi, Angelo, & deNichilo, 1989). The family myth unifies the family and gives it cohesion. It also provides a ground upon which the young adult can separate and individuate. "...(T)he process of individuation must begin with the structure of the myth" (Stone, 1988, p. 114) because the myth presents the most apparent manifestation of the family (Andolfi et al., 1989).

A fundamental shift occurs in one's relationship to, or construction of the family myths in early adulthood (Kotre and Hall, 1990). From being a
player in them, we appropriate them, select from them, become active with them, adjust them, understand how events are related, and take them away. These activities are comparable to those of biographers.

Family systems orientations include understanding of differentiation and individuation in considering identity in young adults. Differentiation, according to this perspective, is considered by some a process and by others as a characteristic of the family unit. Sabatelli and Mazor (1985) use the term differentiation to describe an interpersonal process in the domain of the family that maintains a psychological distance between family members.

Bowen (1978) uses the term differentiation as a descriptive characterization of the family unit. The entire family can be assessed on a continuum from poorly to highly differentiated. An extremely differentiated family system is composed of members who are considered "disengaged" or experiencing little or no relationship between their experiences. Extremely undifferentiated family systems are composed of members who are "enmeshed". Here, family members make little or no distinction between their experience. Bell and Bell (1983) consider individuation in the context of family relationships. Individuation is considered to be the subjective assessment of distance from parents (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985).

In taking into consideration the above understandings of differentiation and individuation, the family systems orientation to identity in young adults can be understood as including both relational and individual forces. Characteristics of the family unit in terms of their level of differentiation and the process by which they attained their level of differentiation may inform the young adult's inclusion and description of family in their understanding of the person they are.
In a highly differentiated family, the young adult may clearly distinguish between the various roles and qualities of family members and hold a confident perspective on their own role in the family. In a poorly differentiated family, the young adult may construct their identity more in terms of family unit characteristics. As Anderson and Fleming (1986) noted, the former family constellation is deemed superior to the latter in terms of identity development:

The systems level of differentiation (i.e., fusion and triangulation) determines the degree to which young adults' developmental needs (i.e., individuation, occupational choice, ideological commitments) are adapted to and consequently, the extent to which ego identity is enhanced (p. 788).

The relative contributions of family separation and relatedness to family in young adult identity formation has been a subject of research. Identity in young adults has been associated with separation from family and individuation leading to autonomy (Aldous, 1978) and definitive shifts from dependence on parents to peer support to work outside the home (Rollins & Thomas, 1979).

The position that independence is the normative result of separation/individuation can be derived from biased research designs. For example, in determining what factors young adults construe as indicating if they had separated from their parents, Moore (1981) had subjects rate 14 statements. The statements, concerning for example making one's own decisions, feeling like an adult, freedom, and financial independence are worded to reflect extra-familial concerns and therefore, by their nature support the notion of autonomy as coincident with separation and individuation. In addition when statements are offered about relationship to family, such as in those concerning emotional detachment or disengagement, they are all constructed in the negative thereby further
biasing the results by framing family relationships in a manner that precludes positive experiences.

In order to assess the contributions of separateness (individuation, autonomy) and relatedness (intimacy, connectedness) in young adult identity formation, Grotevant and Cooper (1986) employed factor analysis of coded family interaction communications to derive four individuation and connectedness related themes. Because young adults in this study coupled an adaptability in personal boundary management (permeability) with communications indicating a distinction of self from others (separateness), the researchers concluded that the development of young adult identity does not ensue from breaking young adult/parent bonds, but by shifting the relationship from symbiotic dependance to associations and mutuality. Hoffman (1984) supports this view by affirming that "... the adolescent must psychologically separate from both parents while maintaining positive family ties ..." (p. 172). Gilligan (1982) also supports this view in emphasizing the role of affiliation in identity development.

As can be noted, ego psychology orientations, being biased in favor of viewing the individual as the repository of experience, favor the "individuation" component of the separation/individuation construct. Their "separation" resides in the domain of the individual. Separation from other becomes a completely symbolic representation residing in the domain of id, ego and superego functions. The family is viewed as an inner landscape. Identity develops through individuals' perceptions, internalizations and rejection of parents (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). In contrast, by focussing on the interpersonal, the systems approach favors the "separation" component by firmly acknowledging that an actual self is becoming independent of an equally viable and distinct other. (Anderson & Fleming, 1986).
Cognitive Models

Cognition concerns "the construction, acquisition, maintenance, and utilization of knowledge. Thus, the field of cognitive psychology focuses upon the psychological processes of perception, symbolization or representation, thinking, language, reasoning, and memory..." (Overton & Byrnes, 1991, p. 151). To the extent that theories view identity in terms of self-concepts, self-percepts, self-images and similar cognitive constructs, they have roots in cognitive psychology.

A cognitive-developmental approach to identity has emerged from the work of Piaget, among others (Broughton, 1983). Piaget (1969) identified qualitatively different levels of cognitive activity which form the basis of an ordered developmental sequence. Development is seen to ensue as a result of the modification of the organism's behavioral and conceptual structures by the environment.

While the view of Piaget as an environmentalist is a popular one, it may be mistaken (Kegan, 1982). An alternative interpretation of his work locates the impetus for change in neither the environment nor the individual as much as in a system that is a unity of the two. This system is characterized by "the tensions between the assimilation of new experience to the old "grammar" and the accommodation of the old grammar to new experience" (Kegan, 1982, pp. 43-44).

Cognitive changes in the young adult can also be identified in relation to family systems. Separation/individuation has been shown to be a process in which many family variables (communication, role, parental relationships) are shifting. The ability to identify and distinguish others' points of view from one's own is viewed as a necessary step in the process of separation and identity formation (Sprenkle & Russell, 1979). Accompanying this shift is a growing cognitive objectivity in the young
adult arising from emerging formal operational skills as defined by Piaget (1969). This ability is associated with the development of role taking or perspective taking abilities which enable young adults to perceive others as occupying independent perspectives (Selman, 1976a). "...with the emergence of the period of formal operational thought, many young adults have the capacity to evaluate parental directions and become increasingly aware of alternatives" (Garbarino, 1985, p. 272). In contrast, cognitive simplicity (Kelly, 1955) is associated with adoption of parental values (Rowe & Marcia, 1980) and the lack of autonomy (Marcia, 1966, 1967). Enhanced abstraction and reasoning skills has implications for family relationships because young adults are able to question parental values from a new perspective. In order for the family environment to continue being supportive, a reorganization of rights, responsibilities and personal relationships is necessary (Irwin, 1988).

Piaget has identified early adulthood as the time in which fundamentally new cognitive abilities arise. Others have demonstrated that this change is associated with a shift in family relations and the evolution of a self concept. While these changes are confirmed in many studies as important aspects of young adult development (Bell & Bell, 1982; Fleming & Anderson, 1986; Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985), the understanding of Piaget as a proponent of development ensuing out of adaptation to environment overlooks agency as an aspect of individuals (Blasi, 1983):

It is the central characteristic of conceptualistic approaches to focus on the self as object of perception and categorization without looking at the self that perceives and categorizes. The self, then, becomes a static, fixed, cognitive conclusion, rather than the active process of cognizing self and others, of wondering, of asking questions, gathering information and evidence, doubting one's conclusions, or
changing self percepts and self definitions. In so doing, what seems most central to the self—the standing back and apart even from his [sic] knowledge, the control of it—is hopelessly lost. (p. 208)

Summary of Major Issues

Two major discontinuities in the literature have been noted. Developmental and ego psychology models hold differing views on the functioning of infant separation/individuation in early adulthood identity formation. While ego psychology affirms that young adult separation/individuation issues recapitulate unresolved infant separation/individuation issues, developmental approaches perceive early adulthood as a stage specific system engaging in a hierarchical series of tasks. Empirical evidence indicates that there exists striking similarities between the differentiation processes that infants and young adults undergo. However, a causal linkage (as in Blos' concept of a revisiting and reworking of infant processes by young adults) is as yet unfounded. Examination of young adults' perceptions of their early development may augment this discussion by indicating what issues rooted in infancy they consider to play a role.

Primacy is given the processes of separation and individuation in identity formation across all the models. For ego psychology separation/individuation is an intrapsychic process propelled by sexual drives or the differentiation of self from other. From a developmental perspective separation/individuation is part of a sequential task process that leads to autonomy and the ability to find a niche in the social order. Systems orientations define separation/individuation as a social negotiation of interactional closeness and distance. And finally cognitive theories affirm the ability of young adults to discriminate their own evolving world views from those of others. While separation/individuation
is a common concern of identity models, there is disagreement as to the nature of these processes. In particular, the relative contributions of "independence" and "connectedness" to identity forms a second field of research concerns.

While some researchers view independence as normative, others note the salience of connectedness factors. This disagreement may exist due to a number of research inconsistencies. Some research was designed to investigate the transition to extra-familial roles for young adults and results were then generalized with emphasis on independence and repudiation of parents. Further, research rooted in differing traditions emphasize one construct or another. Typically the individual concerns of ego psychology favour independence, while the social concerns of systems approaches highlight relationship and connectedness. As some of the literature focuses on the movement of young adults into the extra-familial environment and there is growing support for the inclusion of affiliation themes in development, research that includes a "relationship to family" component and also allows for expression of extra-familial roles can provide a comprehensive understanding.

These issues suggest the importance of including a life span orientation in addition to family and extra-familial components in investigating identity. Developmental models suggest that the past, present and future and how each is linked to the next is important to consider in understanding identity. We learn from cognitive theories that identity formation also involves a growing ability to objectively judge and therefore be aware of oneself as an individual with specific interests and abilities. As identity develops one therefore becomes increasingly able to amalgamate perceptions of one's abilities, interests, goals, social roles, family roles and, personal history into a comprehensive life story.
However, absent from the cognitive perspective, as well as from ego, developmental and systems models is a consideration of the meaning making activities of individuals that extend beyond the organism's adaptation to environment to include wishes and fears, points of view, biases, prejudices, questioning and life reviews.

New Foundations

In this section, three approaches to identity that utilize the meaning making activities of young adults are proposed. The first approach, a philosophical orientation, is constructivism. The other two approaches concern methodology. They are "the narrative" and the use of photographs.

The Constructivist Approach to Identity

Identity is a matter of reflecting on one's experience, and understanding many diverse facets of one's existence as adhering in some manner; of making sense of one's experience (Kegan, 1982). This constructivist view takes the position that it is not the effect of resolving psychosexual crises, nor changing patterns of communication with parents, nor balancing social roles with personal interests, nor adaptation to environment per se that form one's identity. Instead identity is the sense that one makes of these and other experiences.

Each of the reviewed orientations to identity taken in isolation describe in effect one facet of identity; the intrapsychic, the temporal the relational or the cognitive. They also take the view of self as an object of perception and categorization without looking at the self that does the perceiving and categorizing. The constructive-developmental view of Kegan (1979, 1982) is comprehensive in that it addresses the underlying system by which these experiences are mediated and synthesized. Identity is not a static entity but rather a process of meaning making that occurs not only in early adulthood but throughout the life-span (Kegan, 1979).
The constructivist approach considers that whatever family members may do and whatever events occur become part of the story that the young adult employs in the explication of self. It is in late adolescence that, for the first time, "ego continuity" (Blos, 1962) or the integration of events into a comprehensive, meaningful personal history, becomes possible. Some constructivist research focusing on developmental movement has taken too limited a view of identity. For example, Kroger (1990) considers only young adults' retrospective early memories (before 9 years of age) in her account. A broader definition of identity to include not only early memories, but current self concept and future plans is found widely in the literature and should therefore form a basis upon which research is established.

This story of development, which may be composed of (depending on one's frame of reference) the process of resolving personal with familial myths, intrapsychic conflicts and, self desires and social expectations as one emerges into adulthood, becomes a part of the evolving story that is a construction of identity. The fact that these stories are communicated within a social context, using socially negotiated signs (language) enables one to access the cultural meanings given to identity.

The Narrative Approach

The utilization of narrative structures to access identity has a long history in literature, for example, biographies as well as psychology, for example, psychoanalysis. The resolution of identity issues is associated with the ability to establish a personal history or ego continuity (Blos, 1976).

Free association as in psychoanalysis has not always provided satisfactory narrative structures due to its lack of context (Spence, 1982). Context is essential for understanding and interpretation. The
focused biography affirms viewpoint and allows for organization. "The goal is to discover underlying threads of the story" (p. 21). This includes continuity, coherence and opposites (Spence, 1982). Its use in research to address the social interpretation of experience is well documented (Freeman, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Plummer's (1983) review of biography in social research indicates some particular advantages for its adaptation in identity studies. Biographies access phenomenally experienced changes, transitions and processes. It is these very aspects of identity that traditional methods and positivist models fail to account for. The narrative approach is consistent with constructivism in its service as a structure in which meaning is founded. Narrative telling is an act of making connections "and thus meaning, by linking past and present, self and society. By storifying our lives, we bring order to random happenings, making sense by reconstructing and reinterpreting" (Riessman, 1989, p. 233).

The Use of Photographs as a Research Tool

The reviewing of photographs has been found to be a valuable communication aid (Weiser, 1983). Young adults, who have at times been found to be resistant to discussions, have responded more readily when photographs are used as a focus (Wolf, 1976). Identity exploration has been enhanced through the use of photographs by encouraging young adults to focus on feelings about expressions of identity such as dress and body markings in self portraits (Michelman et al., 1991).

The family photo album as a chronology of family life can serve as a biographical storytelling aid. Family photographs can be in bound albums, loose collections or singular pictures. Weiser (1988) suggests that family photographs, "offer proof of that group's existence over time, documenting performance as well as change, continuity, roots, traditions, values, and
degree of freedom for the individual within it" (p. 369). Weiser suggests that albums reflect a broad definition of the family, including support systems, friends, relatives, pets and inanimate objects such as houses and automobiles.

Ego psychology, developmental, and systems theories indicate that one's past experiences and family relationships are important features of identity. The family photo album is a valuable aid to the expression of one's relationship to and experience of family as it can encompass family events, individuals and experiences. In its representation of a range of shared family experiences and norms the album can encapsulate components of family myth. In its representation of a broad temporal range it is well suited to developmental interpretations. By nature photographic reviews are interpretive acts and therefore meaning making endeavors. From a constructive-developmental perspective making sense of one's experience is the essence of identity. Therefore photographic reviews are a valid means of accessing young adults' construction of identity.

Summary

Four theoretical models of identity were described. Two major research concerns were identified; the role of past and present family experiences and, the role of independence/connectedness. In the literature the perspective of young adults towards their family has been de-emphasized in favor of examination of extra-familial roles such as work and education. While family communication and systems variables have been documented in the literature as related to young adult development, a constructivist approach to adolescent development has been under represented. Some studies that do exist employ a limited definition of identity.
The reviewing of personally meaningful photographs can aid young adults in telling the story of their life. From a constructivist perspective, the narrative that the young adult may tell is that individual's construction of identity. Through the interpretation of individuals' constructions of identity, one is able to describe the cultural construction of identity.

It is my opinion that examination of young adults' narratives about who they are, how they came to be the person they are and, their entrance into adulthood has the following benefits; augmentation of information concerning young adult development and identity; elucidation of young adults' relationship to family and how the young adult views the family in relation to their identity; elucidation of the roles of individuation and connectedness in young adult development; provision of information about young adult development that may help counsellors and others in understanding the experience of the young adult and therefore aid support services for young adults; augmentation of our understanding of the way in which the notion of identity is understood in Western societies.
CHAPTER THREE

THE METHOD

This research concerns the construction of identity by young adults. In order to explore this subject, young adults were asked to describe the person they are and tell how they came to be the person they are at present. The present chapter details how the research was carried out. It includes a description of participant selection, the interview procedure, how the data were collected, validated and analyzed, a discussion of the researcher's biases, and a discussion of constraints to this research. The chapter also contains a brief description of the pilot interview which was conducted prior to the actual study.

Principal Study

Participants

Demographic Information

This study was completed with the assistance of six volunteer participants between the ages of 19 and 22 years. The lower age limit meets Blos' (1976) developmental constraint of late adolescence as the period when the ability to form a view of one's past, present, and future emerges. The upper age limit is within the bounds of research involving young adults (Haase, 1987; Krishnan, 1985; Nammalvar, 1983). In order to promote the probability of identity themes being repeated, a relatively narrow age range was employed.

Demographic information was ascertained to a large extent from the interview transcripts. Information that was not located from this source was requested of the participant during the follow-up interview.
The originally proposed minimum of eight volunteers was reduced because it was found that the concerns discussed by the participants compared favorably by topic to a review of trends in research found in a major periodical on young adults (Stefanko, 1992). In this article, six topics for example, sexuality, schooling and 21 subtopics for example, pregnancy, learning disabilities pertained to the experiences of young adults. Participants in the present study referred to all six of the topics and 20 of the 21 subtopics. Because experiences discussed by participants in the present study concurred highly with those discussed in recent literature it was assumed that additional participants would not likely supplement the themes analysis based on the six participants.

Of the young adults interviewed, four were female and two were male. Their ages were as follows: (19) 1, (20) 1, (21) 2, (22) 2. All six were born and grew up in Canada. One participant was attending grade 12. One had dropped out of high school after grade 11. One had completed high school. Two were currently attending university. One participant had completed her undergraduate studies. Two of the participants were employed in the service industry and one was unemployed. A full description of demographic details is found in Appendix IV.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through public advertisements on community, college and university bulletin boards. The advertisements requested volunteers, ages 19-22, to participate in a study about identity and life stories. The expected time commitment, affiliated university, and name and phone number of the researcher were provided (see Appendix II). Upon initial contact, prospective participants were informed in greater detail of the nature of the study. They were also informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and ensured that they could choose to cease
participation at any time. Prospective participants were requested to bring to the interview up to 20 photographs for the purpose of assisting in the telling the story of who they are at present and how they came to be the person they are. Prospective participants were informed that the photographs could be of themselves, taken by them or taken by others. The photographs could be of family, friends, relatives or anyone else or any object(s) of importance to the participant.

The Interviews

The participants were informed during initial contact that the expected length of interview and follow up would be a total 1.5 to 2 hours. The location was negotiated with each participant. I suggested the use of a private, quiet, comfortable office free from interruption, located at UBC.

Participants were interviewed individually. A focussed non-directive style of interview was pursued in order to allow and encourage interviewees to fully develop and explore their stories. Body language, level of comfort and any other non-verbal communications were noted after the interview so that the researcher would not interrupt the flow of the discussion with note taking and to ensure that the researcher was fully attending in order that he can encourage the telling of the story. The notes on non-verbal communication, some of which are included in the section "Introduction to the Participants" augmented the understanding of the narrative by the researcher.

The interview consisted of four segments; the introduction, the experience of self at present and past, the photograph review and closure. At the outset of the interview I stated the purpose, the process of the study as it impacts the participants and informed the participant about ethical considerations (see Appendix I). The body of the interview concerned how participants describe themselves in the present, how they
project themselves into the future and what course of events and experiences led up to how they presently see themselves. Participants were then asked to review with the researcher their photographs with a view to using them as an aid to telling the story of who they are at present and how they became the person they are.

Photographs are here considered a tool to elicit young adults' constructions of self, their relationship to family and emergence into adulthood. That photographs have been used to identify cross-generational themes (Paul, 1972), and power, dependency and intimacy themes (Anderson & Malloy, 1976) indicates their appropriateness for this purpose.

In the closing segment of the interview the participant was asked if he or she would like to add anything more to what had been discussed. Arrangements were be made for the follow-up interview.

The purpose of the follow-up interview was to ensure that my understanding of the story coincided with the intentions of the narrator and to enable the narrator to make changes to the story to achieve clarity and accuracy. These goals were pursued in two ways: First, the interviewee was presented with a written summary of his or her story. This was read by the researcher while the interviewee was encouraged to make correction or additions. Second, the interviewee was asked three questions:

1. "To what extent does the summary represent your story of who you are and how you came to be who you are at present? Do you have anything to add or change?"

2. "In what ways did reviewing your photographs, limit or effect the telling of your story?"
3. "Did the format of the discussion, including the questions I asked, enable you to tell your story in as much detail as you might have wanted?"

4. "Do you have any suggestions as to how your comfort level and ability to relate your story may be enhanced?"

**Data sources**

The data sources were recorded narratives and notes on non-verbal cues. The use of narrative structures to access identity has a long history in literature as biographies as well as psychology as psychoanalysis. Prominent writers such as Erikson and Freud have employed narratives in the elucidation of their theories (McAdams, 1988). Their use in research to address how individuals make sense of their experience is well documented (Freeman, 1984; Polkinghorne, 1988). Murray (1938) recommends the use of biographical studies to account for "... infinitely complex series of temporally related activities" (p. 39). This suggestion coincides with the task involved in recounting events and experiences of one's life, thereby supporting the use of this method in this study.

**Recording of data**

The interviews were audio taped in order to permit the retention and documentation of the participant's entire story. This method enabled the interviewer to be attentive and not intrusive (Wiersma, 1980).

**Analysis**

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with an overview of the methods of analysis and interpretation and support the appropriateness of these methods for the present study.

**Phenomenology**

Husserl is credited as the primary developer of phenomenology (Valle & King, 1978). A principle of this philosophy is that individuals and
the world are co-constituted. That is, neither humans nor the world can be comprehended as separate entities but exist as a unity. The basis of this relationship is dialogue. Individuals are in constant dialogue with their surroundings. The dialogue takes the form of choices. The world presents choices in which individuals must act. Both absolute free will and total determination are rejected in favor of a situated freedom which is the freedom to make choices within the limits of the situation presented by the world (Valle & Halling, 1989).

Phenomenology is a system of naive description that reveals how individuals relate to the world by exposing the meaning, essence or structure of experience in their stream of consciousness (Giorgi, 1985). The focus of phenomenological research is on the experience of the phenomenon under question rather than, as in traditional psychological research, the measurement of overt behavior or physiology. Husserl (1970) was interested not in the world as interpreted by scientific fact and theory but in the everyday world as experienced by humans and expressed in everyday language. As such it is appropriate for the task of comprehending young adults' constructions of their experience.

**Phenomenological analysis**

After each session, the recorded discussion was transcribed in its entirety and interpreted by a method of phenomenological analysis described by Giorgi (1985). The process of analysis involved a number of steps. First, a sense of the first narrative as a whole was gathered by reading the transcript with a view to understanding the language of the participant and grasping the overall meaning.

Second, the transcript was segmented into "meaning units" (Giorgi, 1985, p.11). This entailed demarcating portions of the text each of which were discriminated on the basis of expressing a new cognition or emotion.
(The following steps were accomplished with the assistance of the computer program, Claris™ Filemaker II®, which aided in the organization of meaning units and the sorting process described below). The third step was transforming the participant's everyday expressions represented in each meaning unit into a phrase by simplifying the participant's expressions. This was accomplished by using lay person's psychological language so that, without loosing meaning, the phrase reflected the experience of the narrator.

Fourth, the transformed meaning units were further reduced to a concise label that represented the core meaning of the participant's experience described in the meaning unit. Occasionally it was necessary to choose between two or more concise labels that appeared to appropriately describe the experience. For example, a decision was made to determine whether a meaning unit about a participant's desire to engage in an activity in the future concerned the experience of expectation or the experience of the realization of a future goal. Decisions such as the above were assisted through responding to the question, "what was the intention of the narrator?" The answer to this question became apparent in every instance through reading the meaning unit in the context of the surrounding transcript text.

(Each grouping of meaning unit, transformed meaning unit, and core meaning was designated with a consecutive computer number which aided in the sorting process described below.) The fifth step was sorting all of the groupings represented by the core meanings into common core meaning classifications. The result was 78 core meaning classifications such as "activity interest" and "fearing closeness". Unique core meanings were reconsidered in the context of similar core meaning classifications. Those that could be accurately represented by one of the core meaning
classifications were sorted into the appropriate classification. For example, the unique core meaning, "fearing closeness" was sorted into the core meaning classification "relationship to caregivers" because the participant's experience of fearing closeness concerned, and was subsumed within the experience of his relationship to caregivers. Those that could not be represented otherwise were left as single example classifications. Core meaning classifications that appeared to employ different words to describe the same experience were amalgamated. Before a core meaning classification change was made the corresponding meaning units were referred to in order to ensure that the new core meaning classification accurately represented the experience described in the meaning units. Through this process, the initial 78 classifications were reduced to 27.

The process of constructing a "synthesis of transformed meaning units into a consistent statement of the structure..." (Giorgi, 1985, p.19) was multi-tiered. Initially, I read all of the meaning units associated with one core meaning classification. As I read, I compiled notes concerning the ways in which the core meaning was addressed in each meaning unit. I then re-read the complete transcript from the perspective of the participant's experience as described in my notes. I edited my notes according to the changes suggested by this re-reading of the transcript. I then selected a second core meaning classification that appeared most similar to the one I had just completed work on. With this core meaning classification, I repeated the same note-taking and transcript re-reading process as described for the first core meaning classification. However, in addition I compared the second core meaning classification to the first by asking the question, "Is this classification describing the same experience, a similar experience, or an entirely different experience?" I
proceeded in this manner for all of the core meaning classifications that emerged from the first transcript. Through the process of determining if each ensuing core meaning classification was the same as, similar to, or entirely different from the previous core meaning classifications, the 27 core meaning classifications were further reduced to 11 classifications. This reduction represented the amalgamation of core meaning classifications that represented the same experience. The reduction also represented the organizing of core meaning classifications into more encompassing groupings of similar and related experiences. When this was completed, I used my notes to organize a comprehensive description of each of the 11 core meaning classifications. Each description represented an experience or group of similar and related experiences described by the participant. These formed the initial tentative theme descriptions.

The entire analysis was repeated for each subsequent transcript using the previous core meaning classifications and tentative theme descriptions as guidelines for understanding the following transcript. The ensuing analyses suggested alterations as well as additions to the previously identified core meaning classifications and themes. When analysis of all transcripts had been completed, 21 themes were identified. I then re-read the descriptions of the themes and realized that some of them described different aspects of a more inclusive experience. The final reorganization resulted in the seven main themes and 14 sub-themes described in this study.

In order to access participants' processes in the construction of identity, the narratives were reread in light of the identified themes. One question was asked of each meaning unit: "What role does this experience hold in the context of the identified theme and in the young adult's construction of identity?"
The Role of the Researcher

In this section, I consider my role as researcher. It is the view of some writers (Agnew & Brown, 1989; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983) that attempting to eliminate researcher bias is futile. Instead, they suggest that the researcher examines and documents his/her own biases. This process enables the reader to be better equipped to evaluate the research. In order to enunciate my own views and biases I present a discussion of my long-standing personal interest in identity which I view as the impetus for undertaking this research.

The Researcher's Perspective on Identity

My own biases stem from a personal interest as well as uncertainties in understanding the person that I am that dates back to my childhood. I view my family experiences as the foundation upon which the questioning of my identity evolved. Being the youngest of four siblings, I found that many of the ways in which I was inclined to express myself were already "occupied" by brothers and a sister. At the same time I aspired to emulate them as well as discover how I could be unique. At times I was frustrated with being told that some behavior of mine was simply an attempt to copy a sibling. How I was viewed by others formed an important aspect of how I came to know myself. It seemed impossible to act in any way that would be construed by others as uniquely me.

One area in which I struggled to negotiate a reliable sense of myself was career. I experienced a strong association between career and my identity. As a child I was aware of the apparent importance of career because of the often posited question by adults, "what do you want to be when you grow up?" I valiantly attempted to answer this question many times. Some of my answers, for example, golfer did not appear to elicit much enthusiasm of the part of the questioner. The responses that did
evoke the greatest interest seemed to be the careers with the most complex names, for example, architectural engineer. That I had learned their names from siblings and had little if any idea about the job that they represented added further to my inability to genuinely identify with these careers.

These childhood plays with career ideas eventually transformed into actual trials at enacting career interests in adolescence. I believe that the lengthy and varied list of jobs attests both to my confusion as to the person that I was and wanted to be, as well as to my intense interest in not "settling" my identity by acclamation but through experience. As an adult, my attitude towards this career experimentation transformed from enthusiastic exploration to disappointment, frustration and despair at being unable to sustain a career commitment. My experience of this dilemma reflected, as well as was an expression of, my tenuous sense of self.

Throughout my adolescence and early adulthood, relationships with peers, particularly those of the opposite sex, grew in importance. I struggled with the seemingly mutually exclusive roles of buddy to my male friends and boyfriend to my girlfriends. To complicate this challenge to my sense of self, rationalizing these roles with my role as sibling and son created great anxiety. When a new male or female friend visited my family, I could not find a comfortable "self" in which to be. I wondered, for example, would it not be apparent to my friends that I suddenly was not peppering my speech with profanities. What then is my true self?

As a young adult I questioned the dominant social order but seldom found a public outlet in which I felt comfortable to enact my ideology. Was I therefore hypocritical I wondered? How could I hold certain views that demanded social action yet not act. Was I simply trying to fit in with
friends? Was I attempting to imitate an ideal that I had observed in others but was not comfortable assuming myself?

These questions plagued my university years and found relief but no solution in two activities. I became interested in working with young offenders and I traveled for two years. In my work with young offenders, I felt that finally I was getting a taste of the "real world." I prided myself in my interaction with these individuals for my reasonableness, willingness to help, sincerity, and enthusiasm. These were characteristics that I truly accepted as aspects of myself. I was, however, not prepared for the violence on the part of the young adults that was directed towards me, others and self-inflicted. I fled from that field, once again in confusion, deriding myself for being unable to cope with, understand and resolve the brutality. Who was I if I could not withstand threats to a deeply held interest?

I left for South America with a vague desire to find more primitive roots. This experience awakened an appetite for a spiritual commitment as well as the urge to make art. In the ensuing years I attained a modicum of success in fulfilling these two pursuits yet I suspected I would be unable to sustain these activities without other financial assistance, greater interpersonal interaction than these activities allowed, as well as an intellectual pursuit. This history brought me to enter Counselling Psychology and eventually assume this research.

As can be discerned in this very brief profile, one story of my life is the story of the struggle and search for the person I am. In one respect, this story is one of being confounded by a plethora of choices resulting in indecision and occasional stagnation. Alternatively, the questions that I posed and the course of my search may be understood to be an expression of the person that I am. It is this experience that provided me with the
curiosity to explore how others construe identity. Just as the participants in this study constructed identity, this is the way that I construct my interest in the topic of identity and my impetus for undertaking this study.

As an outcome of my personal history, I bring to this research expectations concerning what I assumed the participants might convey in their life stories. Based on my experience, I suspected that participants' general orientations to identity would include a sense of struggle. I expected to hear discussions concerning their attempts to negotiate a sense of self within the context of family. I assumed that family members would be experienced as both aids and hindrances to the young adults' attempts to establish an authentic sense of self. Based on recollections of my experience as a young adult, I expected that participants would discuss their experimentation with various career alternatives. I suspected there would be aspects of fear as well as hope, promise and exuberance associated with their career explorations. I thought that perceived successes and failures at career trials would inform the young adults' constructions of their identity. I was prepared to hear stories about the participants' relationships with peers and how these challenged and reinforced their understandings of their identity. I assumed that experimentation with ideology would occupy one aspect of participants' constructions of identity. Finally, I expected that in the course of discussing these topics, the young adults would allude to various personality characteristics that they identified in themselves.

Validation

This section consists of the description of the three validation techniques; participant validation, colleague validation and, a method of validation involving hermeneutical inquiry. A rationale is provided for the
use of more than one validation technique as well as for the validation techniques employed.

Rationale for Use of Multiple Validation Techniques

In order to increase our confidence that the conclusions are not an artifact of the method of analysis but are grounded in the data, it was essential that more than one method of analysis was employed (Jick, 1979). Data triangulation is defined by Denzin (1978) as the use of more than one methodology in the study of the same phenomenon. When the distinct methods yield comparable data our belief that the results are valid is enhanced (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). In this study, the data were validated by participant-researcher consensus, colleague-researcher consensus, and hermeneutical inquiry.

Participant Validation

Because interpretation is an aspect of qualitative research, deletions, additions, and distortions in the understanding of narrative material can render conclusions invalid. Misrepresentation in narrative research can be limited by employing others in assessing the veracity of narrative summaries. "The ultimate signal that we have indeed seized reality over and above personal convictions, is consensus" (Agnew & Brown, 1989. p. 174). In the present research, consensus was pursued by having each of the participants review and discuss the narrative summary with the researcher and respond to the three questions (cited in "The Interview") in the follow-up session.

Colleague Validation

In positivist research, the focus is on discovering objective truths about a free-standing reality. Confidence in research findings hinges on the proven accuracy of results. Qualitative researchers are interested in the persuasiveness of the arguments (Polkinghorne, 1989), the
reasonableness of conclusions, and the utility of models (Howard, 1991). In order to increase confidence in the findings of the present study, one randomly selected interview was read by a colleague in order to determine if conclusions drawn by the researcher could be said to reasonably follow from the data.

Validation Using Hermeneutical Inquiry

Hermeneutical inquiry is an inter-subjective process, evolving from the communication of intentions with the goal of understanding others as agents able to express their experience meaningfully, and attained through interpretation and understanding (Sloan, 1987). Hermeneutical analysis involves using an understanding of the parts of the subject matter to gain an understanding of the whole. One considers each part of the text in the context of the whole and visa versa (Hoy, 1978).

A method of hermeneutical inquiry used in this study entails allowing the data to "reveal itself" (Alexander, 1988). This involves identification of primary elements, repetition, uniqueness, negations, emphasis, omissions, isolation and incompletion. The possibility then arises to uncover "important aspects of the subjects experience, [and] the manner in which those aspects influence experience, their limits, and their affective and cognitive consequences" (Alexander, 1988, p. 280).

Research Constraints

This section consists of discussions concerning the establishment of boundaries in the execution and conclusions of this research. The discussions concern limitations to conclusions drawn from the research findings, aspects of the research in which assumptions play a role and, ethical considerations that protect the rights and integrity of participants.
Limitations

The participant group differed from the population of young adults in that five of the six were of separated or divorced families. The families of the participants represent a higher proportion of divorced families than the general population where there is evidence that approximately one third of marriages dissolve (Bane, 1979).

In addition, the proportion of two of six participants who attempted suicide represents a higher proportion of suicide attempters than the general population of adolescents. Although there are no accurate statistics on the incidence of suicide attempts with non-fatal outcomes in the general population (Wenz, 1979), the incidence of non-fatal suicide attempts has been estimated at one out of every 1,000 adolescents (Jacobziner, 1965).

Rather than making generalizations to the population of young adults as positivist research in this area does, conclusions from this study are posited within the framework of possible understandings of identity in the young adults of the present study. Assessment of the value of this study is based on the meaningfulness and utility of the findings as judged by each reader according to his or her own experience (Sandelowski, 1986) and/or the persuasiveness, reasonableness and utility of the argumentation and conclusions (Polkinghorne, 1989).

There is a degree of error in the gathering and interpreting of the data that needs to be considered in assessing the conclusions. First, although recording of the conversations enabled a transcription of the words uttered, some of the words or phrases were not discernable in the recording and some of the quality of expression is lost in the transcription from the spoken to written word. Second, augmentation of the transcript with notes on non-verbal communications taken after the
completion of the conversation, rely on the memory of the researcher and thus are subject to inaccuracies. And finally, the involvement of the researcher in the collection and interpretation of the data influences the findings. The results are therefore tied to the researcher's experience and understanding of identity.

**Assumptions**

1. Young adults can articulate their life story and tell about their experiences.
2. Examination of young adult's account of self will enrich our understanding of the experience of being a young adult.
3. Identity is manifested in narrative accounts concerning the telling of the person one is and how he or she came to be that person.
4. Descriptions of oneself and the conditions that contribute to the making of oneself can be formulated into a narrative account.
5. Young adults aged 19 to 22 are of a reasonably homogeneous maturation level.

**Ethical Considerations**

Participants were informed at the outset that the purpose of this study was to discover how young adults know the person they are, how they talk about, make sense of, and link events, experiences, and people that are important to them, and how family may play a role in how they conceive of themselves.

The participants were ensured that they can choose at any time to not participate in the study. As a principle, this choice was offered upon first contact and at the beginning of each interview session. The participants were also be reminded of this option at any time that they expressed either uncertainty about continuing or desired to withdraw from the study. To ensure that there was no sense of coercion, the
Participant Informed Consent form was read to the participants prior to the initial interview. They were requested to sign it and a copy was left with them.

Anonymity was ensured by encoding the audio tapes, transcriptions and summaries with a pseudonym that also served in place of actual names for purposes of the research findings and discussion. The fictional names, as selected by each participant, were Chris, Zelda, Dan, Jack, Alexis, and Sandy. Any references that identified an individual was altered. Participants were informed of these procedures.

Respect and caring was extended to each participant throughout the interview through validation of his or her experience in the form of encouragement, positive feedback and attending. In a debriefing period directly following each interview the participant was afforded the opportunity to express sensitive issues that the interview may have elicited.

Pilot Study

This section consists of a description of the pilot study and the rationale for its execution.

Description

The pilot interview was conducted using one volunteer who met the age criterion (19-22 yrs.). The participant was interviewed, the taped interview transcribed and analyzed and a summary prepared and returned to the participant. A debriefing at the 30 minute follow up session included the questions stated under "The Interviews".

Purpose

The purpose of the pilot interview was fourfold. First, it was necessary to establish whether young adults are indeed capable of articulating their experience of self through describing the course of their
life experience and whether this description can be formulated as a narrative plot by the narrator.

Second, the pilot study enabled an evaluation of the utility of photographs as a tool to promote young adults accounts of who they are at present and how they came to be the person they are. To this end, one aspect of the participant debriefing was a discussion about the impact of the photograph review on the telling of their story.

Third, it permitted me to practice interviewing skills aimed at enabling the participants to develop their stories in full as they experience it, while maintaining a focus on the task at hand. The pilot study also enabled an assessment of the feasibility of an approximately 90 minute interview time frame.

Finally, the pilot study enabled an assessment of the appropriateness of the methods of analysis for this type of data.
CHAPTER FOUR
FININDS

The purpose of the present chapter is to address the information gathered in this research. This information was generated through dialogue between the participants and me as the researcher as well as through analysis of the interview transcripts. It was expected that the findings would enable a response to the research question, "how do young adults construct identity?"

This chapter is comprised of three sections. In the theme analysis section of this chapter, participants' experiences are amalgamated into a composite. However, the research question focuses on the experience of individuals. In order to rationalize this disjunction, a summary of each participant's interview is included in the first section of this chapter.

The participant summaries are presented with the intention of providing the reader with a sense of the uniqueness of each of the young adult's experience. The participant descriptions are also presented in order to assert that each life story exists independently and as a gestalt. They are intended to be read in conjunction with the theme analyses so as to communicate a unified understanding of the experience of identity composed of both the convergence and deviations of participants' experiences.

In qualitative studies like the present one, the researcher assumes the role of an investigative tool. Therefore it is essential that the researcher's perspective is provided so that the reader may be better equipped to judge the findings. In order to satisfy this requirement I have included in the participant introductions brief notes on impressions I
experienced in conversing with them. These notes were distilled from the notes that I made after each interview.

In the second section of this chapter, I undertake a discussion of the themes and sub-themes in the context of the interviews. Each theme discussion concludes with a summary.

The final section of this chapter is composed of a discussion of the results of the three validation procedures described in the "methods" chapter.

Introductions to the Participants

In this section, each participant is introduced by way of summarizations of transcripts of the research interviews as well as through my impressions of the participants and my reflections on the interview. Participant pseudonyms were selected by the participants.

"Dan"

Dan invited me into his father and stepmother's home for our discussion. When I arrived the entire family was sitting on the porch in lighthearted conversation with some visitors. Dan seemed quiet and somewhat ill at ease as he introduced me to everyone. The scene remained with me as one of a family that enjoyed each other. Dan and I left for a quiet part of the house. There he asked me for more details about the project and expressed the desire for me to help him begin his story as he did not know where to begin. However, once he began I felt that he had a strong and well thought out sense of how his personal history contributed to how he currently thought about himself and also to his philosophy of life and aspirations. His candor and awareness of himself in the present impressed me as characteristic of a person much older. He spoke quietly and thoughtfully in slow, measured phrases. His demeanor was determined,
focused and intense. He displayed little emotion or humor. I had the impression that it was immensely important for Dan to speak of his life. He spoke with commitment and appeared to enjoy the opportunity to share his ideas with me.

At 21 years of age, Dan is the eldest in a family of one sister and one brother. His parents separated when he was two years of age. At that time the family lived in an isolated area "in the bush". Dan credits the experience of living "in nature" with having a great influence on his current philosophy that involves a concern for the survival of plants and animals.

Since that time Dan has lived primarily with his mother, stepfather, sister and brother. He lives with his father, stepmother and their daughter during the summers. Dan considers himself a member of this entire composite family.

Dan believes himself lucky to have two "solid" families. His relationships with his mother, stepfather, father, stepmother, younger brother and two younger sisters are all characterized in a largely positive manner. He points in particular to his mother as a great influence on his enthusiastic, confident demeanor.

Dan is currently beginning the second year of a four year Fine Art program at a large southwest American university where he lives alone. Although he finds the making of sculptures and paintings to be a compelling activity, he believes compensation for artists is not commensurate with the effort expended. He therefore dismisses the practice of art as a career.

Dan's dyslexia necessitates his enlisting of student aids to assist him with academic requirements involving reading and writing. This
greatly reduces the amount of time it would take him to complete projects and enable him to pursue activities he enjoys.

One of these activities is bike racing and touring. Dan is an avid bicyclist and is a member of his university bicycling team. For Dan, cycling represents not just a physical exercise but also a spiritual adventure in which challenge, motivation and confidence play important roles.

Dan's career goal is to be a camp counsellor and to teach children the appreciation of nature, to interact in a positive manner with one another, have fun, be enthusiastic and be creative. His desire to engage in this role is rooted in his conviction that the earth is being devastated by cities and industry. He calls himself "a warrior for the earth."

"Chris"

Chris invited me into her small and cluttered apartment that she shares with her boyfriend. We talked at the kitchen table over cups of tea. Initially I was aware of myself trying to ease Chris' discomfort and self-consciousness. She paused frequently and often asked if she was saying what I wanted to hear. I had to reassure her that I was interested in how she told her story. As she became more at ease she spoke increasingly about her disappointments. More than the other participants, I felt that Chris regarded our discussion as an opportunity to resolve some personal issues. There were recent indications for Chris that her life was changing but she did not trust these yet. She was hopeful yet frustrated by her inability to enact her career aspirations.

Chris is a 21 year old woman. She is the youngest of a brother and sister. Her brother has never been married and her sister is married with two children. Her parents separated shortly after she was born. Both are
currently unattached although her mother had co-habited twice while Chris was a child and a teen.

With the encouragement of her mother, Chris has seen little of her father. However, recently she is beginning to visit her father again after years of estrangement. Her visits, which were prompted by her sister and brother, have had the benefits of renewed emotional and financial support as well as the learning of new interests shared with her father.

Chris contrasts her parents, finding her mother to be too mundane and favoring her father's creativity and adventurousness. Her father is a photographer and her mother is a secretary. Although she prefers her father's lifestyle to her mother's, she stated that she will always mistrust him because he left the family. Chris places a high value on her mother's dependability. She stated that both have influenced her through their personalities. She sees herself as both a "homebody" like her mother and adventurous like her father.

Chris also sees herself as a "jokester", "quiet", "not very confident", "caring and thoughtful", and "pretty intelligent". Her interests are listening to music and attending movies.

Chris characterizes her childhood and youth as tumultuous as a result of her caregiver's fights and their drug and alcohol abuse. She stated that she is from a poor family. She spoke at length about her extreme shyness in school and social situations. She said that she is currently emerging from this shyness.

One of the most important experiences of her life was helping to raise her sister's son. Chris was in high school at the time and moved out of her mother's home to live with her sister and share the responsibility of caring for the baby. She stated that this experience helped her to mature and feel more confident.
In high school she had 2 boyfriends who she "let walk all over me." She describes them as over-possessive, jealous and abusive. She feels ashamed of her allowing them to dominate her.

Chris graduated from grade 12 and currently works full time as a waitress. She considers this "just a way of paying the bills not a career choice." Although she dislikes her work and desires something different, she is yet to enact her wishes. She considers her life to be "on hold right now." There are pressures for her to succeed. Her family encourages her to go to university. She feels that she is aging and that time is running out. She sees peers succeeding at university and feels left behind. She is "disappointed" in her life, feeling that she has not accomplished anything of worth.

Despite her angst, Chris has recently enjoyed greater confidence. She left behind an old peer group that influenced her to be passive and not strive to achieve her goals. In their place she is now associating with university students. Through seeing that they enjoy partying as much as she, and aren't stereotypical book worms, she is encouraged that she may be able to fill the role of university student as well. Another sign that she points to in describing her new found confidence is the man she has been living with for a year. She describes him as thoughtful. He has had the effect of settling her down from her earlier "party days" as well as helping her to feel more confident and aware of her aspirations. The fact that his parents are professionals means to Chris that she is associating with more successful people.

Her current goal is "to educate myself as much as I can, get a degree, get a career, a house and travel." She aspires to be a housewife as well as a professional.

"Zelda"

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Zelda is a vibrant, wide eyed, long auburn haired 22 year old. She held a continuous smile throughout our discussion. Her smile appeared to me to hide some anxiety. I thought as well that it was associated in particular with unexpressed sadness concerning her isolation from peers which she alluded to during our talk. She elected to hold our discussion at my house where she appeared to feel somewhat uncomfortable.

She expressed herself in varying pitches of fast paced and excited tones. She often made sounds and wild gesticulations to flesh out her desired meaning. Another prominent communication style was the dramatization of imagined and recalled dialogue between herself and others by assuming the vocal intonation and expressions of individuals with whom she was in imagined conversation.

She appeared to me eager to please. This may have motivated her to undertake this task. My general sense was of a public "actress" hiding a somewhat shy interior.

Zelda is an only child of parents who arrived in Canada during the 1960's from the United States. Her father's motivation for emigrating was avoidance of military draft. They settled in a small rural community and built their own house on an acreage where Zelda grew up. The family moved to a city at the time that Zelda began university. Both parents are currently in administrative positions there.

In speaking of her childhood, Zelda mentioned feeling free and happy at home. She stated that the family wasn't wealthy but she felt that all of her needs were met. At the two-room school house she attended, the girls thought she was "weird" because she preferred to join in activities with the boys instead of the girls.

Zelda credits her parents with engendering her optimism and generosity. She speaks fondly of the manner in which they cared for her as
a child and adolescent. Specifically, she appreciated being treated like an adult.

Zelda spoke about feeling more akin to her father because of his rational, non-emotional style of communicating with her. Her relationship with her mother is characterized as more confrontational because of their common highly emotional manner of discussing issues. However, Zelda considers her current relationship with her parents to be the "best it's ever been." She credits her mother's acceptance of Zelda's aspirations with this improvement.

Zelda's educational experience includes a year attending high school in Europe. She credits this with influencing her interest in history which she studied in university along with English. At university she enjoyed courses that required imagination and not "those requiring knowledge of the reasons why".

After completing university Zelda returned to live in the community where she grew up. There she lived with a boyfriend until breaking up with him shortly before our discussion. At the time of our talk she was living alone and in search of a room mate.

Zelda is employed in a number of part time jobs. She is a special needs worker, house cleaner, baby sitter and cashier in a small grocery. In assessing this work she stated that only the position of special needs worker was fulfilling because she felt that she was "accomplishing something" and "making a difference". Her interests are reading and cooking.

Having just completed an undergraduate degree and recent separation from a boyfriend, Zelda feels that she is on the cusp of a great change in her life. For the first time in her life, she stated, she is thinking about herself, "what I do and don't want to do in life." Zelda aspires to
being a proofreader of novels. She desires to have a baby in "4 or 5 years... with or without a partner." She wants to continue living in her small community because "it's not like living on a treadmill."

"Jack"

Jack is a solidly built 22 year old. He has an engaging, easy, sociable speaking style. I had the impression that I was treated as a peer. He agreed to speak with me at my house where he appeared comfortable. Aside from his relaxed manner I was also aware of a degree of edginess evidenced by the frequent shaking of a foot and taping of fingers. He appeared enthusiastic for the opportunity to tell his story.

Jack's parent's divorced after a year of marriage when Jack was 1 year of age. He has a teenage stepsister from a later relationship of his father. After the dissolution of his parent's marriage, Jack lived with relatives until he was 9 years of age. There he grew up under "a very strict, traditional, religious" atmosphere.

At age ten, a custody battle between his father and mother resulted in his living with his father and stepmother. The first years of this arrangement were satisfactory. For the first time he experienced his father as "the real dad" meaning that they participated in shared activities and that his father was enthusiastic about various projects.

This harmony dissolved during Jack's teen years when he experienced confrontations with his stepmother whom he viewed as too authoritarian, "obsessive" and "the torturer." As a result of this conflict Jack left home, dropped out of school and attempted suicide. In response to his needs, Jack's mother came to live with him in order to aid his completion of high school.

After high school, Jack traveled to foreign countries often by hitching a ride on sailing vessels. A large portion of our conversation was
devoted to various stories about individuals and events from this trip. One event that Jack recalls as particularly significant was his decision early in his travels to fly a great distance to a foreign country with very little money. Surviving this challenge provided Jack with the confidence to undertake further risks.

When Jack returned from his travels he began work for a short time as a journalist for a small newspaper. During this job he gained a contract to write a book based on his travels. So he left the job and returned to live with his father and write this book which he was working on at the time of our meeting.

Life in the home of his father and girlfriend was difficult and disappointing. There was much tension between Jack and his father, arguments between the father's girlfriend and Jack, violence between the father and girlfriend, and alcohol consumption by Jack's father and girlfriend. At the time of our talk Jack desired to move out and was faced with a dilemma of whether to follow his bent for adventure and travel or settle down and seek employment.

"Alexis"

Alexis was most guarded in our phone conversations prior to our meeting. I had the impression that it was important for her that her mother did not know about her participation in this study. Being concerned about "personal safety issues", Alexis chose to hold our discussion in a university conference room. While in these respects Alexis appeared reserved, as our conversation evolved her speaking style became increasingly animated and fast paced. I was aware that although she spoke expressively and sometimes even dramatically, she held her hands and arms close to her which gave me the impression that she was not entirely
comfortable in this situation and that she found it important to protect herself.

Alexis is a 20 year old fine art student in the second year of her studies at a community college. She currently lives with her mother, younger sister and her mother's boyfriend of ten years. Alexis also includes a cousin, aunt, uncle and grandmother as important family members.

Much of Alexis' life story is related to her mother's relationships. Alexis' mother was 17 at the time of her birth. Her father's alcoholism was a factor in the frequent family quarrels. When she was an infant her parents separated and her mother wanted to put Alexis up for adoption. Her grandmother intervened and Alexis lived with her during the week and with her mother on weekends for two years.

Alexis' mother's second marriage lasted for four years. During this time Alexis had a stepsister with whom she did not get along well. After this divorce, Alexis' standard of living dropped drastically so that she was ashamed to have friends visit her "welfare home."

Alexis was 11 years of age when her mother began living with her current partner. Alexis remembers years of "horrible fights" between her mother and partner as well as between herself and both of them. She wished to live elsewhere but remained in order to care for and protect her sister. Currently her mother's relationship is improved in part because her partner is receiving help for his alcoholism.

Her mother's and partner's fighting had long-lasting effects on Alexis. She blamed herself for their conflicts and because of their criticism of her, began to believe she was "insane." Alexis began regular sessions with a high school counsellor who became very influential in her life. Alexis began to understand that conflict in her mother's relationship
was unrelated to herself. Through discussions with this counsellor, Alexis developed confidence in her ability to resolve personal dilemmas. Despite the difficulties she has endured, Alexis considers herself to have the resilience necessary to improve her life.

Alexis' relationship with her mother remains tense and distant. She finds that in conflicts, compromise with her mother is impossible. She describes her mother as "strict and steadfast". A current conflict concerns curfew rules. Alexis finds it an imposition that she must check with her mother before making arrangements with a boyfriend. Alexis is also saddened by their lack of sharing of personal issues such as those concerning sexuality. Despite these dissatisfactions, Alexis believes it a "worthwhile tradeoff" to live in her mother's house.

Alexis has had few "serious relationships." She said that she found it difficult to know how to relate to males because of the lack of a brother and reliable father figure in her family. She felt alienated from boys because they mistakenly considered her to be sexually available. After her first experience with intercourse she broke up with her boyfriend because he become careless "in terms of contraception, in terms of sensitivity." She is currently in the midst of terminating a relationship with a boyfriend who she found to be "too concerned" about attending to her sexual needs. She suspects he is having an affair and is resigned that it was "just a summer relationship."

Alexis considers herself to be "happy and mostly satisfied... independent... smart... friendly... passive... generous..." and "an optimist." One goal is "to improve myself now and be satisfied with who I am." She believes she will finish her fine art studies, study art at a university and become a teacher.

"Sandy"

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For our discussion, Sandy invited me into her bedroom in her basement suite. (In retrospect, I realize that this is an inappropriate place for the interview and I should have suggested a less private location). She excused the mess as a result of the previous night's partying. We sat cross-legged on her bed surrounded by various personal mementos she had attached to her walls and stuffed animals on her bed. Sandy's diminutive stature and affected speaking style gave me the impression of a person 15 or 16 years of age. Her dress, makeup and jewelry were characteristic of "punkers". Sandy seemed the most enigmatic of all the participants. She provided few basic details of her life and appeared most interested in communicating an impression of herself rather than simply talking. She seemed to bound from one topic to the next, avoiding the drawing of conclusions or relations between stories. She was casual and friendly in demeanor. I was left with the impression of an exuberant, affable young adult who was grappling with her history of family experiences, ever hopeful that just around the next corner was the ultimate solution.

Sandy is a 19 year old grade 12 student. She works part time as a waitress. She has one 20 year old brother. Her parents separated when Sandy was one year of age. At that time she moved into a suite with her mother and brother until at four years of age she began living with her father for a few years. After that period of time, she lived with her aunt and then her mother and visited her father on weekends. Sandy currently lives with three friends in the basement of her mother's house.

Much of Sandy's childhood and teen years revolves around her relationship with her brother whom she described as "hyperactive" and "always tried to make me mad, stupid, ugly and feel inferior." He was often physically threatening and abusive to Sandy. The relationship had a deleterious effect on Sandy's school work. It also effected her
relationship with her mother. Sandy is angry with her mother because she did not protect Sandy from her brother or offer support and aid in resolving the problem. At one point, Sandy felt so desperate she attempted suicide by running in front of a car. A passerby saved her and she stayed with her aunt in order to recover from the ordeal.

Sandy has seen little of her father or his wife in the last year because they moved away. As a result of this distance, Sandy feels that she can't confide in them and that they do not really know her.

In contrast, Sandy described a close relationship with her mother whom she regards as a best friend. Sandy is excited about her current living situation in a separate part of her mother's house where she has a degree of independence from her mother but also receives financial and emotional support from her.

Sandy recently broke up with a boyfriend. They are currently encountering conflict in their attempt to have a friendship without being lovers. Sandy describes their relationship as emotionally charged and punctuated by numerous separations.

In the future, Sandy would like to work for a magazine or do anthropology, journalism and marine biology. She is fairly certain she will marry and have two children. She expects that she will be a good parent because of her experience in coping with family stress. She expects to take her mother with her wherever she goes. Although she doesn't feel the need for wealth, she would like to not have to be concerned about a lack of funds.

The Themes

In this section, the themes and sub-themes that were derived from the analysis procedure are introduced and described with the aid of
quotations from the interviews. These themes are the experience of self
awareness, the experiences of closeness and separateness, the experience
of place, the experiences of tension between opposing forces, the
experiences of change and continuity, the experiences of receiving and
passing on knowledge and experience and, the experience of considering
the future.

Theme One: The Experience of Self Awareness

Various situations prompted participants to be aware or conscious
of the person they are. The experience of self awareness involved
observation, assessment and description. The participants regarded and
described themselves in various ways. They were aware of themselves as
caring, giving, emotional, spontaneous, shy, optimistic and negative
individuals. These features were experienced in a number of contexts such
as in evaluations of oneself, describing various aspects, parts or voices of
oneself, considering how one relates to others and society, the history of
how one relates to others, how continuity exists in various aspects of
oneself over the course of one's life, the reactions of others to the way
one is and, others' contributions to how one perceives oneself.

Different Aspects of Oneself

Participants were aware of more than one aspect, part or voice of
the self. The voices often represented opposites. For example, participants
might experience private and public, adventurous and cautious, or
accepting and critical aspects of themselves. When the voices were
opposites, they were often experienced as in conflict. Other voices
experienced were the real and the facade, and the known and the hidden.
The young adults also experienced a disjunction between how they
believed others to know the participant and how the participants know
themselves.
Participants understood that they did not always act in consistent ways. Different individuals and situations encouraged them to be aware of different aspect of themselves.

Participants were at times surprised when aspects of themselves became manifest. Alexis' inner self as represented by her "potential" was hidden from her. She realized its presence through the process of making art:

I can just do something fast and furious and then create something that's to me amazing. Like I'll look at it and I'll think that came from me, right, wow, sometimes I don't realize my own potential until I actually do something and then it just hits me.

Participants begin to understand the self as a composite of parts. Zelda is aware of two major aspects of herself, the public and the private. She differentiates aspects of herself that she shares with others from those that she keeps to herself:

Um, I have a side of me that I show everybody. Like it seems like I'm really open and I tell everybody my life story but then there's things that other people I know tell other people about like they're not as open in the way I'm open and they talk about more intimate things, like my thoughts and feelings I pretty much keep to myself.

Other individuals are evaluated according to their desire to know the real self or be satisfied with the public facade. For Alexis, caring and the desire to understand a person's true self are seen as synonymous. She describes a situation in which her family was forced to move into a ramshackle house due to a financial setback. She experienced others reacting to her outward circumstances rather than to her true self:

And I'd never lived like that before. I was so ashamed. And it was hard to talk to these people cause you had to be on the defense all the time. And they didn't want to see you for who you were. They didn't care.
When participant's true self was revealed to others they experience exhilaration and a sense of relief. Alexis experienced strength when she was able to allow her private self to become manifest as when she revealed family secrets to a friend:

I told a girl that one day and she was just like "no way" (whispered). Ya I said well that's how it is and that's who I am now right. I'm a really strong person for all that. And she's just like "I never would have thought." And I said "no neither would have any of the other people."

Because participants were aware from personal experience that one's outward appearance may belie the true self and true intentions, they experienced difficulty in trusting others. The difficulty of trusting that a person's public self reflected their true intentions had very real implications for Sandy in her relationship with her boyfriend:

And he was kind of upset because he says he really loves me a lot and I suppose I'll take it for that. It's really hard to do that though.

I: To do....?

To accept someone saying "I love you" and meaning it. It's really difficult (voice beginning to break) a lot of times you don't really know if they're telling the truth. You don't know if they're trying to take advantage of you. I don't know. It's really hard. Um, (crying) could you get me some Kleenex? Anyways it's just a hard thing, to trust. I hate admitting that. But it is a hard thing to do. I kind of believe that he loves me and I kind of believe that I love him but it's a "kind of" thing. It's not a exact thing.

Participants were aware of aspects of themselves as being in conflict. They retained conflicting desires expressed by these divergent voices and attempted reconciliation. For example, the facing of a career dilemma prompted Jack to be aware of three aspects of himself that represented conflicting viewpoints; the confident, the "conservative" and
the voice of fleeting time. Out of these voices he attempted to decide on how best to proceed in the near future in terms of job and travel:

I don't have any qualms about surviving out there. I know I'll be OK. But there's that conservative side. "Don't turn down a good job like that in Victoria Jack." (spoken in self mocking tone) But I think if I don't do it now maybe I won't be able to do it 50 years from now. The world is changing so quickly, the environment, there's political factors, changes in the ocean itself that I'd like to see it before it changes.

The conflict between the desire "to be wild" and the desire "to be secure" was another career dilemma experienced by one participant. A "spontaneous joyride" taken by Chris prompted her awareness of her wild side. She also discussed her desire to be a homebody. In discussing these conflicting desires she established her dilemma as she considered her career aspirations; how to include excitement in her daily life:

I felt good. I was like, I liked it. I like to be wild a little bit. I like to be secure and settling down but I like to just go out and do wild things. Have some excitement. I don't want to be day to day boring.

The sense of two conflicting voices was expressed succinctly in Alexis' description of an drawing she made of herself looking at her reflection in a mirror. In this case the voices were experienced as the dominant way she currently experiences herself and a more hidden aspect of herself:

It was kind of symbolizing me looking in the mirror and the mirror was kind of like I wished I could be and it was just a dominatrix standing in the mirror, right and I just, sometimes I have that side of me too. Sometimes I want to be dominant. I want to be all of the magazine sexy ladies, I want to be all of them in one.

Because these voices were experienced as in conflict, participants attempted to reconcile them. Alexis had undergone a process of
reconciling the voice of the desire for physical beauty as represented by fashion models and the voice of inner beauty:

They used to symbolize ideals, like I used to want to be just like them but I realize that I don't have to be like them. I have a lot of inner beauty. And I am a worthwhile person and all the other self realization stuff that you could go through.

Evaluating Oneself

Participants own thoughts and actions stimulated self awareness in the form of self evaluation. The young adults were not only aware of themselves through a somewhat objective, observer role, they also assumed an active interest in what they perceived in themselves. They judged themselves by various standards and approved or disapproved of their actions and attributes. When they evaluated themselves negatively, they experienced the need to "work on" themselves - to improve aspects of themselves.

Participants judged themselves to have both positive and negative attributes. Chris expressed a tension between two conflicting voices that assessed her self worth. One the one hand she considered herself to be essentially "a good person." This was a voice of self acceptance and appreciation. The other voice spoke from a position of regret. It was a critical voice that found a lack in her accomplishments. This was the stronger voice as it was the one that had the power to assign worth to her life. Without a positive evaluation her life lacked substance:

Like right now I don't like myself. Like I think I'm a good person and a good personality but I don't like what I've accomplished. I could tell you my life story but if I died tomorrow there's nothing I could really say I've done to prove I was here. And that's something I'm disappointed. I don't want to get up the next forty years and go to a job that I hate. Cause I hate doing it now. I go to work and I just hate it.
Participants attempted to resolve conflicting evaluations by assessing the veracity of each judgment. In evaluating her intelligence, Alexis attempted to make a balanced assessment. Initially she focused on the extremes, seeing herself alternately as "the biggest idiot" and "profound." Finally she settled for moderate ground by deciding on "pretty intelligent":

I'm a pretty intelligent person. Well sometimes I think I'm the biggest idiot on the planet. But sometimes I think "that's pretty profound." But I'm not a genius but I'm pretty intelligent.

Participants experienced a disjunction between their own assessment of themselves and how they understood others to know them. Alexis considered herself to be a person whom others would see as "together" but who believed that inwardly "there's lots of stuff I need to do for myself:

I've got a lot of work to do on myself still. Even though I'm outwardly a very together person, I know there's lots of stuff I need to do for myself.

A disjunction between one's self evaluation and how one perceives others to evaluate oneself can have deleterious effects. Alexis traced a history of others perceiving her to be different than she perceived herself to be. She experienced male friends to be reacting to her outer image. The experience of being treated in a way that was both hurtful and at odds with how she viewed herself resulted in Alexis feeling alienated:

... because I developed really early they always thought that I was easy and to this day I still get guys from elementary school and high school that are really stupid, like they're really so dumb. He still, this one particular guy still thinks that I'm easy and he doesn't even know me, he really doesn't know me. Like, literally, just not, he knows what I look like and that's it (emphasis on it).

**Working to Improve Oneself**
Various situations stimulated the young adults to be aware of aspects of themselves that they desired to change. When participants became aware of aspects of themselves that they were dissatisfied with they experienced the need for improvement. One participant termed this "working on myself." Zelda stated that she experienced herself as too talkative in social situations. She described an internal voice that was attempting to control her loquacity:

And sometimes I say to myself "just turn it off, just shut up." And I can't do it sometimes. It's really hard. I find it one of my struggles with myself is to just, don't have to talk all the time. You don't have to fill up airspace. Just be quiet. And ugh, I find I'm doing better at that. Say a little bit and then let someone else talk. Which is hard for me to do ...

Participants were concerned about the effect of negatively evaluated aspects of themselves on advancing aspirations. Chris described two voices that encompassed her career impasse. One voice was that of the "dreamer." This voice expressed many ideas. The other voice was a critical one. It chastised her for not acting on her ideas. She desired to become more active in advancing her aspirations:

I'm a dreamer and a procrastinator. I put things off. And it drives me crazy. But I'm a dreamer. I do a lot of talking and I don't really do and that just drives me crazy. I need to be able to just get out and just do what I want to do but I just keep thinking about it, I wish, I wish, I wish, I'm sick and tired of wishing. I just want something to happen. So that's one thing I've got to work on.

**Relationship with others and society**

Participants' interactions with other individuals privately and in public prompted their self awareness. Zelda considered her experience of herself as she related to other individuals. She generalized on this observation, and viewed herself as a giving, patient and tolerant person:
When I'm with close friends like Fran, there's basically nothing I wouldn't do for them, anything, and certain other people find that difficult to think about. They've got their limits with everybody and I have very, well my physical limits for doing things for people. I'm very tolerant. I have a great deal of patience and tolerance...

Participants considered their manner of relating to others in public, social situations. Chris spoke about her behavior at parties:
I'm the jokester of the party and always cracking jokes and I need to have that... I'm outgoing to a certain extent. I can be really shy... But when I'm at a party I'm a little shy if I don't know anyone. But after a while I'll get to talk to people but when I first meet people I'm shy... But when I let loose I really let loose. I mean I can party. I've done some pretty wild things. Some things I'm proud of and some I'm not.

The history of how I relate to others.

Consideration of one's personal history prompted participants self awareness. Participants discussed how they regarded themselves to have related to others in the past. They also discussed causes and influences on how they currently see themselves relating to others. Chris discussed some of the details of how she had been shy in social situations in the past:
I remember being in grade five and a teacher asked me to stand up and spell a word and being so scared that I couldn't spell the word I just cried. Very high strung as a child. Very shy. No confidence at all. And then as a teenager if I was walking down the street and group of guys was coming I'd take the long way home. Even now when I walk down the street, I'm really self conscious. So it's still with me a little bit.

Participants regarded others to be the cause of or an influence on the way the participant related to others. Influence is regarded by the young adults as consisting of the actions of others mediated by the
interpretation and desires of the young adult. The young adults felt that they had participated in the influencing of their own behaviors through their acceptance of the influence. When participants appreciated an aspect of themselves, they regarded the contributing actions of others as influence.

In a number of examples, Zelda expressed the influence of her parents on how she related to others. The way in which she was parented was seen as the reason for various personality characteristics and values she held. She welcomed this influence and was proud of its effect on how she related to others. Being "positive" in her attitude and actions in social situations was regarded as being influenced by her parents through role modeling:

And that's what I do a lot of like if I go to a friend's house for dinner I like to try and bring something... But that's my parent's influence... and I think that's cause my parents have always tried to do that to me and it's something I do without thinking.

In contrast "cause" was understood as the unmediated actions of others effecting the young adult. They believed they had not consented and had no input into this aspect of themselves. When participants spoke about causes of their behavior they negatively valued this characteristic in themselves. For example, Chris believed that her initial shyness and lack of confidence resulted from her mother's fears. In this segment she established a case for the connection between the way her mother related to her and the way regarded herself to have related to others in the past:

Like when I was young I was really shy. Like I'd hang onto my mom's leg wherever we went. I couldn't go to pre-school. Nothing. And she explained to me why. She said probably if I had it to do over again I'd let more people in the house. Cause she had agoraphobia really bad. So she didn't want anybody inside the house. She made sure we were really clean all the
time. Really overprotective she said. And I think that built up to why you're really shy. No confidence. Afraid that she was going to leave me. She's the real cause of my shyness.

**Others' contributions to how one regards oneself.**

The young adults became aware of aspects of themselves through considering the impact that others have had on their lives. Participants credited various individuals, caregivers, siblings, teachers, relatives and peers with having an influence on the course of their lives and consequently on how they viewed themselves. Sometimes the influence resulted from the observation of others' actions and a consideration of the meaning of those actions in the context of the young adult's life. There were other examples in which the influence is a more direct teaching by the significant other.

The personality of caregivers was sometimes comprehended as having an unmediated effect on the young adult as in the statement by a participant "My dad gives me that wild streak... she gives me that realistic, tense side of me." Chris described her mother and father as having opposing influences on her. Her mother's influence nurtured Chris' sense of responsibility while her father encouraged her to attain her loftiest goals. Through their influences Chris viewed herself as having both "the reality side" and "the spontaneous, wild side." Chris hypothesized that her parents influenced her through heredity or socialization:

Mom's more, I think where I get that realistic dream. I go to my mom and she's like, "take this, something that's secure. You'll have work, good money." Go to my dad, "do what you want to do. Like if you want to do this do it." So I get that from both of them. My dad is a free spirit. He doesn't work 9 to 5. Does his own thing. Takes pictures. My mom's more of a "get an office job." So I get an idea from both... And I see that in my personality. I don't know if it's through genes or just
picked it up. Cause my dad is just wild and my mom's so straight.

Consideration of others in their role as models prompted the young adults' awareness of aspects of themselves. The participants described learning to emulate others' actions and thereby altered how they viewed themselves. Individuals in Alexis' life not only actively aided her to see herself differently (through, for example, counselling) they also stood as models whose lessons Alexis incorporated into her life so as to shift her thinking and her view of herself. For example, her aunt was viewed as a person who "had done something with her life" and thereby prompted Alexis to "make something of myself" and cease viewing herself as a victim of her parent's conflicts. Instead Alexis began to see herself as taking action towards achieving her aspirations:

And she really was also a person in my life that had done something with her life. Also I realized that I shouldn't just sit around and blame it on my parents. It's up to me to do what I gotta do. To go to school. To make something of myself. They're not going to do it for me. They're too busy fighting with each other. I can't wait around for someone to help me. I gotta help myself.

Participating in activities with peers prompted participants' awareness of aspects of themselves. Sandy believed that she gained a sense of herself in part through the activities that she participated in with friends. For Sandy, the kind of friends she associated with influenced the course of her life:

I feel that your friends have a big say in who you are. What you accomplish. When I was with these people I'd go nowhere. It's what your friends do [that] plays a big part in your life. And people that I've met now are just so different. They're all in school and all play sports. They don't have to go to the bar to have a good time. We go to the movies or a barbecue. Totally different life.
Participants were also influenced by others to become aware of themselves through contrasting their own actions with those of others. For example, through observing the resolve with which friends advanced their career plans, Chris assessed her own career course. By contrast, she considered herself to be unfocused and having too many diverse interests to enact career choices:

But they knew what they wanted to do right out of high school. I was interested in so much, I wanted maybe to go into acting and then I thought maybe go be a nurse, looked into that.

Participants believed that the quality of care giving contributes to their sense of themselves. The experience of being cared for was communicated through a description and evaluation of the quality of the caregiver's interaction with the young adult. The participants drew a link between how they experienced being cared for and the person they are at present. Being generous, being of unique character, being stubborn, perseverance, liking to relate to adults, optimism and being helpful were examples of aspects of themselves that participants became aware of through considering the way in which they were given care. Providing much attention, teaching, talking like an adult, providing acceptance, and positive encouragement were examples of caregiver characteristics that participants recalled as influential in engendering aspects of themselves. Zelda attributed her view of herself as a mature person to the way her parents related to her as a child:

I don't know why. I think it's because my parents always talked to me like I was a person. And never treated me like a little kid. They always used the big words around me and if I didn't understand what the big words meant I could ask them and then dad would say, look it up in the dictionary.
Similarly, Dan attributed his confidence to his mother's encouraging, optimistic parenting. He believed that his confidence resulted from his mother providing him with positive feedback on his activities:

... and I think that's mostly because [my mom] is, cause that's where that comes from. And in me too. And I think that has to do with, all through my childhood [my mother] would constantly, more than just encourage me but um, just tell me I was... really did well. No matter what happened it's going to be OK.

Caregiver expectations were also seen to be influential in shaping the participants regard for themselves. Alexis' prescribed "helper" role as a child continued on in the present:

When I was younger after they got divorced, I was always told, "well you've got to help mom out. It's you and me. It's only us." So sometimes I take a "clean up after everything" role that happens.

Others' Regard.

The young adults became aware of the person they are through their understanding of how they were regarded by others. Individuals were seen to react to the actions and appearance of the participant. One form of reaction was evaluation. Others were attributed with making evaluations of the young adult's personality, social abilities and skills. Reactions of others contributed to how participants regarded themselves through their acceptance or rejection of others' evaluations.

Individuals were seen to react to the participant's appearance. In this regard the others were seen by the young adults to be mirrors which aided them in understanding themselves. The reactions of others to the way Zelda dressed enabled her to see herself as unique:

Sometimes it's a little hard on others to take, when I go to a party dressed way differently then I should be or something like that. Just cause that's what I wanted to wear, what the
heck. Sometimes it takes people off guard especially when it's a casual thing and I put something nice on or visa versa.

Participants viewed themselves as valuing to varying degrees the reactions of others. In one segment Alexis said that in the past she looked to the evaluations of others to gain a sense of herself. She said that if males thought she was unattractive than she accepted that as fact:

I always felt that if a guy thought you were nice looking or you were pretty that's what you were. And I always thought that's the way it was. I never thought about me having an appreciation for myself.

Because Alexis valued highly others' evaluations of herself, the reactions of others had a large impact on how Alexis regarded herself in the past. As a teen the reactions of other students towards her resulted in her feeling alienated and contributed to her sense of herself as "a lot different from the rest":

And so when I was younger a lot of times guys would bug me about that and so I would feel alien from that and it's wow because I had these 2 protruding breasts and hips...

Participants struggled against the desires of others to shape their behavior. Peers were seen to react to various behaviors or attitudes of participants. Their reactions were understood as attempts to modify participants' behavior. Sara described a situation in which friends attempted to influence her to drink alcohol. Through her understanding of their reactions to her, Sara regarded herself as an independent person:

Well, you go to, I used to go to parties with [my ex-boyfriend] and all his drinking buddies all the time and it would really bug some of the guys that I was independent. "Are you sure you don't want to get drunk. Here have a beer." "I don't like beer. I don't want to drink. No." They'd just loose their marbles. Cause everybody else was doing it and the fact that somebody was sticking up for what they wanted was really disturbing.
Alexis reported that she currently relied more on her own self evaluation than on the opinions of others. She acknowledged others' opinions, but expressed a knowledge grounded in her own experience: I'm beautiful. People tell me that but I know it. Like I can look in a mirror and say "wow, I am beautiful." I have big green eyes and beautiful hair. Like good bone structure. I know I'm beautiful. So I'm really happy with that. So that's me.

Summary of the Experience of Self Awareness

Various contexts prompted participants to regard themselves. One outcome of the experience of self awareness was the discovery of diverse aspects of oneself through a realization that one acts in a variety of ways with different individuals and situations. With one individual, young adults may have divulged intimate information while with another they have allowed only their "public facade." Like Chris, in one situation they may have experienced themselves to be shy while in another outgoing.

The participants understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the self had implications for relationships with others. This augmented how they viewed themselves in two ways. First, others were assessed according to their desire to know the "real self" of the participant. As described by Alexis, those who cared about the participant were seen to be interested in knowing the participant's true self. Second, participants were reluctant to trust others because they were uncertain whether the other was relating to them through their real self or their facade.

A further implication of this view of self was that participants attempted to reconcile conflicting aspects of themselves. In so doing, the young adults engaged in a decision-making process aimed at resolving personal issues.
Another aspect of the experience of self awareness was evaluation. Like Alexis, who equivocated between seeing herself as "the biggest idiot" and "profound", the participants weighed diverse aspects of themselves using self-devised criteria. As with Chris, who focused on her lack of accomplishments, the outcome of participants' evaluations was a decision about the dominant ways they considered themselves to be.

Others' evaluations prompted participants to be aware of themselves. Participants found that at times their self evaluation was at odds with how they understood others to know them. This disjunction prompted the young adult to decide on whether to accept or reject others' evaluations.

Participants' interactions with others prompted their self awareness. For example, Zelda considered herself to be giving, patient and tolerant in her relations with other individuals. Participants' considerations of their personal histories also prompted their self awareness.

Participants spoke about how other individuals have influenced them. Like Chris, who believed that her personality had been influenced by the personalities of her caregivers, the young adults realized who had influenced them. They knew the manner in which they had been influenced. Finally, they knew effect of the influence.

Theme Two: The Experiences of Closeness and Separateness

The young adults spoke about closeness and separateness in various ways. When they spoke about closeness they expressed a sense of connectedness, and close physical proximity to another. Closeness in terms of ease of relating and understanding was an aspect that Dan noted of his relationship with his brother:

My little brother and I just really get along really well. Like he's the kind of age I'm constantly taking him off on
adventures and doing stuff and playing with him all the time and uh, he's, we get along really well. We understand each other pretty well. He's 13. He's really physical. He's tough. We always wrestle we always "ok let's have a sword fight." He's really energetic so it's been good.

In expressing a sense of separateness, participants described discontinuity, difference, alienation and, physical distance from another. Separateness was expressed by Chris in her experience of being different from family members in appearance:

We don't look like each other. I look different from all my family. I've always been the [black] sheep of the family. Cause I didn't look like anybody. Cause everyone had the same hair color. My mom and dad and brother and sister all have the same resemblance. You don't have to look like your family. It's just the way it goes sometimes.

The participants spoke about their relationships with family members by describing how close or separate they felt to them. They also discussed changes in closeness and separateness with respect to family members. Participants discussed closeness and separateness in the context of leaving home and relying more on their own resources. Finally, they referred to closeness and separateness with respect to peers and society in general through noting similarities and differences in what was held to be important, what was aspired to, how they appeared and other categories of comparison.

Evolving Family Relations

Closeness and separateness were dimensions of participants' experiences of evolving family relationships. They discussed these changes in the form of a story that progressed from an experience of closeness to family to a sense of alienation from family to an experience of renewed and balanced relations.
Participants described how relations with family transformed from a close connection to family in childhood to extra-familial activities and interests in adolescence. Chris traced the transition from being family-focused to being self- and peer group-focused:

High school, it changed. Cause when you're in elementary school you really focus on your family cause you're too young to go out with your friends. But when I got into high school I found other things to do. I discovered boys and parties and so it didn't really matter. Cause my sister had gone, my brother had gone. So it was just my mom and I. So it was like, "I'm going out." I just focused on myself. Partying. Had the boyfriend. Went out every weekend. Went out after school. Plus I was doing school activities. I was graduating. Family didn't really, there was a big stop. I just focused on myself. Through elementary I was really family. I was just like, my mom and my dad and my sister and then I just stopped.

The young adults discussed factors that contributed to separateness from family members. They provided an understanding of their experience of separateness when they spoke about feeling abandoned. Chris described being abandoned by her father as a result of her parents' marital breakdown:

and I was always the one, I hated him cause he left and he didn't pay any support or anything. Left my mom alone and all that kind of stuff

Sandy elaborated on the experience of abandonment. For her it was the experience of not being known by her father that expressed separateness:

but since he moved away when I was eleven years old I sort of remained eleven years old around him. He has no idea that I smoke that I ever drink that I party. He has no idea. Plus he is much older. He is 63...My Dad really knows nothing about me.

The young adults also experienced separateness from family members when they did not have consistent contact with them. Lack of
time spent in the presence her father and stepmother was construed by Sandy as having an impact on her willingness to disclose aspects of herself to them:

And it is also actually because I don't see them day to day. If I tell them something crucial they will leave the next day and I don't see them for a month. They're going to think about that as the last thing I said to them so I don't like to bring up heavy issues unless they're going to be there for a long time.

Conflict with family members can be the source of the desire to lead a more separate existence. For Sandy, the importance of establishing boundaries of emotional and physical separateness and privacy was rooted in the violation of her sense of physical safety by her brother. She struggled to limit her brother's interaction with her by asserting her desire for separateness:

When I moved out about a year ago it was to the point where one day he was being a total, being so mean to me for no reason and I just said I'm not going to talk to you if you're going to be like this just don't talk to me. It's not hard. Why do you have to keep talking to me and being mean? Just leave me alone and don't talk to me. I don't want to talk to you. And he was upstairs just yelling stuff at me and I was like, "Why are you doing this. Don't talk to me. I don't want to talk to you. You are going to ruin my day again. Just don't talk to me.

The ways in which family members related to one another may play a role in the young adult's desire to withdraw from them. Upon graduating from high school Chris experienced much pressure from family members to succeed. Her experience was that she was being "picked on" because she was viewed as the last hope for success in the family. In this segment Chris described her understanding of the family dynamics responsible for this pressure on her and related that her response was the desire to distance herself from her family's concerns:
[it] was the older sister kind of thing. Cause I was like the baby of the family so I get treated like the baby of the family. As the last kind of hope. Like she's got her life now and my brother's got his life and I'm the only one yet who hasn't... I have my life but not settled down so everybody's putting their judgments on me, you can do this and this and Chris is the last one and it's a lot of pressure cause they gave up on Carol cause she had the kids. OK she's gone let's not pick on her anymore, Craig is older now let's not pick on him because he's gone, so Chris is left. She's only 22. I'm just, "oh wow, leave me alone."

The young adults recounted their emotional reactions associated with feeling close to and separate from family members. Separateness in family relations, even when desired by the young adult, can leave emotional wounds. Alexis experienced sadness about her emotional separateness from her mother despite her earlier spoken desire for greater autonomy:

And I don't talk to my mom about that really. We don't talk a lot. We do occasionally. That's always been sad for me (voice breaking up) that we don't.

For Alexis, an infrequent experience of closeness to her mother underscored her feelings of loss at not having that be more characteristic of their relations:

And I can understand that and we try to talk and we do occasionally like sometimes it's really good. Like the other night I was really surprised. We actually made dinner together, like I made pasta and she made salad and we did it together (sobbing). Ordinarily we don't do this. I don't know if she thought about it but it meant a lot to me. I always cry. It makes me feel better afterwards. (voice clearing). What was I talking about? My mom and I don't talk a lot but when we do it feels good. Sometimes we watch [a popular TV program] together and it's good. It means a lot to me.
The importance of intimate family relations was described by Chris for whom the loss of a sister was devastating:

And she moved away an it was really hard for me. For 2 years I was just depressed. So long. I had lots of friends and things but they weren't my sister.

The young adults described how they coped with feelings of alienation and isolation from family members by finding support and close relations with others. Alexis told of the physical and emotional closeness that she shared with her sister:

And so if there was a fight [Mary] would crawl into bed with me or we'd talk about like if [my mom's boyfriend] had said something about her to her or she was feeling bad about something I'd talk to her about it or let her let it out, tell me what was going on. And then I'd say "I see what you mean and well he doesn't hate you."

Alexis expressed her emotional support for her sister which had advantages for herself:

I stayed in the house a lot of the times because my sister and I, a lot of times I figured this is just too much for me to handle I can't stand fighting with my mom, I'm going to run away, leave, find me a foster home to go to. But then I stayed for my sister because she needed someone too. And so I did.

While participants experienced a distancing from family over the course of their teen years some described their current experience of family relations as renewed, re-established and more agreeable. Whereas previously they experienced conflict and the desire to be physically and psychologically more separate from family, their current experience was characterized by a coming back together and mutual acceptance of family. Initial distancing was referred to as an aid to the eventual renewing of family relations.

The experience of re-engaging with family was described most succinctly by Sandy. After enduring a number of years of challenging and
disruptive family relations, Sandy was currently ready to renew family relations. She hoped to put the past behind and build a new beginning. The process was been one of disengagement ("weaning") followed by renewal: and the last few years have been just working toward safety and slowly weaning from my family. And then getting back into them in a different situation.

The young adults spoke about factors that assisted in the renegotiating of relations with family members. Asserting one's own views was one way that the young adult reacted to perceived threats by powerful individuals such as parents. In so doing, the young adult distinguished his or her own attitudes from those of significant others. Chris described the transition from being influenced by her mother's perspective on her father to having her own perspective. For Chris, achieving an independent view was consonant with desiring a renewed relationship with her father:

She's never ever said one nice thing to him. So all those years of being young and living with my dad, dad is a jerk, I hate him, I hate him, and then just getting my own view and saying, forget it he's my dad. So just growing up and listening to my sister and my brother going "he's an all right guy." Just being really mad all those years. Being upset cause going over and I thought she'd be upset that I went and saw him. Rejected. And now I'm just like, he's ok. I know his faults. Who cares? And I know with my mom she's just angry. It was her husband. There's a difference between your husband and your father. I didn't marry him. She has faults too. It doesn't matter. He's my dad, life's too short to be angry and mad at him all the time for past things.

Close proximity and continuous contact was another factor the participants noted as contributing to close famiy relations:

Like with my mom I can tell her anything. Because I see her everyday and she sees how I am normally ...
The encouragement of others also aided the young adult to renew relations with an alienated caregiver. Chris' siblings encouraged her through word and action to seek out her father:

But I grew up I guess. Partied or whatever and then got older and now and plus with my sister and my brother always going over there. And them saying how dad's doing and "dad really wants to get to know you." He wants to see you. And my sister says "why don't you just call him." Just give him a call.

The actions of caregivers influenced the re-adjustment of relations with their young adult. A perception that caregivers were less intrusive in the young adult's life aid a re-negotiated relationship. Zelda described a shift in her relationship with her mother in which she experienced less intervention on her mother's part which resulted in Zelda feeling less threatened and more willing to re-engage with her parents:

but now that I don't feel she's trying to run my life anymore, which, well, I do a little bit but now that I don't feel as threatened by her I guess, things are doing better and my dad and I are still on really good terms.

Participants characterized renewed relations as having elements of both closeness and separateness. Despite the resurgence of close relations with her father, Chris still carried with her the wounds she experienced as a result of her parents' conflict. She predicted that she will always hold an ambivalent attitude towards her father:

I'll never really care[d] for him like I did my mom. Cause she raised us. You have to give her credit for that. He was never around. He did his own thing.

Similarly, the experience of alienation from her father throughout her teen years left a residue for Sandy. Despite her renewed relationship with him, she remained somewhat defended, fearful of "being exposed":

I'm sure he probably knows but it's not spoken about and it's not because he's ... It's because of me. It's my fault. Now it was his fault before but it's my fault now even though I know
he did some things. I'm choosing not to tell him because I
don't want to. It's sort of almost like being exposed. You
know.

The alienation left a tension between the strong desire to make a
connection and the stronger impetus to keep an aspect of herself private
from him. She desired to let her father know all aspects of herself good
and bad but was unwilling to expose herself:
and I'm thinking yeah like thank you dad but I wish I could tell
you though the bad things like what's really happening. It's
not all so pure. It's tainted.

Participants sought a satisfactory balance of family involvement
and autonomy. Support, encouragement and security were important
features of relationships that aided the young adults to establish a
satisfactory balance of closeness and separateness from family. Sandy
experienced her mother as supportive and the provider of security. Her
sense of closeness with her mother provided her with the confidence to
experiment in the larger society knowing she can "always come back...":
I get along really, really, really well with my Mom. She tries
to be as young as possible and I try to be as mature as
possible. But umm. Other than that she is my best friend. She
is like my base - something I know I can always come back
to.

Sandy attempted to balance two conflicting desires, the desire to
maintain contact with her family and the desire to establish a degree of
physical separateness from them. Resolving relationship boundary issues
concerned not only the impetus to separate but the balancing of that
desire with the desire for connection:
My mom lives upstairs and that's really good because I
always wanted to ... I couldn't live at home for a while. But
now I am living at home but not living at home and it's really
good because I still get to see Mom whenever I want and I am
still very close to my family but I am not actually living with them.

The young adults commented that altered perceptions of family members was an aspect of their renewed relations. The renewal of family relations was characterized by mutual acceptance of each person as an individual in their own right. Chris perceived her father in a different light. Instead of being associated with family conflict she focused on him as a person in his own right. It was this change in perception that enabled Chris to re-engage with him:

and now we're starting to like just accept who we are. I just accept him. He's my dad and that's fine. That's the way it is. I guess I have to care about him. I mean I like him as a person.

Altered perceptions of the attitudes of caregivers had an effect on relations. Participants discussed how they perceived their caregivers to be more accepting than previously which encouraged the young adult to have a more positive regard for them. Previously Zelda's mother criticized her choice of rural lifestyle. The young adult reported that her mother had come to accept Zelda's lifestyle which in turn had improved Zelda's regard for her mother:

But that's not what I want and she's finally starting to accept that too. Which is nice. Cause it was a real pain having her constantly down my throat. "What are you doing, you're not making any money. Maybe you should go to Victoria. You could get a job here and dad can get you a job with the government of Canada." "Oh I don't want that." Maybe I will later, but not right now.

The altered perception that one's relationship with caregivers was voluntary rather than compulsory provided motivation to re-engage with them. Sandy suggested a rationale for her desire and ability to renew her relationship with her family. The belief that she was no longer totally
dependent on her mother but could choose to live near her enabled Sandy to re-establish their relationship:

Now I know I'm never going to be stuck, in with mom. Now it's like slowly merging into being with mom and (my brother) again.

In addition to the perception that relationships were voluntary, trust was a factor in the willingness of the young adult to re-engage with family members. Sandy's altered view of her brother enabled her to re-engage with him despite years of conflict:

Since I moved down here about six months ago my brother and I have realized it's like we're not always going to be stuck together and we're not always going to have to deal with each other. I don't want to leave you. I need a big brother. I totally need somebody. Brothers and sisters are wonderful. It's really good. It's more him. Like if I didn't trust him. I wouldn't trust him. When he started being really nice I was just waiting for him to do something bad again and he proved to me that he was for real and really wanted to try out and be friends.

It was a challenge for the young adults to alter the manner in which they were accustomed to perceiving and relating to a family member. However, the possibility of benefits motivated the young adult to make the necessary effort. Participants discussed benefits that accrued with renewed family relations. Chris overcame shyness in order to re-establish a bond with her father:

But really shy. Even now I call and I don't really know what to say but it's a good kind of shy.

I: How's that?

Well, it's exciting to get to know him again. I'm shy but it's fun kind of thing. It's interesting because I know something good's coming out of it. So I don't know how it happened. We just saw each other again. It was weird. I liked it. I found it interesting.
The results of renewed family relationships were satisfying for the young adults. Zelda assessed her relationship with parents as better than it has been since she was a teen:

My parents relations with me, actually, are actually really good right now. They haven't been this good since I was about 12.

Despite her desire for her family to "leave me alone", Chris also benefited in filling her family role. She appreciated the continued closeness in the form of being "protected":

and they still treat me like the little kid in a lot of ways. But that's ok. I don't really mind. It's nice to be protected.

Benefits were reaped from renewed relationships. Chris was able to learn some skills and received financial support from her father as she deepened their renewed connection:

And he's helped me a lot now. He's going to help me out with school and he helped me pay off some bills and so it's interesting. I have another interest in my life. Like I've learned a lot from him. He's a really, really intelligent man. Just took me in the darkroom and taught me photography and jazz and all this stuff that I would never do. It's like meeting a new friend. See how it goes. I'm not as shy now with him.

Being known to one's caregiver was another benefit of a renewed relationship. Chris found that she was able to experience closeness with her father:

This is the first year my dad and I have actually phoned each other. We didn't talk at all before. I was shy in front of him, I could never look at him. But now I'll tell him about my life. It's great all of the sudden having that parent in your life again. Having a dad. Even saying the word "dad" is weird.

Leaving Home and Establishing a Life Away from Family

As elaborated upon above, participants discussed the manner in which they were confronted with, coped with and resolved, to varying
degrees, issues of closeness and separateness with respect to their families. They suggested that these experiences enabled or encouraged them to establish a life apart from family. Participants described the incidents surrounding their leaving family. In speaking of their current relationships to family, the young adults described various aspects of their lives at a distance from family life. They discuss the impetus for their moving away from family and how they lived in and related to the larger society through work, travel and school. They described how they rely on themselves and individuals other than family when making decisions, socializing and for financial support. They also expressed how their families continued to fill a role in assisting them in various ways.

Participants experienced various emotional reactions to leaving home. Some spoke about feeling forced to leave the family. They also experienced themselves to be a pawn to the more powerful forces of significant others.

For Jack, conflict at home encouraged him to be involved in activities away from home which was his first step to actually leaving. Jack referred to the years prior to the time when he desired to be away from family as the "golden years." This was a period when he experienced great closeness with his father through sharing activities. Jack's sadness was in part the result of the replacement of the closeness he had with his father with family conflict. He was not positively motivated to participate in sports but felt compelled to flee family turmoil:

Well after the golden years I started getting into the teen thing and things started changing. Tension in the house just got beyond repair. I didn't want to come home. I was playing five sports just so I could be out of the house.

However, the young adults also assumed a more agentic approach in leaving family. Sandy described herself as on the cusp of a major shift in
how she sees herself. Previously she viewed herself as helpless. Events and individuals determined the course of her life. She currently viewed herself as at the beginning of a time in which she was taking actions and asserting "demands" in order to take her life into her own hands and begin to shape her life on her own terms. One area that this was expressed was in her living accommodations. Because she felt exposed to her brother's violence and without refuge, a secure and private space was of great importance:

But still this is my place. Because I've had my space invaded on so many times by my brother. He's never respected my space at all. I demand my space now I'm old enough to demand things. Now that I'm old enough to demand things I demand respect and I demand space and I demand necessities like I've never been able to have before.

The attitudes of caregivers encouraged their young adults to take greater responsibility for themselves. One contributing factor to Zelda's establishment of a life apart from her family was her parent's attitude towards their responsibility to her. Zelda summed up their attitude as "not my problem" meaning that she was now responsible for whatever happens in her life. Therefore one of the roles that participants identified for caregivers was to release their offspring:

My dad was always saying, he still says, "not my problem."
You know, if it's something to do with me, he's been trying to convince mom to learn to think in the "not my problem" syndrome. Like if I rip my pants or have a bad day in school or screw up a test or get married on my own or whatever it's "not their problem", it's mine. So they're now totally living that. "Ok, it's your problem now, it's your life. If you can't make your rent, well tell us and we'll help you out if we can, but otherwise it's not our problem." And that's kind of nice.

Participants spoke about their emotional reactions to leaving home. The act of leaving home can be a traumatic event. For Jack it was filled
with confusion and ambivalence as he attempted to reconcile his desire to escape mounting family tension with a continuing need for family contact:

So, um, when I ended up leaving it was a difficult situation for everybody because I was so confused, I even tried to kill myself which was, I was really screwed up. And it just really got to the point where it fell apart and I took a bunch of pills and I basically was trying to get my father's attention.

Participants described uncertainties associated with home leaving. Jack was ambivalent about being away from family despite the difficult environment he was living in at home. Having left his nuclear family and cut himself off from school Jack still desired family support:

I dropped out of school and went back to my aunt's for a while. That didn't work out. I thought that might be my home again. It wasn't.

Other participants noted that home leaving represented a consolidation of desires. Leaving her family marked a significant change for Chris. She changed from having ambivalent feelings about living with her family to acting on her desire to separate and "get out on my own":

Where I was last year to now was just the biggest change. Leaving my family, like I lived with my brother, but I hated it. Like I liked it but I hated it 'cause I was still living with my family. I wanted to get out on my own. So I said I just want to move to [another part of the city].

Having established an independent life, participants continued to search for a balance between closeness and separateness with respect to family. Participants experience of their new independent lives was characterized by continued family support and security, rather than an abrupt cutting off. The old family neighborhood also filled a supportive role. Chris found that she often returned to her family neighborhood:

When I first moved here I was like oh yeah the beach. And now it kind of just wears off. You get tired of it after a while. I'm going back to [the old community] more than I have for years.
But that's OK because all my friends are over there so it was a big step for me to move out here. Because I didn't really know anybody.

Even when conflict was a dominant aspect of the young adults' impetus to leave home, the family still formed an important springboard into the larger society. Prior to beginning his travels Jack made the effort to re-unite with his family once more:

I came back to visit before I went to Europe. I took the extra money out just to say good-bye to my dad and mom and everyone and like good-bye, I'll see ya,

Participants recounted the importance of continued connection to family. Despite the conflict with his father that took place in the years preceding to his departure and was in part the impetus for his leaving, Jack continued their relationship by sending him detailed letters which allowed him to be "hearing what I was up to first hand..."

I wrote to him over a hundred letters in 3 years. I used him as a journal. I think I got 2 letters back but I never really expected it. I was just starting to write stories about where I was and I thought Dad would be a good place to send them. Um, so he was always hearing what I was up to first hand, what I was thinking about and that was kind of neat.

A part of establishing a life away from family was the realization of aspects of one's life that one considers important. As participants created greater separateness from family they formed greater bonds with other interests and individuals. For Sandy, the process of adjusting how she conceived of herself from one who was the brunt of various actions of others to one who was active in determining the course of her life, included a cataloguing of the aspects of her life that were essential:

I have my stuff, my things and my friends. And the things that is going to be permanent, like Beth, she'll always be a good friend.
While possessions and friendships aided Sandy in the transition to life away from family, for others, clearly defined aspirations served a similar purpose. Participants found that through continued connection to family they were able to define their aspirations more clearly. Sometimes the young adult viewed family characteristics and activities in contrast to their own aspirations. In this respect the young adult valued continued closeness to family because it enabled him or her to have a clearer vision of his or her aspirations. At the same time, the young adult framed their aspirations in contrast with family life.

One incident that aided Chris' transition to a more firm sense of self away from family was a visit to her sister. While visiting she noticed some of the difficult aspects of having a husband, children and house. In assessing her situation upon returning, she focused on what her life consisted of rather than lamenting about "not having started my life yet." The experience contributed to her confidence in her newly established life away from family:

But I wanted that cause she had that and I was jealous. But now, like I came back from a trip from there last month and I said to [my boyfriend] I said "I'm so glad. I love my life." So that put everything into perspective. I can make decisions and I have freedom.... Just cause I don't have kids and a husband doesn't mean I don't have anything. I have people that care about me.

Participants described how family provided a background against which the young adult developed and defined his or her own aspirations. One impetus for Chris developing her own unique lifestyle was her desire to be different from her family members. Through observing their lives, Chris decided to take a different course:

But I don't really want to be like anyone in my family. I don't want to be where they've been or how they are. I don't want to be like my dad. He's got good things about him but I don't want
to be alone or desert the family. And I don't want to be like my sister. Her life. Or I don't want to be like my mom at all. She just doesn't really have anything. She's done nothing. She raised kids and stuff.

The young adults cited benefits to living away from family. Chris recounted that the benefits of separating from her family included a sense of autonomy in that she could determine what information to share with her family and what to keep to herself. She assumed greater control in the determination of closeness and separateness from family:

No one knows what I'm doing unless I tell them. My sister always knew. "Oh, Chris came home late, or didn't enroll in this course." She always knew. And I got tired of it and moved out and met Steve and nobody knows what I'm doing, unless I tell them. I have my own life.

The participants discussed how success and consolidation of goals in one's life away from family enabled them to re-engage with family members. In the recent past, a relationship with her sister was problematic, because observing her, reminded Chris of the life she desired but had not yet begun. However, with the establishment of a stable relationship and concomitantly a greater sense of self, she was able to re-engage her sister in a relationship:

But now we're fine. I'm with Sam now and we have our own life and I talk to her a lot.

Re-visiting with family after leaving home provided the young adult with insights into their personal history. Returning to the family prompted Jack to reconsider his personal history as a way of discovering the roots of "the way I am":

I try not to let it worry me but it's kind of odd because maybe it's being back here, but I'm starting to think a lot about what formed me and why that makes me the way I am. This is where a lot of the memories are coming back to me.
Returning home also shed light on family relationships. The experience of living with his family once again after being away enabled Jack to have a clearer, more analytical view of his family dynamics which in turn re-ignited his anger and resentment:

Like before I just wanted to get out of there. I was confused. With being away from all this I can now see what's going on. That's playing on my mind a lot now. I'm kind of angry at my dad for letting us down.

Peer Relations

Participants experienced both separateness and closeness in their relations with peers and friends. Participants described some friends as long standing while others were more recently acquired. Some friends remained so for long periods of time while others were impermanent. Having many friends, not gaining friends and loosing friends were categories that the young adults appealed to in expressing their experience. Various factors such as transience or separateness from family were given as rationale for the instability or formation of friendships.

Participants experienced friendships to be impermanent. The end of high school was viewed as an important time for the loss of contact with friends:

I kept the good friends and the rest sort of wandered away on their own. Then in grade 12 when I came back from Belgium all my good friends had graduated and gone off to do what they were going to do. So I sort of lost contact there.

However, friendships which were long-standing were characterized as close. There were some friends that Zelda knew for a very long time:

I've got a few friends from high school. But they're not even high school friends cause I've known them since I was 2 or 3. Like my close friend Fran, the one who is pregnant and just got engaged and then another girl, she's just going into law
school. And I don't remember meeting them since I was 2. Just forever I've known them.

The participants rationalized the impermanence of friendships. Sometimes their rationalization focused on forces outside of the young adult's control. A transient family lifestyle made it difficult for Alexis to grow close to others and make childhood friendships:

Um, I moved around a lot when I was young so I didn't make a lot of friends and when I did it was always really hard because I had to move away. So I stopped at grade 7, I wouldn't make friends in grade 6 and 7.

The attitudes of friends discouraged friendships:
And now the people that I have been associating with have all said the reason they've stopped associating with me is because I was with Neil and they didn't like him very much and they didn't like how he treated me.

Some participants described a greater sense of choice in their friendships. Sometimes they chose to cease relations. Zelda did not regret distancing herself from former friends:

Which didn't bother me too much cause they weren't all saints and people I think I'd want to hang out with now. I hear about them and "oh, glad, glad I didn't stick around with them, they're trouble." I don't know maybe I could have helped them out in some way or another. They didn't seem to want it so ha, ha, haaa. Left them do what they are doing.

Participants learned to be assertive in making friends. The prompting of a teacher encouraged Alexis to be more assertive in seeking friends and establishing a bond with them:

And then one day my teacher said "you're old enough to make friends so that you can call them. You're old enough to use the phone so you can take responsibility for that." So that's what I did.

The participants speak of the difficulty of attaining friendships:
Well, I find it odd that at university I've been thinking about this too, that I didn't make a lot of long term friends there. Jan is the only one I still have contact with.

Participants experienced living in close proximity to others (such as in a university residence) yet being unable to generate close relationships. The young adults rationalized the difficulty of attaining friends in these situations. The finiteness of university life was given as a reason by Zelda for not making friends in university:

I: What do you make of this not making many friend at university?
Well, I have acquaintances I mean, there are people that like "oh, hey, hi" and we'd go out for coffee and stuff like that but um, I haven't kept contact with any of them really. One I was good friends with her, but she moved back up to Kamloops. I called her a couple of times but she's been really, really busy. She and her boyfriend are moving into their own place and she said "after the summer's over we can resume contact but for right now I'm just too busy to think." And I am too. Like I haven't had time to even write her. But um, most people I just, I figure I'm leaving and they are, so there's not much point in making a bond.

The participants developed friendships with others who were similar to themselves. Differences in career aspirations were viewed as a reason for holding others at a distance from oneself. Zelda found that her high school peer group held different career aspirations than she and this discouraged her from developing friendships with them:

And my high school friends aren't too many. Mainly because the mentality of [my home town] is; graduate from high school, get married, have babies, work at Safeway, haaa, ha, or the pharmacy or whatever. I just couldn't deal with that train of thought.
The experience of friendships included resolving the conflicting desires for closeness and separateness. Resolving physical and emotional bonds with an ex-boyfriend provided Sandy with a challenge:

I just stayed in his house and we try and do stuff like try to be able to stay in the same place and without actually being together and it's like we're almost like we're always just testing ourselves all the time.

Coming to an understanding of her desires for both closeness and separateness with respect to friends was a current concern:

I see a few friends, a few close friends. I think I'm think I am going to get really sick of this soon. It goes from patterns. I get sick of being with a lot of people and so I become reclused, become a recluse for a bit.

Comparing Oneself to Others

In their experiences of closeness and separateness, participants compared themselves to others and discovered ways in which they were similar to and different from others. They remarked on similarities and differences in personality, interests, thinking style, career aspirations, goals, activities, beliefs, attitudes, and appearance. In addition, the participants provided rationales for how they came to be similar to others.

Participants expressed a sense of communion, pleasure and understanding with those they considered similar to themselves. Dan expressed his joy at discovering a similarity with his sister:

And then my older sister is very athletic so we get along. Just last night we were up on the hill camping and um, I was just really happy because I like to run and stuff and test myself to see how fast I can go and push myself physically and stuff and she's right there with me too. Like she'll follow and I was really excited that she, cause there's a lot of people who if you start going fast or something physically exerting that "oh forget it."
Similarities contributed to a sense of communion which aided the young adult in the enjoyment of participation in activities with others. Zelda compared herself to other high school students. She found high school to be an enjoyable experience because of the variety of students some of whom were similar to herself:

In high school there's all kinds of people that I could choose to associate with. And there's a lot of people like me. And uh, I really had a good time for the first year in high school.

Participants rationalized how they came to be similar to others. Zelda suggested that she and a friend hold similar values because of how they were cared for as children:

I've known her since we were little, little kids. She was a baby and her set of values is similar to mine because our parents were friends and all sort of tried to raise us the same way and repercussions for what we did were all sort of similar.

Dan believed that some intrinsic or inherited family trait or a common family belief system was responsible for his similarity to his father:

Plus I guess my father's like that too. He doesn't... never been in a fight. It almost has to do with like a genetic personality or something. Cause my mom's side of the family are Unitarians and my dad's side all Quakers, and it has something to do with it.

Participants experienced being different from others. They identified differences with others as the root of conflict. In contrast to Dan's current sense of connection with his sister, in the past their different modes of expression were a source of conflict:

We also didn't get along at all when we were younger because we just didn't think the same way. I was always very logical and uh, systematic about how to deal with things or just, and she'd be always acting on impulse. And she never would pre-think things she would say. Just a thought would instantly
come out of her mouth and um, I was constantly
contemplating consequences and stuff like that. I'd get very
frustrated with her.

Differences in close relationships prompted the young adults to
engage in an active interchange of attitudes and beliefs in an attempt to
resolve conflict or to affirm their position so that they could express
their ideas without feeling threatened. By contrasting her ideas about
family to those of her father, Chris affirmed her own attitudes:
He phones me, "please don't have kids", he's so worried cause
of my sister. He doesn't like being trapped. Like women are no
good, they take everything from you. My brother's like that
too. Women are good for nothing. Except to have babies and
make you dinner. I tell him, "look dad, family's important to
me, I'm not going to be single for the rest of my life." He
lives alone and he's got a girlfriend now but he's a loner. But
family's important to me.

Differences of opinion were also a source of debate and
demonstrated tolerance in close relationships. Dan contrasted his positive
thinking to the "pessimistic" thinking of a friend. This difference was an
ongoing source of growth in their friendship:
Like that's one area where me and my friend disagree. He is
very often pessimistic. He seems to think it's never going to
happen. Mankind just cannot do it, they're unable, they suck
things up and they always will. And I'm always, "it's gonna be
all right." I'm always trying to explain to him how to dwell on
the positive aspects of situations. And so we both learn from
each other.

Dan distinguished other peers from himself in terms of career
aspirations. In doing so, Dan also aligned himself with a close friend with
whom he shares common goals:
...we have a lot of friends who want to go to school who want
to build, you know, get an education, get a high paying job and
build their way up the corporate ladder and have lots of
money and have vacations and have a nice house and a nice car and stuff like this. And I guess we're not, we can't, deal, we can't do that ourselves....we both see ourselves having an eternal goal to protect what is...

Through observing her sister, Chris developed a sense of her own aspirations in terms of lifestyle. She contrasted these aspirations with the life that her sister is leading:

I want to plan it as much as I can. I'm a spontaneous person. But I don't want to be like them. I love them as people and as my family but I don't ever want to be like my sister. I don't want her life. Live in a small town and the father goes out in the logging truck and she's got two kids and she can't go anywhere. I don't want to put her down for it. But it's not me. She's not me and I'm not her.

Female participants discussed the experience of feeling alienated from males and females. In doing so they considered facets of being female. Zelda's retrospective account of her childhood included a description of herself as a girl different from others:

My whole elementary school years I was considered weird cause I liked to play with frogs and snakes and the boys, I liked to play with the boys. I was a tomboy. And the girls were, "ew, she's so weird. Likes to play with mud instead of putting makeup on."

Chris expressed her attitudes towards relationships with males by contrasting her viewpoint to that of her mother and sister. She expressed the desire to attain happiness without dependence on a male:

For my sister and my mother, men are the focus of their life. They've never gone without a man. They have to have a man in their life in order to be complete. For me, if you have one that's fine if you don't that's fine. I don't want to have to have a man to make me feel happy. I want to buy a house by myself. Nice if you have a man but I don't want to have to have a man to help you. I want to do it on my own.

Summary of the Experiences of Closeness and Separateness
The young adults conceived of themselves in various contexts as both interdependent and autonomous. In this respect closeness and separateness were experiences central to participants' notions of the person they know themselves to be. The participants spoke about closeness and separateness in the context of family relations, leaving home and establishing a life away from family, peer relations and, comparing oneself to others. Generally, closeness referred to a sense of relationship connectedness, intimacy and close physical proximity to another. Separateness referred to discontinuity, difference, alienation, relationship distance and, physical distance from another.

**Evolving family relations**

In the context of evolving family relations, the participants spoke about factors that contributed to the establishment of relationships characterized as close and separate, their emotional reactions to feeling close to and separate from others, how they coped with separateness from family, factors that aided in finding a satisfactory balance between separateness and closeness, the ways in which perceptions of others shifted when a relationship was renewed and, the benefits experienced with renewed relations.

In speaking about factors that contributed to separateness in relationships the young adults discussed feeling abandoned, having a discontinuous relationship, conflict and, family expectations. According to participants, relationship closeness was encouraged by consistent contact.

The young adults discussed their emotional reactions to closeness and separateness. They associated sadness and depression with relationship separateness. Alexis' tearful recounting of an infrequent
experience of closeness with her mother expresses the strength of emotions associated with both closeness and separateness.

The participants experienced shifts in closeness and distance to parents and family as they aged. As described by the participants, family was central for the early adolescent. Teen years saw the development of outside interests and focus on peers. Family was experienced as less important, with relationships characterized by separateness. Participants' most recent experiences of family included a sense of rapprochement or renewed relations.

The young adults found ways of coping during times of separateness from family. As was the case of Alexis, participants found support and closeness from others.

Participants believe that their own actions and attitudes aid the re-establishment of close relations. They believed, like Chris who asserted her own views about family to her father, that defining their own views and distinguishing them from the views of caregivers aided the young adult to feel more willing to engage with their caregivers in a new, more intimate way. Trust was also a factor that encouraged renewal of relationships.

Participants also believed that the actions and attitudes of caregivers aided the re-establishment of close relations. As in the case of Zelda, who was more willing to re-engage with her mother when she felt her mother was less invested in changing Zelda's lifestyle and aspirations, participants found that less intervention on the part of caregivers encouraged the establishment closer bonds. As with Sandy, whose relationship with her mother changed when Sandy began living semi-independently in the basement suite of her mother's house, participants
also found that a balance of contact, support and independence was most conducive to renewed family relations.

Participants found that their perceptions of family members changed when relations with them were renewed. They experienced greater mutual affection and acceptance.

Participants accrued benefits from renewed family relations. Benefits mentioned by the young adults were greater satisfaction, improved support, the resolution of inter-personal issues, the experiencing of new role relationships with caregivers and greater intimacy.

Leaving Home and establishing a life away from family

Closeness and separateness were overarching aspects of leaving home in that at the core of what participants spoke about in this regard was their attempt to create and maintain a satisfactory degree of continuing family ties while establishing greater autonomy from family and engendering links to the larger society. In the context of the experience of leaving home and establishing a life away from family, the participants discussed changes in relationships, emotional reactions to leaving home, the role of caregivers, the continued closeness to family, establishing links with individuals and social structures outside of family and, the benefits of leaving home.

Participants experienced varying degrees of control in leaving home. While in some instances they felt compelled to leave others assumed a more agentic approach.

Participants believed that one important role for caregivers to assume is the release of their offspring through abdicating responsibility to them. When the young adults experienced greater responsibilities they felt more confident and enthusiastic about leaving family.
The young adults experienced varied emotions during the time that they were leaving home. Participants cited feelings of ambivalence, confusion, uncertainty, confidence and enthusiasm.

After leaving home, participants continued their connection to family. Like Chris, who found that she was revisiting her old neighborhood frequently, and Jack who regularly wrote letters to his father, participants found various ways in which to integrate aspects of their family experience into their life away from family.

Participants described benefits they experienced as a result of leaving home and continuing their connection to family. Among the benefits mentioned were greater definition of one's aspirations, greater autonomy, renewal and strengthening of family relations, greater clarity in self understanding, and greater clarity in understanding family dynamics. The young adults noted the connection between consolidating their place in the larger society and the realization of these benefits.

Peer relations

In the context of peer relations, the participants spoke about different kinds of friendships and rationales for engendering and avoiding friendships. The two general kinds of friends mentioned by participants were transient or temporary and long-standing. Transient or temporary relationships were viewed by participants as characteristic of their experiences of separateness. In contrast, participants viewed long-standing relationships as close, permanent attachments.

The young adults rationalized the dissolution of relationships. They cited frequent family relocations, friends' attitudes, and divergent interests and aspirations as reasons for ending peer relationships. They also discussed obstacles to generating close relationships. Lifestyle
impermanence, such as that experienced by participants who were university students, was viewed as one such obstacle.

Comparing Oneself to Others

One way in which the young adults came to know themselves as social individuals was through comparison to others. They found similarities and differences in those with whom they developed relationships. They also hypothesized similarities and differences with various social groups and acquaintances experienced from a distance.

Participants experienced closeness with those whom they perceived similarities and separateness from those whom they found differences.

In an example of expressing one's alignments with peers, Dan related his ideological and aspirational similarities with a friend and contrasted their position to that of peers.

Like Dan, who expressed his joy at discovering a similarity with his sister, participants found that being similar to or different from others had emotional and relationship implications.

Participants asserted personal history and relationship contexts for their similarities and differences with others. They suggested that similar parenting, genetic pre-disposition and, the passing on of inter-generation personality traits were responsible for how they came to be similar to others.

The young adults discussed how they related to others by comparing themselves to others. They chose various criteria and standards by which to compare themselves to others.

Theme Three: The experience of place

Place was experienced as the environment, location, structure and design of one's place of living. Place of living was described by the young adults as city, country, and proximity to family. Place of living formed an
important aspect of how participants framed their personal past and present, and their future aspirations. The participants linked place of living with relationships as well as with various emotional states.

Participants evaluated and described their childhood in terms of place. Environment was singled out as a significant and positive aspect of Zelda’s childhood:

And uh, gardens were always big with me. My parents always had a garden. And I’d tend to eat my meals out of the garden, pull up carrots, rub them off in the grass so they were almost clean and eat those and strawberry patch and blueberry trees and just I think the place I was raised in was really a good environment for a kid and it was comfortable and I felt good about being where I was. I didn't want anything.

Participants linked their experience in various environments that they inhabited as children with various aspects of their current existence. Zelda’s childhood experience in the wilderness was given as reason for her current sense of comfort where she lived. City and country formed two ends of a continuum by which she assessed the worthiness of lifestyle and defines her own:

Which is why I'm here on the island instead of the city too. Went into Victoria this week for the first time in two months. It was like, oh my look at these people. They're all doing these crazy life treadmill things. I'm really not into that. I've had enough. I was raised on 10 acres in the middle of nowhere and I just like being in the middle of nowhere so [this island] suits me well.

Similarly, being "raised in the bush" had influenced Dan's "philosophies" as well as where he felt most able to function at his best:

And also I've been raised in the bush and I took a lot of my philosophies from there. I feel like the trees and the animals and the plants, that's the real world and I go to the city and it's just concrete and stuff like that. It's a fabrication. It's a shield from what is real to me. I don't deal with that well.
And Dan felt that his experiences living in an isolated area when a child had an impact on the way he thinks:

But I think that had quite a lot of impact on me in terms of just the way I think. Because we lived quite deep in the bush. And there was nobody else around. We lived across the river and um, I just got used to being in the natural environment. So even though I spent a fair bit of time in the city with my mom I didn't quite get used to it the way the most kids did there. So now I find that I'm much more comfortable in the trees and stuff. Just because I like it better.

Dan credited his family's vagabond existence with his "worldly perspective":

So I think I've been a lot of places and been introduced to a lot of different philosophies cause we've moved around a lot. And I think that somehow has made me have a what I would call a worldly perspective. Like I look at issues in terms of ah, the whole planet not just the country I'm in, because I feel I don't have a strong rooted nationality. So that has a lot the do with my philosophy.

Participants spoke about the impact of place on relationships. For Zelda, the quality of small community life affected friendship patterns:

A lot of the people I know are just sort of, they're friends because I'm here and they're here and there's nothing much else to do on [this island]. But if they moved to Victoria they wouldn't keep contact. A couple would but most people are friendly because we're all together and we all like being on [this island]. We're all part of a team sort of thing.

For Sandy, the place where she was living was important for its proximity to family. Living downstairs from her mother signified that she could live independently as well as have some support:

...like my mom pays for the rent and gives me food money but it is still totally different, even living in her basement it's still just totally different because I live with roommates and like it's just .. it sounds like it's just like living at home but it's not anything like living at home. Not anything...
For Alexis living in a house that she was ashamed of affected her relationship with friends:
Not only that but um, when my mom and my step dad were married I was used to having two cars, nice house, like if I brought my friends over it was decent blahh, blahh, blahh, right all the nuclear family things, right, but when they got a divorce our house wasn't always clean, our house wasn't the nicest house in the world, so I really felt ashamed to bring friends home.

Participants pondered their future in terms of place. City and country living were considerations for Sandy when thinking about where to live in the future:
I would like to own a house. And although I've always lived in the city I think I would like to spend some time living in the country. I am definitely a city person I could never live, I could never always live in the country but I could I could live in the country for about a year.

Childhood experiences in a country contributed to Dan's desire to return there in the future:
Probably I'll go back to New Zealand because I lived there from the time I was 6 until I was 12 and I guess it was an important part of my life to just, elementary school, I don't know, I wish I knew more about what part of your brain develops at what age type thing but I feel quite connected to there just because I was 11. That was the age when I was wanting to do all of these things.

Summary of the Experience of Place

The experience of place was one aspect of the participant's understanding of the person they are. When speaking about place, they referred to a physical environment, location, structure and design of one's living place. The young adults discussed the experience of place in the context of their personal history, linking their past to the present, autonomy, relationships, and the future.
Like Zelda, who spoke about childhood experiences in her family garden, participants associated aspects of their personal histories with certain places.

The young adults drew links between past experiences associated with place and their current experience. In this regard, participants associated their past experiences of place with their current suitability for living in certain environments, cognitive style, and ideology.

The young adults also linked the experience of place with other conterminal experiences. This was exemplified in the young adults' discussions of the impact of place on relationships.

Place was a subjective experience in that it assumed various guises for each individual. Participants associated place with autonomy as exemplified by Sandy whose living near to but not with her mother represented independence to her.

Similarly, participants appropriated public notions of place for their personal ends. This was exemplified by Sandy, who regarded city and country living to both be important aspects of the future that she imagined for herself.

Theme Four: The Experience of Tension Between Opposing Forces

Participants experienced various forces in their lives as being in opposition to one another. The tension that they experienced resulted from failed attempts to reconcile these forces or from an inability to formulate a plan of action. Participants experienced tension between opposing forces in various areas of their lives such as peer relationships, family relations, how they viewed themselves in relation to society, culture, and career. Participants also discussed how they resolved the tension they experienced as well as their reactions to being unable to resolve conflicting tensions.

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Participants experienced frustration because of being unable to make career advances. Chris described the tension between her desire to move towards her career goals and feeling trapped in her current job. Her frustration arose out of not knowing how to proceed in making a career change. She cited her advancing age as a factor in her angst:

I want to start my life. I feel like I'm being on hold right now. I want to go to school, just focus on something, get a career. I feel like I'm getting old now. To me I feel like I'm old. Five years just zoomed by and I feel like I have to get going or I'm going to be a waitress for the rest of my life.

Inner tension was an aspect of participants' experiences of searching and striving for meaningful career alternatives. Participants described the tension that resulted from a gap between abilities and aspirations. For example, Dan described the effort he expended in attempting to attain his goal of good school grades despite his disability:

I had a difficult time in boarding school. I was dyslexic. I spent hours and hours and hours doing my work. I was very diligent and just determined to do well even though it was taking a long long time. And in my first years there that's all I did just because I wanted those grades, I wanted good grades. I wanted to have a good background to get me through school so I worked hard at it.

Participants hypothesized about conflicting forces in their considerations of the future. In that these ideas were speculations, they were inner experiences. Chris believed she will need to find a compromise between finances and lifestyle in the future. She believed that her desire to live an expansive life will be tempered by financial constraints:

But you know I don't want to be a wife and a mother and that's it. I just want to live this big exciting life but it's hard to do when you have bills and all that stuff.

The tension that participants experienced within themselves had repercussions for relationships. Sandy's mistrust of her brother prompted
her to require he "prove to me that he was for real and really wanted to try out and be friends." Chris' frustration in being unable to make career advances had repercussions for her relationship with her sister. A visit to her sister provided the forum for the expression of her jealousy:

I was jealous a lot cause her life had started. Even though it wasn't what I wanted for myself her life had started, she had a life. I'd go there and I'd be jealous. She's got her kids, and her husband and their house and stuff and I'd feel like it's not fair. And I'm going home to nothing.

While Sandy's and Chris' conflicts were experienced initially as a tension between competing desires within themselves, the young adults also described tensions between themselves and other individuals such as peers. For Dan, tension between himself and peers was of a physical nature. Dan expressed the frustration that resulted from being overpowered:

Stuff like that infuriates you when there's nothing you can do about it. I remember I was on a date once with this girl and one of the guys in my dorm just picked me up and was twirling me around in the air. There's nothing you can do. I just said, "One day, I'm gonna, you know." (shaking finger) I couldn't stand to be overpowered.

Family was another forum in which opposing forces were experienced as in conflict. Chris recounted a conflict in which her mother attempted to influence her to not have a boyfriend. In this instance, the tension was between her mother's desires and Chris' desires. Her mother attempted unsuccessfully to convince Chris that having a boyfriend would negatively affect her school grades. In another example, Chris' mother and sister attempted to influence her through expressing condemning opinions about her actions. Chris framed the tension as one of conflicting values. She placed her sister's and mother's values concerning gender roles in opposition to her own values on this topic:
My sister and my mother, did they ever freak out on me. My sister, "I can't believe that you went to Seattle without telling Steve where you went, that's something [my husband] would do." That's something a man would do. (interpreting her sister's statement) Not something the girl would do. My mom was saying, "I can't believe you went to Seattle by yourself and didn't tell Steve nothing."

Participants experienced tension between opposing forces within their family as a whole. Chris described a complex of family relations in which each parent communicated their negative assessment of the other parent to Chris. She expressed the desire to separate her feelings about her mother and father from those that they had for each other. While they wanted Chris to side with each of them against the other parent, Chris wanted simply to remove herself from the fray:

I always kind of regretted that. That's wrong. You shouldn't do that to your child. She does that now still. She gets jealous when I go to his house. She's never ever, I've never heard anything nice about him. I'm sure he's got some nice things. You married him for some reason. But she, they don't like each other. My dad, he said to me just last month, "I really don't give a shit if your mom lives or dies. I do not like your mother at all." "Why did you have to tell me that. Don't tell me that you hate my mother. I have nothing to do with it. I was just born. So he's negative about her. She's negative about him. Still. They've been divorced for 22 years now.

Participants also experienced tension between society or culture and themselves. In their relationship with society, the young adults found that society placed limitations on them and defined them. Dan found that bureaucracies interfered with his attempts to carry out his project. For Dan the tension was caused by the demands of the system and his lack of ability "at dealing with that":

I've had a bit of problems in terms of just the system of rules and stuff that you have to go through to get things done
like art projects and stuff. I've had to deal with that at school just this year. I was trying to do a major art project and the museum of art wouldn't let me cause it was, I was going to attach something onto a building that they didn't like, or, I didn't, I just, sometimes it doesn't make sense to me... there are all these committees that you have to go through in order to get something done and I didn't want to, like I'm not very good at dealing with that, like I just want to do it the way I want to do it...

Alexis framed the tension between herself and society in terms of gender role. She described the interaction of the societal construction of womanhood, that is sexiness, and her search for a personal gender meaning:

Sometimes I want to be dominant. I want to be all of the magazine sexy ladies, I want to be all of them in one. That's what society does to me, ya that's it I'll blame it on society... They used to symbolize ideals, like I used to want to be just like them but I realize that I don't have to be like them. I have a lot of inner beauty. And I am a worthwhile person and all the other self realization stuff that you could go through.

Conflicts with others like the ones cited above were experienced by the young adults as emotional tug-of-wars in which each party attempted to impose their desires on the other. The conflict became one of determining who held the greater power and ability to impose their will. Describing his stepmother as "the torturer", Jack made it clear to me that she held the balance of power in their conflict. She was able to "ground me for eight weeks in the summer. To my room, which was pretty intense punishment." Zelda recalled a childhood incident of conflict with her mother that captured the emotional tension of opposing wills:

And I remember one evening we were going somewhere and mom said "you have to wear underwear" and I said "I don't want to wear underwear" and she said, "no you have to were underwear." I cried in my room for about 2 hours all at war
with my mother because I didn't want to wear underwear. I think I was like 6 or 7 and oh I still remember it and I had to wear these dumb old polyester pants.

Participants framed the battle of wills in terms of the desire to control events in their lives. Two competing forces in Sandy's life were the experience of being a pawn, of experiencing no influence on the outcome of events, of being unable to control events in her life and the desire to be agentic, to make decisions, act and carry out her will. A negative evaluation of her abilities was associated with feeling unable to overcome life's challenges and pursue her goals:

There's no way I can win. I'm not physically strong enough to win a fight. I'm not as witty as he is or as quick to insult. I can't fight as well as he can. There's nothing I can do to get my way.

The battle of wills was also experienced as a competition for responsibility in determining role relationships. That is, individuals competed to determine the responsibilities and expectations required by the relationship. Jack framed the tension he experienced in his family in terms of differing views of the role relationship between himself and his father:

But um, um, right now there seems to be a lot of tension in my family right now between me and my dad. It's a really odd situation. Basically we're, he's not really a father figure. We're sort of like brothers. I can't really take orders from him.

The young adults rationalized their conflicts. Dan suggested two reasons for his inability to work with bureaucracies; his father's influence and his family lifestyle when he was a child:

...because, well I guess that's the way dad always did it too. Like up [where I lived as a child] across the river 30 miles from this tiny little town you could just do basically what
you wanted to and there was no system or code. You just did everything yourself. You didn't hire people to do it.

Resolving tension between opposing forces

Participants described the experience of being successful at resolving tension between opposing forces. As described above, participants experienced events that called for a great deal of effort and personal resources. They described surviving and recovering from challenging situations. In overcoming challenging events a sense of inner strength was a commonly identified resource enabling recovery. Recovery lead to the experience of renewed determination, increased strength and perseverance.

The young adults described aids to resolving tensions. Certain personal attributes were one such aid. The experience of resolving tensions was described by Alexis as requiring personal strength. For Alexis, personal strength was the ability to overcome difficult situations or the threats of others. Her personal strength provided her with a confidence in herself such that she retained self respect, appreciation for her abilities and the desire to pursue her goals. Her personal strength enabled her to bounce back or have "resiliency" when confronted with adversity:

But I have resiliency and I was ok. I'll get upset, but I'll always come back. I have a strong belief that I have wings. And wings is a metaphor for the talents and the things that I have. It's a metaphor for my blessings. For the ability to be with people and talk to people and understand people. The ability to bounce back. To be so creative. The ability to do stuff that amazes myself. And all the things I have are my blessings, are my wings. So I imagine that they're there. And that's me.

Aside from personal attributes, participants spoke about the support, encouragement and modeling of others that helped them to make
changes and resolve tensions. The support of her father aided Sandy to cope with a dangerous situation. Sandy described the concern expressed by her father. He is portrayed as engaged in strategizing and taking an authoritative role which Sandy responds to:

I was obviously in a lot of pain so I called my Dad. I told my dad what was happening and he asked me what I wanted to do. I said, "I don't know what to do. I'm afraid to leave my bedroom." He asked, "Can you get out of the house?" and I said, "I don't know if I can get out of the house. I don't know where he is." And he said, "Look get out of the house. Somehow just get out of your house. You're in the worst place you could be right now if this is happening. Just get out of the house. Go to your aunt's house and I'll be there in two hours."

Chris described how the encouragement of others had an impact on resolving a conflict. The absence of her father coupled with her mother's negative assessments of him, made Chris' relationship with him particularly challenging. Through the encouragement of siblings, she was able to muster the confidence to ask him a favor:

But I'm working on it. Like I had to phone my dad to ask him for thirty bucks and it took me like 3 weeks to get up the nerve to ask him. I finally did and it was like 2 or 3 weeks to pick up the phone and ask him for 30 bucks. Like just afraid of what he's going to think.

Enduring difficult situations were experienced as discouraging at times, yet in many instances participants expressed the beneficial effects of their challenging experiences. A sense of confidence was one outcome of coping with challenging situations. Sandy believed that her ability to cope with her brother's violence and her mother's lack of support had provided her with the confidence to succeed in her aspirations:

I'm not worried about the future that much because I know that I'm able to do - like I've been through so much stuff, like just bad things and great things. I know that whatever I want to do I can do.
More specifically, Sandy expressed that despite the fact that her suffering has been at the hands of individuals closest to her, the experiences augmented rather than discouraged her desire to continue close bonds to significant others:

but basically through all this stuff that's going on. Through all --- it's given me a personal strength to achieve and attain what I want to and like not close myself off to people. I'm not going to let people stop loving me again.

Coping with difficult situations aided in the promotion and encouragement of confidence in certain abilities. Sandy believed that because she knew from personal experience the challenges of being a child that she will be a good parent:

I think I'm going to be a good parent. I think I've been through enough shit that I'll be able to be a good parent.

The resolution of tension between opposing forces aided the determination career goals. For example, Dan spoke about how his notion of leading a constructive life conflicted with the activities of other youth who "are just getting into smoking and that type of stuff." He then described his desire to engage in a career that would influence others towards his ideas of a "positive and energetic" life:

So I'm always trying to get them to whenever I get a whole group of them to play a game or something. So I think I want to do something like that in terms of a career, to be a camp counsellor. Just I like dealing with group dynamics and umm, experimental learning type stuff rather then book learning.

Participants' confidence arose from the experience of being agentic; of being able to make desired changes by taking meaningful actions. Whereas in the past Chris allowed others to take advantage of her, she currently was "learning to not be a doormat." Chris stated that she had learned from past relationships not to allow others to takes advantage of
her. By having those relationships, she also learned that she did not have to be a pawn to others' desires but could act on her own desires:

But I'm lucky that I took something from it and said, so now you can watch for it, when someone is taking advantage of you. That's enough. Cause you can end it. You don't have to stay with them.

Similarly, Dan was able to overcome feeling helpless through weight training. His was motivated by determination to make a change. The change involved having greater authority over his physical development:

But, and then I was like that you know even into high school and it just, I couldn't stand it anymore, I was just, when I finally started to learn about you know how you can develop your body and stuff by training, I was just determined to not grow up and still be a wimp.

Dan was also able to make changes in the area of tension between self and society through taking control over his physical environment. In order to fulfill his desire for refuge from the urban environment Dan had altered the shape of his apartment which provided him with comfort and satisfaction:

This is my room at school. It's just a normal square house but I've rounded the whole ceiling. And it just had a lot to do with the shape of my environment, I want to be able to come back to the house and be able to sit down and breathe and relax. A very peaceful environment so that when you're stressed you can get away. I'm right in the middle of highly populated urban area and uh, that does get to me, so I had to build this get away place that I can just relax.

While participants talked about overcoming challenging situations, they also described the experience of being unable to make desired changes when confronted with challenging events. And as a result they regretted various actions, inaction, choices, performance, relationships, behaviors, aspects of their personality, their personal history and their
thoughts. Regret was experienced as sorrow, remorse or disappointment. It involved hindsight and evaluation. The participants regarded a particular aspect of their experience and make a negative evaluation. In addition, they described an alternative scenario involving the absence of the regretted one.

Zelda was disappointed in her past school performance and in her willingness to accept only an average level of performance. She suggested that had this aspect of herself not been present, she would have achieved more which would have enabled her to pursue a different course of study in university:

And I regret that I'm not as good at math as I could have been. And if I had been better in math I think I would have taken a bachelor of science instead of what I did do. But a lot of courses were closed to me because of my lack of mathematics. Like I took an entomology course which was really great. And I loved it. It was one of my favorite courses. But I couldn't take anything else like that because you needed first year mathematics and I didn't, I got a "P" in algebra 11.

Alexis negatively evaluated her actions in past abusive relationships. She found herself to be passive and therefore "a looser." She was disappointed in how she behaved and regreted her confusion, her not knowing "what I wanted":

But now, I'm getting older. And I look back at what they treated me and how I was. I laugh. What a looser I was. Just young. I was just stupid. I didn't know what I wanted.

The frustration of being unable to resolve complex family relations had emotional repercussions. Sandy described a sense of helplessness and feeling trapped due to not knowing how to extricate herself from her brother's violence and gain her mother's support. Suicide was an option she considered:
like you don't think beyond the present when you're in a situation like that so I was trying so hard to get out of the situation and I was too young to move out and I was too young to do anything. I'd be in that situation for another couple of years I didn't know what it meant to kill yourself. I didn't know how. I just knew cars couldn't obviously -- throwing myself in front of cars.

Like Sandy who became frustrated in her attempts to change her relationship with her brother and mother, Jack also described the experience of being involved in a conflictual triangle of family relations. The unhappiness that resulted from conflict in complex family relations forced Jack to leave home. He described a situation in which Jack and his stepmother competed for his father's attention:

So in the end I left after the third stepmother and we just didn't get along. A lot of it had to do with the tension. My dad doesn't have a lot of emotion to pass around. He's very quiet and he reads a lot. And he doesn't express himself very well. So I think there was a real competition between me and [my stepmom] for his attention. I see it that way. She's probably the reason I left when I was 16. Because we just weren't getting along and nobody was happy there.

Summary of the Experience of Tension Between Opposing Forces

The experience of tension between opposing forces was an aspect of the young adult's conception of the person he or she is. Tension was experienced within oneself and between oneself and others. Participants understood tension as a battle of conflicting wills. They rationalized the tensions they experienced. The young adults described aspects of resolving tension between opposing forces. They discussed factors that aided them in fashioning resolutions. They discussed benefits accrued when tensions were resolved. Finally, they discussed the experience of being unable to resolve tensions.
In one example of a discussion about tensions experienced primarily within the individual, Sandy described her conflicting feelings about trusting her brother. Career and anticipating one's future were also fields in which inner tensions were experienced.

Tensions experienced within the individual had implications for relationships, as was the case for Chris whose jealousy of her sister was rooted in her personal career frustrations. Interpersonal tensions were experienced with peers, individual family members, family groupings as well as with society.

Participants indicated that the core experience of interpersonal conflicts was a battle of wills fought over two issues. The first was the struggle over power to control events in one's life, as exemplified in Sandy's endeavor to free herself of her brother's violence. This struggle concerned an individual's desire for primacy in determining the course of his or her life and thereby the nature of the person he or she is.

The second issue was over the power to determine responsibilities and expectations in relationships. This was alluded to by Jack questioning of the role relationship his father played.

The young adults discussed aspects of resolving tensions between opposing forces. They identified aids to resolving tensions and the benefits of resolving tensions. Finally, the participants discussed the experience of being unable to resolve tensions.

Personal attributes such as inner strength were identified as aids to the resolution of conflicts. The assistance of others was also discussed as an important factor in the resolution of conflicts. As was the case in Sandy's appeal to her father for assistance in extricating herself from a potentially violent situation with her brother, other individuals were seen to be supportive and authoritative in their efforts to aid the resolution of
conflict. They were also identified as aiding the resolution of conflict through encouragement as well as through being role models.

The young adults discussed the benefits of resolving tensions. Increased confidence, increased inner strength and the clarification of career goals were some of the benefits experienced. As was the case with Sandy, who believed that she will be a good parent because of her ability to survive challenging family conflicts, resolution of tensions promoted and encouraged confidence in abilities.

Having greater authority over the course of one's life was the core of participants' experiences in resolving tensions between opposing forces. For example, through weight training Dan avoided physical threats from others and was therefore more able to act without fear.

Inability to resolve tensions also had repercussions for the young adults. Regret, disappointment and a sense of helplessness were cited as the results of being unable to resolve tensions.

**Theme Five: The Experiences of Change and Continuity**

The young adults considered change and continuity to be aspects of the person they are. They perceived changes in themselves, which is to say they regarded themselves to be different than at a previous time. As well, they experienced changes in various events, circumstances, relationships, and individuals that were considered outside of themselves. The participants also perceived similarities in their experience over time herein referred to as the experience of continuity. This theme answers the questions; how was change experienced, what were agents of change and how did they function and, under what circumstances was a sense of continuity operative?

The experience of change can be seen in the interviews to be operative in the context of the young adults' sense of themselves,
confidence, physical strength, striving to improve, striving to find one's essence, judging one's actions in social situations, one's feelings towards living with family/leaving the family, relationship to family members, lifestyle, judgment about what is important, gaining and loosing friends, attitudes towards caregivers, perception of an aptitude, perception of teens, and perception of what is normal.

Chris stated that a change in how she related to others was an important aspect of the person she is. She provided an example in her description of changing from experiencing herself as socially irresponsible to being responsible. In describing a joyride she took with a friend she described and contrasted her experience of responsibility at two points in time the past and the present. Her experience of change included a perception of how she was in the past (irresponsible), and a perception of how she was at present that is, responsible:

I'm a person who has really changed. Like I could never do that now. You learn. I was just like, I was going "oh you better pull over, I better phone him. She said "no man, you're 21 you don't have to answer to anybody. You can do whatever you want. But then you think about it and think that's just silly. You gotta take people's feelings into consideration. So you learn from that. It's fun to be irresponsible but you gotta be responsible too to make it fun. So I wouldn't do that again. I'm a lot different. I always call.

Implicit in Chris' description of her experience was a sense that she considered herself to be a better person as a result of her learning. Dan also implied that he had changed for the better. His change was also in the area of personal growth. He experienced changing from being motivated by competition to being motivated by the desire for personal improvement. High school sports was the forum in which he framed this change:

people would just slap you all over your body. "Kick his ass, tear him apart." That's completely different mental
motivation for pushing yourself then say what I'm into now in cycling. It's like "ya, come on you can do it, come on, come on." You just, really being positive for motivation wise. Wrestling was "kill em."

Chris experienced change in the area of peer relations and lifestyle. In this case the change was experienced through comparing two distinct times in her life, the present and when she was younger. She contrasted her younger years in which she did more drinking and partying to her current more home-centered lifestyle. She also suggested that the reason for her change was her maturation:

I wouldn't trade those days for the world. They were fun. But I'm different now... Like I enjoy staying at home now, making dinner. Before I'd go out and party, go to Mac Donald's. I don't know what it is. Instinct, growing up. Whatever. Or I've had enough.

Participants experienced change in the way they think about topics of interest. They experienced a shift in perspective. Chris expressed an awareness of the change in perception of what is important:

I: So would you say you've told me about who you are at present.

Ya. From what I know, that's me. I change every year. I can see that. From 18 to where I am now. Things that I thought were important last year I look back at and oh my god, what a joke.

Sandy also experienced a change in perspective. Her change concerned her consideration of the appropriateness of university for herself. She felt that this change was the result of, or resulted in increased confidence in herself:

Like I never thought about getting a degree. Like I thought you had to come from a certain family to go to university. People who go to university I've always been jealous of. Now I go "I can go to university." I always figured you had to be this brain. You didn't party or nothing. Just stay at home and study. I wasn't like that. Then I met people who were party animals.
"Ya, I'm in my third year." "Wow, you're a real partier." Maybe I can go too. So I'm having more confidence in myself as I go. You don't have to come from a certain family or be a certain person. So that's really it. That's all.

Agents of change were a part of the experience of change. In Chris' example above the realization that "You gotta take people's feelings into consideration" prompted an attitude change. Other agents of change experienced by the young adults included the experience of counselling, the experience of being a teen, the example of others, the desire for revenge, anger, the experience of maturation, and the experience of being satiated in a particular activity. Dan's motivation for making change was his desire to take a stand and make a statement about personal values to others through using his actions as an example:

I was on the wrestling team for 4 years and in the fourth year the Gulf War broke out and I was so opposed to it cause I just didn't see violence as a way to accomplish anything you know, it's just going to make other people pissed off and just degrading other people's integrity. Just makes them pissed off and fight back. Most people around me, well I quit the team because I wanted to sort of make a statement about um, just, um, like negative sort of energy to degrade other people.

The motivation for Chris' change in thinking was due in part to insights she realized through the process of counselling. She described how in the past she would blame herself for her parents' fights. She felt that she was "ruining this for my mom." Through counselling she was able to understand the nature of her parent's problems and see that she was not the cause of those problems:

And then one day this lady came into my school at high school... She listened to me a lot. I'd talk about stuff that happened at home and she'd say it's not your fault. Um, and I'd start realizing that. Or if I had a problem I'd talk to her and I'd talk my way into a solution. By her saying "what do you
think about that" or "what do you think you're options are" and stuff like that. So real logical thinking that I started using in my own life outside of school. Problem solving really.

Zelda also experienced change in her perceptions of what was normal and how she thought of herself in terms of being similar to or different from others. Her changes were the result of having more experience and knowledge of others' experiences:

And the longer I go through life the more I realize that that's unusual. Like I'm out of the ordinary. I always thought people who were screwed up on drugs and stuff, I thought they were far and few between and it seems to me that a lot of them have been. When I was little I found out that a lot of the kids in elementary school were abused and stuff and I had no idea when I was going through the world thinking everyone was raised like I was and that's not true. It makes me identify with people differently.

A sense of continuity operated when the young adult perceived a common general quality of experience at two points in time. Specific examples were used to express the quality of experience. For example, Alexis found continuity in an aspect of the way she related to others:

I always had to please people when I was younger and I'm still like that. Um, whether it had to be my caregivers or the teachers or friends. I was always drawing people pictures and being as nice as nice could be cause I never wanted to upset anybody. I'm still a lot that way now. I don't like to confront people at all.

Sandy compared herself as a child to herself in the present and found similarities. She regarded areas of her personality; happiness and sociability to be the same now as when she was a child:

I think I'm the exact same just older. I was a happy little kid. I really was. I was a typical little kid. Just like happy and playful. I loved talking. I loved showing things to people. I loved meeting people. And I'm still like that.
Summary of the Experiences of Change and Continuity

The experiences of change and continuity were aspects of participants' conceptions of the person he or she is. The young adults described both differences and similarities of experience over time. They perceived changes within themselves and in other individuals and events.

The participants perceived changes in various aspects of their lives such as relationships, lifestyle and way of thinking among others. As was the case with Chris who spoke about changing from being irresponsible to taking responsibility for the impact of her actions on others, participants framed some changes as personal growth.

Participants described changes that involved the way in which they conceived of themselves or changes in thinking. For example, Sandy described a change in her view of the likelihood of her entering university. Initially she considered herself to be different from those who were university students but through personal experience she realized that there was a wide variety of university student lifestyles, some of which was comparable to her own. As a result of this change in thinking, Sandy's view of herself and thereby the way in which she conceived of herself shifted. She began to view herself as a potential university student.

The young adults spoke about factors that aided in their making changes. They referred to these agents of change as either primarily self determined or prompted by other individuals or events. For example, through her own realization of the effects on others of partaking in a joyride, Chris decided to be more responsible. In contrast, Dan's desire to become physically stronger was prompted by the violent actions of others.

The young adults also discussed continuity or sameness over time. They spoke about aspects of their lives that did not change as they aged.
Theme Six: The Experiences of Receiving and Passing on Knowledge and Experience

Participants experienced both receiving knowledge and experience from others and passing their own knowledge and experience on to others. At times the knowledge and experience from others was accepted by the young adult while at other times the young adult rejected what they understood to be others' attempts to impose their will. In the latter case, the participants described the ensuing conflict. The participants also described the experience of passing their knowledge and experience on to others. Finally, the participants discussed how they view themselves as a conduit for passing on the knowledge and experience that they have accepted from others.

The Receiving of Knowledge and Experience

Participants described the experience of receiving knowledge and experience from others. Caregivers' attempts to impart their knowledge and experience was sometimes experienced by participants as the imposing of expectations. Participants experienced expectations as the wielding of power, influence and control. Expectations were seen by the young adults to be rooted in the caregiver's conviction of what was due, desirable or necessary for their offspring to enact. Participants identified caregivers' expectations and described reasons for their rejection.

Participants also described the experience of accepting other's knowledge and experience. When participants accepted what others offer, the experience was described in terms of influence, inheritance or observation rather than expectations.

In an example of the rejection of caregiver expectations, Zelda described the nature of expectations that she experienced her mother to have. She understood the roots of these expectations to be in activities
that her mother participated in when she was Zelda's age. In essence, Zelda perceived her mother to want Zelda to be more like herself by partaking in activities similar to her own:

I feel, I mean, my parents, especially my mom would really like me to join some vigilante type group and protest whatever my convictions are. She used to do that. During the Vietnam war, she lived in California and she said uh, they'd round up Mexican immigrants and uh, send them off to the drafting office and mom would stand there with pamphlets saying "you don't have to do this. This isn't a requirement. You can object."

Zelda rejected her mother's expectations. Her rationale for not fulfilling her mother's suggestions was that the two have different personalities. She characterized her mother as "into the social scene" and herself as "more one on one." From Zelda's perspective, her mother failed to take into account Zelda's character when she made her expectations known. Her expectations were seen by Zelda to be based solely on her own experiences:

And uh, she's curious as to why I didn't join any groups at U. Vic. Like "when I was your age I did all this stuff." And I'm like "well ya, I'm just a more quiet person than you, I think." She's right into the social scene. Whereas, I'm more one on one.

Similarly, Alexis' mother had expectations regarding dating. Alexis believed that her mother's attitude towards Alexis' dating was rooted in her own history and did not consider Alexis' experience:

That's another thing my mother's always afraid of. She never wanted me to go out with guys until I was like 35 because she got pregnant with me when she was 17. So that's another thing ... My mom has a hard time accepting that I'm sexually active but she knows it happens.
Sandy's mother expected their relationship to be more intimate than it was. Sandy understood that her mother expected what she felt was her "due" as a result of the effort she extended in caring for Sandy:

"She resents me though because I don't let her in on my life... But she says I've done the parenting bit. I've done all that why can't I just get let in on the other part. You know. Why can't I be a friend?"

While sometimes the participants expressed the wish that their caregivers would not intrude in their lives with unwanted expectations, at other times the young adult expressed a wish for more caregiver involvement. Although Jack appreciated the freedom that his parents allowed him in making career choices, he was also disappointed that they do not take a greater role in providing direction:

"It kind of bothers me. Because I don't really have parents who have ever pushed me into university or college or really given me any pressure in terms of my career. Its always been "well whatever you do, whatever makes you happy." They've always been really good that way. But in someways it's like "jeez I wish you'd tell me something. Give me some direction."

Although Jack desired more caregiver involvement, he appreciated his autonomy that resulted from their lack of intrusiveness:

"But they tend to just stand back and let me do it. They don't really get involved in helping me make decisions. Which I suppose is good... now I'm an adult so I have to make my own decisions anyway."

There were examples of the participants accepting caregivers' knowledge and experience. As characterized by Zelda, the experience was one of observation and osmosis rather than the imposition of expectations. "Moderation" was one parental value that Zelda has adopted:

"I mean, I think my parents did drugs way back when but ha, ha, haaa, they never really had a problem with it. And they kept it under control. I tried to do the same thing. When I go
out and have fun I don't do anything in excess. Moderation is the best way to go about doing things.

Her parents were an example to Zelda of how she would like to conduct her finances. Zelda adopted aspirations and the means to achieve those aspirations though observing and accepting her parents' modelling of the achievement of financial solvency through education and work:

Which is what my parents did. They went to school and they worked and worked and worked and they paid everything in cash. And I want to do that too. When I get another car go down and buy it with cash. Or buy myself a big freezer or something and pay cash with it so I'm not paying the credit card company 20% to loan me some money. And that would be nice.

Similarly Dan credited his stepfather with encouraging confidence and adventurousness in him. Dan described this influence as resulting from observing the lifestyle of his stepfather and testing it out for himself:

And [my stepfather] brought out the adventurous side of me. He's, he never stands still in one place for more than, I don't think he's ever lived in one place for more then 6 years. And that's why my mother and him have travelled so much. Just 'cause he just likes to go. And I've seen them live that way and what it's like and I think that's good for me too. Right now they're on a boat and they're sailing all over the Bahamas again. And, so that's been good for me, to not be afraid to just ah, to just go into another country and not know anybody and not have connection and just go and let it flow and let things happen for you and you'll find somebody to help you and and find a place to sleep.

Dan expressed a general approval and appreciation of his parents and stepparents. When speaking of his strengths he credited them with being "the reason for how I am." It was not surprising then that Dan desired to adopt various aspects of their lifestyle. In the area of intimacy, Dan
envisioned an ideal relationship modeled on the one he understood his parents to have:

I see myself living quite simply and trying to be um, possibly on a commune. I haven't found the right person to be with yet but I definitely see myself with a woman. That's probably why I want to travel too. I have a definite idea what she might be like. I see her as my other half. Like, somehow being able to do the things I can't do and I'll be able to do the things she can't do. It's like [my dad and step-mom]. My step-mom deals with all the people and the bills and stuff and [my dad] builds the house and stuff.

The Passing on of Knowledge and Experience

Participants described the passing on of their knowledge and experience to others. Doing so was experienced as an honor, something to be proud of and as a mission. How knowledge and experience were passed on was discussed. Some participants viewed their actions as models that others chose to follow. Others saw the process as a conscious and determined teaching. For some, passing on knowledge and experience to others was seen in the context of career while for others it was in the context of friendship and family relationships. Participants rationalized their desires to pass on their experience.

Participants found pleasure in passing on the knowledge and experience that they value highly. Having gained a sense of courage through facing his fears during his challenging sailing adventures and his willingness to risk the unknown in traveling to distant countries, Jack was pleased to pass his experience on to a friend. In contrast with more determined teaching that other participants engaged in when passing on their knowledge and experience, Jack felt that he had a passive "influence" on his friend through casual conversation. Jack viewed himself as a resource available to his friend at his discretion:
It's been neat to be an influence on Ed and see him really happy with his life in terms of traveling now and I don't know if I told you the whole story but I was living in Holland with Annette and he was in the same house and I used to sit back and tell him stories about traveling and it ended up that he, I went back to England and he kept in touch and kept saying that he wanted to travel but was afraid to. Anyway finally he took off and I received cards from him from all over the place and now he's passing through and going to drop in. So for me, it's great to have passed on my experiences in a way that has encouraged another person to make a decision and act on it. For me traveling was about learning that courage and now I feel I've passed that on.

Participants desired to pass on the knowledge and experience that they saw as important aspects of their lives. Earlier in the interview, Dan discussed the importance of challenging himself, striving to achieve his goals and motivating himself. Dan attempted to incorporate these ideas into games that he organized for children so that they could learn their value:

...get them psyched up and full of energy to run around and I like to motivate them to do things... it's great if you can get young people to or anybody to go and challenge themselves and accomplish you know something,

Alexis filled the role of mentor or guide for her sister. She realized the importance of this role because of her unfulfilled need to learn information about sex from her mother. When an opportunity arose, Alexis aided her sister cope with and understand an aspect of sexuality:

Last week I walked in on her by accident. She was masturbating. And I was just like "oh, I'm sorry [Mary]. And then she started crying because it was her secret and no one in the world does this but me kind of thing. And I said " it's ok." And she started crying (mock crying) and I said "oh, I'm so sorry [Mary] and it's perfectly normal, it's ok, blahh, blahh,
blahh, so I gave her a little talk. Cause I never did that with my mom. We did that at school.

Participants discussed different contexts in which they passed on knowledge and experience. Some participants considered career to be a form in which knowledge and experience could be passed on to others. When participants discussed career in this manner they projected themselves into imagined future situations rather than recounting incidents they have experienced. Dan identified a particular world view that he wished to pass on to others in a teaching role:

I see myself working with kids and teaching them um, to be more self sufficient and to not have to depend on running water and all the sewage pipes and stuff like that. And to be more in touch with their real environment that was here long before we built this, ceilings and stuff.

Dan related that the notions he wished to teach others stem from his own childhood. Both the natural environment that he lived in and the caring he received that encouraged exploration, independence and confidence, contributed to his philosophy of life whose tenets he wished to pass on to others. His was a deeply held conviction that he believed essential to the continuance of humanity. He viewed himself to be a member of a minority whose mission it was to influence the course of human history:

...encourage people to live in a more natural way and um, to avoid, I can't think of the word, um, sort of the fabricated, jungle world which is, which will block them off from their um, goal or whatever. I think people need to see where they are going, not just by thinking about it but by knowing it within themselves...

Participants experienced passing on the knowledge and experience that they received from others. Dan credited his mother with his "positive outlook." He valued what he had learned through her teaching and demonstrating. He employed this knowledge in his own life as an aid in the
achieving of goals. Dan attempted to teach his peers the co-operative, encouraging communication style that he had learned in the family context:

If we're at the dinner table and squabbling she just won't tolerate it. She's um, taught me to communicate in a positive way all the time. Um, I'm the same way. A lot of the way I am is from her. I'm always saying to my friends you know, how to have a positive outlook, like an optimistic, and that's really important for accomplishing goals and stuff.

Dan's future aspirations included having children. One of his reasons for wanting children is that he valued what he had learned from his parents. He hoped to pass his parent's teachings on to his children:

And I also want to have a family so I can teach my own kids things that my mom and father have taught me.

Summary of the Experiences of Receiving and Passing on Knowledge and Experience

One way in which the young adults came to know the person they are was through the experiences of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience. At times knowledge and experience that were received by participants were rejected. They experienced this process as the rejection of expectations. There were other examples of participants accepting knowledge and experience from others.

By rejecting or accepting caregivers attempts to impart knowledge and experience, participants exercised their will to determine how they would be influenced. By viewing caregiver's attempts to impart knowledge and experience as expectations, the young adults understood that their caregivers had desires for them to enact that differ from their own.

The young adults discussed their passing on of knowledge and experience to others. They described different ways this was experienced. They discussed the roles they assumed in passing on knowledge and
experience. They named contexts in which this process occurred. Finally, the young adults discussed the experience of passing on the knowledge and experience that they received from others.

The young adults experienced their rejection of knowledge and experience from others as the rejection of expectations. Like Zelda, whose mother wanted her to partake in similar activities as herself, participants experienced expectations as centered in their caregivers' experiences without their concern for their offspring's interests or aspirations.

Participants associated control with the acceptance of knowledge and experience. Rather than feeling that others expected them to enact their wishes without input from the participant, the young adults experienced themselves to have an active role in the acceptance of knowledge and experience. An example of this was Zelda's description of the observation and acceptance of her parent's modeling of financial responsibility.

While participants accepted knowledge and experience from others, like Jack who equivocated between wanting "some direction" and appreciating having "to make my own decisions", participants expressed the desire for a balance between caregiver guidance and personal autonomy.

The young adults spoke about the experience of passing on knowledge and experience to others. Participants believed it was an honor or privilege to be able to assist others. They also experienced the process as a mission.

The young adults described the roles they assumed as they passed on knowledge and experience. Like Alexis, who shared information about sex with her sister, participants assumed teacher and counselor roles. They
also passed on knowledge and experience through being role models and through acting as resources.

The young adults discussed the passing on of knowledge and experience in various contexts such as family, peers and career. For example, Dan foresaw the passing on to others of his world view in the context of a career as a teacher.

Finally, the young adults discussed experiencing themselves to be conduits for the passing on of knowledge and information that they received from others. For example, Dan expressed the desire to have children in order to pass on to them knowledge and experience that he received from his parents.

Theme Seven: The experience of considering the future

Consideration of the future entailed the describing and planning of goals that the young adult desired to achieve in the future. Aside from the simple stating of various goals, participants described implications of their goals for others, rationales for their goals, goal time frames, the relationship between current interests and goals, the influence of their family and childhood on goals, and the preparation for goal achievement. In some cases ideology formed the basis of a participant's formulation of their future.

In their considerations of the future, participants described various activities they would like to engage in. Zelda aspired to travel. Past experiences enabled her to be more specific about her plans:
I'd like to travel. Right now I have no realistic travel plans. But I'd like to go see Australia and South America. I mean I've been to Europe 3 times. I've been there, done that, I want to do something else now. Um, Australia would be great. I've heard wonderful things about it. I've just met a woman and she's talking about "oh, good you like to travel, good, we'll go somewhere" and I think that will happen. If I want it enough
and she wants it enough we can actually save up a couple of thousand dollars and go to Australia.

Participants specified not only activities they aspired to but also expressed personal attributes they would like to attain in the future. Zelda wanted to be known by her friends as a generous and hospitable person:

I want to, want to be a good cook. Sounds really weird but I want to be known, like there's certain friends of mine that you go over there and like I know that I'm going to get a good meal. When they invite me for dinner, it's like wow this is great. Lots of good food and warm atmosphere. And I want to have people think about me in that terms, those terms.

Finally, participants discussed ideal future relationships. Zelda described the kind of family she foresaw for her future:

Um, well my way distant future, I'd like to find Mr. Right and have a baby but I don't necessarily have to have a baby with Mr. Right in the picture. I could just have a baby without anybody. I'll have to see how it goes. I'd like a baby at some point. Not right now. Not for a few years. Maybe 27, 28, 30.

As expressed by Zelda above, participants framed their future in terms of life span. Age was also a factor in Chris' organization of her aspirations, as when she stated that she "definitely want[ed] to have kids when I'm thirty."

An aspect of considering the future was discovering and carrying out a means of attaining goals. Participants discussed plans of action they were engaged in presently or intend to undertake in the future as a means of moving towards the realization of their goals.

The first step in undertaking a plan of action was to identify possible desired goals. Zelda found that she had confused her own goals with expectations that others had of her. She was currently attempting to define her own goals so that she could act on them and not think that she
was acting due to other's expectations. She found that our discussion in the context of this research aided in the clarification of her goals:

That's one thing I'm working on now. Is all the things I think I ought to. Why do I think I ought to do this? Like where did this feeling of ought come from. Is it because my mom and dad want it? Is it because I want it? Is it because I feel other people think I should? And I'm going to try to change all my ought to do this to I want to do this. I don't want to do things out of obligation. I want to do things because I want to. Gosh, this clarified a lot of things that have been bouncing around in my head. That's great.

Participants expressed that one aspect of identifying goals was the consideration of alternatives. The young adults found that establishing goals sometimes entailed making compromises between alternatives. Participants also expressed an unwillingness to make goal compromises. For example, Chris was currently unwilling to consider a compromise between undertaking a career, having a husband, owning a home and being a housewife. Her desire to "have it all" indicated an uncompromising idealism in these areas:

I: Earlier you said you didn't see yourself as a housewife. I do, what I meant was I just don't want to be a housewife and a mother and that's it. Like I want to have the career and the house and the husband and all that. I want to have it all. I don't want to have one or the other. I'd go crazy. It's not for me. Not that it's wrong. But I need something for myself. I can't just stay at home all day.

However, Chris understood career to be a compromise between various options such as an ideal job (being an actress) and financial concerns:

But I'll be poor if I do that so I don't want to do that. So I mean, I'm looking for a backup kind of thing... Like I want to be an actress but I have to be realistic too. The chances of
making it are so slim. It's nice to have a dream but you can't starve doing it.

Participants attempted to reconcile conflicting goal options. Income, values and happiness were aspects of career planning that Sandy attempted to reconcile:

Basically I haven't gone too... I don't want to be rich that's not a major thing of mine. I don't need to be wealthy to be happy. At all. I wouldn't mind being comfortable you know not always scrounging for money or anything like that not always...But you know I'm not centering my career choice or who I would marry or anything like that around money. It's a necessity but money causes greed and I hate greed and I hate the things that seem to go along with money. But we all need it so I work for it right. You know.

Sometimes the process of considering options lead to difficulty in deciding which course of action to engage in in the future. One participant described this experience as being "at a crossroads." Being at a crossroads concerned the experience of facing a dilemma in the context of decisions aimed at propelling the participant into their future. The young adults experienced a time of indecision through being faced with the desire to make a change in their lives but the inability to choose between alternatives or to define what alternatives were available. For Jack, the current crossroads entailed an evaluation of his history, skills, values, aspirations and opportunities:

Now I've come back, I spent a year in school and another year working and now I'm at this stage now where I'm not sure what I want to do. And there's a few different opportunities. It's either me coming back and getting a career going... So I'm a little confused about that right now. Because I have a job offer in Victoria with a weekly newspaper which is a nice place to settle down in for awhile or I'm off with my backpack again.
Once goals had been identified and alternatives resolved, the young adult constructed a course of action intended to lead towards the attainment of goals. Chris perceived a relationship between her immediate goals and the achievement of more distant goals:

I really want to focus on right now, my main goal is to educate myself as much as I can to get a career and travel as much for the next two years as much as possible.

Chris had organized her goal plans with the belief that the achievement of one goal would enable the achievement of more distant goals:

So right now that's really what I want to focus on is just going to school, educating myself, then getting a good career, buying the house, then getting married and having the kid.

Plans of action aimed at achieving future goals included the desire for self improvement. Dan believed that he must develop an adequate level of self confidence before engaging in a long term relationship:

I don't even know if there's going to be sort of a trial and error type thing or I think it's going to work and we're going to be in love forever and I feel like it's one day I'll find that person and then that will be it. So, that's ok. That doesn't rule my life. I'm not ready for that yet anyway. But, so I'm still, I feel like I'm still building myself um, to like, the ultimate state of confidence.

Similar to Dan, Alexis believed she needed to improve herself before she finds a mate. The present was the time in her life that she perceived as appropriate for self improvement and the achievement of being "totally good with myself" prior to "get(ting) someone else who's good with themselves":

So I'm really selfish. And sometimes it comes across. Randy tends to think I'm really selfish but um it's just what I need to be right now. So until I'm done with being selfish I can't see myself with being with someone for ever and ever. Cause I said this before when I was in high school too. Before you
really love someone you have to really love yourself. And I love myself but not really, really, really, like I'm not really not totally like self, an ideology that's a perfect. I still have more to go before I can be totally good with myself and then get someone else whose good with themselves.

Participants discussed factors that aided them in the formulation of their goals. In this respect, the young adults mentioned ideological concepts such as gender equality. Significant others also aided participants to formulate goals. Finally, participants considered aspects of their past and their current aptitudes as the impetus for goal setting.

In considering their futures, participants discussed ideological factors drawn from current social issues. The environment and gender equality were two issues that were discussed. Zelda aspired to be "environmentally conscious" and defined what that means to her:
  Um, I want to, it sounds politically correct, but I want to be environmentally conscious. I've got plans, like I'm going to have 6 different places for garbage, like this kind and that kind and sort everything out. It will take energy and time but I think it'll be worth it.

Chris cited gender issues as the basis for her goals concerning love relationship and family. She considered independence, a cornerstone of modern feminist belief, to be an important aspect of her future:
  I couldn't live in the old fashion days where the man decided everything. I want to be able to buy half the house and have my own car. It's really important for me to have my own things. In case it doesn't work out. I don't have to depend. Like my sister if [her husband] ever walked out she wouldn't know what to do. I couldn't live like that. I want to have my own money. I don't want to have an allowance. I don't want to have to depend on a man.

The example of others was considered to be helpful in defining goals. Zelda's knowledge of a friend's activities in helping others aided her to
see a practical way she could engage her interest in the helping professions:

And I can just see myself becoming like Pat Johns' house used to be the place if somebody is having a rough time with their boyfriend or their husband, hang out a Pat's for a while. I can just see my house turning into something like that. I'd like people to come to me and know that I'll be able to help them. Or feel confident about telling them things. I think I can help people.

The example of others also aided participants in knowing what they wanted to avoid in the future. For example, Chris' negative evaluations of various aspects of the lives of family members shaped her aspirations in terms of children, finances and agency:

I: How has your family played a role in who you are today?
I think that makes me, I don't want to struggle. That's a big thing with me. The kids thing. I want to have kids when I'm older. I don't want to have 2 kids at 25 and struggle. I don't want to have to struggle for anything money-wise. Like I want to plan out my kids

Participants' past experiences were cited as rationales for their aspirations. Chris' childhood experiences of her caregivers as well as more recent experiences with boyfriends aided in shaping her views on the kind of person she desired to marry:

I guess, that childhood, I remember a lot. Abusive boyfriends and drunk all the time and mom crying. I won't have that. I swear I'll never marry anyone who drinks a lot, who's an alcoholic. Cause that's all my life has been. Like 12 steps to recovery, 12 steps to this. And ah, I've had enough of it. So that's one thing. She had 2 boyfriends since I was born and both were bad alcoholics. So just the hell I went through because of that, counselling and it was just a joke. And I can understand now what it can do. So I don't want it.

Aside from past experiences, participants considered their interests and aptitudes when constructing aspirations. For example, Chris
attempted to identify future career goals through assessing her career activities:

and then, no, and then, I've always been good in kind of people kind of careers. So I'm more focusing on working with people with problems. Something in the counselling area. But I don't know exactly what. A social worker or something like that.

Summary of the Experience of Considering the Future

The experience of considering the future contributed to the participants' experiences of identity. In thinking about the future, the young adults considered future desired activities, various personal attributes they would like to achieve in the future, and ideal relationships they would like to attain in the future. As with Chris, who wanted to bear children at age thirty, the participants at times situate future aspirations in the context of his or her life span. The identification of aspirations was one aspect of the young adults' knowledge of the person they are. By locating their aspirations within a time frame, they further clarified their knowledge of self.

The participants considered numerous alternative aspirations and attempted to decide which aspiration or set of aspirations they preferred. Like Chris, who desired to "have it all", participants projected themselves as unwilling to make compromises in the future. However, like Chris who wanted a "backup" for her financially tenuous acting aspirations, participants were also willing to make compromises. Being "at a crossroads" as Jack described it, was the experience of being temporarily unable to decide on which alternative aspiration to follow. Whether willing or unwilling to compromise, the young adults attempted, and were at times unable to come to a resolution. Participants' constructions of identity included deciding on which aspirations were worthy of pursuit.
Another way the young adults constructed identity was through understanding the factors that contributed to their identification of goals. Like Sandy, who attempted to reconcile income, career and marriage with personal happiness, ideology formed a criterion by which participants attempted to resolve aspirations. Like Zelda who wanted to establish a refuge similar to that of a friend, participants desire to emulate the example of others, aided their formation of goals. And like Chris, whose dislike of the financial struggle that family members endured prompted her to aspire to family planning, participants identified goals through the realization of what they desired to avoid.

Participants believed that their past experiences contributed to their aspirations. For example, Chris believed that her childhood experiences of family alcoholism contributed to her desires to avoid a long term relationship with an alcoholic. As with Chris, who saw herself as "good in kind of people kind of careers" aptitudes were also considered instrumental in identifying goals. Ideology, the modeling of others, aptitudes and, the participant's past are understood as instrumental in the establishment of goals. Through identifying and understanding the factors that contributed to the establishment of their aspirations, the young adults further their knowledge of the person he or she is.

With alternatives resolved and goals identified, the young adults constructed a course of action directed towards the achievement of aspirations. Some participants, like Chris who saw a connection between gaining an education, attaining a career and achieving family goals, constructed a linear goal achievement plan. Like Dan's desire to achieve "the ultimate state of confidence" before initiating a long term relationship, participants included self improvement as one aspect of their preparations aimed at goal achievement. Deciding on the means of
moving from the social and psychological position they currently occupied to their desired state of being was one aspect of the young adult's construction of identity.

Validation

This section concerns the outcomes of validation procedures. First, I discuss the validation method employing hermeneutical inquiry. The ensuing themes are compared to those themes found using Giorgi's method as described in the "findings." Second, I discuss the results of the colleague validation. Finally, I discuss the participant validation.

Validation Method Employing Hermeneutical Inquiry

Alexander's (1988) guidelines for identifying salient information in biographical text were employed as the second method of analysis for validation. The guidelines, discussed in chapter III, were used as an aid in identifying important passages in one transcript. These passages were collated, thereby allowing themes to become apparent to the researcher. A description of the themes garnered using this technique was compared to the themes identified and described in the "findings" chapter for all participants. This was undertaken for two reasons. First, to ascertain if the second method of data analysis yields further ways of understanding how young adults construct identity. The second reason is to determine the degree to which the findings may be said to reasonably follow from the data.

The transcript was randomly selected by numbering each transcript with the numbers one through six, writing each number on a piece of paper, placing the six pieces of paper into an opaque container, and having a colleague draw one piece of paper. The selected transcript was the one having the corresponding number to the one drawn. Using this method, the
transcript that was selected was that of Dan. Alexander's (1988) "principle identifiers of salience" guided the researcher in locating four of Dan's predominant considerations with respect to how he conceives of himself. These concerns were identified due largely to the high frequency with which they were mentioned, the primacy with which they were accorded, and the unique character and context of the descriptions. Alexander's other categories were employed less frequently. The themes are introduced below. Elaboration of the themes can be located in Appendix IV.

Dan's frequent references to the influence of family members on the person that he is were noted and aided the establishment of the theme "Influence: The role that others play in the person I am." The transcript was peppered with descriptions of various aspects of himself followed by, for example:

I guess that's the way my dad always did it, too.

Or, in describing the model he would like his ideal intimate relationship to follow:

It's like [my dad and step mom]. My step mom deals with all the people and the bills and stuff and [my dad] builds the house and stuff.

Primacy was apparent in the importance that Dan attached to cycling and his "mission" as demonstrated in the following two quotes respectively:

Well, I'm very into cycling...I guess I'm very into that.

and:

This is my favorite picture. He's kind of like my spiritual brother. It's almost like a symbol of us on our mission...

Flagging these statements contributed to identification of the themes "Cycling: The transformation of body and spirit" and, "Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration" respectively:
Uniqueness was a quality of Dan's description of a fight he participated in as a child. The associations surrounding this description contributed to the theme, "Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration":

I've been in one fight in my whole life... But that only took once for me to realize that um, it was stupid, it didn't accomplish anything. So I refuse to do it.

The four identified themes are; Cycling: The transformation of body and spirit; Invoking resolve in safeguarding self-determination; Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration and; Influence: The role that others play in the person I am.

*Comparison of Themes Derived from Hermeneutical Inquiry and Giorgi's Methods*

This discussion concerns the comparison of the themes presented in the "findings" chapter for all participants to the themes presented above for the participant "Dan." The former themes were identified through the process of considering each participant's interview transcript in light of all the rest. The latter themes were constructed from Dan's transcript alone. The themes derived from the former process were more generic in nature than those identified for Dan using Alexander's method. Dan's themes were generally more idiosyncratic.

For example, I was compelled to specify the activity "cycling" in the title of the theme "Cycling: The transformation of body and spirit." This was because of the significance that Dan attributed to his bike and the experience of bicycling. Dan's experience of biking was identified because his statements concerning this subject fell into all of Alexander's categories. That is, the subject was mentioned frequently, afforded great importance, associated with events of unique character, as well as being
the hub of diverse associations. In short, the experience of cycling held tremendous significance for Dan.

Read in the context of the other interviews, Dan's experience of cycling may have been translated simply into "activity interest." The strength of Dan's unique associations with this subject may have become lost or diminished. This being the general manner in which the "findings" themes were derived, their character may therefore be generally less extreme, less poignant and less direct than the "validation" themes.

These general distinctions aside, there was much in common between the two sets of themes. As well, there were some augmentations to the "findings" themes that were suggested in the "validation" themes.

Cycling: The transformation of body and spirit.

There was some utility in considering this theme in the context of the theme "the experience of self." The current theme suggested some interesting augmentations to the experience of self as reported in the findings.

The findings reported that the participants were aware of many aspects of themselves. That is, different individuals and situations encouraged different aspects of the participants to become manifest. Their experience was of the awareness of fully independent personal aspects such as "the public" and "the private."

The participants also revealed their attempts to reconcile conflicting aspects of themselves. These descriptions, however, continued to emphasize the segmentation between conflicting aspects of the self. An example of this was Jack's resolution of his "conservative side" and adventurous side in his decision to travel instead of work. In his resolution he continued to express the presence of his apparently less powerful "conservative side." Although he had resolved his immediate
dilemma, he had yet to find a way to integrate these two conflicting aspects of himself into a gestalt.

Dan also expressed an awareness of various aspects of himself. He spoke about, or referred to the physical, psychological, spiritual and, creative aspects of himself. However, rather than experiencing these as independent and in conflict, Dan's experience focused on their integration. He spoke, for example, in reference to his love of cycling and art about "exercise as a form of creative expression."

While the findings theme emphasized conflict and uncertainty associated with, for example, the frustration of others not knowing the participant's "true self", Dan expressed enthusiasm and was "motivated" by his evolving awareness of the link between various aspects of himself.

Understood inclusively one may note that, for these young adults, a range of integration or fragmentation in the experience of self was possible. Resolution of conflict represented by various aspects of the self may not mean the integration of these aspects into a complete, unfragmented sense of self but rather a realization of the relative valence of aspects of the self. For Dan integration of self was associated with self-acceptance and self-satisfaction while for the participants fragmentation was associated with self-doubt and interpersonal conflict.

Invoking resolve in safeguarding self-determination.

Dan's discussion of self-determination initially established the great value he placed on this force in his life. He then described various threats to his ability to be self-determining such as the ridicule of peers or the requirements of bureaucracies. Finally he spoke about the ways in which he overcame these threats and identified "resolve" as the internal force responsible for his ability to retain self-determination. This theme
paralleled in many ways the "findings" theme "The experience of tension between opposing forces."

The discussion of the experience of tension between opposing forces demonstrated that tensions could be experienced primarily as personal, such as Sandy's conflicting feelings about trusting her brother. Tensions were also experienced as primarily interpersonal. In Dan's experience, one can discern both intra- and interpersonal tensions. In conflict with peers, Dan reported on their critical views of his vegetarianism. This conflict was experienced as interpersonal. However, in Dan's conflict with bureaucracies, he stated "I've had a bit of problems in terms of just the system of rules..." In this case the conflict had intrapersonal manifestations. He was clearly disturbed and frustrated by this conflict. Similarly, in the story of a physical altercation with a peer, Dan said that "it would just infuriate me", another apparent sign of inner tensions. Dan's description of his experience therefore augmented my understanding of tensions between opposing forces by demonstrating how interpersonal tensions become reflected as an intrapersonal conflict.

There was a direct link between Dan's experience of conflict with others as he attempted to safeguard his ability to be self-determining and one of the core experiences of interpersonal conflicts described in "The experience of tension between opposing forces." This core experience was described as a battle of wills fought over the power to control events in one's life. Dan's struggle to retain his ability to be self-determining is clearly also of this order. When Dan described his peer "pick[ing] me up and twirling me around in the air" he was describing a very basic experience of being unable to control events in his life. He was, at that moment, unable to control his own freedom of movement. As Dan described it, this
aggression meant another individual had power over him ("... to be overpowered"), which he "couldn't stand."

Similar to participants describing of various personal strengths, such as resilience for resolving tension between opposing forces, Dan noted the value of his determination in overcoming the challenges of his dyslexia. Similar to participants crediting of various individuals with aiding their resolution of tensions, Dan mentioned his use of school special services aids in enabling him to be more self-determining.

Participants discussed the benefits of resolving tension between opposing forces. They mentioned increased confidence, increased inner strength and clarification of career goals among the benefits. Dan also mentioned benefits to fending off threats to his self-determination. For example, he undertook weight training in response to the physical threat from peers. As a result of acting on his own behalf to protect himself he said that he increased his self-confidence through knowledge that "I'm strong in myself" and "feel solid about myself."

Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration.

This theme resembled or had associations with three of the "findings" themes; "The experience of place"; "The experience of change and continuity"; and, "The experiences of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience."

A dominant aspect of the validation theme was the role of place in the formation of Dan's ideology. Dan credited his childhood experiences growing up in an isolated natural environment with having "quite a lot of impact on me."

In "the experience of place" participants associated aspects of their personal histories with a certain place. In "childhood: legacy of an ideology and career aspiration, Dan also associated aspects of his history
with place. For example, he recounted his experience with his dogs and eating directly out of the garden and associated these with living in the natural environment and in isolation.

An aspect of the experience of place was the linking of past experiences of place with current experience. The substance of Dan's experience in "legacy..." concerned the impact of his experience of the place where he lived as a child on the formation of his ideology. For example, he related the influence of living in a natural environment as a child on his appreciation of nature and finally on the formation of an ideology concerning the benefits of human exposure to "the things that will help them... Plants and stuff like that."

Similar to the participants' experiences of place, Dan had numerous associations with the place of his childhood. He associated it with "the natural environment", self-sufficiency, isolation and, transience.

The young adults appropriated public notions of place for their personal ends. For example, Sandy expressed her aspirations in terms of city and country living. Similarly, Dan appropriated the public notions of city and nature to meet his requirements in the formation of his ideology. For Dan, both of these terms assumed mythic proportions. "City" characterized by Dan as "buildings, cars and concrete and stuff" signified confinement, a place to escape from and generally a malfeasance to be avoided. Dan contrasted "city" with "nature" which he referred to as "the way I can communicate with that kind of spiritual energy." For Dan nature is "the real world" while city is "a fabrication."

This discussion demonstrates that there were numerous parallels between the themes "The experience of place" and "Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration."
The validation theme was also related to the theme "The experiences of change and continuity." The entire thrust of Dan's description of his legacy and ideology was the proposal of a link between the two. Dan expressed a continuity that began in childhood with his experience of place, continued through adolescence where ideas rooted in childhood were refined into opinions and, came to fruition in early adulthood where opinions were systematized into an ideology.

The validation theme provided greater detail to my understanding of the experiences of change and continuity. Dan referred to various developmental changes suggested by, for example childhood, high school age and university age. However, in the experience communicated in this theme, he emphasized continuity throughout these broader changes. Whereas the theme "The experiences of change and continuity" stated only that experiencing continuity in various aspects of their lives was expressed by participants, the theme "Childhood..." details one such experience in its demonstration of how one individual linked experiences across his life span.

Finally, there were also parallels between the validation theme and the theme "The experience of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience." Dan did not discuss rejecting knowledge and experience from others as was discussed as an aspect of the experience of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience. In fact, one of his strongest expressions was of the acceptance of knowledge and experience from his parents as well as others.

Similar to participants in their experiences of receiving knowledge and experience, others' expectations were not a factor in Dan's acceptance of influence. Instead, Dan described his father and stepfather as role models of self-sufficiency and adventurousness whom he observed and
subsequently developed his own behavior based on theirs. Role modeling was also mentioned by the young adults as one way in which they received knowledge and experience from others.

While other participants mentioned only individuals as sources of influence, for Dan, place, belief systems and family lifestyle were mentioned in addition to individuals as sources of influence. For example, Dan spoke about the influence of living in an isolated area, his family's religious beliefs and, his family's transience as influential in promoting his self-reliance, pacifism and "worldly perspective" respectively.

Passing on knowledge and experience to others was an experience of the young adults and discussed in the findings. Like Alexis, who counselled her sister about sex, they mentioned examples of passing on knowledge and experience to others. They also included the desire to pass knowledge and experience on to others in their aspirations.

The desire to influence others was also an integral aspect of Dan's ideology. He discussed his perceptions of what "people need" and determined to make it his "mission" to promulgate his ideals. He said, "I see myself working with kids and teaching them um, to be more self-sufficient...." Dan also discussed current or past examples of his passing on knowledge and experience. For example, he framed the quitting of his high school wrestling team as a desire to "make a statement" to his peers about his belief in non-violence.

**Influence:** The role that others play in the person I am.

This validation theme does not resemble as a whole any of the earlier themes. However, the idea of "Influence..." is present in two sub-themes; under "The experience of self" and "The experiences of closeness and separateness."
One aspect of the experience of self, as discussed by participants, was the gaining of an understanding of oneself through knowledge of who has influenced them, the manner in which they were influenced and the effect of the influence. Similarly, in the theme "Influence..." Dan noted the influences of his mother, family, father and others. He related that they had influenced him through discussion, role modeling and, teaching among others. He stated that he had been influenced to be "solid in what I'm doing" as well as other characteristics.

A sub-theme in "The experience of closeness and separateness" is "Comparing oneself to others" in which participants discussed aspects of themselves that were realized and refined in the context of comparable or contrasting features in others. An aspect of the validation theme also concerned the manifestation and realization of aspects of oneself in the context of comparison and contrast with others. For example, one way that Dan spoke about his optimism was through contrast with a friend whom he labeled as pessimistic. Dan also experienced an aspect of himself through comparison. He said that his experience of spirituality included the sharing of this personality feature with his sister.

Validation Conclusions

While this has not been an exhaustive discussion of the similarities and differences between these two sets of themes, the intention was to determine what degree of confidence to hold findings in, in terms of reasonableness. The intention was also to demonstrate that the findings should be read with an understanding that allows for a breadth of young adults' experiences not considered in this research.

It was demonstrated that the validation themes bare, for the most part, great affinity to the themes discussed in the "findings." There were examples cited in which a validation theme resembled and then extended
the knowledge garnered from a findings theme. There was exiguous disjunction between the two sets of themes. This degree of similitude arising from comparison to a second independent method of theme identification should provide the reader with a degree of confidence that the findings themes do reasonably follow from the data.

**Colleague Validation**

The second validation method involved the participation of a colleague. She is a psychologist familiar in her capacity as a therapist with listening and responding to life stories related by clients. She was aware that qualitative studies focussed on the experience of participants but was unfamiliar with the procedures of qualitative studies. She was aware that present study involved the telling of life stories by young adults 19 to 22 years of age. She was aware that the researcher had enlisted the assistance of participants in order to research the topic of identity.

One transcript was randomly selected by the colleague through blind selection of one of the assigned transcript numbers. A copy of this transcript had been segmented into meaning units each of which had been coupled with a phrase or phrases that the researcher determined as its core meaning. This data was a component of the data set which had been employed to elicit the findings.

The colleague was instructed to read the complete unsegmented transcript in order to gain a general understanding of participant's story. Following this reading, she was requested to read the segmented transcript by reading each meaning unit followed by its core meaning which had been noted adjacent to the meaning unit by the researcher. The researcher explained to the colleague that her task was to determine if
the core meanings could be said to reasonably follow from the meaning units.

The researcher had broken this interview transcript into 238 meaning units. The colleague agreed that all but three of the core meanings attributed to the meaning units by the researcher could be said to reasonably follow from the meaning units. She reported that each of these three core meanings "only partially reflected the content of the passage." The colleague elaborated that "an important attitude or value of the subject was not captured in the essential meaning." The researcher and colleague reviewed the three core meanings in question and were in accord as to the deficiencies in the researcher's specifications.

Considering the number of meaning units identified by the researcher, the aberrations may be said to be very few. Of these few, the colleague inferred that the researcher identified an aspect of the core meanings. There is no reason to assume that the quality of work by the researcher varies between this data and data derived from the remaining transcripts. Therefore, it may be inferred that there were likely very few examples throughout all of the data in which the researcher's core meanings did not reflect the meaning units. This offered credence to the researcher in his efforts to understand and report on the experiences as related by the participants. This few number of disjunctions was extremely unlikely to have effected the identification of themes and therefore the findings. Therefore this validation study can be said to strengthen the reader's confidence in the researcher's ability to accurately represent the experiences of the participants.

Participant Validation

With minor exceptions, participants agreed that their interview summaries accurately reflected the content and intent of their
discussions. Information changes, such as Jack's correction of the number of years he had been in a relationship were mentioned. Participants also augmented and clarified stories that they felt did not truly capture their experience. For example, Chris said that although she remembers feeling sad and abandoned when her brother and sister moved out of the family home, she also felt a sense of relief in that she would not have to listen to their quarreling nor get into quarrels with her brother. She also said that she did not mention that at the same time she became closer to her mother. The suggested changes were appended to the end of the interview transcripts and therefore became a part of the analysis.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Identity is defined in various ways in the literature. Some writers consider identity to be a structure (e.g., Blos, 1962) while others consider it a process, a subjective experience, or an unconscious entity (e.g., Erikson, 1959). A common understanding of the construct concerns its association with the "self", "inner nature", "self-concept", "self-knowledge", and "personal experience" (Rosenberg, 1979). Identity, in the most inclusive sense, concerns the person that one is.

The design of this research was based on the constructivist perspective in which identity is defined as the sense that an individual makes of the person he or she is. Thus, young adults were engaged in interviews and asked to respond to the questions "how would you describe the person you are at present?" and "how did you come to be the person you are at present?" It was expected that responses to these questions would enable the researcher to respond to the research question, "how do young adults construct identity?"

In the time elapsed since the publication of landmark research on this topic (e.g., Blos, 1962; Erikson, 1959; Mahler, 1968), the social landscape has undergone revolutionary changes. The social conditions within which individuals negotiate their identity are vastly different now than they were only 40 years ago. Whereas early definitions emphasized continuity, uniqueness and unity of character (Erikson, 1959), recent socio-psychological writings discuss the impact of the pervasive technological landscape on how individuals conceive of themselves (Gergen, 1991). This may influence how identity is constructed by individuals and thus how researchers should define identity. One impetus
for undertaking this research was to understand how individuals construct their identity within the modern social landscape.

The findings of this research, which were based on a phenomenological analysis of interview transcripts, indicated that the participants' experiences could be understood through seven thematic groupings: the experience of self awareness, the experiences of closeness and separateness, the experience of place, the experience of tension between opposing forces, the experiences of change and continuity, the experiences of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience and, the experience of considering the future.

The purpose of this final chapter is twofold. First, to discuss the findings in light of the research question "how do young adults construct identity?" Second, to describe the relationship between the response to the research question and literature on the topic of identity. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of my reaction to employing the present research method and a discussion of the implications of the findings of this research for counselling. The final section of this chapter concerns suggestions for further research.

The Researcher's Reaction to the Research Method

Because this research method necessitated my intimate involvement, my past and current experiences were bound to enter into the outcome. Attempting to understand the world view or meaning making systems of participants challenged me to be aware of the role of my personal biases and reactions to participants. I found the role of participant and observer to be a complex one. As a result, I found it helpful to record my thoughts after each interview in order to aid my awareness of how my personal biases enter into my understanding of the discussion.
This diary shows that the recasting and questioning of my own identity continued energetically throughout the undertaking of this research. My listening to and reflecting upon the experiences recounted by participants stimulated self-reflection including comparison of participants' experiences to my own.

The diary revealed that in the course of the interviews I found myself at times envious of participants' resolute understanding of their identity evidenced by their facile presentations of life stories. In the process of attempting to understand each participant, self-comparison was inevitable.

Another item in the diary noted my entry into parenthood. Becoming a parent prompted me to hold a broader perspective on the human life span than previously. It aided me to view the participants' discussions as set in a particular time in their lives situated approximately half way in years between the age of my infant and myself. I began to look for similarities in what participants related in terms of separating from family to my infants loosening of bonds to us as parents and experimentation with the larger world. I had been biased by my readings in the literature to look for this relationship. In clearly documenting these thoughts in the diary, I cautioned myself to allow the participants words to speak for themselves and was able to parcel out my biases from what they related.

I also struggled with reconciling my training as a counsellor and the role of interviewer. For example, one role that I assume as a counsellor is to promote change through encouraging client self awareness. At times this can take the form of summarizing what has been said. As researcher/interviewer my role excluded the promotion of change but sometimes necessitated the summarization of what was said in order to better my comprehension. At times I felt confused about how to avoid assuming the
counselling role which I had been so intensely trained to enact in exactly these situations.

It was because of these moments in the interviewing process that my journal, the recordings of the interviews, and the transcripts assumed great importance. The entries aided me to identify the times when my self reflection overshadowed the stories related by participants. The recordings and the transcripts enabled me to review the discussions with greater objectivity especially after reviewing my notes on the interview.

Another aspect of the research method was analysis of the transcripts. I was mistrustful of identifying meaning units and their transformations from the transcript alone as the transcript seemed to loose some of the unique qualities of each participant. I therefore listened to the audio-taped recordings as I read each transcript and commenced the analysis. This satisfied my desire to be more aware of the interview experience while retaining a degree of objectivity.

This method posed many methodological challenges. The method also involved numerous checks and balances (i.e., validations, discussion of researcher bias) that when taken into account with the research findings, provide the reader with the resources to judge the veracity and coherence of the discussion.

Participation in this study required extensive exertion on the part of participants and me as researcher. There was, however, a great return on one's efforts. Some participants stated in their follow-up interviews that they felt like co-researchers interested in the process and outcome of the study. Most of the participants stated they had learned much about the person they are as a result of participating in the interviews and reading their interview summaries.
Participation in this project provided benefits for myself as researcher. I learned a great deal about the person that I am through assessing my role as researcher, forming relationships with the participants during our discussions and, listening to the variety of ways in which identity can be constructed. Through listening to the taped interviews I had learned much about my communication skills. Finally, I learned about some of the resources and challenges that young adults retain as they negotiate their identity.

Discussion of the Findings

This section consists of two distinct discussions of the research findings. The first discussion concerns how the young adults in this study construct identity. Their constructions of identity are organized thematically and reference is made to relevant research literature. The second discussion is concerns how some of the themes can be considered in the context of models of identity.

Discussion of Participants' Experiences in the Context of Identity

The research findings show that the participants' experiences, as related in their life stories, can be understood according to seven major themes and numerous sub themes. The following discussion considers the relationship between the thematically categorized experiences and participants' constructions of identity. Reference to research is provided where appropriate.

The first three themes describe the basic framework upon which the remaining themes rest. These three subtending themes operate in the context of all six of the remaining themes. These themes are "process" themes in that they concern the manner in which meanings are made of experience rather than the meanings which are made. The three themes are
the experience of self awareness, the experience of tension between opposing forces, and the experience of change and continuity. The remaining themes concern the meanings that the young adults made of their experience. They are the experiences of closeness and separateness, the experience of place, the experiences of receiving and passing on knowledge and experience, and the experience of considering the future.

The Experience of Self Awareness

It may be said that all experience is available to individuals through self awareness. As such, how identity is constructed by young adults is contingent upon "the experience and content of self-awareness" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 109). The nature of self awareness and the results of being aware of oneself are therefore experiences central to, and indeed that enable the construction of identity. Without self awareness individuals would be unable to construct identity. This is because, at least within the constructivist approach, the individual is the source of meaning. By deduction then, it is to the individual that one must appeal to discover the meaning of experience. The experiences that participants were aware of and were able to speak of form the basis of the understanding of identity proposed in this research.

The experience of self awareness also has a more specific meaning in the context of this study. Participants experiences of self awareness can be understood in terms of "the self-as-object" and "the self-as-subject" (Damon & Hart, 1988; James 1890/1950). The process by which participants come to know the person they are involved their experience of the self-as-subject. Here, they were actively engaged in the role of knower or construct-maker. The outcome of participants' experiences of self awareness was knowledge of the self. Here, participants may be said to experience the self-as-object.
Self criticism is strongest during adolescence (Lowenthal, Thurner, & Chiriboga, 1975) perhaps due to the predominance during this age of emotional conflicts and uncertainties in knowing the person one is (Rosenberg, 1985). Self evaluation was one means by which participants' self awareness was manifested. Self evaluation concerned both critical and supportive considerations of one's experience.

Participants' experiences showed that self evaluation may contribute to young adults' constructions of identity in two ways. First, the young adults were actively engaged in a process of constructing the self through self evaluation. This experience may be understood as one of the self-as-subject. The act of judging one's character, abilities, aspirations, behavior, and other concerns may become an aspect of their construction of identity. Second, through self evaluation the young adults may be able to recognize and weigh various self attributes. In this way they may construct the person they are in increasingly greater detail. The results of self evaluation can be represented as a self-as-object experience in that they retain uncertain and unequivocal ideas that constitute the person they are. The act of self evaluation and its results can contribute to young adults' constructions of identity.

One focus of participants' experience represented as a self-as-object experience, concerned participants awareness of the co-existence and relationship among many disparate aspects of the self. Among these constructs were the "true self" as distinct from "the facade" and the "public self" contrasted with "the private self." The constructs expressed participants' understanding of themselves as complex individuals. The self that was known was multi-faceted. The self was a composite of sometimes conflicting ideals, aspirations, thoughts and emotions.
It is known that young adults are able to systematize the many disparate features of the self in such a way that recognizes diversity yet maintains coherence (Bernstein, 1980). By linking the contrasting constructs of oneself, the young adults established organizing principles that maintained coherence and diversity. The act of linking together the contrasting constructs is associated with the experience represented by self-as-subject.

In an example of the maintaining of diversity and coherence, Alexis acknowledged her adherence to ethnic group norms of privacy. In citing an exception to her values concerning privacy, she spoke about a discussion with a member of her ethnic group that prompted her to reveal family secrets. Through her consideration of the role of context in altering her behavior, Alexis acknowledged the diversity of her beliefs about herself. The story also maintains coherence through her constructing a relationship between the exceptional circumstance and her dominant belief about herself.

While participants maintained a degree of coherence through their awareness of the relationship between these contrasting self aspects, these conflicting notions can stimulate emotional turmoil (Damon & Hart, 1988). As discussed in the previous chapter, concern about whether they were cared for and the trust for others are two emotionally charged implications for the young adult that arose from this multi-faceted understanding of oneself. Belief about being a person who was cared for or disregarded was based on their sense of others' interest in discerning the young adult's authentic self. As a result of being uncertain whether others are likewise revealing themselves with authenticity, this understanding of self propels the young adult to explore their own capacity to trust others.
Attempting to and succeeding in resolving personal issues which are reflected in conflicting aspects of oneself may lead to a further awareness of oneself. In this experience, which can be represented as a self-as-subject experience, the young adults may realize that although many disparate aspects of oneself may co-exist, they are further parcelled in dominant and subordinate characteristics. For example, Jack was faced with a dilemma reflected in the conflict between his adventurousness and conservativeness. Resolution subordinates one aspect to the other. Resolution of personal issues provided some clarification and prioritization of personality features, aspirations, interests, opinions and other of the young adults' concerns. In this respect, the young adult's construction of identity was furthered.

Participants discussed self characteristics in the context of relating to others. Some of these characteristics were asserted in simple oppositional terms characteristic of young adolescents (Harter, 1986). For example, Chris described herself as "a real partier" and liking to "keep to myself." Similarly, simple trait descriptions also formed an aspect of participants experience of self awareness in the context of relating to others. For example, Chris described herself as a "caring and thoughtful", "quiet" and "not very confident."

However, as suggested of late adolescents participants also employed more complex concepts and integrating ideas represented by self-as-subject. For example, the young adults augmented ideas they held about themselves through constructing personal histories about how they came to relate to others as they currently did. They considered their personal history to be constitutive of how they relate to others through cause and influence. Chris' belief that her mother's fears and parenting were responsible for Chris' shyness in social situations was an example of
a participant considering her history to be the cause of behavior. Participants' experiences of being influenced were characterized as more participatory.

The young adults experienced being evaluated by others and this prompted their self awareness. In this experience, which can be represented as a self-as-subject experience, they considered the validity of others' evaluations. Acceptance of another's evaluation indicated adoption of that point of view by the young adult. Rejection of an others' evaluation indicated that the young adult preferred their own view of themselves. In either case, awareness of oneself-as-object is altered or enhanced. Through the experience of reconciling others' assessments of oneself with those personally held, the young adult may decide between acceptable constructions of their identity. For example, the evaluations of teenage males for their female counterparts can have deleterious effects for the girls. This was the case for Alexis who referred to her turmoil that resulted from males response to her early physical maturity. Negative self-esteem can be one outcome of early physical maturity in girls because of their feelings of awkwardness and inability to cope with the social and sexual expectations that their early maturity fosters (Simmons & Blyth, 1987).

Acceptance of others' evaluations was understood by participants as openness to their influence. The young adults constructed identity through understanding various of their personal attributes as inculcated through the influence of others. This understanding provided the young adult with an awareness of important individuals in their life, knowledge of the manner in which they have been influenced and knowledge of the effect of the influence, all of which may contribute to their construction of identity.
The experience of self awareness concerned two contrasting experiences of the self. The first involved the activities directed towards constructing the self such as self evaluation and linking together various facets of one's experience as in the constructing of personal histories. This is the experience of self-as-subject or knower. The second experience of self, self-as-object, concerned the awareness of the self that is constructed. A feature of the former experience is that effort is expended in the process of making meaning of various temporally or experientially disparate experiences. A feature of the latter experience is that various aspects of oneself are seen to be in conflict and therefore in need of resolving in an effort to maintain coherence.

**The Experience of Tension Between Opposing Forces**

This second subtending theme, like the above theme, can be seen to operate in all of the other themes. The experience of tension between opposing forces concerned not only the experience of conflict and attempts to resolve such, but the experience of the tension that is present prior to making more than one aspect of one's existence cohere in a personally meaningful manner.

Erikson (1959) proposed that identity is associated with a crisis of conflicting forces. He referred to the drive to gain "integrated ego identity" and the need to overcome identity or role confusion as the predominant conflicting forces experienced by young adults. He suggested that this conflict ensued through attempts by young adults to reconcile societal expectations with their personal interests, talents and values. While "crisis" is not always the appropriate descriptor of participant's tensions, Erikson's formulation can be seen reflected in the conflicting forces apparent to the young adults in this study.
Participants in this study described tensions experienced within themselves and conflict between themselves and others. Intrapersonal tensions may contribute to an individual's construction of identity in two ways. First, it may promote cognizance of the existence of inner experience. The young adult may realize that inner turmoil in the form of opinions, feelings and beliefs is an aspect of the self that is known. Second, it may promote awareness of specific conflicting thoughts and feelings. One intrapersonal tension experienced by participants concerned the discrepancy between the actual self and the self one ought to be. The tension is a result of the thwarted desire to link together two notions that one holds about oneself. Ideas about the person that one "ought" to be reflect participants' introjections of societal expectations. That this tension can lead to restlessness, fear, and generalized agitation in young adults (Higgins, 1987) is supported by the experience of Zelda who expressed her frustration at attempting to discern what she "ought to do" from what she wanted to do.

Shantz (1987) defines interpersonal conflict as a disagreement or behavioral opposition between two parties. Interpersonal tensions in which the young adult views him/herself to be in opposition to others has been credited with promoting ego development (Cooper, 1988). In the present study, interpersonal tensions are seen to contribute to participants' notions about the person they are in two ways; through the recognition of who is in opposition, and through engaging in the conflict. First, by identifying those individuals who hold contrary views, the young adult gains knowledge of alliances and oppositions. The young adults' discernment of their niche amongst peers and family members and their position in society form an aspect of beliefs about the person they are. Second, by engaging in the conflict, the young adult's values, ideology,
thoughts, beliefs, and feelings may be enacted. The young adults may become aware of these aspects of the person they are as well as realize how they differ from others.

Participants indicated that the core experience of interpersonal conflicts is a battle of wills fought over the power to control events in one's life and the power to determine responsibilities and expectations in personal and societal relationships. The outcome of the first struggle may furnish the individual with notions of their instrumentality. By engaging in the second struggle, the young adult may be striving to enact their desires to have their relationships reflect an aspect of the person they are, through prevailing in determining the nature of the relationship. Whether successful or not, participation in this struggle may make previously unrealized aspects of oneself manifest and therefore contribute to an individual's sense of the person they are.

Participants discussed the role of personal attributes in the resolution of conflicts. The challenge to obtain a solution to conflict may stimulate the expression and awareness of various personal attributes which contributes to an individual's beliefs about the person they are.

Individuals became a part of the resolution of tensions through their efforts to aid the young adult. As such, they also became an aspect of the young adult's experience and therefore contribute to the young adult's notions of the person he or she is. At the very least, others may become an aspect of the story of tension between opposing forces that the young adult may tell and through which they create and know the person they are. In aiding the resolution of tensions, others may also contribute to the young adult's sense of being a worthy person, a person with valued relationships as well as other notions associated with the person one is.
Because the young adults accrued benefits as a result of resolving conflicts, resolving tensions may promote both the development and awareness of various notions about oneself. For example, the young adults said that they experienced increased confidence or the clarification of career goals with the resolution of conflict.

Because the young adults experienced greater authority over their lives as a result of resolving tensions, through resolving tensions the young adults may augment their notions of the person they are with the realization that they are individuals who are able to guide the course of their lives.

Inability to resolve conflict promotes the expression and awareness of various personal attributes such as helplessness and regret which can contribute to notions about oneself.

The Experiences of Change and Continuity

The final subtending theme concerns the manner in which participants justified the changes and abiding aspects of their lives into a coherent story. Both change and continuity were important aspects of how the young adults conceived of themselves. Through perceiving how he or she has changed over time, the young adult may understand that he or she is advancing, becoming better persons or more closely resembling an ideal. Conversely, they may feel they are stagnating or not advancing in their pursuit of an ideal.

The threat that change poses is the obscuring of the sense of a unifying self that is responsible for creating change as well as for engaging in other actions. Indeed at times the young adults feel that it is not they who are responsible for changes. In these instances, the young adult may feel threatened by powerful others, as did Dan when he was
compelled to undertake strengthening exercises in order to overcome the intimidation of others.

Individuals reconstruct their experience so as to maintain coherence of self (Cohler, 1972). The experience of change challenges the maintenance of coherence in that the young adults must locate a way to assimilate changes into their current experiential system or accommodate their established way of being to the new experience (Piaget, 1969). The young adults established a sense of coherence and congruency of self in their experiences of change through understanding their changes in a context. For example, Chris related how her experience of peers who were university students as well as "partiers" like herself, shifted her perceptions of the possibility of her attending university. She accommodated her way of thinking through being confronted with the evidence of peer lifestyle that ran contrary to her established beliefs about university students as unsociable. Although this change may have initially de-stabilized her notions about the person she is, in accommodating she was able to incorporate the new information into her system of making sense of experience, thereby providing coherence to how she thinks about herself.

A sense of continuity provides the young adult with the experience of enduring aspects of themselves. For example, Sandy found her personality characteristics of contentment, playfulness and sociability as a constant throughout her life. However, continuity can also signify fear of making a change and defensiveness. Alexis' continued desire to "please people" despite being treated "like a doormat" exemplifies the assimilation of experience into her established way of thinking. Rather than resolving her dilemma through perceiving these individuals as aggressors, she preferred to "be as nice as nice could be 'cause I never
wanted to upset anybody." She preferred to view these individuals as worthy of her support rather than confront them about the effects of their behavior. While this was likely an uneasy position to retain given the presence of her acknowledged discomfort, it does show the efforts of an individual to retain a semblance of coherence in a dissonant situation. She rationalized her acceptance of being taken advantage of by asserting that she was the kind of person who does not want to upset others.

The following themes describe some of the meanings that participants made of their experience. Within each theme can be discerned the supporting processes of; self evaluation and the creation of relational constructs in participants' awareness of themselves as knower and known, the tension and resolution of conflicting intra- and interpersonal forces, and the rationalizing of shifting and abiding experiences through accommodation and assimilation.

The Experiences of Closeness and Separateness

Kelley et al. (1983) noted the factors that promote closeness and separateness in relationships as the frequency, interdependence, and rewards of interactions. Participants discussed closeness and separateness in the contexts of evolving family relations, leaving home, peer relations and comparing oneself to others.

Evolving family relations.

The present research suggests ways in which young adults make sense of their changing family relationships. The young adults spoke about shifts in family relations in terms of their experience of closeness and separateness to others.

One way in which participants made sense of family relations was through the linking of factors that contribute to a sense of separateness and closeness in family relationships with the experience of relationship
separateness and closeness. In so doing the young adults constructed personal histories concerning antecedent factors that contribute to the quality of their relationships to others. Forming relationships between various aspects of their lives can contribute to the young adults' constructions of identity by providing coherence to their experience. Understanding the history and reasons for close and separate relationships constitutes an aspect of their identity.

Intense emotions are aroused in participants through their experiences of closeness and separateness. The chronicling of emotions was a component of participants' constructions of identity. By rousing emotional reactions, close and separate relationships contributed to the young adults' constructions of identity. Emotions constituted a component of young adults' constructions of identity. The young adults may know themselves to be individuals with emotions. They may also be aware of specific emotions they associate with certain kinds of relationships.

Participants described shifts in closeness and separateness from family members. These shifts contributed to the young adults' constructions of identity in a number of ways. First, a history of changing relationships becomes an aspect of identity. Participants' knowledge that they are capable of a range of relationships with others, and their knowledge of the quality of those relationships in terms of closeness and separateness also informs their construction of identity. Finally, the young adults augment their constructions of identity with the knowledge that they can adapt to changing relationships and can become close to, or separate from others according to their own needs. They may learn that they are adaptable, seeking autonomy when investigation of the novel is paramount, dependent when in need of nurturing and, a balance of support and independence when continuing family relations enhances one's
entrance into the larger society. In addition, as a young adult, he or she may understand that he or she has a personal history and that he or she is able to regard and consider his or her personal history and formulate a comprehensive narrative of his or her two decades of life accounting for shifts in family relationships.

Participants described their seeking of support during periods when they experienced separateness in their relationships with caregivers. The experience of gaining support from others and finding that this support enabled them to cope with the stresses of separateness may have contributed to the young adults' constructions of identity in three ways. First, the young adults may view themselves as capable of acting on their own behalf through utilizing resources to meet their own needs. Second, the young adults may view themselves as worthy of the caring of others. This may be especially important during times when separateness from caregivers can be understood as a lack of caring. Finally, the young adult may view themselves as able to survive outside of the family through their success at utilizing sources of support that enable the them to cope with periods of separateness from caregivers. Through gaining support from others, the young adult may view themselves as an individual who values relationships and that in a relationship they are able to fill the role of receiver of support. In addition they may realize that they are able to discover and utilize ways of surviving situations in which alienation is experienced as a threat.

Participants reflected on the actions and attitudes of caregivers in prompting the young adults to seek renewed closeness in their relationships with caregivers. Caregivers were said to display a range of behaviors from hyper-vigilance to indifference. Participants noted that they were more likely to seek closer relations when caregivers expressed
less vigilance and intervention or a balance of contact, support and independence. The quality of contact with caregivers may form an aspect of young adults' constructions of identity.

The young adults regarded family members in new ways as a result of renewing close relations with them. Individuals whom they viewed as adversaries were later viewed as allies. The young adults' capacities to engage in a broad range of dynamic relationships may inform their constructions of identity.

Home leaving and establishing a life away from family.

Five of the six participants in this study were from families with divorced parents. Home leaving in young adults of divorced families is associated with greater emotionality compared to intact families (Moore & Hotch, 1982). Also, there is an interaction between openly expressed divorce conflict and, instrumentality and positive feelings about leaving home (Proulx & Koulack, 1987). Although this study did not consider specifically the relationship between divorce-related conflict and home leaving, both instrumentality and emotionality were aspects of participants' constructions of leaving home.

Participants experienced varying degrees of authority in leaving home. Some endured the experience of feeling forced to leave while others were self-determining and decisive in their departure. Therefore, leaving home may have implications for the young adults' apprehension of their instrumentality.

Participants described various emotional responses associated with leaving home. The young adult may therefore become aware of the emotions that leaving home promotes. Their emotional responses to leaving home may become an aspect of their understanding of the person they are.
Participants asserted that an important motivation for their establishment of support systems outside of the family was the willingness of their caregivers to surrender some responsibility to their offspring. Therefore, trustworthiness and competence can form two aspects of young adults' constructions of identity.

Participants described their continuing relationship with family after moving away from them. Their experiences do not support research on late adolescent separation from family that couples the experience solely with autonomy (Aldous, 1978), and independence (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). Participants' constructions of leaving home included both experiences of independence and continued connectedness.

Moore and Hotch (1982) identified autonomy-related experiences of young adults as emotional detachment from parents, economic independence, establishing a separate residence, and self-governance. Participants' experiences supported this view. Chris spoke about emotional detachment from parents in terms of not being entangled in the emotional antagonism that her parents had for each other. Economic independence from parents formed an aspect of participants view of leading a separate life from parents as an aspiration as well as a current reality. Establishing a separate residence formed an important component of the participant's life away from parents. For Zelda, autonomy was not only found in her newly established residence, but the lifestyle that the experience of having a separate home enabled. She wished to infuse her home with signifiers of esteemed beliefs such as that represented by a recycling system, as well as interests such as that represented by her desire to house many animals. As evidenced by Jack's world traveling, consideration of the role of separate habitat in autonomy should not be confined to residences. Jack's experience of travel included the autonomy-
related concern of self-governance. Jack's "enormous risk" of leaving for a
country with little money was a successful trial of his ability to survive
difficult situations. He discussed the outcome of that experience in terms
of increased confidence in his ability to plan and carry out his goals.

While participants spoke about autonomy issues in leaving home,
continuing family relations also formed a significant aspect of their
experience. Jack chose his father as the person to receive written
installments of his travels, despite their antagonistic relationship prior
to his leaving. Chris spoke about her frequent returns to "the old family
neighborhood." Relatedness was constructed by the young adults as the
relating of experiences and thoughts, the sharing of experiences, the
receiving of support, encouragement and security, the voluntary quality of
relationships, and excitement associated with re-engaging with an
alienated caregiver.

In addition, the young adults associated their retaining of
independent viewpoints and less intrusiveness on the part of caregivers
with relatedness. These two associations are complex in that they contain
a quality of separateness. It is apparent from these that relatedness is
redefined in the context of young adults leaving home and renewing family
relations. As younger adolescents, relatedness may be unidimensional,
consisting solely of closeness. As young adults move away from home and
renew family relations, their relationships can become more complex and
experiences that earlier would be perceived as indications of
separateness are accepted as a viable part of the continuing close
relations. These experiences serve to support studies such as that of
Gilligan (1982) that emphasize the role of family affiliation in young
women's experiences and that of Doi (1973) that show the importance of
family obligations, dependence and affiliation in identity achievement.
Whereas early studies suggest that young women are primarily interpersonally oriented and young men oriented towards occupation (Marcia, 1980; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1975), the present study showed less gender stereotyping. While occupation was a concern of the males in this study, continued family connectedness constituted an important aspect of their constructions of identity. Jack, in his communications with his father while traveling, and his return to live in the family home, and Dan, in his discussions of close relationships to family members. The young women in this study also spoke about their continued connectedness to family. However, contrary to these early studies, they were also concerned with occupation. Chris spoke about her frustration at "going nowhere" in her career aspirations. Viewing her friends as "partiers" and university students enabled her to see new career possibilities for herself. Similarly, Zelda weighed the positive and negative attributes of her current employment in her consideration of personal values.

By including family in their life away from them, the young adults may gain the perspective that their lives are not isolated in time and place but that they lead a continuous existence in which past experiences and relationships accumulate rather than vanish. Participants' experiences away from family included family support, conflict with family members and shared family activities. Their experiences support the notion of separation as inclusive of family associations and mutuality (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986) and a gradual transition to the work place rather than a definitive shift away from family (Rollins & Thomas, 1979). Through gaining benefits associated with continued family connection after leaving home, the young adults may learn that continued family affiliation may enhance their experience away from family.
The young adults also remarked on the association between success in the larger society and their willingness to rekindle family relations as well as their family's willingness to accept them. Through this experience young adults may realize that the achievement of career and other goals can enhance family relations. Through learning this connection, the young adult may be encouraged to succeed in their life away from home. As a result, they may learn what value they place on work and family.

**Peer relations.**

Peer relations are initiated, transformed, and dissolved with greater frequency and ease than kin relations (Collins & Laursen, 1992). By positing reasons for consummating and dissolving friendships, the young adults linked relationships to various of their concerns or circumstances. In doing so they created a narrative about their relations with others, which can form an understanding they retain about themselves.

For the young adults in this study some peer relations were seen as temporary and some as long-standing. Participants associated separateness with temporary relationships. The young adults suggested that differences in peers' aspirations, interests and activities were reasons for terminating relations. These reasons were seen to underscore the young adults' perceptions of leading an independent and unique existence. These relationships emphasized differences between the young adult and peers. Through experiencing differences with peers, the young adult may become aware of their own personal qualities.

Long-standing relationships were judged by participants to be close and permanent. These relationships may prompt the young adult's awareness of the continuity of their personal history. Through sharing common interests with long-standing friends, peers may act as mirrors enabling the young adult to recognize various interests they retain.
Conflict was also present in close long-standing relationships. Conflict is exhibited more frequently in relationships characterized by interdependence and closeness (Laursen, 1993). In these relationships, conflict improves relations by highlighting and resolving differences. This can be observed in Dan's disagreements with his "pessimistic" friend. Dan suggested that "we both learn from each other" despite, or perhaps because of their differences.

Friends and romantic partners are sensitive to the potential divisiveness of conflict and therefore tend to settle disputes amicably (Laursen, 1993). This was evident in Sandy's and her ex-boyfriend's continued attempts to restore friendship to their relationship. In contrast, because of the perceived stability of kin relations, moderate levels of negative affect are tolerated (Berscheid, 1985). In comparing participants' peer and kin relationship conflicts, this would appear to be true. In the context of speaking about her renewed relationship with her father, Chris suggested that she would always hold a degree of animosity towards him because of his abandonment of the family. Yet in speaking about peers, negative affect was not tolerated. She alluded to the replacement of an entire peer group with another because of her newly adopted interests and aspirations which she perceived to be in conflict with the old peer group.

Peer relationships are considered an important aspect of participants' conceptions of the person they are. As Chris suggested, "I think your friends have a big say in who you are. What you accomplish... It's what your friends do plays a big part in your life."

Comparing oneself to others.

Through comparison and contrast to others the young adults identified and refine self constructs. For example, through the experience
of closeness with a friend and separateness from others, Dan gained insight into his beliefs and goals.

By stimulating emotions, the experience of realizing similarities and differences to others has the potential to enable the young adult to become aware of their emotions as well as their feelings about others. The feeling of intense bonds or disparities with another can become an aspect of young adults notions about their peer system as well as their belief system.

Participants asserted personal history and relationship contexts for their similarities and differences with others. For example, they posited that similar parenting, genetic pre-disposition and the passing on of inter-generational personality traits as responsible for how they came to be similar to others. Drawing these connections may assist the young adult in making sense of how they came to be the person they are, ways in which they are currently similar to and different from others, shared histories, and their bonds with others.

Comparing oneself to others in terms of propensity for closeness or separateness in relationships can aid the young adult in their assessment and therefore knowledge about the person they are.

The Experience of Place

The young adults spoke about the significance of the place they lived in as a child, the place they currently live in, and different countries or areas they have lived in. Place and notions about oneself were ineluctably linked through retrospection when the young adults recount experiences that they associate with specific places.

The linking of past experiences of place to present experiences may aid the young adult to unify notions about the self that were previously isolated in time. The particular causal notions employed by participants in
linking past experiences of place to current experience may also form an aspect of the young adults' notions about themselves.

The young adults also linked their family home with experiences that took place there. Through linking place with family turmoil, peer relations, various emotions and other experiences, a web of interconnectedness is established that may augment the young adults' notions about the person they are. The experiences associated with place become invested with complex meanings that form an aspect of the individual's identity.

Participants invested place with various meanings. For example, for one participant place was a sign of independence. By instilling place with an idiosyncratic meaning, the young adults may claim it as an aspect of their existence and thereby an aspect of the way in which they come to know the person they are.

The Experiences of Receiving and Passing on Knowledge and Experience

Through assessing and filtering the knowledge and experience offered by others, the young adults exercised some control in shaping the person they are. By rejecting others' knowledge and experience, the young adults affirmed the precedence of their own interests and aspirations over those held for the young adult by others. Rejecting caregiver's attempted influence can create conflict. Conflict is associated with the perception of caregiver's behavior as selfishly motivated, intentional, and blameworthy (Grace & Kelley, 1993). Zelda's rejection of her mother's desire for her to engage in political activity exemplifies the attributions that the young adults held for their caregivers in these situations. Here, Zelda perceived her mother as selfishly motivated. Instead of considering Zelda's interests and personality, her mother was seen to desire that Zelda carry on her mother's interests.
In rejecting others' attempted influence, the young adults may have furthered their construction of identity in two ways. First, the process can heighten their awareness of their own interests and aspirations by having those challenged. Second, they can distinguish for themselves how they differ from others.

By discerning acceptable from unacceptable influences, the young adults may gain awareness of their preferences. Through the acceptance of knowledge and experience from others, they may become aware of influences that are congruent with the person they are. In these respects, the experience of accepting knowledge and information informs the young adult's sense of the person they are.

Passing on knowledge and experience can contribute to young adults' understanding of themselves in two ways. First, through being active in passing on knowledge and experience the young adults may become cognizant of the knowledge and experience that they possess. Second, the young adults imbue the act of passing on knowledge and experience with meanings that emerge from various other aspects of their experience. Dan spoke about the relationship between his desire to influence children in his career and his ideology. In connecting disparate aspects of their experience, the young adults can make meaning of their experience.

Participants discussed the various roles they assumed as they passed on knowledge and experience. The roles that young adults assume can form an aspect of the person they know themselves to be.

As the young adults discover various outlets for knowledge and experience that they retain, they may identify a career or aptitude which augments their knowledge of the person they are. Awareness of appropriate contexts for the edification of others can augment the young
adult's comprehension how they are able participate with others and find a role in society.

Participants became aware of knowledge and experience that they had inherited and therefore retained by knowing that they desired to pass on or already had passed this on to others. They also invested individuals, whom they had received knowledge and experience from, with esteem. These individuals therefore formed an important aspect of how the young adults conceive of themselves. By carrying their inherited knowledge and experience forth in their own lives, the young adults may acknowledge and indicate their valuation of antecedent influences which can form an aspect of their identity.

**The Experience of Considering the Future**

For these young adults, considering the future was associated with the identification and pursuit of aspirations. The identification and pursuit of aspirations can be one aspect of the young adult's knowledge of the person he or she is. By locating their aspirations within a time frame, they may further clarify their expectations and desires about the pacing and organization of predicted key events in their lives.

Adolescents' consideration of the future can be understood in the context of four categories derived from narrative themes (Greene, 1986). Future achievements are represented in the attaining of goals or status. Relational events concern aspects of interpersonal relationships. Experimental events concern predicted new experiences or changes. Finally, existential events concern changes in one's inner state of being. These categories comprehensively describe participants' constructions of their future in the present study. Future achievements were a focus of participants' desires for career, children, house and intimate relationship. The young adults' expressions of ways in which they want others to know
them reflect relational concerns. Participants' desires for future travel or new lifestyles are experimental in nature. Existential events are reflected in participants' expectations that they will undergo changes in character.

The findings of the present study support the research of Greene and Wheatley (1992), in that the general topics of predicted life events were the same for both males and females. Both male and female participants referred to their considerations of future mates, children, career, and activities. While the general subjects of predicted life events were similar for male and female participants, the meaning that participants appended to these differed by gender. Only female participants predicted the need to resolve the dilemma of making financial, career and family compromises or expressed their desire to "have it all" in acknowledgment of social forces that discouraged exactly that. For the males, "having it all" did not enter their future deliberations. In the case of Dan, attainment of career, personal and family goals were considered the natural and expected extension of his past and present family experience and personal beliefs. The young women's constructions of their futures included reference to the need to surmount personal and social constraints such as the desire to become less selfish, avoid traditional gender based marital roles, and alcoholic mates. The males' constructions of their futures were devoid of these themes.

While Greene and Wheatley (1992) found that young women exhibited less of an urgency than males in their narratives of the future, the present study showed the opposite. Chris was particularly agitated in her desire to escape from "being on hold" and initiate a series of actions that would culminate a successful career and domestic life because she felt that she was "getting old." Similarly, Zelda was agitated about her confusion in the distinction of her personal aspirations from those that others held for her.
These females could be characterized as highly motivated and anxious in their desire to engage their futures and avoid a future of conflict. In contrast, the males were much more constrained. Dan predicted his career future as following naturally from his ideology and interests. Similarly, he characterized the finding of a suitable marital partner as a given; "I think it's going to work and we're going to be in love forever..." Similarly, Jack's career "crossroads" was experienced in the context of being "mellowed out." One resolution relied on the chance visit of a friend. He showed no indication of being proactive in determining his future.

Some of the women expressed a willingness to make compromises to attain goals. Others stated they expected that they would not be able to fully realize all of their goals. For these young adults striving to achieve aspirations included deciding between two or more mutually exclusive courses of action. Whether willing or unwilling to compromise, the young adults attempt, and are at times unable to come to a resolution of how to enact career plans. The young adults come to know the person they are through this process of deciding on which aspirations are worthy of pursuit and locating a means of pursuing aspirations.

Participants were able to identify a course of action directed towards the achievement of goals. The description of the means they are able to undertake in order to move from the social and psychological position they currently occupy to their desired state of being can be expressive of the young adults' construction of their capabilities projected into the future.

Another way the young adults constructed identity was through understanding the factors that contributed to their identification of future goals. Ideology, the modeling of others, aptitudes, and the participant's past were understood as instrumental in the establishment
of goals. Through identifying and understanding the factors that contribute to the establishment of their aspirations, the young adults can construct a story of career that comprises an aspect of their identity.

Summary

The above discussions respond to the research question, "How do young adults construct identity?" The first three subtending themes answered the research question in terms of the manner in which identity was constructed by these young adults. It was found that identity was constructed through self awareness in the form of self evaluation and linking disparate aspects of one's experience. While the process of self evaluation necessitates a view of self-as-subject, the outcomes of this process adhere in the form of the experience of self-as-object. The second process by which young adults may come to know the person they are is in resolving and attempting to resolve tensions experienced within oneself and interpersonal conflicts between opposing forces. Here, the young adults recognized and attempted to reconcile diverse and sometimes conflicting personal characteristics. They also attempted to resolve conflict with others. The final process theme, the experiences of change and continuity, concerned assimilating changes into one's current experiential system and accommodating one's established way of being to new experiences. The remaining themes responded to the research question in terms of the meanings that these young adults made of their experience.

Close and separate relationships with family members and peers represented an aspect of young adults' constructions of identity. Transitions in closeness and separateness to family members were an aspect of this experience. These changes, in the form of shifts in autonomy and relatedness were apparent in the context of leaving home
and in renewed family relations. Young men and women both included autonomy and relatedness in their experiences of leaving home and renewing family relations. After home leaving or the renewal of family relations, closeness and separateness may become less distinguishable and more unidimensional as retaining a unique perspective, for example, can enable rather than discourages closeness. The parent-child relationship was viewed as more cooperative and reciprocal rather than one of unilateral parental authority.

Peer relations occupied another aspect of young adults' constructions of identity. Peer relationships were seen as temporary or long-standing. Conflict was an aspect of peer relations as is the determination of similarities and differences. The young adults attempted to resolve conflict in peer relations but also replaced them in attempting to create greater alignment of peer activities and interests with personal ideology and aspirations.

The young adults considered place of living or domicile as constitutive of an aspect of identity. They linked various experiences such as family turmoil or a sense of independence with the place in which they live. In so doing, young adults may embrace place of living into their meaning making system.

Receiving and passing on knowledge and experience was an aspect of the young adults' constructions of identity. They both accept and reject others' influence. They also expressed the desire to influence others through career activities and in personal relationships in the form of advice-giving and the sharing of information.

The young adults' considerations of the future was an aspect of their identity. In speaking about the future they mentioned achievements, relational events, existential concerns and new experiences. Although
gender was not a significant factor in these categories in this study, concerns about intrapersonal, interpersonal and social conflict was an aspect of the young women's and not the young men's constructions of the future.

Dialogue with Identity Models

The purpose of this dialogue with the theories is not to discredit identity models but rather to provide experiential support in which to discuss them. The intention is to encourage further questioning of the experience of identity.

Ego Psychology Models

Id, Ego, Superego and the Experience of Self Awareness

The elemental principles of psychoanalytic theory concern the interplay of id, ego and superego. Strictly understood, the design of this research does not allow for comments concerning these constructs on the development of identity because the id and superego are defined as unavailable to individuals except perhaps through intense and specialized analytic techniques. This study is premised on quite different notions. As a phenomenological study, the assumption is that identity is implicit in participants' naive descriptions of their experience rather than in the interplay of predetermined structures. As a constructivist study, the emphasis is on individual volition and concerns only those experiences that are available to the individual.

With the above provisos, this study does show that participants' experiences as described in the theme "The experience of self awareness", included expressions of personal organizational structures, similar to the id, ego and superego. The discussion context in which participants related their life stories and the fact that these structures were experienced through self awareness, necessitates their definition as conscious and
available to the individual rather than unconscious and unavailable as is
the orientation of psychoanalytic theory concerning the id and superego.

While a psychoanalytic interpretation of participants is beyond the
scope of this discussion, there are some interesting parallels between
participants' experiences and psychoanalytic constructs. Participants'
experiences included the awareness of various and often conflicting
aspects of themselves that can be seen to be descriptively similar to the
above cited intrapsychic constructs.

Participants' descriptions of conflicting privately experienced
voices such as "the accepting" and "the critical" correspond to conceptions
of ego and superego. Participants' descriptions of conflicting motivating
drives to "be wild" and "be secure" hold similarities to the instinct driven
id and the controlling superego. Participants' descriptions of privately
experienced wishes to be sexually aggressive hold similarities to the
sexually driven id. That participants experienced this drive as an
unfulfilled and hidden "wish" is reminiscent of the conflict between, and
the domination of superego over id.

Similar to ego psychology's conceptualization of the attainment of
ego identity through the interplay of id, ego and superego (Anderson &
Fleming, 1986) participants described their attempts reconcile
conflicting aspects of themselves. In an example of this, Alexis noted the
abatement of her base sexual drives with a more balanced realization that
"I don't have to be like [female sex symbols]." Her new valuation of her
"inner beauty" and realization of being "a worthwhile person" may be
understood by ego psychologists as indicative of a degree of ego
continuity (Blos, 1976) because of their expression of self contentment
and unity.
The underpinnings of the psychoanalytic model and the philosophical orientation of this research are quite different. However, there are suggestions in the participants' experiences of self awareness of personal conflicting forces and resolutions that appear descriptively similar to the psychoanalytic constructs of id, ego and superego and attempts at their resolution.

Developmental Models

The Reconciliation of Social Expectations in the Experience of Tension Between Opposing Forces

Erikson's (1959) extension of the psychoanalytic view of identity to include social and cultural contexts is well supported by the experiences of participants in this study. All the identity themes include a component in which the young adults referred to the interconnection between identity and their social or cultural experience. In that the present research considered the coherence and integration of experience through narrative, it is related to Erikson's (1959) view of identity as unity. The present view contrasts with Erikson when his work is considered structuralist or neo-psychoanalytic and is in accord with Erikson in his view of identity as a process or subjective experience (Kroger, 1989).

As is the case in Erikson's view, participants attempted to reconcile social expectations with their personal interests, talents and values. One identified theme, "the experience of tension between opposing forces" was inclusive of discussions in the other themes concerning the young adults' attempts to resolve discord between the personal and the social.

Breaches between personal and social imperatives and the attempts by participants to resolve these, were an aspect of the experience of self awareness. While social forces were an aspect of participants' experiences of self awareness, they formed a background to the more
prominent experience of personal structures and orientations through which social experience was perceived. Social forces, such as ethnic group norm pressures and peer group pressures stimulated participants' awareness of personal values for example, privacy or being unique among friends.

Participants acknowledged differences between how others perceived them and their personal self assessments. Resolving disparities between others' assessments and participants own self-assessments involved the weighing of other's evaluations with their own. They addressed the disjunction by attempting to resemble social assessments more closely or by discounting social assessments as archaic, inaccurate or motivated by personal interests rather than genuineness. Participants also spoke about changing from being dependent on others for validation of personal qualities to relying more on their own evaluations.

Not only did others play a role in the young adults' self awareness through their assessments, they also represented models against which participants contrast themselves. By seeing, for example, how one's social group was progressing in their career development, participants formed opinions as to their own career potential. This process augments the young adults' understanding of the person he or she is through reconciling their assessment of their own qualities with qualities of their effective social group.

Participants attempted to resolve closeness with separateness in the context of tensions in family relations. In this context, the young adults attempted to resolve their personal needs for closeness and separateness with those of others. For example, participants experienced family pressures to succeed. By living at a greater distance from family, participants resolved their need for greater autonomy in the form of more
control over family knowledge of the participant's activities. Consequently, participants reduced the intensity and frequency of family contact and thereby experienced less pressure to succeed.

Participants' experiences of place included attempts to resolve conflicting personal and societal ideologies. For example, participants experienced conflict between personal ideology and urban lifestyle or the norms of small community and individuality. Resolution of the conflicts included rejection of societal standards along with increased valuation of personal ideology and attempts to alter the social environment to suit one's ideology.

The reconciliation of participants' needs with those of others was discussed by participants in their experiences of change and continuity. For example, the young adults described conflict between caregivers' expectations and participants' values. The resolution by participants of adapting to caregivers expectations was discussed in terms of personal changes that participants experienced.

An aspect of the theme "the experience of receiving knowledge and experience" was the rejection of caregiver expectations. Participants attempted to reconcile their personal values with imposed expectations of caregivers. For example, participants described caregivers' communication of the value of engaging in various activities and their desire for participants to engage in those activities. Reconciliation involved participants' affirmation of their unique interests and the rejection of caregivers' attempted influence.

In their experience of considering the future, the young adults attempted to reconcile others' career expectations for the young adults with those personally held. Participants described their difficulty in
discerning caregivers' expectations from those personally held and foresaw being able to discriminate the two in the future.

Participants' consideration of the future also included expectations about negotiating societal norms with one's personal convictions. The young women expressed the expectation of a future need to reconcile societal gender role expectations with their own career aspirations. They described their attitudes towards gender roles as broader than that generally held in society. In considering the future, they expressed a concern about fulfilling needs for intellectual and emotional growth as well as achieving success in career and family.

The findings of this study augment Erikson's notions of the reconciliation of personal and society expectations in the construction of identity in a number of ways. The findings demonstrate how the reconciliation of personal and societal expectations was experienced by the individual. In their experiences of self awareness, participants attempted to rectify disjunctions between different aspects of themselves in which social forces were represented in evaluations and as role models. In their experiences of closeness and separateness in evolving family relations, participants attempted to resolve their own needs for closeness and separateness with family forces that compelled close and separate relations. Participants attempted to resolve personal ideology with that of society in the context of their experiences of place. Resolution of conflict with others was reflected in participants' experiences of ways in which they had changed or remained the same. Participants' rejections of caregiver expectations in their experiences of receiving knowledge and experience concerned attempts to reconcile personal values with imposed expectations. Finally, an aspect of participants' experiences of considering the future concerned their
attempt to reconcile career expectations that others hold for them, with their personal career aspirations.

Identity vs. Identity Confusion in The Experience of Considering the Future

According to Erikson (1963), the psychosocial negotiation of identity can result in identity or identity confusion depending upon whether the developmental task is successfully completed or remains incomplete. This notion has been refined and operationalized in a number of identity assessment instruments such as Rasmussen's (1961) Ego Identity Scale, Dignan's (1965) Ego Identity Scale, and Marica's (1966) Ego Identity-Incomplete Sentences Blank. Identity confusion or the achievement of identity is accessed by identity assessment instruments through evaluation of a combination of following: a) the coherence of self-definition; b) the presence of commitment to goals, values, and beliefs; c) the presence of a consideration of a range of identity options; d) the degree of self-acceptance; e) the sense of personal uniqueness; f) the degree of self-assurance in one's personal future; and g) the presence of activity aimed at implementing commitments (Waterman, 1982). In the present study, participants' experiences reflected in the themes related to all of the above assessment areas.

Confidence in the future.

An aspect of participants' experience of considering the future was the degree to which they experienced confidence that they would be able to achieve their aspirations. Participants communicated their degree of assuredness in the achievement of future goals in terms of the degree of concreteness with which they could specify goals and their sense of proximity to achieving goals.

Participants experienced difficulty in being able to specify goals. They expressed the desire to know their goals in greater detail. This
contributed to their sense of uncertainty with respect to the future. They also expressed a confusion in their inability to distinguish their personal goals from others' expectations of the young adult. This confusion of personal goals with others' expectations was experienced as frustrating, discouraging, and in need of change.

Some goals that were identified were experienced as vague wishes not associated with a concrete plan of action directed towards their realization. Participants were uncertain as to whether they would advance towards these goals or would achieve them because they could not determine what steps were necessary for their achievement. In terms of identity, the above orientation to the future would be associated with identity confusion.

In contrast, participants also viewed the future with certainty. Participants' experience of confidence with respect to the future was associated with a sense of aspirations set within a framework that acknowledged participants' current position with respect to the desired goal. This was apparent in participants' framing of goals in the context of their life span in that they identified specific aspirations they expected or desired to achieve by a certain age. Participants experienced confidence in their framing of the future when they were able to define a course of action directed towards the achievement of goals. Their action plans involved an understanding of how the achievement of a series of related steps could lead to the desired goal. Confidence in the future was also experienced when participants could identify and envision realistically undertaking, in the near future, the first step towards the attainment of a goal. These framings of the future can be considered indicative of identity achievement.

Uniqueness.
The young adults' sense of uniqueness was experienced in the context of the experience of comparing oneself to others. Some experiences associated with comparing oneself to others concerned the convergence with others of personal qualities, beliefs, and experiences. In these cases, participants emphasized their similarity to others or their sense of being a member of a homogeneous group. However, the group was also experienced by participants as a selective, committed group of heretics, social misfits, or harbingers of a better future which thereby bolstered participants' sense of being unique or different from the mainstream. Participants' experience was that of drawing a distinction between themselves and others and thereby defining ways in which they were unique, at least relative to the contrasting group. Therefore, one way in which the young adults experienced their uniqueness was through membership in a group or affiliation with other individuals.

The issue of a sense of uniqueness in the context of autonomy being considered the singular route to identity achievement is challenged by writers who assert that relatedness deserves an equal status (Gilligan, 1982). Other writers (Doi, 1973) take the view that the high status accorded uniqueness by Western researchers is an artifact of the cultural construction of success through independence rather than a reflection of a mature or maturing identity.

The present research supports the view that identity achievement is consonant with a singular construct consisting of both a sense of uniqueness and relatedness. As discussed above, participants asserted their strong identification with groups or other individuals. At times this identification emphasized only the quality of sameness. Others were viewed as replicas or extensions of the participant. This experience can be understood as indicative of identity confusion.
However, participants' experience of group or identification with individuals also differed from peer relations characterized by undifferentiated identification to the individual or group. In these cases, participants both affirmed their commonality with others and expressed a perspective about the shared quality in the form of an evaluation or affective reaction. This experience affirmed both uniqueness and relatedness. The compound experience can be viewed as acknowledging the extant social environment as well as the separateness of the individual. Because this experience acknowledges the individual, the social system, and the relationship between the two, it can be said to signify a greater degree of identity achievement than acknowledgment of only the unique individual, or group affiliation.

Commitment to, and activity directed towards the achievement of goals, values and beliefs.

Participants' experiences of commitment to goals, values, and beliefs can be seen in their experience of passing on knowledge and experience. Included in this experience was participants' descriptions of experiences that contributed to the formulation of values and beliefs. These descriptions concerned the overcoming of challenges and the relationship between values and beliefs, and the participants' personal histories. Participants reported that the effort expended in overcoming challenges contributed to their commitment to the values and beliefs represented by the challenge. The length of history and breadth of associations also contributed to participants' commitment to values and beliefs. That is, values and beliefs that they considered rooted in their early experiences or family history were associated with commitment.

The presence of activity directed towards the implementation of commitments was apparent in participants' experiences of influencing
peers and siblings in the past and present. They identified experiences in which they were able to express their values and beliefs and see them enacted or reacted to by others. Commitment to goals was experienced through aspiring to influence others to accept values and beliefs similar to those of the participant. Participants' goal commitments were expressed in the context of career, experimental, existential, and relational aspirations.

**Self definition.**

Participants' experience of a self definition, or the struggle to achieve a coherent self definition was apparent in their experience of self awareness. This theme concerned the experiencing of disparate aspects of the self. Participants experienced acting inconsistently. Different social situations or individuals prompted the expression of contrasting self aspects. Because of this, participants wondered "who is the real me?" The young adults also expressed surprise at learning about various aspects of themselves through activities they engaged in. They were both realizing new ways of thinking about themselves and attempted to reconcile existing aspects of the self.

Participants engaged in two processes in attempting to construct a coherent sense of self. First, they attempted to resolve dilemmas, such as career decisions that were reflected in conflicting aspects of the self. Through attempting to resolve a dilemma, participants identified conflicting aspects of the self. By resolving the dilemma, participants prioritized conflicting aspects of the self and thereby experienced a more coherent view of themselves. In failing to resolve a dilemma, the young adult remained confused about his or her identity.

The second process that participants undertook in the process of constructing a coherent sense of self was creating narrative links that
accounted for the existence and relationship between conflicting aspects of the self. By considering the co-existence of a multitude of facets of the self, participants experimented with a range of identity options.

**Family Systems and Cognitive Models**

**Differentiation, Formal Operational Thinking and the Experiences of Closeness and Separateness**

Although the present study does not involve examination of the family unit as a system, the experiences of participants provide insight into how they view their role in their family and how they view their family as a unit. Findings in this study are amassed through the active interpreting skills of participants. With a focus on individual cognitive skills and the family as the object towards which participants' cognitive skills are directed, cognitive and family systems perspectives can be fruitfully considered in tandem. The cognitive perspective can be employed to assist in the understanding of participants' thinking, reasoning, memory, and symbolization skills. Family systems models can be appealed to in order to understand the family experiences that these cognitive skills are directed towards.

The emphasis of family systems models on the importance of family inter-relationships in identity formation is well supported by participants' experiences of closeness and separateness. Discussions of participants' family organization, relationships and communication in terms of closeness and separateness abound. Identity, for the participants is predicated in part by the identification of their uniqueness or separateness within their family as well as by their identification with family members and family unit characteristics considered as closeness.

These constructions of identity can be considered in the context of the family systems construct "differentiation." In terms employed in this
research, undifferentiated family systems would be characterized in the young adults' experiences of closeness. In contrast, differentiated families would be characterized in the young adults' experiences of separateness.

The experiences of closeness and separateness that differentiation suggests, can also be understood in terms of the concepts of formal operational thinking (Piaget, 1969) and cognitive simplicity (Kelly, 1955). In this view, the emergence of the ability to distinguish one's own experience from that of others is consolidated in early adulthood. Experiences of separateness may exemplify the manifestation of formal operational skills, while experience of closeness may be indicative of cognitive simplicity.

In terms of closeness, there are numerous examples of participants discussing their similarity to members of their family and expressing their sense of being a part of their family "identity" or "myth" (Bagarozzi & Anderson, 1989). For example, the young adults expressed mutual understanding, physicality, toughness, energy, and sense of communion in considering common sibling and self characteristics. Participants also described their identification with a multi-generational family "genetic personality" sharing of traits.

In speaking about their closeness to others, the young adults focused on shared family experience. On a continuum from highly differentiated to undifferentiated, these examples would be considered a contribution to undifferentiated more than they would to differentiated family systems.

In terms of cognitive skills, I would not consider all of these experiences to be suggestive of cognitive simplicity as was tendered in the above discussion of cognitive skills in relation to closeness and separateness. In some examples concerning participants' evaluations of
shared traits with siblings, they identify their unique perspective within the context of expressing shared experience. For example, Dan expressed surprise at his sister's desire to share in his experience of running. This shows that although he experienced a sense of communion with her, he also held a personal perspective on their joint experience.

The examples concerning participants' perceptions of a genetically based familial perspective and socialized family traits suggest cognitive simplicity more closely. Here, the participants do not parcel out their own experience from that of their family. They do not identify their personal perspective on shared family ideology or traits.

In examples of separateness, participants spoke about differences between themselves and family members. In so doing, they identified personal qualities that they understood as unique in their family. For example, Dan elaborated upon how he and his sister "didn't think the same way." In so doing he identified himself as a systematic thinker. Similarly, Chris spoke about her family's perspective on female roles, beginning with a description of her father's attitude:

Like women are no good, they take everything from you. My brother's like that too. Women are good for nothing. Except to have babies and make you dinner.

Chris then went on to explain her mother's view on this topic which she characterized as diametrically opposed to the males of her family and equally unpalatable. Finally, Chris expressed her view and in so doing indicated her unique family position:

He can say what he wants, mom can say what she wants. It's what I want.

The above are examples indicative of differentiated more than undifferentiated family experience in that participants are focusing on distinctions in family characteristics rather than homogeneity. They may
also be understood in the context of the expression of formal operational skills. Here, the young adults demonstrate their role taking or perspective taking abilities. Participants demonstrated how they are able to evaluate parental mandates and establish alternatives.

This study demonstrates that these young adults' constructions of identity include experiences that can be understood in terms of the family systems construct differentiation and the cognitive constructs formal operational skills and cognitive simplicity. Young adults' constructions of identity may include a range of family relationships experienced along a continuum from undifferentiated to differentiated. Young adults' experiences of closeness may contribute to an undifferentiated family system and their experiences of separateness to a differentiated family system.

The young adults' constructions of identity can also be understood as being mediated by the cognitive skill employed. Experiences of separateness were associated with formal operational skills while experiences of closeness were associated with both formal operations and cognitive simplicity.

The family systems perspective views undifferentiated families as a hindrance to identity development in young adults (Anderson & Fleming, 1986). Although this study does not evaluate the degree of identity achievement in participants nor the level of family differentiation, it does show how some experiences which may contribute to an undifferentiated family system are employed by young adults in their constructions of identity.

Similarly, the cognitive model deems cognitive simplicity as indicative of less advanced identity development (Marcia, 1966, 1967). The present study does not evaluate participants in terms of the level of
their cognitive skills. However, it does demonstrate how expressions of experiences characteristic of cognitive simplicity can form an aspect of young adults' constructions of identity.

The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to the Nature and Location of Identity Discord

The models of identity reviewed in this study share the view that discord between opposing forces and their denouement are aspects of identity formation. The nature of those forces and the location of the conflict are a matter of dispute. The psychodynamic tradition views identity as ensuing in the context of an entirely internal, biologically rooted system represented by various drives (Freud, 1905). The resolution of intrapsychic conflict or tensions is considered the basic process through which identity ensues.

The neo-psychodynamic tradition of object relations is responsible for the introduction of considerations of the "other" in identity (Josselson, 1980). Development is seen to ensue out of the relationship between self and environment (or object) rather than solely through biological maturation (Winnicott, 1965). However, the location of this relationship is considered internal in that object relating with respect to identity concerns the internalization of parental figures (Mahler, 1968). Opposing forces form an aspect of this view of adolescent identity formation in that the unities and disharmonies of infant/parent relating are repeated and re-negotiated in adolescence (Blos 1968).

With Erikson's (1950) view of identity, the "other" of object relations theories takes on a truly external nature in the form of society. In this view, the young adult attempts locate a personally meaningful role in society by reconciling the opposing forces of societal expectations and demands with personal initiative.
Similarly, the family systems perspective considers identity to involve the external process of differentiation of self from the family system (Bowan, 1978). In this perspective, opposing forces assume the form of interpersonal relationships.

A view of the cognitive model of identity (Broughton, 1983) emphasizes the biological adaptation of the organism to the environment. In this view, identity is an internal maturational process. In this model, opposing forces collide through the modification of behavioral and conceptual structures by the environment.

The present study supports the notion of discord and resolution as important aspects of identity in early adulthood because participants' constructions of identity included the experience of tension between opposing forces. The tensions they experienced were described in the areas of career, peer relations, abilities, aspirations, family relations and, values and society. The understanding of the nature and location of these tensions is framed in terms of the cognitive-developmental theories of Kegan (1982). These theories affirm that individuals' experience includes that which is conceived of as outside of oneself and that which is conceived of as inside of oneself. This was supported by participants' experiences in the present study. Various aspects of oneself in the context of self awareness were conceived of internally. Participants also recognized the repercussions of certain internally conceived notions of oneself for relationships with others.

The site of identity development in Kegan's (1982) view is in the movement of individuals' experience between that which is conceived of as internal to that which is conceived of as outside of the organism.

According to Kegan (1982), development ensues out of changes in how individuals conceive of their socio-psychological environment. The
shift to viewing one's environment as external to oneself from experiencing it as an aspect of oneself represents a developmental change and a concomitant shift in how one makes sense of experience.

According to Kegan (1982), the socio-psychological environment typical of adolescence is relationships. Initially, relationships are experienced as subject to the individual. That is, the adolescent experiences a unity of self and relationships. The threat of loss of a relationship is experienced as loss of oneself.

In the present study, one can see this operating in participants' relationships with intimate companions. One participant desired to end a relationship, but simultaneously continued sexual relations. Another participant felt used "like a doormat" by boyfriends but accepted abuse because "I'm always nice to people." Relationships with peers and siblings were experienced similarly. Participants frequently spoke about extricating themselves from relationships or overthrowing entire peer groups that found dissatisfying. For participants, relationship either existed or ended. There was no discussions of engaging in processes aimed at modifying relationships.

For these individuals, the threat of loss of a relationship represented loss of self and was therefore to be avoided at all costs. The participants did not describe any measures they might undertake to alter the relationships. Relationships either worked or they did not work. This is because, in Kegan's (1982) terms, the participant did not "have" relationships but they "were" their relationships. Therefore they could not objectively assess the situation and apply some measures to make changes. The ability to do so constitutes a meaning making system that was foreign to them.
Home leaving is one typical challenge to young adults meaning making system because it threatens to dislocate relationships. Therefore, the experience of leaving family holds the potential of encouraging or discouraging developmental movement. For Kegan (1982), home leaving is more than the physical distancing from family and establishment of ties to society. Home leaving represents a loss of the familiar and a challenge to the way individuals understand the world they live in. It can destabilize the experiential system so that the "rules" an individual lives by are no longer relevant and are conceived of as false.

Participants described shifts in how they experienced closeness and separateness to others as they moved away from family. These shifts can be seen to constitute different ways of making sense of experience from that which was conceived of as internal to that which was conceived of as external. For example, participants describe increased separateness from caregivers over the course of their adolescence. This separateness was characterized as fleeing from intrusive caregivers, aggressive siblings or unmanageable family conflict. In Kegan's (1982) terms, these adolescents were "embedded" in these environments. That is, they were unable to affect relationship changes because they could not perceive these relationships as separate from themselves. Their reaction of withdrawing underscores the severity of their experience of feeling unable to change the relationship.

Participants described their experiences of attempting to reconcile shifts in closeness and separateness to caregivers. They were ambivalent about the degree to which they found caregiver support and allowances for autonomy to be helpful. They also described shifts from experiencing themselves as a part of caregiver conflict to occupying a more objective stance where they expressed their personal beliefs about caregivers.
Finally, they described continued returns to the family home or continued connections to family members after leaving. In the cognitive-developmental view, the core experience of preoccupations with the tensions between closeness and separateness is young adults' questioning of "who is in charge?" Individuals like these young adults are beginning to emerge from being embedded in their relationships by questioning the nature of their relationships with caregivers.

This shift in conceiving of relationships represents a change from viewing relationships as internal or an aspect of oneself to viewing relationships as external to oneself. In this cognitive-developmental view, the construction of identity occurs in the transition from that which is conceived of as internal to that which is conceived of as external. Benefits of this view include elucidation of the dynamic aspects of young adults' constructions of identity.

Implications for Further Research

Past research into identity has contributed a large body of information to our understanding of the correlates of identity and identity formation. However, identity as understood in this study, is a construction of the individual. Models of identity do not aid the understanding of the meaning that identity has for the individual. Appealing to individuals to share the sense that they make of their experience can contribute new understandings of identity to the body of research. By beginning with the individual, a formulation grounded in the experience of identity may be proposed.

This study was exploratory in nature. The presented constructions of identity are by no means intended to be representative of all young adults. They result from the experiences of these particular young adults in concert with the researcher's understanding and way of amalgamating
their experiences into coherent themes. Replication of this study by another researcher would likely show some similarities, refinements and differences all of which would be valuable in gaining a clearer understanding of the experience of identity.

Those who consider the replication of this study are advised to consider the alteration of some of the methodology. Participant and researcher fatigue was evident in the latter part of the interviews. In some cases, the completion of their story appeared rushed and lacking in the degree of attention given earlier segments. While the allotment of adequate time for participants to relate their story in full is necessary, this must be weighed against the loss of motivation and respect for the comfort of participants. A solution to this problem would necessitate participants willingness to participate in three interviews. The first interview could focus on the person they are at present. The second could concern how they came to be the person they are at present. The final interview would remain as in the present study, a review of the researcher's summary.

The use of photographs as a story aid was a particular casualty of the protracted interviews as their review was relegated to the final part of the interview. The second problem confronted in the use of photographs concerned the role that they played in participants' stories. One participant presented photographs representing only one segment of his life. A second participant brought too many, and a too disorganized collection of photographs to be of assistance. This occurred in spite of the researcher specifying the maximum number and temporal dispersal of photographs requested. Because of these two problems, the benefits of photographs as a story aid is unsubstantiated by this study. It is suggested that further specific instruction to participants is necessary.
for the inclusion of photographs in similar studies. Prospective participants can be instructed that the first part of the study involves a preparation stage in which they are requested to consider the expanse of their life, divide it into personally meaningful segments and select a specified number of photographs that are representative of each segment. In order to rectify the fatigue associated with photograph review in the final segment of the interviews, it is suggested that participants incorporate the photographs into the body of their discussions.

As suggested in the literature, there is some differences in the emotionality and instrumentality in adolescent separation in divorced compared to intact families (Moore & Hotch, 1981; Proulx & Koulack, 1987). The present study, in which six of seven participants were of divorced families, showed that emotionality and instrumentality were aspects of participants' constructions of identity in the context of home leaving. However, the study was not designed specifically to observe how divorce might impact young adults constructions of identity. A study involving only young adults of divorced families focusing specifically on their constructions of identity in the context of home leaving could beneficially augment the findings of the current study.

The present study suggests that the young women's constructions of the future consist of more uncertainty and need to resolve conflicting personal and societal values then their male counterparts. In contrast, the two males in this study reflected confidence and a laissez-faire attitude in their constructions of the future. In at least the last 15 years there has been increasing societal expectations of males to participate in a broader range of less gender specific roles. This is evidenced by writers who suggest the benefits of blending "such masculine and feminine attributes as interpersonal skills and sensitivity with need for achievement and
independence" (Denmark & Goodfield, 1978). Therefore, the traditional assurance with which males have entered social roles may be eroding. The findings of this study did not access this angst that may be present in the male population. Because this study employed a small number of participants, and more women than men, no generalization is possible. It would be valuable to construct a study to focus on comparing young women's and young men's constructions of the future using a larger participant base.
Implications for Counselling

The study illustrates the need for practitioners to attend to the meanings that young adults make of their experience rather than approaching the young adult with counselling agendas and preconceived notions based on theories that may not accurately reflect the young adult's experience. While therapeutic orientations can assist the practitioner, they should emerge in response to the communicated experience of the client rather than attempt to predict client concerns.

The experience of identity in young adults is supported by the process of making sense of various forces. These forces can be found in conflicting aspects of self awareness, the negotiation of closeness and distance to others, the relationship between place and experience, the tension between life changes and continuity, the acceptance or rejection of influence, and the tension between one's abilities and aspirations. At times, the young adult is not equipped to find a way to resolve these forces. However, because individuals have a need and desire to establish a coherent understanding of their experience, practitioners can be of assistance.

It is my opinion that participants found the opportunity to relate a comprehensive story of their lives to be enjoyable and a learning experience. In reviewing their experiences of the interviews, some participants said that in the past they had related isolated life incidents to friends but that they did not have the opportunity to "tell it all." In taking the time to consider their lives in total, participants may have been able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between various aspects of their lives. In the course of the interviews, they were not only re-telling old stories but creating new constructions.
that at times were surprising to the participant. Numerous times, participants emerged from the telling of a story and said a variation of, "I didn't know that" or "I really learned a lot that I didn't know."

Practitioners should be interested in what occurs between the time that the young adult begins discussing an event and they realize they have learned something new about the person they are. It is this experience that practitioners can learn to encourage.

The process of telling life stories is a meaning-making experience. It may be beneficial to create an atmosphere in which the young adult feels encouraged to tell their life story without feeling judged; where the meaning that they make of their experience is accepted as true for the young adult. Practitioners can be advised to use the meanings that young adults retain as the basis for further therapeutic work.

Young adults may struggle to make sense of disparate intra- and interpersonally experienced forces. Their experience of identity is the attempt to resolve experience, through linking isolated events and affective experiences into increasingly larger, more comprehensive meanings. Thus, in this study the identified themes described overlapping experiences. The themes demonstrate the attempts by young adults to establish lines of connection between disparate aspects of their lives. Practitioners can aid young adults in this agenda through summarizing their descriptions of isolated events, aiding the young adult to discern connections between these events, and encouraging the perception of larger themes that unite the connections into a meaningful framework.

It appears from this study that the development of a "stable identity" is more problematic for young women than for their male counterparts. Aiding young women to identify and rationalize the roles they expect to enact is essential. At the same time, it can be anticipated
that those young men who accept a broader range of roles, including child care and homemaking ones, may undergo similar personal, peer, societal pressures that may compromise their attempts to forge an identity. They will also require the support and encouragement of practitioners as well as advocates of social roles by choice not gender.

Through identifying life themes, the young adult may be in a better position to approach future challenges with greater clarity and resolve, thereby enabling goal identification and achievement.

Conclusions

A phenomenological approach was used in this thesis to answer the question, "What are the processes through which young adults construct identity?" While positivist approaches to identity provide much information on the correlates of identity and identity development in young adults, they do not approach the question of how individuals construct identity. Models of identity such as the developmental approach, are rooted in constructs founded upon research four decades old. These models may be inaccurate in their understanding of how identity is constructed in post-modern society.

By taking a constructivist approach to identity, the present study was able to access how individuals construct identity. Because the experiences that the young adults spoke about were social events, their constructions of identity reflect the current cultural construction of identity.

Six persons who responded to public notices volunteered to participate in the study and be interviewed by the researcher. They used personally significant photographs as an aid to answering the questions: "Describe the person you are at present?" and "How did you come to be the person you are at present?" A follow-up interview concerned participants'
appraisals of the accuracy of the researcher's summary of the first interview. Opportunity for corrections and additions was provided, and closure was accomplished through discussing how the participant experienced the interviews. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed and then segmented into meaning units. The meaning units formed the basis for the identification of seven themes that comprised a phenomenological description of the young adults' experience. These themes, in concert with the researcher's personal assumptions were then employed to answer the research question. The ensuing constructions of identity were considered in the context of research on the topic and models of identity. Finally, suggestions for further research and for counselling young adults were posited.

The discussion of the findings illustrates that identity can be constructed by young adults through the processes of; resolving conflicting aspects of self awareness such as those prompted by self evaluation; establishing narrative links between disparate personal characteristics, personal history, relationships and other experiences; acceptance and rejection of others' evaluations; engaging in and resolving interpersonal conflict; assimilation and accommodation. The young adults' constructions of identity included the experiences of closeness and separateness, place, receiving and passing on knowledge and experience, and considering the future.

The findings support Erikson's (1959) notion of identity as the reconciliation of societal expectations and personal interests, talents and values understood from the perspective of the experience of the individual. The findings also support the utility of the family systems construct "differentiation" as applied to the young adults' experiences of closeness and separateness in relation to family. The cognitive model
constructs of formal operational skills and cognitive simplicity can also be understood from the perspective of the young adults' experiences of closeness and separateness.

Contrary to other research on young adults' expectations of the future (Greene & Wheatley, 1992), this study demonstrated that the young women showed greater urgency in their constructions of the future than did their male counterparts. Also contrary to research on young adults' narratives of the future (Greene & Wheatley, 1986), this study showed that the young women's predicted life events differed from their male counterparts in young women's inclusion of a concern for the resolution of future societal and personal conflicts.

By understanding the meaning that identity has for young adults, we as counsellors may be able to provide more meaningful assistance to those who seek our help. Identity can no longer be viewed solely as the product of intrapsychic, interpersonal, or cognitive factors, but an act that individuals undertake in the course of making sense of their experience.
REFERENCES


Young, R.A., Friesen, J.D., & Pearson, H.M. (1988). Activities and interpersonal relations as dimensions of parental behavior in the
APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

"Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My name is Michael Gooblar and I spoke to you earlier about the nature of this study. I would like to briefly review that information and answer any questions that you might have. This study is conducted as part of the requirements for the Masters degree in the Department of Counselling Psychology at the University of British Columbia. Dr. R. Young of the Counselling Psychology Department is supervising this study."

"We are trying to understand how individuals describe themselves, what they see as important experiences that contributed to their present sense of who they are, what family experiences contribute to their present sense of who they are and, anything else that they consider relevant to describing who they are and how they came to be the person they are at present."

"We are interested in hearing anything that you are willing to share about the people, events, places, relationships or anything else that occurs to you as we talk. Later as we review your photographs I will ask you to describe the background and significance of each picture and how that experience may have contributed to your personal history and how you see yourself today."

"Your participation will help us understand the process that individuals experience as they get older, particularly with respect to their family. This may lead us to become more effective as counsellors in assisting young adults to gain a clearer sense of who they are."

"Our discussion should last approximately 90 minutes. With your permission I would like to audio tape your story in order that I may listen to your story again. The tape will be transcribed and all identifying information, such as your name, will be altered. The names and any identifying information of the participants in this study or those to whom you refer in the course of conversation will be altered to ensure anonymity in the final report. Everything that you say will be treated confidentially and be used only for research purposes. You may choose to cease your involvement in this study at any time. The permission form (given to candidate) states the same conditions that I have explained."
Please read it and feel free to ask any questions about it before signing.

(pause to complete permission form)

"Before beginning, are there any questions or concerns that you have at this time? (pause) I will now turn on the cassette recorder and test it so that I am sure that everything will work as planned. Many people find speaking to a recorder a little awkward at first but after a while you may find that you have completely forgotten that it's here."

"When you're telling me about yourself occasionally I might interrupt in order to understand more clearly what you said, or to encourage you to tell about yourself as fully as you feel comfortable relating. However, you are the leader in this discussion. My job is to listen and to assist you by asking questions in order to help you tell your story. If at anytime you wish to stop our discussion, stop talking about a certain aspect of your life, or choose to end your participation in this study, you need only to say so and I will support your decision."

"There are 3 parts to this discussion. In the first part I'd like you to tell me about who you are at present. In the second part I'll ask you to tell the story about how you came to be the person you are at present. And in the final part I'll ask you to look through your family photos and tell me what story they tell about you.

"Now, this part of our discussion is about how you describe the person you are today. When people describe themselves sometimes they speak of their interests, abilities, beliefs, future plans, friends, family, personality, likes, dislikes and many other aspects. For example when talking about myself I might include that I had been an artist working mainly with photographic collages for a number of years and that I was looking for a way to combine that interest with an interest in psychology, as well as attempt to emerge from starving artist status. This brought me to study counselling psychology and to be interested in the family photo album. Having nearly completed the program I am still uncertain how I will express my interests in work. But I have decided that I want to put my skills into practice perhaps by starting a business. As I tell you about myself I might go into more detail about each of these topics. How would you tell me about yourself? In particular, for this part of our discussion, how would you describe the person you are now?"

(discussion)
"Now we're finishing this part of the discussion in which you've told me about who you are at present. Is there anything else that you would like to add? (pause)

"Let's begin the second part of our talk which is about how you came to be the person you are at present. For example you might want to talk about how you came to... (give example from participant's self description). What are the circumstances, experiences, people or anything else that might have led to you (restate example)? What is your story about how you came to be the person you are at present?"

(discussion)

"We're almost finished this section of our talk. Is there anything else that you can add that will help me to understand how you came to be the person you are at present?" (pause)

"Now, let's begin the final part of this talk in which I'll ask you to look though your photos and tell me what story they tell about who you are and how you came to be the person you are at present. You may wish to show them to me or keep them to yourself as you tell your story. You may wish to use one, some or all of them in your story."

(discussion)

"Are there any more photos that you would like to share in the telling of your story? (pause) Are there any other photos you would have liked to have brought to the interview? (pause) We're finishing this part of our talk. Is there anything that you would like to add?" (pause)

"Our talk is coming to a close. I now know and understand very much more about you than when we began. In thinking about the story of yourself that you told today, do you have any final thoughts that might make the story more complete and accurate?" (pause)

"Our discussion is now over. I'll turn off the recorder. (turn off recorder) Thank you very much for the time that you have spent helping in this project, and for the care and effort with which you told your story. Your work here today has become part of this project and will help in carrying it to completion."

"As I mentioned earlier, the final part of your participation in this study is a 30 minute meeting in which I will present you with a written summary of the story you told today. The purpose of this is to ensure that I have correctly understood your story as you intend it and to give you the opportunity to add to or question my understanding of who you are and how
you came to be the person you are. May I reach you within two weeks at
the same number as before? And is the time for calling still good for
you?*

(A follow up session of approximately 30 minutes is conducted
within two weeks of the interview. This interview is audio taped. A
summary of the transcript of the first interview is given as well as read
to the participant and three questions are asked.)

1. Does this summary accurately and fully represent what you told
me in our first interview? That is, does this summary capture who you are
at present and how you came to be the person you are?

2. Are there any other thoughts or feelings that came up for you
since we first met that you may wish to add to your story?

3. Was the method of the interview helpful in your telling your
story? How did the photo review effect the telling of your story? Did you
at any time feel restricted or lead into telling your story in a certain
way?

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APPENDIX II
PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT NOTICE

YOUR LIFE STORY

IF YOU ARE BETWEEN 19 AND 21 YEARS OF AGE, YOU MAY BE INTERESTED IN HAVING YOUR LIFE STORY BECOME PART OF A RESEARCH STUDY CONDUCTED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA.

THIS STUDY CONCERNS HOW INDIVIDUALS DESCRIBE THEMSELVES THROUGH THEIR LIFE STORY.

EACH PARTICIPANT WILL SPEND APPROXIMATELY 2 HOURS DISCUSSING THEIR LIFE STORY WITH THE RESEARCHER. PARTICIPANTS WILL BE REQUESTED TO BRING PHOTOGRAPHS TO THE DISCUSSION TO BE USED AS AN AID IN TELLING THEIR LIFE STORY. PARTICIPANTS WILL RECEIVED A PRINTED SUMMARY OF THE STORY THEY TELL.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PHONE MICHAEL GOOBLAR AT 879-2302

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APPENDIX III
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title
The experience of identity in early adulthood.

Investigators
The project is supervised by Dr. R. Young of the University of British Columbia, Department of Counselling Psychology. His telephone number is 822-6380. The project will be conducted by Michael Gooblar who is completing it as part of his M.A. degree in Counselling Psychology. He can be contacted at 879-2302.

Purpose of the Study
The researchers are interested in how young adults describe who they are and understand how they came to be the person they are at present.

Procedures
As a participant I have been requested to bring photographs that represent a broad range of my life span to the interview. The interview will last approximately 90 minutes. During the interview I will be asked to describe myself and relate the story of how I came to be the person I am at present. Following this I will be asked to review my photographs with a view to relating the story they tell of who I am and how I came to be the person I am today. This interview will be audio-taped. Within two weeks, a follow-up interview of approximately 30 minutes will be conducted in order for me to hear and comment on a written summary of the initial interview. At this time I will be given the opportunity to make changes to the summation in order that it more closely and clearly corresponds to my experience.

All information that identifies the participants in this study will be held in complete confidence by the researcher. Under no conditions will the participants or anyone referred to be specifically or indirectly identified in the study. The tapes will be identified by a pseudonym which will correspond to the transcription. All names will be deleted from the transcription and replaced by relational descriptions (i.e. friend, father). Any identifying information will be altered. The results of this study will
be reported for the group as a whole with supporting evidence derived from interview segments. A precis of the transcription will be appended to the study. The audio tapes will be erased at the end of the study.

Benefits/Risks

Through participating in this study you may develop a clearer sense of who you are and how you came to be as you are. Some research indicates that through the telling of one's life story individuals can become more aware of who they are, more self assured and more clear on what they want in the future. Some individuals find that the telling of one's life story is a pleasurable, motivating experience.

During the course of the interview, you may experience discomfort resulting from the recounting of some experiences. Some individuals experience a degree of initial anxiety in sharing personal details with others.

Other Information

The total time commitment required for this study is approximately 2 hours. This consists of approximately 90 minutes for the initial interview and approximately 30 minutes for the follow-up interview.

My participation in this study is voluntary and I may choose to decline participation or withdraw at any time without consequence. I will be encouraged to discuss any concerns or questions I have about this study, the procedure and my experience as a participant before, during and at the close of participation.

The researcher is aware that sensitive areas may be broached during the course of the telling of my story and will assist in the debriefing following the interview to ensure that a level of comfort is reached before closure.

I may contact the researcher by phoning 879-2302.

I acknowledge having read and received a copy of this consent form, and I agree to participate in this project under the above conditions.

(Participant's signature) 
(Researcher's signature) 
Date
APPENDIX IV:
ELABORATION OF THEMES FROM VALIDITY STUDY EMPLOYING HERMENEUTICAL INQUIRY

Theme Descriptions

Cycling: The transformation of body and spirit

Dan emphasized the important role that cycling had in his current repertoire of interests. For Dan cycling was not merely an activity, but was imbued with a myriad of associations that were central to his person:

And I ride my bike a lot. And for cycling and stuff it takes a lot of motivation because I do a lot of racing too. And um, I just want to do. I don't feel like I have to drive myself to do it. Because it makes me feel good and it fulfills something within me. Something about self confidence. And um. It's exciting too. Yaahhhhh!!!!

Dan associated cycling with "the most important thing to me" namely his health. Cycling was viewed as a means to increase the level of his tolerance of physical exertion and thereby improving his health:

I'm into my body a lot. I feel really in touch, I try to be really in touch with how my body is functioning so I can have a lot of energy, so I'm very into keeping a healthy diet, so I have lots of energy to do stuff. I eat a lot of vegetables and fruit and carbohydrates and things like that. And I'm into body building.

For Dan, cycling is also an activity that sparks awareness of intra-psychic processes. For instance, he wonders how his arduous exertion does not compel him to give up but rather motivates him to further effort. He challenges himself to better his previous trials and to achieve the penultimate exertion. He is aware of his determination to succeed. The physical experience of cycling gains transformation into a psychological experience:

How do I turn pressure into challenge and how do I enjoy myself in really tough situations. Even when I'm hurting and sweating and I still go "Yaaaaa, I love this!!" I push myself harder to keep up with the pack. Anyway I guess that's an important thing about me now. That kind of sums it all up.
For Dan, physicality and psychological thinking become allied with spirituality. Exertion is associated with challenging himself. Exertion also ushers in a state of delirium which he links to the spiritual experience. Spirituality is associated with a search for identity; "to find myself":

I get away. I take off on my bike. I do that almost every weekend. I take a backpack, some food and clothes and I guess that brings up more ways....I test myself. I go almost on a vision quest or something. I go over the hill and I just go and go and go until I was delirious and tired just searching for some kind of vision to find myself and what I'm doing to find a source of strength or to be more connected to my spiritual strength...

Dan viewed his body as a tool to carry out his spiritual agenda. A key story concerning the relationship between physical exertion and spirituality concerned the description of an arduous solo bike journey in which he challenged himself to increasingly faster speeds. His exertion, his aloneness, his being aware of his thoughts and, the expanse of cloud, sky and sun all contributed to a near state of ecstasy. The mountains he was traversing came to feel like a dragon whose horns (handlebars) he was holding:

And here's that bike trip I told you about. When I came out of the mountain I could see all these neat clouds cause the sun had just gone down and there was a layer of clouds over [the city] but I was above them on the mountain. And because I was on this mountain I felt like the mountain was this dragon I was riding and there's me holding onto the horns.

Psychological thinking and physicality are also associated with creativity:

I can't stand to be out of shape. But I still really enjoy expressing myself creatively. But I almost find exercise as a form of creative expression because it's um, it's a way of being creative with my physical body um and um, it's, I find it really interesting um, to figure out how I motivate myself to do all these physical tests I do on myself. But um, it takes a lot of mental energy too.

Out of the cycling experience emerges creative expression. For Dan this is an integral part of spiritual experience. In order for him to
complete the cycle, Dan turns his ethereal experience, which began in the physical realm, back into a corporeal experience. Body and spirit unite through the modification of his bike and the creation of a representational painting. In this way Dan feels that he is not just being an observer and commentator on his spirituality but immerses himself in his experience:

I remember one time I went over the hill, over the mountain and I rode all day and I was coming back over the other side and this is about a 4000-foot hill and it started to get dark and cold and my feet were wet cause I'd been running through rivers and stuff and I did a painting about this. Umm when I was coming over the other side I could see all these colors and stuff and I did the painting because I had just gotten this bike and I had, this one here (showing photo of painting) and I had horns on it (the bike) and there was a lot of symbolism in it. It was like I was holding onto these horns more of an animal then a bike and I was riding down this hill and I was thinking of landscapes of hills as dragons because of this research I did into the ancient Asian cultures where the landscapes, the lines of them, have to do with the shapes of dragons, the energy lines. So that's one of the paintings I did. So that's when I go do these things that's when I find myself and find direction.

Dan expressed his interest in the integration of the corporeal and the ethereal through his creativity:

And um, this is a Halloween costume that I made. It's a dragon and I wanted to be able to get inside this dragon and um, sort of feel that, or be in that creative energy or be that creative energy that the dragon symbolizes.

Transforming body and spirit is also an aspect of Dan's alteration of his place of living. Through making physical changes to the environment, he infuses it with his spirituality:

This is my room at school. It's just a normal square house but I've rounded the whole ceiling. And it just had a lot to do with the shape of my environment, I want to be able to come back to the house and be able to sit down and breathe and relax. A very peaceful environment so that when you're stressed you can get away. I'm right in the middle of highly populated
urban area and uh, that does get to me, so I had to build this get away place that I can just relax. It's like a dome. The shape of it I feel has to do with um, the way you feel in a space. Somehow the shape and the lines of the space kind of give off a feeling and I can't describe exactly what line would make you feel what way but somehow I just know uh, what, shape sort of makes a person at ease.

Dan stated explicitly his interest in connecting his physical and spiritual sides:

This one was a symbol of your physical body and your soul as a being connected helping each other. So I drew this part symbolizing the body as um, being able to do physical work like walk and you'd have two eyes like we have two eyes and this would be the soul of your body and I was going to have this mane that came down to communicate and steer and you'd have just 1 eye like your third eye would be like your foresight.

**Invoking resolve in safeguarding self-determination**

The notion of self-determination is central to Dan's understanding of himself. He referred to self-determination in numerous contexts throughout his life from childhood to the present. References to his self-determination include its role in inspiring threats of various kinds from others. These threats engaged Dan's will to retain his self-determination through resolve or, as Dan describes it, through "determination." Resolve or determination is a transformational force for Dan. Determination supplies him with the motivation to change and to strive to achieve his goals and safeguard his ability to be self-determining.

Dan locates the roots of his desire to be self-determining in his childhood experience where reliance on oneself was a necessity, and accomplishing tasks therefore required determination. This was due to the isolated living conditions of his family.".. between two towns..." and .. quite deep in the bush..." His father stands out as a model of self-determination in that environment:

And I think that's partly, my dad's like that too. All his life, I guess, he was just trying to get away from that because they were always giving him these rules that didn't make sense to him. Like building codes or whatever. Or just things like that.
That he felt were a nuisance. So he figured he could do it his own way.

Dan's view of himself as a young child was also saturated with allusions of being left to his own devices. He recalls that "as a little kid I was just by myself and you know when I was two years old I guess my friends were like, the dogs around the cabin in the bush." The family lifestyle was seen to reflect his personal experience:

... across the river 30 miles from this tiny little town you could just do basically what you wanted to and there was no system or code. You just did everything yourself. You didn't hire people to do it. It was just the way we functioned I guess.

He considered his experience to have been a positive and fulfilling one due to his being occupied by numerous and varied projects. Compared to the lifestyle of adolescents he is currently acquainted with, he held his own adolescence in high regard:

Around my sister's age, most of her friends are just getting into smoking and that type of stuff. You know, she's 14. It's a shame. I think that when I was 14, I was just building forts constantly. I'd build one fort and that was neat and I'd build another one and I was just into just being constructive and uhh, doing stuff and I was always doing some kind of project.

To this point in his life, Dan had established in our conversation that he lived an independent and satisfying life. Models of self-sufficiency through the employment of personal resources to solve problems figured largely. He considered this background to be an important basis in establishing the person that he is. He attributed his childhood with having "quite a lot of impact on me in terms of just the way I think." He stated that, "those kinds of things really make you the way you are somehow."

These early experiences proved to hold both the makings of, and the solution to later encounters. Dan viewed himself as the recipient of ridicule from peers who regarded his habits as unusual. He experienced himself to be a loner and different from the rest:

... people would say you know, oh you're the fruit man, you just eat so much stuff or we'd go camping or something and they'd laugh at me cause I was eating pieces of grass or whatever, but it was just cause I grew up that way.
Other experiences served to bolster Dan's view of himself as an "outsider." As in the experience described above, further experiences involved an antithetical force that served to isolate him as well as present a challenge to be overcome. An attempt to complete an art project was the scenario for confrontation with an adversary. "Bureaucracy" was experienced as the opposing force that threatened his desire to "do it the way I want to do it." He related his behavior and attitudes to those of his father and by inference to his childhood experiences of self-sufficiency:

I've had a bit of problems in terms of just the system of rules and stuff that you have to go through to get things done like art projects and stuff. I've had to deal with that at school just this year. I was trying to do a major art project and the museum of art wouldn't let me cause it was, I was going to attach something onto a building that they didn't like, or, I didn't, I just, sometimes it doesn't make sense to me... there are all these committees that you have to go through in order to get something done and I didn't want to, like I'm not very good at dealing with that, like I just want to do it the way I want to do it because, well I guess that's the way dad always did it to.

Three other similar experiences occurred during Dan's years at boarding school. In the first instance he described himself as "quite small and quite skinny" at the time. Because of his diminutive stature, others would attack him physically. This had the effect of igniting Dan's resolve to overcome this challenge to his self-determination:

I used to get thrown in trash cans and stuff and it would just infuriate me and there was really nothing I could do about it at that age. But it made me so determined to come back or whatever, or, in the end or whatever..."you're not ever going to do this to me again."

The second incident occurred while Dan was on a date. It too involved a threat to his self-determination and also invoked his resolve to "not let it happen again":

I remember I was on a date once with this girl and one of the guys in my dorm just picked me up and was twirling me around in the air. There's noting you can do. I just said, "one
day, I'm gonna, you know" (shaking finger) I couldn't stand to be overpowered.

Dan's resolve led to his undertaking weight training in order to gain strength. In so doing he bolstered his self-confidence in addition to solidifying his ability to avoid being impeded in carrying out his will:

  So I got into weight lifting and it was just another way to feel solid about myself. Like not let people phase me or bring me down because I know that I'm there. I'm strong in myself.

The third experience concerned the determination to overcome a personal challenge. Dan's dyslexia made school difficult. He recalls:

  ... a ten page paper took me 70 hours to do and I was so frustrated because it was so hard for me to articulate what I was trying to say just because somehow I don't think in terms of word structure...

This challenge invoked Dan's determination as well:

  I was very diligent and just determined to do well even though it was taking a long long time. And in my first years there that's all I did just because I wanted those grades, I wanted good grades. I wanted to have a good background to get me through school so I worked hard at it.

In university at present he continues to make special efforts to adapt to his disability:

  ... I get um, books that I need on tape so that helps me out a bit and um, I also get note takers from the special services department, so that helps me out a lot and gives me a little bit of extra time to do things I'm more interested to do.

In this illustration it may be said that Dan diminished his self-reliance through engagement in an activity that he was unable to complete by himself. However, the meaning that he attributed to their support was that it benefited him by providing "extra time to do things I'm more interested to do." Simply stated, from Dan's perspective the note takers were not so much usurping his self-authority by acting as scholastic seconds as they were enabling him to further his self-determination through participating in more fulfilling activities of his choosing. This therefore is another example of Dan being confronted with a challenge to his self-determination, engaging his resolve to overcome the challenge
and finally finding a solution that enabled him to retain or enhance his self-determination.

**Childhood: Legacy of an ideology and career aspiration**

Dan associated childhood with living in nature, self-sufficiency, an ethos of non-violence and, transience. He regarded all of these aspects of his childhood as contributing to his view of himself as a steward of the earth, an outsider, an "outlaw", "determined" and, "worldly." He also viewed his childhood experiences as the foundation of his ideology. His ideology gives primacy to the notions of living according to laws of nature, protection of eco-systems, pacifism and, instilling these ideas in others.

Dan describes his childhood home as located "in the natural environment." Playing contentedly and the pleasure of eating directly out of the garden were two prominent images of his childhood recounted by Dan. He regarded himself as living "by myself" in an isolated natural environment. Not only did Dan experience himself to be a solitary creature in nature, he assumed an indigenous persona as evidenced in his reminiscence:

...I was just by myself and you know when I was two years old I guess my friends were like, the dogs around the cabin... I used to come in the door and bark as a two year old to get in cause this was, cause these were my peers, the puppies. Dan believes that his childhood had "quite a lot of impact on me in terms of just the way I think." He stated that "those kinds of things really make you the way you are somehow." An example of this is his relationship to urban and rural life. He finds that nature enhances his life and that he has a negative affective reaction to living in cities:

It seems that the way I can communicate with that kind of spiritual energy is through the natural environment because it seems like it's blocks off when I'm at all around buildings and cars and concrete and stuff. So that can really get to me.

Aside from the emotional outcomes of living his childhood in nature, Dan also stated that living in nature influenced his way of thinking. His childhood experiences in nature contributed greatly to what he values and what he disdains, what he considers essential and what he regards to be dispensable:
And also I've been raised in the bush and I took a lot of my philosophies from there. I think like the trees and the animals and the plants, that's the real world and I go to the city and it's just concrete and stuff like that. It's a fabrication.

Isolation and self-reliance are also features of Dan's experience of his childhood. This is how he described that environment:

Like up [where I lived as a child] across the river 30 miles from this tiny little town you could just do basically what you wanted to and there was no system or code. You just did everything yourself. You didn't hire people to do it. It was just the way we functioned I guess.

He credited these aspects with engendering his "outsider" persona:

So I used to tell my friends, "when I was a kid we didn't have Oreo cookies for snacks. We'd go in the garden and we'd pick vegetables."

I: So it can set you a part from people who have had an urban upbringing.

Ya.

Dan's view of himself as an outsider evolved into considering himself an "outlaw." He considered himself to be not only outside of mainstream society but standing against aspects of society. Dan expressed his orientation to society through differentiating his aspirations from those of peers:

Umm, we get into a lot of heavy duty discussions with our friends because we have a lot of friends who want to go to school who want to build, you know, get an education, get a high paying job and build their way up the corporate ladder and have lots of money and have vacations and have a nice house and a nice car and stuff like this. And I guess we're not, we can't, deal, we can't do that ourselves.

Pacifism is another important tenet of Dan's ideology. He stated that this belief has its roots in his early school experience as well as in the influence of his father's family:

Even though I want to hold my own sort of, I'm also really non-violent and that had a lot to do with, that school is a
Quaker school. And my dad's side of the family, they're all Quaker, so, I never have been in a fight...

Because of his belief Dan felt conflicted about his participation in high school wrestling. He described a personal outcome of a belief he held that was rooted in his childhood. Participation in the sport was aversive for Dan:

I didn't see the motivation for wrestling and I was the captain of the team when I quit and it was painful, not physically but inside it was painful to motivate myself that way. It just went against my grain somehow.

Dan's belief in non-violence was put to the test in high school. There he used his participation on the wrestling team as an opportunity to take a stand and "make a statement" about his pacifist beliefs. Here one discerns the cognitive and ideological outcomes of his belief:

I don't believe in violence. I had a hard time with at high school, I was on the wrestling team for four years and in the fourth year the Gulf War broke out and I was so opposed to it cause I just didn't see violence as a way to accomplish anything you know, it's just going to make other people pissed off and just degrading other people's integrity. Just makes them pissed off and fight back. Most people around me, well I quit the team because I wanted to sort of make a statement about um, just, um, like negative sort of energy to degrade other people. Like wrestling was one of these sports where you'd go out on the mat and you'd, people would just slap you all over your body. "Kick his ass, tear him apart."

Dan also attributed his early family experiences of living in various countries as constitutional of his current perspective. He stated that early broad cultural exposures encouraged him to be less ego- and ethnocentric compared to others:

So I just went around to all these places and I guess that I just sort of got a more worldly perspective as people on the earth as a whole thing not just as a nation or just look out for ourselves and stay away from what everyone else is doing. And I find that when whenever I'm in a neat place that I always think about issues more in terms of the whole
worldly picture whereas other people seems just thinking of where they are.

Nature, family transience, a belief in non-violence and, a view of himself as an outsider and outlaw are important aspects of Dan's childhood and adolescence. These experiences prompted a system of beliefs about personal and social issues; an ideology. The early experiences are related to various forces that Dan either currently supports or considers an adversary. His worldly perspective born out of family transience, and his concern for nature which evolved from living "in the bush", inform his opinions about environmental issues:

But um, there are things that we would say that we feel is um, we say to people well what are you doing to help the planet, like when you, when we see loggers on the TV saying "we don't want to loose our jobs, we don't want to loose our jobs!" I understand that but what are you doing to help the planet. So that's where I'm at at this point in my life.

His belief in non-violence informs his current activity interests as well as his attitudes. He expressed this through contrast with his wrestling experience:

That's completely different mental motivation for pushing yourself then say what I'm into now in cycling. It's like "ya, come on you can do it, come on, come on." You just, really being positive for motivation wise. Wrestling was "kill em."

And it was one of these things where you'd go out there on the mat and your in front of your whole school and you'd either beat em and be a stud or hero or you'd get beat and feel like an idiot. And I saw that as a, that type of motivation to do that as a wrong way to motivate yourself. So I'm not interested in violence. It's got to be positive motivation...

Dan's childhood under the influence of a father that "figured he could do it his own way" and, a view of himself as an outsider contributed to his attitudes towards "bureaucratic systems":

I'm also, I find that I'm much more, umm, I find bureaucratic systems just total, I can't even deal with them at all. They're just completely a system that doesn't make sense to me at all... Well you have to, there are all these committees that you have to go through in order to get something done and I
didn't want to, like I'm not very good at dealing with that, like I just want to do it the way I want to do it because, well I guess that's the way dad always did it too.

Dan's esteem for brotherhood is joined in this next passage with his ideological goals. This favorite photograph of Dan's contains vital elements of his ideology; spirituality, brotherhood and, the natural environment. Dan expresses that his ideology is not simply an intellectual exercise but is action oriented in that he considers it to be a "mission":

This is my favorite picture. He's kind of like my spiritual brother. It's almost like a symbol of us on our mission. That's where we are going and we're in our natural environment.

In the following passage Dan defines his ideological mission. It includes the idea of a natural law, as well as the zealous element of influencing others to accept and live the ideology he believes:

And I think I've always been like that but we both see ourselves having an eternal goal to protect what is, the earth here and to encourage people to live in a more natural way and um, to avoid, I can't think of the word, um, sort of the fabricated, jungle world which is, which will block them off from their um, goal or whatever.

In this expansion of his mission statement, Dan shows that it is the values that he upholds (the supremacy of nature) that he desires to influence people towards accepting:

I think people need to see where they are going, not just by thinking about it but by knowing it within themselves and I think that will be you know distracted if we're too cut off from the things that will help them to make it [inaudible].

I: That being the more basic life forms?
Ya. Plants and stuff like that. So that's kind of where I am right now, that's where I'm at in terms of my goals and stuff.

Dan intends to carry out his mission through career. He aspires to having an impact on children by working with them. Once again, Dan indicates that the values that he wishes to impart are those that he holds highly and that were rooted in his own childhood:

I see myself working with kids and teaching them um, to be more self sufficient and to not have to depend on running water and all the sewage pipes and stuff like that. And to be

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more in touch with their real environment that was here long before we built this, ceilings and stuff. I want to be a counsellor at summer camps and just take kids on adventures basically just to help them challenge themselves and accomplish the goals um, small goals I guess, help them learn about group dynamics how to help each other out and stuff and how to have a bit of respect for [inaudible]. This is probably 10 or 15 years from now.

Dan also believes that he is involved in a battle to outdo his opponents in the influence of young minds about nature:

And I also feel like one of my goals is to be a warrior for the earth. That's probably why I do a lot of physical training. That's what I'm here for. And the way I'm going to do that is taking kids at a young age and somehow building into them a respect and a feeling of connection to the earth mother.

**Influence: The role that others play in the person I am**

Dan described various of his personal attributes and abilities. He named various individuals, mostly family members, as being responsible for the cultivation of these self-characteristics. He also comes to know aspects of himself through interaction with, comparison with and observation of others. Dan identifies various processes through which others have been able to influence him.

Dan experiences himself to be a "competent" individual who is "pretty solid in what I'm doing" and "don't feel lost." He credits the efficient and effective functioning of his family as well as his relationship to his family with the development of this aspect of himself. He infers that his personal competence is the result of having few family problems, his co-operating with parents and "get[ting] along well with them":

And this is my whole family. This is [my dad and step mom] and my mom and [step dad] and they have [two children] and there's [my sister]. But I think that's part of why I'm so competent I think because of that 2 solid families. I get along well with them. I don't have a lot of family problems. I work really hard with my mom and step dad.

Dan reported that he believed that efficacious family functioning resulted in his competence. He maintains that his mother is responsible
for the effective way in which his family functions. He suggested that her "forc[ing] us to communicate properly" was a compelling influence in the family's functioning and thereby Dan's competence:

[My mom] who I spent most of my upbringing with work really hard at making sure that the family dynamics work well and making sure that um, everyone is happy and everyone's communicating well with each other. She forces us to communicate properly. If we're at the dinner table and squabbling she just won't tolerate it.

Communication and his mother also figure largely in Dan's optimism. He stated that through teaching, his mother influenced him to "have a positive outlook":

She's um, taught me to communicate in a positive way all the time. Um, I'm the same way. A lot of the way I am is from her. I'm always saying to my friends you know, how to have a positive outlook, like an optimistic, and that's really important for accomplishing goals and stuff.

Dan contrasts the influences that his caregivers have had on him. While he sees his mother as influencing his spiritual side through discussions, he considers his father to have influenced his "practical, logical type side":

And [my father] on the other hand is a more practical, logical type side of me. I don't talk about any of the spiritual stuff with him cause he doesn't deal with that verbally like my mother does. My mother is always talking on that level and always talking about the way things have happened in terms of energy and stuff like that.

Stepparents are also afforded a role in Dan's view of himself. He stated that though role modeling assertiveness they were responsible for inculcating his ability to "function more in this world":

And then these two [my stepfather and stepmother] I respect them equally like a parent but ah, they taught how to be, how to function more in this world like how to deal with um, just getting by in terms of dealing with the system. How to deal with um, society better. They're very, um, they don't doddle at all. "Do it right, ok boom, boom, boom."
Adventurousness and fearlessness are characteristics that Dan perceives in himself. He credited his stepfather with role modeling these for Dan. He also credits his stepfather with his "male" abilities:

And [my step dad] brought out the adventurous side of me. He's, he never stands still in one place for more than, I don't think he's ever lived in one place for more then 6 years. And that's why my mother and him have traveled so much. Just cause he just likes to go. Right now they're on a boat and they're sailing all over the Bahamas again. And, so that's been good for me, to not be afraid to just ah, to just go into another country and not know anybody and not have connection and just go and let it flow and let things happen for you and you'll find somebody to help you and and find a place to sleep. It's good that when I visit my mother that I have another father to do male things, to do projects you know to learn how to fix cars or how to build stuff.

Dan credited a friend with aiding him in the development of an ability. He states that through teaching his friend has helped him improve his cycling:

This is one of my good friends. He's one of the top bike riders. He's one of the only riders on the A team that will talk to me. A lot of these guys are on that superiority trip. He will teach me. He helps me a lot with strategy.

Aside from knowing himself through accounting for the influence of others, Dan also experienced the manifestation of aspects of himself through comparison and contrast with others. For example, optimism is a characteristic by which Dan knows himself. He experienced the manifestation of this characteristic through contrast to a friend whom he labeled as pessimistic:

Like that's one area where me and my friend disagree. He is very often pessimistic. He seems to think it's never going to happen. Mankind just cannot do it, they're unable, they fuck things up and they always will. And I'm always, "it's gonna be all right." I'm always trying to explain to him how to dwell on the positive aspects of situations, just little things when we're not thinking so broadly. Just dealing with people dealing with you know school system, problems, how to just
pay attention to the good things that have happened and to
dwell on that cause that's sort of the right trail to follow.
Um, and if you're just constantly thinking it won't get done I
don't think it will. So I think most of that comes from my
mother.

Contrast was also a feature of the way Dan accounted for himself
when recounting his past. Through contrast with his sister he experienced
himself to have been "logical" and "systematic." He contrasted these
characteristics in himself with his sister whom he saw as "acting on
impulse":

We also didn't get along at all when we were younger because
we just didn't think the same way. I was always very logical
and uh, systematic about how to deal with things or just, and
she'd be always acting on impulse. And she never would pre-
think things she would say. Just a thought would instantly
come out of her mouth and um, I was constantly
contemplating consequences and stuff like that. I'd get very
frustrated with her. She was always just very emotional.

Dan also contrasted himself to his sister in terms of "being
confident." He stated that "it doesn't matter what people say or do it won't
phase me because I still know I'm there." This he distinguished from his
sister's defensiveness:

But she's also like right now she's at a state where she, the
only thing that matters is a boyfriend or something. So I have
a hard time sometimes with squabbles but ah, I guess she's
not as interested yet in terms of um, herself uh, being
confident. She wants to be confident about herself but
sometimes she's just lets things get to her. Like you know
when I was talking to you before about I wanted to be so
strong within myself that it doesn't matter what people say
or do it won't phase me because I still know I'm there. I'm
still almost shielded from remarks or things that people try
to get to you. She has a hard time dealing with people because
it just gets right to her and immediately makes her defensive
and she'll start to get really negative because she just
dwells on that kind of thing. But um, I try to teach her to be
more, to not let those things get to you. Sometimes she just
gets so worn down and these things just don't phase me like that.

Comparison of similarities with others is also a way that Dan experienced aspects of himself. Spirituality is one aspect of himself that he knows through feeling akin to his sister. He also distinguished the sharing of this interest with his sister from his brother's indifference about the subject:

And then my little sister she's another artist in the family. She's extremely talented painter. But she's the same in terms of that part of me that's um, connected to um, spiritual symbols, like when I talked about dragons and stuff, she also dwells in that fairy tale land a lot too. She's 15 now. And so when we are getting along that's usually the level we're at which sometimes my little brother "oh what's this stuff."

Strength is a characteristic that Dan experienced through comparison to his siblings. He also experienced a similarity in the way that they became strong. He stated that his mother's encouragement was responsible for the inculcation of strength in himself and his siblings:

And [my younger brother and sister] do a lot better at that in terms of strong within them selves and I think that's mostly because [my mom] is, cause that's where that comes from. And in me too. And I think that has to do with, all through my childhood [my mother] would constantly, more than just encourage me but um, just tell me I was really did well. No matter what happened it's going to be ok. I'm doing fine and um, and no matter what happens it's going to be all right. So [my brother and sister] are, they've got that too.
APPENDIX V

Demographic Information

1. Gender: Female-4 Male-2
2. Age: 19-1 20-1 21-2 22-2
3. Educational status: attending grade 12-1
   high school drop out-1
   high school graduate-1
   attending post secondary institution-2
   completed undergrad studies-1
4. Occupation: unemployed-1
   student-3
   service industry-2
5. Ethnicity: indiginous, of European background-6
   other-0
6. Siblings: participants with siblings-5
   without siblings-1
7. Marital status: married-0
   single-6
8. Domestic arrangement: alone-2
   partner-1
   biological father-1
   biological mother-1
   peers-1
9. Marital status of biological parents: married-1
   divorced-4
   both remarried-1
10. Father's education: some high school-2
high school grad-1
some college-2
college grad-1

11. Father's employment:  blue collar-1
white collar-5

12. Mother's education:  grade school-1
some high school-2
high school grad-1
some college-0
college grad-2

13. Mother's employment:  blue collar-2
white collar-2
professional-1
home maker-1
unemployed-0

14. Religious preference:  Catholic:1
Protestant:2
Agnostic-1
None-2

15. Hours/week employed:  0 hours-2
20 hours-2
40 hours-2

16. Dating: rarely-3
more than one person-2
co-habiting-1

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This is the person I am now:

I have a lot of different personalities each of which come out depending on my mood. There's two major parts to my personality. I can be a jokster and really "off the wall." When I'm like this I can't click with serious people. This part of me comes out especially at parties. Although I really like to party there's also a more quiet side to me. I'm a homebody. I like to cook, read and watch TV. This is my more shy side.

Another part of my personality is that I react very strongly to things. Like if things don't go the way I want them to then it seems that everything is wrong. This is my negative side. Some friends say it's just being negative but this is really how I see things. This is my reality. When I'm like this I expect that bad things will happen. I want to stop thinking this way.

I'm not a very confident person. I think this comes from looking over my life and seeing that I haven't accomplished anything. I haven't done anything to be proud of and be able to say "I did it." So I'm kind of disappointed in myself but I'm only 21 and I have lots of time to accomplish stuff.

I'm a very emotional, caring and thoughtful person. Like music and movies really effect me. I'll think about movies for a long time. Life story movies like about people dying or love stories are what I'm interested in because they are my personality. Action movies don't interest me.

Part of being a real thinking person is that I worry a lot. Worrying is an important part of me. My mind just goes and goes about so many things at once. I can't seem to quiet my mind down. It takes me 2 hours to get to sleep because I think so much. I worry about stuff that isn't even relevant to me now. Like will I have a baby when I'm 30. I worry about death a lot. About family members dying or what will happen to me after I die.

Although I don't like to worry so much I think it's a good attribute to be a thinking person. I think about why we're here and social pressures such as dress codes and how you act. I think about finding the meaning of
life. I know there's got to be more than just sitting around and doing daily activities. Some may think I'm an idiot sometimes. And I don't think I'm a genius. But because I have opinions about causes, government, society and, poor and homeless people I consider myself pretty intelligent.

I'm not moving forward in achieving my goals right now. But at least I'm thinking and planning a lot. I guess I'm more of a thinker, procrastinator and dreamer than a doer. For me life is on hold right now. Which means lots of partying. This is driving me crazy because I wish to have many things and I'm sick and tired of wishing. I want it now. I've been putting off going to school saying "next year, next year" and now I'm 22 and getting older. Time is passing and I'm feeling more and more pressure to do something, yet so far I've been stuck. My family is pressuring me to do something.

I'm presently working as a waitress. This is just a way of paying the bills not a career choice. I know that I need to get going or I'll remain a waitress all my life. So my main goal is to educate myself as much as I can, get a degree, get a career, a house and travel.

I'm having difficulty knowing how to start on the road to achieving these goals because I have a lot of ideas about what I might like to do. I've thought about acting, nursing, counselling and social work. Although I can't choose among these right now, all my career choices involve working with people. So I know I'll do some kind of work in that area. I just hope that I don't take the work home with me at night because I'm a really caring person and would probably get very involved in their lives and want to help them a lot.

There's a number of things to consider in choosing a career. For one, I don't want to be just a housewife and mother. I also want a profession for myself because I know I can't always rely on a man to support me. Another thing to consider is that travelling is important for my career. I want to travel to meet people and see how they live so that I'll have lots of experience knowing many different kinds of people. I also have to be realistic in my career choice. Friends tell me to be an actress. But I've found out in these past few years as I begin to realize the responsibilities of adulthood, that I have to pay the bills. I have to choose a profession in which I'll be assured of work. It's not a free ride out here like it was in high school.
It's also important to pick a career that is meaningful. This is one reason that it's taking me such a long time to choose. Another reason is that I'm perfectionistic. I want to choose the right career for me. Because I think a lot about it and have ideas and ideals to achieve. I don't want just any job. This thinking is very stressful. And I'm getting impatient. I've put it off for so long that I want all my dreams to happen immediately.

In order to achieve this I'll have to go to university. I used to think that you had to be very intelligent, from a certain family and never go to parties to succeed in university. But I've met some real party goers in third year so I know I can make it in university too. I have more confidence that I can succeed now.

Although all these considerations make it difficult to choose a career, I know that as long as I'm thinking about it I will eventually arrive at a decision. I'll just take one day at a time.

Aside from a career, family, friends and caring for someone are extremely important to me.

I do want to be a mother but not until I'm 30. Right now the most important thing is freedom. I don't want to be tied down.

This is how I came to be the person I am today:

I've been thinking now about what kind of life I'd like to have in the future; children, husband, career, house etc. Being the youngest in the family has enabled me to observe my brother and sister as they grew up, got married, had children or, in the case of my brother, remained single. Through observing them and my parents I was able to form attitudes about what I would like and not like for my life. Actually I wouldn't want to be like any of my family members although, like my sister, I do want a husband, children and house. But not until I'm 30. Now is for freedom. Through seeing that some men (such as my father) are unreliable, I also want to make sure that I have a career for myself so that I have my independence.

When I was in elementary school I was jealous of my friends' families-what I thought was a pleasant, warm life with father and nice home. I never wanted any of them to see where I lived. It didn't seem like a real home because I didn't have a dad. Family seemed really important to me at that time and I didn't think that I had one. I wanted a dad but mom put a lot of pressure on me to not talk to our dad if he phoned. I always regretted that. In high school home life wasn't so important. I discovered
boys and parties. I began to focus on myself and my boyfriend. I also realized that some of my friends were of single parent families. So I started to feel like I fit in.

Mom still gets jealous if I visit dad now. She has never said a good word about him. And he told me he didn't care if mom lived or died. So our family wasn't the normal middle class family. Because my parents were in conflict and there were some ugly scenes between my mom and her boyfriends, I became very close with my sister and brother. When they moved out I was really sad. I figured that we would be together forever. I wasn't ready to be home alone with mom. They were my family. Because of this I think it's really important to stay close to them now and the same for friends. Once I get to know someone I don't like to leave them.

My brother and sister prompted me to get to know dad because after they had moved out of the house they formed good relationships with him. They told me he was a good guy. It took me a while to believe them. Dad left when I was born. He had problems with drugs and alcohol. He was a lost child of the 60's. He was never really a father to me -more like a buddy. He never raised his voice to me or discipline me. I always hated him because he left my mom alone and didn't pay support. If I spoke to him mom would mention some bad thing about him from the past. Mom was always bad mouthing him, so what else could I think?

I came to realize that mom was saying bad things about him because of her own insecurity and because she resented him because she did all the work raising us and said he never helped. Well that's her story. That's the difference between a wife and daughter. I didn't marry him. She has her own anger towards him. I now have my own relationship with him based on my own attitudes. I have my own view now. I know his faults but I don't care. He thinks that I shouldn't have children because my sister had a child when she was young. But my attitude is that I don't want to be a loner all my life like he is. My dad is really intelligent and interesting. He exposes me to different things like photography and jazz. Even though I find his life more interesting then mom's I'll always have an anger towards him because he left me, whereas I truly love my mom "cause she was always there for me.

I wish I had a picture of my whole family together. But that would never happen because mom and dad wouldn't understand. But it's my family. It's them that got divorced. They're all still my family.
This is the first year that dad and I phoned each other. At first I was shy just to look at him. Now it's great just to call him "dad" and I love to tell him about my life. He's my dad and life's too short to remain angry.

Mom and dad are 2 really different people. But I can see myself in various aspects of them. Mom is normal. She is the realistic one. She influences me to want security. She thinks a woman must have a family and man to be happy. She thinks that an office job would be just fine for me. Dad is totally opposite. He's laid back, not nit-picky like mom. He's into jazz and art whereas my mom likes country and western and talks about recipes and tupperware and everyday things like that. Dad influences me to do whatever I want to do, to be a free spirit, spontaneous and wild. He influences me to try to achieve my dreams. He gives me that wild streak, be free, see the world and don't get married. But dad is also selfish and mom is very giving. I'm not sure if these influences are because of genes or if I picked them up just by being around them.

My brother influences me too. He's very selfish like my dad and an alcoholic. Also like my dad, he thinks that women are good for nothing except to trap you and make dinner and have babies. I get my negativity from him. After I talk to him I walk out of the room feeling that everything is bad. He sees marriage as a trap. I think his attitude is not good. I accept his attitude but mine is different. I'm not going to be single for ever. Family is important to me.

My sister also has this attitude that women are subservient to men and that men are the focus of a woman's life and that a woman needs a man in order to be complete. I think my sister would be lost without a man. I think there's something wrong with women who can't live without a man. My attitude is that if you have a man-fine, and if not, that's ok too. I don't want to be caught in the trap of needing a man for happiness. It's nice to have a man to help buy a house but I don't want to rely on a man. I like to have my freedom. No man is going to tell me what to do. I go to stay with girlfriends over the weekend and my mother thinks that it's terrible to be away from my boyfriend. Men are more powerful for my mother. For me, I think that my boyfriend does his thing and I do mine. One time a girlfriend and myself decided to drive to Seattle. I didn't phone my boyfriend, who I was living with, to tell him I had gone. It was fun to be irresponsible. Now I realize you have to take a more balanced approach and mix responsibility with fun and spontaneity. My mom said she couldn't
believe I did that. But I have my own view of relationships. What I did is something that a man would do. Girls wouldn't normally just go off without telling their man. I don't feel constrained by these sex role stereotypes.

I have developed my attitude towards men by watching how men abused my mother and sister. Also I had 2 boyfriends in high school who I let walk all over me. They were over-possessive, jealous and abusive. The first one wouldn't let me go out with girlfriends or talk to guys. He even tried to control what clothes I wore. I look back on him and think what a goof he is. After my second boyfriend was the same I said "no more." I used to think that I was destined to pick out loosers. But now I stand up for myself and am making better choices. Before I never thought I would ever go out with someone like my current boyfriend who is really thoughtful and was able to settle me down from my wild days. And he's from a good family—mother a doctor and father a professor.

I don't come from a disciplined family. We were poor and struggled. If I wanted something I had to pay for it. My childhood was about alcohol. My dad was an alcoholic. And my mom's boyfriends who lived with us for 4 years were alcoholics and abusive. I won't marry an alcoholic now because I've seen what that life is like. I saw the constant arguing, slapping my mother around, drinking and driving. I would hide in my room and listen to them fight and my mother cry. I hated it because I couldn't do anything about it. I had to live there "cause I was just a child. Then I grew up and forgot about it. They weren't my real father so I could forget about them. So now I don't want to struggle. I don't want to have 2 kids at 25 and have to struggle to make ends meet. I take a philosophical approach to my background. There are good times and bad times. I just have to accept this. I don't feel sorry for myself.

I thought all this alcohol was over but now I'm dealing with my brother who is an alcoholic. And my sisters boyfriend drinks. It never ends. I find it very tiring and wish I could get completely away from it.

My shyness began when I was a child. I think it started because I didn't meet many people when I was young because mom, who was agoraphobic, never let anyone into the house and never took us out. Another factor is that she never let me get dirty—always watching me closely and controlling me a lot so that I never learned to get out on my own. I was afraid she would leave me and so I clung to her. I couldn't look at or talk to
people, had no friends and was scared of teachers. One time a teacher asked me to stand up and spell a word. I was so scared I just cried and cried. I was very high strung and had no confidence. My mother always said I lacked confidence so I started to believe that even though I thought I was confident.

I was still shy in high school because I was afraid people were talking about me. If a group of guys was coming my way I’d take the long way home. I was always jealous of my sister because she’s so outgoing and strong. I let people walk all over me and don’t stand up for myself. I’m afraid to tell people what I really think and let people yell at me and take advantage of me. But I’m pushing myself out of it now. Living near the beach where there’s lots of people has helped to overcome my shyness. Now I really surprise myself by telling people where to go. It took me 3 weeks to phone dad to ask for $30. I was so upset thinking what he might think of me. But I decided if he says no, big deal. I finally did it and it didn’t seem like a big deal. Now I’m saying "no" more instead of always trying to please friends. There’s nothing worse then shyness.

The biggest experience of my life was raising my sister’s son and living with my sister for 2 years. Prior to this we weren’t very close. But when my sister got pregnant I immediately knew I would help her. I was her Lamaze partner and was in the delivery room for the birth. My sister is in all of the pictures that I hang on my walls. That’s how important she is to me. I have a picture of my sister at her baby shower. I began to see her differently then. She was no longer just my sister, she was also a woman. When she got pregnant I automatically said I’ll help you. Being there at the birth and seeing the baby come out, I felt in love with my sister and thought she was a great person. Living with them was like a second family and her son was like my son. It was so exciting to have another family member after all of those years of just the 4 of us. At my graduation I took my nephew up on the stage with me to receive my diploma. It was such an honor for my sister and myself to take him up there because everyone knew our story. Living with my nephew made me realize all of the responsibility and work there is in raising a child. So now I want to put that off for a while.

Sometimes I feel like I’m kind of not going anywhere, like my life hasn’t started yet, like life is on hold. When I used to visit my sister I was jealous because her life had started. She had kids, a husband and a house.
Even though this wasn't what I wanted I was jealous that she had her life started. After visiting her I thought that I was going home to nothing. When she got married I felt small. I felt like I didn't have a life. But after seeing her life I appreciate mine much more. She's got kids crying and no freedom. Her friends have to lie to their husbands in order to go out. Now I know that just because I have no kids or husband etc. I do have something important. I have friends and people who care about me. That's why I stay close to friends and do stuff with them. Because they are my life right now. And I also have my freedom. I want to settle down eventually but not now.

Now I can pick up tomorrow and go travel which is just how I like it. This is freedom and freedom is important to me. There was the time that a friend and I decided one night to drive to California and live there. And so we did. I like that spontaneity. We did get thrown in jail and now I think how stupid that was but it was also a lot of fun. This independence and spontaneity is a part of my life that I cherish.

"Sandy"

This is who I am now:

I'm a very happy, outgoing, social person who also likes time alone. Now I'm seeing a lot of friends but I think I'll get sick of that soon and spend more time alone. I'm confused about how others perceive me. This isn't an insecurity. It's a natural part of growing up. Taking part in the outdoor education program last year made me an active person although with summer here I've been pretty lazy, staying up late and sleeping in. I've been sick a lot this last year with asthma. I think it's caused by stress because now that I'm clearing up a lot of the things I don't like in my life my asthma is also clearing up. I'm stagnating now, not doing much and I wouldn't mind doing something. I was cared for and supported when growing up and I never rebelled against my parents but I am resentful because of some incidents in my past. I hope I can get rid of that resentment in the future.

My father, who is a fairly old person, lives in a town in the interior. He doesn't know me very well. Like he doesn't know I drink, smoke and party. I love him. Since he moved away when I was 11 he treats me like I'm still that age. I resent my dad because he has not made an effort in the right way to get to know me. I can't love him now because of what is going on in my life. He accepts me for who I am but I can't tell him anything.
Whereas I can tell my mom anything because she knows me on a day to day basis. I don't see my dad and stepmother enough or for long enough times to really confide in them. Like I might mention I had a party and dad knows that means drinking but we just avoid that topic. In the future I won't have to explain myself and just do what I want to do. I've been living the life of an adult for the last year but to him I'm still his baby. But if I want to smoke it's my choice. I'm not his possession. In the future I'd like him to know me more.

My stepmother resents me because I don't let her know about myself. She thinks she deserves to know me because she cared for me. We talked about this and bridged some misunderstandings we had. We get along very well.

My mom lives upstairs which is great because it means I have my independence and my family too. I get along very well with her. She tries to be as young as possible and I try to be as mature as possible. She's my best friend and the person I know I can always rely on. She's really close with my friends, like she had them over for her birthday instead of her own friends.

I'm living with three friends right now. But I'm not too happy with the situation. Fortunately they're moving out and 2 very good friends are moving in. I've been looking forward to this change. It seems that everything is going to be just as I want it. One of the girls that is moving in is such a good friend it's almost like we're married. When they move in we're going to make some changes to the house so that it's not so divided up. It will be like one house and one big family and we'll all buy food together.

I recently broke up with my boyfriend. He's pretty much always on my mind right now. I've spent a lot of time partying with him lately and staying at his place trying to see if we can be friends without being lovers. We're trying to be good friends but it's difficult. We had a very rough relationship, very emotionally charged and breaking up and getting together often. Now he wants to talk to me about something that happened. I don't know what it is so it's been on my mind a lot. It could be about that I'm going out with one of his friends.

I really like school although this was a really tough year because I didn't have anyone to keep me on track. But my good friend made sure I got
through the year ok by taking a mothering role for me. My friends are so close to me that they're like family.

My brother lives in Europe right now. We had a very rough time together when we lived with my mom.

In the future I'd like to work for National Geographic doing anthropology, journalism and marine biology. I'm pretty certain that I'll get married and have no more then 2 children. My relationship with a man will have to be as deep as the one I have with my best girlfriend before I'd be willing to get married. There has to be romance, friendship and intrigue. I'll be a good parent because of all the difficult times I've had. I'd like to own a house and live in the country for about a year. I'd like to live in Senegal practicing Anthropology after graduating. The only reason I can think of for wanting to live there is I studied it in grade 4 and have since read a lot about it. Family is important to my future. I'd bring my mother with me wherever I moved because we're best friends and she'd fall apart without me to look after. In the future I don't need to be wealthy but just not always having to search for money.

This is how I came to be the person I am today:

As an infant I lived with my mom and dad very near to where I'm currently living. Then at 11 months, my mom left my dad and took me and my brother to live in a "shit hole basement suite" until I was 4 years old. At the time mom had very little money and worked in an antique shop during the day and as a seamstress all night. It was very difficult but we were happy. Then we moved into the upstairs of my current house. At 4 I moved with my dad for a few years. After that I lived with my mom and visited my dad every few weeks. That was pleasant. Then my dad and stepmom moved to a town in the interior and I moved in with my aunt earlier this year.

So I've been moving around my whole life. This is because of my brother. He was hyperactive and always tried to make me mad, stupid, ugly and feel inferior. And he'd say "don't tell mom or you'll stress her out. You and me can work this out." We were always in conflict. I remember a time when I was 8 years old that he really tormented me. It started with him locking me in and ended with me climbing out the window and running to my aunt's house. Another time he hit me across the face when I was sitting near to my mom. Because my mother never did anything about that and it was never talked about I really resented her and felt betrayed by
her. Another time I locked myself in my room because he was trying to injure me. My mom just left the house "cause she couldn't stand it anymore. When I phoned my aunt to say I was coming over I could hear my mom's voice in the background. So I said I wouldn't come over because I was so repulsed and angered that mom had left me there I didn't want to see her. Finally my dad got me and I stayed with him for a week. Another time he was tormenting me, threw a phone book at me etc., and I starting screaming and bit him. I got out of the house and wanted to get run over by a car. I was just thinking about the awful situation of the moment at the time, not the wider picture. I felt helpless, too young to move out, and thinking about living with him for another 2 years. Finally a lady took me to my aunt's house and I stayed there for a couple of weeks. There was so many instances of this that I blocked them from my memory. All this really effected my school work. Grade 10 was particularly bad. This experience really shaped my ideas of the person I want to be and what I won't be. All these experiences have given me a personal strength to "not close myself off to people."

This living situation with me living downstairs from my brother and When I moved out of our house because of the situation with my brother I lived at my aunt's for a while with the person who is now my best friend. That's when we got to know each other well. After a while another girl moved in without even asking. Her and I fought a lot because I felt that she came between my best friend and myself and that she was using my aunt and being rude. After she moved out and I moved back home I didn't like her for a couple of months. From that experience I know that her and I cannot live alone together. But the three of us are going to live together here and it will be great. This is something I've really been looking forward to. Now my living situation will be the way I want it. Since I moved into the basement 6 months ago even my relationship with my brother has improved because we realize that we won't be stuck together forever. Now I realize that I need a big brother and think that brothers and sisters are great. At first I didn't trust him when he was nice to me but he proved to me that he really wanted to try to be friends. Although I despised my brother I also really always loved him too.

In the past I've had my space invaded by my brother. Now I'm old enough to demand and get my own space, respect and the basics to live on.
So very soon this situation is going to be just right with my 2 friends living here and my mom and brother upstairs.

It still have ambitions and dreams but most important right now is my personal safety and "weaning from my family." And then forming a new more accepting relationship with them.

I took a self exploration course when I was 13. I was "sorting out my head." It was there that I realized I was very angry with my dad. I called him up and told him "I am your baby, I'll always be your baby in my heart, but I'm not 11 years old anymore. 11 to 14 is really different. At 14 there's interest in drugs and boys and experimentation. So I wanted him to know that I was going through that. But I haven't talked to him about anything important like that since then. It's always been a struggle. He compliments me on all my achievements. I wish I could tell him about the bad things and help me. But I don't tell him because he may only be alive for another 10 years and I don't see him very much. Maybe when I'm older I'll tell him about myself. He probably knows anyway. But he doesn't mention anything. I guess now it's my choice to not tell him. I don't want to expose myself to him. My father encourages me to do whatever I want.

My aunt is not like my mother. She is very much like me; eccentric. She has no short term memory. She's the kindest person and really smart. But the family doesn't respect her because they think she's naive and "nutty." But I don't think she is. We're really close. My aunt means "compassion" to me. She has let me know that "I can be as creative as I want to be, and as outgoing as I want to be, wear what I want to, do what I want to." She taught me a lot about myself.

My brother is a very important person in my life. Everything in my life seems to have to do with him. I competed with my brother to have more friends. I think I was a social person from day one, always talking to everyone. Also I trust people a lot, maybe too much.

My friend, who is a major person in my life taught me "friendship, definite, real, friendship." I'm lucky that I have such really good friends that are like a family in that we take care of each other.

I met my boyfriend at a club. I saw him dancing and he really impressed me, he really stood out. I saw him approaching and thought he was coming for my friend because she's beautiful but he spoke to me and took my hand and we were kissing before I even knew his name. I'd never done that before. We became good friends immediately but he broke up
with me to return to his ex-girlfriend who apparently he had never really broken up with. I started going out with someone else but after a few weeks we spoke and got back together. It's been difficult because we get close and then he'd decide we can't be together. So I want him to decide finally what he wants to do because I don't want to be "a scapegoat for [his] emotions." We were both the first person each other had ever slept with so it was difficult when he started to see others as well as myself. Because he was doing that I decided that I would too. Be broke up shortly after I was nearly raped. I told my boyfriend that I needed him and came and got me. This was closest time we had ever had together. We broke up that night because I wanted him to make a commitment to me and not see others as well. So I said "you make a decision, I don't mind breaking up with you." He couldn't decide so I said let's break up. After that we got together and broke up numerous times. Now we resent each other because of what happened. I resent him because he's been trying to get my friends into bed. I think he's doing that because I'm seeing one of his friends.

My mom has taught me independence, strength of character and perseverance. My mom taught me that you can get what you want if you put your mind to it. When I first applied to the outdoor education program I wasn't accepted so I wrote letters and talked to them and when someone dropped out I competed with some others for the position and was successful. Because I then had something to work towards my marks really went up even in math which I had never done well in.

I came to be interested in outdoor activities like we did in that program in part by spending time at my dad's house and going for walks in the area which was rural. At first I didn't like it ("Bugs!, Bugs!"). But then I got to like it. Also I've always really liked competing, and did very well in outdoor sports activities such as the city marathon. And the final reason that I got involved in the outdoor education program is that it's important for me to get out of the normal school system and to not be like everyone else. Like I dress in ways that are really different from others. I know some of this is just a phase and that after you graduate you go back to being normal. I went through a phase of hanging out with these hippies and then with some mescaline users. But I don't do that anymore. In school I try and change the program as much as possible to make it interesting for myself.
I've been through so much in the past that I'm not worried about the future. "I know that whatever I want to do, I can do." I've been working for 5 years. I can get money. I'll be graduating next year. So my life is my own after graduation. I can go to school, travel, work full time. I have an established life with long lasting friends.

Because my experiences have been very intense I could grow up fast, get a full time job etc. But I'm not going to. "I love being a teenager. I love being young enough to get away with being a looser, but having the ability to be as mature as I want to be."

In the past I wanted to be a veterinarian because I've always had animals. But now I don't want to do that because I don't like the idea of operating on animals. But I would like to observe, play with and write about animals. Now I want to study native cultures. I have a connection with them because I'm part native. You can see it in my father's reddish skin and very deep dark brown eyes. In contrast my mom's quite British. I'd love to study African tribes and hear their stories, watch how they interact and communicate.

I had an experience when I was 10 that expresses one of my views of society. I was assaulted at that time and later spotted the attacker and had the police pick him up. Later they wanted me to identify his picture from pictures of a number of men who looked so similar that I couldn't pick him out. This really angered me. I had already pointed him out on the street. This makes me really skeptical about society when they go against a person who has been assaulted and think that emotions are a weakness.

I think that everyone should be able to express themselves in whatever way they want to. For example, I talked with a guy dressed very eccentrically in a park. This person just said what he thought and I appreciated, respected and admired him although the friend I was with thought I shouldn't talk to him. I thought even though he looked strange he was more sane than most people and "at peace with himself." I thought he was true to his inner self and didn't care what other people think. I do care what others think about me although I'm not totally a conformist.

"Alexis"

I'm happy and mostly satisfied. I'd say that I am independent, smart, cuddly and friendly. I don't always feel that I am self secure and a beautiful person. So I have my "down but I get up again." One can't always be happy. My period really effects my level of contentment because it
makes me feel fat. Also I get really sensitive at that time of the month. Like a commercial or a song will have a great impact on me.

I had a sketch book that had 3 pictures taken out of it. I was really upset about this because the 3 pictures really captured who I am. They represented parts of me; my introverted side, my passionate side, and the part of me that wishes to be dominant or aggressive. This wish for dominance comes from looking at magazines and wishing to be like all of the sexy women who are pictured. I think society has influenced me to think like that. But I now realize that I don't have to be like them because I have an inner beauty and am a worthwhile person for who I am.

All my sketches are very important to me and take the place of a diary. I don't keep a diary anymore because someone read it once and reacted too strongly to the contents.

Sometimes I think of myself as a passive person. This is really different from my mom who "just comes out with it." But like my mom, I'm a very tolerant person. I need to be aware not to tolerate situations that are bad for me the way my mom tolerated my stepdad.

I'm a very generous person. For example, my mom couldn't afford to buy new clothes for my sister so I bought some for her.

I'm an optimist and "don't like to get depressed." For example, if something difficult happens at home, the next day I would have a smile on my face. Even if inside I was crying.

I'm creative. I work well with people. I like kids and work with kids. I'm very good at that.

When I was young I always tried to please people and one way that I did this was to give people pictures that I had drawn. I never wanted to upset people and I'm still like that. "I don't like to confront people at all." I think it's important for me to learn to express myself without being confrontational. For example, where I'm working now I spoke to the director in a manner in which I expressed myself without being critical. I guess I'm a diplomatic person. As a result people are at ease with me. This has the benefit of enabling me to see all the parts of a person, even the less flattering sides. So "I can see people for who they are."

This is particularly useful in my ethnic community where people really cover up what is happening in their lives. People "look good" but that's only a facade. There is lots of difficult family situations that are kept secret. For example, my own family situation of marital discord,
alcoholism and divorce was not known in the community. When one day I
told a girl about it she was shocked. For people in the community
"appearances" are what is important. So in this respect I feel alienated
from my community.

Another time in which I felt alienated was when my family moved to
the east coast and lived in a dilapidated house. People at school, including
the teachers, didn't like me and treated me like I was different because I
was new to the area and because of reputation of the house we lived in. I
felt like I didn't fit in and didn't feel good about myself. People didn't see
me for who I really was but who they thought I was. It was a difficult
experience because I didn't know anyone except my family. But I'm much
stronger for it. I have resiliency and the ability to "bounce back."

I'm an artist. I like to paint. I like to do figure drawings. I also enjoy
drawing in sketch book. The way I work is to just work quickly without
evaluating it and then when it's done see how it "turns out." When I do this
I am really impressed with how well they turn out. "Sometimes I don't
realize my own potential." I have paints at home and so I paint there.

My mom and dad weren't married when I was born. My parents always
got into fights. He was an alcoholic. It seems that my mom followed the
pattern of marrying a man who is like your father because her father also
had "alcoholic tendencies."

I have a brother who I have never met but want to get to know. My
mom doesn't want to have the financial responsibility for him so I will
wait for a couple of years before I seek him out.

My parents separated when I was young. My mom never wanted me to
go out with guys because she was pregnant with me when she was 17 and
doesn't want me to be in the same situation. She almost put me up for
adoption until my grandmother said that she would take care of me. So at
that time I was with my mom on weekdays and with my grandmother on
weekends. At that time my whole life was with my mom. "If anything ever
happened, it was me and my mom, right." After their divorce I was told
"it's you and me." So I always helped mom out.

Then my mom got married for security reasons. My stepdad had a
daughter so I had a step sister. Our relationship was bad because we
fought a lot.

Some aspects of that family were good. For example I always had top
quality clothes. After the demise of that family clothes shopping was
more likely to be at a second hand store. That marriage lasted for 4 years. So my sister was really young when this family and the financial change occurred. So she's used to getting second hand clothes.

Prior to the divorce we had a nice house, 2 cars and "all the nuclear family thing." After the divorce I felt ashamed to bring friends home because our house was not so nice. Kids at school also started to call me "welfare bum." It was a very difficult time. But I stood up for myself and said being poor "does not change the kind of person I am." I'm proud that I had the strength to say that instead of withdrawing.

My mom now has a boyfriend of 10 years. He's also an alcoholic but he's in AA now and they are finally "coming together" in their relationship. When I was in grade 8 they would "get into horrible fights." I hated to hear this so I would turn my radio up. After these fights the entire house would be a mess. I couldn't understand how my mother would simply clean up and continue on as if nothing happened. I wanted to run away to a foster home. But I stayed for my sister because "she needed someone too." She talked to me if she was concerned about what was going on. For example, I gave her advice about her habit of lying to my mom's boyfriend.

At that time I would blame their fighting on myself. For example, I preferred to not put articles neatly away in my room, but leave them just where I put them so that I could find them the next time I needed them. This has been a bone of contention with my mom's boyfriend, who considers my room "disgusting" and me "sick" because of this. So I started to think that I was "insane," not knowing that it was quite normal for teenagers to have rooms like mine. And I also thought that it was my fault that they were fighting and that I was ruining their relationship.

I discovered that their fighting was their problem and not mine with the help of a school counsellor. I talked to her throughout a 3 year period and she provided me with confidence and clarity about this situation. Through talking to her about a problem I could work out a solution for myself. This influenced me to develop "logical thinking" which I am able to use in my life to solve problems. I give that woman a lot of credit for making me who I am now. But I also realize that I "have a decent head on my shoulders" and would have found somebody to talk to in order to work things out.

Because we moved at least twice a year when I was young, I had some difficulties in school. For example I never learned to spell properly.
When I was having difficulties with spelling they put me in the learning assistance center. This was a bad idea because I learned to spell phonetically which is not a good method of spelling. I also got behind in math. Also I was "set apart from the rest" which made me feel different and unhappy. When the school suggested that my younger sister go into L.A.C. my mother refused to let her go because she saw the negative effect it had on me.

The important people in my life are my mom, my sister, my cousins, my aunt and my uncle. I lived with an aunt and uncle for a short time. My cat is also important to me.

I'd say that my aunt, my grandmother, my mother and my self made me what I am.

My aunt is an influential person in my life. She's studying to be a psychologist. When I lived with her she helped me with my self-esteem. She also represents to me a person who is able to fulfill her own goals through self-determination. So I realize through her that it is not useful to blame my problems on my parents. I have to decide what I want and go after it. "I've got to help myself." She is lucky in that she is married to a man who is liberal. He respects her desires to get a profession. I'm like my aunt in our style of dress which is conservative.

My mom and my grandma are also important people to me. Being the first grandchild meant that I was very special to my grandmother. It is their strength that impresses me. They both raised children on their own.

I'm so impressed with my mother's ability to deal with 2 alcoholics, raise 2 children and deal with the welfare system. She has had a great influence on me. I think I got my "resilience" from her. For example, at first my mom did secretarial work to pay the bills. But she was dissatisfied with that so she decided to do something more fulfilling. So this year she's going into massage therapy. It's this ability to make changes in your life when you are dissatisfied that impresses me.

We are also similar in that we are "people persons." As well we are "really stubborn." Therefore arguments between us go on and on. Compromise is next to impossible with her because she is really "strict and steadfast." I feel like I don't have a choice. If I want to live with her I must do what she wants. This is a worthwhile tradeoff even though it is "a pain." I find some of her curfew rules to be unreasonable and interfering in what I want to do. For example, my boyfriend has recently moved to
Seattle. I'm unable to tell him if I can visit him because it's up to my mom to give me the permission to go.

My mom and I don't talk a lot especially about sexuality and other personal issues. I find it really sad that we don't have a closer relationship. I felt very happy that we made a dinner together recently. I wish we had more intimate times like that. It means a lot to me. Even sharing an hour watching TV together is important to me. I don't know if she is aware of how important this is to me.

But I know that she loves me. She shows her caring by being concerned about what happens to me and worrying about me. For example, I was considering moving into a place with a male friend. She advised me against doing that by suggesting some difficult situations that might arise. She was concerned that it might limit my ability to achieve my goals.

But the difficult aspect of my mom advising me is that she doesn't discuss it with me but tells me what to do. This has the effect of making me want to do what I want to do even more. Another example of this is when my mom tells me to clean my room. Even if I intended to clean it, if she tells me to, then I loose interest in doing it. In contrast, the way my mom's boyfriend presents issues to me makes it a lot more easy to listen to.

I'm very like my grandmother in that I always keep things that are important to me. I want to retain my memory. For example, one time I went to a beach where there was a glass factory that blew up and shot marbles all over the beach. My grandma and I were able to actually pick up marbles from the beach. I recently returned there and found that marbles were still on the beach.

Another way that we are similar is in our "cautiousness." Because my mom is the youngest in her family, my grandma always worried about her. Also her 2 siblings are leading stable lives. So this cautiousness has been passed on from my grandma to my mom and finally to me.

Also both my grandma and myself are creative. We both enjoy sewing, although she does her sewing with a machine that I wish I had. We also both enjoy redecorating.

Recently I had a very tender, close experience with my sister. I accidently walked in on her when she was masturbating. We had an intimate talk in which she at first cried from embarrassment but later
felt reassured as a result of my honesty and caring. I think that I am able to help her in a way that is useful to her. And when I do this I am also reinforcing ideals that I have for myself.

My boyfriend tells me that he loves me but I find this difficult to accept because my experience is that I don't always know when others are telling the truth or trying to take advantage of me. Trusting others is a very emotional issue for me. Anyway I know that I'm not going to marry my boyfriend even though I like him a lot. I am sexually active with him so it's always a relief to get my period, even though we do practice birth control.

I liked a previous boyfriend in part because of his cute "babyface." Also we are both "very sexual" people. We didn't have sex for the first 3 months of our relationship because I decided "to hold out." He was the first person I had intercourse with. It was a very enjoyable experience. But after that he became careless "in terms of contraception, in terms of sensitivity." Although I satisfied his sexual desires, he did not respond to "what I wanted and what I needed." That's one thing I like about my present boyfriend. He's always concerned about whether I'm having a good time. In fact perhaps he is too concerned. Anyway, after a summer in which we spent a lot of time together I think it was likely he was having an affair because he seemed to be always too busy to get together. He used the excuse that he was working a lot. But now I'm resolved to the idea that it was a summer romance. I learned from that relationship to not drag a relationship out. Either fix it or end it.

I saw him after we broke up and he appeared to have really gone downhill and also I'd heard that he'd become very reclusive. It seemed strange that such an outgoing guy would change so much and become that way. Perhaps he was distressed over the breakup of our relationship.

I haven't had many "serious relationships." In high school I dated guys but just as friends. But it was difficult to refrain from having sex with these guys because not having a dad or brother, I didn't know "how to deal with guys that well. They were always really alien to me." Because I developed very early and looked and acted like an adult, the guys always thought "that I was easy." Even now there's a guy that thinks that "I'm easy." And he doesn't know anything about me but he still thinks that. As a result of this I felt very alien from males. And I also felt very different from the other girls.
Other girls told me that I was pretty, but I didn't think that was so because I thought if I was pretty then guys would like me instead of intimidate me.

When I was younger I thought that others were the judge of attractiveness. I had no idea that a person could appreciate themselves. Now I consider myself to be beautiful. I really appreciate my physical features. I'm very pleased to be beautiful.

Because we moved around a lot when I was young I didn't make friends. In grade 7 a teacher told me that it was ok to make friends because now that I was older I could use the phone to keep in touch with friends and take responsibility to keep friendships going.

I think I'll find the right man and have a family, but now I'm focussed on the present; "school, where I live, safety issues, what I'm doing with myself, what am I doing to have fun." I suppose one could say that I'm selfish but I make no excuses about that. I want to improve myself now and be satisfied with who I am. Before I achieve this I can't envision myself in a loving relationship. I must love myself first.

For a profession I see myself as an art teacher. I would be an artist but I think the market is very difficult to get into in that field. So I'll finish my fine art studies at the community college, go to an art school and then a university to become a teacher. I expect to be in school for about 7 years. I want to be a teacher because I like teachers a lot and also it "will put food on the table."

In conclusion, one important thing I would say about myself is that I have resilience. I like to think that I have wings. That is to say that I have had a natural ability to be successful and content within myself and in the things that I do despite some very difficult situations that I have encountered in my life.

"Dan"

When I was a child my family travelled and lived in many different places and this has had a great influence on who I am. We did live for quite a while in an isolated northern area in the bush. When I was 2 years old my parents separated so I lived mostly with my mom and visited my dad in the summers.

I went to a boarding school that my dad's side of the family went to. There I had really close friends and was less connected to my parents who I only saw a Christmas and in the summer. Because of my dyslexia, school
was and is very difficult. But I always put extraordinary effort into doing well at school.

When I was in boarding school I felt different from the others because I had done so much travelling while they were mostly locals. Also people thought I was strange because of my eating habits. But that was just because of the basic, "close to the earth" lifestyle we lived, in which our dogs were my close friends and food came from the garden instead of out of a box.

When I was in boarding school I was small and was picked on a lot. One time when I was on a date another fellow shamed me by physically picking me up. I was furious and frustrated. I had very little strength. This made me determined to never get picked on again. So in high school I got into weight lifting. This provided me with a sense of self confidence.

In high school I also got into wrestling. But I found that eventually I didn't like the violent aspect of that sport and I wanted to make a statement about that so I quit. I don't like to express my interest in the physical side of life in a violent way. I think this comes from my family who are Quakers, and the boarding school I went to which is also Quaker. Instead of violence, I motivate myself by challenging myself to be faster and stronger. My motivation is positive.

Another outcome of my early life experiences is that I don't know how to deal with bureaucracies. My father was also a big influence on me in this respect. He's like that too. He has always tried to do things his own way and avoid rules imposed by others. For myself, this year I was trying to do an art project that the gallery wouldn't let me do. Their attitude just doesn't make sense to me. I just want to do what I want to do without having to go through committees or adhere to a set of rules.

Right now one of the most important activities I do is cycling. I ride every day. At university I'm on the cycling team. Bicycling is one of the ways that I care for my health, express my self confidence and discover how my mind works. I don't enter bike races as much to win as to better myself and discover how I turn challenge and physical strain into the motivation to bike faster.

I think better visually rather then logically which is why I enjoy making art. I work mainly in sculpture and painting. I'm very good at working with my hands. Dragons are the dominant motif I use in my art work. I've always been interested in dragons and have made hundreds of
them. I think this is because they symbolize "creative energy." They represent my own creatvity.

These activities are not only something I enjoy but they are deeply connected to who I am. I don't have to force myself to do them. They are who I am so I am very motivated to do them. They make me feel good. They are an expression of my self confidence and they are extremely exciting.

Because of where we lived when I was young, I feel most "at home" in the natural environment. Even though I have spent a lot of time in the city with my mom, I'm not used to living there. Because my university is in a city, I have to get away. My room is also a refuge from the city. I've rounded all the corners as a way to soften the harshness and create a relaxing, peaceful environment. Also I ride my bike into the hills almost every weekend in order to get away. When I ride my bike I'm on a "visionquest" which is a journey in search of truth, self discovery and spiritual experience. Cities tend to block off this search. So I need to go into the natural environment to achieve this sense of "clarity or discovery." For example, one time I went over the hill for an all day strenuous bike ride. When I came back over the hill I had the experience of being in the midst of dragons (which the hills resembled). This was so profound that I made a painting of what I experienced.

Because of travelling a lot and not having any long standing group of friends, I have a worldly perspective and the sense of being concerned with the entire human race instead of with my own immediate concerns. And because I spent my early years living in the bush, I feel that the natural environment is where I am most at home and what is most real. I find urban environments to be limiting, harsh and discouraging. I believe that the natural world is being eroded by the growth of cities and the needs of the people who live in them. So the natural environment, which I hold in the highest esteem, needs to be protected. And I feel that I have that mission in my life. I consider myself to be a "warrior for the earth." And the way I intend to carry out this mission is to encourage others, particularly children, to respect and enjoy the natural environment and to be joyful, energetic, creative and, responsible to one another.

I share this attitude with a very close friend at school who I consider my spiritual brother. From a past life regression experience, we realize that we have a very deep connection. I think we both share an
"outlaw" persona. That is, we live outside of "the system." We both have "an eternal goal" which is to "protect the earth" and encourage others to live in a "natural way." We feel that the urban environment distracts individuals from finding what is their true purpose in living and in being connected to the natural environment. Other friends have the goal of gaining material wealth. My friend and I hold "the good of the planet" as the ultimate goal of all actions.

But we are different in that I am optimistic whereas he is a pessimist. He thinks that the human race has always made mistakes and will continue to whereas I always have hope.

Although I'm studying art I don't want to do that for a career because there is little monetary gain for the long hours of work that go into making a piece of art. Instead, I want a career that's active because I need to be active every day. And I find that physical exertion is a form of creative expression. I don't want a 9 to 5 job. I want to work outdoors. "I love playing with kids." I like to help them have fun rather then hang around being bored and smoking cigarettes etc. Because I had such a good "constructive" childhood, I think that other kids would benefit from being involved in activities that are fun, creative, healthy and develop their interpersonal skills. So in terms of a career, I'd like to be a camp counsellor. My group dynamics skills and interest in "experiential learning" would help me in this. I like to help kids challenge themselves so that they can feel energetic and confident.

This is all in 10 or 15 years. At this time I'm still "building myself", still honing my skills and learning. First I want to finish university and travel. I want to go to New Zealand because I have great memories of living there.

In the future I'd like to live simply, perhaps in a commune and with a woman. I never have had a longstanding relationship with a woman but I have a clear idea about what the woman I might live with will be like. We would compliment each other in our abilities. This is similar to how my dad and stepmother work together. I think that one day this woman and I will meet and we will just know that we are almost destined to be with each other forever.

I'm very lucky when it comes to family because with both my parents remarrying and having children I now have 2 families and I consider both of them to be "solid." My mother ensures that family
dynamics are running smoothly and that everyone is happy by forcing us to communicate to each other in a caring manner and not tolerating squabbling.

They have had a tremendous impact on who I am now. My mother influences me to be optimistic. She encourages my spiritual side. My father has influenced my practical side. I respect my step parents like they are my parents. They "taught me how to function in this world, like how to deal with just getting by and dealing with society." My step dad has encouraged the adventurous side of me. Because of my experience with him I have the confidence to go anywhere in the world and know that I can survive. That's why I want to travel. It's good that when I visit my mother I have him to be with to learn "male" stuff like fixing cars etc.

I get along really well with my brother. He's 13 and so we're into being physical, wrestling, water fights etc.

My younger sister is also an artist and like myself, is interested in mysticism, fairytales, and symbolism. It's more than just an interest. Our world is composed of these spiritual aspects and they form the basis for our understanding of each other and how we relate to one another. It was different when we were younger. At that time, my logical, systematic thinking style conflicted with her impulsiveness.

One way that my older sister and I are different is that I am self confident. I feel strong within myself so that I don't feel so dependent on what others think or say. She has more of a need to please others so that what they think and say can really disturb her and make her defensive and negative like when she has a conflict with her mom and dad. I've been trying to teach her to "not let those things get to her" and be more optimistic and strong in herself. My younger brother and sister are better off in this respect. I think the three of us are strong because of my mother who has always been encouraged us with a positive attitude.

"Jack"

This is who I am now:

I'm at a crossroads. In the recent past I've changed jobs and/or countries every six months. Since then I spent 1 year in school and 1 year working. Now I'm staying in one place and trying to decide whether to go travelling again or take a journalism job. When I was travelling I worried about getting a career going and now when I'm home I've been thinking about travelling again.
When I came back from travelling I wanted to write, photograph and sail. But being back at home I don't always keep to what I intended to do. I could settle down and take a job offer at a newspaper or go travelling. It bothers me that I can't decide what to do. I wish my parents would give me some direction in this decision process instead of saying "well whatever you do, whatever makes you happy." Although, I also appreciate their encouraging my independence. "Now I'm an adult so I have to make those decisions."

I have a contract with a publisher to write a book on hitchhiking across the oceans. This is the reason that I quit my last job. I'm having difficulties writing this. One reason for this is that find it difficult to do it alone. So now I've gotten some friends involved. Finishing this is something that is always in the back of my head. Originally I was really excited about doing the book because I feel that adventure travel is a growing industry. Now the task is just festering and I wonder if I can do it.

I just ended a 3-year long-distance relationship. So I'm rediscovering what it's like to be single again. I'm an idealist. I get ideas and want to make them come true. So I thought I was going to spend the rest of my life with her. I find it difficult to deal with that "rejection or failure." But now I don't think about it all too much.

Since working as a journalist, which means spending a lot of time with just myself and a computer, I've become more contemplative and inner focused. Breaking up with my girlfriend has also contributed to this. Although I've become a journalist, a communicator, I find it more difficult to communicate to friends because I'm concerned about what people think about me and I find that I think too much before I talk. Also being a journalist I've become much more observant of small details which makes just talking more complex.

There's a lot of tension in my family now between me and my dad. My father is more like a brother to me then a father. "I can't take orders from him." Now is the first time I've lived with him in 10 years. It's difficult being back because some of the old wounds get opened up again. Living with my dad now has prompted me to think about my early life experiences and what made me the way I am.
My dad's girlfriend, who gets drunk and violent, recently wrecked my computer and broke the windows in the trailer. I think my dad should have controlled her because he knows she is capable of doing things like that.

The most important thing I'm dealing with now is my dad's behavior towards our family. I don't like that my father let my sister leave home at an early age. He should have provided a good home for her so she would have felt safe to stay there. "I'm angry at my dad for letting us down." He seems to help others more than his own kids. I think family is very important. Dad doesn't put our family first. His ideas emerge from the hippy generation of which I am a child. So when I say family is important he thinks I'm a very conservative person rebelling against his liberalism. I just wanted to see my sister happy when I returned home. I want him to apologize. Sometimes I want to punish him.

This is how I came to be who I am:

My mom was 17 when she was pregnant with me. My father comes from a very strict Dutch Reformist family. So they pressured him to marry her when she got pregnant. Their marriage lasted 1 year.

When my parents split up they took me to my aunt and uncles for a couple of weeks while they "sorted it out." I ended up living there for 8 years. I called them my mom and dad. I grew up in their very strict traditional family - mom at home, dad at work, church on Sunday etc.

After those years my mom decided she wanted me to be with her. It ended up in court and my mom won but my dad appealed and he won. I think it was one of the early cases in which the father was awarded custody. He won by "dragging out a lot of dirt on (my mom)" to prove she was an incompetent mother. My mother ran away and I saw her about once a year.

So my dad, stepmom and myself lived together and moved around a lot. There was a lot of turmoil but the first couple of years with my dad and his wife, my pre-teen years, I think of as "dad's golden era ... because he seemed to be doing so much." He had a big garden, made wine, worked on the house, had projects and took me to soccer games. He "was the real dad...."

When I was a teen the tension in the house became so intense that I was playing 5 sports so I could be out of the house. My dad is quiet and doesn't express himself very well so there was a competition between me and my stepmom for his attention. She set stringent rules at home. She was "the punisher." My father didn't take that role. She became "obsessive"
as "the torturer" even grounding me to my room for a summer. So we didn't get along at all so I left home. When I finally left I was so confused I tried to kill myself. I had dropped out of school and went back to my aunt's but that didn't work out. I took some pills to get my father's attention. I went to hospital and he came. Then we went to counselling for one session. The counsellor drew a map of all of my father's relationships. He didn't like to see it "that clear."

At that time my real mother joined me and helped me for six months and got me through high school. I was washing dishes at the time and she was on welfare. It was difficult.

I've talked to my uncles about my father's growing up. This helped me to see what happened in perspective, to understand what makes him the way he is. He had 13 brothers and sisters in their very religious family. He and 2 brothers left the church which meant my dad had to deal with that stigma. He still does. There's no cohesion in that family. Dad thinks the rest of the family are religious fanatics.

My dad and I have our differences. For example, he thinks I'm a moralist which he thinks I picked up by living with my aunt and uncle all those years. He thinks newspapers are "crap" and he hates sailboats so it's no wonder we have conflict. But people tell me that when I'm gone he always talks about me. I think he's proud of me being a person without grade 12 English working as a journalist and having interesting adventures.

When I travelled I wrote him over 100 letters in 4 years. I wrote these as a journal. So he always knew what I was thinking and doing. But I received only 2 letters back which makes me wonder about how much he cares about our relationship. Also, I thought he would have kept them all but was disappointed when I returned to know he had lost them all. I thought he didn't appreciate the work I put into writing those letters. I was hurt. Perhaps his life is too chaotic to realize these were important to keep. Maybe his alcohol problem contributed to the way he is also. I won't write so fully to him again.

However I also know that he cares about me. For example, when I got sick dad flew me home and nursed me back to health.

I don't have problems with my parent's rejection of what I do. They just stand back and let me do it. They don't get involved or help me make decisions. This is probably good.
My recent girlfriend and myself commuted between Canada and England and sailed for a year as crew in the Caribbean and South America. It was an exotic life but she went back to school and "time and distance took its toll." Her family didn't approve of me because they thought I was too transient. Also they thought the class system was important and would rather their daughter go with a higher class person. At least they were sailors so we had some connection. I think her parents attitude played a role in the demise of our relationship.

I knew from an early age that I would travel. Not only travelling appealed to me but also getting away from my living situation. I first went to Toronto. I spent a lot of time alone there. I was real creative then, painting and drawing. I made friends after a while. It was the first time I had to start anew. I got a couple of jobs and then used some extra money to fly home to say goodbye to my mom and dad before leaving for Europe. I told them I didn't know when I'd be back.

In Europe I partied a lot at first, then lived with my uncle and worked. "Then I took an incredible risk." On the word of a Jamaican that there was work to be had in Jamaica I flew there with very little money. I finally got a job but not until I went without food and slept on the beach. This was the first big risk I had ever taken. It was extremely thrilling and when I landed on my feet I was very pleased.

I lived on a sailboat and got bored after a while and so I joined a crew that was returning a boat across the Atlantic. This was the first time that I sailed. Having been successful with the first risk I took I was willing to take another. "I don't think there is anything in my entire life that had more influence on me then being out there." I was so content and at peace especially when I was on night watch. I thought that I could "really be with myself here" because there was no interruptions. However it was also extremely scary, at times thinking that I might die. Because I noticed that the others were more confident, I was able to transform my fear into exhilaration.

After that trip I travelled on land for a while and also did some more sailing. I found that by hanging around the marinas or bars I could get onto a boat as crew. I met others who were doing the same thing. I began to record others' hints on how to crew on boats. This gave me the idea to write a book on this topic. Travelling around I met many great people and also learned how to play guitar.
I look fondly on those times and wonder why I'm living back at home now. I wonder if I do that again will it be different now that I have writing and photography skills. I know that I see and observe things differently from writing and photography. From this last experience I know that I can survive in travelling. So I have a dilemma of whether to travel or listen to my conservative side which tells me to take that job in the city.

I'm really interested in the environment so I did a series of articles on this topic. I interviewed scientists whose opinions scared me and made me think about travelling again before the earth changes. But this is a minor reason. The real reason is that I had a good time. Journalism is intellectually challenging and is a good outlet for me. But I wasn't that happy doing it. Part of me likes to analyze but the other side is not interested in writing newspaper articles.

"Zelda"

This is who I am at present:

I just completed a major life phase having finished school and decided what I do and don't want in life. I want to live in my own house and "be my own person" without worrying about complications from a boyfriend or parents. A month ago I wouldn't have said I was happy but now I am. Having just finished university I was uncertain what I would be doing, but things are slowly taking shape.

I prefer to be with other people than be alone. I'm content.

I like to help people and am a very "giving" person. My mother thinks that I don't think about my own needs enough. People think it's unusual for me to be thinking solely about what I want in my recent breakup with my boyfriend. I've never put myself first like that and I'm enjoying it.

Having just finished school, I'm at a point in my life where I'm thinking about what I want in life, so I'm thinking a lot about me now. I'm quite clear at this time what I want. I want to try to get a job proofreading for a publishing firm. I told my mother that I had already sent off letters to see about this to "get her off my back" but I've yet to do anything.

Because my parents gave me reinforcement for doing well and not much attention for doing poorly, now I try to do positive things especially when things aren't going well. This also gave me an optimistic outlook.
Although I don't make a religion out of astrology, I am aware of my sign and horoscope. I think I’m “very Aquarius” meaning people enjoy being around me although they don’t understand me because I’m different. Also I am ahead of my time. For example I learned to wear neon clothes in Europe but when I returned here everyone thought they were ugly so I put them away. Then everyone started wearing them so I just pulled them out of my drawer and people commented that I had worn them years ago. So I guess in the end I was right about this fashion.

I get defensive especially with my parents. I’m trying to change this by realizing that I am not always right. I need to accept when I make a mistake and realize that it’s not the end of the world. My parents are also making an effort to not hold such unyielding positions.

Now I'm a special needs worker, house cleaner, baby sitter and work at a small grocery store. I'm not too interested in any of this work except being a special needs worker because I "feel I'm doing something." I don't like working in the store because it doesn't require any imagination. It's all regimented. As a special needs worker I can be spontaneous.

I enjoy living in this small rural community because I can be spontaneous and not live on a treadmill. I grew up in the middle of nowhere and so that's exactly where I like to live. I feel like I'm in transition and look forward to feeling "totally settled here." Shortly, when I have my own place I'll feel settled.

I will fill up the house very fast with a dog, the cat of my recently deceased grandmother, a specific breed of chicken and 2 iguanas.

I recently graduated from university in English and History. I enjoyed most of the courses especially those that require imagination without needing to know reasons.

After living in Belgium for a year I was much more focussed in school when I returned. This is because I knew that I wanted to study history because, with the experiences I had in Europe, I could visualize what I was studying which made it exciting.

I didn't study much in university and got ok marks. My habit of not studying was reinforced by an incident in grade 6 when my parents and teacher were trying to get me to study. We had a test and I was the first to finish and the teacher was so impressed with my mark he assumed that I had studied when I hadn't.
Maybe I'll continue in university in the future but for now I've been in school for too long. It was a strange sensation to be finally finished university and have absolutely no idea what I was going to do.

People told me that they had stopped relating to me because they didn't like my boyfriend or the way he treated me. My mother also didn't like how my boyfriend treated me. Now that they are supporting me I've discovered that I have a lot of friends. This reinforces that I made a good decision in breaking up with him. I enjoyed being with him but now feel like I have a "weight taken off my shoulders."

I'm surprised that I didn't make any close friends at university. I think this is because I had a different reason for being there. They want to make a lot of money whereas I want to live in a rural community and just make enough money to live on. Also university students are transient so there's not much reason to make friends who will just move on.

When I was in Belgium I made some friends but they aren't long term friends because they are different from me. They are all wealthy and "up tight." They care about what you look like. I think the only thing important is that you're a nice person who is happy with your values. I've got "quality not quantity friends." I know that because I live in a small community, I have become friends with individuals who I wouldn't associate with if there was more choice. What holds us together is the sense of being on the same team because we're in a small community.

My best friend and I are so close that we know everything about each other. We do crazy things together which most people would think unusual. Her values are similar to mine because our parents were friends and tried to raise us both in a similar manner. Such as we received a lot of reinforcement for doing well and not much attention if we didn't do well.

My parents relationship with me now haven't been this good since I was 12 years of age. I was very mean to my parents, especially my mom. She's "too nosey." My dad and I have always gotten along well because he and I are rational, whereas my mother is emotional. For example, my father would talk to me about my grades in a very logical, reasonable, understandable manner in contrast to my mom who would rant and rave and make me feel defensive. Now that she is not as threatening to me, our relationship is better.

I'm like my mother in that if we are upset we like to talk to our friends in order to relieve our worries.
Our relationship was bad when I was in high school in part because they didn't like the boyfriend I had who smoked and drank. So I would lie to them when I wanted to see him. Our relationship is good now perhaps because my parents consider me an adult and they aren't paying for me now that I finished university.

This is how I came to be the person I am:

My parents are the biggest influence on how I came to be who I am now. They came to Canada as draft dodgers from California and built their own house on 10 acres. I'm an only child "so I guess I had a lot of attention as a kid." Sometimes only-kids can be spoiled but I'm not.

They gave me a sense of freedom. My father lives by the ideal of "not my problem" which means that I am responsible for my own behavior. Freedom was really important to them. Although my parents say they weren't hippies I can tell from their clothes and being draft dodgers and the "things they stood for all spelt hippie to me." They really gave me a free hand for example I would "run around in the woods for hours at a time" on our large acreage. And I loved to be naked when I was a child.

One time when I was 6 or 7 my mom told me I had to wear underwear when we were going out. I didn't want to wear underwear so I cried in my room for 2 hours. I was "at war" with my mother. I had minor altercations with my parents when they tried to teach me something like eating properly with a fork. I was stubborn and would probably have been better off if I listened to reason. But I like to do things my way. So they let me learn from my mistakes.

"The place I was raised in was a really good environment for a kid." My parents always had a garden which I enjoyed, especially eating my meals from just-picked veggies. We weren't rich but I didn't feel I really needed anything. I had lots of clothes which were mostly given to me from relatives. I would wear out these clothes very quickly because of living in the wilderness.

I went to a two room school from grades 1 to 6. One of the teachers lived next door and I would wander over naked to help milk the goats. They probably thought I was very free. At school I would take off my shirt like the guys. I was a tom boy liking to play with little animals. Girls thought I was weird. The school was "pretty laid back" with lots of individual attention. I like attention.
Then I went to high school and enjoyed the wide variety of people because some of them were like me. When I got a paper route my social activities diminished. In grade 10 and 11 I had fewer friends because a lot of my earlier friends were doing alcohol and drugs and having sex. I remained with the friends who weren’t into that lifestyle. After returning from Europe these friends had dispersed but I’m glad about this because they were getting into trouble anyway. Maybe I could have helped them, but they didn’t want that.

I’ve almost always associated at least as well with my teachers as with the students. I think that’s because my parents always talked to me like an adult and didn’t treat me like a child. Especially dad who was always so rational and definite. Mom was less rigid. They always answered any questions I had so I became able to identify with adults.

From high school on my parents had the philosophy of do it our way or leave. They only insisted that I be in school in order for them to pay my living expenses. If I wasn’t in school then I would have to get a job and pay rent. And if I didn’t want to do those two things then I had to leave. I found their rules reasonable to live by. Except their curfew of 11 pm. was difficult. But it was a worthwhile exchange for receiving free rent and clothes.

My parents have secure jobs and a house now which is good to see. They are relieved that they don’t have to support me anymore now that I am finished school.

My mother wants me to live in the city and be rich but that’s not what I want. She’s beginning to accept this. We had so many years of conflict. Now I’m trying to like her but it’s difficult. For example now she wants everything put away and clean. She throws out things before I’m finished with them. I’m "a definite slob" but I’m trying to learn how to clean up now so I don’t have to do it later. The woman who is my house mate now, recently asked me to clean some of my things up.

People find me easy to get along with but a "little scatter brained." When I was a child I found teenagers scary and so when I became a teenager I wanted children to have the same respectful attitude towards me. When I was a child, teenagers seemed older and more intimidating than my parents. When I became a teenager I didn’t feel like the way I imagined teenagers to be when I was a child.
Presently some children are not shy of me the way they are of other adults. This might be because I treat them like full humans and not just little children. This is like my parents treated me.

I "like to make people feel as comfortable as I can." This is because my parents always tried to do that to me. I'm influenced by my mom who always looks on the bright side.

I'm "naive" in that I have no knowledge of some of the harsher life experiences such as abuse and alcohol. Now I realize that it's more unusual to not have these experiences than to have had them.

I also lack some social skills because I was brought up to think that anything a person does is acceptable. For example, I went to a formal party dressed casually. When I saw how other were dressed I didn't go home to change but went to a friend's house where it was more comfortable.

I like when things are flexible. For example the days I work are different from week to week. I think I'm like this because my parents are like this, especially my mom. For example, when I was young if I lost a privilege I could always convince my mom to give it back whereas my dad would never change his mind.

I think my mom "is one of the best moms I know" although when I was a kid I wanted to trade moms with a friend. But I think that's just what kids do. despite all of our conflict I know my mom has not done what she has done to be mean. She is caring, giving and understanding.

The arguments I do have with my mom are not about conflict but are more about our different interpersonal styles. Sometimes we would argue about one petty thing in order to avoid a more serious disagreement like about poor grades. My father would point out that we get "sidetracked." Now both my mom and myself know this and are trying to stop doing this.

I'll talk about "anything that has ever happened to me" to anyone but I find it difficult to talk about my viewpoint on topics. Also I only talk about personal things with my closest friends. I would do anything at all for my closest friend. I'm very patient and tolerant.

"The more people I know the better I feel." And I'd like to know people better. Most people I find very likeable. If a person has an extreme point of view I can "look around that" by not talking about that particular topic in order to know the person better. "I'm open minded."
I enjoy all the natural sciences and if I was better in Math would have studied them in university. But I love reading and enjoyed the reading I did in university. However because of my low math abilities some courses that I wanted to take were closed to me.

One of my struggles is to try to not talk so much. Sometimes I feel like I just need to "fill up air space", but I'm trying to be more quiet and share the conversation with others. My mother has influenced me to be a talker.

In the future I want to be a good cook so that people will know that when they come to my place that they can expect a good meal. I'd also like to get some of my writing published. I'd like to "make a difference" in some aspect of the world. I want to be "environmentally conscious" for example setting up a recycling system in my house. I'd like to be more involved in politics. My mom would like me to join a protest group like she did when she was young. She's surprised that I didn't join a group in university. I told her that I'm different from her; more quiet.

One thing I'm thinking about now is that there are some things that I feel that I "ought" to do. I'm wondering "where this feeling of ought [came] from." I wondering if it's because I want to, because others think I should or because my parents think I should. "I'm trying to change all my 'I ought to do this' to 'I want to do this'." I want to do things because I want to not because I feel obliged to.

I want to do something for my community. For example I'll be taking a peer counselling course. I envision having a house where women who are in difficult situations can come to. I'm confident that I can help people.

I'd like to own my own house eventually but before that I have to pay off all my school debts which should be within the year.

Although I'm living far below the poverty line I feel like I have enough.

Independence is very important. For example it would bug some of my ex-boyfriend's friends that I didn't conform to getting drunk.

I'd like to find a partner and have a baby or have a baby on my own but not for 4 or 5 years and when I feel financially secure.

I'd like to travel, perhaps with a friend. It would be great to go away and not have to worry about missing anything like school. So the job I want to have needs to be flexible enough to accommodate my desire to travel.
Right now the most important thing is to have fun and enjoy myself.