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**THE LIFE-CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF YOUNG WOMEN:
SHAPING SELVES IN A RURAL COMMUNITY**

by

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B.A., University of Waterloo, 1989
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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Educational Psychology and Leadership Studies

We accept this dissertation as conforming to the required standard

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the ways in which young women perceived themselves in their rural context, now and in the future. Little attention has been paid to rural adolescents, especially in relation to life-career development. The majority of research efforts have ignored the diversity among rural communities. Additionally, little is known about how the unique qualities of a rural community affect female adolescent development and future life choices.

An ethnographic-narrative method was chosen because the approach is sensitive to context, the emic perspective, and the construction of narratives embedded in the lived experience of participants. Eight young women, who were long-term residents, were interviewed using an open-ended, unstructured format. Participants expressed their understanding of their world through the completion of community life-space maps, the construction of possible selves, and by creating a photographic display.

A four-phase narrative analysis involved four readings (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998): snapshots, life-course graphs, emotional charge, and themes and metathemes. Transcripts were summarized into snapshots of participants' social worlds. Life-course graphs uncovered personal construction of life stories. The emotional charge of participants' narratives revealed their response when talking about their futures. Four views toward the future were evident including apprehension, holding pattern, tentative, and anticipation. Their planning process could be described in four ways, no plans, fuzzy plans, tentative plans and concrete plans. Six metathemes emerged across the narratives: connected and disconnected, feeling supported and feeling unsupported, committed and uncommitted, opening and limiting, tangling with lines of tension, and looking within and looking beyond.

Participants expressed a variety of perspectives on their rural experience. Their life-course development was complex, interactive, and affected by the environmental context of the rural community. The paths taken were varied. Their

identity development occurred through relationships and varied across social worlds. Notions of the self as bounded and discrete made way for a view of permeable, connected selves through which experience flowed.

A holistic, life-course perspective of life-career development widens the focus from the individual to include the social realm. Contexts, values, beliefs, psychosocial factors and other influences and their interrelatedness constitute the system of young rural women's life-career development.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A recent shift in the career exploration field has been towards contextualized approaches to the study of life-career development (Super, 1980).

Career development involves one's whole life, not just occupation.

As such, it concerns the whole person ... More than that, it concerns him or her in the ever-changing contexts of his or her life. The environmental pressures and constraints, the bonds that tie him or her to significant others, responsibilities to children and aging parents, the total structure of one's circumstances are also factors that must be understood and reckoned with. In these terms, career development and personal development converge. Self and circumstance—evolving, changing, unfolding in mutual interaction—constitute the focus and the drama of career development. (Wolfe & Kolb, 1980, pp. 1-2)

Hence the term life-career development will be used to highlight the contextual understanding of career development taken in this paper.

Individuals negotiate their identity, belief systems, and life course within the combination of physical, social, political, economic, and cultural environments that they occupy (Blustein, 1997; Brown, Brooks, & Associates, 1996; Herr, 1996;

Vondracek, Lerner, & Shulenberg, 1983, 1986; Young, Valach, & Collin, 1996).

Social contexts and ecological issues are wide-ranging in their impact on individual career behaviour. The ways in which one perceives gender and family roles, the goals one sets, the resources obtainable, and the kind of information provided about opportunities are affected by the interactions among the countless features of one's

life space (Jepsen, 1989; Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990; Super, 1990; Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986).

With the increasing pluralism of North American society, a number of studies have been undertaken to examine career behaviour in specific cultural contexts (cf. Fassinger, 1991; Fouad & Dancer, 1992; Harris, 1995; Morgan & Brown, 1991; Richie et al., 1997). However, relatively little attention has been given to the rural context (Apostal & Bilden, 1991; Cahill & Martland 1993, 1996; Jeffery, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996; Rojewski, 1999), and almost none that consider the issues of gender and rurality as important contextual factors in which adolescent development is embedded (Conrad, 1997; Doebler, 1998; Elder, Hagell, Rudkin, & Conger, 1994; Hall, Kelly, & Van Buren, 1995; Little, 1997). Yet “adolescents do not come of age in society as a whole, but rather in a particular community...” (Elder et al., p. 261).

In thinking about the impact of contexts on adolescents, growing sociocognitive capabilities and their consequences for the self are important to consider. Adolescents experiment with possible selves, supported by their increasing awareness of how they can use the latent potential of their environment for their development. As adolescents try to utilize and even shape contextual features, what they see is in part a reflection of what they did or were allowed to do. Thus facilitating and constraining factors in the environment have an impact on adolescents’ goal-directed, intentional behaviours (Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). However, there has been little research on the interaction of environmental factors and adolescent development in rural communities.

What is Rural?

This is the essence of rural sentiment: the Arcadian myth of a landscape of pleasant views and harmonious countryside. The myth is a product of an urban-based nostalgia for an imagined and unchanging landscape of the past, ...it is a landscape which satisfies our most nostalgic emotions...In classical times rural life [was seen] as moral, virtuous, and simple. This is a philosophy which continues to be remarkably strong in North America. (Bunce, 1981, p. 111)

The term “rural” has enjoyed widespread popular usage. Rural life is understood by the general public to be the “repository of all that is stable, immemorial, harmonious, pleasant, and reassuring in the modern world” (Saunders, Newby, Bell, & Rose, 1978, p. 63). The presence of widespread acceptance by rural, urban and suburban residents of a “rural mystique” (Fitchen, 1991; Troughton, 1999; Willits, Bealer, & Timbers, 1990) may obscure genuine concerns facing rural communities.

“Rural” can also be defined objectively using quantifiable standards. One definition of rural according to Statistics Canada standards (1996) is “sparsely populated lands lying outside urban areas” (p. 226). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines rural as regions where more than half the people live in communities with a population density of fewer than 150 persons per square kilometre (Ministry of Rural Affairs, 2000). Included in rural areas are small towns, villages and other places with less than 1,000 population; rural fringes of census metropolitan areas and census agglomerations that may contain estate lots, agricultural, undeveloped and non-developed lands; and remote and wilderness areas.

Recent government reports (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2000; Ministry of Rural Affairs, 2000; Standing Committee on Natural Resources, 1997) indicate that rural communities are undergoing profound social and economic change. The drastic restructuring with the decline in the basis of rural economies; that is, forestry, farming and fishing, has impacted rural community function and viability (Troughton, 1999). Additionally as urbanization has spread, rural Canada has become increasingly fragmented. "This fragmentation has emphasized underlying physical and economic differences among regions, including problems of climate and isolation, the inherent variable capability of land and soils, and the resultant ability or inability to adapt to changing economic and technological circumstances" (Troughton, p. 25). In the past decade, the infrastructure of rural communities has eroded due to government downsizing and cut-backs and the decreasing size of local tax bases (Canadian Rural Partnership, 1998).

In many rural areas in Canada jobs in traditional employment sectors are disappearing while few new jobs in expanding, knowledge-based manufacturing and service industries are being developed. Rural Canadians have expressed concern about the loss of young people through urban migration, particularly young, skilled adults. When rural communities lose their youth, they lose the creative and innovative ability of young people to find possible solutions to community problems (Canadian Rural Partnership, 1998). In turn, young people perceive rural communities as lacking in educational and employment opportunities. Rural youth also report that they are overlooked and disregarded as important members of their community. They are not optimistic about the benefits of remaining in their community.

The Ministry of Rural Affairs (2000) reported on the current state of rural Canadian communities. Although rural regions in Canada have 31.4% of the

country's population and contain 90% of Canada's landmass, they have only 29% of Canada's employed workforce. In fact, within each age and gender group, rural Canadians are less likely to have a job than are urban Canadians. Overall estimates indicate that rural families tend to have lower average incomes than do urban families. Rural Canadians have less formal education than urban dwellers and are more likely to drop out of high school. As well, rural residents live far from the hubs of the nation's distribution networks for goods and services and, therefore, pay more per household for transportation, food and household operations.

On the positive side, there is 30% less reported personal victimization, such as sexual assault, robbery, and assault in rural Canada than there is in urban areas. There is also 40% less reported household victimization, meaning fewer cases of break and enter, theft of motor vehicles or household property, or vandalism. Given all this varied information, life in rural communities appears to be far more complex than indicated by the myths surrounding rurality.

The rural myth has privileged certain ideological discourses over other ones by excluding the "real-life" aspects of rural living, such as labour, poverty and unemployment. In the same manner, rural women's identities have been cemented by the dominance of a popular rural culture which regards women's roles and skills within the family and community as more worthy than their identities in the "public" sphere of waged work (Bois, 1985; Cloke & Little, 1997; Conrad, 1997; Phimister, Vera-Toscano, & Weersink, 2001). "The stereotype of a rural woman is that of a family woman, traditional and conservative, absorbed in the care of her home" (Braithwaite, as cited in Hughes 1997, p.125). If this traditional identity is assumed by and for the majority of rural women, to what extent does a rural adolescent girl understand herself in terms of the "rural myth?" How would she describe her rural

upbringing? What does she see as her future role in her community? Is there a future for her in her community? How do these self-understandings affect her life-career plans?

Rural Youth

Youths living in rural areas comprise a population that has not received a great deal of attention in terms of life-career development research. Yet several themes highlighted in the literature indicate that their life-career development may be different than that of their urban counterparts.

Rural youth appear to feel the effects of economic hardship more than urban youth (DeHaan & Deal, 2000). Non-metropolitan poor families are more likely to live in intact families and to have at least one parent working than metropolitan families (DeHaan & Deal). However, the number of single parent families in rural areas is increasing. Rural youth living in single-parent homes are more likely to be poor, to be poor longer, and to be in deeper poverty than their urban counterparts in single parent homes (Fitchen, 1995). Non-metropolitan families tend to receive less social assistance than urban families (Phimister et al., 2001).

Because many rural communities depend on resource-based industries, the number and range of occupational opportunities is restricted (Canadian Rural Partnership, 1998, 2000; Ehrensaft & Beeman, 1992; Jeffery et al., 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996). Rural youth are also deprived of the opportunity to have a variety of role models (Jeffery et al.; Lehr & Jeffery). In particular, young women have limited access to role models combining work and family (Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987; Tolbert & Lyson, 1992; Websdale, 1998).

Youth living in rural areas are less educated than those living in urban areas (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2000). One suggested reason for the lower level of education of rural youth is that the types of jobs available in rural areas require lower skills than those required by jobs in urban areas (Canadian Rural Partnership). Young people in small communities who want to further their educational and career opportunities must move away from their family and community support systems (Hektner, 1995; Howley, Harmon & Leopold, 1996; Jeffery et al., 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996). Youth aged 15-19 tend to leave rural areas more often than urban areas and only 54% of rural youth aged 15-19 are in their community of origin ten years later (Dupuy, 2000). As Hektner points out, moving away to pursue educational and/or work opportunities often results in very mixed feelings for rural young people who are strongly identified with their community. Additionally, due to the lack of availability of post-secondary institutions in rural areas, the cost of pursuing post-secondary education is higher for rural students than for urban students (Canadian Rural Partnership).

Lack of transportation and distance to large centres prevent rural youth from attending social and cultural events (Hedlund, 1993). As well rural youth lack exposure to different cultural and ethnic viewpoints (Hedlund; Vollmer & Hedlund, 1994).

On a more positive note, rural environments provide youth with closer connections to people and to the land (Bollman & Biggs, 1992; Carter, 1997; Herzog & Pittman, 1995). In general, there is a strong commitment to supporting others in the community and rural youth give a great deal to their communities in the form of volunteer activities (Hine & Hedlund, 1994; Smithmier, 1994). The close interpersonal connections provide a sense of safety and belonging, but also seem to

restrict personal privacy and foster prejudices (Hedlund, 1993). Rural youth subscribe to the personal qualities of dependability, self-discipline, self-determination, and self-sufficiency (D'Amico, Matthes, Sankar, Merchant, & Zurita 1996; Ley, Nelson, & Beltyukova, 1996).

Taken together, these studies suggest several generalizations about the current state of knowledge concerning rural adolescents. First, the majority of studies characterize rural communities as homogeneous cultures when, in fact, rural communities differ in terms of ethnicity, social, and economic activity (Bollman & Biggs, 1992; Flora, Flora, Spears & Swanson, 1992). Consequently, research results are frequently reduced to comfortable stereotypes about all rural youth, such as the belief that rural youth are tied to their communities. However, when surveyed, young women from North Dakota expressed not only higher occupational aspirations than the young men but also a willingness to move to other communities to fulfill their dreams (Apostal & Bilden, 1991). On the other hand, Appalachian girls from coal mining communities, had difficulty verbalizing future selves and imagining futures outside their communities (Carter, 1997). Therefore, youth may be strongly tied in some rural communities, but not in others.

Second, when diversity among rural communities is ignored, conflicting conclusions are generated. For example, Haller and Monk (1992) found that the primary determinants of a youth's decision to leave home was based on socio-economic status (SES) and intelligence, as well as with structural aspects of school and communities such as isolation and ruralness. Ley et al. (1996) report that the most common barrier to career aspirations for rural Indiana youth were economic limitations such as paying for postsecondary education.

Third, a significant number of rural studies have made use of survey methods, using questionnaires with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (cf. Apostol & Bilden, 1991; Armstrong, 1993; Hektner, 1995; Howley et al., 1996; Legutko, 1998; Ley et al., 1996; Quaglia & Perry, 1995). Few studies have attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of rural youth by allowing them to speak for themselves and thus give voice to their experience as a resident of a particular community (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; Hedlund, 1993; Smithmier, 1994).

Rural Female Youth

The experience of being a young woman or a young man differs depending on the community in which one lives (Pratt & Hanson, 1993; Reiss, 1995). Traditional expectations often restrict rural females in addition to the more general constraints placed on young women (Hughes, 1997; Katz, 1993; Scanzoni & Arnett, 1987; Tolbert & Lyson, 1992). Traditionally, female employment rates in rural Canadian communities have been significantly below the rates found in urban areas (Phimister et al., 2001). Additionally, rural females tend to be underemployed when compared to their urban counterparts. Lack of childcare facilities and public transportation are factors that reduce female employment (Shaffer as cited in Phimister et al.).

Rural family members have been found to be significantly more traditional than urban family members, especially in gender role socialization (Astin, 1984; Conrad, 1997). Socialization that emphasizes home and family pursuits narrows young women's life-career options. The strong traditional beliefs of rural communities may be explained by the existence of strong kinship ties (Hennon & Marotz-Baden, 1987). In addition, limited association with other groups and lack of a variety of female role models may lead to a strengthening of already-held values and

may be conducive to greater fixity of habits and opinions (Pratt & Hanson, 1993). Young rural women may, therefore, find the negotiation of multiple life roles and demands of adulthood particularly difficult (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Weitzman, 1994).

Communities appear to organize differently for rural female youth and male youth. Yet, little is known about how communities affect female adolescent development and future life choices. No in-depth study of young women's experience of growing up in a rural community could be located.

In order to provide relevant resources, career education and counselling support to young women living in rural communities, educators, counsellors, parents and the young women themselves need a comprehensive picture of the complexities of their lives. What meaning do these young women give to their rural experience? What possible selves have they formulated? What information and resources are available to these young rural women? What do they see as facilitators and barriers to their plans for the future? What are their self-descriptions? How do they influence the course of their development by selecting, shaping, and producing environments according to their interests, talents, and personality? Additionally, information gained through the study will add to the knowledge base and further the understanding of rural female adolescent life-career development. This information will be available to other researchers to draw on when examining other rural communities.

The Purpose of the Study

Little research has been carried out on the element of rural community as a context for adolescent girls' life-career development. Most studies have involved adolescent girls from urban areas (Conrad, 1997; Herr, 1990; Poole, Langan-Fox, &

Omodei, 1991; Sarigiani, Wilson, Petersen, & Vicary, 1990) and many were limited to college populations (Betz & Hackett, 1981; Leung & Harmon, 1990). While there has been little research generally about what adolescents have to say, Hedlund (1993) noted that there is “almost none that has provided an opportunity for rural adolescents themselves to say what is important to them—to express their own thoughts, feelings, needs, or values” (p.150).

The investigation of real world contexts and intricate, multiply constituted individuals required a qualitative approach to research. “[Q]ualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.3). Qualitative methods of inquiry often rely on interviews or other means of direct observation to contextualize phenomena, allowing for the exploration of the full experiences of participants from their own points of view and in their own words. A critical element of the design was the researcher’s residency in the rural community for a period of 8 weeks (Dietz, Prus, & Shaffir, 1994; Lareau & Shultz, 1996; Stewart, 1998). Local economic, employment, social and recreational conditions were discerned through observations of the community and through interviews with eight young women and a number of residents.

This study attributes a powerful formative influence to rurality itself, arguing that young women’s experiences and understanding of rurality is crucial to their identity. The purpose of the present research is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which young women perceive themselves in their rural context, now and in the future. The research questions to be answered are:

1. How do young women perceive themselves within the context of a rural community, now and in the future?

2. How do these self-perceptions affect their life-career plans?
3. How do they think their rural living has impacted their education, training, life plans, and work opportunities?
4. How active are these young women in the construction and organization of future plans?

In this collaborative study between researcher and participants, participants are brought into the research process and introduced to the heuristic process of self-discovery and self-reflection.

Heuristics is ...a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experiences...Through exploratory open-ended inquiry, self-directed search, and immersion in active experience, one is able to get inside the question, become one with it, and thus achieve an understanding of it. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15)

Not only does the researcher gain insight, richness and depth that might otherwise go undiscovered; but participants too are rewarded; reflective thought and self-understanding can only empower participants (Moustakas).

Conceptual Framework

A theoretical framework is not something that can be added to an otherwise completed research design. Rather, the main task of the researcher is to dig out and reconstruct the framework implied in the questions asked and in the research design in question. Such a more or less explicit theoretical framework consists of ontological and epistemological premises, that is, of notions about the nature of the reality being studied and the ways by which one can study that reality. The main function of data collection and analysis is to make one's

own underlying premises as visible as possible... (Alasuutari, 1996, p. 372-373)

The conceptual framework provides the first lens through which the collected data can be viewed and made sense of. Two frameworks will be discussed: constructivist framework and cultural psychology framework.

Constructivist Framework

Constructivist assumptions appeared highly relevant for researching how young women, within the context of their rural community, make sense of their futures beyond high school. The constructivist paradigm emphasizes the creative capacity of human beings to develop conceptions of themselves and their worlds that form an underlying basis for their actions and experiences (Neimeyer, 1995).

“[D]evelopment is an activity of self-construction that involves making meaning rather than the passive ordering of made meanings” (Hayes, 1994, p. 6).

The self is grounded in a social context in which individuals secure a sense of self from personal experiences, social roles, and from diverse supportive and restrictive social conditions (Gergen, 1991; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Peavy, 1998). Self-constructions are a product of socially embedded ways of talking and acting. Individuals, then, are “always ‘in the language’ of their culture, time, and place in history” (McAuliffe & Eriksen, 1999, p. 268). The shared language and meaning systems develop, persist, and evolve over time (Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Kvale, 1996). Therefore, the constructivist paradigm holds a relativist ontology, that is, realities are “multiple and socially constructed, uncertain, and tentative” (Manning, 1997, p. 95).

Cultural Psychology Framework

The field of cultural psychology is another ideal conceptual framework for exploring relationships between rural adolescent girls' dreams and visions for their lives, and the rural community they live in. Cultural psychology, according to Shweder (1990), is the study of "the ways subject and object, self and other, psyche and culture, person and context, figure and ground, practitioner and practice, live together, require each other, and dynamically, dialectically, and jointly make each other up" (p. 1). Shweder bases his conception of cultural psychology on the premises of "intentional persons" (p. 2), or individuals seeking meaning from environmental stimuli, and "constituted worlds" (p. 2).

The aim of cultural psychology is to examine the different kinds of things that continually happen in social interaction and in social practice as the intentionality of a person meets the intentionality of a world, and as they jointly facilitate, express, repress, stabilize, transform, and defend each other through and throughout the life of a person or the life of a world. (Shweder, 1990, p. 27)

Jerome Bruner (1990), too, viewed cultural psychology as concerned with meanings in social and historical contexts and the activities and practices by which individuals confer and enact such culturally shared meanings.

Rural young women are intentional persons who actively seek meaning in intentional and multiple worlds or contexts. The understanding that these young women have of their worlds can be accessed through their narratives. "Meaning is not only constructed; it is conceived of in particular cultural communities. Stories provide a vehicle for making sense of cultural meanings" (Freeman, 2000, p. 366-367). The narratives of the young women are also emergent and everchanging. "Meanings are

not only created, but also transformed through our interactions” (Freeman, p. 368).

This study, then, examined the narratives constructed by eight rural young women as they made sense of their experiences in multiple social contexts, and reflected on their future possible selves, and the relationships between selves and contexts.

The Plan of the Dissertation

This study is reported in a descriptive and exploratory style. My goal is to engage the reader in the stories of eight young women’s lives and to use these narratives to illustrate the power that the rural context has on the life-career development and identity formation of adolescent rural women.

Chapter 2 is divided into two sections. In section one, relevant literature on adolescent life-career development is presented. The evolution of the trend toward understanding self and identity in career development is traced. In section two, contextual approaches that provide a conceptual framework for understanding life-career development are outlined. In particular, gender and rural contexts are examined.

In chapter 3 the methodological foundation for the study is provided. My preconceptions about young women’s experience of growing up in a rural community are presented and the implications of a pilot study on the present study are outlined. The blending of ethnographic and narrative research approaches are explained. The backdrop of the rural setting is described as the flavour of the village and the surrounding communities is with these young women as they go about their daily life. Chapter 3 concludes with a description of the data collection and analysis process and criteria for evaluation of the study.

Portraits of the participants and the first three phases of narrative analysis will be presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5, themes and metathemes will be outlined. The dissertation will conclude with chapter 6, an integrated discussion and implications for practice and further research.

CHAPTER TWO

A Context for Inquiry

Relating the present study to the ongoing dialogue in the literature was comparable to the incredibly complex web of relationships found in the young women's lives. Over time, my ear became attuned to harmonic sequences, descriptive themes, and movements played in the same key as I read through the literature on adolescent life-career development, identity formation, self-concept, gender issues, contextual approaches, and rural education. The polyphonic style of the chapter has two main melodies or counterpoints: adolescent self and identity in life-career development and a focus on context.

In the first section of Chapter Two, the self-concept as explained by career development theories will be reviewed. Secondly, a specific component of the self-concept, self-efficacy will be explored from a sociocognitive perspective. Thirdly, self-schemas, specifically the future-oriented component, possible selves will be considered. Next, a review of the literature on identity formation will be presented followed by an examination of the contextual self that incorporates an inherently relational and environmental context. The last part of section one will include innovative formulations of the self, including the narrative self.

In the second part of Chapter Two, contextualist approaches will be presented: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Model of the Environment, Vondracek et al.'s (1983,1986) Developmental-Contextual model, Multiple Worlds Model (Phelan, Davidson, and Cao, 1991a; Phelan, Davidson, & Yu, 1991b), and Patton & McMahon's (1999) Systemic Theory Framework. Secondly, gender as context will be considered with particular emphasis on life-career issues. Thirdly, community as context including the

importance of place identity will be outlined followed by an overview of the rural context and adolescent development. Included in this section is literature pertaining to rural female life-career development and choices for the future.

Section One: In Search of Self and Identity in Adolescent Life-Career Development

Adolescence in contemporary American society is traditionally defined as a transition period, marking the change from childhood to adulthood. Occurring between the ages of ten and the mid-twenties, adolescent development is characterized by qualitative biological, social, and cognitive changes for the individual (Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Petersen, 1996; Hurrelmann & Hamilton, 1996; Montemayor, Adams, & Gullotta, 2000). One theme permeating the literature on adolescent development is the problem of self-definition. As adolescents navigate through life, they develop a sense of who they are and how they can best find personal satisfaction in the adult world. Career development theorists as well have struggled to understand how individuals acquire and make use of their knowledge of self in making decisions about the future. Self-identity has been explicated in career development models with terms such as self-concept (Gottfredson, 1981; Super, 1953; 1980; 1990); vocational identity (Holland, 1985); self-observation generalizations (Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990); self-image (Lofquist & Dawis, 1991); and narrative knowledge (Cochran, 1990).

Self-concept in Career Development Theories

Developmental approaches view the life-career choices individuals make throughout their lives as based on important processes that occur in childhood and adolescence (Ginzberg, Ginsburg, Axelrad and Herma, 1951; Gottfredson, 1981; Miller-Tiedeman & Tiedeman, 1990; Super, 1953, 1980, 1990). Youth form ideas

about work and self that eventually develop into an occupational and life-choice self-concept. The development of such a self-concept is a continuous process, changing as life experiences of the individual change. Consequently, developmental approaches are inclined to be “more inclusive, more concerned with longitudinal expressions of behaviour, and more inclined to highlight the importance of self-concept. They tend to be process-oriented in their conceptions of how career behaviour develops and changes over time” (Herr & Cramer, 1992, p. 207). Two developmental approaches most frequently applied to youth are Super’s Life-Span Theory and Gottfredson’s Theory of Circumscription and Compromise.

The developmental theory of Donald Super has been one of the most influential career theories (Borgen, 1991). One of the hallmarks of Super’s theory is that career development is a process of developing and implementing a self-concept:

it is a compromise process in which the self-concept is a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes, neural and endocrine make-up, opportunity to play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role playing meet with the approval of superiors and fellows. (Super, 1953, p. 189)

According to Super (1990), the self-concept includes the objective view of the self along with the subjective view of the self that first develops in adolescence. In the exploratory stage (ages 14-24), adolescents and young adults form an occupational goal on the basis of career information and awareness of personal interests and values (crystallization). A specific goal is selected (specification) and the training/education necessary for the selected occupation is sought out, followed by employment (implementation). Career development is the process of making several decisions, which culminate in occupational choices that represent an implementation of the self-

concept. Occupational choices are viewed as successive approximations of a good match between the vocational self and the world of work. Differences among individuals translate into suitability for a number of different occupations; that is, individuals may have characteristics appropriate for multiple occupations.

Although the self-concept is portrayed as influenced by a variety of factors, Super's theory does not sufficiently explain the nature of this influence on career development (Patton & McMahon, 1999). Super (1990) conceptualized the self-concept as a broadly defined, multi-faceted structure that included personal determinants (interests, values, needs etc.) and situational determinants (peer group, family, school, community, labour market etc.) While recognizing the number of factors influencing career development, Super did not adequately address the complexity of the interaction among the variables nor operationalize the self-concept as a construct (Betz, 1994b; Blustein & Noumair, 1996; Patton & McMahon; Salomone, 1996).

Incorporating a developmental approach similar to Super's developmental stages, Gottfredson's theory addresses the impact of sex-role socialization and other societal factors that influence the development of occupational aspirations. According to Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise (1981), as the vocational self-concept develops throughout childhood, aspirations are progressively circumscribed. Gottfredson differs from Super in that she views career choice as an implementation of the social self and secondarily as an implementation of the psychological self. Psychological variables such as interests or values are circumscribed by social variables such as gender or social class. The vocational self-concept is defined through four developmental orientations—size and power (which occur from approximately age 3 to age 5), sex role (approximately ages 6 to 8), social

valuation (approximately age 9 to 13), and unique self (approximately age 14 and on). As individuals progressively move through the four orientations, they begin to narrow their vocational options. Circumscription is the process by which children narrow the “zone of acceptable alternatives” which leads to a set of occupational alternatives called the social space from which the career choice is made. Adolescents develop greater awareness of self, sex-typing, and social class which they use to evaluate occupational preferences.

Compromise is a process of examining the preferred alternatives on the basis of accessibility or “obstacles or opportunities in the social or economic environment that affect one’s chance of getting into a particular occupation” (Gottfredson, 1981, p. 548). Tolerable limits of acceptable occupations are created by using criteria such as sex-typing, level of work, and field of work. For example, a young woman may not consider aircraft maintenance technician as an occupational choice if she views mechanical positions as “male” occupations and if she ranks mechanics as less important than being a pilot.

Gottfredson’s work has generated little research and has yielded mixed support for the concepts of circumscription and compromise. Research on the circumscription and compromise processes has indicated that these processes do not occur at the specified age range (Leung & Harmon, 1990; Leung & Plake, 1990). Individual differences in the circumscription and compromise process may better be explained by a process characteristic of cognitive development (Neimeyer & Metzler, 1987). According to constructivist researchers, schemas or an organized framework of knowledge about a certain domain become progressively specialized and consolidated as individuals attempt to establish occupational commitment (Neimeyer & Metzler).

Development based on unchanging sequences of maturational unfolding cannot account for situational or contextual influences on a person's development or for the multiplicity of individual differences based on factors such as gender and culture. Pryor (1985) argues for more attention to the properties of the self, such as motivation and agency, and less to the study of the self-concept in career theory. Herr (1996) contends that it is the combination of physical, social, political, and economic environments occupied by individuals that combine to create the conditions in which each individual orchestrates his or her identity, values, and life course.

Social Cognitive Perspectives

Self-conception involves not only descriptions of the self, but also evaluations of those attributes. Centrality of the self-concept in maintaining personal well-being and in anchoring and guiding the processes of self-perception, interpretation, self-evaluation, and self-expectations has been acknowledged by a number of career theorists (Borgen, 1991; Hackett & Lent, 1992; Krumboltz & Nichols, 1990; Super, 1990). Yet, despite this long-standing recognition of the importance of the self-concept in life-career development, it has been difficult to translate this understanding into a functional framework.

The self-concept is a highly abstract construct that has been difficult to define and too general for the development of valid measures (Pryor, 1985). Researchers have attempted to quantify the self-concept by using self-esteem measures (Harper & Marshall, 1991). However, although often used interchangeably, self-esteem refers to an overall level of positive or negative self-regard whereas the self-concept refers to more qualitative descriptions of self-perception. The self-concept is "composed of various identities, attitudes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences, along with their

evaluative and affective components (Gecas & Burke, 1995, p. 2). Global self-evaluations may mask the specific domains that contribute to self-esteem. Instead, self-efficacy, the evaluative component of the self-concept, has been applied to career-related domains of behaviour.

Bandura (1986, 1997) hypothesized that individuals' conception of their confidence to perform tasks (self-efficacy) mediates between what they know and how they act, and that people's beliefs in their ability to accomplish things helps to determine the actions they take. Self-efficacy comes from individuals' previous accomplishments, from vicariously observing others, from verbal persuasion, and from physiological states and arousal. In terms of career decisions, "people must come to grips with uncertainties about their capabilities, the stability of their interests, ...the prospects of alternative occupations, ...and the type of identity they seek to construct for themselves" (Bandura, 1997, p. 422).

Building on self-efficacy theory, Hackett and Betz (1981) suggest that low self-efficacy could explain the restricted range of women's career options. "[Women] lack strong expectations of personal efficacy in relationship to many career related behaviours and thus fail to fully realize their capabilities and talents in career pursuits" (p. 326). According to their research, the background experiences of men and women varied in terms of the amount and range of efficacy information they received. The socialization of men provided a wider range of career options than for women.

Based on Bandura's social cognitive model Lent, Brown, & Hackett (1994) proposed a three-part career development model that links interests, choices, and performance. Lent et al. (1994, 2000) suggested that demographic and individual difference variables, such as race, ethnicity, culture, socio-economic status and gender

interact with background and other contextual variables to influence learning experience that play a role in forming self-efficacy beliefs. Those self-efficacy expectations, in turn, are related to outcome expectations that an individual has about the consequences of behaviour. Three social cognitive variables, self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and personal goals interact to self-regulate and maintain an individual's behaviour.

In regard to gender, Lent et al. (1994) hypothesized gender differences in career interests and goals occur because of different opportunities, supports, and socialization processes. Betz (1994a) summarized twenty-five years of research on women's career development into both facilitative and obstructive factors at two levels, the self-concept and the sociocultural. Individual barriers, for example, included low self-esteem, weak expectations of self-efficacy, low expectations for success, and family-career conflict while individual facilitators consisted of high self-esteem, strong academic self-concept, instrumentality, profeminist attitudes, and late marriage or remaining single. Environmental barriers included gender-role stereotypes, occupational stereotypes, gender bias in education, and lack of role models while facilitators to career development comprised active encouragement, female models, supportive father, highly educated parents, and a working mother.

Fassinger (1985, 1990) applied multivariate causal modeling techniques using Betz and Fitzgerald's variables. In her 1985 study, Fassinger found ability, achievement orientation, and feminist orientation to be independent variables influencing family and career orientation and career choice of young female adults. In a subsequent study (1990), higher ability level and agentic characteristics (instrumentality and self-efficacy) and sex-role attitudes (feminist orientation) influenced career orientation and career choice. In a follow-up study with adolescent

girls and their mothers (Rainey & Borders, 1997), girls' agentic characteristics (assertiveness and independence), maternal variables (education and gender role attitude) and mother-daughter relationship (i.e., psychological separation and attachment) were found to contribute to girls' career aspirations.

This dizzying array of career-related variables points to the complexity of female career development and emphasizes the importance of considering a variety of contextual factors that impact on adolescent girls' career development. Hackett (1997) called for the integration of constructs and issues such as racism and supports and barriers into career theories with the intention of accumulating a "coherent knowledge base" (p. 187). Fassinger (1990) acknowledged that other models that incorporate cultural frameworks need to be developed to explain the varying patterns of sex role socialization and family/career salience, for instance, on minority and working class women (cf. Richie et al., 1997).

Linear cause-and-effect models are not able to represent complex interactions among sex-role attitudes, family and career orientation (Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986). As well, the amount of variance explained by these studies has been quite modest (Blustein, 1997).

Adolescent Identity Development

Erikson's identity formation theory (1959, 1968) has also guided researchers in understanding the role of the self in adolescent career development. Adolescence is the time when individuals begin deciding who they are—what they value, what they enjoy, what they hope for and desire, and what they would like to avoid (Erikson, 1968).

The young person, to experience wholeness, must feel a progressive

continuity between that which he [sic] has come to be during the long years of childhood and that which he [sic] promises to become in the anticipated future; between that which he [sic] conceives himself [sic] to be and that which he [sic] perceives others to see in him [sic] and to expect of him [sic]. (p. 87)

Eriksonian theory painted identity formation as a process that had as much to do with identifying and rejecting what is not “me” as it did with choosing and embracing what is. In keeping with the view of the notion of self as independent and internally bounded (Markus & Kitayama, 1994), “differentiating” one’s self from one’s peers, family, and environment, and maintaining a consistent sense of these differences is the normative and healthy path through adolescence. The absence of this differentiation is the state of “identity confusion,” characterized in many cases, according to Erikson (1968), by psychopathological symptoms.

Despite Erikson’s concurrence with the dominant Western paradigm of the independent self, he did embrace the idea that identity formation was a *psychosocial* process, governed in large part by historical and social context (1968, p. 23). So, too, did he maintain that an individual’s identity could never be said to be “finished,” but, rather, the evolution of one’s identity was a lifelong event. These two concepts—that identity formation takes place within a social context and that one’s sense of identity is revisited over the life span—stand in marked contrast to the off-shoots of Eriksonian theory that have worked their way into popular thinking about adolescent identity development (Adams, 1992; Waterman, 1992).

From a general point of agreement about the task of adolescence, researchers in the field of adolescent identity development have diverged along two paths of inquiry. The first, dominated by clinical psychologists, focuses on an elaboration of

selected aspects of Eriksonian theory, the “ego identity statuses,” and their personality and behavioural correlates (Archer, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Marcia, 1980; Waterman, 1992). The second, pursued by researchers in diverse fields, including psychology, cultural studies, and sociology, explores relational and contextual factors that contribute to the formation and content of individuals’ identities (Berzonsky, 1992; Forrest & Mikolaitis, 1986; Ianni, 1989; Josselson, 1988, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994).

The Ego Identity Statuses. James Marcia (1966) operationalized Erikson’s concept of identity versus identity confusion through the creation of four distinct ego identity statuses. He described four statuses on a general continuum from least to most psychologically healthy: (a) *identity diffusion*, or the state of not being interested or concerned with exploring one’s identity; (b) *identity foreclosure*, or the state of having accepted another’s, usually a parent’s, view of one’s identity instead of exploring many options; (c) *identity moratorium*, or the state of experimentation with different possible identities prior to committing to one, and; (d) *identity achievement*, or the state of having committed to a particular identity following a period of exploration.

Hundreds of empirical studies have been carried out based on this paradigm, which focuses on the individual as a mostly autonomous decision-maker, somewhat influenced by context, but largely independent. Thirty years of this type of systematic research has produced a well-developed taxonomy of different individuals’ styles of resolving their adolescent identity crisis, and this taxonomy has seeped into the set of common knowledge possessed by practitioners who work with youth. The belief that adolescents start out not knowing what they want to do or be in the future, then move through a process of exploring and experimenting with different options, and, finally,

pick one option to pursue is central to educational practice at the secondary level. The influence of the ego identity status paradigm on popular wisdom about adolescence cannot be underestimated.

In applying the identity status paradigm to a study of the career salience of adolescent girls, Archer (1985) and Waterman (1993) found that female adolescents defined themselves across a number of domains, for example, vocational plans, friends, marriage, parenting, family, values, and family roles. No differences were found between genders in the use of each identity status within the occupational domain; however, females more frequently questioned alternatives pertaining to family roles than males. Archer and Waterman concluded that females on average not only have a more complex identity to establish because of the number of identity domains they use to define themselves, but also because their societal orientation is less popular and less well supported.

[N]ot only do females experience the desire to establish their sense of identity in vocational choice, religious beliefs, political ideology, and sex-role attitudes in the same manner as males, but they engage in more active reflection and decision-making regarding identity in a relational context than do their male counterparts. (Waterman, p. 62)

Further research on adolescent identity development (Archer, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Archer & Waterman, 1990; Jones, 1997) has suggested that not only do individuals vary in status across domains, but also that progression toward identity achievement may be influenced by historical and cultural factors. For example, where traditionally “identity diffusion” has been perceived as a dangerous condition in which individuals lack an organizing centre (Erikson, 1968), diffusion may be a

culturally adaptive form of identity in response to the changing circumstances confronting young people as they grow up (Côté, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Lifton, 1993).

The suitability of applying the identity construct to women has also been questioned (Archer, 1992; Côté & Levine, 1988) because the construct appears to be biased toward the Western, masculine ideal of individualism over relatedness. However, Archer also cautioned against dichotomizing intrapersonal and interpersonal domains. "Being excluded from a category is the consequence of a basic premise underlying the gender literature that personal qualities are unidimensional (e.g., if one is masculine, one cannot be feminine)" (p. 28). If one is intimate one cannot be self-defined and vice versa. According to Josselson (1988), adolescents generally are attached to peers, parents, and important others. The task of adolescence is to combine concern with independence in the context of relatedness. "The late-adolescent rapprochement phase is a dance of discovery about where the limits of the bond are" (Josselson, p. 95).

Archer (1992) believes that the sense of self and the desire for connection are intertwined and therefore, researchers need to listen for "identity in connection" rather than looking for one schema to fit all data. Researchers need to listen instead to the narratives of adolescents to gain an understanding of their experiences within each of the domains and to understand the relationship of one domain to another (Archer; Jones, 1997).

A second path in the field of adolescent identity development has involved the exploration of contextual factors. The notion that the development of the self is influenced by social context is not a new one in psychology. William James (1890/1950) was perhaps the first to write about the concept of the social self. His ideas were followed by Cooley's (1902) looking-glass self, and George Herbert

Mead's (1934) theory of a contextualized and socially-constructed self. The contextualized self continues to be a central conceptual framework for many theorists (Astin, 1984; Baumeister, 1987; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Kegan, 1982; Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986; Youniss, 1989).

Most theories of the social self are predicated on the observation that individuals care a great deal about how they are perceived by others, and therefore, that others play a key role in structuring and supporting one's self-perception. However, these approaches still locate the mechanism of others' influences on the self within the individual. The specific nature or content of the social context was not the subject of this type of inquiry. Rather, the search for universal processes of incorporating information from one's context, whatever it might be, into one's sense of a private, bounded self was the central objective of much of this empirical work.

Other psychologists have rediscovered the centrality of context to development and cognition. Vygotskian and other similar perspectives on the social origins of cognitive development are increasingly popular among developmentalists (cf. Rogoff, 1990). At the same time the field of cognitive psychology is embracing theories of situated cognition, which imply that it is impossible to isolate thinking and learning from social context and interactions with others (Sternberg & Wagner, 1994). Gergen (1987), a social constructionist, believes that, "In the same way that individual words cannot be understood outside of a linguistic context, the understanding of individuals requires comprehension of social context" (p. 63). These increasingly prevalent theoretical frameworks continue to push on the boundaries of what has been traditionally labelled the "person" and the "context," and generally conclude that these elements are mutually constitutive.

In fact, psychologists have suggested that the making of self is so contextually specific a process that it is best researched by collecting individuals' life narratives, or autobiographies (Bruner, 1990, 1991; Howard, 1991). Indeed, an individual's culture, gender, socioeconomic situation, and social history are now acknowledged to be vital contributors to one's self-concept. These factors influence not only the content of one's identity, but the very way in which identity is conceptualized (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Oyserman & Markus, 1993; Segal, DeMeis, Wood, & Smith, 2001).

Josselson's (1988) concept of the embedded self incorporates the wider social contexts that facilitate or hinder one's options, while providing the cultural elements of one's identity. Similar views regarding the importance of social, cultural, and economic influences or embeddedness have also been incorporated into the literature on adolescent career development (Astin, 1984; Blustein, 1994, 1997; Lent et al., 2000; Patton & McMahon, 1999; Vondracek, 1992; Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986).

The idea of embeddedness is that the key phenomena of human life exist at multiple levels of analysis (e.g., the inner-biological, individual-psychological, dyadic, organizational, social network, community, societal, cultural, outer physical-ecological, and historical); at any one point in time variables and processes from any and all of these multiple levels may contribute to human functioning... the variables and processes at one level influence and are influenced by the variables and processes at the other levels; that is, there is a dynamic interaction among levels of analysis where each level may be both a product and a producer of the functioning and changes at all other levels. (Vondracek et al., 1986, pp. 69-70)

Blustein (1994) proposed that the notion of the embedded self be incorporated into career theory as a means of expanding self-definition constructs in the various career theories. The concept of the “embedded identity” would encompass four groups of characteristics: (a) self-knowledge or core beliefs, values and perceived traits, (b) degree of commitment or the extent to which one has internalized aspects of one’s identity, (c) familial factors such as support from family and significant others and one’s perceptions of those relationships, and (d) sociocultural factors that affect the development of identity, for instance, the amount of self-expression permitted in a given culture or social group (p. 147). Attention must be paid to individual’s dynamic phenomenological role in confirming both positive and negative environmental influences (Blustein). “Supports, opportunities, and barriers—like beauty—lie at least partly in the eye of the beholder” (Lent et al., 1994, p. 106).

In summary, adolescent identity development does not appear to be “one single developmental sequence for the identity statuses” (Grotevant, 1986, p. 176). Instead development takes place in shifting patterns and at different times for different domains (La Voie, 1994). Cultural pressures may be creating a confusion of identity domains and a disordered identity formation (Blustein & Noumair, 1996; Giddens, 1991; Lifton, 1993). Contemporary views regard identity formation as a “lifelong reflexive project of the self” (Giddens, pp. 32-33). Identity formation thus involves the self navigating through life and contemplating its accomplishments during its journeys.

Schema Model of the Self-Concept

Identity formation has also been conceptualized by constructivists as a self-theory (Berzonsky, 1993). A relatively new area of research has centered on

explorations of self-schemas. The self is viewed as a multidimensional, multifaceted set of structures that play a critical role in organizing all aspects of behaviour (cf. Markus & Nurius 1986; Markus & Sentic, 1982; Nurius, 1986). These structures, called self-schemas, are the cognitive structures about the self, derived from the repeated categorization and evaluation of behaviour by oneself and by others (Markus & Sentic). Self-schemas serve to integrate and summarize thoughts, feelings, and experiences about the self in specific behavioural domains. Self-schemas can be developed about any aspect of a person including physical characteristics, social roles, personality traits, and areas of particular interests and skills. Self-schemas “enable perceivers to detect features and higher-order thematic structures in their own behaviour and in that of others to which they otherwise would be insensitive” (Markus & Oyserman, 1989). They are established in domains that the person values (Markus & Nurius).

In contrast to earlier reliance on a narrow band of traitlike descriptors... the emerging view is of a self-concept that is dynamic and future oriented, including self-knowledge about goals and motives, personal standards and values, and rules and strategies for regulating and controlling one's [own] behavior. (Nurius, 1986, p. 430)

Possible selves are assumed to constitute part of a multifaceted self-concept with one centralized “I” position. According to Dunkel (2000), “Possible selves are hypotheses that derive from and direct...one's self-theory” (p. 528). Possible selves conceptually link the self-concept and motivation. Markus and Nurius (1986) described the concept of possible selves as:

individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming...a conceptual

link between cognition and motivation. Possible selves are the cognitive component of hopes, fears, goals, and threats, and they give the specific self-relevant form, meaning, organization, and direction to these dynamics. Possible selves are important, first, because they function as incentives for future behaviour (i.e., they are selves to be approached or avoided) and second, because they provide an evaluative and interpretive context for the current view of the self. (p. 954)

Possible selves are thought to influence the motivation process by providing specific, clear goals to strive for, if they are positive, and to avoid, if they are negative, and by energizing an individual to pursue the actions necessary for attaining that goal (Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Motivation appears to be heightened if the individual forms a balance between their positive and negative possible thoughts (Markus & Ruvolo). For example, if an individual can invoke an image of graduating from high school along with a feared possible self of working at a fast food restaurant for the next 20 years, the motivation to study and to attend school is more likely to be sustained.

“Thoughts about what is possible allow the individual to develop a narrative of the self, to construct a self that is different from the present one” (Markus & Nurius, 1987, p. 164). By expressing one’s competencies, one develops the self-system, or identities, and it is through actions that these identities are sustained. When individuals are unsuccessful in cultivating a set of self-defining schemas, for example, when sufficient supports are not provided in the environment, they will experience an insecure and scattered identity in addition to a sense of general incompetence. In the same way, crises in identity will occur when one’s self-defining competencies are

contested or expression is prohibited (Markus, Cross & Wurf, 1990). Furthermore, the range of possible selves is constrained. “[T]he pool of possible selves derives from the categories made salient by the individual’s particular sociocultural and historical context and from the models, images, and symbols provided by the media and by the individual’s immediate social experience (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954).

Studies that have adopted a framework of “possible selves” have been conducted with adolescents in order to elicit gender differences in self-schemas. In one study conducted with 289 youth, aged 14-15 years, Leondari, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou (1998) found that participants produced vivid descriptions of specific hoped-for selves and less elaborated descriptions of feared selves. Results showed that 73.81% of participants generated hoped-for selves with success due to personal effort while 26.19% generated hoped-for selves with success due to luck. When feared possible selves were considered, participants were more likely to attribute future failure to lack of luck. Participants who had well-developed, specific hoped-for selves and who imagined themselves achieving as a result of hard work outperformed the other groups in academic achievement. There were no gender differences in relation to achievement motivation, however, girls outperformed boys in academic achievement and task persistence. However, on a measure of self-esteem, girls scored substantially lower than the boys. The authors suggest that adolescent females’ belief in their capabilities seems to be shaped by a number of factors including family, educational systems, the media, and other cultural factors.

The purpose of Knox, Funk, Elliot, and Bush’s study (2000) was to examine the content of and gender difference within adolescent possible selves with 212 students, aged 14 to 19, representing a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds. Female adolescents rated feared possible selves as more likely than did males.

Furthermore, girls produced more feared possible selves associated with the relational category; whereas boys generated more feared possible selves related to occupation, general failure and inferiority. No gender differences were found in the likelihood or content of hoped-for possible selves. The differences in the categories of feared selves generated by this group were consistent with past research indicating that male self-views appear to be closely associated with asserting oneself or getting ahead of others, whereas female self-views are more closely related to connecting with or helping others (cf. Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Thorne & Michaelieu, 1996). These findings, according to Knox et al., indicate that traditional views of the self that emphasize autonomy and independence may be more applicable to male and less appropriate for female adolescents. The effects of gender-role socialization on female adolescents may also explain the results of this study. Gender-role socialization intensifies at adolescence and frequently serves to draw girls' attention toward aspects of interpersonal function, and, in particular, romantic relationships (Eccles, 1987).

In a study examining the life domains of girls (Curry, Trew, Turner & Hunter, 1994), 520 male and female students aged 13 to 14, completed a series of psychological measures and a possible selves questionnaire that asked them to consider the likely pattern of their working life. Results suggested that girls' self-concepts are more likely to encompass several life domains, and the importance girls attach to the different domains may influence their future career planning. While boys appear to be a more homogeneous group concerning career orientation, girls appear to be heterogeneous, with differing orientations toward full-time and part-time work, and differing attitudes toward the role of parenthood.

The concepts of self-schemas and possible selves are consistent with constructivist (Berzonsky, 1993; Lent et al., 1994, 2000; Mahoney & Lyddon, 1988) and cultural perspectives (Shweder, 1990). Not only is the self viewed as an active agent and constructor of meaning, but the self in interaction with the environment is also emphasized (Borgen, 1991). One way that intentional persons seek meaning from their context is through the development of possible selves that represent interpretations of environmental stimuli. Possible selves are constructed through interactions with multiple contexts and social worlds, and individuals' multiple contexts and social worlds are constructed through the lens of their possible selves (Shweder). As adolescents imagine themselves in the future, they produce narratives that explain past actions, the experienced present, and the anticipated future constructed out of their particular historical and cultural environments (cf. Cohler, 1982; Gergen & Gergen, 1988, 1991; Shotter & Gergen, 1989).

The Narrative Self

Innovative formulations of the self have been developed to capture the complexity, intricacy, and subtleness of one's nature as a person living in a complex world. A variety of metaphors have been employed to portray these new understandings: the narrative self (Howard, 1991; McAdams, 1985, 1996, 2001; Sarbin, 1986), the dialogical self (Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992), the empty self (Cushman, 1990), the saturated self (Gergen, 1991), the protean self (Lifton, 1993), and possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) as examples. In particular, the narrative self and possible selves are two metaphors that offer new perspectives for understanding adolescent life-career development. Self-conceptions told in narrative

form or projected into the future create powerful frameworks for understanding core life experiences, motivational states and action orientations.

Human identities are considered to be evolving constructions; they emerge out of continual social interactions in the course of life.... Narrative constructions are the socially derived and expressed product of repeated adventures and are laid over a biological life progression that often extends beyond its storied span. (Scheibe, 1986, p. 131, 144)

Individuals conceive of their lives as having the form and logic of a story. Life stories give individuals a sense of identity by providing a narrative coherence that integrates past experiences with present concerns and future goals (McAdams, 2001). Incidents and experiences that make up their lives are not viewed in isolation, but are interpreted as part of the ongoing stories that gives them their significance.

Individuals engage in narrative processing of their life experiences; they construct storied accounts of past events that range from brief anecdotes to fully developed autobiographies. These accounts rely on vivid imagery, familiar plot structures, and archetypal characters and are often linked to predominant cultural themes or plots. (Singer & Bluck, 2001, p. 93).

McAdams (1996) highlights five characteristics of selfhood in Western modern society. Firstly, the self is perceived as a reflexive project that the individual works on and takes responsibility for. Giddens (1991) defines self-identity as “the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of his or her biography” (p. 53). Secondly, selves are created and recreated within the everyday social life of work and family in what Taylor (1989) calls “the affirmation of ordinary life” (p.x). Thirdly, selves are multi-layered and profoundly deep, requiring an examination of the inner life. “Human identities are considered to be evolving constructions; they emerge out

of continual social interactions in the course of life” (Scheibe, 1986, p. 131).

Fourthly, selves develop over time as individuals make sense of their lives. Lastly, the developing self searches for a sequential coherence. This involves the construction of self-narratives. “Narrative is the cognitive process that gives meaning to temporal events by identifying them as parts of a plot” (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 136).

Narrative accounts are the means by which human action and meaning making are linked (Polkinghorne, 1991; Rosen, 1996). This construction occurs as an ongoing interactional process between the individual self and historical and interpersonal contexts, that is, the self grows through the experience of history, gender, and culture.

[N]arration is a complex social process, a form of social action that embodies the relation between narrator and culture. Taking narrative seriously means directing our attention to what narrators accomplish as they tell their stories, and how that accomplishment is culturally shaped. (Chase, 1995, p. 2)

Furthermore, narratives are meaningful for people across communities as well as culture, and across time and place (Fisher, 1997). Narratives facilitate the understanding of the actions of others since “we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (MacIntyre, 1981, p. 197).

These stories follow a narrative structure with plot, themes, scenes and endings. During adolescence, a time of heightened perspective taking and self-regulation, young people make explicit attempts at story building and consolidation of identity (McAdams, 1985, 1996; Rosen, 1996). Self-stories not only reflect motivational characteristics, they also provide a forward-looking perspective on the self that encourages and shapes the continued expression of self in a story-consistent manner. Core themes, turning points and repeated scenes are evident. The self-

narratives of adolescents frequently include other significant individuals such as family members, peers, and mentors, as well as the community (McAdams).

The importance of events is no longer determined only by their effect on me, but now also by their impact on the others who have been taken in as part of my own identity. By incorporating others and communities into my self-identity, the self that I am expands its temporality beyond my birth and death. My past is extended to include their past, and my future to include their future...and the place in which I stand at any moment is enlarged to embrace that in which my community stands. (Polkinghorne, 1991, pp. 146-147)

These narratives are necessarily selective, anchored in the individual's country, culture, class, race, religion, and gender. Although each individual emerges with a different set of narratives and with distinctive constructions within similar narratives, overall patterns can be distinguished (Singer, 1995). For example, McAdams (1985, 2001) has identified several cultural themes that shape lifestories — communion (movement toward others), agency (the assertion of independence from others), redemption (when bad things turn good), and contamination (when good things turn bad). The life story is co-authored by the person and his or her defining culture or cultures. Different stories make sense in different cultures. Additionally, different groups are given different narrative opportunities and face different narrative restrictions (Chase, 1995). For example, Heilbrun (1988) comments that many women “have been deprived of the narrative, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over—take control of—their own lives” (p. 17).

Life stories consequently resonate gender and class constructions in society and reflect, in various ways, the prevailing patterns of power in the economic, political, and cultural contexts in which human lives are embedded (Habermas &

Bluck, 2000; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). As well people present different stories about themselves in different contexts. In order to meet the demands of everyday life, individuals function in a way to manage the impressions of others, seeking status, and acceptance in their self-defining groups (Hogan, 1987).

The narrative self has been conceptualized in a number of ways. Harré (1983) used the term “identity projects” to refer to efforts to achieve self-directed development and expression of self. Identity projects may take the form of the pursuit of fame or status, or they may be concerned with more personal aspects such as personal growth and actualization. Giddens (1991) used the term “life plans” to refer to the “reflexively organized trajectory of the self. Life-planning is a means of preparing a course of future actions mobilized in terms of the self’s biography” (p. 85).

Few narrative studies have been undertaken with youth in the area of life-career development. In one Canadian study, the narratives of 50 young adults were examined with regard to significant events through which their parents influenced them in their life-career course (Young, Friesen & Borycki, 1994). The narratives recounted by the participants reflected their cultural understandings about career, characterized their relationships with their parents, and relayed how they positioned themselves in their family of origin. The researchers were particularly interested in the process of establishing separateness from and/or connectedness with one’s parents. One of the constructed accounts of individuation in North American culture involves a story of adolescents seeking independence from their parents while favouring the support of peers (Berndt, 1996). An alternative constructed account proposes that growth and development in adolescence is fostered by both individuality and connectedness (Grotevant & Cooper, 1986). In this study,

adolescents predominantly told progressive narratives in which the narrator progressed toward a goal. Progressive narratives were illustrative of positive relationships between parent(s) and participant and were framed in terms of process toward career commitment. The researchers caution that these stories exist as interpretations at a specific point in participants' lives. Rather than pinpointing how parental influence can predict future career behaviour, the narratives illustrate how young people assemble their life story explaining parental influence and how life stories may be structured differently to give them new options.

The narrative self is "embedded in a network of meaning at the social level" (Young & Valach, 2000, p. 189). Individuals actively construct and negotiate meaning through their interactions with others.

Career identity, values, interests, and behaviour are not shaped from the outside "in"; rather, they are constructed, perhaps largely through language, in conversations with others." (Young et al., 1996, p. 486)

Summary

This section, "In Search of Self and Identity in Adolescent Life-Career Development", has presented an overview of approaches taken in understanding the process of adolescent self-definition. The constructs of self and identity as defined by Eriksonians and the major career theorists have led to a better understanding of the tasks of self-exploration and self-assessment (Blustein & Noumair, 1996). However, the constructs appear to describe relatively unchanging features of one's inner psychological experiences. Increasingly, profound challenges to the self-as-individual model are being mounted from within the field of psychology (Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Sampson, 1985). As compelling as these challenges are to the traditionally held

doctrine of the individuated self, they are only now beginning to capture the widespread attention of theorists and academicians in the area of life-career development (cf. Blustein & Noumair, 1996; Collin & Young, 2000). Relatively few empirical studies of alternative models of the self have been carried out.

Constructionism, narrative and cultural psychology, and feminist approaches have advanced notions of the self that are contextual in nature. The self is viewed as an evolving, self-organizing proactive and reactive entity which discovers, attributes, and creates meaning as movement through new situations and contexts occurs” (Peavy, 1992, p. 121). Experiences occur in a multiplicity of social and cultural contexts. Youth are viewed as:

active, constructive participants in getting to know themselves, their social worlds, and who they are and can become within them. Within various community institutions and environments, adolescents can observe the interacting effects of their actions and the actions of others. (Ianni, 1989, p. 264).

Feminist perspectives challenge Erikson’s notion that the project of adolescence is to “differentiate” from the contexts of one’s childhood and replace their identifications with new ones. Rather, healthy development is based on one’s ability to make connections with family and significant others (Josselson, 1992).

Taken together the constructs of narrative and possible selves provide new avenues for exploring how adolescents understand themselves when considering their futures. Possible selves have been shown to play a powerful role in motivating and regulating goal-directed behaviour. Highly detailed images of the self at various stages in pursuit of a desired goal shape and organize the enacted behaviours (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Narrative selves are built from history, culture, community,

relationships, and language. Cochran (1990) applies the term “holistic construction” to express the power of narrative to connect to and make sense of context. Individuals construct narratives in which events are connected to one another in relation to self and to others within a structure that integrates the parts into a whole and gives coherence and direction through time.

Recent research into adolescent identity formation is taking contextual factors more seriously, to the extent that the field of adolescent development is becoming firmly interdisciplinary. Researchers from various disciplines, namely, psychology, sociology, and education are examining how adolescents not only shape direction and content of their development by evoking reactions from parents, teachers, peers, and other people, but also play an active part as “producers of their development” by utilizing contextual potentials conducive for development (Hayes, 1994; Lerner & Busch-Rossnagel, 1981).

Section Two: Focusing on Context

Contextualism presupposes an ongoing texture of multiple, elaborated events, each being influenced by collateral episodes and by the efforts of multiple agents. Included in the metaphor [of contextualism] is the idea of constant change in the structure of situations and in positions occupied by actors. (Hermans, 1992, p. 362)

A central feature in prevailing models of life-span developmental psychology is the location of events in the context of time and space (Cohler, 1982; Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; McAdams, 1985, 1996, 2001).

The term “context” has been defined in two distinct ways (Cole, 1995). A first meaning of the term is “that which surrounds,” a concept closely related to Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) model of concentric circles which represent different levels of context. Studies that portray rural and urban environments as differing contexts that surround adolescents and provide different opportunities would be an example. The image of “nested contexts” (Cooper & Denner, 1998, p. 568), however, does not enrich our understanding of how families, schools, or cultures etc. interact with each other and change each other over time.

A second meaning of the term “context” is “that which weaves together” (Cole, 1995). In this conception, “objects and contexts arise together as part of a single bio-social-cultural process of development” (Cole, p. 109). Development is conceived as an ongoing process of interaction between the person and environment. “[C]omplex multidirectional relations exist between an individual and his/her context, and that changes in one of the multiple sources of development...will influence changes in all others” (Vondracek et al., 1986, p. 187). The personal agency of individuals is highlighted. “[P]eople, by interacting with their changing context, provide a bases of their own development” (p. 77). The Multiple Worlds model (Phelan et al., 1991a, 1991b), Vondracek et al.’s Developmental-Contextual Model (1983, 1986), and Patton and McMahon’s (1999) System Theory Framework (STF) correspond to this second definition.

Phelan et al. (1991a, 1991b) engaged in an in-depth, multi-year study of ethnically diverse adolescents in several California high schools. They used the concept of “world” to describe “cultural knowledge and behaviour found within the boundaries of students’ particular families, peer groups, and schools...each world contains values and beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to

insiders” (p. 53). Students perceived themselves to be living in “multiple worlds” which may be in direct conflict. In this study, some adolescents were able to move smoothly between the different social worlds of family, school, and peers while for others, the “borders” between these worlds were impenetrable, despite a desire on the adolescent’s part to overcome them. These different worlds and the boundaries and conflicts among them profoundly shaped the adolescents’ self-concepts and behaviour in various situations. For example, an impassable border between the school’s expectations of success and the peer group’s expectations of allegiance can lead an individual to forswear an identity in one or the other of these social worlds. The student either achieves in school or has friends. Phelan et al. found that for many students key resources such as teachers and parents who could help with boundary crossings were unavailable, leaving students to navigate across their worlds without help.

The developmental-contextual approach of Vondracek et al. (1983, 1986) is a conceptual model that identifies individual and ecological variables considered important in life-career development. In their dynamic interaction career development model, eight contextual variables (e.g., organizational/institutional context, job opportunities, technological advances, social/educational policy, economic conditions, sociocultural context, labour laws, environmental conditions) form the outer circle. There are four inner circles that exemplify the interactive roles of family of origin, family of procreation, and the adults’ and child’s extra-familial networks (e.g., peers, school, part-time work). Since changes at one level are reciprocally related to changes at other levels, interventions at one or more levels of analysis have the possibility of altering the status of a given life-career process or variable. One limitation of this model pointed out by Patton & McMahon (1999) is the view of life-career

development as a “longitudinal series of snapshots” (Vondracek et al., 1986, p. 82). Rather than viewing life-career development as a continuous, evolving series of changes, Vondracek et al.’s model suggests that relationships at one point in time modify future relationships in a deterministic fashion.

Patton and McMahon’s (1999) Systems Theory Framework (STF) emphasizes nonlinear, acausal, and multidirectional influences that reflect the “coexistence and recursive action between the individual and the broader systems” (p. 165). Two elements of life-career theory, content and process are described. Under content, critical influences on career development which act as “input into an individual’s ... life-career development, social systems, and environmental-societal...system” (p. 155) are delineated. Process influences involve chance, change over time, and recursiveness. Recursiveness is the “ongoing relationship between elements or subsystems of the system and the changes that occur over time as a result of these continual interactions” (pp. 9-10).

Although contextual approaches provide a conceptual framework for understanding life-career development as a holistic process, few studies have been carried out to explore this development concurrently across and between multiple contexts (Elder et al., 1994; Richie et al., 1997; Shorter-Gooden & Washington, 1996; Vondracek, 1990). In the next section, gender as a specific context and adolescent life-career development will be examined. When possible the simultaneous impact of multiple contexts will be highlighted.

Gender as context

A number of researchers (cf. Gilligan, 1982; Jordan et al., 1991; Josselson, 1988, 1992; Lyons, 1983; Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Miller, 1991; Taylor, Gilligan

& Sullivan, 1995) have noted that women are likely to develop a schemata of themselves “as understanding and caring, as loving and nurturant, or as responsible, considerate, conscientious, or sensitive” (Markus & Oyserman, p. 105). Women are more likely than men to be “connected to and embedded in relationships with others” (Kimmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001, p. 131). In contrast, men are more likely to develop a “separateness” schema or independent self-construals that focus on “independence, assertiveness, instrumentality, and competitiveness” (Markus & Oyserman, p. 105). This is not to say that women are unlikely to develop self-schemas as autonomous and independent. However, when self is formed in relation to others, women may depend more heavily on the evaluations of others when forming schemas of separateness (Josephs, Markus, & Tafari, 1992).

For men and women to construct self so differently as adults, there must be a point in childhood or adolescence when male and female processes of identity development diverge. Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990) observed and interviewed students at an all-girls private secondary school on the East Coast. Their intention was to investigate the developmental origin of women’s selves, and they did, in fact, find that adolescent girls’ decisions about everyday behaviour are guided by concern for caring and preserving relationships. However, an observational by-product of their longitudinal interactions with these young women was also an important result. Before puberty, at ages nine, ten, and eleven, girls were full of life and optimism about their futures. They participated fully in a wide range of activities, including sports, they spoke out freely in the classroom and placed no constraints on their beliefs about what they could achieve. These same girls were practically unrecognizable just on the other side of puberty. At twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, they were withdrawn in their classes and in their social interactions with adults. They

were sullen, lonely, and depressed about the bleak futures they saw before them.

Notably, in many cases a previously robust interest and competence in mathematics and science fell by the wayside at this time and was replaced by an active dislike and struggle in these subject areas. Similar results were found by Orenstein (1994) published in the book *SchoolGirls*.

Miller (1991) states that an adolescent girl receives strong messages that her capacity to “perceive and use her powers in all ways” (p. 20) or to be agentic should not be developed. “She will tend to want most to retain the self that wants to be a ‘being-in-relationship’ but she will begin to lose touch with the definition of herself as a more active ‘being-within-relationship’”(p. 21).

According to Gilligan (1982) and others (Lyons, 1983; Miller, 1991) women start the developmental process from a basis of connection with a significant other, usually the mother, and gradually explore ways of managing separation. Gilligan hypothesizes that a morality of care develops through three major stages, with transitional periods between them. Female development begins with an orientation to individual survival and self-interest, with the first transition occurring as females see this orientation as selfish and self-centered. During the second stage of development, emphasis is on connection and interdependence where females view self-sacrifices as goodness and value others’ needs over their own desires. Transition out of this stage is characterized by an exploration of separation and individuation, which recognizes the importance of self-care. In the final stage, females are able to see their contributions having equal importance to those of others and strive for an effective balance between self-nurturing and caring for others.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule (1986) have referred to the mode of processing in which one is sensitive to the interpersonal environment as “women’s

ways of knowing” or “connected knowing.” Connected knowing is contextually based, focusing on understanding another’s point of view, valuing experiential learning, and connecting conceptualizations to personal events and knowledge. Connected knowing is similar to J. Bruner’s (1985) idea of narrative modes of thought. He describes the narrative mode as imaginative, constructive, and inquiring into the “ meaning of historical and personal events in their comprehensive richness” (p. 101). Separate knowing as described by Belenky et al. is similar to critical thinking or the ability to separate the self out of the discourse, that is, to be objective. Bruner refers to this mode which characterizes science and logic, as “paradigmatic.”

As the paradigm of the independent self reaches the limits of its heuristic value, at least as in regards to women’s development, it is becoming clear that the specific nature of various social contexts—family, community, school—play a pivotal role in shaping selves. Theories of gender identity have only recently been placed within the context of culture. In a grounded theory study of 10 diverse (eg. race, culture, religion) women college students (Jones, 1997), participants were asked to describe their understanding of their own identities. The emerging theory seemed to suggest that within the basic sense of self or core identity are personal attributes and characteristics. The core was described as multifaceted and personally defined. Noteworthy contextual effects (race, gender, culture, religion, and sexual orientation) enclosed and overlapped the core identity. The various contexts were understood by participants as externally imposed and internally defined, as well as crisscrossing with other dimensions of identity. Identity was not fixed but was continually retold and created. Individuals in this study lived in multiple identities that periodically were confounding and conflicting.

The process of women's life-career development is also described as complex and multidimensional. Marshall (1989) noted the cyclic nature of women's life-career development. "Female values offer career theory a more cyclic interpretation of phases, based on notions of ebb and flow, of shedding and renewal" (p. 285). The diversity of women's life patterns reflect a "wide variety of combinations and sequences, often appearing to start afresh as they give up status in one arena to take on a novice role in another" (p. 286).

Women's distinctive developmental voice and needs point to fundamentally different career perspectives, choices, priorities, and patterns for women that need to be understood and appreciated—differences that are only further expanded when cultural expectations, shifting norms, employment opportunities, marital practices, childbirth and rearing, organizational policies, and institutional practices are added to the picture. (Gallos, 1989, p. 127)

The young college women in Luzzo and Hutcheson's study (1996) were significantly more likely than young men to indicate the perception of occupational barriers associated with child rearing and balancing work and family responsibilities. Davey (1998) also found that adolescent girls made occupational choices based on their expectations for home and family. Rarely have the family-work interface issues that affect women's life-career behaviour been salient in the life-career behaviour of men (Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992; McCracken & Weitzman, 1997; Phillips & Imhoff, 1997; Weitzman, 1994). An assumption of career development theorists who have based on their studies on men was that individuals are relatively free to follow their interests. Traditionally career theorists have not recognized the effects of early socialization and the gender-structuring of the labour force that result in limiting the

life-career options of women (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Eccles, 1987; Farmer, 1985, 1997; Fitzgerald & Weitzman).

According to Betz (1994a) women often adjust their plans, aspirations, and needs to the situations in which they find themselves, and to the expectations they perceive others to have of them. In a qualitative study that explored the role of relationships in women's life-career development (Lalande, Crozier, & Davey, 2000), participants' career and educational choices were shaped by relational factors in two ways. Many of the women chose to enter occupations where they could help others and make meaningful connections. Additionally, important people in the women's lives influenced their career choices and self-knowledge. The results of the study indicated that "women's career development and psychosocial development are interwoven" (p. 193).

In Paa & McWhirter's study (2000) based on Farmer's model (1985), high school students were asked to identify perceived influences in making career decisions in three different areas: personal, background, and environmental. Personal influences were ranked the highest among the three variables. Both genders ranked interests, personality, and values as the three strongest perceived influences. Interestingly, girls ranked combining work and family as a weak influence. The three most important perceived background influences for both males and females were ability, role models, and media. Ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic status were viewed by both groups as least influential. In the category of environmental influences, same-sex role models were perceived to be more influential on career expectations than role models of the other gender, although the parent of the opposite sex was given a high ranking. For the females in the study, the three most important influences were, in order, mother, father, and same-sex friends. Male teachers and

counsellors were viewed as having little influence on their career decisions. The researchers hypothesized that students in high school are not consciously aware of the effect that ethnicity and gender had on their career expectations and decisions. Young women are not thinking about the implications of balancing work and family.

When adolescents' implicit theories of the life course were examined (Greene, Wheatley, & Aldava, 1992), gender differences emerged. While both female and male adolescents believed that the completion of formal education and entry into the full-time labour market occurred at similar ages for both genders, participants believed that the average man would marry and have children at a significantly older age than would the average woman. Participants shared the belief that gender differences exist in the timing of adulthood transition events.

In a similar study (Greene and Wheatley, 1992), female participants foresaw a life course consisting of a series of relational and career transitions with equal and persisting responsibilities in each domain. Many of their career-related decisions, such as decisions about further education and relocation, were based on how those decisions would affect their relationship with important others. Adulthood for women appeared to be an accumulation of relationally defined role transitions, termed "temporal constraints" by Greene and Wheatley.

The basic proposition is that women tend to be more context-dependent or relationally-oriented than men. Research on the salience and intersecting nature of identity dimensions such as the community context and gender would enrich understanding of the life-career development process of other populations of young women, for instance those young women living in a rural community. Rural as context will be surveyed in the following section beginning with research on place attachment. The "worlds" of self, family, peers, and school will be explored as salient

local contexts of rural adolescents. The interaction of young people's plans for the future and community resources will be presented using Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital.

Rural as a Context

“Admittedly, there are theoretical problems in identifying a rural culture. Yet those who come into a rural area to carry on their professions have no difficulty recognizing something distinctive about the new countryside” (Sim, 1988, p. 60). A community entails more than spatial variation-- it involves social as well as ecological organization. A community is “a demographic and spatially bounded collectivity characterized by dominant cultural or normative orientations, formal and informal collective controls, social cohesion, and local networks (Reiss, 1995, p. 306). Communities vary greatly in their size, shape, and structural and organizational properties. It is difficult to spatially separate communities one from another. Moreover, communities are dynamic and can change considerably in a brief time.

Many people imagine a rural Canada characterized by farming, homogeneous cultures, and close-knit communities. In reality, rural communities differ more among themselves than they do, on average from urban areas (Bolaria, Dickinson, & Wotherspoon, 1995; Bollman & Biggs, 1992). Rural communities differ in terms of ethnicity, social, and economic activity (Flora et al., 1992; Miller & Smith, 1997). Rural communities are among the most ethnically diverse as well as the most ethnically homogeneous, depending on the region of the country in which they are located. Although the cultural milieu, social structure, and social capital of rural areas is quite distinct from that of other areas, there is tremendous diversity in the social organization of rural areas (Elder et al., 1994; Flora et al., 1992; Hobbs, 1995). The

mix of organizations and institutions varies greatly by locality, as the local organizations dedicated “...to preserving local traditions, distinctiveness, and identity have been joined by institutions and organizations dedicated to drawing rural producers and consumers into a mass society and a global economy” (Hobbs, p. 372). While “rural industrialization” and tourism have contributed to greater regional specialization and perpetuation of rural diversity (Flora et al.; Hobbs); the nonlocal economic institutions, however, have reduced local autonomy and altered the sense of community in rural areas. The conditions considered to be typically rural may not be true for all rural areas, and a “sense of localism” and “value of place” may be true for some rural communities but not for others.

Sense of Place. **One often overlooked aspect of context is the concept of “place-identity.” Like people, things, and activities, places are a fundamental part of the social world of daily life (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Although physical, social, and cultural contexts influence place identity, place identification is also mediated by the characteristics people bring to places. “People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, a referent of their identity” (Cohen, 1985, p. 118). From a social psychological perspective, place identities are thought to arise because places as bounded locales imbued with personal, social, and cultural meanings provide a significant framework in which identity is constructed, maintained and transformed (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). The study of place has a strong narrative component. It reflects the:**

interweaving of the relationships among people, objects, and messages, which produces place and which may be viewed as discourse...Metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., all serve the purpose of conceptualizing place and its meaning. These discourses express people’s relation to their

representations of the environment and society.” (Berdoulay, 1989, pp.134-135)

Investigators of community identity provide four fundamental insights into the phenomenology of community and place meaning (Hummon, 1992). Firstly, biographical experience with a locale can transform the local landscape into a symbolic extension of the self by imbuing it with the personal meanings of life experiences. Some residents have a sense of place that is best characterized as “rooted” (Tuan, 1980). Such “rootedness” is always a matter of degree, but individuals who are so rooted experience a strong, local sense of home and are emotionally attached to their local place. Rootedness implies being at home in an unself-conscious way. Residents seldom venture beyond their setting and display an incuriosity toward the world at large (Tuan).

Secondly, neighbourhoods and communities are imbued with public meanings and as such serve as symbolic locales with distinct cultural identities. Communities and neighbourhoods accumulate rich local traditions that define and celebrate the distinct identity of place. Residents view themselves and their community as special and unique.

Thirdly, various social identities can become embedded in and communicated through the local environment, reinforcing the sentimental bonds for people and places. For instance, particular parts of town may define and express moral reputation and social rank for particular social groups.

Fourthly, residents can experience emotional grief when they are forced to relocate due to a natural disaster. “[F]eelings of apathy, disorientation, and grief are... caused by traumatic separation of the self from a community landscape of meaning” (Hummon, 1992, p. 260). However, a symbolic reworking of the self can occur when

residents choose to disengage from a locale and recommit to a new community. In a study of young suburban migrants to New York City, Fava & Desena (as cited in Hummon, 1992) found that the suburb-to-city move was often preceded by temporary residence at a college in a large town. During this time young people reformulated their conceptions of cities and of their place identity as a potential city person.

Cahill and Martland (1994) noted the importance that sense of place, environmental and social preferences, and community attachment played in the career choices of residents of fishing villages in Newfoundland. Glynis George (2000) observed the strong Newfoundland identification among the women at Bay St. George Women's Council. Carter (1997) also found that place had a potent impact on the development of Appalachian girls. "Ties to a particular place are extremely strong in the rural site, and geography is closely allied with a sense of destiny" (p. 7). Carter reasoned that in order to understand female development, exploration of the complexity of relationships among contexts is essential.

Such a perspective, based on a broader picture that includes place, class, gender, and ethnicity may provide... insight into ways in which multiple discourse communities influence girls narratives of themselves and their journeys toward who they are becoming as relational and situational, but also as independent women. " (p. 24)

In two large-scale projects, Programs in Rural Youth Development (Project PRYDe) in New York State (Hedlund, 1993) and the Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (Armstrong, 1993), researchers interviewed adolescents about their views of their community. Rural adolescents perceived both positive and negative aspects of living in their communities. On the positive side, they believed that their community was a good place to raise children, to live safely, to be close to nature and animals, to

interact with many community members, and to form close relationships with parents, friends, teachers, and relatives. On the other hand, participants reported a lack of privacy in their community accompanied by narrow views and prejudice (Hedlund). Youth drew attention to few job opportunities and alcohol abuse among their friends (Armstrong) as concerns. Both samples of youth noted few opportunities to bring their concerns to the attention of community members; and most importantly, a lack of activities in which to engage. Similar views were found by in the Rural Young Voices Project (D'Amico et al., 1996).

In the next section, more detailed analysis of the social worlds of rural youth will be explored using Phelan et al.'s (1991a, 1991b) Multiple Worlds Model. The contexts of self, family, peers, and school will be examined as salient local contexts of rural adolescents.

Self Context. The self context according to Phelan et al. (1991a), includes “meanings, perceptions, understandings, thoughts, feelings” (p. 228) that take place within the individual as well as the adaptation strategies employed by the individual as he or she moves from context to context.

Deciding who and what one will be is a function of both one's past and one's perceived and believed in future. Both are related to, but separable from, who or what one is in the present. Positive and negative images from the past, memories of warm or rejecting relationships with parents and peers, successes or failures in school are always with us to shape our self-concept. What we believe we can be or will be in the future is no less affected by what others tell us or show us is possible. The adolescent helps to shape the effective environment within which his [sic] transformation will take place, but in turn seeks help and guidance from others. (Ianni, 1989, p. 262)

Although rural adolescents have been viewed as “cushioned” from the harsh realities of larger urban settings (Crockett, Shanahan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2000), rural youth have identified a number of psychosocial concerns. Rural youth were more likely than urban students to be accepting of alcohol abuse and viewed depression as more unhealthy (Chimonides & Frank, 1998). Rural students were also more likely to recommend violence as a coping strategy (Chimonides & Frank).

Rural high school students in Pennsylvania (Puskar, Tusaie-Mumford, Sereika, & Lamb, 1999b) reported feeling lonely and depressed, thinking about suicide, having trouble at home, lacking a best friend, and feeling confused about the future (reported by 24% of the students). Frequently reported risk behaviours included tobacco and alcohol use (reported by 57% of students), lack of exercise, and sexual issues. Overall, these findings were consistent with national statistics in the United States. However, in a study of youth living in the Midwest (Kosterman, Hawkins, Haggerty, Spoth, & Redmond, 2001), more vandalism, shoplifting, alcohol and marijuana use was reported than the national average.

Spencer & Bryant (2000) studied rural, suburban, and urban differences in teen dating violence. Rural students in their study were more at risk for being victims of dating violence than the other two groups. Additionally, both male and female students from rural communities were more likely to have encountered physical violence and resorted to physical violence.

In a study aimed at identifying levels of optimism and relationship of optimism with depression, coping, anger, and life events in a sample of rural adolescents (Puskar, Sereika, Lamb, Tusaie-Mumford, McGuinness, 1999a), participants were less optimistic compared to established norms of urban youth. Optimists’ preferred coping strategies included problem-focused strategies such as

reappraising the situation and seeking help. Adolescent anger was negatively related to higher levels of optimism. Negative life events and optimism were negatively related, and positive life events and optimism were positively related.

Feelings of loneliness and isolation are usually most intense in adolescence (Renshaw & Brown, 1993). In a study consisting of children and youth from rural Nebraska (Woodward & Frank, 1988), the extent of loneliness was investigated in relation to aspects of their self-esteem. Results indicated that this sample of rural adolescents had extremely high loneliness scores and that 10 of the 12 self-esteem characteristics were significant when correlated to loneliness scores. Coping strategies used by the subjects to combat loneliness included keeping busy, listening to music, watching television, participating in sports, and playing with pets. Social resources listed as being most helpful in battling loneliness included church group activities, social organizations and clubs, choir and band, and organized sports and recreation.

Over a four-year period beginning in junior high school, 142 adolescents living in a resource-poor Appalachian community were tracked for changes in self-esteem (Deihl, Vicary, & Deike, 1997). Cluster analysis indicated three distinct, divergent trajectories. The Consistently High group described 47% of the rural sample. These adolescents had positive peer and family relationships and had a more positive emotional tone. Those in the Small Increase group, 37% of the sample, showed a slow and steady increase in self-esteem over time. They had sufficient strategies to cope with transitions and seemed to gain competence through experience and development. The Chronically Low group included 16% of the sample. This group appeared most vulnerable to negative outcomes as a result of transitions to junior high and later to senior high school. This group had fewer social and family supports. No significant gender differences were found in any of the three clusters.

In an effort to understand young people's health concerns, rural youth living in Scotland were asked to define physical and mental health and to discuss factors that aided or hindered their coping ability (Hendry & Reid, 2000). Their health concerns involved their social relationships. Peer relationships were viewed as both possible sources of anxiety and emotional distress, and also as factors in meliorating other health concerns ranging from physical illness to chronic depression or lack of self-esteem. This group of young people believed that adults underrated the effect of their concerns and frequently underestimated the experience of loss or pain.

Family Context. A theme that permeates the recent conceptual models of family interaction and adolescent development is the importance of acknowledging and fostering the adolescent's developing sense of individuality but in a context of parent-adolescent emotional connectedness and support (Bell, Allen, Hauser, & O'Connor, 1996; Grotevant & Cooper, 1986; Josselson, 1988). "The adolescent, as much as the toddler, brings [his or her] new ideas and [his or her] new ways of being home, to be recognized in the context of ongoing connection, to bring the relationship up to date" (Josselson, p. 95).

Parental monitoring; that is, parents' knowledge of their child's whereabouts, activities, and friends, was strongly associated with higher adolescent grade point average, and lower levels of adolescent sexual activity and minor delinquency in a sample of rural youth in Grades 7 to 12 (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000). Parental monitoring was found to be particularly important for young adolescent girls in the area of delinquent behaviour. Girls who physically matured at an early age tended to associate with older peers who were more likely to introduce them to problematic behaviours such as truancy and alcohol and drug use. Scheer, Borden, and Donnermeyer (2000) also found that adolescent substance involvement was

significantly lower the more youth perceived that their families would “stop them” or “care” if they became drunk, smoked cigarettes, or used marijuana. Other parenting characteristics that serve as protective factors for rural youth included positive encouragement of their children’s abilities, parental warmth, communication of clear, prosocial normative expectations, and fitting and consistent discipline (Kosterman et al., 2001).

In an eleven-year longitudinal study, Bell et al. (1996) examined the relationship of rural parent-adolescent interactions and young adult outcomes. Parents who demonstrated that they valued education, were more likely to have children who pursued postsecondary education. The balance of autonomy and relatedness in parent-adolescent interactions was also related to overall educational attainment and occupational prestige in young adulthood. In particular the autonomy and relatedness between adolescents and their fathers was important in predicting educational achievements. Parents whose marital relationships promoted autonomy and relatedness were more likely to have children who fared better in their early careers. Adolescents who were unable to establish autonomy with reference to their parents held less prestigious jobs as young adults.

Kracke (1997), Mackey, Arnold, & Pratt (2001), Otto (2000), Young et al. (2001), and Young, Paseluikho, & Valach (1997a), have also examined the influences of parental behaviours on adolescent career exploration. Young et al. (1997a) underscored the importance of “shared understandings, shared emotional states, and joint goals and actions in the projects and careers parents and adolescents construct together” (p. 42). Kracke found that “authoritative parenting, individuated family relationships, parental openness for adolescents’ concerns, and parental behaviours directly addressing career exploration related similarly to self-oriented and context-

oriented exploration activities” (p. 348). Mackey et al. also found that adolescents’ openness to parental influence around decision-making was related to a more authoritarian pattern of parenting. In Otto’s study, youth reported talking with their mothers and their friends when considering career interests. Mothers were most informed of youth’s career interests and abilities when compared to fathers. The results of the study indicated that youth wanted to talk more about their career plans and wanted assistance from parents, particularly their mothers, as well as from school counsellors.

In a number of studies (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995; Hedlund, 1993; Hektner, 1995; Smithmier, 1994), rural adolescents reported feeling close to their parents. D’Amico et al. (1996) found that girls were particularly close to their mothers. Parents and other family members had an impact on the educational aspirations of their children. If parents went to college or university, their children were much more likely to aspire to post-secondary education (Legutko, 1998). This also held true when older brothers and sisters furthered their education. Khattri, Riley, and Kane (1997) found that the low educational attainment of parents, especially the mother had a negative effect on student achievement. The family’s financial situations did not seem to be as strong a factor in postsecondary decisions (Legutko).

Results from two Canadian studies (Jeffery et al., 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996) have indicated that rural parents want to be involved in helping their children make future plans. One theme that emerged from focus group sessions was the fear that if their children remained in the community and worked at the local fish plant or logging mill, they would lack the skills and economic resources needed to obtain other employment if the plant closed down. Parents also viewed local employment opportunities as incentives to marry early, buy a truck, and become debt-ridden.

These Canadian parents felt ill-equipped to help their children with educational and career decisions due to their own lack of education and lack of current information about living and employment conditions outside their community. Additionally, this group of parents felt the burden of making correct decisions for their children's futures because of the economic costs involved.

Peer Context. During adolescence, youth spend increasing amounts of time interacting with peers (Berndt, 1996). With the transition into adolescence, close friendships become more important (Berndt). Peer influence can contribute to both desirable behaviours, such as trying out for a school team, and undesirable behaviours, such as smoking (Youniss & Haynie, 1992) and substance use (Chopak, Vicary, & Crockett, 1998). Adolescents differ in how much they are influenced by peers. Steinberg & Silverberg (1986) found that youth are less influenced by friends when they have close relationships with parents or when they are involved in other activities such as academic work or extracurricular activities. Adolescents who feel rejected or neglected by parents or who have less status in their peer group tend to be more influenced by their friends. Susceptibility to peer influence and responsiveness to peer support appear to peak in middle adolescence (Steinberg & Silverberg). Romantic partners compete with friends for late adolescents' attention (Berndt).

In their study of career conversations with peers, Young et al. (1999) noted that participants co-constructed each other's ideas about career by exploring, formulating, challenging, and validating each other's thinking in the areas of educational planning, career selection, and personal future. In comparison to conversations with parents (Young et al., 1997b), the democratic and cooperative nature of the peer relationship provided a risk-free environment in which adolescent experienced the openness to explore ideas and options and to obtain new perspectives.

For rural adolescents, peer relationships provide one well-defined context, in addition to family and school, in which social activity occurs (D'Amico et al., 1996). Friendships are vital resources for comfort, confidences and companionship. Peers are more important for non-farm rural adolescents than for farm adolescents who depend on their families for support (Esterman & Hedlund, 1995). In response to the Aspirations Survey (Quaglia & Perry, 1995), 97% of eighth to twelfth-grade students attending seven rural schools in Maine indicated that they met with friends on a regular basis, and 45% of those students spent at least eleven hours a week doing so. Although 94% of students spent time with their family, 66% reported that they spent less than 10 hours a week doing so.

Social activities with peers provide occasions for adolescents to act out interpersonal developmental themes before a supportive audience and without the dangers of failure (Fine, Mortimer & Roberts, 1990). According to Hine and Hedlund (1994), adolescents in rural New York are quite active in school activities and have peer groups within the school. Several participants volunteered in their community by working with children, especially as coaches or as helpers in 4-H Clubs or Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. Participants listed walks with friends, family and pets as another common activity in addition to the parties they attended in people's homes or in secluded spots in the area.

Although socializing with friends was named as important part of rural life, Hine and Hedlund's (1994) participants also engaged in a number of solitary activities. Participants listed taking walks in nature, listening to rivers flow, writing poetry, stories, or letters, reading, painting and drawing, dancing or playing a musical instrument, training horses, repairing machinery, working with wood, and writing computer programs as examples.

The rural adolescents in Hine and Hedlund's study (1994) complained that there was no place for them to meet with friends informally. Most activities were either school-sponsored or structured by community members. Transportation was one factor that prevented adolescents from seeing each other outside of school. Certainly obtaining a driver's license and having access to a car enhanced their freedom. However, there were few, if any places, within the community for adolescents to informally spend time with their friends. Fine et al. (1990) make the point that adolescents need to have a place of their own that acknowledges their group as a meaningful and important part of the community.

School Context. School is an important developmental context. School socialization is, by and large, the result of direct instruction, buttressed by a system of social reinforcement, expectancy effects, and social comparison processes (Bolger, Caspi, Downey, & Moorehouse, 1988). Rural schools have traditionally been tightly linked to their communities. In the past, the process of schooling reflected local values, local mores, and local ways of being in the world. However, the ability of rural communities to maintain an autonomous ecosystem has become increasingly threatened by centralized school boards (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1998).

On the one hand, if rural communities are losing their young people, and if as a consequence they are becoming less "viable," it could follow that heroic efforts to preserve, not to mention strengthen, local schools within such regions are ill-advised. What is the point of maintaining or enhancing the school in a dying community if the community's condition is utterly terminal?...On the other hand, it is possible that the maintenance of a healthy local school is one means by which rural areas can retain or even

regain their viability. It could follow that state or federal governments are well advised to preserve and strengthen local rural schools as part of a more global commitment to the social and economic welfare of rural America. (Haller and Monk 1992, pp. 48-49)

Residents of Saskatchewan viewed the preservation of extensive local educational services as highly important and contributed tirelessly to support schooling by volunteering services and offering support in other ways (Wotherspoon, 1998). Residents expressed concern that local schools were not able to supply the range of curricular offerings and services available in urban schools.

According to Smithmier (1994) rural students counteract the lack of human and fiscal resources by relying on themselves and each other. In her study she found that the 30 senior students in a small town high school developed a number of strategies to compensate for the lack of direct parent and community involvement. Smithmier observed how the senior class pooled their talents and strengths to create and shape their own educational experiences. They actively cultivated a culture of participation and cooperation as well as a culture of high expectations. For example, at graduation they each prepared "wills and prophecies" to pass on to another classmate. They coached each other and encouraged peers to take more challenging courses such as math and science courses. Senior students in this community actively made the conditions work for them to meet their needs even as they heard the strong message from adults to leave the community for educational and occupational opportunities.

Hedlund and Hine (1995) interviewed rural high school graduates to explore the importance of their relationship with their teachers and their schools. Graduates noted that teachers knew students for a long period of time; students were often

labelled based on their socioeconomic status or locality; and participants often knew teachers outside of school, sometimes as friends of the family. With one exception, all participants mentioned at least one rural teacher who had had a positive influence on their life. Hedlund and Hine noted that although participants discussed personal values that were “rural” in nature, there was no evidence in the interviews that the rural schools promoted the values of rural areas or in any way integrated the local community and locale into the curriculum.

[F]ocusing on place, using the community as a curricular lens, not only contributes to re-creating community, but it will also help realize true school renewal—first by making learning more experiential and therefore more powerful, and second, by providing youths with an ability to understand who they are and how they might be in the world. The more students understand their community and its environs...the more they become invested in that community. (Theobald & Nachtigal, 1995, p. 134)

When students’ sense of self is “ecologically constructed in a dialectical relation to one’s geographical space” (Berry as cited in Snauwaert, 1990) and fostered through the school and community sharing that place (Snauwaert), students are more likely to consider ways to either stay or return to the community. Theobald and Nachtigal also point out that when there are opportunities for being part of the daily life of the community through school related activities, these community experiences may reduce the growing alienation of rural youth. As well, volunteering in the community not only strengthens intrinsic work values, but also fosters self-exploration with respect to values, job interests, and one’s role in the community (Johnson, Beebe, Mortimer, & Snyder, 1998). Furthermore, volunteerism encourages relationships with civic-minded adults and peers, and promotes prosocial norms.

Planning for the future. James Coleman's (1988, 1994) concept of social capital has emerged as an increasingly useful explanation for studying the importance of community and family influences on rural children and youth (Beach, 1996; Chan & Elder, 2001; Israel, Beaulieu, & Hartless, 2001) and their plans for the future (Doebler, 1998).

The terms physical capital and human capital have had wide usage by economists. Physical capital refers to tools, machines and any other productive equipment used to facilitate productivity while human capital refers to the skills and capacities of people that facilitate productive activity. Coleman (1988) maintains that relationships among people constitute a third type of capital resource: social capital. "Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between actors and among actors. It is not lodged either in the actors themselves or in physical implements of production" (p. S98).

Social capital is any aspect of the social structure, including family ties, peer relationships, community involvement through volunteerism etc., that facilitates individual action or the achievement of individual objectives. "Social relationships within the family and the community that generate the attention and time spent by parents and community members in the development of children and youth" (Coleman, 1994, p. 35) provide social capital. Coleman suggests that the commitments, beliefs, and responsibility exemplified in social relations, the possibility of obtaining important information within the relationships, and the norms established within communities are essential for the successful development of youth. Schools, families, and community organizations can play an important role in building and maintaining social capital.

Israel et al. (2001) contend that families and communities are important in helping young people develop the knowledge and skills they need to excel. In fact, they point out that local labour markets act as a catalyst for human capital investments, especially in education. When local labour markets do not provide satisfying and well-paid jobs, the motivation and ability to build social capital is suppressed. When families are economically stressed they are less likely to give their time and resources to their children, to the school, or to community organizations.

According to Chan and Elder (2001), parental social participation shapes young people's social choices. Parents' social ties function as social capital because they connect youth to community culture and encourage participation in community activities. Not only do youth build prosocial skills, they are more likely as adults to become a source of social capital in the community where they live.

Using longitudinal data from a sample of rural Appalachian girls (Doebler, 1998), those participants who possessed higher degrees of family-based and community-based social capital were more likely to go on to post-secondary education, to graduate from high school, and to participate in the workforce as young adults. Participation in extra-curricular school activities, a measure of community-based social capital had the strongest effect on future plans.

Rural schools, community organizations, and rural parents share the responsibility of preparing youth for life choices about careers, post secondary education, and place of residence. Aspirations reflect individuals' ideas of their "possible selves," what they would like to become, what they might become, and what they do not wish to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Realizing aspirations requires the investment of time, energy, and resources—both from the young person

and from others. Conditions in the community interact with the imaginations of students as they realize their aspirations.

...because rural youth have close ties to their traditional rural communities they are confronted with the dilemma of either staying in their rural communities, which do not have an economic base to offer sustaining work, or move away from family and friends in order to succeed in the “modern” world. This pull to remain close to family and friends while at the same time feeling a need to choose an occupation which is congruent with one’s education and training, places enormous stress on the rural youth as he or she makes the transition to adulthood. (Schonert-Reichl, Elliott & Bills, 1993, pp. 6-7)

In their study of adolescents living in a rural Midwestern community, Conger & Elder (1994) found that young women who valued their families were in conflict over leaving their communities in order to obtain work. These young women appeared to make their career-related decisions, such as decisions about further education and relocation, based on how those decisions would affect their relationship with important others. This finding illustrates the assertion made by Markus and Ruvolo (1989) that adolescents’ perceived self roles, or “possible selves”, direct the acquisition of appropriate self-knowledge, the development of plans, and the pursuit of suitable behaviours.

In contrast, Roy (as cited in Canadian Rural Partnership, 2000) found that even if young people could find the job they desired in their rural Quebec community, four out of ten would still want to move to an urban centre. Participants listed a desire to experiment with different life experiences or to accomplish their aspirations as reasons for migrating out of their rural community.

Ley et al. (1996) surveyed students, parents, and teachers in rural Indiana to ascertain the congruence of aspirations of rural youth with expectations held by parents and teachers. All three groups viewed personal qualities such as personal resolve and self-determination as most important to future success. Parents and students listed economic restraints such as the cost of financing postsecondary education and poor economic opportunity, as the most important barriers to obtaining a desired career. Teachers, however, believed that motivation and effort were the cornerstones of success. Connections to family, community, and the land were listed as factors important for successful adulthood by parents and students. Teachers, on the other hand, believed that students would like to live somewhere else yet feared that students would remain in their community. “Increasingly, expressed postsecondary plans may have less to do with that they [students] expect to do after graduation and more to do with what they interpret to be the ‘appropriate’ success model held up by school personnel...” (Elliott, 1987, pp. 26-27). Schools, parents and communities need to assist students in identifying opportunities and goals based on students’ own ideas of what success is (Hull, 1994; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996).

In Canada (Canadian Rural Partnership, 2000), young people living in rural areas are less educated than their urban counterparts. For example, in the 25-29 age category, only 31% of rural residents had post-secondary education in 1996 compared to 46% for those living in urban areas. One reason for the lower level of education in rural youth is that the jobs obtainable in rural communities may demand lower skills than those required by jobs in urban areas. Approximately 48% of employed rural youth are employed in blue-collared occupations compared to 36% of urban youth. For young adults in the 20-29 age category, labour market conditions appear to be more severe in rural communities compared to urban centres. The percentage of

young adults employed on a full-year, full-time basis is 31% in rural areas compared to 50% in urban areas.

In a cross-cultural study with Australian, Israeli, and Finnish adolescents, Nurmi, Seginer, and Poole (1995) discovered that the levels of exploration and commitment concerning future education and occupation varied between urban and rural environments. Higher levels of exploration and commitment were positively associated with high self-esteem and stability of self-concept in urban areas. In rural areas, there was no association between exploration and commitment scores and the stability of self; nor was there any association between levels of exploration and commitment. According to Nurmi et al. lack of educational and employment opportunities in rural areas does not provide a basis for stable and positive self-identity in the occupational domain. In addition to lack of educational and employment opportunities, Nurmi et al. question whether “family traditions, fixed gender roles, and socio-economic status restrict the repertoire of careers and educational opportunities that are available for rural adolescents and, therefore, decrease their possibilities for individual identity work” (p. 233).

Sarigiani et al. (1990) conducted a comparison study of two communities, one a rural, resource-poor community and the other, an affluent suburban community. Rural adolescents had significantly poorer self-images and lower educational aspirations than their suburban counterparts who lived in a community where adults had a higher educational attainment, higher SES, and where greater opportunities and resources were available for youth. Sarigiani et al. noted that rural lower SES adolescent females appeared to be at particular risk.

[T]heir rural status, combined with their lower SES, substantially blocks potential pathways to life satisfaction for resource-poor,

rural females, and this is manifest in part in their poor emotional tone. These problems may persist into adulthood. (Sarigiani, et al., p. 51)

As noted earlier, Hackett and Betz (1981) propose that an individual's perception of occupational choices is influenced by his or her self-efficacy expectations. They cite a restricted range of options and underutilization of abilities as important factors hindering women's career development.

Summary

There is increasing recognition of the role of contextual factors in the study of adolescent development. Aspects of gender, family, peer group, school, community, and socio-economic status are gradually being intertwined into the research, although the research efforts are far from being systematic and integrated. Much of the research on context involves merely asking if there are setting or situation differences on how adolescents behave, develop, or grow. Simple correlation of variables cannot capture the dynamic conception of the individual in continual interaction with multiple dynamic contexts.

It is not sufficient to simply specify aspects of the proximal or distal environments in which adolescents live and link these features to aspects of adolescent functioning without examining the social and psychological processes that mediate these links...The field needs more systematic discussion of basic social-psychological processes, such as imitation, social influence, social comparison, and social referencing. We need to keep in mind that any contextual influence must be mediated through some sort of interpersonal process, and we need to work toward the development of models

that specify what these processes are and how they operate in adolescence (Steinberg, 1995, p. 252).

The relevance of contextual features for understanding adolescent development has been widely accepted (cf. Silbereisen & Todt, 1994). As researchers have become aware of the role that interactions between and among contexts play, an increasing number of contexts have come into focus. However, one often overlooked context is the rural community. "Rural" can imply a variety of life-styles apart from agricultural, and frequently the distinctions in rural contexts are ignored. In an extensive review of the research literature, few studies could be found that focused on female adolescent development within rural communities.

By exploring the ways in which identity formation is a product of the mutual construction of an individual's possible selves and multiple contexts, the present study's conceptual framework is grounded in the constructionist and cultural psychology paradigms. Youth move across their multiple worlds, which are defined in terms of the "cultural knowledge and behaviour found within the boundaries of students' particular families, peer groups, and schools...[E]ach world contains values and beliefs, expectations, actions, and emotional responses familiar to insiders" (Phelan et al., 1991b, p. 53).

Understanding the nature of the relationship between a person's life-career plans and contextual aspects of their world, such as gender and community, challenges not only traditional conceptual frameworks, but also the notion of the independent, internally, consistent, bounded self. The constant interplay among an individual's possible selves and social worlds guarantees that the self-concept is never "finished" developing. Moreover, Erikson's notion that the project of adolescence is to "differentiate" from the contexts of one's childhood and replace these

identifications with new ones becomes problematic when such differentiation involves a painful rending of culture from one's identity. In a complex multi-dimensional society where border crossings between different social worlds are important aspects of adolescents' development, does it still make sense to suggest that an "achieved" adult identity is the product of a rational process of choosing one affiliation over another? It seems more likely that the dominant phenomenon of adolescent life-career development is a blending of the expectations of many social worlds, and a complex and fluid identification with various component selves.

Whether rural or urban, the life-career development process of young women is complex. The life-career development of young women is affected in specific ways by factors such as occupational gender stereotypes, gender-role socialization, and conflicting values around work and family. As well, young women appear to fit their plans, aspirations, and needs to the situations in which they find themselves, and to the expectations they perceive others to have of them. A number of factors in rural communities make the life-career planning process particularly challenging. Young women living in rural communities have limited access to role models and may experience more traditional gender role socialization than their urban counterparts.

The purpose of the present study is designed to explore the ways in which eight young women experience growing up in a rural community and the perceived impact of those sociocultural, educational, and environmental experiences on their life-career development process and plans. The study will extend our understanding of young rural women's life-career development and planning in a number of important ways. Firstly, because of the importance of considering person-context interactions, inquiry will focus on the ways in which each participant interacts with, and experiences her various social worlds within her rural community. Secondly, each

young woman's perception of both the nature and development of her sense of herself and her plans for the future will be explored in order to move toward an understanding of the processes involved in life-career development. Thirdly, as a function of social expectations, developmental experience, and practical constraints, education, training, life plans, and work opportunities come to have a different significance or meaning in the lives of young people. As a key link to young women's expectations, this subjective significance which provides direction for what is valued and how effectively it is pursued, will be addressed. It is hoped that such exploration will lead to a better understanding of the way in which these young women interpret, as well as shape, the direction and content of their life-career development. It is also hoped that such exploration will increase participants' self-understanding of their rural experience.

CHAPTER 3

Laying the Groundwork for Understanding Narratives: Method and Analysis

Organization of the Chapter

The development of a research lens, method, and design are the focus of this chapter. The chapter is divided into four main sections beginning with the development of an “authentic” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) methodology. This portion of the chapter includes an explication of my rural experience and preconceptions and the knowledge acquired from the pilot study. The second section provides a rationale for and description of the research methods. Ethnographic methods and narrative psychology are blended to form the research methodology. A description of the five phases of the research process, including site selection, selection of participants, interviewing procedures, and the process of analysis, are provided in the third section. The fourth section is a consideration of the ethical issues and criteria used in evaluating the study.

Developing an Authentic Methodology

My intent was to come to this study with the spirit of what Jerome Bruner (1990) has called “open-mindedness.” By this he refers to:

...a willingness to construe knowledge and values from multiple perspectives without loss of commitment to one’s own values...

It demands that we be conscious of how we come to our knowledge and as conscious as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. It asks that we be accountable for how and what we

know. But it does not insist that there is only one way of constructing meaning, or one right way. (Bruner, p. 30)

Analysis of qualitative data requires that researchers continuously take account of their interpretive process and check these vigilantly against the data to ensure that the understandings generated have their basis in the participants' experience as much as possible (Lincoln, 1995; Manning, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). This reflexive stance is a "process of self-reference" that requires continual "turning back on oneself" (Davies, 1999, p. 4). Issues of reflexivity are especially relevant for ethnographic research because the researcher is closely involved in the culture of participants (Davies). It is only through awareness of preconceptions of the phenomena under investigation that researchers are able to monitor their effect on the process of inquiry. Therefore, this discussion begins with my experience of self as a rural resident and my preconceptions of young women's experience of growing up in a rural community.

Researcher's Context

As I reflect on my experience as a young rural resident, four themes emerge which represent aspects of my sense of self: feeling different, attachment to nature, lacking in skills, and feeling part of the community. The first theme, characterized by my self-perceptions in late childhood and adolescence, is feeling different from other children. As a young girl I spent much of the year at my family's fishing resort. When children and their families arrived to spend a week or two living in "rustic and primitive" conditions, my family's lifestyle was often a topic of laughter and criticism. When I later attended school in a large city, the feeling of being an outsider was even stronger.

My strong ties with nature, the second theme, also set me apart from most urban children. I was very attuned to the different smells in my world—how poplar forests smelled in the spring compared to the smell of birch groves or how the smell of swamp muck compared to clay. I was used to the quietness of my surroundings. I was aware of a variety of bird calls. I recognized their patterns of flight. I identified animal tracks and knew the paths that animals frequented through the forests. I was familiar with tadpoles' development in sheltered bodies of water. School, on the other hand, was crowded with foreign smells and sights. I did not recognize the patterns of other's behaviour; there was little that was familiar. My connection with nature continues to be a dominant theme in my life. I raised my children "close to nature" and incorporated outdoor education into the curriculum at the school where I taught.

Throughout my adolescent years, I believed that I was lacking in skills. Not until my mid-twenties did I appreciate my skills and strengths. Running a hobby farm, growing large gardens, baking bread, milking cows, building chicken houses and barns, making everything from scratch, cleaning cabins, making ends meet, and helping neighbours when they needed an extra hand were all skills that I had learned as a rural resident. I value my ability to be self-reliant. The skills and strengths that I acquired were passed on to my children.

The fourth theme, feeling part of the rural community, was also a significant feature of my rural adult life. Setting up a food cooperative for several small communities was one of my first endeavours as an adult. By ordering in bulk, rural families were able to cut their food bills by half. I incorporated rural skills into the activities I led as a Girl Guide leader. Later I became instrumental in developing a small alternative school.

During my years as a teacher I based much of my curriculum around the rural community. Through school activities, students learned how to be part of the community by visiting nursing homes with home baked goods, by picking up litter in parks, or by volunteering to help a family in need (for instance, by doing yard work).

During a practicum at the Counselling Centre at the University of Victoria, I met a number of students from small communities. Many of them felt lonely, insecure, and questioned whether they should return to their home community where there was support and a sense of belonging. Their concerns seemed similar to my reactions as a teenager whenever I moved from a rural community to an urban community. I wanted to make sense of their experience and in turn make sense of my experience as a rural resident.

Researcher's Preconceptions

Several of my preconceptions about young women's experience of growing up in a rural community, while consistent with research outcomes on rural adolescents, seem intuitively correct because they reflect the themes that characterize my personal experience. The following represent such preconceptions:

1. Adolescents growing up in rural areas face different career issues and hold some different values than adolescents growing up in larger centres. Rural youth have a stronger work ethic, and are drawn to "hands on" activities such as construction.
2. Urban dwellers and scholars view rurality as deficient rather than as different.
3. Rural adolescents have many skills and strengths to draw on that may not be recognized by them or professionals who work with rural residents.

4. Rural youth feel conflicted between staying in their community or leaving to take advantage of occupational and educational opportunities. They form close bonds across and within a number of social contexts: school, church, community groups, family, and peers.

5. Rural women participate actively in the rural labour market, often through home-based and community activities and through the bartering of services. Bartering plays an important part in making ends meet in rural communities.

6. Although many rural young women have practical skills such as in milking, sewing, bush-work, and building, they de-value these skills in the face of media representations of what is gender appropriate.

7. The most serious issue facing rural youth is the abuse of alcohol and drugs in their community. Substance abuse includes the use and abuse of drugs and alcohol by adults who are important in the lives of adolescents.

8. Rural communities lack adequate community resources for dealing with social issues such as depression, family violence, substance abuse, suicide, and teen pregnancy.

After examining my personal preconceptions about rural living, and comparing my experience to the literature, I turned my attention to the important task of conducting a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to assist me in modifying my conceptual framework, to apprise me of any potential problems with the interview questions, and to suggest optional approaches and design (Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Maxwell, 1996).

Pilot Study

The 1998 pilot study (Shepard & Marshall, 1999) was conducted in a different community than the current research project. Eight adolescent girls, aged 17 to 19, who lived in the southern British Columbia were interviewed individually for approximately 1.5 hours each. The interview guide included four broad questions: (a) What has it been like growing up in a rural community? (b) How do you see your future unfolding with regard to work, relationships, and education? (c) When you think about your plans for the future, how has growing up in a rural community affected those plans? (d) How would you name and describe your different selves? When describing their life-career plans, participants were encouraged to draw a conceptual map as a way to visually indicate the importance of certain features in their lives, as well as the relationships among different aspects (Cahill & Martland, 1994; Peavy, 1998). The young women described currently held selves and future selves using a mapping procedure previously developed and tested by Shepard and Marshall (1999) based on a paper and pencil measure developed by Cross & Markus (1991).

The experience of undertaking the pilot study helped me to refine my dissertation research in a number of ways. Participants identified friends, family, school, and leisure activities as important social worlds. When discussing their futures, the young women spoke of information and resources available in their community, described their future plans, and articulated their sense of self. The concepts of multiple worlds and intentional selves (Shweder, 1990) from cultural psychology were added to the constructivist framework in the current study.

The young women identified themselves with the “traditional rural values” of a strong work ethic, a strong sense of responsibility for upholding their family name, and a willingness to care for others in their community (Hedlund, 1993; Hine & Hedlund, 1994). Their strong sense of community led me to consider adding cultural psychology to my constructivist framework because the young women seemed to make sense of themselves through their interactions with their social environment.

The six metathemes that emerged from the data (attached and supported; people to look up to; being disregarded; valuing self; attachment to the environmental setting; and limited opportunity, information and contacts) pointed to a strong sense of connection to the community. Participants provided not only stories of their experience, including point of view and voice, but also talked about their experiences as embedded in their community. A combination of ethnographic and narrative methods seemed appropriate for viewing individuals as embedded in some cultural place and for accessing the multiple worlds that participants construct, interpret and live in.

The experience of carrying out a pilot study led me to make changes to the interview format. Participants reported that the two mapping procedures were an effective way to anchor their thoughts. Since I wanted participants to talk of “who they are in this community”, I believed that a visual display would facilitate this process. Therefore, a photographic essay was added to the dissertation methodology as a way for participants to construct an “imaged narrative” (Barry, 1996, p. 419). Realizing that participants would need time to construct a visual display, I added a second interview in which to discuss the display and to respond to the first transcript. I anticipated that I would need to spend at least six weeks in the community.

A number of participants expressed curiosity about the views of others in the study. Therefore, I included an optional closure/feedback group in the dissertation study as a way to present themes emerging across the interviews, to receive feedback on the themes and the study itself, and to allow participants opportunities to share their experiences and reactions with other study members.

Yet again in response to feedback from participants, I made two changes to the interview questions in my dissertation study. I asked participants to consider what they had done in the course of thinking about and planning for the future. In addition, I facilitated their thinking about the effects of their community on their future plans by asking them to think about the beliefs, skills, and attitudes that have been developed while growing up in the community.

Because I anticipated longer and more detailed self-descriptions over two interviews, I developed an “Analysis Guide”, adapted from L. Brown (1988) to assist me in reading the texts. This “way of reading” is based on the idea that a person, represented in the interview text by their narrative, speaks in different voices. The intent was to take six readings of the transcripts: grasping the whole, who I am, myself in relation, rural discourse, goal-directed and action-oriented statements, and future orientation. However, I found it difficult to separate the different voices that often seemed to overlap. Instead I modified the approach by taking “snapshots” as described under the section on analysis.

In the following section, ethnographic and narrative research practices will be described and the rationale for blending the two methods will be outlined.

Blending of Research Methods

As Nelson, Treichler, & Grossberg (1992) point out, the “choice of research practices depends upon the questions that are asked, and the questions depend on their context” (p. 2). In order to answer my central research question, “How do rural adolescent girls’ perceptions of self and future plans develop within the context of their community?” a combination of two approaches, ethnography and narrative seemed necessary. Ethnography refers to the writing of others (Van Loon, 2001) and is “grounded in a commitment to the first-hand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting” (Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland & Lofland, 2001). Narrative inquiry provides the researcher with “access to the textual interpretive world of the teller, which ...mediates or manages reality” (Cortazzi, 2001, p. 385). Narrative is now seen by ethnographers as one of the fundamental ways of accessing participants’ understandings of their experiences within their communities (Atkinson et al., 2001).

Denzin & Lincoln (2000) appropriated the word “bri-coleur” to describe the researcher who borrows from many different disciplines and methods.

Qualitative research is an interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and sometimes counterdisciplinary field. It crosscuts the humanities and the social and physical sciences. Qualitative research is many things at the same time. It is multiparadigmatic in focus. Its practitioners are sensitive to the value of the multimethod approach. They are committed to the naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience. (Denzin & Lincoln, p. 7)

Ethnography and Culture

Traditionally ethnographers searched for coherent, plausible patterns in the innumerable behaviours and ideas that distinguish a group of people. Identity and culture, self and other were seen as discrete, integral, and stable concepts (Conquergood, 1991). This view of culture highlights commonalities in patterns while overlooking processes of change, disharmony, and dissensions. If culture is viewed as a set of shared meanings, then “zones of difference” (Rosaldo, 1989, p. 45) within and between cultures become difficult to study. “If ethnography once imagined it could describe discrete cultures, it now contends with boundaries that crisscross over a field at once fluid and saturated with power” (Rosaldo, p. 45). Researchers instead turned their attention to borderlands that appear not only at the boundaries of conventionally accepted cultural units, but also at informal intersections, such as those of gender, age, status, and distinctive life experiences (Rosaldo).

We live in both/and worlds full of paradox and uncertainty where close inspection turns unities into multiplicities, clarities into ambiguities, univocal simplicities into polyvocal complexities. As but one example, upon closer inspection, “women” become fragmented, multiple, and contradictory both across and within individuals. (Riley, as cited in Lather, 1991, p. xvi)

The epistemological effect of dismissing ideas of fixed centres and unified wholes with notions of borderlands and zones of difference requires a reformulation of culture. For example, in *Typical Girls?*, Christine Griffin (1985) researched a group of young working class women who were making the transition from school into the job market in England. She found that selves and culture did not seem to be independent entities; rather

the boundaries were blurred. She brought to light the fact that there were no “typical girls”. Instead she underscored the ongoing, complex interactions between the simultaneous points of transition in labour, marriage, and sexual marketplaces which the working class girls in her study had to negotiate.

Ethnography, then, is rooted in the concept of culture. “Ethnography generates or builds theories of cultures or explanations of how people think, believe, and behave--that are situated in local time and space” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 8).

Ethnographic Assumptions

Prus (1994) set forth several assumptions that ethnographers hold as they study human lived experience.

1. Ethnographic inquiry assumes that humans hold many perspectives. “[P]eople are seen to operate in versions of multiple realities which they share...with others at an intersubjective level” (p. 18).

2. People have the ability to self-reflect. They develop this awareness through their interactions with others and through their ability to see themselves as others see them. The possession of reflectivity makes possible personal agency and intentionality.

3. Human life is influenced by others. “[N]otions of co-operation, competition, conflict, and compromise are recognized as central to human interaction... (p. 19).

4. People are entrenched in a community of other people. Everyday life is made meaningful through and is shaped by the relationships one has with others. “Definitions of objects, definitions of self, and negotiations of reality (including language) all depend on...embeddedness in a community of others” (p.19).

5. Lived experiences are continual and evolving and, therefore, all aspects of human life should be viewed as emergent.

Negotiation ... assume[s] a processual dimension as people define situations (and selves), work out tentative lines of action, make indications to others, interpret the indications of others, and make ensuing adjustments in the form of subsequent definitions, plans, and indications (p. 19).

What is Ethnographic Research?

Six characteristics of ethnographic research are widely accepted (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Prus, 1994; Stewart, 1998).

1. Ethnographic studies involve fieldwork or prolonged involvement in participants' settings. With more time, the researcher acquires deeper contextual understanding about relationships and the "culture." Prolonged engagement in the field can stimulate new meaning-making. Disconfirming observations are investigated (Fetterman, 1998; Stewart; Weisner, 1996).

2. The engagement of the self is basic to the conduct of fieldwork. Maintaining the researcher self requires not only sensitive and reflective involvement with respondents, but also requires a kind of self-conscious engagement with the research process (Lather, 2001; LeCompte, Schensul, Weeks, & Singer, 1999; Stewart, 1998; Wasserfall, 1997). The production of ethnography is a self-reflexive process that "takes into account the subtle demands of making sense of others' conduct as well as one's own" (Manning, 1995, p. 250).

3. Ethnographic research takes a holistic approach in that the data are comprehensive and arrived at through a number of data sources, including participant observation, interviews, photographs, etc. (Stewart, 1998; Weisner, 1996). “Immersion within a particular setting leads the ethnographer to see linkages among various strands in holistic—that is, comprehensive—data” (Stewart, p. 7).

4. Ethnographic work is sensitive to context (Brunt, 2001; LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Prus, 1994; Stewart, 1998). “This orientation can help the fieldworker discover the interrelationships among the various systems and subsystems in a community... generally through an emphasis on the contextualization of data (Fetterman, 1998, p. 19).

5. Ethnographies present detailed portrayal and analysis of participants’ points of view (Fetterman, 1998; Prus, 1994; Stewart, 1998). “An emic perspective [or insider’s perspective of reality] compels the recognition and acceptance of multiple realities (Fetterman, p. 20).

6. Results of an ethnographic study should generate new concepts that were not present before the research was undertaken (Stewart, 1998). Ethnographic research is “inductive; that is, local theories are constructed for testing and adapting them for use both locally and elsewhere” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p. 1).

What is Narrative Inquiry?

The term narrative is used quite freely in qualitative research (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zolber, 1998; Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 1993). Part of the confusion lies in the fact that the term narrative refers to “both phenomenon and method. Narrative names the structured quality of experience

to be studied and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 416).

As a phenomenon, narrative can be understood as a way of describing the phenomena of human experience. Human beings are storytelling people “who individually and socially lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.2). The narrative structure displays intention and direction in human affairs and makes human lives understandable as wholes (Polkinghorne, 1988). Narrative ordering “operates by linking diverse happenings along a temporal dimension...it serves to cohere human actions and the events that affect human life into a temporal gestalt (Polkinghorne, p. 18).

An important characteristic of narrative is its embeddedness in history, culture, relationships, and language (Collin & Young, 1992). Cochran (1990) used the phrase “holistic construction” to capture the ability of narrative to connect to and make sense of context.

To make sense of the self in context and to be able to express that sense to others, the individual constructs a narrative in which events are connected to one another in relation to self and to others within a structure that integrates the parts into a whole and gives coherence and direction through time. (Collin & Young, p. 9)

Narrative as a method refers to the result of the process or the stories that are told. “Narrative is the representation of process, of a self in conversation with itself and with its world over time” (Josselson, 1995, p. 33). The role of language is crucial in the construction of meaning. “Linguistic forms...filter and organize information from the physical and the cultural realms and transform it into meanings that make up human knowledge and experience” (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 158). Language facilitates the

organization of information into meaningful constructions out of which our sense of self and our agency in the world emerge. The storied narrative is “the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.7).

Clandinin & Connelly (2000) understand narrative inquiry as defined by a three-dimensional space. “Studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (p. 50). Narrative inquirers are mindful of the numerous, layered narratives in action in their inquiry space. “They imagine narrative intersections, and they anticipate possible narrative threads emerging” (p. 70).

During adolescence, the cognitive tools necessary for constructing life stories develop (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). In order to construct a narrative, Habermas and Bluck maintain that four types of coherence are necessary: temporal coherence, concept of biography, causal coherence, and thematic coherence. Temporal coherence provides a chronological order to the narrative. The concept of biography is the term used to describe “the normative cultural notion of the facts and events that should be included in life narratives (e.g., birth, affiliations with and transition from family, institutions, and geographic locations)” (p. 750). Causal coherence involves not only the ability to connect events and to relate events one to another, but also involves the ability to describe

variations in values and beliefs or personality as a result of life-changing events.

Thematic coherence is established by delineating patterns among various life events and by the capacity to summarize multiple episodes. Thematic coherence involves awareness of “inferential processes used to interpret and reconstruct the past” (p. 759).

Field notes of the shared experience, journal records, in-depth interviews and transcripts, metaphors, and photographic essays, etc. are important narrative data sources (Mishler, 1986). Field texts or journals help researchers to “become fully involved...[to] ‘fall in love’ with their participants” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81) and “to ‘slip in and out’ of the experience being studied” (p. 82). The recorded reflections of events, activities, attitudes, and feelings solidify specific moments in the narrative inquiry space. “Our field texts of that day, unchanged by the passing years, uninfluenced by intervening experiences and memories, may show a more complex, perhaps even different, picture of the day’s events” (p. 83).

Narratives occur in the field when participants are asked for life stories about a life experience of importance to them (Chase, 1995). Such stories can be facilitated by asking open-ended questions, for example, “What is it like growing up here?” The open-ended question invites respondents to make sense of and to communicate their experience of living in their community.

Social processes can be understood through the analysis of narratives produced during data collection. The life story or the “the story we tell about our life” (Goodson, 1992, p. 6) can be examined by considering:

the ways in which culture marks, shapes, and/or constrains this narrative; and the ways in which this narrator makes use of cultural resources and struggles with

cultural constraints. By analyzing the complex process of narration in specific instances, we learn about the kinds of narratives that are possible for certain groups of people, and we learn about the cultural world that makes their particular narratives possible—and problematic—in certain ways. (Chase, 1995, p. 20)

The various procedures for reading, analyzing and interpreting narrative material gained through the data collection methods will be outlined under the section “Process of Analysis” later in Chapter Three.

Combining Ethnography and Narrative Approaches

Several researchers (Atkinson, 1992; E. M. Bruner, 1997; Cortazzi, 2001; Fisher, 1997; Maines, 1993; Richardson, 1995) have noted connections between narrative psychology and ethnographic practices. With the re-emergence of ethnography as a method of inquiry in a variety of disciplines (Hughes, 1992), ethnographers turned their attention to questions of how to deal with participants’ own representations of their worlds (cf. Atkinson, 1992; Van Maanen, 1988). Participants were viewed as “active interpreters who construct their realities through talk, and interaction, stories, and narrative” (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). A careful examination of the topics, content, context, and recounting of narratives told by participants in an ethnographic study should give researchers admittance to narrators’ perceptions of significant events in their lives, communities, or cultural contexts (Cortazzi). “Human beings....are story-telling animals. It is narratives, along with the values they prescribe, that form the basis of communities large and small, and thereby define who we are” (Hinchman & Hinchman, p. 238, 1997).

In the present study, the use of ethnographic practices (prolonged fieldwork, engagement of self in the research process, the use of multiple data collection strategies, and sensitivity to context) gave me a first-hand look at the multiple worlds that young rural women construct, interpret, and live in. The use of narrative practices helped me to understand the young women's meaning-making processes. I obtained local narratives that were embedded in the lived experience of the young women being studied (Atkinson, 1992; Daly, 1997). "To call everyday experience a story is to acknowledge the presence of temporality, order, shared language, and experiential boundaries in the way that people account for their lives" (Daly, p. 355).

Research Procedures

In-depth interviews were conducted with eight participants and involved (a) the possible selves interview, (b) community life-space mapping, (c) the photo-elicitation interview and (d) an optional group closure/feedback session. As well, data collection included informal interactions, interviews with other community members, and observations that occurred through a prolonged stay in the community.

Multiple data collection strategies allowed the young women to approach their experience in different ways and to take alternate narrative positions. For example, participants talked from a future-oriented position in the possible selves interview whereas in the photo-elicitation interview participants tended to speak from a past and present orientation. While completing the community life-space mapping, participants used different descriptors for the various roles they played in the community. Anita

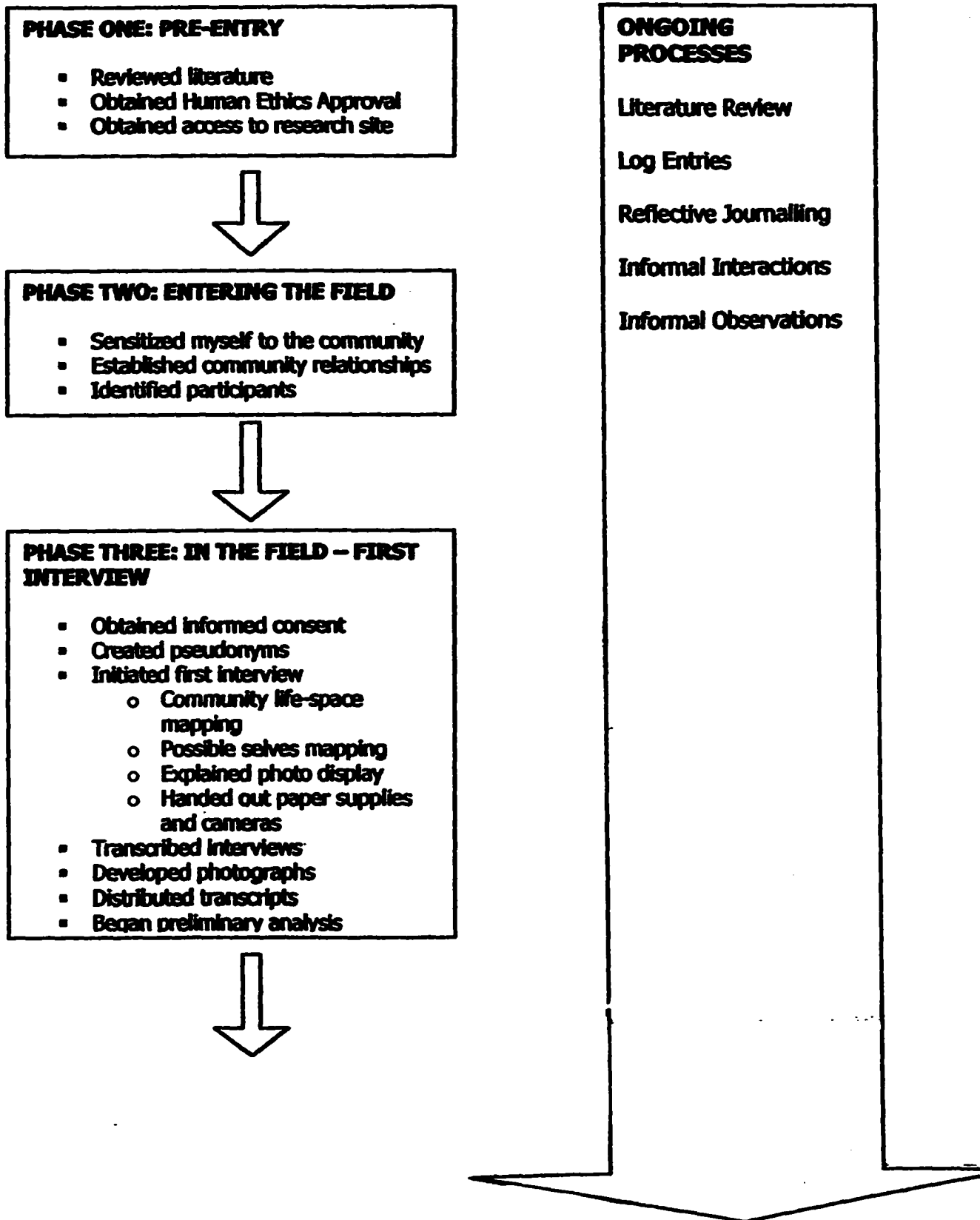
described the “daughter” self as responsible, the “friend” self as a good listener, and the “partier” self as wild and crazy.

There were five phases to the research process (Figure 1): (a) Pre-entry, (b) Entering the Field, (c) In the Field (First Interview and Second Interview) (d) Leaving the Field and (e) Process of Analysis. Each phase will be described in detail in the following sections.

Phase One: Pre-entry

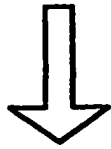
Prior to entering the field, I read through the literature on rural adolescents, reflected on prior rural experiences in a journal and tracked procedures and contacts in my field log. An important component of the research process was spending time reflecting on my understanding of self as a researcher.

Reflexivity. Since the “interpretive turn” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Geertz, 1988) in the social sciences, ethnographers have become concerned with the on-going relationship between interviewer and interviewee. The concern with relationship emphasizes one of the identifying characteristics of ethnographic interviewing—the considerable time invested in developing, through recurring contacts and multiple interviews, a genuine relationship with participants (Heyl, 2001). The term reflexivity refers to the practice of appreciating and acknowledging “the interconnections and mutual influence between the researcher and those being researched” (p. 377). Michelle Fine (1994) calls for researchers to “work the hyphen” between self and other in an exploration of “how we are in relation with the contexts we study and with our informants, understanding that we are all multiple in those relations” (p. 72).

Figure 1. RESEARCH PROCESS

PHASE THREE: IN THE FIELD—SECOND INTERVIEW

- Initiated second interview
 - Obtained informed consent
 - Reviewed initial interview transcript
 - Obtained consent to use photo displays in research
 - Initiated photo-elicitation interview
 - Invited participants to closure/feedback group
- Continued transcribing
- Continued preliminary analysis



PHASE FOUR: LEAVING THE FIELD

- Group closure/feedback
 - Shared representative object
 - Presented preliminary themes
- Received four poems
- Verified second transcript with participants



PHASE FIVE: PROCESS OF ANALYSIS

- Snapshot Reading
- Life-Course Graph Reading
- Emotional Charge Reading
- Themes and Metathemes Reading
- Distributed each analysis to participants
- Wrote up the research
- Notified participants upon completion

ONGOING PROCESSES

Literature Review

Log Entries

Reflective Journalling

Informal Interactions

Informal Observations

Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest that rather than seeking to objectify or minimize personal involvement, the researcher should rely upon the development of the relationship with the participant as the foundation of the co-construction process.

The goal is to achieve some empathy, but not so much involvement that you cannot see the negative things, or if you see them, feel that you cannot report them. A second goal is to learn to go for balance rather than neutrality, that is, you should ask about multiple sides of a story, questioning each interviewee with intensity and empathy. That means that you may have to learn to empathize with different and conflicting points of view... (p. 13).

As an example of conflicting points of view, in the first interview, Josée discusses the hurt she experienced at the hands of her friends when she became a Christian. In the second interview, Josée describes a time when she severed a friendship because her friends' family did not live according to Christian values. I listened empathically to both points of view and also questioned Josée about "being hurt" and about "hurting others."

In the present research project, a reflexive posture incorporated the circular process of examining my own ideas and perspectives that originally focused my view and later re-examining those ideas and perspectives in light of what the research experience had started to reveal. I incorporated a number of strategies into my research process: maintaining a log; keeping a journal; creating reflexive accounts of my thoughts, reactions, hunches, and theoretical biases; and soliciting the aid of participants to review transcripts for omissions and misunderstandings. I kept a journal for recording personal reactions to participants, my participation in the research process, and for reflecting on my rural experiences.

I find myself questioning the use of pseudonyms. Here I am attempting to focus on context by living in the community, highlighting the various social worlds that participants engage in—trying to make sense of their experiences and relations with others—yet at the same time by obscuring their identities, I am masking the way that multiple selves are interactively built up by individuals through their participation in multiple worlds. Lyn, Josée, and Anita challenged me on the idea of anonymity when we ran into each other yesterday. Who would have thought that I would be having such a thought-provoking discussion about ethics with my participants! They want their names to appear in full because they want to be heard—and so often they feel not heard in their community. What a challenge as a researcher. I haven't read about this topic. It seems automatic—confidentiality is important and no one seems to question it. Yet how do you respect participant's wishes at the same time? June 8, 1999

During Phase One: Pre-entry, I began writing about my research concerns, rural experience, thoughts, and insights in my research journal.

My vision of rural has never been of the "serene idyllic existence." I think of rural as wilderness when I think of British Columbia. My mind moves to dichotomies: wilderness versus cultivation, rural versus urban, past versus present, natural versus artificial, rustic, peaceful, serene, tranquil and domestic versus awe-inspiring, untamed, wild and undomesticated. I wonder how the young women will see their community? March 14, 1999.

I also created a log to document meetings, contacts, phone numbers and transcription procedures.

Met a graduate student who previously lived in the southern interior of BC. She made several suggestions as possible locations for my research. I was very surprised when she phoned with two phone numbers of friends who lived in a small town. I followed up by phoning the first number and was told, "Love to have you!" I thought the selection of a research site would be a difficult step! The town seems to fit the definition of rural by Stats Canada and yet seems far enough away from a city to be considered "rural." March 6, 1999.

I received approval for the research from Human Research Ethics Committee and I made arrangements to board in two different homes for four weeks each. There was an extra room in each of the homes to use as office space.

Setting. The name of the village is fictitious, changed to protect the privacy of the many residents who opened their doors to me and who offered their stories. As several mountains and towns in the area are named after Scandinavian gods, I chose to name the village, Asgard, abode of the gods, to acknowledge the beauty of the setting. Asgard (pop. 1063) was chosen for the research site because it is the business centre for a number of small towns (area pop. 2500). Asgard is a self-contained community right on the lake about 50 minutes away by car from a town of 10,000. Snow-capped mountains can be seen in all directions. A number of services are available in town: hospital, ambulance, RCMP station, library, seven churches, bank, credit union, grocery store, laundromat, four restaurants, pub, cultural centre including a small theatre, arena, a small college extension, counselling and family services, and various Provincial and Municipal government services.

The recently built school serves over four hundred kindergarten to grade 12 students from around the region. Students who live north of the town attend elementary school in their local community until the end of grade 7 and then are bussed to Asgard. Those students who live south of the town attend Asgard's school starting in Kindergarten. Students have opportunities to travel outside the town on yearly band trips to the United States, to drama festivals, and to sport activities.

During my walks around town, I noticed young people sitting on the steps of the pub, drinking coffee with friends in the restaurant on Main Street, gathering on the beach near the park, taking solitary walks along the river, and sitting on the verandah of the convenience store in the evening. On Sundays, the cultural centre provides a place for

community members to play music, to recite poems and to display their art. Young people sometimes arrive in small groups to participate.

The streets of Asgard are immaculate, with an abundance of Victorian architecture that echoes back to the days of the British empire. I noted a number of alternative healing options (eg., Thai massage, healing with herbal medicines, Reflexus Holistic Therapy) in the area and was happily surprised to find a natural food store on Main Street.

During my stay in Asgard, I saw no aboriginal people. I was told that the area had only been used for vision quests and for hunting game and gathering fruit. Several local residents told me that the area was an “energy vortex” probably due to the crystals under the lake. According to their story, the energy in the area was too powerful for people to stay year-long. As one young person explained, “You can’t go on a vision quest forever. You need to get on with life.”

A school portable, overlooking the lake, serves as the Youth Centre for “up-the-lakers” and Asgard youth. Apparently, the Asgard and Area Youth Society has struggled for several years to obtain support and participation from the village. The aim of the Youth Centre is to provide a supportive and non-judgemental environment with opportunities to enhance the skills and self-esteem of youth. Several stumbling blocks such as wheelchair access and sewage disposal have prevented the Youth Centre from opening. One plan is to establish a Youth Employment and Skills Centre to enrich and broaden youth abilities in finding or creating work for themselves in the future.

Asgard relies on forestry and tourism for its economic base. A Youth Theatre Company entertains tourists with street theatre and Shakespeare in the Park. The annual

Spring Festival is a family-oriented activity involving logger sports, parades, dances, and the crowning of the Spring Queen and Princess. Youth from nearby towns flood into Asgard for beach parties that last until dawn. A father of three adolescent girls described the Spring Festival as a “spring rite” or “maybe a big mating ritual.” An outdoor wilderness adventure and travel business offers youth camps that combine mountaineering, life skills, leadership techniques, and safety evaluation.

Phase Two: Entering the Field

In early May 1999, I travelled to Asgard and met with my two “sponsors” (Prus, 1994). I allowed myself a week to sensitize myself to the community (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995) and to develop an awareness of the “ethnographic background” within which the interviews would be embedded. Throughout the first week I collected newspaper articles, photographs, pamphlets, business cards, and other material to form a scrapbook as a means of immersing myself in the community (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) and as a way of revisiting the community when I left. I was also introduced to a number of residents through a “welcome to the community” barbecue put on by my sponsors.

In the second week of the study, I interviewed “encultured informants” (Spradley, 1979, p. 47) or individuals who could tell me about the setting and who knew the culture well. The interviews with two employers and the vice-principal of the school provided me with background information about school programs, organizations, resources, and employment possibilities.

Selection of participants. Qualitative inquiry requires a small number of participants who can provide the information needed to answer the research questions

(Patton, 1990). I was introduced to almost all the current grade 12 female students through parents that I met at the barbecue. Letters of contact (Appendix A) and a statement of understanding for parents were handed out to young women who displayed an interest in the study. During the second week, I set up appointments to meet with possible participants to explain the research study in detail to them and to describe their role throughout the three stages of the study. The young women, in turn described their understanding of the research relationship, their interest in taking part in the study, and their ability to “inform” me of their experience.

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990) was the specific strategy employed for selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. The eight informants were chosen from a group of 15 because they had lived in the area for a minimum of eight years. Participants were also chosen on the basis of their place of residence within the district. Three of the participants lived in smaller communities outside of Asgard. Participants were Euro-Canadian with the exception of one participant who was Asian-Canadian. Participants were asked to create a pseudonym that would be used throughout the study to protect their identity.

During the selection process, I spoke about my rural experiences and assumptions with potential participants. Participants were encouraged to become involved in the research process by posing new questions and ideas. For instance, one participant suggested that I find a participant to walk with around the town as way to “get her to talk about what it’s been like here for her.” Participants also suggested that each of them pose a question, sentence starter, or scenario for other participants to respond to during the group closure/feedback session.

Phase Three: In the Field -- First Interview

Participants read and signed a letter of information and consent (Appendix B), took part in an individual interview, drew a conceptual map, and completed the possible selves mapping interview. Each of the data collection strategies is described in detail.

In-depth interviewing. The core data collection strategy used in the present research project was the in-depth interview, a qualitative research technique common to both narrative and ethnographic research (Heyl, 2001; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The interviewer listens carefully to the words used by the interviewee, to the nonverbal cues, to the emotional tone, and carefully notes key words, ideas and themes. The intent is to “hear the meaning of what is being said” (Rubin & Rubin, p. 7). The interviewee is encouraged to elaborate, provide examples, and to discuss situations at length (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Rubin & Rubin).

Kvale (1996) uses the traveller metaphor to describe the in-depth interview process.

The interviewer wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects [sic] to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converses with them.... What the traveling reporter hears and sees is described qualitatively and is reconstructed as stories to be told to the people of the interviewer’s own country, and possibly also to those with whom the interviewer wandered. (p. 4)

Holstein and Gubrium (1995) view the interview process as active and creative. “Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter” (p. 4). An active orientation encourages shifts in position so as to explore

alternate perspectives and sources of knowledge. “[T]he respondent becomes a kind of researcher in his or her own right, consulting repertoires of experience and orientations, linking fragments into patterns, and offering “theoretically” coherent descriptions, accounts, and explanations” (p. 29).

After obtaining informed consent, seven of the eight initial individual interviews were audiotaped in the sponsor’s home with the exception of one interview that was conducted in the participant’s home. Interviews lasted about two hours on average. In order to obtain narrative complexity, the interview format needed to be sufficiently flexible to respond to the organization and diversity of meaning being conveyed by each respondent. New questions and discussion items were added as the interviewee focused on topics of importance or interest to her. Therefore, an interview guide was followed rather than a set of specific questions worded precisely the same for each respondent.

Interview Guide

1. What has it been like for you growing up in this community?
2. The construction of concept maps gives you an opportunity to reflect on the key concepts or big ideas concerning the influence of this community on you. Begin by brainstorming the major influences on your life and elaborate on your ideas.
3. As you are getting closer to finishing high school, you are probably thinking about your future. Think about how you see your future unfolding with regard to each of the influences on your map.
4. What have you done in the course of thinking about and planning for the future?
5. What beliefs has this community taught you?

6. When you think about your plans for the future, how has growing up in this community affected those plans?

Probes were used to obtain additional information. For example, all participants were asked, “What has it been like for you growing up in this community?” One participant responded to the question by stating the community was like a family that took care of each other. I followed up by asking, “How did they (community members) take care of you?” Open-ended questions open up possibilities and encourage narrative accounts (Riessman, 1993). Closer focus can occur subsequently via follow-up questions.

On completion the interview was summarized and participants were asked to clarify and verify my understanding. Participants were encouraged to ask questions, to pose new questions, to make suggestions, and to shut off the tape recorder when they wanted to say something “off the record.” Six of the eight respondents shut the tape recorder off once during the first interview.

Community life-space mapping. Constructivists emphasize the importance of expressing one’s understanding of reality in a number of ways (Peavy, 1998). Life-space mapping can be used to discern how individuals make meaning of their world by promoting dialogue that can uncover personal meanings and underlying assumptions, opinions, and values rooted within the relationships of the parts of the map (Peavy). The mapping procedure includes connecting ideas and patterns in a systematic fashion and using drawings, words, colours, and thickness of lines to identify meanings. In particular, the community life-space map emphasizes relational as well as cultural factors as important aspects of a participant’s context.

As a first step, participants were asked to put their name in a circle somewhere on the page. Participants were then encouraged to think about important influences in their current lives and to elaborate on each influence. Family members, school, peers, jobs, boyfriends, school trips, leisure activities, and mentors were mentioned most frequently. As the last step, participants were asked to think about how they saw their future unfolding with regard to each influence and to continue to put their ideas on the map. See Appendix C for an example of a community life-space map.

Possible Selves Mapping Interview. The Possible Selves Mapping Interview (PSMI) was developed from previous research with young adolescents, aged 11 to 13 (Shepard & Marshall, 1999). The PSMI is an adaptation of Cross and Markus' (1991) paper and pencil adult measure of possible selves. The questions used by Cross and Markus were put into an interview format, which was considered more appropriate to engage and interest the age group.

The PSMI is divided into three sections: Introduction, Exercise and Debriefing. The Introduction familiarizes participants with the concept of possible selves by using examples of hoped-for and feared selves that are relevant to this age group. In the Exercise section, participants are asked to respond to the prompts, "Think about what you hope to become" and "Think about what you fear, dread, or don't want for yourself." Hoped-for selves are written on green cards and feared selves on yellow cards. These cards are then used in a series of four activities, carried out for both hoped-for and feared selves. After each activity, information is recorded on the Possible Selves Map (Appendix D).

A description of the four activities follows. (1) To ascertain the relative importance of hoped-for and feared selves, participants rank their hoped-for (and feared) selves and elaborate on these selves. (2) To assess interviewees' perceived self-efficacy, participants are asked, "How able do you think you are of achieving (or preventing) your most important possible self?" (3) Outcome expectancy is appraised by the question, "How likely do you think it is that this possible self will happen?" (4) To secure information about short- and long-term goal setting, participants are asked to reflect on the steps that they have taken in the past year to bring about (or prevent) these possible selves.

In the present study, Debriefing included summarizing their Possible Selves Map and discussing their possible selves in regard to their community. In particular, participants reflected on which selves they could achieve in the community, which selves had they been unable to develop in the community, and which selves community members would judge to be successful (or unsuccessful).

At the end of the initial interview, each participant was given a disposable camera to take photographs of herself and important aspects of her community (as described under Photo Elicitation Interview). Participants were asked to organize the photographs in a meaningful way before the next interview. Plans were arranged to pick up their cameras for development and to return their photographs. Participants were supplied with their choice of either poster board or a scrapbook for arranging their photo display.

Following each interview, I listened to the tapes and reflected in my journal about the interview.

Suzanne seemed to take the task of explaining the cliques in the community very seriously. I wonder how others will see “cliques” and “labelling” of youth? Should I pose the question or wait for participants to mention it? In keeping with my idea of “being a stranger in a new land”, I think that I will listen with open ears and mind and see what comes up. I always have a second interview in which to discuss the topic with participants. May 11, 1999.

Log entries were made about the interview procedure.

Lyn was feeling tired and did not want to walk over to where I was staying. I offered to either drive her here or to interview her at her home. She seemed relieved that I was willing to come to her. In the pilot study, most of the participants were interviewed in their homes. I liked the chance to see them in their home and I also found that the participants were more relaxed—or at least relaxed faster! May 15, 1999.

A transcriber was hired to transcribe two tapes while I transcribed the remainder. The transcriber also assisted me in checking the accuracy of the transcriptions. As each interview was transcribed, I made arrangements to drop off the transcription for verification by participants (Fine, 1994; Lather, 1991; Reinhartz, 1992) and to pick up the camera for development. When the photographs were ready, I arranged to deliver them to the participant and I set up a tentative date and time for the second interview.

Preliminary analysis involved reading for phrases which revealed something about the research focus and answered the interview questions (van Manen, 1984, p. 60). These “content categories” were coded with highlighters.

I'm visualizing the young women's worlds as made up of overlapping circles surrounding a central circle that I labelled "sense of self." The overlapping circles include: peers, family, school, activities, boyfriends, and workplace. The model doesn't quite show all the interactions, I will have to keep working on that. June 4, 1999.

Phase Three: In the Field -- Second Interview

During the first half of the 60 to 90-minute interview, participants read and signed an information and consent form for the second interview. As the first transcript was reviewed, participants pointed out inaccuracies in the transcripts, added details, and deleted parts that they did not want to share with others. Only one small section was deleted from one respondent's transcript. In turn, I had several responses that I wanted clarified or further developed in each transcript. The second half of the interview was devoted to the explication of the photo display. Permission was obtained from all participants to use their photographic displays in research and professional publications with the understanding that they might be identified through their photographs. Participants were asked to carefully consider what images they liked and wanted in their displays (Gold, 1989).

Photo Elicitation Interview. Photographic displays are a means of collecting “multiple symbolic readings and portrayals within and across settings and/or around a

given phenomenon...[b]y collecting multiple constructions, an imaged narrative can be fashioned” (Barry, 1996, p. 419).

Photographs are footprints of the mind, mirrors of our lives, reflections from our hearts... They document not only where we may have been but also point the way to where we might be going, whether we know it yet or not. (Weiser 1993, p.1)

What participants choose to photograph or to include in their displays and how their photographs are displayed are both constructed by human action (Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 1987, 2000). “Photographic displays are essentially ethnographies” (Harper, 1987, p.7) in that they require you to leave your culture and enter the culture of the other.

“Art-based symbolization tends to naturally upend more logocentric, ‘reasoned’ forms of knowing. Whereas we often take our words to ‘mean what they mean’, photographs seldom allow unambiguous interpretation; their polysemic nature invites multiple interpretive passes” (Barry, 1996, pp. 411-412). In the reflexive photographic method (Harper 1987), participants share in the definition of meaning; that is, the definitions are said to “reflect back” from the participants. Through the process of “photo elicitation” (Ball & Smith, 2001; Barry, 1996; Collier & Collier, 1986; Harper, 1987), participants photograph themselves and their environment and comment on the photographs. The researcher can see their social world from their point of view.

Hedy Bach (1998) took photo elicitation a step further. In her study, *A Visual Narrative Concerning Curriculum, Girls, Photography Etc.*, participants visually documented their lives inside and outside of classrooms to create a visual narrative. The photographs “acted as ‘transitional objects’ towards another reality” (p. 36). Her

participants “told and retold different stories about their photographs as they searched to make meaning, connections and references to the lives they are writing” (p. 38).

In the present study, participants were given a disposable camera to take photographs of themselves and important aspects of their community. The process of taking photographs and organizing them in meaningful ways “free[s] up the individual from the constant search for the fixity of an ‘ideal self’ and allow[s] enjoyment of self as process and becoming ” (Spence as cited in Bach, 1998, p. 35). Participants were encouraged to include words, poetry, and storylines with their displays.

Participants were intrigued by the idea of taking photographs. Lyn said, “I am going to have fun with this. I wonder what my display will look like when I am finished?” Over a three-week period, three of the participants created collages, one produced a poster display, and three made scrapbooks. One participant was unable to complete a display because she obtained a summer job out of the area. However, she wrote a poem about her “imagined” display. Four of the participants wrote poems that included aspects that they found difficult to portray in their photo displays. A general interview guide (Appendix E) was followed based on three areas of focus: symbolic representation, hidden meanings, and new meanings and patterns (Barry, 1996). For an example of a display, see Appendix F.

The interview ended with a summary and an invitation to attend the optional closure/feedback group. The young women were asked to bring an object that told something about them and to bring a question, sentence starter, or scenario about their community for discussion.

Preliminary analysis continued with highlighting content areas and breaking down each content category into preliminary “themes.” These themes were presented at the group closure/feedback session.

I continued to play with ways to view the data. For instance, I developed a “Grasping the Whole” summary sheet for each participant. I used their words to describe their social worlds, their self-beliefs, their hopes and fears for the future, their decision-making process, and their self-identified skills.

Informal Interactions and Observations. As I became better acquainted with the young women, they made several suggestions for the study that I tried to incorporate. One suggestion was to talk with two young women who have lived outside the community for periods of time and who could offer “fresh” insights about life-career development process in a small community. A second suggestion was to meet with a few of their male friends to hear their perspectives on growing up in this community. A third suggestion was to continue to interview several key people in the community for adult views on youth and opportunities and resources available in the community. I followed up on their suggestions and have incorporated their views into chapter 5.

By living in the community for eight weeks, I was able to take advantage of many opportunities to interact with and observe several of the young women informally. My goal was to observe the young women in as many social worlds as possible to gain a first-hand appreciation of the demands and complexities of the young women’s multiple social worlds. Therefore, through invitation, I visited the smoker’s pit below the school, attended an art showing where Lyn was displaying her art, went to a beach party with Suzanne, observed families and their children during the Spring Festival celebrations, and

accompanied Anita to a Rave. I also witnessed participants working at jobs in town, walked with participants around town, met informally with a variety of youth at a restaurant for coffee and conversation, and talked with employers and parents whom I met through social gatherings.

Throughout the two months, I grew to know six of the eight young women quite well. I knew where each one spent most of her time, who her closest friends were, and what her family relationships were like. I knew which adolescents were sexually active and which ones were using drugs and alcohol. A significant amount of this information was obtained, not through the formal interviews, but rather through brief, informal conversations that occurred coincidentally. The sustained relationship that I was able to build with six of the eight young women led to a deep-seated level of trust.

Phase Four: Leaving the Field

Group closure/feedback. An optional group closure/feedback meeting was scheduled for mid-June, after the second interviews had been completed. Five of the eight participants chose to attend although several were writing examinations the next day. One participant was taking training out of town, one participant was working that night, and one participant felt that she needed the evening to study. All participants signed a consent form (Appendix G).

The group closure provided an opportunity to receive information on the emerging themes. Participants were given an opportunity to amplify, change, or reform their viewpoints in response to challenges and input from each other. Additionally, the

session indicated that I would be departing from the setting in the next few days. The session was videotaped and later transcribed. Group responses are included in chapter 5.

As a way to introduce ourselves to the group, we shared an object that showed others how we wanted to be seen in the community. For instance, I brought in moccasins because I wanted participants to know that I tried to walk in their shoes. A summary of the themes I was hearing was presented and I asked for their feedback. The themes noted were: perceived community support; biases based on family history, types of clothes worn, who you hang out with; identification with nature; a sense of connectedness to others, but also a loss of privacy; personal involvement with family; networks of support including teachers and community members; limited opportunities, information, contacts, and role models; and finding places for youth to be with friends.

The ensuing discussion was quite animated. Participants jumped in with new stories and confirmed the themes that I presented but also added times when the theme did not hold true. For instance, when I stated that cliques tended to separate individuals from each other while at the same time served the purpose of providing an identity, Joséé jumped in with, “When you have the choice, you’re with a group, but if it’s just an open setting, it’s not like... the school is such a microcosm... but it’s like when you’re out in the world, or out even just outside, then you start to see it for what it is. And you’re just like, you start to see people for who they are a lot.” Her feedback helped me to see cliques as associated with the school environment. During the summer and when students graduated from high school, the importance of cliques faded away. Data from the session was used to confirm themes heard in individual interviews and to receive feedback on the themes that were emerging as I transcribed and read the transcripts.

At the suggestion of several participants, each participant brought at least one sentence starter, scenario, or question that was written on chart paper for the group to respond to. These were:

1. If you could change Asgard in some way, what would you change? (Lyn)
2. I'm proud of my role in the community because: (Suzanne)
3. In Asgard the family-like atmosphere comes from: (Josée)
4. What is a "rural community?" What isn't rural? (Tina)
5. Your urban cousin will be moving to Asgard in the fall under great protest.

Here is what she has to say about rural people: They are uncultured, intolerant, and ignorant. They are hicks from the sticks! And man, Asgard is so small that if you blink, you'll miss it! And you know what they say about small places and small minds! (Grace)

6. I am an alien who landed on Mt. Lyman last night. I've been sent here to report back to my council about a sub-species of humans, called young women from Asgard. What can you tell me about them? (Lyn)

Each participant responded to each other's question about their community by writing their responses on sheets of flip chart paper. The papers were passed around and participants talked with each other while they formulated responses. The group as a whole responded to question six while Lyn acted as scribe and group leader.

Leaving the field. Leaving the field involved not only physical disengagement from the research setting, but also emotional disengagement from the various relationships developed during the field experience (Shaffir, Dietz, & Stebbins, 1994). In actuality, I have remained in the setting through the relationships that I formed with my

two sponsors. We have kept in touch through e-mail. My relationship with five of the participants, as indicated earlier, had developed into a relationship of “trust.” Two of the participants who had been best friends until they had a falling-out at age 13 asked me to act as a mediator after the group session. Another participant telephoned me and cried as she explained that her mom didn’t want her dad to attend the graduation ceremonies.

I made arrangements to revisit the community in a month in order to clarify my ideas as I continued to work with the transcripts and to obtain feedback on participants’ second transcripts. I made sure that the participants knew where I would be staying and stated that I would be there to talk with them if they had any questions or concerns about their participation in the research. During the month I received four poems and a letter from three of the participants.

July 8, 1999

Dear Blythe

Hi. This is Josée writing. Grace and I are hanging out together lots and really enjoy each other. We were down on the beach and were talking about our photos and stuff. So Grace...Hi Blythe this is Grace. So Josée and I thought we'd do some writing about living in Asgard because we didn't have time before because of exams. Then who should come along, but Piglet, I mean Lyn. Hi this is me, Lyn. We decided that we would each write a poem about living here. We tried to be really metephoricall (spelling?) because we knew how much you liked our metaphors. We sure hope you can use them in you work cause we sweated over them and had to have a few icecream cones just to do it! Anyways we are really stoked on them. (Josée) they are so cool and show how hard core we are about living here. (Grace) Yeah, they are awesome and we had fun doing them (Lyn). Come and see us again, we had fun doing the interviews and taking photos! Thanks for talking with Grace and I. See you soon, we hope.

Bye from us in Asgard,

Josée, Grace and Lyn

On my return to the community at the end of the month, I did talk with four of the participants and thanked the three participants for their poems and letter. Since that time I have been back to Asgard twice to visit with my sponsors. During my last visit to the area, I met one participant on the street who later phoned me to see if I would like to have coffee with her and three participants. The meeting allowed us to exchange current stories and addresses. The four participants were eager to read the analysis of their stories and to examine themes and metathemes.

Phase Five: Process of Analysis

A two-by-two model of narrative analysis as developed by Lieblich et al. (1998) was applied to the transcripts (Figure 2). The model is based on two continuums (a) holistic-categorical and (b) content -form.

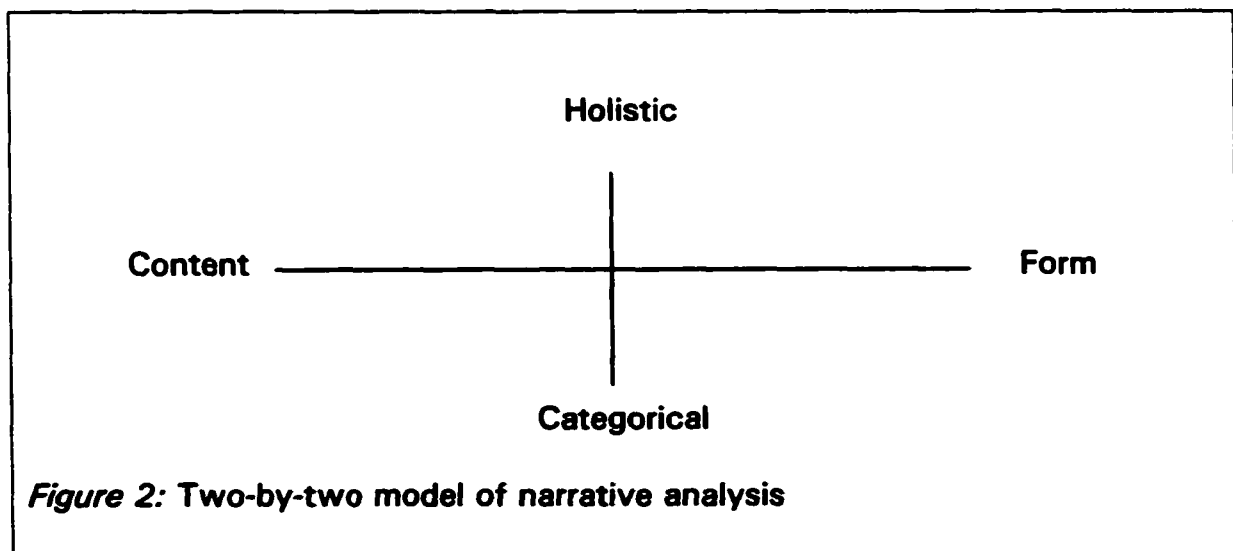


Figure 2: Two-by-two model of narrative analysis

The holistic and categorical continuum refers to the unit of analysis. *Holistic approaches* involve taking participants' narratives as a whole and reading

segments of the text in relation to other sections of the text. *Categorical approaches* involve taking narratives apart, line-by-line and sorting into categories. Holistic analysis is useful for exploring the person against the backdrop of a particular context, whereas categorical analysis is appropriate for shedding light on the common themes shared by a group of people.

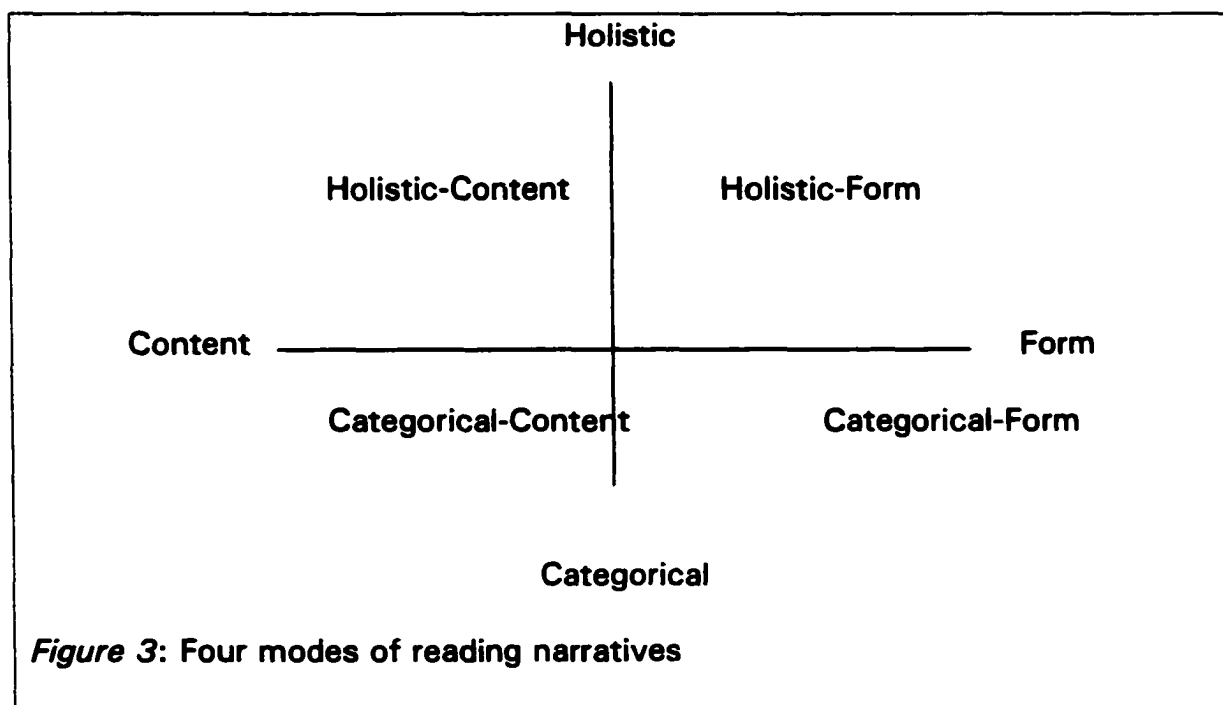
The content and form continuum refers to the story line. *Content approaches* involve concentrating on the explicit and implicit subject matter of the narrative. Questions are posed, for example, Who is the main character? What happened? What does this section of the story mean? What motives are displayed by the main character? *Form analysis*, on the other hand, refers to the plot structure, the selection of metaphors and words, and the sequencing of events. According to Lieblich et al. (1998) the form of the narrative “seems to manifest deeper layers of the narrator’s identity” (p. 13).

The multiplicity of readings gained by utilizing the model captures the multidimensionality and complexity of participants’ identities.

[N]o story is unidimensional in its voice. A story may have melody, pitch, and loudness, or in our terms, content and form—content, which comprises many interwoven, sometimes conflicting, themes, and form, which may be characterized by structure, style, coherence, and other attributes. (Lieblich et al. 1998, p. 168)

The two continuums intersect to form a four-celled matrix (Figure 3). The four approaches to reading narrative are holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-form, and categorical-content.

Although each approach has a particular focus, there is some overlap among the four approaches. For example, in order to make sense of metaphors (Form), an understanding of subject matter (Content) is also needed. Furthermore, in order to understand the deeper meaning of the metaphor, some understanding of the whole narrative is needed.

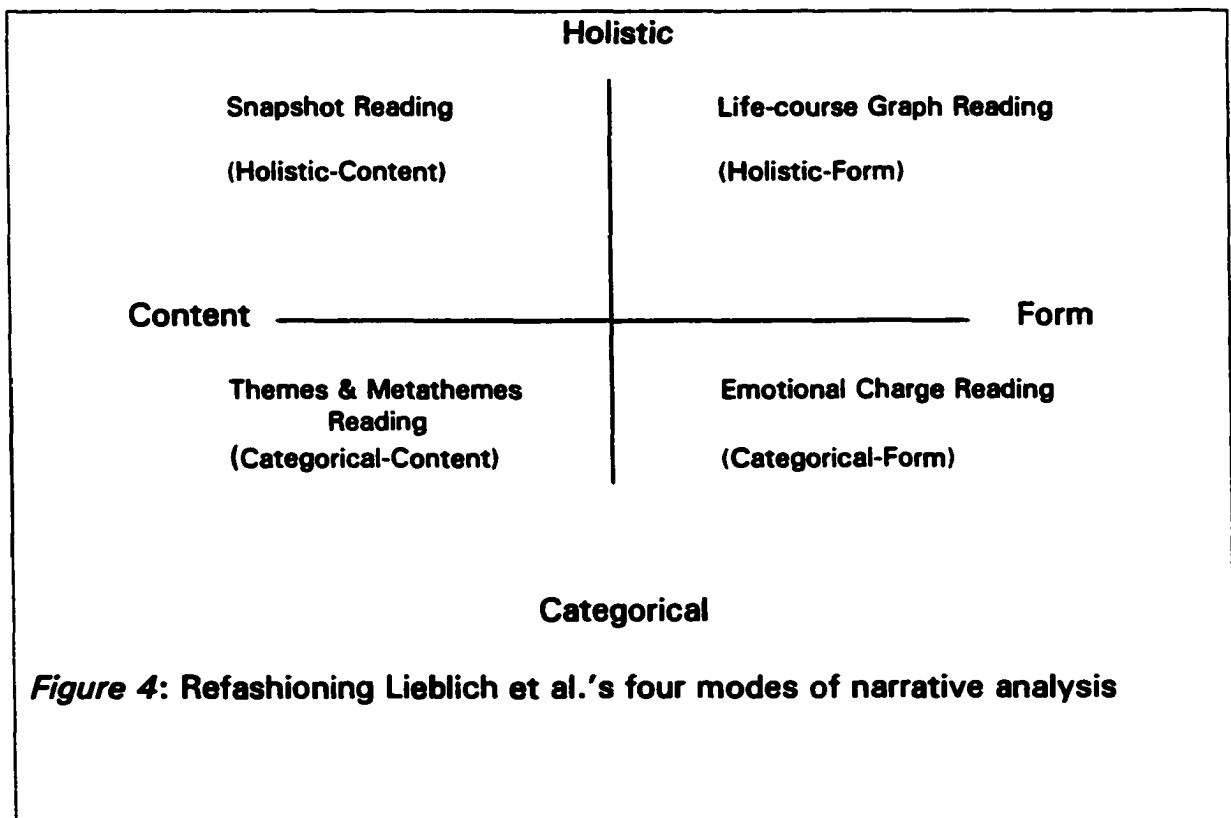


At the ends of each [continua] are rare but very clear examples of an either-or nature, while most proposed reading methods would consist of more balanced mixtures.... The major distinctions created by our model ... oversimplify the practice of conducting narrative research. When aiming to concentrate on the form of a story, globally or categorically, the content of the narrative could not be ignored. On the contrary, the content of the plot or its

segments is essential for characterizing and understanding its form.

(Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 169)

In applying the two-by-two model of narrative analysis to my study, I re-labelled the four approaches or readings: snapshots (holistic-content), life-course graphs (holistic-form), emotional charge (categorical-form), and themes and metathemes (categorical-content) (Figure 4). In the *Snapshot Reading*, global impressions were formed and



content areas relevant to the research questions were colour-coded. Chunks of each transcript were labeled. In the *Life-course Graph Reading*, key events were placed in

temporal order on individual life-lines. The structural graph was utilized to display large amounts of narrative material in a visually accessible arrangement. The *Emotional Charge Reading* was used to examine the affective quality of participants' life-stories. The focus was on the "emotional charge of the narrative" (Lieblich et al, 1998, p. 162) as noted by direct and nonverbal (laughter and tears) expression of feeling. The *Themes and Metathemes Reading* involved two levels of analysis using the computer program, *QSR NUD*ISY VIVO- NVivo* (Richards & Richards, 1999). Firstly, all transcripts were coded as a way to identify content categories, themes, patterns, events, and actions related to the research questions. Secondly, connections or interrelations were identified across themes and content categories to form "metathemes" (Tesch, 1987).

Ethics and Evaluation of the Study

Questions about the right way to treat each other as human beings, within a research relationship were paramount in my mind as I engaged in this research project. As I entered the field, I realized that ritualistic observation of the University of Victoria's Human Research Ethics Approval might not give real protection to rural participants. Instead I might actually increase the risk of harm by blunting my researcher's sensitivities to the method-specific issues which might arise in this context.

As a starting place, I turned to the five ethical positions outlined by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). Two positions seemed important to my study and were used to guide my stance as a researcher. The contextualized-consequentialist model, based on the ethical principles of "mutual respect, noncoercion and nonmanipulation, the support of democratic values and institutions, and the belief that every research act implies moral

and ethical decisions that are contextual (p. 21), ” seemed essential to embrace when using a ethnographic-narrative methodology. In addition, the feminist ethical stance that emphasizes a collaborative, trusting, and caring research relationship between the researcher and the participants (p. 21) was also deemed indispensable in undertaking an in-depth study of participants’ worlds. “Precisely because ethnographic research depends upon human relationship, engagement, and attachment, it places research subjects [sic] at grave risk of manipulation and betrayal by the ethnographer” (Stacey, 1991, P. 113). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) also point out that “Thinking about ethical approvals as meeting the university ethical guidelines for human subjects...does not, however, allow us to consider relational issues, which in narrative inquiry underpin the entire inquiry process” (p. 171).

May (1980) writes about a covenantal ethic or “the exchange of promises, an agreement that shapes the future between two parties. This promise grows...and acknowledges the other...It emphasizes gratitude, fidelity, even devotion, and care” (p. 367). The reciprocal relationship implied by the covenant required active engagement in the hearing and understanding of the young women’s lived experiences, beliefs, values, and views of their worlds. This ethical stance reminds me to consider carefully, the participants’ needs in my research and publications (Gold, 1989).

Ethics Approval. Before data collection began, approval was obtained from University of Victoria’s Human Research Ethics Committee. However, I had several additional concerns about maintaining anonymity, obtaining informed consent, and minimizing risks and dangers to participants.

Nespor (2000) points out several characteristics of ethnographic research that makes anonymity efforts questionable. The very act of engaging in extended research entails public visibility. “The rationale for place anonymization is presumably to make people more difficult to identify” (p. 549), yet the process of gaining access to settings involves negotiations with a number of people who will then know the research site. Members of the community were made aware at a barbecue that I was living in Asgard as a researcher. As well, several of the participants made their presence in the research project known to other community members by introducing their friends to me in public places.

I soon recognized that although the usual practice of using pseudonyms and altering some of the details of participants’ biographies did prevent them being instantly recognizable, “the individuality that is preserved in linguistic habits means that the use of extensive direct quotations makes informants recognizable, at least to themselves, and often to others who know them well” (Davies, 1999, p. 51).

Other issues around anonymity and informed consent emerged in the field. Four of the eight participants were disappointed that their names would not be used in the final report. They felt that the benefit of taking part in the research was lost because they were no longer able to stand up and be counted as an important “voice” in their community (cf. Crick, 1992). I followed the advice of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) who have struggled with the ethical concern of naming adolescents in research texts.

Always, in all of these matters of anonymity, we need to keep the relational at the heart of what we are considering. We need to work through with our participants,

as clearly and in as many ways as we can, the possible future plotlines of the stories that may unfold from these decisions concerning anonymity. (p. 175)

In working with the participants who “wanted their voice to be heard”, I emphasized that I couldn’t guarantee who might read their stories or how others would react to the research. Additionally, I pointed out the possibility that their stories might have repercussions in the future. As well, I reminded participants that the individuals referred to in their narratives did not necessarily want parts of their stories to be known. However, I did guarantee that participants’ vibrant stories would not be lost or be transformed into a bland account. I assured all participants that I would include large segments of their stories, told in their words.

Given the emergent nature of the ethnographic-narrative research design, researchers do not necessarily have all the information that fully informed consent might require. While in Asgard, I realized the strength in incorporating participants’ ideas into the research procedure. Participants, for example, created new questions to include in the interviews and helped create the agenda for the group closure/feedback session. Obtaining informed consent required continual communication between participants and myself.

Taking part in the study added to participants’ self-knowledge. I could not assume that increased self-knowledge was necessarily a benefit for all participants. Positive feelings immediately after an interview might reverse later. Ethnographic-narrative research requires an ethics of witnessing which is both responsive to and responsible for participants’ well-being (Davies, 1998). Throughout this research project, I endeavoured to make myself available to participants outside the interview sessions. I also debriefed

with them after each interview and encouraged them to turn off the taperecorder whenever they wanted to. I attempted to explain my research process clearly and openly with participants. When in doubt, I relied on Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) idea of maintaining wakefulness.

We need to be alert and aware of questions about field texts and research texts from the point of view of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space People need to be awake to how field texts and research texts are positioned along the dimensions of time, the personal and the social, and place (p. 182, 183).

Clandinin and Connelly remind me that ethnographic-narrative inquiry is the study of "people in relation studying with people in relation" (p. 189) and that our relationships have a temporal dimension as well as a contextual dimension.

Criteria for Evaluation of the Study

Interpreting participants' narratives relies on language for the construction and transmission of meaning and implies that the other's experience and understandings cannot be directly accessed. In addition, narratives constructed in discourse are not solely produced by the respondent, but rather are produced by both the inquirer and the respondent. Not only is the researcher unable to directly access the other's experience, but by the questions that are asked and the responses that are made, the researcher impacts on, and changes the very experience that is trying to be understood (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

The criteria for judging the worth of a research study can be problematic for qualitative researchers. Numerous criteria have been developed to address central

questions posed by qualitative research. Are these findings trustworthy? Do the co-constructed narratives improve our understanding of the meaning-making process? Are our ways of knowing ethical? (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, pp. 178-184).

The primary criteria deemed essential to all qualitative research (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001); that is, credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity were applied. Secondary criteria (Whittemore et al.) of creativity and sensitivity were selected on the basis of their fit with the constructionist paradigm and the research concerns in ethnographic and narrative research (cf. Maxwell, 1992; Mishler, 1990).

Credibility. Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 534) ask, "Do the results of the research reflect the experience of participants or the context in a believable way?" A number of tactics were taken to meet this challenge. Prolonged fieldwork, development of strong relationships, focused attention to the context, and multiple data collection strategies were employed. The ability of the report to portray the participants' worlds was achieved through richness of the text and abundance of examples. Clearness of the text allowed participants to see themselves in the report. Theoretical claims were supported with evidence from participants' accounts and alternative interpretations of the data were considered. The "believability" of the stories (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995) was achieved by providing "thick descriptions" and by presenting the process of both decoding and recoding the narratives. Chapter 4 and chapter 5 were given to two peers to read. Both readers said that they could "resonate" with the experience as portrayed in the narrative account (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Authenticity. Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 534) question, "Does a representation of the emic perspective exhibit awareness to the subtle differences in the voices of all

participants?” Lincoln (1995) describes the voice of the constructivist researcher as that of the “passionate participant.” The “voice” that the teller adopts influences what is emphasized within a setting, who is heard from a community, and correspondingly what themes are silenced or neglected (Lincoln). In the research, I took an active and committed stance towards the research and was open to “multiple voices and interpretations of the work” (p. 282). When informants are given voice, the researcher is compelled to include consideration of the intersubjective relationships in the field. An ongoing journal was used to track relationships and to clarify both our agendas. Representation in the text was accomplished through giving participants a copy of their transcribed interviews to read, clarify, and correct and by having five participants read sections of Chapter 4 and all of Chapter 5.

Criticality. Whitemore et al. (2001, p. 534) inquire, “Does the research process demonstrate evidence of critical appraisal?” Throughout the interviews and analysis process, I purposefully explored the transcripts and my journals for other ways of looking at the emerging picture. Additionally, I met with my supervisor on a regular basis to review research progress and issues and to discuss alternative explanations. I aimed to remain open to the inquiry through reflexive journaling, exploring rival explanations, and by examining my biases. Inconsistencies within and across interviews were examined. I sought to understand why contradictions in responses took place and what these differences meant. Critical analysis meant returning to the interviews for deeper and more detailed responses. For instance, some participants viewed their relationship with teachers and the school as close while others viewed the relationship as more distant. Presenting both versions and the reasons for the differences in experience became a focus

of the research. I remembered that narratives are not representative of life as lived, but are life as told (Riessman, 1993). When inconsistencies were evident within interviews, I let the interviewee explain the apparent contradiction to me.

Integrity. Whitemore et al. (2001, p. 534) query, "Does the research reflect recursive and repetitive checks of validity as well as humble presentation of findings?" Research that has integrity allows the reader to see the basic procedures used in the research. The transparent study permits the reader to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the study, the predispositions, and the thoroughness of the researcher. In this study, a log was kept of the sampling procedure, time and place of each interview, how transcripts were made, when and how the transcripts were verified with participants, and the transcription devices used, for example, how pauses were noted. A running file of observations and informal meetings were listed by date, time, and place. I also recorded whether certain information was to be "kept off the record." In my journal, notes were written on the tone of the interview and on my reactions. Ideas were recorded as they emerged and when and how I made decisions to follow certain themes or concepts. In the analysis stage, descriptions of the codes were written as memos.

The application of creativity and sensitivity also contributed to the development of validity in the present study. Creativity is portrayed when the data is constructed, displayed and examined in inventive ways. Novel data collection strategies, flexibility in design, and application of a four-phase narrative analysis heightened fresh discoveries and challenged my ways of thinking about the young women's narratives.

Sensitivity is revealed when the research is carefully implemented and is attentive to context and respectful of and beneficial to participants. Reflexive journaling, ethical

considerations in designing and conducting the research, member checking, giving voice to participants, and encouraging participants to become actively involved in the process were the means by which I demonstrated sensitivity.

In chapter 4, eight young women are profiled, each of whom had a unique story of growing up in Asgard. Their stories are presented in the first phase of analysis, the Snapshot Reading. Two other phases are presented in Chapter Four, the Life-course Graph Reading and the Emotional Charge Reading.

CHAPTER 4

Participants' Narratives

As described earlier in chapter 3, Lieblich et al.'s (1998) four modes of reading narratives were applied to the participants' transcripts. The four approaches allowed me to explore different facets of the data and to construct several versions of participants' worlds. These are described in chapter 4 and chapter 5. In chapter 4, three of the four approaches are presented: Snapshot Reading, Life-course Graph Reading, and Emotional Charge Reading. The Themes and Metathemes Reading is described in chapter 5. Table 1 provides an overview of the analysis process.

Features of Narratives

McAdam's life-story model of identity (1985, 1993, 1996, 1999) provided six features that were useful in analyzing participants' narratives. The life-story metaphor of identity implies that a person's life story "is an internalized and evolving narrative of self that incorporates the reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future" (1996, p. 307). A person's life-story or identity can be understood in terms of the following features: key events, narrative themes, ideological settings, narrative tone, imagery, and imagoes.

1. *Key events*. Key events are nuclear episodes. They are identified as times of affirmation, of turning points, of transformation, of peak experiences, or of low points.

In reconstructing the past, adolescents and adults underscore special *scenes* that stand out in bold print. These critical incidents may complicate the plot structure, move the plot forward, or change the direction of the plot.... As key incidents in an evolving identity... nuclear episodes can be broadly classified into two general types: episodes of *continuity* and episodes of *change*. In an

Table 1**Chapter 4 Narrative Readings****1. SNAPSHOT READING**

- **Social worlds**
 - **family, peers, school, boyfriends, workplace**
- **Community benefits and limitations**
- **Planning and decision-making process**
- **Hopes and fears for the future**
- **Global impressions**

2. LIFE-COURSE GRAPH READING

- **Nuclear episodes (McAdams)**
- **Narrative themes (McAdams)**
 - **agency/communion**
- **Ideological Setting (McAdams)**
 - **values and beliefs**
- **Summary**

3. EMOTIONAL CHARGE READING

- **Narrative tone (McAdams)**
- **Imagery and metaphors**
- **Imagoes (McAdams)**
- **Summary**

episode of continuity, a specific incident in the story affirms what the story maker sees as an identity “truth.”... Nuclear episodes of change, on the other hand, mark perceived turning points in history, sometimes signaling the end of one epoch and the beginning of another. (McAdams, 1990, pp. 169-170)

In the participants’ stories these episodes were often prefaced with phrases such as “I always have been;” “things like this always happen to me;” “it was the worst time in my life;” or “I really changed at that point.” Key events are plotted on the Life-course Graphs.

2. *Narrative themes.* Thematic lines can be traced through life stories.

According to McAdams (1996), agency and communion are two dominant themes in people’s stories. “Agency denotes story material in which characters assert, expand, or protect themselves as autonomous and active agents” (p. 308). The converse is also important to recognize as a theme. Individuals express a desire for physical, psychological or spiritual strength, or for a heightened sense of significance that they currently lack. “Communion refers to union of the individual with the environment and the surrender of individuality to a larger whole, covering such motifs as intimacy, love, reconciliation, caring and merger” (p. 308). Likewise lack of communion or fellowship can be a powerful thread through narratives. In the Life-course Graph Reading, the dominant themes from participants’ stories are discussed.

3. *Ideological Settings.* McAdams views ideology as the backdrop for the identity story. Beliefs and values narrated by the individual position the storyteller “in a particular religious and ethical context” (1999, p. 486). The ideological setting “refers to the person’s religious, political, and ethical beliefs and values as they are instantiated in the story, including the individual’s account of how those values and

beliefs came to be” (McAdams, 1996, p. 308). Values and beliefs of participants are explored in the Life-course Graph Reading.

4. *Narrative tone.* Narrative tone is the overall affective quality of a life-story, ranging from extreme optimism to the depths of despair. A number of narrative forms based on “tone” have been identified. They include traditional forms such as comedy, tragedy, romance, and satire/irony as well as forms identified by Gergen and Gergen (1984), stability, progressive, and regressive life narratives. The narrative tone of each participant’s life-story is discussed in the Emotional Charge Reading.

5. *Imagery.* The unique quality of an individual’s experience can be conveyed by the images, symbols, and metaphors expressed. All participants in this study developed metaphors to describe their community while four participants also created poems to reflect their sense of self. Patterns of imagery are presented in the Emotional Charge Reading.

6. *Imagoes.* Narrative themes are often expressed through main characters referred to as imagoes.

An imago is a personified and idealized concept of the self. Each of us consciously and unconsciously fashions main characters for our life stories.

These characters function in our myths as if they were persons; hence, they are “personified.” And each has a somewhat exaggerated and one-dimensional form; hence they are “idealized.” (McAdams, 1993, p. 122)

Imagoes may also be conceived as a type of “superordinate self-schemata” (McAdams, 1990, p. 179). Imagoes, as idealized and personified images of the self, provide self-relevant information that can provide a repertoire of plans and actions scripts. Imagoes are considered in the Emotional Charge Reading.

First Approach: Snapshot Reading

As the first step in the analysis process, the transcripts were condensed into manageable chunks. Because the nature of qualitative data means that data concerning particular subject matter are not found in a tidy package at the same point in each interview, labelling sections of the transcripts served as a preliminary step to more detailed analysis. The Snapshot Reading allowed me to gain a general understanding of participants' social worlds and to form some initial responses to the research questions. As I worked through each transcript, as described below, I recorded the questions that were raised from my readings. For example, "Who noticed Anita's transformation? What, if any, changes occurred in her relationship with family members? with teachers? with peers? Did she received more support when she transformed her label?" The memos contained the germs of analytical points that were developed later.

The processes involved in developing snapshots can be summarised as follows:

1. Read each transcript several times, empathically and thoroughly. Note any patterns in my journal. Form and note global impressions. Document persistent words, phrases, repetitive themes, and contradictions in the narrative. Note brief references to a subject for possible further exploration.
2. Determine the particular content areas to be followed in each transcript. Make the decision based on the amount of space devoted to the content area in the transcript, how often that content area is referred to, and the amount of detail supplied.
3. Label or assign meaning to these content areas. Develop a colour-code for each content area.

4. Highlight the content areas with coloured markers according to the colour-code.

Four main content areas were identified: (a) social worlds in the community (family, peers, boyfriends, school, workplace), (b) community benefits and limitations, (c) planning and decision-making process, and (d) hopes and fears for the future. A summary of the four content areas formed a “snapshot” or a portrait of each participant. The snapshots were constructed by taking phrases or complete sentences from participants’ transcripts and “chunking” them under the appropriate content code. The order of presentation follows the order of the interviews.

In order to illustrate Snapshot Reading, I have included a coded section of Suzanne’s transcript (Appendix H). Global impressions formed while reading Suzanne’s transcripts conclude her portrait.

Suzanne

Suzanne entered into the research whole-heartedly. She introduced me to many youth in the area, including young people who had dropped out of school and were now living on their own. Suzanne had been involved in a number of youth initiatives and was able to talk in-depth about young people’s relationship to Asgard. She was less able to reflect on her personal experience.

Social worlds: Family. I came here from Alberta when I was 10 years old and I’m 18 now. I moved here with my mom. My mom is a support worker at the school. She encourages me to speak my mind and has been there even when I’ve done something really stupid. I love her a lot. Wednesday night is our night. That’s when we cook something together and then sit and watch TV together or play cards. Sometimes I get really frustrated with my mom and I take off. I’ve moved out three times. I don’t see too much of my dad. He’s remarried now and isn’t around a lot. He

works all around the world. I have a half-brother. He's unemployed most of the time and whenever I'm around, he likes to bully me. That's a source of tension between my mom and me.

Social worlds: Peers. Friends influence how I think about myself. Like I'm on the phone for hours every night just talking with everyone. I've gone through many friends here. In two seconds, friends will stab you in the back. I guess we're really too close—kind of like a family. And this town is full of cliques. I'm in the Skids group. We listen to heavy metal, most of the group smoke dope and like to party. The group is mostly guys. Girls in town really put me down for hanging out with them. I also belong to a girl group and we do girly things, like going to the restaurant and talking about boys. It's sometimes difficult to cross boundaries between groups—sort of like being caught in a web. That may be one of the reasons why a number of teens including a very close friend have committed suicide in past 5 years. No one wants to talk about that.

Social Worlds: School. I've wanted to drop out since Grade 10, so school's not big for me. When I was younger, like in grade eight and grade nine, I was on the honour role. Now I do as little as possible. Like this year I have four spares. The only way that I have managed to hang on is by taking some classes at the alternate school. Like those cliques I was talking about earlier, well they are really evident at school. All the school funds go towards sports, like basketball and band is really hard to get into. The same people go to California on a band trip each year. It's not very fair.

Social Worlds: Boyfriend. Right now I'm in my longest relationship since grade five. We've been together for nine months. He's one of the sweetest guys I've ever met. He's a year younger than me. He was one of the biggest troublemakers until we got together, but I spend massive amounts of time trying to make him happy. His

parents really appreciate what I've done for him. I used to spend a lot of time alone but now, whenever I'm not with him, I wonder what he is doing.

Social Worlds: Workplace. I've worked at the gas station for over two years, every Thursday night, Saturday and Sunday. I have tried to quit but my boss keeps persuading me to stay but he won't give me a raise. Now that I have a boyfriend, I want to have weekends off so that I can go camping. But there aren't many jobs here and me and my boyfriend may find a place of our own in the fall and we'll need the money.

Community benefits and limitations. I'm pretty active in town and sit on two committees. I've been the Youth Council president for five years. We're always running into roadblocks that prevent us from carrying through with programs. I get a lot of help from the adult president. I'd say that most adults don't like us and are not really supportive of the Youth Centre. I'm also on the Restorative Justice committee and the president is a mentor to me. I admire him because he speaks the truth and searches for the truth. That's important to me because not many adults do. Many business people distrust youth and label us as vandals, drunks, and reckless drivers. You always have to prove yourself to them. It's not all bad or anything. The lake, the scenery, the closeness of everyone, the safety here, and knowing just about everyone make it a great place to live. But there's nothing for young people to do here. Like there's no place to hang out together, there's no mall, there's no cinema, there's nothing for us and it's dangerous to drive to the nearest large town.

Planning and decision-making process. Everyone's poking and prying, like trying to get in my life, and telling me what I should do. If I want to do better than working at a gas station, I know I have to go back to school. I'm interested in Tourism, but I don't want to go to school. My dad bought me a ticket to go to

Australia after graduation, but I love my boyfriend and it kills me to think about leaving right now. Like my friends, each of them are getting a boyfriend and are getting closer to being in my position, not wanting to leave. So yeah, right now, I can't even think about the future. It just kind of scares me.

Hopes and fears for the future. In the future, I want to be happy above all and that means having friends, being close to my parents, being healthy, perhaps being married and maybe adopting a child. Of course I would hope to have a job and be rich but who knows? Most of all I fear being alone. I fear being sad and depressed and being in a place I don't want to be. I fear being lonely and not having anyone to talk to and of being sick with cancer, of being poor and not having a job.

Suzanne: Global Impressions

The impressions that were formed as I read and reread Suzanne's transcript were documented in my research journal. The following is a summary of my reflections. On my initial reading, Suzanne presented as an active young woman. She was involved with two community committees and worked part-time. However, when I re-read her transcript, I was struck by several contradictions. Suzanne emphasized that there was nothing to do in the community, yet she also spoke about the time commitment required for her community work and her part-time job. She repeated nine times that gaining respect was important to her. Then, why, I wondered, did she hang out with one of the least respected groups in town? She gave numerous examples of how close she was to her mom, but at the same time described her relationship as very "up and down."

Suzanne's responses suggested five motifs or patterns that provided me with different perspectives for reading her transcript.

1. *Always the Other.* I noted that the voice of “others” was much stronger than Suzanne’s voice. She described herself “in relation” to others (Gilligan, 1982; Kemmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001), emphasizing others’ thoughts and feelings as the primary determinants of her behaviour and beliefs. “Friends influence how I think about myself.” She seemed to define herself through her relationship with her boyfriend, her peers, her community, and through her membership as part of the Skids group. In fact, I found few places where Suzanne used “I as a knower and claimer” (Gee & Crawford, 1998). Rather than using verbs such as know, learn, and think, Suzanne spoke of what she wanted, hoped and desired from her relationships. However, I found two instances when Suzanne spoke her mind. Suzanne made the decision not to smoke marijuana even though all the members of the Skid group were frequent users. “They don’t bug me...I said, I tried it, I don’t like it, go away.” She also chose to work on community committees. “I know that with some hard work, I can make Asgard a good place for kids.”

2. *Maintaining Respect.* A recurring pattern that appeared throughout Suzannes’ narrative was the importance of being respected by others. She was respected by her friends’ parents, by the Skids group, by committee members, and by her friends. Suzanne put effort into acquiring respect. “Like if they (friends’ parents) hear they are hanging out with me, it’s like, it’s good, right on, you know. I’ve got a good rep in this town.” I couldn’t help but wonder what the parents of her friends thought about her relationship with the Skid group. She never mentioned self-respect.

3. *Finding Anchors.* Suzanne appeared to find security by attaching herself to her boyfriend, the Skid group, and to community mentors. Josselson (1987) described this process as “anchoring.”

The process of anchoring is critical to identity formation in women because the self is experienced so much in relation to others. Who a woman is reflects her sense of what she means to others. This process is not at all passive... a person can choose those people she wishes to have meaning to. (Josselson, p.175).

4. *Speaking Up for the Underdog.* Suzanne had taken up a number of causes. She was responsible for her boyfriend's happiness. She believed that she could change her boyfriend's delinquent behaviour. She wanted to prove to the town that the Skids were "good kids." She saw herself as the spokesperson for all of Asgard's youth. It was up to her to get that youth centre built. It was her responsibility to take action to prevent youth in trouble from going to jail.

5. *The Future is Scary and Uncertain.* Suzanne did not want to think about the future. "It scares her." I wonder if thinking about the future would require Suzanne to let go of the present? She appeared to be firmly entrenched in the community; her identity was so anchored in her relationships that letting go would be threatening. What else did she have to hold on to? I was not hearing a strong sense of an individuated self. As Josselson (1987) suggests, "Meaning and identity reside in connectedness" (p. 178). My overall impression of Suzanne was someone who was very caught up with others.

Josée

Josée articulated her story in a clear and forthright manner and talked for over 2 hours in our first interview. At times it was difficult to slow her down so that I could query her responses. She set clear boundaries for herself and had no hesitation in turning off the taperecorder when she was uncomfortable.

Social worlds: Family. I've lived in Asgard since I was one. I am 17 and will graduate from grade 12 this June. I've got a mother and a father, and a brother and a sister who are both younger than me. My dad is athletic and good-looking and he gets lots of looks from the women in this town. My mom is a "fifties" mom who likes to cook and go to garage sales. I can talk to her about everything, like drinking and smoking pot. I am proud that my parents have stayed together because so many families break up here. My parents have been strict with me and raised me up a Christian. That's been good for me. We do family chores together, attend church, and go camping together.

Social worlds: Peers. I was home schooled until I was in Grade 4 and that made it difficult when I switched to public school. I really didn't know how to get along with people who were different than me. I've had a lot of hurt through my relationships with friends. The things that happened were really painful and I've learned not to form deep attachments. Being a Christian has also been hard with friendships. Sometimes people feel that I judge them. In Grade 7 I made a real effort to make friends. I've always found it easier to be with boys. I think they are more accepting. I used to party with my friends in grade 9 but it doesn't appeal to me anymore. It doesn't help my body or mind.

Social worlds: School. Homeschooling taught me to be to be self-motivated and that has made learning very easy for me. I respect my teachers and listen to what they have to say. I found self-acceptance and health playing sports. Today I'm involved in basketball, baseball, volleyball, soccer, and cross country running. I've represented my school at the Provincials for two years. I've also won drama awards and I'm second to the prime minister on the student parliament. I am near the top of my graduating class and won three scholarships and two awards. So I am pretty busy

all the time and so far haven't found anyone that I wanted to date. Having a boyfriend here will be difficult because I don't believe in having sex before marriage.

Social worlds: Workplace. Outside of school, I volunteer at the town library and at church. I visit older town residents and help out at teas and clean the church once a month. I believe in being responsible in my family and in my community. I had a paper route from age 9 until age 11, I've babysat and, at age 13, I got a job at the bakery. When I was old enough I worked in a restaurant and brushed for forestry. This year I will work full-time at the bakery over the summer. I was proud to represent my community as the Spring Queen two years ago.

Community benefits and limitations. This is an incredible community. Young people have the freedom to move around the community visiting friends. It's a very safe community and there's lots to do. I bike, hike, fish with my dad, hunt, swim in the lake, snowboard, and even skinny dip at a private beach. It is pretty sheltered here, but individualism is encouraged. From my experience the community is very supportive of its youth and I've found it easy to get work. That's probably because I know everybody. It's a trustworthy environment and living here has helped me to get the best of what I can out of life. I believe that the clean air and water and the serenity of the place, like the calmness, help make the community as wonderful place. Some of my friends think that living here is limiting but I say, "What you don't see, you don't want!" Of course there are some negatives with living here: the stinging gossip, the break-ups and affairs, and the repercussions on the children. Every bit of hurt is played out in front of the whole town.

Planning, decision-making process. CaPP helped me to start thinking about the future. The school counsellor gave me ideas, such as being a psychologist, and provided information about massage school. Mostly though I talked with friends and

with exchange students from Japan, Columbia, and Australia. In the future, I plan on going to school, but I'm not sure what I want to be yet. Something that is adventurous and fun and always surprising and new. Maybe I'll go on missions in different countries and then end up living somewhere in France on my own little farm. I trust in God to show me the way. I'm going to Australia in the fall with the Student Work Abroad Program (SWAP) and that will be a beginning.

Hopes and fears for the future. I'm glad that my time here is coming to an end because with friends you're vulnerable. My hopes for the future include living in the country of my choice, surrounded by animals, veggies, flowers, and friends. I want to be travel-wise and know the world and its inhabitants. Having a stable home of my own to come to and get centered in will be important. I want to eat healthy and exercise. I want to work to change life into something better for those around me. I hope to be someone people like and trust. I want to be self-accepting, married to my soulmate, and financially stable. My fear would be that I would become cold, uncaring and hardened, worry-ridden and selfish. I fear that I could become hurt through family problems such as being in debt and worrying about money. Becoming unstable mentally and being alone, being closed off from others, having no garden, living in the suburbs, and having no music are also some of my fears.

Josée: Global Impressions

Josée portrayed her life as straightforward and "on the right path." My initial impression of Josée was of someone who was sure of her world. She viewed the world from a Christian viewpoint and was proud that her family was different from other families in Asgard (although with several other churches in town, her family could not be unique in their Christian beliefs). Within her family circle there were

rules, and responsible behaviour was encouraged. However, there was a second story within her narrative. Josée feared being hurt by others and was careful not to make herself “vulnerable” to others. There seemed to be tension points within Josée’s narrative.

1. *Being trusted and being caring.* Her self-description included phrases such as “open, trusting, caring and accepting.” Josée stated that she wanted to be supportive of her friends yet I also heard her say that her friends sometimes found her “closed and judgmental.” Josée believed that she must “be like what God would want [me] to be... to talk to kids... and try to make them feel better if they look low, just try and be a positive reflection of my faith.” Friends seemed to be more a source of anxiety and distress for Josée than they were a social support (Hendry & Reid, 2000).

2. *Protecting Myself.* It seemed important to protect herself from other’s judgments. Her belief in God, the support she received in her family and the recognition she received at school seemed to provide strong anchors (Josselson, 1987). TANK GIRL was her role model. TANK GIRL is an interactive computer game (www.mgmua.com/tankgirl/intro.html) as well as a movie. Her role model was a hip, young woman who takes on Water and Power, a group of people who control the last sources of water since the comet hit earth in 2033 A.D. TANK GIRL’s mission is “to fuck with them (Water and Power). Any self-respecting renegade fucks with the bad guys. The other thing you gotta know is I don’t go anywhere without my tank.... I like it because it’ll do anything I say.” I wondered how TANK GIRL fit with her sense of self as Christian and I wondered why she needed all that armour to negotiate her “worlds” in Asgard. Josée’s greatest hope was to work towards “changing life into something better” for those around her and her greatest fear was

growing up to be “cold, uncaring, hardened, and selfish.” Her fears seemed to lie as much in the present as they did in the future.

Grace

Grace, aged 17, was completing grade 12. I met Grace while she was giving young children a ride in a horse drawn carriage. Grace had a great sense of humour yet was quiet too. I noticed that she laughed whenever she described herself. She turned off the tape once to discuss a private issue that didn't impact directly on the research. Grace and I met several times on the river trail and talked informally. Grace provided insight into the world of an “outsider.”

Social worlds: Family. I've lived here for 14 years, ever since I was three. I have a huge, well, a weird family. I have three older half-brothers on my father's side and a half-sister on my mother's side and a younger brother who lives at home. Dad works seasonally as a self-employed carpenter and my mom works part-time as a home support worker and cook. We're a pretty close family, like we play Penochle for our bonding time and I can talk to my mom about anything. My mom and dad are both retired hippies and are pretty mellow. I will always remain close to my family.

Social worlds: Peers. I don't have many friends, but the friends I do have are really supportive and close. We do sharing circles and meet at a restaurant for tea and occasionally go to a larger centre to see a movie. I am on the fringe of all the cliques, sort of an outsider. I prefer to spend most of my time alone riding my horse, walking through the woods, sitting by the river, or reading.

Social worlds: School. I was a different type of kid when I was younger because I went to a Waldorf School until Grade 3. I was like this little farm girl coming up to everyone and saying, “I love you!” So public school was really hard

because everyone had formed their little cliques and wore biff clothes. My parents didn't associate with any of the parents either. It was scary for the first few years. I sort of withdrew and got into animals and books. Grade 8 was a big shift for me. That was the year I changed my name and had a small social group for the first time. I still remained wary when I was in the school environment. Later I became involved in Drama and travelled to the Canadian Improv games in Ottawa in Grade 11 and had the lead role in the major play in Grade 12. These experiences gave me confidence. I think I would have turned out different if I didn't get away from here. I learned that other people liked me.

Social worlds: Workplace. My important connections have been with horses and with the town librarian. I volunteered there for five years and also worked at a restaurant in town. I did some work experience at a camp counsellor for one week. I found out that I liked working with horses more than I like working with people.

Community benefits and limitations. My family has more influence on me than the town. I like nature and being outdoors, especially swimming in the lake. Water balances me because I am pretty volatile and the library has been a place of peace for me. I think that it is a safe community, it can be friendly, and there is a sort of cheery closeness here. However, it is easy here to get slotted and labeled by your teachers and classmates so it is important to develop skills in fending for yourself. I did miss the lack of exposure to different career paths and to different sports. If you weren't interested in team sports, there was nothing for you. Work-wise there are not many places to work and nothing that pays more than minimum wage. The theme of the week here is always "Asgard."

Planning and decision-making process. I haven't done that much research. CaPP didn't work for me. I wasn't motivated to do a bunch of research into careers

and stuff because I sort of knew what I wanted. I looked at the things that have made me happy so far. I found it best to talk with my mom. She ordered some calendars and we looked through them. The librarian has encouraged me to go into library science, but I don't want to go to school for that long. I've also thought about massage therapy and took chemistry to keep that option open. It's pretty important, my connection with horses. I'd like to do the Equine Science Program at Olds and then work on a ranch. My parents are helping me prepare for an interview with Olds.

Hopes and fears for the future. In the future, I'm looking forward to having more balance between my public and private personality. Maybe that will come when I leave here, cause there's just part of me that I don't want to look at or expose here. I also hope that I can dress in ways that make me more me. I want to feel whole and go through a lot of personal growth. I want to be satisfied with my body. When I move away from here, I'd like to have a serious relationship and work at a job that fulfills me and stimulates me. I want to meet people with similar plans and interests. I'd like to get my bartending certificate and own my own jeep. My fears include continuing to allow other people to decide who I am. I don't want to do things that make me uncomfortable such as being in social situations that I don't like. I fear being in a relationship with someone who doesn't share my view of people's role in the world. I never want to deny what I really want or to be with a child before I am ready. I fear not having enough money to pay my bills and having to work at a job that I hate.

Grace: Global Impressions

Grace's story was one of living on the fringes of the community. She saw herself as an "outcast." Rather than turning to friends for company, Grace spent the majority of her leisure time with her horse discovering private places in the wooded

areas around Asgard. Her few friends were described as “very close friends” and they too, were youth who lived on the edges of Asgard’s social structure. Key motifs focussed on private and public selves and self-discovery.

1. *Exposed self/concealed self.* Although she was still very “wary”, Grace became involved in school activities when she entered grade 8, particularly drama. Yet Grace stated “I still don’t go out much... I have a small group of friends that I will open up to.” For Grace, the library and nature provided places where she could “get grounded...and sort of figure out who I am rather than let other people tell me.” In Asgard, Grace learned to keep her public and private worlds separate. “Who I am alone and who I am in public is very different.” Grace seemed to think that if she opened up to others she would become dependent on their evaluations (Josephs et al., 1992). Grace wanted to define herself on her own terms.

2. *Finding myself.* When Grace was not attending school or involved in the latest drama production, she spent her time alone. She was clear with her friends that she needed to balance her time with them with time alone. During these “alone” times, Grace wondered what clothes she would wear if she could truly be herself. She questioned her sexual identity. She struggled to visualize a realistic path for the future. “How can I know who I am and what I want to do when I have never been given the opportunity to try out who I might be?” Grace felt constrained by the many watching eyes in town, yet she appreciated the “cheery closeness” of Asgard. As I listened to Grace, I heard someone who was tentatively getting ready to expand her horizons.

Lyn

I met Lyn, aged 18, at her art gallery fund-raising event. She had heard about my research through friends at school and through my contact at the general store

where she worked. She was quite happy to be asked. Lyn talked quickly and initially was reluctant to talk about personal issues. Over the course of the first interview, she opened up and said that she found the process “therapeutic.” Her use of metaphors allowed our discussion to go deeper and she set her boundaries by turning off the taperecorder when she discussed situations that were not open to the public.

Social worlds: Family. I’ve lived here for 17 years. My dad came here with my mom to teach school. My parents divorced when I was in elementary school, but they both live in town here. I live with my dad and that was difficult at first because I really didn’t know him that well. Now it’s a pretty good relationship except that my dad is really busy and I’m really busy too. It’s kind of sad, but we don’t do things together very often. My older brother just graduated from university with a Bachelor of Science degree. My mom and dad always made sure that it was okay for me to be myself. I think that I’ll always have deep contact with them.

Social worlds: Peers. Friends are very important to me, especially having a variety of friends. In this town, there are a number of definite cliques. Mostly the groups are defined by the type of music people listen to. It’s also divided if you’re really into drugs and partying and stuff or into like sports and doing that all the time, and then there’s grey areas in between. I’m kind of in the grey area in between! Now I’m embracing all different cliques more, I think. Like everyone in my class has been friends for so long, and we go through stages of being better friends and then not, but no real falling out. When we get together we watch a lot of movies or stay up really, really late just doing nothing, just driving around or walking around or just finding something to do somewhere or it’s going to parties, sometimes too. In the future, my “friends’ circle” will just continue to grow.

Social worlds: School. The school's so small that it is like a family. You look out for each other. My grade and the grade above mine were really, really close. I like to be really involved in school. I'm the co-editor of the grad book and the yearbook. This year I've been in both plays. Last year I was on the basketball team. But this year, I was just too busy to do anything like that! It was just crazy! And I have my courses and we have night classes for math for preparing for the Provincials! I have a couple of teachers at school who have been there for me by inviting me to go to different conferences and urging me to apply for Canada World Youth. I've travelled to California three times with the band and I've been to Regional Drama Festivals a number of times. I just won the Principal's award for high academic standing and contributions to the community.

Social worlds: Boyfriends. I haven't had very many relationships because I've known everyone since I was in Kindergarten. I'm just friends with guys. Like you know them and you hang out and you have a good time. It's more a hope for the future--growing up and there will actually be a lot of guys.

Social worlds: Workplace. I'm busy all the time. I've had a job since I was 14 and have worked at a restaurant and at my mother's store. Right now I work at the corner store. My boss really supports me. She helps gives me time-off when I go on school trips or when I am doing fund-raising. She's really great at figuring out fund-raising ideas too.

Community benefits and limitations. I think this is a really good community to grow up in. I'm not afraid of what people are going to think of me because there are just so many creative people here. You're allowed to just be yourself. You don't have to put up a front. I think the environment here really affects me and I always miss the mountains when I'm away. I really appreciate the quietness, the calmness, and the

clean air and water. One thing that I especially like is being able to go to a spot and be alone outside.

One benefit of living here is that it forces you to interact with people who aren't necessarily your peers. You know most of the older people in the community too. Living here forces you to go out and look for opportunities. There's not very many things to do especially for kids so you have to totally figure it out for yourself. I think that's why lots of people are doing drugs and stuff, because there's nothing else for them to do really. So that can be limiting. In school, you can't always get the classes that you want. Employment –wise there aren't many opportunities in most fields. An annoying limitation to living here is that everybody knows everything that you're doing which is good sometimes and horrible some other times. Word really goes around fast. However, I do think that you can create opportunities. For instance, I persuaded adults to start a recycling program in town.

Planning and decision-making process. I went through a three-part process of applying to Canada World Youth. I applied, went through an interview and was recommended to the team. I then went through 8 hours of activities with the group and will be going to India and Ontario starting in the fall. During the past year I visited most universities in BC so I know what's out there. CaPP is called CRAP. I mean it's good for learning how to write a resumé but not for figuring out what you want to do. My parents want me to go to school and I want to go too. I'm not sure which degree I'll go after, but I know that travelling and meeting other people, just sort of opens me up to other possibilities. After my stint with World Youth, I think that I will have a better idea of what I want to do.

Hopes and fears for the future. My hopes for the future include having friends and loved ones around, being financially stable, and having my own space in which to

grow and develop. I really fear being unaccomplished, losing my health, not being able to leave Asgard, not having purpose in my everyday life and being alone with no one to be close to.

Lyn: Global Impressions

Lyn talked enthusiastically about her many positive experiences in Asgard. Although there were times when she wanted to be left alone, she viewed residents' inquisitiveness as caring and supportive. Lyn had taken opportunities presented in the community and used them to her advantage. Her father, employers, and teachers were not only encouraging but also went out of their way to provide her with the skills and resources that would open up future prospects. According to Takanishi (2000), one of the key requirements for successful transition to adulthood are supportive systems including families, schools, community institutions, and health care systems. Distinctive features in her narrative involved being absorbed in many activities and projecting herself into the future.

1. *Doing and being it all.* Lyn had a history of taking part in community activities. She had taken art lessons since the age of seven. She started to work when she was 14 years of age. She was involved in numerous school activities that gave her opportunity to travel outside the community. Lyn stated that she had a "good idea of who I am." She knew who she was when she was with her family, her peers, her teachers, and with herself. When context changed, Lyn did not lose her sense of self. When thinking about the future, Lyn had a clear idea of what she might become. She would continue to develop as an artist, to attend university, to travel, to develop new friendships, and to take an active stance on social issues such as recycling.

2. *I'm already in the future.* Lyn was "anxious to get on with life's adventures." She wanted to experience as much as she could in her position on the

Canada World Youth team. Lyn expected that she would be able to retain her connections to Asgard at the same time as she explored the world beyond her community. She had the ability to live with uncertainty and change and actually seemed to thrive on the idea of possibilities.

Individual development... can be conceived of as either a risk or a challenge, depending on the individual's personal and social resources. Such resources are part of one's past experiences and present (social) context, including the timing of transition... The context of the person, the timing of events, the person's developmental age, and related social and individual resources constitute risk or buffering factors. (Trommsdorff, 2000, p. 67)

Anita

Anita, aged 17, was in her final year of high school. During our first meeting Anita commented that if she was to be involved, she would want me to see all sides of Asgard. "You need to see behind the scenes." At times she seemed to contradict herself, but when reviewing her tape I realized that she saw situations in their complexity. Anita invited me to the smoker's pit at school and to a Rave.

Social Worlds: Family. My family has lived here for 12 years. My dad is a logger and is on the town council. My mom is currently unemployed. I'm closest to my dad because we both like hockey. I don't really think my mom understands me as much as my father does. My sister and I do not get along but my brother and I are really close. I don't see my sister that often because she works as an au pair in the States. Family relationships are strong and our family has strength. My dad keeps telling me he isn't ready for me to leave, but I know that I will remain close to him and my mom even though I won't be here.

Social worlds: Peers. Friends have played an important part in my life by giving me confidence, especially about my body. Friendships can be complicated here because people get labelled in town. If you screw up once, you get stuck with a label. There are also all the cliques here. I am part of the Stoner group, but I hang out with just about everyone. My closest friend is male because he accepts me and listens to me without judging. In summer, I like to go across the lake, hang out on the beach, fish, swim, boat, walk and bike. In the winter I play on a mixed hockey team. This year I was the only girl on the team.

Social worlds: School. The cliques are most evident at school. I think that the “geeky” people are cool, but they aren’t invited to parties. They all smoke dope and keep a low profile at school. I feel for them because they haven’t had a chance to create themselves. Everyone else has created them with their negative attitude and their hate. In the top clique are the basketball people who can be mean and pick on others. All the funding seems to go to them. The school has a large drug problem, but everyone’s in denial. I hate it when I see all these young girls that are at parties and they’re thirteen years old and they’re smoking and they’re totally loaded and they’re just falling all over any boy. There’s a lot of young girls that remind me so much of me, that it sort of makes me sick. I’ve spent my high school years trying to escape being labelled. It’s taken me the past year to sort of get around it and make people realize that’s not who I am. Even though I am part of the Stoner group, I do get along with most of my teachers, especially my English teacher. I am involved in drama, band, and cross country running. Last year I went to provincials for cross country running.

Social worlds: Boyfriends. Dating here is like a weeding out process. There are lots of meaningless one-night stands. Having a boyfriend is more of a status thing.

You become a name like Anita and Will. Right now I have a boyfriend who I met at the Spring Festival this year. He's in his early twenties and is the co-manager of a skateboarding shop in a nearby town. This is my first serious relationship. He takes me out to expensive restaurants and gives me things. I want this relationship to work and I feel responsible to keep my self-respect.

Social worlds: Workplace. I've worked at the restaurant for four years now and just love it. The owner is flexible and will give me time off when I am playing hockey. I think the job is great because you learn all the parts of running a restaurant like working cash, dishwashing, doing the books, and cooking. It's hard to get a job in town so I've been lucky. Even though I love it, a job like this keeps you from doing what you want to do if you stay here after high school.

Community benefits and limitations. Asgard is unique and special. The town grows on you even if there's nothing for you to do. Dope smoking is a way of life here. For those with no jobs, growing pot is an alternative. There's also a pecking order in this town and if you're at the bottom, you don't want to get up in the morning. Education is the only way to get out of this town. If you get trapped here and end up with kids and no father, there's no way out. Vandalism is also a problem. It's mostly because there's nothing to do and, especially guys, they get frustrated. For years now they've been trying to get this Employment Centre and Youth Centre together but it will never happen because the community shrugs off responsibility to youth. Yet there's an integrity and dignity about youth, but there's no place to show it. There are some good things like the safety, and knowing everyone and being able to stay out at night. If anything bad happens to a family, the community is here to support them. One of the problems with living here is that you feel so secure that it's hard to leave. Accessibility and opportunities are also limited here. There's only one

doctor here and there's absolutely no privacy. They might as well hand out a big huge prescription and run around the drugstore with it.

Planning and decision-making process. CaPP helped me learn about my attributes, my interests, and gave me information about colleges. My English teacher also gave me pointers. My first plan is to leave and never look back. What I mean is I want to be able to say I'm not going to miss it, but I know that I will. This town grows on you and you come to realize who you really are here.

Hopes and fears for the future. My hopes are to become a television broadcaster. I also want to write a script and make a movie. I want to continue to play hockey and coach. It's important for me to become successful at something I love, to be happy with who I am, and to make enough money to be stable. I also hope to have someone to be with. What I don't want in my life is being worried about money, being alone and abandoned, and feeling like a failure. I don't want to lose significant people in my life or to have my trust broken. I don't want to be harmed.

Anita: Global Impressions

I had several opportunities to "hang out" with Anita and to see her life firsthand. What struck me was the struggle she experienced in trying to define herself. Anita attempted to figure out where she stood in relation to all the conflicting parts of herself. Adolescence in a time when young women learn to negotiate their multiple selves and come to formulate answers to the question, "Who am I?" (Johnson & Roberts, 1999). There was the strong only-female player on the hockey team, the serious writer, the heavy partier, the loving daughter, the smoking pit member, and the hardworking restaurant worker. Unlike Lyn, Anita had not generally received strong support from family, teachers, or the community. Her English teacher, her

employer, and hockey coach were the only people that she felt comfortable in asking for guidance. Yet, Anita wanted to be given attention and care but was cynical about the ability of most adults to worry about anyone but themselves. Two topics were predominant when talking with Anita, none of the adults pay any attention and playing both sides.

1. *Nobody pays any attention.* Anita described how she skipped school on a regular basis and how she joined the other girls down at the smokers' pit. According to Anita, she was never caught skipping and teachers rarely reported those students who were smoking dope below the school. She asked me, "Do you think they don't know or do you think they don't care?" She wondered why no one stepped in to talk with the young girls who drank, did drugs, and hung out with older guys. She questioned what the connection was between the school motto, "What we do today creates tomorrow", and the emotional and physical abuse that several of her peers faced at school.

2. *Holding my own.* Anita worked hard to transform herself from the "young girl who drank too much and screwed around too much." With little community and family support she managed to stop her binge eating. She spent time writing each day and published several of her poems. At the end of grade 11, Anita browsed through the university and college calendars for journalism programs. With little direction, she pulled together a writing portfolio and applied to Mt. Royal College. When she was not accepted, she continued to search out other programs and to develop alternate plans for the fall. I was deeply touched by Anita's ability to cope with the layers of paradox and complexity in herself and in her worlds (Ianni, 1989; Phelan et al., 1991a).

Catherine

Catherine, aged 18, graduated from grade 12 a year ago. Although she had only a few days available before she started a training program, she was willing to make the research relationship work. Within a week of finishing her training in river rafting, Catherine found a job in Adventure Tourism away from the area. We conducted the second interview over the phone and when Catherine was unable to complete her photographic display, she wrote a poem that was a description of the intended display.

Social worlds: Family. My family is very important to me. They're so loving and caring. My mom is my best friend. I'm the oldest of three sisters and act as their role model. I am constantly blown away by how loving my family is. It will be hard to leave. We have 30 acres of bush and farmland and a river that runs right next to us so I've spent a lot of time outside exploring and camping. My dad owns a sawmill and my mom works at a nearby ski resort. That has been great for me. I've become physically strong working the planer, splitting shakes, and driving forklifts.

Social worlds: Peers. Living up the lake has meant that I have made friends with people that in a bigger situation I probably wouldn't talk to. Once I bussed into Asgard for school, I made different friends. I would stay overnight in town at friends so that I could go out and party with them. That's when I met my best friend from the other side of Asgard. After graduation we travelled together to Eastern Canada to work on organic farms.

Social worlds: School. Living up-the-lake has meant not having many friends when I was younger. Like when I was in grade 5, I felt like I didn't fit in. It was really hard to be in a small school. At the end of grade 7, I went to summer camp and found out how easy it was to make friends. When I went to high school in Asgard, I found

myself there! I joined everything! I just loved drama classes and playing speedball. I was the captain of the volleyball team, president of the student council, class valedictorian, and the winner of several scholarships.

Social worlds: Boyfriends. I've never had a steady boyfriend with exception of a short relationship in grade 8. I really like doing things independently and meeting people. I'm not able to commit to a relationship right now.

Social worlds: Workplace. Besides helping my dad on the planer, I've also taught swimming at the local lake, worked as a kitchen assistant in a nearby centre, worked at the Ski Lodge as a kitchen helper, caretaker, and cabin cleaner. My experience at the lodge has gotten me interested in adventure tourism.

Community benefits and limitations. I've always noticed how varied each community is. In my small community I see more intolerance of difference and more narrow-mindedness than I see, for instance, in Asgard. Still, I loved growing up in the area. I like waking up each day and seeing the mountains and seeing the same people and watching how they change. It's a great feeling to walk down the street and recognize just about everyone. More than anything, I love breathing in the clean air and taking hikes in the amazing wilderness around here. There are some changes I would have liked as I was growing up. I felt gypped out of some good friendships because I just lived too far from Asgard. The elementary school couldn't provide as many opportunities as the school in Asgard. I didn't learn to play a band instrument and so I couldn't be part of Asgard's school band. There are so few jobs here. I've been lucky because of my mom's work connection that I could find work in the area. Most young people can't. Another drawback to living here is if you change, people will still see you as you were. Change is really difficult.

Planning and decision-making process. The CaPP program and work experience didn't really work for me. I think the programs need more development and need to focus on expanding students' horizons. My future has already begun. I graduated last year and since then have learned how to rock climb, have taken Essentials for Leaders, and Wilderness First Aid. I've taken my Bronze Medallion and Bronze Cross in swimming, and have signed up for the National Certificate Course in life-guarding. The mountains, rivers, and sports are my focus right now. My love of water has led me to learn river rafting. School right now is life's school-- getting experiential learning and learning about myself and stepping away from the shy, insecure person that got created in elementary school. In the future, I'd love to come back and be near my family, but only if a career opportunity arises. In the distant future, I want to become a mom, become an environmental advocate, and become financially established.

Hopes and fears for the future. My overall hope is to be close to nature and the outdoors. Within that environment, I want to be loved and connected to others. I want to be healthy and in shape. I hope to be well-adjusted, adaptable, cultured, and a globe-trotter. I would like to be an educator who serves as a role model and mentor for others. I hope I will be a good mother and perhaps own a farm. What I fear in the future is being unhealthy and out of shape and not living close to nature. I wouldn't want to be cut off from family and friends or be closed to other points of view. I would hate to be looked down upon.

Catherine: Global Impressions

Full of strength was the phrase that I used to describe Catherine in my journal. Her family was intact and diligent and provided Catherine with structure, support, and

resources, the characteristics according to Tromsdorff (2000) necessary for positive adaptation to environmental and social change. Catherine related how she and her parents discussed her future plans together (Kracke, 1997; Young et al., 2001) and how they encouraged her to take steps to become independent. Catherine's central concerns were around becoming stronger and extending herself beyond the borders of her community.

1. *Creating the stronger me.* Catherine communicated several instances of experiences that gave her strength and confidence. She learned how to negotiate friendships in a small community where she had few choices. She ventured into sports and other school activities and found that she was a leader. Since graduating she had travelled through Eastern Canada, and taken up rock climbing and other adventure sports. Through her purposeful activities she had developed strong expectations of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997).

2. *Becoming bigger than.* Catherine had been supported in her efforts to develop skills needed to succeed in the male dominated field of adventure tourism. Her parents, extended family, employers, and teachers had encouraged her to move beyond her community to discover essential skills needed to be successful in her chosen field. "I've challenged myself to be more accepting of differences. When I came home from my trip... I noticed how narrow-minded and intolerant many people were here... I told myself that I wanted to become more of a cultural person...someone who knows about other cultures, someone who is comfortable with a variety of people."

Tina

Tina, aged 18, and in grade 11, had the most difficulty in articulating and reflecting on her experience. However, Tina also said that she hated listening to

discussions in class, and found school somewhat difficult. In our second interview, Tina seemed somewhat distant and it took time for us to re-establish a connection.

Social worlds: Family. When I was younger, like in grade 8, living in a place with less than 100 people was not cool. Now I like it here. It's been pretty cool because you know a lot of people. My relatives have moved here to be closer to us because my family had some rough times, like when my brother died and when I was caught shop-lifting and had to serve community hours. Anyhow, I moved out a couple of times and lived with friends up-the-lake and in Calgary. It was such a pumping city! Now my parents are just so flexible and support me in everything I do. It's like hanging out with your friends. As for the future, we'll be close. My dad works at a marina and my mom works on a weekly paper in Asgard.

Social worlds: Peers. Actually I don't have a lot of female friends. I have more what I would call associates; girls I've known from Kindergarten. Most everybody is in some sort of clique and I tend to hang out with an older crowd in their early twenties who drink and smoke dope. Like partying is the biggest thing we do. My friends and I also like to bike, fish, hike, play baseball, play hockey, play pool, and shoot darts at the hall in town. In the summer we hang out on the beach or on Main Street where we can smoke and watch people walk by. Generally I like to hang with male friends. Male friends make you stronger because you have to compete with them and learn skills like shooting and fishing. I can communicate with guys more. In the future, it will probably change with friends. But, you know, it's like you'll still keep a piece of them cause you had lots of good times with them. We have really good relationships with people here.

Social worlds: School. When I came back from Calgary, I decided to try going to the alternate school and that works for me. I go, do what I need to do and then hang

out with my friends. I'm not into many activities—like I don't have to do activities with others unless I want to. At the regular school, I didn't get along with the teachers and I didn't like the work. I began to skip on a regular basis in Grade 8. It just didn't work for me. I like to be active and doing.

Social worlds: Boyfriends. One thing about living here is that you know your boyfriend before you go out with him – cause you know everyone that lives here. My current boyfriend is a “bushman”. He really likes the outdoors and that's something we do together. He's two years older than me and he graduated 2 years ago. Long term, I don't know. We have our arguments, like every other relationship, but whatever happens, happens, you know.

Social worlds: Workplace. I've had a few jobs here. I worked at a convenience store right near my house and at the marina restaurant. This summer I'll probably cut firewood with my boyfriend and sell it.

Community benefits and limitations. Living here has both good and bad parts. It's a small place so you get to know so many people, but you can get sick of seeing the same people too. You can always find a place to be alone and there are so beautiful things to see. I can walk around here safely at night. There's always somebody you can talk to and support is there when someone commits suicide. But there's also nothing to do and that's why people grow and smoke weed, take mushrooms, go to Raves, and drink. It's even more difficult when you're younger living out of town and you want to go out and party. I don't think there's a lot of support for young people. There's no help when you want to get away from home or when you're trying to think about the future. Like they don't even notice and they don't even care. It's also hard to find jobs here. Another thing is that rumours are made up because there's nothing to do.

Planning and decision-making process. I believe that plans for the future come from inside and what you're thinking in your head. It's all experience and that's why CaPP is not working. Teacher's can tell you what courses you need, but most people don't know what they want to do. If I were interested in thinking about the future, I'd talk it over first with friends and then my teacher. I have no interest in looking things up on the Internet. Like if I had to guess, I'd say something like accounting because I'm really good at math. If I made some money perhaps I would open a restaurant in Calgary. As for children, I want to be grown up before I have them. Then I'd like to come back to this area. The future's too far off to think about. I graduate next year—a year later than some of my friends. I think I'll go to the city, but right now, I just want to graduate. That's all I'm headed for, and then whatever comes after that...like if I find something that I really like to do. But whatever happens, I just kind of go with the flow.

Hopes and fears for the future. My hopes for the future include raising my family in my hometown, being happy, never losing touch with my childhood, being wealthy, being an owner of a house with beautiful scenery, and having many of the same friends as I do now. I am afraid of being unhealthy (like not quitting smoking), of seeing the forests ripped down, of growing old and senile, and of never leaving here and meeting other people.

Tina: Global Impressions

As Tina stated several times, "This is who I am and people either like me or they don't." Tina presented as a "doer" rather than a "thinker." She found it difficult to reflect on her experiences and her interviews seemed to lack some of the cohesiveness of the other interviews. Causal cohesiveness connects life events and

explains differences in the narrator's values as a result of those life events (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). The lack of causal coherence produces a lifestory that appears to be based on chance. She did not make the links between life episodes explicit nor did she explain the changes in her value system over time. I wondered how she and her parents reconciled their differences when she returned home? How did she resolve her desire for the fun and excitement of Calgary with the adolescent scene in Asgard? Was her responsiveness towards nature a form of geopiety; that is, a sacred or spiritual response towards a place (Tuan, 1980)? Three features of Tina's life story stood out for me: her need to be active; her strong attachment to the landscape; and the sense that she was going through the motions of attending school and living in Asgard.

1. *Being active.* Tina found school increasingly difficult when she entered grade 8. Tina stated, "I couldn't sit there all day writing down what I thought about things. It was too slow." Instead Tina skipped and spent time with friends hiking through the woods, playing on the beach, or acquiring a bottle of liquor from older youth. Her favourite sport was ice hockey, a sport she played for a number of years.

2. *Attachment to the landscape.* Tina talked in depth about beautiful places in the area where she and her friends partied. She spoke passionately about how she hated to see the clearcuts from across the lake and how she wanted to take action to make sure that the forests were not cut down. Tina seemed very attached to the landscape (Proshansky et al., 1983; Tuan, 1980) in almost a spiritual way. Tuan believed that from an interaction of space and place, intimate exchanges between humans and the natural world emerge--hence sacred place. Paul Shepard (1982) wrote that the deprivation of an enveloping and intimate exposure to the natural world leaves individuals in crippled psychological states.

3. *Going through the motions.* Tina enjoyed going to the alternate school. She set her own pace and worked alone on the computer. "I just sit down and work for three hours, answer the questions, and then leave.... Then my time is my own. I don't have to sit around thinking too much. I just do it" Tina also talked about her activities in the same manner. "One of the things I like about living here... there's not much to do so you don't have to think too much about what you're doing on the weekend. It's party, party, party. The place where you party might change, that's all." Tina seemed to want the stability after the high energy of Calgary. "It was neat to go out, but I can't handle it for too long."

Jessica

Jessica, aged 19, was the oldest participant. She graduated from grade 12 a year ago. Jessica arrived for each interview dressed neatly and conservatively in a black skirt and white blouse. She approached the interview process in a business-like fashion, making sure that we kept to the topic and ended at the agreed upon time. Jessica was very clear about her boundaries and told me, "When I don't want to talk about something, I plan on letting you know."

Social worlds: Family. I'm an up-the-laker who graduated last year. I've lived in the area since I was two. My mom and dad divorced when I was young and my mom remarried when I was seven. My step-dad, mom, older sister, younger sister, and younger half-sister live about an hour north of Asgard on some acreage. My step-dad has an excavation business and my mom does the books. My dad still lives in the area and builds homes. I always look forward to being with my family. We have so much fun together. Our favourite family activities include watching TV on Friday night,

playing cards, fishing, having a barbecue, swimming, and camping. I am especially close to my mom and still phone her about four times a day.

Social worlds: Peers. Most of my close friends went to school up-the-lake with me. I found it difficult to make close friends in Asgard because of the distance from home. My parents discouraged me from partying in Asgard and so that set me apart. I could have partied every weekend if I had insisted on staying overnight but I liked going home and having a nice night with my family. To me, it's just a waste of time and money, partying. I've never belonged to any particular group but floated among the different groups.

Social worlds: School. When I was in elementary school I enjoyed attending the local school. Because it was a small school, I wasn't able to take band and that was too bad. The move from a really small school at the end of grade 7 into Asgard was traumatic! I got used to it and school became pretty much my social life. Drama was a way for me to connect with other students. I also liked art and took extra courses and played volleyball in grade 10. I graduated with a few scholarships but I haven't had the opportunity of using them.

Social worlds: Boyfriends. I met my boyfriend when he was visiting from a large city. He used to live here when he was younger. We were together for about two years or so when we decided to live together when I graduated. The relationship has been good for me. It's given me a sense of responsibility. We both work in Asgard so living together makes sense. Financially, I would never have been able to rent a place by myself. Now he's one of the family. After he finishes his apprenticeship as a meat cutter, we plan on travelling.

Social worlds: Workplace. Getting a job in Asgard is not easy. You have to earn employers' respect by showing them that you are responsible and hardworking.

My parents really worked hard to help me land my job. They helped me with my resume and encouraged me to go back and remind them that I wanted work. I work at a bulk gas station doing office work. After a year I have learned a variety of skills including computer skills.

Community benefits and limitations. I can't imagine living anywhere better than here. I don't need the bigger life found in the cities. I'll admit there's not much to do but you have to go out and make it what you want it to be. For me, I've learned to love the freedom of the outdoors and the quietness and calmness of the area. The people here give you the freedom to set your own path. I recognize that the smallness of the place makes for limitations. I could use more role models beyond my mom and I would have liked to have had more variety in the courses available at school.

Planning and decision-making process. I really didn't learn that much from CaPP. Representatives from the different colleges came in, but I wasn't all that interested. I knew that I wanted to stay in the area, so I never did much research into what was out there. Besides, I didn't want to end up with a huge student loan in something that I couldn't use here. After talking with my stepbrother's wife who went to SAIT, I am thinking that I might learn how to design web pages. That would be something I could do at home and still be able to raise a family. I was sick of school when I graduated. I just wanted to get out of school. I've graduated. I have my diploma. I just want to go out and have a working life for a bit. I enjoy living with my boyfriend. I have no reason to leave right now. I definitely want to go to school in the future. We're not ready to have any kids yet. But for now, I'm happy here.

Hopes and fears for the future. In the future, I hope to have a family, children, and a husband. I really want to help my sister overcome her fears about singing. I would like to be her agent. It would always be important for me to be employed at

something steady and enjoyable. Of course, travelling is on my list, as well as owning my own car and living in a timber-frame house built by my dad. I fear that one of my family members will die. If I couldn't live in the area, my fear would be that I would end up in a city, feeling lonely and perhaps losing my job and becoming homeless. I also dread the not being able to pay the bills and being unemployed.

Jessica: Global Impressions

During our two interviews, I kept feeling “boxed in” as I listened to Jessica tell her story of living in Asgard.

Jessica presented what I felt was a white-washed version of life in this community. She summed up her discussion with phrases such as “It’s been good. It’s been fun.” When I probed for more detailed responses, she often gave glowing reports of living here. I found myself listening for moments of contradiction or times when she paused to think about what she was going to say. I was aware of places where her story contradicted other stories that I had been hearing. When I asked about these other themes that were arising from the interviews, she said, “Well I think you’re talking to those kids who have gone against what this community wants kids to be like.” I began to wonder how much of her story was a form of impression management (McAdams, 1996). Journal, September 1999

Two topics recurred throughout the two interviews: being responsible and being practical.

1. *Being responsible.* For Jessica, being responsible was a sign of being a grownup. She had taken on “being responsible” from the time she entered high

school. She was a responsible daughter who didn't party or hang out with friends in Asgard. She was a responsible student who put her studies before having fun. She was a responsible employer, a responsible sister, a responsible driver, a responsible partner etc. Jessica's story reminded me of the work of Gilligan (1982), Markus & Oyserman (1989), and Miller (1991) etc. who spoke of adolescent girls losing their sense of self as an active agent in order to retain the self that wants to be "being-in-relationships." Jessica appeared to follow the rules laid out for her. I found it difficult to get a sense of who Jessica was.

2. *Being practical.* Jessica described herself as a practical person. It was practical to live with her boyfriend in Asgard so that she wouldn't have to drive all the way to her parents' home after work. It was practical to not party as partying cost money and time. When thinking about the future, Jessica wanted to make sure that her decisions would be practical and would fit in with having a family and continuing to live in Asgard. After our interview I wrote in my journal, "What would Jessica do if she was told to be totally impractical for one day?" Would new directions for her life emerge or would she indeed choose to continue to live her life as she is now?"

Summary

The Snapshot Reading gave me a concise synopsis of each participant.

Forming these global impressions helped me to pare away all the details and to get down to the bare bones of what was being said. I kept getting lost in all the pages of transcript and wondered if I had information that would help me to answer the research questions. I certainly heard many stories about living in this community, but did I have the stories I needed? OR is it more important to follow the stories the young women told me. My counsellor training tells me to follow them; I am not sure

what the researcher self should do. Where do I go from here?" Journal September 2000.

On rereading the Snapshots, I noticed participants had a variety of self-perceptions of their place within the community. Some like Lyn, Catherine, Josée, and Suzanne were actively engaged in community activities. Grace and Josée felt alone and vulnerable at times. Jessica was taking on the roles she saw around her. Anita was finding her way through trial and error. Tina saw herself as a partier, just doing what she was doing and not thinking too much about who she was or her role in the community. My sense was that there was more complexity here than what I was able to capture in the Snapshot Reading. I returned to the transcript and noted the stories within stories that I heard. I began to order their life stories in a temporal sequence to see if there was some direction to their overall narrative.

I keep returning to Grace's transcript. Her story especially resonated with me-- probably because she likes to spend time alone walking through nature. She also feels like an outsider--a similar feeling that I had when I was in high school. Now when I look at important events in her life and begin to put them in order, they seem to be saying more to me than the single event does. Why does she continue to talk about her grade 3 experience of being left out? What was so important about changing her name and how did that change how she saw herself? Was changing herself a theme?

I continued to examine the timing and sequence of important incidents and developed a graph for each participant. The next analysis section contains the Life-Course Graph Reading.

Life-course Graph Reading

After completing the snapshots, I reread my journal notes and reviewed notes made in the margins of the transcripts. In each transcript, I noted nuclear stories or key events that participants related spontaneously and described as important. As I listed the key events in chronological order, I was struck by the connectedness or coherence of the key events as well as by the sense of movement or direction through time. Several researchers (Gergen & Gergen, 1984, 1988; Ochberg, 1988; Riessman, 1993) have stated that the structure of a life plot is symbolic in its own right.

Individuals make sense of their lives through a reliance on familiar plot lines, archetypal characters, and significant remembered episodes. They use these components of the life story to weave together diverse experiences into a coherent narrative that creates a sense of unity over time and a defined purpose for future action (Singer & Bluck, 2001, p. 93).

Rather than directing attention to the content, the researcher examines the “specific form and direction taken by the content” (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 89). The formation of the narrative or the plot structure uncovers the participant’s personal construction of her developing life story. For example, topics such as inclusion in a particular clique may be the thematic focus of the narrative; however, analysis will focus more on the path of this development instead of just on the content world in which this development occurs.

Each of us draws on every form in constructing our personal myths. No single life story is pure tragedy or pure comedy. Rather, there are narrative mixtures. Each mixture is unique. Most mixtures nonetheless emphasize one or two of the forms and minimize the others. (McAdams, 1993, p. 52).

Structural graphs can display a large amount of narrative material in an understandable, visually accessible arrangement (Lieblich et al., 1998). The process of developing Life-course Graphs can be summarized as follows:

1. List events identified as important by participants.
2. Note the chronological order of key events and age at which each event occurred. Key events can include past and present course of development as well as the anticipated future course of development.
3. Note repeated phrases in each key event. The dynamics of the plot were inferred from specific phrases and terms that the narrators expressed in describing their past, current, and anticipated future life course, for example, "it was the best part of my life so far" or "those were the hardest years."
4. Designate the event as positive, negative, or static based on the detail and language used to describe the event.
5. Construct a graph with age on the horizontal axis and evaluation of the event on the vertical axis. Place the key events on the graph and number them. Use the following key to connect events: ascent for positive events (/), decline for negative events (\), and a straight line for times of continuity or stability (____).
6. Title the graph using a repeated phrase from the participant's narrative that seems to capture the course of events.
7. Identify key narrative themes in the life story. Use the themes of agency and communion as identified by McAdams (1985, 1993, 1996, 1999).
8. Specify the ideological setting (McAdams 1985, 1993, 1996, 1999) or values and beliefs that are expressed through the nuclear episodes.

The number of key events cited by each participant ranged from three to four events. All participants revealed a key event within the first four interactions during

the first interview. Significant events involved times of difficulty with friends, parents, or teachers, times of self-growth and acceptance, times of opportunities inside and outside the community, and times of losses. The life-course graphs are presented in the same order as the Snapshots.

Suzanne: A Series of Ups and Downs

Suzanne described her life in Asgard as “a series of ups and downs.” Her relationships with her mother, her employer, her father, her half-brother, her friends, and her teachers were changeable. Her parents divorced when she was young. Suzanne was not close to her father and frequently fought with her mother and her half-brother. The fighting escalated and Suzanne decided to live with her father for the summer. She came back to Asgard to begin grade 10 and then left after one month to return to Calgary. On her return to Asgard, two months later, she became more involved in community activities and less involved in school activities. Three stories identified by Suzanne as key events show the fluctuations in her life and how she coped

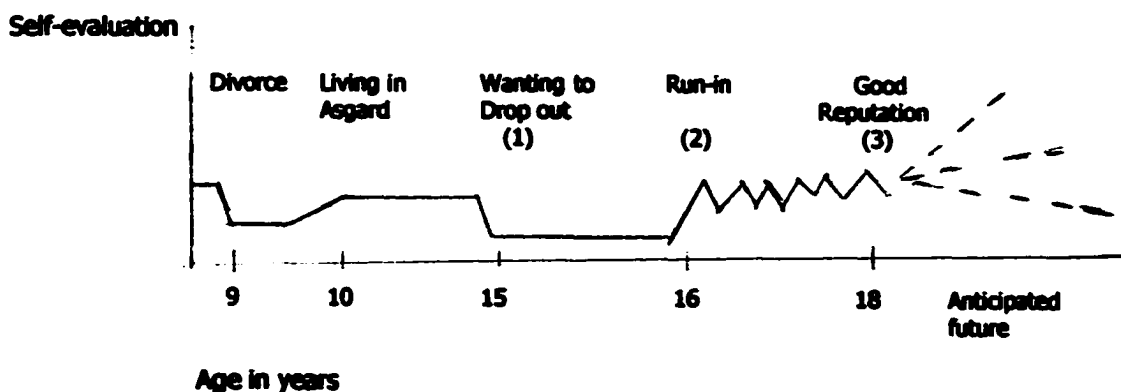


Figure 5. Suzanne's Life-course Graph: A series of ups and downs

1. *“Wanting to Drop Out”* Suzanne was on the honour roll until she and her mother disagreed about her curfew and about the type of friends she was making. Initially, Suzanne thought that she would benefit from living with her father and from attending a larger school where she would have more friends, more freedom, and more activities to engage in. However “I couldn’t do it. Just going to a school that was larger than the town I just came from was amazing. I couldn’t deal with it. I was ...completely unknown... I didn’t develop any relationships with my teachers.... Nobody got that--my dad couldn’t understand my situation and my mom was too angry to try.” On her return to Asgard Suzanne started to take some courses at the alternate school and that allowed her to finish high school although she wanted to “drop out just about every day.”

Suzanne’s first story seemed reminiscent of Elkind’s personal fable (1981). Adolescents narrate stories that underscore their uniqueness, often framed in terms of “nobody understands me.” McAdams (1990) views the personal fable as a “very rough draft of identity.” With maturity the adolescent edits, rewrites and reworks the narrative to become more realistic. Suzanne appeared to value friendships and close ties with her teachers. She also believed in being listened to and receiving “some acknowledgement that I am growing up and have some opinions of my own.”

2. *“Personal Run-in”* One of Suzanne’s strongest ties to the high school was her involvement in the drama club. Suzanne had a “personal run-in” with the drama teacher “off-school, and she [the teacher] carried it on to school and classes...she put a lot on me. So I just don’t want to deal with it.” Suzanne paused and said very quietly, “It hurts a lot.” Suzanne’s hurt stayed with her as theatre was “really big here” and theatre sports took place almost every Friday. Not being part of the drama

club cut Suzanne off from her only extra-curricular activity. “Now I don’t even hang out at school that much. There’s really nothing for me there.”

The theme of Suzanne’s second story seemed to also fit with the idea of a personal fable. Her teacher did not understand her and Suzanne was not going to bother trying to present her side of the story. Suzanne believed that she should be listened to and respected at face value.

3. “*Developing a Good Reputation*” Suzanne turned to outside the school system for role models and mentors. “Like I’ve been on the Youth Council for five years, the same adult president has been on with me.... She’s taught me how to speak out more... Making presentations. Writing proposals.” Another adult on the Restorative Justice committee also mentored Suzanne. “He just teaches me so much. He’s like the teacher I never had, and the father I never had.... He like, just gives me the best advice: Stand up for yourself. Be there for friends.” Through her community activities, Suzanne found that her friends’ and boyfriend’s parents respected her. She stated emphatically, “It’s the whole deal about small town type of thing, I don’t want my reputation to get trashed.”

The last story has a theme of communion. Suzanne joined two community organizations and developed the close relationships that she craved in her earlier story. Her mentors showed her how to match her actions with her values. She believed that it was important to be respected and now she had a means to gain respect. She believed it was important to have a voice and to be acknowledged. Now she had a forum for being heard and “for making a difference in this community—especially for kids.”

Who Suzanne may be in the future is full of possibilities. Right now Suzanne just “hates to think ahead.” She might get a place with her boyfriend, or she might go

to Australia (a graduation present from her father), or she might continue to work in town, or maybe she might go back to school.

Josée: A Painful Process

A common theme in Josée's stories was the difficulty of growing up in Asgard. Negotiating between the world of her Christian family and the worlds of her peers was a challenge. Josée described herself as a "friendly outgoing" person yet she had few close friends.

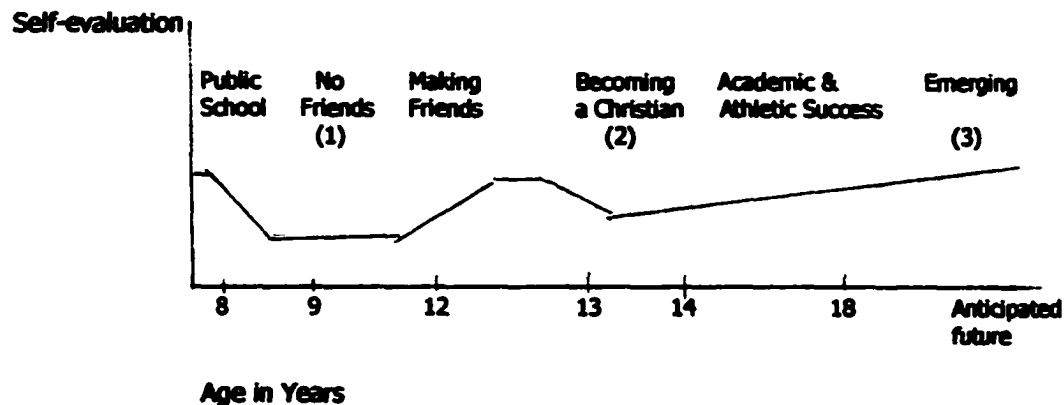


Figure 6. Josée's Life-course Graph: A Painful Process

1. *"Never Had Any Friends"* Before grade four, Josée was home- schooled. During that time, she developed close friendships but slowly her friends moved away. "[T]hat really hurt a lot....like a lot of my friends ended up moving away and so I don't know if it was training for me to have pretty, like not too deep attachments with people..." After she entered public school she "had another friend, who also grew up hereour relationship came to a point where some things happened...I didn't have any friends in grade 5 or 6 really and that was really painful for me." Josée included many of her friends that have "been involved in a lot of hurt that I've experienced" in

her photo display. At several points in her narrative, Josée stressed that “when you’re friends then people can get hurt, because you’re vulnerable and you make yourself known to them and that can be dangerous.”

The theme of Josée’s first story reflects a lack of communion with her peer group. She wanted to be close to others and she valued faithfulness and loyalty in her friendships. Above all, Josée wanted to be accepted by her peers, yet she believed that she must safeguard herself against being hurt by others.

2. *“Becoming a Christian”* When Josée entered Grade 8, she became a Christian. Her photo display included the phrase, “Father’s love is in the centre—God’s love is at the very centre of my life.” In her small community, Josée found few young people who were Christians. “[W]hen I became a Christian, that really separated me from many of my friends, because I couldn’t go along with what they were doing. So I probably came across as knowing all the answers.” Josée admired her parents for staying together and for being Christians. “Like one of my friends has an alcoholic mother and most of them are from split families. And my family isn’t and so I think my friends thought that I was being judgmental about their families.” At this point in her life, Josée turned her attention to community activities through her church. She also began to excel academically and athletically.

The theme of this story is primarily one of agency with the intent of forming relationships with others. Josée found spiritual strength when she became a Christian. In the Christian faith she discovered standards of behaviour that she valued: love and care for others and faithfulness in relationships.

3. *“Emerging”* Josée was filled with both sadness and excitement as grade 12 ended. She stated she would miss her friends but had felt constrained by the community at times and hoped that she would meet fellow Christians in the world

beyond Asgard. “My life [here] is ending really soon. And at the end of grad, it’s like a new chapter begins.” She was not sure what she would do in the future, but after graduation planned on travelling to Australia.

Again, Josée expressed a desire for fellowship that she could not find within her community. She began to consider looking beyond Asgard for connections to others who shared similar values and who would accept her.

Grace: On the Fringe

Grace’s lifeline can be summarized as someone who was “still wary of others.” She lived her life on the periphery of the various groups in the community. When asked, “What has it been like growing up here?” Grace told the story of “not fitting” in the community. “I basically learned that I was a little bit behind” (she laughs) and “a little bit odd” (she laughs).

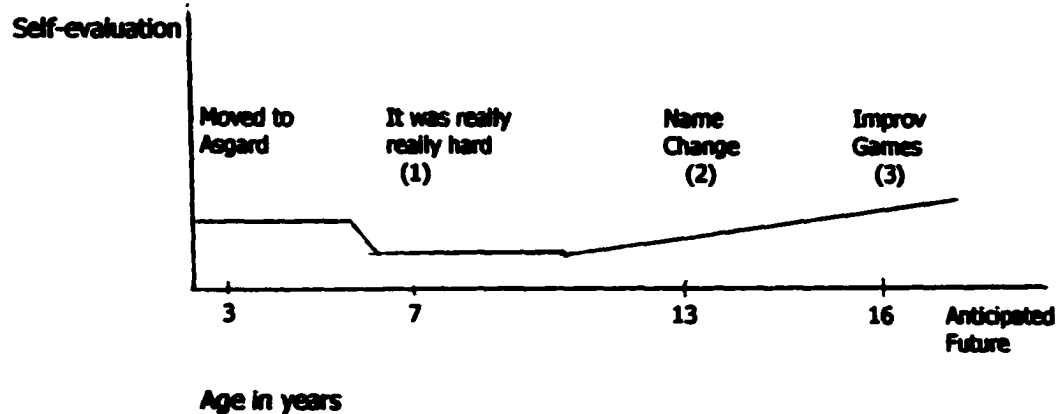


Figure 7. Grace’s Life-course Graph: On the Fringe

1. *“It was really, really hard.”* Grace described her experience of entering the local public school at the beginning of grade 3 from an alternate school as really hard. “[E]veryone has formed their little cliques and relationships by Kindergarten!...I was in my little cords and sweatshirt, everyone else was in their neon-coloured leggings and biff 80’s shirts and stuff and I was just this little farm girl...” Looking back, Grace realized that “it wasn’t so much me trying to fit in, it was like me not fitting in....I sort of withdrew...I didn’t have much to do with the people in my class outside of school. I would just go home and read to be away from them.”

Grace talked of “power differentials” at school. “If you don’t get to play it out when you’re little and actually fight for yourself and work through and find out where you’re going to be, then you won’t be able to function when you are in actual society.” Grace’s story was centered on a theme of lack of communion. She valued being accepting and having nonjudgmental friendships. Like Josée, Grace had learned to protect herself from being hurt others by spending little time with her peers.

2. *“Name Change”* At the beginning of her grade 8 year, Grace “was really dissatisfied with ...who I was.” While attending a fall fair, she heard the “cool names” of the vendors, “Star Rainbow” and “Sunshine,” and decided that if she changed her name, she wouldn’t “have to worry about the whole image thing.” After considering a number of possible names, Grace chose her second name because it reflected qualities that she valued—“being considerate, being gracious, and showing compassion.” Grace partially attributed her positive experiences in high school to her name change. “[I]t was a big shift for me. One of the biggest things was like I made a couple of friends that were really good...I felt... more comfortable with teachers.”

This story seems to fit under the thematic line of agency. She made an intentional act that had an impact on how other's responded to her. However, the purpose of her act was to gain companionship or communion with others.

3. *"Improv Games."* One of the highlights of Grace's latter school years was her visit to Ottawa for the Canada Improv Games. "I think there's a lot of truth in the whole "small town minds" thing. And I think anytime that you leave it and are exposed to just another slice of the world, it...changes you a lot." Grace had opportunities to meet youth from across Canada and to attend cultural performances. "It gave me a lot more confidence, cause you get slotted [here]. And they decide and THEY decide that deep in your past. That's just who you are...But going down to Ottawa, meeting all these people, it's like, you are whoever you are!" Grace believed that "I would have turned out way different if I didn't get away from here."

Here is another story with a thematic line of communion. The values expressed include finding approval from others and gaining wider perspectives from which to view one's self.

With regard to the future, Grace had considered several career paths and had taken the necessary academic prerequisites. Her first choice was to obtain her Level 4 with the Canadian Equine Association and then attend Olds College in Alberta. Her second choice was to apply to massage school. If she was not accepted at Olds in the fall, then she planned on working for a year in Victoria while boarding with her brother.

Lyn: I'm Embracing All

Lyn's lifeline is a summary of events that she viewed as "opportunities for self-discovery." Although Lyn made brief reference to her parents' divorce and to

“worrying about everything” when she first started school, she seemed more interested in discussing recent events. She spoke with excitement and enthusiasm whenever she referred to her three key events. Her body language reflected her animation as she waved her hands and smiled.

1. *“I’m Getting Comfortable with my Little Quirks”* Lyn described how “in grade 9 and 10, it was like, it was this big quest to find yourself.” Finding herself involved partying, drinking, and experimenting with drugs and sex. As a grade 12

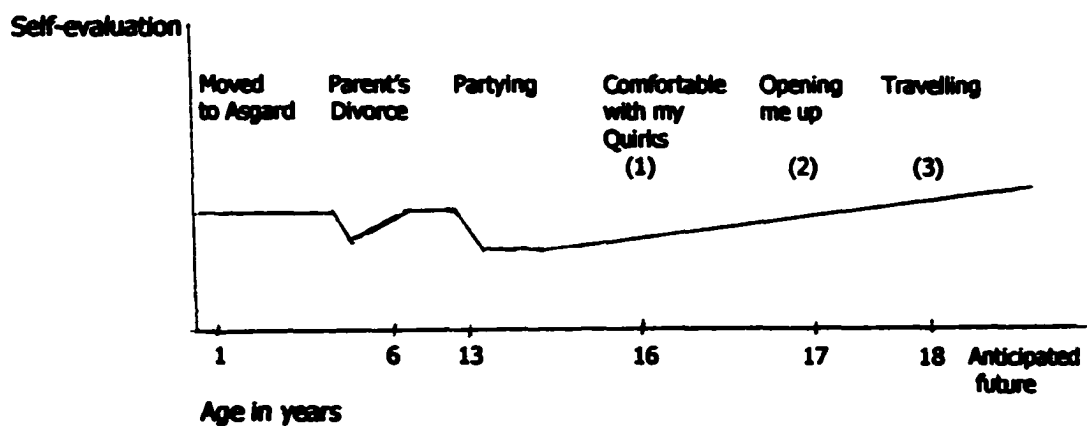


Figure 8. Lyn's Life-course Graph: I'm Embracing All

student, Lyn commented, “I would say that I know myself way better and I’m not so desperate at searching.... I’m not as set into putting myself into a stereotype....I’m getting comfortable with my little quirks that counteract with other things. Kind of realize that ...no one fits into a stereotype....you don’t have to fit into that category making every part of your whole being be that type of label.” Lyn discovered that with the letting go of trying to fit in she became less stressed out, “so it’s kind of just gradually easing off.”

Lyn's story pointed toward actively developing psychological strength. Within her agentic narrative, Lyn expressed the values of self-discovery, experimentation, and self-acceptance.

2. "*Opening Me Up*" Lyn illustrated how she has slowly opened up to new perceptions of who she was. Her attendance at an "environmental sanity" summer camp in California "really opened my mind and my eyes to a lot of different things...like discovering a lot of stuff about yourself and how it's all connected to the earth...a lot about connections." Lyn noted that when she travelled and met other people, "It just sort of opens me up—like just different people besides just the Asgard, not that it's bad, but it's ...just a little wider than Asgard."

Through connections with others, Lyn came to understand herself. Again the story reflected values of self-discovery, exploration, and perhaps spirituality as she noticed "personal connections to Mother Earth."

3. "*What It's Like to Live in Another Place*" Travelling was a thread that ran through Lyn's interviews. "I didn't know what I was going to do next year. I knew that I didn't want to go to school next year...I was totally burned out...I was pretty sure I wanted to travel somewhere.... So there was a poster up in the school-Canada World Youth..." Lyn described the three-stage process that she went through to be accepted. "It was fun, it was also very...nerve-wracking, too." However, just "figuring out what I'm going to do next year, that brought happiness." Lyn viewed this opportunity to work in Ontario and India as a chance to "open the door" to discover herself and her potential as well as an opportunity to gain a different perspective on life by living in a different culture. "[I]t helps to just be able to have opportunities to meet more and more people."

This is a story of agency. Lyn actively thought about her future, sought

out information, and made plans to travel. Recurring values were expressed, including: exploration and self-discovery. Again I noted that not only would she learn about herself through her travels, but she would also associate with a wide-range of people.

Anita: I've Transformed the Label

Throughout grade 9 and grade 10, Anita “partied hard.” Her reputation was “smashed and smeared all over town.” Her Life-course Graph shows a slow progression throughout the later years of high school.

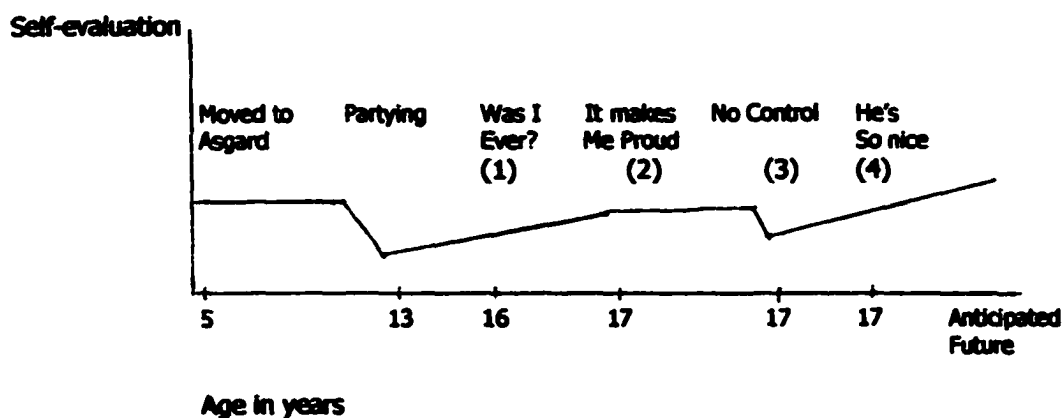


Figure 9. Anita's Life-course Graph: I've Transformed the Label

1. “*You're Not Like That Anymore... Was I Ever?*” Anita described her grade 9 and 10 years as her party years. “I went out with a lot of guys...but just from stuff like that, you get a reputation or a name, dirty looks and everything.” Anita realized that she could not live with the label of “slut” and that she wanted more self-respect. “I just sort of lost it and spent months wearing track suits and a sweatshirt....and I didn't

kiss anybody for ten months!” When asked how she escaped the label, Anita replied, “[I]t’s not that I’ve escaped a label, it’s just that I’ve completely transformed it, because that’s not who I was in the first place.” And when people came up to Anita and stated, “You’re not like that anymore” she would think, “Like was I ever?”

An agentic theme described Anita’s story. She intentionally took action to change how others saw her. She stated, “I deliberately set out to make a better name for myself.”

2. *“It Makes Me Proud”* Anita attributed her new-found self-confidence on her involvement in hockey and the support of her friends. “I was the only girl on the team that year and it was just like completely hormonal, horrible, raw emotion hockey season of death...I really learned more about having pride and about being honest with yourself.” In some communities, Anita “experienced a lot of ignorance...a lot of sexism from people.” At first she would cry and leave the ice because “I [got] beaten up practically... I [took] a lot of shit.” Her coach supported her and encouraged her to go out and play the best that she could. Another factor in her increased confidence was from her friends. “I used to have like horrible, below everything self-esteem, sort of like my friends turned me out of that...” Anita was able to end her binging cycles with her friends’ assistance and with her own determination. “I was like whatever, and to either grow up and realize that’s not who I am, that’s not who I was, and that’s not who I’m going to be, and that...I have a lot going for myself.” Anita submitted several of her poems to a magazine and had two published. She also represented the Chamber of Commerce as Asgard’s Princess.

The thematic line of communion characterized Anita’s second story. However, I noted that it was through her affiliation with others that Anita gained a sense of who

she was. The values expressed by Anita included self-respect, honesty, taking ownership of one's life, and support from others.

3. *"You Don't Have Any Control"* In the spring for the third year in a row, Anita tried out for the girls' provincial hockey team. When she was not selected, Anita felt "competent enough to say I know I should have been on the team, but it's just the politics in hockey...who your coaches are and stuff like that." Anita strongly believed that she had worked hard and had made significant improvements each year. "I spent the year really thinking about it and preparing myself for it." Making it on the provincial team had been one of Anita's dreams since grade 8. Anita's other dream had been to enrol in the Broadcasting program in Calgary. "Two hundred people applied for the program in Broadcasting and I got this letter saying...your portfolio is stunning and stuff like that but that...since so many people applied they are giving first preference to people from that province." Anita cynically stated that "[I]t's kind of a joke." Another dream shattered. Anita asked me why no one told her about not being able to get in because she was out of the province. Anita wondered, "Why have plans when you don't have any control over what happens anyway?"

Both of the above incidents are linked by the theme of "feeling totally with no control" or lack of agency. Although Anita set goals and worked hard to achieve them, she felt that she had no control over the outcomes. Anita believed that taking responsibility for her actions, setting clear goals, and working towards them would lead to success. Throughout the interview, Anita frequently asked, "How does what we do today create tomorrow?"

4. *"He's So Nice To Me"* Anita felt that meeting her boyfriend was part of her transformation. "I'm totally overwhelmed by the whole thing still, because I thought I was just here for the summer, going to Calgary in the fall, into broadcasting...but it's

great.” Although Anita repeated several times that she had “never had anyone be that nice to me before,” she was determined to keep her self-respect. “The thing is that he noticed me, and I didn’t, for the first time in my life, I was the one that didn’t have to do anything, someone finally found me.” According to Anita, part of the transformation process was the realization that she couldn’t “go out looking for love.”

The content of this key episode can be characterized in terms of the thematic line of communion. Feelings of heightened love and liking were highlighted. The episode embraced the principles of acceptance and self-respect.

Anita’s lifeline is one of positive transformation. She had a picture of herself in the future in the areas of journalism, broadcasting, or scriptwriting. “I’m aware of the challenges ahead and probably a lot of changes too.” Anita was looking “forward to getting out of” Asgard. She stated, “I broadcasted my life to like the whole town...well now I’m going to write my own scripts.” When her first plans were no longer possible to carry out, Anita was on the phone to explore the possibility of enrolling in writing courses at the local college over summer. She phoned Camosun College in Victoria for their fall courses and investigated that possibility of entering the University of Victoria in the fall of 2000 or the Vancouver Film School.

Catherine: The Unafraid Self is Still Developing

With the exception of “not fitting in” during the intermediate grades, Catherine’s lifeline showed a series of positive experiences through her high school years and beyond. The four key episodes presented by Catherine have themes of both agency and communion.

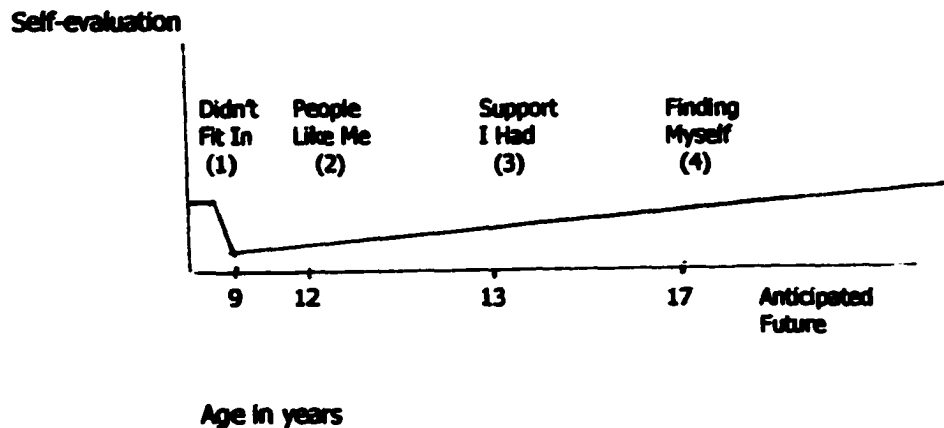


Figure 10. Catherine's Life-course Graph: The Unafraid Self is Still Developing

1. *"Didn't Fit In"* In her Grade 5 year, Catherine started to feel like she "didn't fit in." "I had a best friend and ...she kind of ended up brushing me off after she discovered boys and so for grades 5, 6, and 7, I was kind of like the person that the cool group picked on." Since Catherine lived up-the-lake, there were few choices for friends. "I'm still close to the girls who were mean to me, cause it's necessary in a small community."

In this story the theme of lack of communality was evident. Catherine believed that being accepted and accepting others were important standards of behaviour.

2. *"People Like Me!"* Before entering Grade 8, Catherine's parents sent her to a summer camp. "I was one of the most popular people in the camp and it just opened my eyes and so when I came into Asgard school, I was ready to meet new people." Catherine enjoyed making new friends and taking part in school activities. "It was like I found myself there. Like I joined everything!" One particular friendship stood out for her. "I met my best friend Susan. I don't know what I would do without her.... We lived more that an hour apart and it was long distance to talk to each other."

A thematic line of communality was portrayed in this episode. Catherine achieved what she had been looking for, acceptance and inclusion.

3. *"The Support I Had"* Catherine related several stories about receiving support from her family and other community members. At school, she was encouraged to develop her athletic skills. "Being captain of the volleyball team, that was empowering." She developed enough courage to consider learning how to rock climb. "I used to be a wuss as far as taking risks and ...athletic-wise....I took a climbing course....I went up you know to the top of this ninety foot face ." Rock climbing "expanded my outdoor horizons." Catherine saw herself as "finally stepping away from the shy, insecure person."

In this agentic story, Catherine showed how she gained physical and psychological strength through the support of her family, peers, and community members. Values expressed include being courageous, being physically strong, and being connected to the environment.

4. *"Finding Myself"* Catherine and her best friend travelled to Eastern Canada when they graduated. The trip showed Catherine that she could organize herself and take care of herself. "[W]e got train tickets and we figured out how to fly stand-by home." Catherine felt confident to try some adventures on her own. "I'm finally finding myself...like I'm finally stepping away from the ...shy insecure person that got created in elementary school. I'm finally happy with myself and I'm okay with what I look like."

Again Catherine's story reflected a theme of gaining agency through fellowship. Through her travels with her friend, she developed skills in self-sufficiency, responsibility and organization. She gained self-confidence.

Catherine's future plans involved continuing to take training opportunities in eco-tourism with the aim of attending College of the Rockies in the next few years. In the meantime, Catherine wanted to gain experience and confidence in a number of areas: river-rafting, scuba diving, rock climbing, and Nordic skiing. She also hoped to meet people from other countries who came to Canada to participate in outdoor activities.

Tina: To Be Doing Not Thinking

A familiar theme running through both interviews with Tina was her need to be active. She liked biking, playing ice hockey with the boys, hard partying, and outdoor activities. School learning was too "tedious" for Tina. In the first three stories, Tina's focus on being active was apparent. She described herself as a tomboy who found it easier to make friends with boys. The fourth story was about her close relationship with an older man who really listened to her and seemed to care about what she was doing.

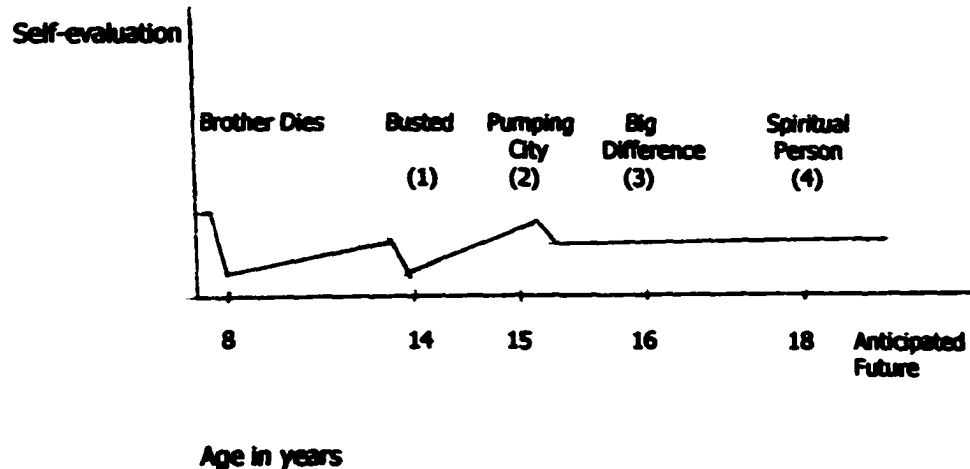


Figure 11. Tina's Life-course Graph: To Be Doing Not Thinking

1. *“Busted”* When Tina entered her adolescent years, her parents did not want Tina going to Asgard on the weekends to stay with friends. “When I was 15, my parents and I got into a lot of fights, cause I always wanted to come into Asgard and party and stuff.... I moved out a couple of times, like I moved up the lake and then I moved to Calgary for a month and then I came back.” Tina’s difficulties were not limited to her relationship with her parents. “I got suspended lots from school.” Tina had to retake her grade 9 year. During this period, Tina “got busted for shoplifting” and had to do community hours.”

The narrative line through Tina’s story was one of affiliation. Like Suzanne’s story of “Wanting to Drop Out”, this story seemed reminiscent of a “personal fable” (Elkind, 1981). Nobody understood her needs. She did not believe that there would be repercussions for skipping or for shoplifting. Within the story I heard a cry for companionship and a demand for independence.

2. *“A Pumping City”* Tina enjoyed her time in Calgary. “I had a lot of fun in [city] cause I have a few friends from there.... Like it’s a really pumping city.... You go there and there’s so much to do and so much to see and so little time.... I went to the bars a couple times... and I went to a party in the city.” One of the difficulties Tina had in living in Asgard was “There’s nothing to do. That’s why [kids] drink and do drugs.” She laughs as she stated, “I don’t know why people don’t expect it. You don’t give them anything else to do so...they’ll find something else.”

In this episode, Tina developed a friendship group by moving to Calgary. The “energy” of the city provided her with opportunities to be physically active and to have fun.

3. *“A Big Difference”* When Tina began grade 9 for the second time, she started going to the alternate school. “I’ve really liked it.... We went all day so it was

just like going to a normal school but it was work at your own pace...and I really liked that cause I can work better like that.” Tina saw this as a positive move. “It was my decision. I didn’t like the school at all. I didn’t like most of the teachers. I didn’t like the stuff they were giving me to do. I didn’t like the principal.” Tina liked working on her own and just getting her work done. “I really liked the idea of just being told what to do and do it and get it done, instead of having all these other activities to do.... I haven’t been suspended at all this year.”

Tina took control of her learning process by making a decision to change schools. Ideals of setting her own pace and making her own decision were expressed within this agentic story.

4. “*A spiritual Person*” Between the first and second interview, an older friend of Tina’s died in a house fire. “[H]e was really a spiritual person and he helped out, like, lots of teenagers like when they were fighting with their parents and stuff.” Tina wondered what would happen to teenagers now? Her best friend’s mom agreed. “If he wasn’t there for those kids, where would they have gone?” Tina knows that “there was no where else for them to go.” Tina and her friend used to talk with him about their questions and concerns. “He had so much to say about everything.”

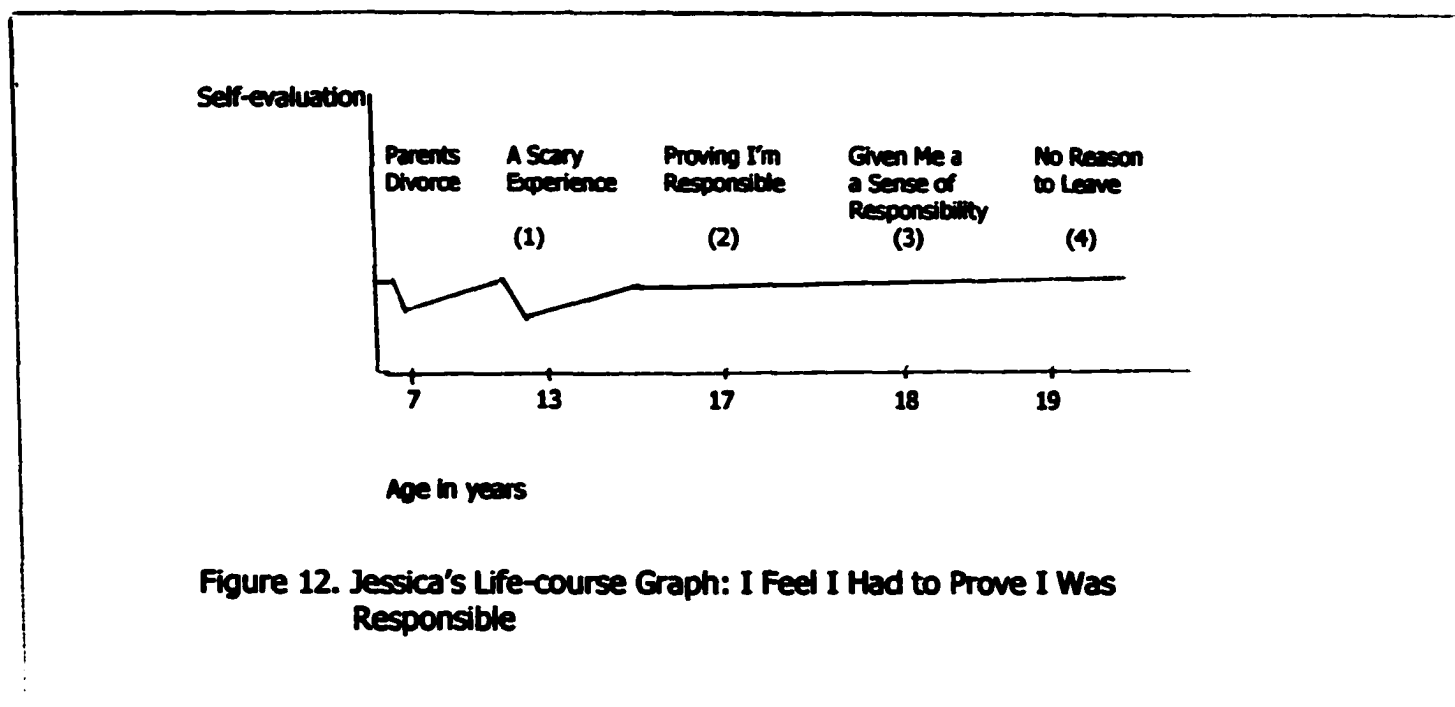
In this communal episode, Tina articulated the beliefs of being listened to and respected and of being supported emotionally and spiritually by adults. “That’s one of the things that I don’t see here. Not many adults are supportive. Most are just too busy doing their own stuff, and that’s okay, but what about us?”

Tina stated in various ways that she liked “to be active and doing. I don’t like spending much time thinking about things. Like school work...it sort of drives me crazy.” Living in a community with limited activities had been difficult for Tina; however, when she returned to the area in Grade 9, she made some changes in her

life, so that some of her needs were met. She appreciated her friends and spent most of her time with them. Life for Tina consisted of going to school, being with her older boyfriend and partying on the weekends.

Jessica: I Feel I Had To Prove I was Responsible

Jessica's Life-course Graph was a reflection of her endeavours to be seen as sensible and mature. Although Jessica referred briefly to her parents' divorce and her mother's subsequent marriage, she identified four key events that she saw as central to her life in Asgard. Beginning with a "scary and traumatic" transition to school in Asgard, Jessica described a steady path through adolescence.



1. "*A Scary Experience*" Moving from a class of seven to a class of almost 30 was described as "traumatic." "[W]e were split up into two groups...so that all of my peers that I was close to in that group of seven, we got split up." Jessica felt that "they didn't prepare us that well for it." In hindsight, Jessica viewed the transition as

necessary for being exposed to a wider range of subjects and teachers. "It was really strange at first and then...you eventually get used to it, and you don't want to go back to that old stuff!" The transition to Asgard from elementary school "made you think about moving from a smaller town to a bigger town...and how scary it was at first."

Lack of communion was expressed in this first event. Jessica felt insecure away from her family and missed attending classes with her peers. I sensed that it was important for Jessica to be prepared ahead of time for upcoming changes and that she desired constancy in her life.

2. "*Proving I'm Responsible*" Jessica pointed out several times during the interviews that she was not a partier. When school was finished she went back to her family "up-the-lake." When she initially refused to learn how to drive, her step-dad "made sure I learned how to drive and be responsible." Both her mother and step-dad were instrumental in Jessica finding a job in Asgard. "If you're young and you're looking for a job, you pretty much just have to prove that you yourself are a responsible person who's interested in working." With support, Jessica followed up her first contact. "I went there probably twenty times....I mean if you're not going to follow up on what you just did, then the people are just going to think of you as another one of those Asgard kids who are more interested in spending...time drinking that you are with having responsibilities." Community reputation was everything. "Everybody pretty much knows everybody and everybody hears about everything else so if your were at a function where something terrible happened... people automatically think that you're one of the bad apples. It just makes it harder for kids around here to... prove their responsibility."

The narrative throughout this described event seemed to be one of agency grounded in a strong supportive relationship with her family. Values expressed

included the importance of following rules, listening to parents, proving herself, and taking on responsibility.

3. *“Given Me a Sense of Responsibility”* Jessica met her current partner when she was in Grade 11, during the Spring celebrations. He was apprenticing in Asgard. After graduation a year ago, Jessica and her partner found an apartment in Asgard. Jessica continued to go home on a regular basis. “I enjoy spending time with my boyfriend, and ...my friends party...I don’t really understand now people can find that amusing.” Jessica was happy with her relationship. “I’ve grown up just a little too fast in that way, but I also enjoy that because it’s given me a sense of responsibility and I have someone who’s there for me all the time.”

Through her relationship with her boyfriend, Jessica gained a heightened status. “Just having a partner and working and being accountable and everything, has given me a different reputation than most kids my age.” Ideals conveyed by her narrative include responsibility, mutual support, and the importance of family ties.

4. *“No Reason to Leave”* In regards to the future, Jessica stated passionately, “I just wasn’t ready [to make a decision about moving away to go to find work or to obtain further schooling.] I am not ready. Or I wasn’t ready to move away from my parents....To me that was a terrifying thing to think about....I like working and paying my bills and living semi on my own...I wasn’t ready to just do that, that sudden change.” Jessica compared herself to peers who have left and felt that she had made the right choice for herself. “I’m so stuck here right now...not stuck, I enjoy being here....I have no reason to leave right now....I can go later when I know what I want to do.”

Once again a communal theme was conveyed. The value of responsibility was clearly articulated and Jessica also stated, "It's important to make the right decisions in your life."

Jessica's lifeline, with the exception of the two events earlier in her life, was quite even. She maintained close relationships with her parents and phoned her mom several times a day. With a view to the future, Jessica would like to have a family and be employed in a "sturdy" [steady] and enjoyable career. She was considering designing web pages because she could work from home. She had no concrete plans for obtaining further education or expanding her work opportunities.

Summary

The Life-course Graphs provided a means to understanding the key themes and issues in each participant's life that was perhaps deeper than the apparent content of their stories. Tracking participants' experience of oneself-as-subject was a challenge. Amid the many pages of transcripts, their attempts to integrate the various components of their personality and to articulate how their past, present and future formed their current sense of self was not always clear. Examining key episodes for themes and values highlighted their identity process. One common pattern found in the participants' narratives was finding the self through relationships. Their relationships and connections with others provided the foundation for developing feelings of competency, independence, and self-esteem (Archer, 1992; Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Cross & Madson, 1997; Enns, 1991, Kimmelmeier & Oyserman, 2001; Miller 1991). A second pattern involved how they processed major events.

Recent research on adolescent female identity development has indicated that females blend interpersonal and intrapersonal issues in forming their identity (Archer,

1985, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Lytle, Bakken & Romig, 1997; Streitmatter, 1988). In the present study, agentic key episodes took place within the context of relationships. Associations with peers, parents, teachers and community members provided the support necessary to carry out specific actions; to develop strength; to have an impact upon other people or the environment; or to gain status or prestige. Developing a positive sense of self and acquiring the ability to make choices seemed to develop through interdependence. "Learning to make independent choices and to grow toward self-mastery does not mean that women should ignore their affiliative needs. Being autonomous means choosing to take care of oneself as well as give to others." (McBride, 1990, p. 25).

As I reviewed the participants' stories, there seemed to be three approaches taken by them in processing their stories. Lyn, Catherine, and Anita narrated a series of personal struggles and triumphs throughout their high school years. They sought out and/or were presented with new experiences within and/or outside their community. The three young women related stories of exciting possibilities for themselves. Lyn and Anita saw their futures outside their communities in larger centres while Catherine was open to remaining in the community if the opportunity presented itself.

Josée and Grace also dealt with personal struggles throughout their lives in Asgard. Both young women felt different than others in their community and therefore felt constrained within their community. However, they had found ways to get their needs partially met. Josée turned to church and to school activities for self-definition. Grace gave "voice to her public self" through drama and continued to "feed her private self" through reading and riding her horse. Both hoped to be able to express who they were outside of Asgard.

Suzanne and Tina struggled with parents, teachers, and community members throughout their junior high school years. Both fled Asgard to find more friends, action, and fun. Both returned to the community after living in Alberta and switched (or partially switched in the case of Suzanne) to the alternate school. Suzanne was strongly connected to the community through her membership on the youth council and the Restorative Justice Committee. She planned on remaining in the community for the time being, possibly living with her boyfriend or working at the gas station. She was reluctant to think about the future. Tina, in grade 11, attended school in the morning and partied on the weekend. Her plans for the future were unclear and she would “just go with the flow” until something came along that looked interesting.

Jessica wanted things to remain the same. Throughout her high school years, Jessica preferred to spend most of her time with her family and was not involved in many extra-curricular activities. After graduation, Jessica wanted to remain close to her family, to continue working at her same job, and to establish a home with her boyfriend.

Berzonsky & Kuk (2000) investigated the role that differences in identity orientations played as students negotiated the transition to a university context. Results indicated that both identity status as formulated by Marcia in 1966 (achievers, moratoriums, foreclosures, and diffusions) and identity-processing style as formulated by Berzonsky in 1989 (information-oriented, normative, and diffuse/ avoidant-oriented) played a role in the transition process. Those individuals identified as information-oriented took an active role in seeking out, evaluating, and using self-relevant information. They reported more emotionally and cognitively autonomous and self-directed behaviour than the other two styles. Their self-descriptions included

being tolerant and accepting of others. The information-oriented processing style was strongly associated with achieved and moratorium statuses.

Lyn, Catherine, and Anita were active in exploring, assessing, and implementing plans. Grace, too, had looked into one possible option for the future but was considering other feasible choices such as massage therapy. Josée had engaged in little exploration beyond a short-term plan of travelling and working in Australia.

Normative processing (Berzonsky & Kuk, 2000) involved conforming to the recommendations and expectations of others. Although hard-working and pleasant, the respondents had a low tolerance for ambiguity and a strong need for structure. This group of students were identified as being foreclosed. In the current study, Jessica seemed most firmly entrenched in the identity bestowed upon her as the oldest child in the family.

According to Berzonsky and Kuk (2000) diffuse/avoidant-oriented individuals found it difficult to confront personal problems and decisions. Strategies identified with this group included avoidant coping, self-handicapping, and other-directedness. Dollinger (1995) found that individuals with a diffuse/avoidant identity style were at increased risk for a number of difficulties and behaviours, including early drug and alcohol use and depression. Students categorized as identity diffused frequently relied on this approach to problem-solving.

Suzanne and Tina had engaged in almost no exploration. Tina seemed to exemplify the “playgirl” form of identity diffusion as identified by Marcia (1994).

Dunkel (2000) proposed that the identity exploration process entails the production of possible selves in a number of different domains. Nine domains of hoped-for and feared selves have been identified (Cross and Markus, 1991) including: family/partners, occupations, personal qualities, abilities/education, material items,

leisure, physical health, lifestyle, and relationships. Markus and Ruvolo (1989) found that an important aspect of adolescents' construction of possible selves was the balance between their positive expectations and possibilities to be avoided in the same domain. Youths with balanced possible selves have both a positive self-identifying goal to strive for and are aware of the personally relevant consequences of not meeting that goal.

The findings from Dunkel's study (2000) indicate that Moratoriums had a greater balance within domains between negative and positive possible selves. They also generated more negative possible selves and expressed a higher degree of anxiety about the future when compared to the other three statuses. Achievers, on the other hand, had a narrower range in the categories of possible selves and greater confidence about the future in comparison to the Moratoriums.

In examining the possible selves generated by the sample, Josée and Grace seemed to be closest to the Moratorium group. They had a balance between their negative and positive possible selves in five of seven domains including personal qualities, material items, physical health, lifestyles, and relationships. Both generated more negative than positive possible selves. Josée listed 10 feared selves and eight hoped-for selves while Grace listed 11 feared selves and seven hoped-for selves. They expressed uneasiness about the future, but were exploring their options.

Lyn, Anita and Catherine, on the other hand, had possible selves in fewer domains than Grace and Josée. Lyn and Catherine expressed possible selves in five domains (family, personal qualities, physical, lifestyles, relationships) while Anita listed possible selves in six domains (occupational, personal qualities, abilities/education, material, leisure, lifestyle, relationships). This group of participants also cited more hoped-for selves than negative selves. They were also less

anxious about their futures than Josée and Grace. They identified a number of skills and capacities that they would use in striving for their personal goals. They seemed closer to moving to what Dunkel described as the Achiever group than did Josée and Grace.

Dunkel (2000) identified the Foreclosed grouping as having the most restrictive range of possible selves and the most confidence that the future would unfold in predictable fashion. Jessica with possible selves in four domains (family, occupations, material and lifestyles) would seem to fit in this category. Stability and responsibility were important values. In order to obtain the security that she desired, Jessica conformed to the expectations of her parents and the community. She did not party, she paid her bills, and she was a model employee.

In Dunkel's study (2000), the Diffusion group had little balance across domains and had difficulty describing their possible selves. They displayed a lack of confidence and thought when considering the future. Suzanne and Tina seemed to show this pattern. Suzanne who expressed little balance across domains (two domains out of seven) as did Tina (two domains out of five). Neither young woman was exploring options for the future and had little to say about future plans.

Emotional Charge Reading

In this approach, I focused on the "emotional charge of the narrative" (Lieblich et al., 1998, p. 162) as noted by direct and nonverbal (laughter and tears) expression of feelings. I was interested in examining the emotional tone of participants' narratives as they described their current lives and the transition to the future. Focusing on the emotional charge of the narratives required several sensitive

readings of the transcripts and careful listening to voice quality and expression on the tapes.

The process involved in reading for Emotional Charge can be summarized as follows:

1. Reread self-identified key events, review the Life-course Graph, and examine my journal notes for emotional expressions, nonverbal reactions, and images and metaphors expressed in the interviews.
2. Determine the narrative tone (McAdams 1985, 1993, 1996, 1999) or the overall quality of each Life-course Graph.
3. Identify the narrative form based on tone (cf. Gergen & Gergen 1984).
4. Summarize images, symbols, and metaphors expressed in the interviews.

Include poems in the discussion where provided by participants.

5. Consider each life-story in terms of main character(s) or imagoes (McAdams 1985, 1993, 1996, 1999).

Suzanne: Emotional Charge

Suzanne used the word scary and terrifying when thinking about changes in her life and when considering the future. Suzanne's two months attending a large school in Alberta were described as frightening. The thought of losing her boyfriend "just panics me." Suzanne responded quietly and hesitantly when she talked about the future. "I don't see my future unfolding—it's still a ball in the back of my head The future scares me." When Suzanne spoke of a future change of residence, of her future relationship with her mother, or of her future relationship with her boyfriend, the future "scared" or alarmed her. When asked to think about her life five years from

now, Suzanne stated, “[I]t will be scary. But I also know I need to do this [move away from Asgard] and that I can come back for holidays.”

Suzanne’s strong connection to her community and its members was evident in her collage. When asked to make a display that told who she was, she displayed eight pictures of her home and family, ten photographs of her friends, and six pictures of the community. All the photographs were firmly fixed in the community of Asgard.

The narrative tone or the capability of the narrative to produce directionality among a series of otherwise isolated events was similar to the romantic saga identified by Gergen & Gergen (1984). The romantic narrative is a series of movement forward followed by movement backwards over time. Suzanne saw her life as a “series of ups and downs.” She reached out to peers and to community mentors for stability yet believed that “things just happen in your life and you have to learn to go with what comes down.”

Suzanne’s metaphor of the community showed ambivalence about her relationships in the community. “I think a spider web... [I]t’s like one main person in the centre which is the spider and all these little spiders are all over the web and they’re getting...like eaten by this big spider in the middle-- just like a whole bunch of mean people.... everything’s connected, everyone’s connected. And there’s a whole bunch of spiders that would represent different groups and different kinds of people. And people sometimes get tangled in the wrong group...and end up getting eaten...And the web seems quite fragile maybe to outsiders, but actually the web is quite strong and it can entangle you and make it hard to free yourself and it can also extend out if you know how to do that.” The web could act as a thread to connect her to the community “when it gets scary out there.” Like you can unravel it and use it for an anchor—go riding off on the wind to new places, knowing that you always have

this connection, this structure to come back to.” On further reflection, Suzanne commented that the web sounded more like an umbilical cord than a spider’s web.

According to Josselson (1995) and McAdams (1985, 1993, 1996, 1999), individuals hold central images of themselves that capture narrative themes known as “imagoes.” Suzanne described herself as a caregiver. She was the “mother” of the Skids group. She “looked after” her boyfriend so that he would not get into trouble and “got after him” when he did. She worked toward creating community resources for helping young people feel that they belonged and were valued and cared for by adults.

Josée: Emotional Charge

Josée felt insecure in her relationships with peers. She stated in a serious tone that “once you’ve been hurt by a friend, you never quite trust again.” Josée felt held back within the community. Moving on would bring convenient closure to hurtful friendships. “Friendships have been hurtful for me. Even though you try to work on them, you never really get over the hurt.”

Her photographs included several friends from her elementary years who had hurt her. In fact there were nine pictures of friends. Included on her display were the words, “Don’t hurt me” and “Three words [I love you], why are they so hard to say?” Around the circumference of her collage, Josée wrote, “Down on your knees, you’ll be stronger than trees!” When asked to explain, she stated that her belief in God helped her to overcome the hurt she had experienced with friends. I was struck by the emphasis on the past and the distress still experienced when she thought about past friendships that had not worked out.

The narrative form was one of “tentative” or slow progression over time. She portrayed her cautious emergence through her poem.

The Chrysalis

*As children we are changed by the world and people around us.
The shaping of our very being can be a painful process
Gradually, our pliable souls are bent and shaped into what others want us to be.
By degrees, we learn to display what others want to see,
And we learn to dance in approved patterns around the maypole.*

*We learned how to please others and to fit in.
Sometimes hurting those around us and being hurt in turn.
The longing to be wanted, to be included, to be loved, to belong,
Was so strong that we wove a cocoon tightly around our souls
Until we felt that we would burst!*

*In the turbulent years of adolescence we slowly transformed ourselves:
Some turning to parties, drink, drugs, sex and rock 'n roll
Others to family, friends, inner contemplations, and nature's beauty.
Slowly we allowed all those feelings inside us to be revealed and we let go
To unfold our many-coloured wings, to spin and whirl into the sky,
To learn to dance the music in our hearts!*

Josée’s poem referred to the difficult process of breaking free. Josée felt “bent and shaped” by the expectations of others in the community. In her interviews she described the difficulty of holding firm to her family’s values in the midst of peers who party. She learned to “dance in approved patterns around the maypole” in order to “fit in.” Josée was now in the process of breaking out of the chrysalis and perhaps flying away. When asked to use a symbol to describe what it has been like growing up in Asgard, Josée stated that “it’s kind of like a cocoon...it is quite sheltered, but it produces beautiful individuals. [T]hese butterflies emerge in all different colours and shapes and sometimes fly away and sometimes they fly back home and others stay here. There’s something about Asgard that draws...sort of like Monarch butterflies coming back to the place where they grew up...”

Josée looked to the future with both sadness and excitement. She hoped that she would be able to find fellow Christians and be able to express her faith outwardly. There was a sense that Josée had to fly away in order to be able to express who she was. Josée expressed sadness on leaving her family and community setting in order to be accepted.

Josée used the term “survivor” three times during the interviews. She felt betrayed and victimized by her friends and had to learn to protect herself at an early age. She regained a feeling of safety when she became a Christian. Within her faith she received unconditional love from her God. However, her Christian faith also separated Josée from her non-Christian friends. Her role model, TANK GIRL, served as a reminder “not to let others get too close” and to armour herself against future attacks.

Grace: Emotional Charge

Grace viewed the transition from high school as a time of tentative emergence. Like Josée, she had experienced rejection by peers during elementary school. While the influx of up-the-lakers provided her with opportunities to form new friendships, she never felt perfectly secure in her relationships. Speaking in a quiet voice, Grace said that she was “still really wary of the school environment even though it’s a lot better for me.”

Grace’s photographic display was a reflection on her life in Asgard. She displayed pictures of her chickens, cat, and the flowers that have always bloomed beside her house. She included pictures of her younger years in Asgard. She wrote about her “emotional growth” and included pictures of those friends, places, pets, and family members that had contributed to her growth. Each time I studied her display, I

was impressed by how Grace was working through her earlier experiences in the community.

Like Josée, the narrative tone expressed was one of slow progression. Her poem traced her development from childhood to the present.

I am

*I am the snow falling on the mountains,
the water rushing in the river,
the Stellar's Jay laughing from the cedar,
the coyote's yelp across the meadow.*

*I am the baby gazing in wonder,
the toddler with scabby knees,
the child with dirty hands and face,
the adolescent with tears in her heart.*

*I am the actor strutting my stuff across the stage,
the joking, laughing, silly one,
the one who is made fun of,
the one who never could fit.*

*But I am also the one who sits by rivers and lakes,
who feels peace and forgiveness,
who whispers her heart's desire in animal ears,
who joyously races with the wind.*

Grace's poem described various aspects of herself. In the first stanza, Grace referred to herself as part of the natural setting, a place where she felt most at home. The second stanza provided a picture of her transition through developmental stages. During her adolescent years she still had "tears in her heart." In the third stanza, Grace told of her role in school drama productions where she appeared to have found her niche. Although she had the lead role in the school play, she felt laughed at and excluded from the group. The last stanza was the Grace I saw on my evening walks--sitting by the river reading a book or riding her horse.

Grace used the metaphor of “a big squishy pillow” to describe herself in relation to the community. “There are a few feathers that have poked through the cotton and they are drifting around in the air, but most of the feathers are just packed in nicely.... The feathers inside the cushioning are thinking, “Like who would want to go outside the cushioning?” but then the feathers that have poked through the cotton are like, “Ah, look, there’s air, there’s sky!” I just have the tip of my quill outside the cotton.... Next year will be like getting ready to leave the pillow and like getting myself, my quill, out of the pillow and knowing it’s okay.”

Grace stated, “[I]t’s sort of time to go...It’s kind of a rush to—be done school and leave, not sort of to be stuck here. Cause graduation is such a big change and I’d like to just make it more of one [a change] and not be here anymore.” Grace felt constrained by Asgard. “I have a pretty good idea of who I am, but I can’t really act on who I am here.... [I]t will be easier for me to not let people decide who I am...”

As I reviewed the transcripts and re-listened to the tapes, I was struck by how tentative and wary Grace was in developing new relationships within the community and in thinking of moving away from the community. Her idea was to “talk to the other feathers that have already floated away to other places...and know what it is like out there.”

Grace consistently used the terms “outsider” to describe her relationship to her community. She recalled times when she had been judged and had made herself vulnerable. She had banded together with other “outsiders” who nurtured and cared for one another in sharing circles. Over time, Grace has reflected on “being wounded” and was now ready to move beyond the hurt. Taking a lead role in the drama production was a large step towards that process.

Lyn: Emotional Charge

Lyn was excited about future possibilities and viewed past situations as occasions for growth. She had taken advantage of opportunities within her community. Lyn had used her connections to support her work in India with World Youth. Her plans for the future were not rigid. While she had made some concrete plans, she allowed for “life to happen.”

While Lyn was very active in the community and at school, she also spent periods of time alone creating artwork, writing poetry (three booklets), and “figuring out more about myself.” Lyn spoke with excitement when talking about the changes she had made in her life. No longer a heavy partier, Lyn now found her bliss through meeting new people. “I’ve developed the confidence in myself that I will make the right decisions” through opportunities for travel outside the community.

Lyn’s collage included the metaphor of a tree. The roots were her family, giving her strength. The branches were opportunities that she had explored—travel, drugs, summer camps, art, music, environmental issues, and friends. The door of opportunity was the central image in her photo display—“Then as I walk out my door, I’m asked, ‘What have you learned?’ The door slowly swings opens.”

The tone suggested by Lyn’s life-story was a progressive narrative. Her key events are linked in a forward-looking fashion. Her poem “Rhizome” also suggested someone who was looking forward to new experiences.

Rhizomes

*My life began as a tiny seed, fragile and delicate.
Unnoticeably, my roots reached down and took hold.
As the years went by, they grew stronger and stronger,
Nourished by the love of those around me.
Fed by snow-capped peaks and spirited rivers,
Fueled with warmth and shelter.*

*In time, a rhizome formed, stretching and spreading,
Traversing over well-known fields and valleys,
Reaching for untrodden pathways, unexplored terrain.
Branching out and seeking new sustenance,
Excited by free-living exploits*

*Ferretting out unknown sources of stimulation.
Entwining with other roots and branching into complex patterns,
Surprisingly, out of this seemingly convoluted mass,
A variegated, multifaceted plant --
surfaces.*

The key events in Lyn's lifeline reflected her generally positive experiences in the community. Lyn described her experience in the community as being part of "a family." "It gives you support and safety and a sense that you belong somewhere. You're accepted for who you are, but then you have to leave your family and go out into the world....And just like in families, there can be fights and misunderstandings, but these blow over. And sometimes it's too close and you need more space to try things out."

Lyn plans to travel and to work in a foreign country seemed congruent with the images portrayed in her poem. She was a rhizome spreading out and intermingling with other people. Her future plans would allow her to meet that goal. Obtaining a university education would also assist her in becoming a "variegated, multi-faceted plant."

The main characters in Lyn's narrative were the creator and the seeker. Lyn identified herself as an artist who liked to create poems, paintings, and sculptures. For Lyn, creating was something she liked to do alone. She also liked to "discover new people and new places." The seeker looked forward to exploring new lands, new

ideas, and new experiences. Through her travels, Lyn was able to sample different art forms and to develop new techniques for creating her own work.

Anita: Emotional Charge

Anita was “looking forward to getting out of here” even though she had “transformed her label” and was finding more acceptance in the community. She had lived her life fully in town or as she stated, “I broadcasted my life to like the whole town” but now wanted “to write her own scripts.” She admitted to making mistakes in her life but believed “they’re my mistakes, not anybody else’s.” More importantly, Anita had learned from her mistakes and had taken satisfaction from her ability to use her experiences as a way to move forward. “No one else is going to pride it for you.” She viewed her development as a positive process. “The spiritual part, maybe I have been creating that for myself in the last ten months.” Thoughts of the future enthused her. “It’s all so new. My future is changing even now.”

Anita’s photographic display included reflections on why she wanted to leave Asgard. The display was made up of pictures of friends and nature. Anita portrayed the constraints as well as the strengths of living in Asgard. She used the school motto, “What we do today creates tomorrow” as a thread throughout her display. She wondered how the women who worked at the restaurant were creating tomorrow by working at the same job day after day. She did not want to fall into that trap. For Anita, education was the only way out and she was determined to “escape the web.” Yet, she recognized that the stability of the mountains, her private places, her home, and her friends would make it hard to disengage from the community completely.

Anita’s life-story was progressive. Like Lyn, she had made significant positive changes in her life and was looking forward to life after graduation.

Anita used the metaphor of a movie set to describe Asgard. “The backdrop is painted with mountains, lakes and stuff. All the props are arranged in the same way for each scene—even the scripts have been written for everyone. It’s like you get assigned a role—no questions asked. And what if you don’t like the role? Well, you can either accept it, or completely change it, or maybe even ham it up. Everyone gets really antsy when you don’t play your role right. It’s kind of sad really. For me, I’ve had to rewrite my script...and it’s been really hard. I’m getting better at following my new script these days.”

Anita referred to herself as a scriptwriter and poet. She would often sit on her favourite bench and picture movies in her head. In Anita’s life-story, the creator integrates artistic and spiritual elements. Through her writing, “I was able to figure out what I believed in.”

With the help of her English teacher, Anita had improved her ability to write. In the future, Anita hoped to become either a broadcaster or a screen writer.

Catherine: Emotional Charge

Catherine, too, was excited about the future. She had honed her outdoor skills which would give her several options for careers. Catherine affirmed that it would be hard to leave her family and the area, but held the door open to returning if a “career opportunity arises.” Her voice was full of energy and enthusiasm. She believed that she had “worked hard to discover who I am and what’s important to me” and now she wanted to “go out and see the world” and “to see what happens.” Not knowing exactly what the future held was not a concern for Catherine. She wanted to learn it all. School for Catherine was “life’s school.”

Catherine's life story exuded confidence and hope for the future. She believed that her dreams were attainable and that there were many opportunities available to her.

Because Catherine's summer job required her to work in an isolated area, Catherine was not able to complete a photo display. She wrote the following poem as a way to "paint a picture of who she was."

Who Am I?

I am the giant cedars that stand majestically by rushing rivers. I draw up nutrients from deep within the forest's bed. I embrace black bears within my womb-like trunks and protect them from the winter cold. I raise my arms in the presence of the wind and rain and delight in the delicate snowflakes that perch on needle tips. I am sturdy and unshakable.

I am the rivers surging through boulder-strewn canyons and swirling giddily over stoney beds. I am the cascade that drops from snowy ridges in thundering tempos to the valleys below. I am the quiet backwater where trout slumber and waterstriders casually float. I am the chuckling waters delivering cryptic messages to passerbys. I am the raging floodwaters awakened by the sun's warm beams.

I am the glacier-fed lake sustained by alluvian silt. I am the vast depths of silent cold waters that hold secrets of past ages. My bottomless depths so seemingly dead, bring life to mountain rivers. I am a mirror for lone evergreens clinging to fissures in granite slabs and the sunny avalanche lilies that push up through melting snow. I am the source of nourishment for the valleys below.

I am the glaciers atop distant mountains, dirty around the edges and salty to the taste. Red algae decorates my icy surface highlighting my shiny points. I surprise unwary travellers with the birth of a deep crevasse. I am the cold wind that blows across the timeless icy mass bringing fresh mountain air to the valleys below. I am the last remnants of another age, slowly creeping down into gouged out mountain valleys, changing slowly in times of rapid change.

I am the mountains that have endured the passage of time. Mine shafts cut through me and my once pristine green quilt has been shaved in places so that my carefully made soil spills down rushing streams into the valleys below. My ridges are not quite so sharp and my pointed edges have been filed by the wind and rain and snow. I am all that is tenacious, persistent, robust, and hardy. I am the backbone of British Columbia, rated high among the beauties of the world.

The tone of Catherine's poem matches her positive, strong lifeline. She described herself as part of nature, "sturdy and unshakeable", a "raging floodwater" whose potential had been awakened. She was a "nourisher", someone who gave to others, perhaps offering opportunities to experience nature through her outdoor skills. She viewed herself as "the backbone of BC" and a "remnant of another age." She carried with her traditional pioneer values that have given her strength.

Catherine's metaphor of her experience growing up in the area also reflected her strong ties to nature and her inner strength. "I think of this area as a garden. It's cared for—watered and weeded. Some of the plants are hybrids and need some care.... Some of the plants are herbs and can heal people and prevent sickness....Some plants are weeds—like quiche grass—invasive and strangling the other plants. And some plants are wild—a real mixture. And all of these different plants are accepted in the garden except the weeds. But the weeds are worked at and never completely take over, but do have an influence on the rest of the garden."

Catherine placed herself among the "wild plants." "Sort of bright and showy with a lot of strength. Maybe a tansy or, no, not so strong as that. Maybe a tiger lily. You can see me from a distance and I bloom year after year. My roots go deep and I spring up in surprising places—on the edge of the woods or a long a stream. You never know just exactly where you'll find me."

The main characters in Catherine's life seemed to be the teacher and the seeker. Catherine wanted to pass on her love of nature to others. Through her work, she was able to provide others with the opportunity to experience BC's magnificent environment. For Catherine, teaching others how to take care of wilderness areas was a central mission in life. As well, Catherine had the urge to explore new cultures and to achieve the formerly unachievable in her life; that is "developing her unafraid self."

Catherine was taking full advantage of new experiences and was building a “cultured self”; that is, someone who was exposing herself to new perspectives on life. Her work in Adventure Tourism brought her into contact with people from many different countries and she enjoyed hearing their “different points of view.” “It’s refreshing.”

Tina: Emotional Charge

Tina spoke in a casual and off-hand manner. As Tina stated, she didn’t like to “spend time thinking about things.” School was difficult for Tina because she “hated sitting around discussing things.” When discussing key events, Tina talked in a perfunctory manner as if past events were not all that important. Her stance towards the future was one of “Whatever happens, happens. If I need to, I’ll go....I just kind of go with the flow.” Tina seemed unconcerned about the future and told me that the only thing that stirred her up was “getting a 40 (40 oz. bottle of liquor) and a shot glass.” She continued to place “partying” at the centre of her life.

The majority of her photographic display included activities that she engaged in with her family and friends, for example, fishing and playing street hockey. She incorporated scenic views and special personal places in the area. Tina’s pictures gave no indication of future plans or thoughts about the future.

Tina’s narrative of leaving home and partying in Calgary displayed a series of battles against the law, her family, and school, followed by times of tranquility as when she moved up that lake to live with another family. Her early narratives suggested the up and down pattern of the romantic narrative. Since Tina returned home two years ago, her narrative took on the tone of a stability narrative. She found a way to be successful at school. She established a relationship with her parents that

allowed her to party with her friends. As Tina stated, “ Nothing’s really changing for me these days.”

The metaphor Tina created to describe her relationship to the community was that of a vine. “It’s like growing and there’s old parts of it there at the base or the roots, but it keeps growing and growing... It puts out new shoots, but the oldest parts are closest to the roots and are stronger and ...like can handle tough times. And there are some shoots that grow really quickly and twine around the....trellis...Um, like the older parts give the foundation for the vine and the trellis provides the support and structure for the shoots. And who knows...which shoots will survive and add on to the plant.” Tina wasn’t sure if she was a shoot that would survive.

Tina had little to say about her plans for the future. Tina was a little more than one year from graduation and perhaps that time span seemed like a long period of time. She may have anticipated that she had plenty of time in which to make decisions.

When I asked Tina to describe herself, she used the words “crazy, a joker and a kidder, someone who likes to live it up when she can. I don’t like to think about what I’m doing a lot.” The central character to her story could be called the escapist. I was reminded of the fable of the ant and the grasshopper. Tina asserted that she hated being bored and had a strong desire to enjoy life as much as she could. She wanted to think about tomorrow some other time. The aim of life was to “live for today.”

Jessica: Emotional Charge

Jessica, like Suzanne, used the words frightening, scary, and terrifying when talking about periods of change in her life and when considering the future. For example, she referred to her transition from the local school to Asgard School as

terrifying. When she talked about future changes in jobs, partners, and places of residence, she stated firmly that she was not ready for those types of changes.

Jessica spoke passionately and at length about staying in the area while at the same time knowing that she will likely move to a larger centre to upgrade her skills at some point in the future. "I'm so used to a small community and knowing everyone that moving to a big city would be very frightening." "I don't need the big...bigger life. I *don't need* something like that. Like I've been down to Vancouver and there's no way that I would want to live there.... I'm going to move somewhere for school, but I would like to take something that's going to give me the opportunity to either work from home or work somewhere around here."

Jessica's photographic essay consisted of 18 photographs each outlined in a heavy black frame and spaced evenly on a poster board. Rather than developing her photographic display to portray her life, Jessica made a brochure of Asgard. Eleven of the photographs were of important buildings and settings, while the remainder included pictures of her apartment, her partner's cat and truck, and scenic pictures. The photographs showed Asgard as a family place, a community that offered all the services.

The narrative tone set by Jessica's life-story was one of stability. According to her, Asgard had not changed much in the past twenty years, nor had she. Her life, played out against the familiar and unchanging backdrop of Asgard, felt meaningful and right because she carried on traditions passed on from her family. She brought items from home to put in her apartment and transplanted herbs and vegetables from her family's garden to her garden in Asgard. Her boyfriend also shared the same values and together they were forming a new family built on familiar values.

Jessica used the metaphor of a “well-rounded community. There’s a nice yard and a good garden and maybe a family out back playing, a very family-oriented community.” Jessica was working towards creating that for herself.

In the future, Jessica wanted to take some sort of training, perhaps in computers that would allow her to stay in the community. She and her boyfriend wanted to travel before building a home and starting a family.

The most admired person in Jessica’s life was her mother. “If I could be anything in life, it would be my mother. I admire her for so many things. She’s a great mother and gardener. She knows how to cook and to keep her family safe.” Jessica desired to conserve the past and carry on the rituals and traditions of her family and her community. She wanted to recreate the simple life of her mother and to pass on those skills of homemaking to her own family. Her imago seemed to be the ritualist.

Summary

As I noted the similarities and differences among the eight participants’ narratives, I became aware that I could place participants on a continuum between anticipation of the future and apprehension towards the future.

Catherine, Lyn and Anita appeared the most enthusiastic about future prospects. Suzanne and Jessica seemed to fall at the other end of the continuum. They were fearful about the future and wanted their lives to remain the same for as long as possible. Josée and Grace attitude suggested tentativeness and wariness about the future. They had been hurt in the community and had not been able to “transform” their experiences. Tina seemed to fit at the midpoint of the continuum, that is, she was neither anticipating the future nor was she apprehensive about the future. She was in a holding pattern.

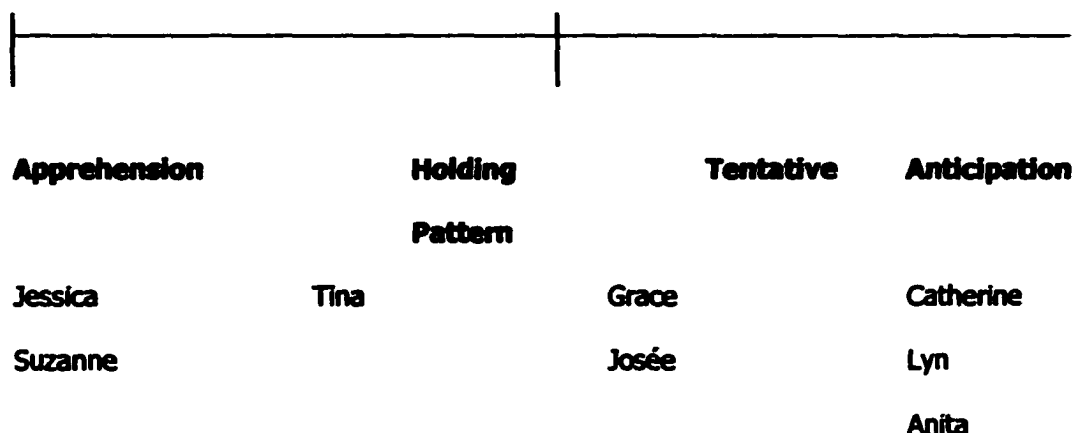


Figure 13. View of the future

Another continuum seemed to be one of having made concrete, tangible future plans and of being unplanful about the future.

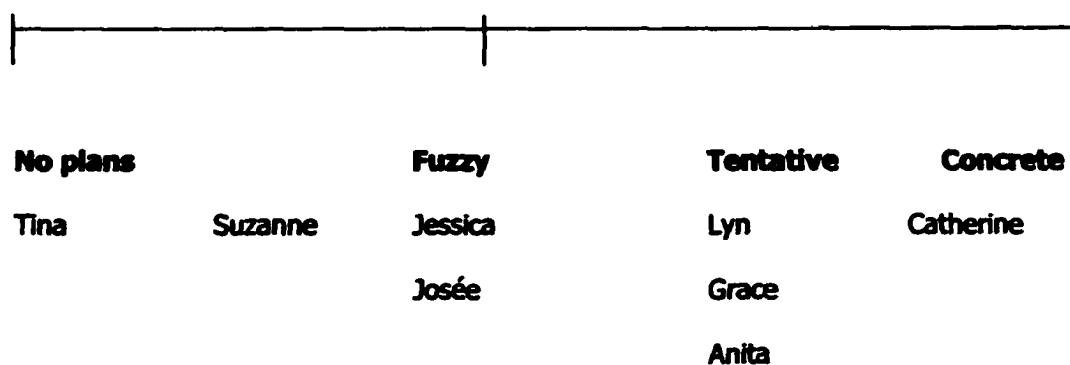


Figure 14. Plans for the future

Catherine who had been out of school for one year, knew what she wanted to do and was actively pursuing her goals. Lyn, Amy and Grace had also made plans that allowed for some flexibility. Lyn planned on travelling with World Youth and then applying for university on her return. She had no idea of a major. Amy planned on pursuing her journalism and broadcasting interests by developing her writing skills

and applying to several BC colleges for the fall or spring term. Grace knew that she needed to upgrade her riding skills so she had enrolled in the five month Level 4 training through the Canadian Equine Association. Upon completion of Level 4, she planned on applying to Olds College. Her backup plan was to apply for massage therapy training. She had taken steps to ensure that she had the necessary prerequisites.

On the other end of the continuum was Tina who was the only participant not working part-time and who had no real plans. Suzanne also had not made firm plans. She was “interested in tourism, and might move to be near Dad... might go to Australia...but it kills me to think about leaving my boyfriend.”

Jessica and Josée were near the middle of the continuum. Jessica had continued with the same part-time position that she had in high school which was not enough to pay the rent and grocery bills. She recently thought that she might go to “SAIT in Calgary to get some computer training so that I can stay at home” but that won’t be “for at least two years.” It was “too scary” for Jessica to think about moving in the near future. Josée had made definite short-term plans to go to Australia through the SWAP program. Her long-term plans were vague. She might live in France on some acreage or she might go to University and take biology. She had not sought out admission requirements for university. Josée trusted that “God will reveal his plan for me.”

Consolidation

The truths of personal narratives are the truths revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experience in social relationships, in the context of passionate beliefs and partisan stands. They recount efforts to grapple with the

world in all of its confusion and complexity and with the normal lack of omniscience that characterizes the human condition. It is precisely because of their subjectivity—their rootedness in time, place and personal experience and their perspective-ridden character—that we value them. (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, pp. 263-264).

The young women's narratives exposed a variety of perspectives on living in one small community and the three narrative readings each revealed some new information. Life-stories and their readings are as multilayered and complex as human identity.

Youth exhibit a variety of responses in dealing with the inevitability of becoming an adult. These responses include anticipation of the future, escape from the past, paralysis that may include either clinging to the past or apprehension of the future, and constancy seeking. The diversity these young women displayed in managing this transition process is summarized in Table 2 under six headings.

The analysis in chapter 4 has focussed on the transcripts from a "holistic" perspective. The three readings required me to stay with each participant's story and look at each life-story from a variety of perspectives: as snapshots, as life-course graphs and as emotional reactions or charges. The perceptions gained at this point in the analysis are summarized under each research question.

1. How do young women perceived themselves within the context of a rural community, now and in the future?

The overriding theme throughout the life-stories was one of relatedness although there were different emphases in their social worlds. Some participants had

strong connections to their families; others were close to their peers and boyfriends.

Josselson (1987) called the communion aspect of the transition process, anchoring.

Anchoring is a way of attaching to aspects of the adult world, of having a berth in it. For women, this attachment to the world involves connection to other people....Anchoring for women is like a rapprochement process, where elements of the outside world are brought back to or through an important other to be integrated and made part of the self. (p. 178)

Anchoring appears to take place in a number of social areas: family, boyfriends, peers, school, and community. According to Josselson, women's sense of identity is a "product of these anchors and webs—is a multifaceted synthesis of multiple investments, each important in its own way..." (p. 178).

Some of the young women (Suzanne and Jessica) perceived themselves as providers of care and friendship within the community. It was difficult for them to imagine themselves leaving their close connections behind in order to further their work and educational opportunities. Through their supportive relationships, Lyn, Catherine, and Anita developed belief in their abilities and they aimed to develop their skills through further training and education outside Asgard. Josée and Grace saw themselves as victims of their peers and believed that freedom to develop their abilities would have to take place outside the community. Tina escaped within the community through her relationship with her boyfriend and his friends. She was not sure what she would do in the future.

Table 2

Summary of Three Readings: Snapshots, Life-course Graphs and Emotional Charge

Participant	Narrative Form	Images	Imagoes	Themes		
Suzanne	Romantic	Spider web	Caregiver	Communion (3)		
Josée	Progressive	Cocoon	Survivor	Communion (2) Agentic (1)		
Grace	Progressive	Pillow	Outsider	Communion (2) Agentic (1)		
Lyn	Progressive	Door opening Rhizome	Creator/Seeker	Communion (1) Agentic (2)		
Anita	Progressive	Life is a stage	Writer	Communion (2) Agentic (2)		
Catherine	Progressive	Garden of a variety of plants	Teacher/Seeker	Communion (2) Agentic (2)		
Tina	Romantic now Stable	Vine with shoots	Escapist	Communion (3) Agentic (1)		
Jessica	Stable	A nice home	Ritualist	Communion (3) Agency (1)		

2. How do these self-perceptions affect their life-career plans?

Anita, Lyn and Catherine, whose stories had a combination of communal and agentic themes, were thinking about their futures and were making plans. They used images such as a door opening, or a stage where new scripts could be written, or a wild flower that grew in new places each year. Their life-course graphs showed a steady progression over their senior high school years.

Grace and Josée had concerns about their relationships and connections within their community that seemed to overwhelm them at times. Their narratives contained predominantly communal themes and the images of a pillow and a cocoon suggested a certain wariness and guardedness. Josée, in particular, had not explored any options beyond her SWAP trip to Australia. Grace hoped that she would be able to maintain the momentum to enrol in the Equine program at Olds.

Jessica and Suzanne also had predominantly communal themes in their life-stories. They both expressed fear moving away from their community and expressed vague, unformed plans for the future. Jessica had a traditional and conventional view of women and her choice was to take on the traditional women's role. Recognizing that her future family would need her financial support, Jessica hoped to find work that she could do from home. Suzanne, too, realized that she would have to work to support herself. Her powerful image of the spider web suggested that she saw her community connections as grounding yet also feared she might become so entangled that she would never leave.

Tina wanted to avoid thinking about the future. She displayed principally communal themes and seemed very caught up in her world of friends. Her sense of efficacy did not seem strong; she wondered if she would be "a shoot that survived."

3. How do they think their rural living has impacted their education, training, life plans, and work opportunities?

The holistic approach taken in the analysis did not reveal a great deal of information regarding this question. These facts may be better revealed through the Themes and Metathemes Reading.

The young women believed that their school course selection was limited, especially in terms of language and vocational courses. The CaPP courses were not particularly useful to the young women unless they already had some idea of their direction. While all of the young women identified a role model in their lives, they noticed that they had few occupational role models to aspire to.

The majority of work opportunities involved service industry part-time positions. If the young women wanted to further their education at a community college, they would have to move to a community two hours away.

4. How active are these young women in the construction and organization of future plans?

Exploratory behaviour yields information about the work environment, the work itself, work-related interpersonal relationships, and the self in relation to work, including one's abilities, interests, and valued. The more successful these early forays are into the world of work, the more likely they are to lead to certainty about an occupation and also a confidence in one's ability to get information, do the work, and succeed; this creates a sense of self-efficacy that is likely to result in the capacity to make first tentative and then firmer commitments. (Raskin, 1994, p. 156)

The young women in this study varied in the amount of energy they devoted to exploring their options and to constructing plans. Catherine, Lyn and Anita were the most active of the young women. All had worked since they were fourteen years of age and were able to list the skill set they had developed. They had a strong sense of what interested them. Their transition from high school was viewed as part of their “transformation, “quest”, and “metamorphosis.” They made their situations work for them and they sought out opportunities both within and outside their community.

Josée and Grace were slowly “emerging” from their community. Both participants believed that “you have to find your own path.” Josée’s path was heavily influenced by her Christian upbringing, while Grace’s path was influenced by her family’s adherence to anthroposophism. Grace had moved towards developing firm plans for the future, whereas Josée had made plans for the next six months. Both young women had worked or volunteered in the community since their early teens. Although both could list a number of skills that they had acquired, neither one was sure of what their options were. Grace stayed with what she knew. Josée appeared to have little idea of what interested her.

Jessica and Suzanne were very attached to the community and had adopted a caregiving role. Suzanne described herself as a caretaker of the community. She was involved in several community projects for youth. She was also one of the only females in the Skid group. Her boyfriend “used to be one of the troublemakers...[b]ut I kind of make him use his brain more and his parents are so surprised by the way he is acting now... And they love me.... I’m the mother of the group.” Jessica had made a new family with her boyfriend. She liked to “stay at home with her boyfriend” and mother their cat. “She’s been like... been like my little baby.” She had trouble understanding what her peers see “in partying and going out with different guys all

the time.” Although she lived most of the time in Asgard, Jessica went home to her mom’s at least once a week for a break. Both young women worked in the community and limited themselves to the life-career roles they saw around them.

Tina’s approach to the transition process was one of what will be, will be. She didn’t look with a great deal of enthusiasm towards the future, but neither did she fear it. Her work history was very limited and she had a great deal of difficulty in outlining her competencies.

Blustein, Devenis, and Kidney (1989) found that occupational exploration was positively related to the identity and moratorium statuses and was inversely related to the diffusion status. These results appear to suggest that identity status may be related to occupational exploration; more specifically, the difficulty of identity formation (Who am I?) may give clues as to why some individuals do not engage in occupational exploration. This suggests the need to resolve issues related to personal identity or self-concept prior to being involved in occupational exploration.

The next step in the analysis of the narratives involves reading for themes and metathemes. In the Themes and Metathemes Reading in chapter 6 the transcripts are broken down into units of content, coded, and arranged into categories or themes. Relationships or patterns across themes are explored.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion of Themes and Metathemes Across Participants

Chapter 5 begins with my understanding of the young women's experience in their community before plunging into the line-by-line analysis. An ecosystem metaphor is presented as well as community norms. A description of the analysis process is outlined. The remainder of Chapter 5 is organized according to the themes and metathemes identified. The metathemes that emerged from the data include: (a) Connected---Disconnected, (b) Committed --- Uncommitted, (c) Opening---Limiting, and (d) Tangling with Lines of Tension, (e) Looking Within and Looking Beyond.

At this point in the analysis process I had developed a number of ideas and concepts that I had recorded in my journal. I reread my journal entries and listened to the tape of the group feedback meeting. I continued to journal. During this cyclical and reflexive process an ecosystem metaphor emerged as well as four community norms. A journal excerpt relating to an ecosystem model follows.

I found the ecosystem to be an apt metaphor for describing the relationships among participants and aspects of their community. An ecosystem can be defined as a grouping of various species of plants, animals and microbes interacting with each other and their environment. In the metaphor, the community of Asgard is the ecosystem. A community has a spatial location and has traditions that hold it together, for eg., sense of belonging and common interests that bind people together.

The structure of the ecosystem refers to parts and the way they fit together to make the whole. There are two parts of every ecosystem—biotic and abiotic. Biotic factors are all the living organisms. Abiotic factors are the nonliving, chemical and physical factors of the environment. The biotic features in the community of Asgard are the various social worlds—self, family, peers, school, community organizations, resources, etc. while the abiotic features include local economy, community cohesiveness, distance from nearest large centre, community resources, etc.

The overall structure of ecosystems is dominated by feeding relationships. In some relationships, one species benefits while others are harmed. However, there are many cases in which there is a mutual benefit to both species, known as mutualism. There are also competitive relationships when organisms compete for resources. No organism or individual living in a community lives as an entity unto itself. Every individual lives and can only live in relationships with other individuals in the context of community. Each human community develops its own rules for how individuals will get along together.

Different species thrive under different conditions. For example, some plants like it very wet while other like it relatively dry. The entire range from minimum to maximum which supports any growth is called the range of tolerance. Points at the high and low ends of the range are called the limits of tolerance. Between the optimal range and the limits of tolerance there is increasing stress. Incorporating this concept into the metaphor, means recognizing that individuals vary in what they need from

their community in order to feel supported. Additionally, their tolerance to stressful events and conditions, such as exclusion from their peer group, differs.

All ecosystems and communities are maintained by a delicate interplay of limiting factors affecting all the species or individuals. Altering any factor, biotic or abiotic, will affect all living creatures in the system or community.

October 10, 2001

The ecosystem metaphor seemed to capture the range of experiences and the complexity of the participants' narratives. They were deeply attached to the physical environment and yearned for meaningful connections to the social worlds within their community. Participants perceived themselves as an intrinsic, although often overlooked, part of their community. Although participants related to their social contexts in numerous and diverse ways, common themes were evident across their narratives. They shared a number of beliefs about how the community functioned and the rules that guided acceptable behaviour. I conceptualized these implicit rules or "community norms" as a backdrop against which participants led their lives. These norms were presented and discussed with participants during the second interview and during the group/feedback closure. Participants added to and clarified the values that I had extracted from our interviews and informal interactions.

Hierarchies exist in all communities and Asgard is no exception. According to the participants, the "pecking order" in Asgard was based on length of time your

family had lived in the community and the reputation of your parents. Residents who collected social assistance or employment insurance were ranked lower in the hierarchy. Youth were seen as having one of the lowest rankings. Both adults and young people belonged to social groups. Adult groups included loggers, old hippies, old-times, business owners, etc.

I would say ... there is sort of a struggle like between people of different, like people that earn different amounts of money. Like even like people that work at the banks--so they're dressing well everyday and they're getting whatever salary and then people that maybe work seasonally...I haven't heard of anything flaring up, but it's sort of, they sort of stalk about each others and like, "Hi!" but it's sort of separate. Like very separate... So there are definitely power struggles... Some people just have more say in the community because they have more status...Some people have status because of who they are. Like some families have lived here for awhile, so they have more say it seems. (Grace)

Community members are outwardly friendly, and kind to each other, and supportive. According the participants, everyone would say hello to each other even if they didn't really like the person. "If not the whole town would be in an uproar" (Lyn). Most stores and the gas station were willing to extend lines of credit, especially in the winter when many residents were not working full-time. Anita commented that in Asgard, "You've got to relate to people and so I think the community as a whole is definitely into drawing people out." Catherine in her first interview reflected,

You're friends with people, that in a bigger situation, you probably wouldn't even talk to cause it's necessary to need to be. You're friends with what you've got. You make do with who's there and so that's really what happens...and that's really cool too ... cause sometimes, someone you wouldn't normally wouldn't think of hanging out with and you find a really interesting person inside....

Most people here put personal happiness before money. The participants stated that people in Asgard engaged in activities that fulfilled them and that brought them happiness and contentment. The community was accepting of individuality and uniqueness if the person contributed in some way to town. Youth who took part in town activities and who were creative or athletic were supported emotionally and financially. Employers tended to hire from this group but were also looking for the "clean-cut" look as Asgard was primarily a tourist town. Catherine summarized success in this way. "As a community we don't have a whole hell of a lot of money (laughs) so you know, I think success is on a personal level. In a pure, honest, I don't know, somehow it's a honest way."

Once you transgress, you are labeled and those labels are hard to change. The young women commented that there was a "things never change" attitude in Asgard. "If you mess up in elementary school, you have to deal with that all through high school" (Suzanne). Youth were labeled with a "bad name" if their behaviour was not appropriate. Examples of unacceptable behaviour included smoking on Main Street, hanging out in public places, and touching each other

inappropriately in public. Youth felt judged by the type of people they associated with and the community responded to each youth group in different ways. Skids and Stoners and any “hard-core” groups were not to be trusted and were not allowed to walk around in some of the stores. The police approached these groups first if there were any problems in town.

...if you're in the Skid group, you're automatically this pot smoker and ... you vandalize, and you drink on weekends and you listen to heavy metal music and then in the community if you're known as a Skid person, people don't trust you and they look at you like, you're going to steal something from the store. Like being in the preppy group, you're known around town for having good grades and being smart and on the basketball team and stuff...It does help define you. (Suzanne)

Analysis Process

Transcripts were analyzed using QSR NUD*IST NVIVO (Richards & Richards, 1999) software. This reading was an inductive process following key features outlined by Tesch in Coffey & Atkinson (1996).

Analysis is a cyclical process and a reflexive activity; the analytic process should be comprehensive and systematic but not rigid; data are segmented and divided into meaningful units, but connection to the whole is maintained; and the data are organized according to a system derived from the data themselves. (p. 6)

The processes involved in developing the themes and metathemes can be summarised as follows:

1. *First-level Coding.* Each broad topic area as described under Snapshot Reading was read carefully, “line-by-line” (van Manen, 1984). Codes were developed out of the data so that each topic or content category was broken down into subcategories forming Tree Nodes. A hierarchical Tree Node System developed, as sub-categories (“children”) emerged under a parent node (“Tree Node”). For example,

Example of a Tree Node: Community

- (1) Community
- (1 1) Community/benefits
- (1 2) Community/relationship
- (1 2 1) Community/relationship/future
- (1 3) Community/closeness
- (1 4) Community/youth
- (1 4 1) Community/youth/future
- (1 4 2) Community/youth/perspectives

The same segment of a transcript could have more than one code attached to it. For example, youth perspectives could also be coded under Tree Node: Employers.

2. Analysis of the themes involved compilation and interpretation of all text segments with the same code. Nodes were renamed as the conceptualization process continued. Some subcategories and sub-subcategories were merged.

3. Models were drawn throughout the stages of the analysis to represent ideas, processes and “theories.”

4. *Second-level Coding.* Connections or interrelations across Tree Nodes (categories), children and siblings (subcategories), and sub-subcategories were

explored using the NVIVO search tool, Boolean Search. Second-order codes or “metathemes” (Tesch, 1987) were developed from first-order codes and had no direct connection with transcript content. Table 3 illustrated the five Metathemes and six themes that emerged from the data.

Table 3

Metathemes and Themes

Metatheme:	Connected -----	Disconnected
	Theme: Feeling close -----	Feeling separate
	Theme: Feeling supported -----	Feeling Unsupported
Metatheme:	Committed -----	Uncommitted
Metatheme:	Opening -----	Limiting
Metatheme:	Tangling with Lines of Tension	
Metatheme:	Looking Within and Looking Beyond	
	Theme: Community Messages	
	Theme: Exploring Resources	
	Theme: Identifying Options	
	Theme: Implementing Plans	

Metatheme: Connected-----Disconnected

As suggested by the ecosystem metaphor, “No man [sic] is an island unto himself [sic].” Asgard is a small community where an individual’s conduct is less easily privatized. The term connected suggests reciprocal and communal relationships and mutual dependence. It implies a socialization process that

requires individuals to think of their actions in terms of others' ability to hold them accountable. Because of the reduced ability to lead private lives and the awareness that Asgard has a memory, social worlds are bound to intersect and overlap.

Communality or mutuality involves reciprocal feelings of closeness and of being part of each other. Connectedness implies supporting each other and showing concern for each other. There is an emotional caring and an acceptance of each other. For the young women in the study, connectedness was a source of support and at the same time, an infringement on their personal lives.

Disconnected or feeling unattached and unengaged seemed to be a response by individuals and/or by the community to emotionally cut off association. Rigid boundaries developed. Disconnection implies lack of support and concern for each other. For the young women in the study, disconnectedness was experienced as extremely painful and unjust.

The Metatheme, Connected---Disconnected has implications for how young rural women manage the "tension" or pull between connectedness and disconnectedness. What are the ingredients necessary in creating a connected environment and preventing a disconnected environment? Do connections assist young women in thinking about and planning for their futures? How do feelings of separation impact future selves?

The themes that form component parts of this metatheme are presented with reference to each social world mentioned by participants: community, family, school, peers, boys, and employers when applicable.

Theme: Feeling close ----- Feeling separate

Feeling close to the community. One important focus of this study was to gain an understanding of how young women perceived their various social worlds. Closeness was experienced by participants in the community as a whole, in their families, with friends, and/or at school. All eight participants viewed the community of Asgard as a close, friendly community where everyone knew everybody else. The young people intermingled with older community members.

...because it's a small community, you're forced to interact with the community and with people who aren't necessarily your peers too. Like older people in the community... whereas in a bigger centre, I think you're more likely to just hang out with your friends. If you didn't have to do it, you wouldn't have to show that respect to older people because you just wouldn't have to interact with them as much. (Lyn)

There were many benefits to living in a close-knit community. Participants were all thankful that they had been raised in a place where they had the freedom to walk over to their friends' homes, to wander through forests, and to go out at night alone. "I've enjoyed a lot of freedom in my life, being able to go out after dark, being able to go to my friend's house" (Josée). During the summer I noticed numerous young people hitchhiking. Seven of the eight participants hitchhiked to friends' homes on a regular basis.

You get offered a ride, but it's not like you're offered to be picked up and you're not going to show up back home. It's just the safeness of the community. If someone's out of place, well everyone knows that--you get looked at and stuff and everyone knows that you're a stranger. (Suzanne)

Close connections with all ages gave participants a sense of continuity that they valued. “There is a benefit to seeing the same people and seeing how they change with the years. That gives such an immense feeling of community” (Josée). Participants enjoyed talking about “the old days” with older residents and also kept a watchful eye out for the younger generation. “I worry about them--they are just so crazy compared to us --especially the young girls. It’s scary watching them coming up behind us (Lyn).”

Participants all pointed to the high level of trust that was evident in their community. Josée compared how she observed people interacting in Vancouver to the interactions of Asgard’s residents.

In Vancouver, everyone is so busy like not trusting everyone else like so much bad is happening...people look at each others and say, “You know what if that kid is packing a gun?” or “What if that man is going to rape me?” or “What if that woman is going to steal my child?” Everyone’s kind of a threat to them and there’s this paranoia and so there’s not this mentality of friendship or trust. Here people are friendly, talking across the street. Hey, they stop their cars in the middle of the road and talk to each other and block up the road. People just drive around them on the sidewalk or something. (Josée)

Feeling separate from the community. Although all participants stated that they felt close to their community, they could remember times when they felt “alone and disconnected.” For Jessica, Suzanne and Catherine feeling disconnected from their community occurred whenever they were away from the area. “Whenever I’m away, I miss that sense of ... (pause) belonging” (Jessica).

Gossip and rumours prevented closeness. Anita “felt severed” from the community when she “got a bad name.” Anita remembered walking down the street and hearing people whispering about her behaviour. Although Anita “continued to walk with attitude” she was really hurt and felt “disowned by the community.” Grace felt that her family was rejected by the community for many years because they were hippies.

Living under “a microscope” (Josée) also contributed to feelings of separateness. For Lyn, episodes of her mother’s drinking were regular topics of conversation by the adults of Asgard. When she was younger, she wanted to cringe whenever she had to be on Main Street. Yet she also knew that there were people who were concerned about her well-being. Josée stated, “There were days when I felt that I couldn’t live up to my Christian upbringing and I felt that people were waiting for me to make a slip.” When Tina found herself in trouble with the law, she “skipped town and went where there were few prying eyes.”

The views held by this sample of rural young women were similar to those found in Project PRYDe (Hedlund, 1993), Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs (Armstrong, 1993), and Rural Young Voices Project (D’Amico et al., 1996). Participants perceived both advantageous and detrimental aspects of their communities. They enjoyed interacting with friendly residents, moving freely in the community, and experiencing a sense of continuity. On the other hand, the gossip and rumours and lack of privacy were perceived as damaging.

Feeling close to family. No matter what family configuration the girls lived in, they felt close and connected to at least one parent, usually their mothers.

My family...they're just so loving and caring and my mom was my best friend for a really long time and so we're so close now. I don't know what I would do without her. Family is very important to me. (Catherine)

Tina who experienced family difficulties earlier in her adolescence, stated that, "Now it's just like hanging out with one of your friends."

Family closeness developed through shared activities. In Suzanne's family, they set aside Wednesday evenings for ordering in pizza and watching television followed by a game of Scrabble. On the weekends they would walk together or Suzanne would roller blade while her mother rode her bike. In Grace's family, they played Penochle in the winter and built campfires on the beach in the summertime. Jessica's family liked to get together with cousins, aunts and uncles to play cards. In the summer they played badminton, had barbeques on the beach, and fished.

Participants' families seemed to make an effort to spend some time with their children. Anita's parents attended all of her hockey games. Grace's dad took her to Florida to visit his relatives. Tina travelled with her dad on a special trip to Calgary. Jessica's family camped every weekend in the summer.

Suzanne was the only participant to express current family difficulties. Her relationship with her mother was volatile and she had few ties with her dad.

We have out times when we fight a lot and I love her a lot. She's like so important in my life right now. She doesn't know but it is hard to talk about her without getting emotional. My dad...he was like, like whatever, you're young, you don't know what you're talking about type of deal. Like I think about him and he sends me letters and stuff but we don't talk very much.

When I graduate, I'm going to go out and see him.

Although others must have had times when they felt separated and not close to their parents, in-depth analysis and review of the transcripts did not identify any other examples. Lyn who chose not to divulge details about her relationship with her mother indicated that their relationship varied.

Feeling close in the school environment. Participants saw benefits in attending a small school. Anita pointed out that “the class sizes are really small, about 20 people. That’s good because it’s easy to get help. And it’s easy to form sort of a bond with your whole class.” Suzanne learned to value the small school after her experience in attending a school in Calgary with a population of over 1200 students.

Everyone in our school is 250 students. Like you’re interacting with grade one’s and your locker is right next to a grade 8’s. And the teachers they try to get personal.... If they are worried about you, they’ll tell you.

All participants had connected with at least one teacher. Grace commented that, “You get to know your teachers, sort of on a personal level. Like I babysit for one of my teachers.” Lyn noted, “Teachers are somebody you can talk to and like reason with and come to some sort of understanding with.”

Participants found that extracurricular activities facilitated closeness. Catherine found drama to be “the kind of class that forms bonds because you really have to rely on each other and trust each other to make the play happen. Like it’s really important, so you become very close.”

Feeling separate in the school environment. Although participants enjoyed the personal contact with teachers and the small student body, it was at school that

the girls experienced incidents of being excluded. Above all, participants stressed how school-based cliques divided students into opposing factions.

Anita expressed surprise at the “cliqueness” of the school. She stated, as did the group of girls during the group/feedback meeting, “cliques were definitely more of a school thing than a community thing.” Outside of school, people were more likely to cross borders into other groups. Anita couldn’t understand why youth did not get along. “There’s a lot of different people in our school, and for some reason a lot of people don’t get along. There’s a lot of clique sort of people that like keep together and it’s hard for other people.”

For Grace, being renounced by many of her classmates began with the clothes she wore.

In the earlier days it was clothes that were the thing. The kids with nice clothes were the cool ones, they had the clout to be cool. They had the back-up of the teachers. In our class, the cool people were totally the ones who got really good grades. They all kind of did the same things with each other. Like the hugest thing about the cool people in the class was...just the respect that they commanded. They had so much confidence.

Suzanne noticed how teachers sometimes encouraged factions in her drama class but more often in her band class.

It is the same group of people that belong each year. Like take band.

There’s no really new joiners to it. It’s kind of like a little clan type of thing. You really can’t get in even if you wanted to. Like I’ve seen some people try to want to do band, but no one can handle it or stay. It’s like a group in itself too.

Although Lyn was one of the “cool people”, she was uncomfortably aware of the exclusion of others. She noticed how groups were formed around the type of music that was listened to.

At our school, music’s really important, it’s extremely important. It’s kind of what defines everything, all the groups that hang around together. They all listen to the same type of music and stuff and have like the same interests.

Catherine had the experience of being an outsider from her peer group when she attended a small school up-the-lake. Looking back at the experience, Catherine attributed the experience to the different values held by her family.

Like if you went to a party and someone told you a really good joke and then later on they hit you, you’d forget the joke and remember that they hit you and that’s’ kind of what like elementary school was like.

In a review of the strengths and weaknesses of rural education in the United States, Herzog & Pittman (1995) heard students describe their school experiences as similar to a family. They valued the smallness of the school, the close-ties with teachers and students and the opportunity to have activities in which to be involved. The young women in this study appeared to have similar experiences.

On the other hand, the development of cliques or rigid groups within Asgard school appeared to limit the young women’s opportunities to try out various selves, for example, the music self, the drama self, or the athletic self. Additionally the obstacles participants faced in “crossing the border” into various clubs and classes within the school setting separated them from peers and teachers

and made the school environment less inviting. Phelan, Davidson, & Yu (1998) noted that “such borders disrupt or hinder students’ ability to focus on classroom tasks, participate fully in learning or establish positive relationships with teachers or peers in school environments” (p. 12).

Feeling close to peers. Peers provided all participants with close relationships. “Me and C. are like best friends. People have thought we were brother and sister. Like we are really close (Anita)” Catherine and her closest friend travelled together.

We met in grade 10 and we’re just so close. Like we were sitting in the restaurant the other day and she said something like, “Do you know how much I appreciate having you as a friend? I don’t know what it would have been like without you as my friend.”

Young people’s friendships develop through the activities they engage in. During the week they went to each other’s homes to watch videos, play Nintendo, and play on the computer. On weekends, participants might drive to the nearest town or go hiking if they weren’t working. Four of the participants noted that things had changed in the last few years.

I’m really busy and they’re really busy, so it’s not like in grade 6 or 7 when you’re always at their house and they are at your house. Now it’s more like we see each other or we’ll go for tea or something like that and talk. (Lyn)

Boys offered a different type of friendship that was highly valued by most participants. “I love my male friends. I have long discussions with them about life and stuff. They have helped me to define who I am and how I relate to guys. They’re honest with me and I appreciate that” (Grace).

Feeling separate from peers. When Suzanne first arrived in Asgard, she recognized the importance of being accepted by one of the groups in town.

Everyone belongs to a group and if you don't then you're kind of wondering what you are doing wrong or wondering what you are supposed to be doing. Like you're kind of lost. So like, basically everyone has a group.

Although participants verified at the group closure/feedback meeting that cliques "were more of a school thing," cliques did operate outside the schoolyard. Lyn, Anita, Suzanne, and Tina affirmed how difficult it was to get everyone together. Suzanne cites an example of the difficulty in breaking down the boundaries between cliques.

[I]t's kind of hard because trying to do stuff with everyone. Like you try to have a party at the beach. If you have the Skids there, no one else will show up. The basketball people won't show up, the band people don't really come out very much, none of the other people will show up so it kind of makes your party small. So if the basketball people showed up there would be fights. Fights would break out all the time.... It's kind of hard to enjoy yourself or you don't want to be friends with everyone because you can't. There's no way. Like some people, there's odd people out of the group that can mingle with other people, but not very much. Once you're in a group, you are labelled in that group.

Lyn was one of the people who could move among the various groups. She noticed that not only were the groups based on the type of music listened to, but also on whether drugs and partying were involved or whether sports were of interest.

And then there's the grey areas in between. I'm kind of in the grey area. Of yeah, there's definitely the group that goes and like are totally into sports and that's like what they mostly do and they're just that and like hockey and things like that and then there's like partiers who like... They're really nice and stuff...they drink and do drugs a lot and like...I'm friends with like people who are just kinda in the middle. I'm friends with adults, I'm friends with most everyone.

Anita spoke passionately about the kids who were laughed at and scorned. She believed that for these youth animosity was deliberately directed at them for no apparent reason.

People who are considered the geeky group.... sort of the people that haven't had a chance to create themselves because everybody else has created them with their negative attitude towards them and their hate and their put-downs and stuff. They've sort of created them. But the thing is they're not like your typical nerdy-looking guys and girls. They're actually really cool people. They realize who they are, and they realize they are these people's hate and they still do drugs too. But they don't go to parties where everyone's there. And they don't really speak to the other people and they sort of sit on the other side of the classroom and sort of keep to themselves because they know these people don't want anything to do with them....All the people that have been hurt sort of stay together.

Research on adolescent friendships has shown that positive experiences with friends contribute greatly to cognitive, social and moral development as well as to emotional health (Berndt, 1996; Youniss & Haynie, 1992). Previous studies

with rural youth (Armstrong, 1993; D'Amico et al., 1996; Hedlund, 1993) indicate that friendships provide youth with opportunity to develop interpersonal skills such as empathy.

In a small community where the numbers of same-age youth are limited, rigid friendship groups would appear to be more problematic than in larger centres where more choices are available. Loneliness has been identified as a psychosocial concern for young people living in rural communities (Chipuer & Pretty, 2000; Puskar et al., 1996b). Lack of attachment to a group of peers can lead to a sense that one does not belong and is not acceptable to the larger community (Chipuer & Pretty).

Social loneliness reflects one's lack of attachment to a larger social network, including kinship groups, peer groups, or other social groups that provide the individual with a sense of social integration (p. 234).

Feeling close to boys. Participants spoke fondly of their male friends and boyfriends. "I've hung out with my girlfriends before, but now I kind of stick with.... mostly guys--which bothers my boyfriend at times. I'm mostly friends with those guys. I don't know, they fit better" (Suzanne).

Jessica who was in a "long-term" relationship, remarked on how valued she felt. "He supports me and makes me think about what I'm doing." Grace, Lyn and Catherine felt the same way about their male friends. "My guy friends are my most interesting friends. They... challenge me physically and mentally. Making me look at things in a different way—kind of refreshing" (Catherine). Grace noticed how she felt more self-assured with her male friends. "They're less likely to pick at you or judge you."

While participants agreed that they “bonded” with girl friends, boys made the best friends for having fun and engaging in physical activities such as four-wheeling, biking, golfing, and hiking.

Boys also provided status for girls among their female friends. For example, when Anita started a steady relationship with a young man from a larger centre, girls in town came up to congratulate her on her success.

Feeling separated with boys. Relationships with boys did provide girls with status, support and a sense of confidence. However, there was a price to be paid. Relationships with boys could create a lack of closeness with others in the community because many of the boys were viewed by community members as “troublemakers.”

Suzanne explained how going out with a Skids boy could create problems with committee members with whom she worked. She feared that her relationship would jeopardize all her years of work in the community.

My boyfriend was involved in one of the stupid acts of vandalism...like he tore up one of the benches in town. I asked him, “Did you have any part in it?” And he was like, “Yeah.” I was like, “Why did you do it?” And he was like, “I was pissed off.” I’m like, “Oh yeah, sure, beat the crap out of a bench. That does a lot of good.” Cause it’s stupid things like that, you know, that make me realize how young he is and that just makes me mad cause I don’t want to think how young he is, you know. It sucks.

On the one hand, Suzanne was working closely with the community in creating a youth centre, and on the other hand, she was going out with someone who had probably vandalized the centre. Anita, who had recently “transformed her

label” gave her some advice during an informal meeting. “Suzanne, you’d better watch it. You could lose everything in this town.”

Yet, Suzanne did not want to think about the difference in values between herself and her boyfriend. She believed that she could change those characteristics that she didn’t approve of. She spoke at length of times when she lectured him, praised him, and helped him with his homework. She was willing to do just about anything to make that relationship work and to keep her good relationship with the townfolk.

Participants who were in steady relationships noticed they no longer saw their girlfriends on a regular basis. As Tina stated, “I just hang out with my boyfriend and I see my girlfriends every once in awhile.” There was a price to be paid if you wanted to keep your boyfriend happy. Several participants remarked how they missed the supportive and encouraging conversations with female friends.

Lyn stated emphatically that she did not want a boyfriend yet because her “art work was way too important.” She valued her time alone and she saw too often what happened to her female friends. Suzanne spoke for several young women that I talked with during my time in the community.

I used to spend a lot of time by myself but now I try to and I just wonder where he is all the time. “What’s he doing? He was going to call me. He was going to come over. What’s going on, you know?” My friends also all have boyfriends... so they’re depending on their boyfriends and I’m depending on mine so anytime my boyfriend’s not around, I’m by myself because a lot of my girl friends are with their boyfriends too. Like basically

the close-knit friends that I have all have boyfriends—all pretty serious boyfriends, too. So it kind of throws me off when he's not around--when he wants to do something with someone else, I'm just like, "No, you can't! Take me with you please?"

Suzanne and Tina both struggled with keeping a job and keeping a boyfriend. Tina decided not to work while Suzanne struggled with the decision of working or not working in order to spend time with her boyfriend.

It takes away my weekends. ... I can't go and do anything. I can't go stay with my boyfriend and I can't go camping. ... I've tried to quit but my boss won't let me. He tells me I need to work and I know I do but... I don't know what I'm going to do. My boyfriend works all summer and then I'll be alone cause he gets up at four a.m. and sleeps all evening!

Tina noted that she gave up some of her freedom to make new friends when she became involved in a relationship.

...[G]irls have more of an open mind than guys do. They can adjust to stuff. Where guys are just like, "I don't like him. I'm not going to talk with him. Screw that." Girls are just like, "Oh yeah, she seems like a nice person. Maybe I'll get to know her."

Generally girls saw relationships with boys as more likely to separate them from other connections. According to this group of girls, boys weren't as concerned with connections and "bonding."

I just think they're more concerned with them, themselves, and like their friends and what they do, you know. Just more fun things with their friends.

And they don't concentrate more like on the whole social aspect of it all.

(Lyn)

Jessica provided an insightful view.

Guys don't care about each other, I mean, not like girls do. ...Like me and my close friends are very close. And it's like a sister...and not to say that any guys aren't, don't have any really close friends, but....their idea of a close friend is probably a lot different than our idea of a close friend.... I think that girls here...I think they are more likely to appreciate the closeness of people here and knowing people when you ...walk down the street.

Lyn added, "I'd say that girls are more concerned ... about how they are with other ...people." Suzanne also thought that boys weren't as worried about being respected by others or about their reputations.

The guys don't have the same closeness as the girls have because they don't have the same bonding and the same gossip and stuff--all the girly things. It's like, guy stuff, you know. And girl stuff is like bonding and stuff. That's what we go for. Is bonding (laughs).

Heterosexual relationship provided the rural participants with increased opportunity to participate in leisure activities designated by them as "guy" activities. Their relationship with boys gave them another context for developing close relationships. Yet participants recognized that what they wanted from a male friendship was generally different from what boys wanted. Girls were looking for relationships while boys were looking for action (Berndt, 1996). Girls

worried about their reputations while boys seemed less concerned about others' reactions.

Several researchers (Cross et al., 2000; Cross & Madson, 1997; Gilligan 1982; Gilligan et al., 1990; Jordan et al., 1991; Josselson, 1987, 1988, 1992; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; 1994) have described how women raised in Western cultures are more likely to describe themselves in terms of relatedness to others. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to describe themselves in terms of separateness from others. This gender difference seemed to hold true for youth in Asgard.

Two types of heterosexual relationships were evident in this group. One group of girls, Suzanne, Jessica, and Tina, were willing to give up other relationships in order to remain with their current boyfriends. In contrast, Anita who just started a new relationship and Lyn, who was not in one, felt that maintaining their self-respect and identity was important. Thompson (1995) referred to this group of young women as "equality narrators." Girls in this group maintained their relationships with their girlfriends and were less likely to divide girls into "good girl" and "bad girl" categories. In this group, Anita and Lyn best fit this category.

Not surprisingly given the themes uncovered in the Life-course Graphs, the young women wanted to have close ties to all their social worlds. Their sense of self and the desire for connections were intertwined and again convey complexity in the identity process (Archer, 1985, 1992; Josselson, 1987, 1988, 1992).

Theme: Feeling supported—Feeling unsupported

This theme captures participants' understanding of how they were encouraged, strengthened and regarded within their community. Overall, participants felt cared for and encouraged, but they were critical of the lack of support and concern experienced in some of their worlds and on some occasions. "It depends on who you are. Like at school, if you're involved, then you're supported. If not then, it's like...who cares" (Group Closure/Feedback Meeting).

Feeling unsupported was perceived by participants as times when important others appeared uncaring and unaccepting. Participants spoke ardently when discussing times when they felt unsupported.

This theme has implications for how young rural women develop and implement life-career plans. Research on female social development (Gilligan et al., 1990; Orenstein, 1994; Taylor et al., 1995) has suggested that close supportive relationships serve as a protective factor during adolescence. Without this support, young women may not develop the confidence to make effective life-career plans.

Feeling supported by the community. A supportive community is a community that looks after each other and accepts each other. Catherine's metaphor of the variety of plants found in Asgard captures some of what participants meant by "taking care" of each other.

The hybrids are the fragile people who are easily led astray. Perhaps their home did not provide them with a lot of security and care so the community has to watch out for them and help take care of them... Like in my family, mom would invite them over and make sure they got to see a regular family function—like go camping with us occasionally.

Josée also gave an example of how community members watch out for those who are less fortunate. Her family helped a father whose wife died suddenly by taking care of his young son whenever the father had to work at a logging camp.

The community rallied behind its residents even when tragedy struck. “Even if you’re away somewhere and something happens. It’s really important to the whole town. Like the whole town knows about it and the whole town’s been writing letters and... supporting people” (Anita). Suzanne and Tina also mentioned how supportive community members were when a young person committed suicide. “[T]his town kind of fell apart, but people, like friends were there to help friends out, like they were very supportive of each other which was what everyone needed at the time” (Tina).

Out of town residents helped each other by providing rides for their children. Catherine explained how rides were arranged.

There’s kind of a network, like people realize that it’s hard to get to Asgard for kids who don’t have a license... so it’s not uncommon to get a phone call, “Do you know anybody going into Asgard? So and so needs a ride.” Up-the-lakers like Catherine were offered places to stay in Asgard when involved in extra-curricular activities such as student council.

All participants appreciated that their gender did not restrict them from being physically active. Catherine remarked how important it was not to be “held back because I’m female. Like I’ve played ice hockey [minor league] and you know when I was on the volleyball team we went and split firewood and stacked firewood as a fundraiser.”

The girls valued the community's support of individuality and uniqueness. Catherine put it this way, "Another nice thing about the area is that everybody is an individual (laughs) pretty much! ...It is so small, you really expand yourself to make a statement. It's really accepting about being different. It's cool."

For the young women, giving back to the community was something that they valued. For most it was the small things done in daily living such as looking out for the younger generation. As Catherine noted, in a small town, it was easy to be a role model because "the little people notice you more." A young neighbour frequently asked Anita about the safety of going to certain parties.

Feeling unsupported by the community. The young women believed in the traditional rural value of support and acceptance of all community members and have internalized this rural belief or value. However, their actual experiences have shown a lack of support for youth, thus causing feelings of tension regarding the contractions they experience. Although the participants could give examples of community support in general terms, when it came to discussing the support the community gave to its young people, they were more critical. The young women believed that the community should recognize and support youths' contributions to the community.

I've been doing this [youth centre] for five years and we keep running into problem after problem. Like with being hooked up to the sewer and stuff. Like our building is right down by the lake, it's far away from Main Street, like we have our own little place.... We've totally fixed it up inside and now we can't use it. Sometimes it seems like those roadblocks are made on purpose. (Suzanne)

Anita believed the youth centre would never come to fruition because:

[W]ell it's like they don't want teenagers around. It's like, "Go away and come back in the summer and party with your friends and then go away!" Like everyone talks about getting a youth centre, they've been talking about it for years. It'll never happen, I don't think it ever will. It's just for show—we wanted you to have a centre, but you guys destroyed it and now you won't get it and then if we try hard, then we're told, "Sorry you can't put a septic in so close to the water," and it goes on and on. It's just for show, to make them feel like they have done their bit when they actually haven't done much at all. I mean we don't have power here and they know it! So for us to put together a youth centre, we need their help. And then an employment office. People talk about it. It'll never happen. It won't. Like for the youth in this town, if they want to be noticed, in a positive way or a negative way, no matter what, no matter how they want to be noticed, they have to do it themselves.

Participants criticized community members for not providing more recreational activities outside of school. For participants who were not comfortable or accepted at school, there was little for them to do.

The fact that there's nothing to do. Like to succeed you have to like school. It is hard to get away from school. Like everything is based on school it seems around here, like sports and everything, It is hard to get money for anything else. It is hard to get through to the adults in the community if you want something. (Suzanne)

While Jessica was against the "partying" that occurred in Asgard, the

rest of the group felt that they had little choice. Again, Suzanne who regularly spoke for youth at the town council had this to say.

There's no place to just hang out. Cops always bust us. Like cops always come down even if no one is drinking ... I was at a party last weekend and it was older people and they were playing drums and stuff, like just talking and stuff, and it was kind of like a musical, spiritual type of thing. Cops went down there and busted everyone. They told everyone, like put the fire out and it's like, you got a tiny fire, you've got rocks around it, it's safe, you're far away from houses. The cops say, "That's where all the kids are going to go and it's going to be a big party." But where else do you want us to hang out? There's no place for us to go. There's no place else for us to go. They complain when we are on Main Street, they complain if we are hanging out in stores, they complain anytime we're anywhere.

Catherine noticed that some community residents seem to be afraid of teenagers while others showed disrespect when serving young people in stores and restaurants.

[T]hey don't serve you very nicely. It's like if I sit down with an older looking person they serve us. If I sit down with my younger sister and some of her friends, they walk past you many times and serve the adult who came in after you.

Anita cried out for adults to look behind the vandalism and drinking. She agreed there was too much destruction of property in Asgard.

Whenever somewhere to hang out happens, it gets trashed. Like there's a lot of vandals—a lot of vandalism in this town. I don't know, it's really

boring.... Like there's integrity here and there's dignity here, but there's just nowhere to show it really. It's like because the only time adults in this town see the youth is hanging out on Main Street, sitting in restaurant having coffee, walking down the street drunk, hearing the music from the beach from a party, but the dignity that most of us actually do have...it's not really shown. It's like there's nothing to do, there's nothing here for us.

Just as the rural adolescents in Hine and Hedlund's study (1994)

complained that there was no place to meet with friends, so too did this sample.

Hedlund (1993) found that rural youth wanted to be involved in decisions that affected their lives. In the current study, the young people I talked with had creative ideas for stopping vandalism. These suggestions included providing opportunities for youth bands to play twice a month, inviting a representative from the youth of Asgard to sit on the town council, and encouraging the golf club and community centre to start junior programs in golf and curling.

Finding a space of their own is a phrase that echoes through the research on adolescents. Gill Valentine (1996a, 1996b) in a study of the use of public space in urban and rural England found that there were few facilities for young people in towns and cities, nor even in the countryside. Valentine believes that children and youth have little privacy. At school and at home, adults try to keep them active through structured activities that may conflict with young people's own ideas. After dark when adults are no longer out, young people take over spaces.

The results of Valentine's studies indicated that youth did not set out to break laws or to disrupt adults' worlds but rather these outcomes were a by-product of natural flow of activities as youth gathered in one place.

...in most cases the teenagers are not committing any offence. Young people are therefore denied the opportunity to express their own lifeworlds and their spatial freedoms are regulated, not on legal grounds, but purely because adults want to maintain their own spatial hegemony (1996a, p. 594).

Valentine (1996a, 1996b) presents a compelling argument that adults' fears about youth crime and violence have led to representations of children "as simultaneously angels and devils" (1996a, p. 596). Police are pressured to maintain firm boundaries between "us and them." According to Valentine, this "othering of children is being reproduced and articulated through space" (1996a, p. 597).

Public space therefore is not produced as an open space, a space where teenagers are freely able to participate in street life or to define their own ways of interacting and using space, but is a highly regulated—or closed—space where young people are expected to show deference to adults and adults' definitions of appropriate behaviour, levels of noise...to use the traditional saying, "Children should be seen and not heard." (1996b, p. 214)

The girls remarked on the response of the community to the physical destruction of property, but noted their seemingly lack of concern for tarnishing reputations. At the group meeting, participants identified the "pettiness: of rumours, labeling, and gossip" as the most hurtful part of living in the community. "There are days when you just can't face it...and it's not like you can touch it but it's there and it hurts" (group closure/feedback meeting). Tina explained,

There's rumours all the time. You have to learn to live with it... That's why a lot of fights start. They happen when...people, they have nothing

better to do so they start rumours. And everybody knows everybody so everybody's going to hear the rumours....

Anita voiced her experience too:

A lot of girls in this town are labelled "slutty girls"... I think it's really easy to get that label in this town because if you screw up once you're stuck with that label and it just depends on the choices you make....sometimes it will only take one person that you have to sleep with and then you are slutty. You don't even have to sleep with anybody depending on how you dress....

As Jessica pointed out, "It's not fair but it's what happens and it's hard to lose that reputation like once you have it."

The traditional "rural" value of helping your neighbour was supported by participants. Individual idiosyncrasies (Allen & Dillman, 1994) were accepted and creativity was encouraged. At the same time, participants reflected on the drawbacks of being highly visible. Smaller communities

tend to enhance consciousness of the intersubjectivity of social life; one's deeds are not forgotten...[W]hat an individual in the small town has to take into account is that his or her actions are always taken into account and that this account becomes part of the discourse of the community (Bonner, 1997, p. 182).

Lack of good judgment, a careless word, or lack of tact buzz through the grapevine and labels form and crystallize.

Feeling supported by family. Support in families included emotional support, physical support, mutual support, and providing a value system. For many

of the young women, being listened to by their mothers was at the top of their list. As Suzanne related, her mom had always been willing to listen to her even when her mom disagreed with Suzanne's activities.

My mom's always there for me to talk to....she really, she has been so supportive. All the decisions I've made in my life, she's been there for me, like no matter what, no matter if they're stupid. She's, 'You need to learn' so if I make a stupid decision, she knows. If I get to a party and everyone's drunk and can't find way home, she's there to give me a ride. So she's taught me how to be a friend. She taught me how to be there for people. And when I've wanted to quit school... she's just like, 'Keep going. You'll regret it, you know.'

For Lyn a caring relationship meant being able to be herself. "My mum and dad, they've always made sure that it is okay for me to be myself and they're really supportive and everything and fair." For Josée, it was being able to

always talk freely with my mom about anything. Like I told her when I tried drugs and alcohol. Like when I tried smoking pot, for example, I told her I'm going to try this and she wasn't OK with it...she was so concerned but she never yelled at me or grounded me.

Parents provided physical support as well. Jessica looked to her mother for support especially in helping stretch her pay check.

My mom is really good about helping me out. We just got together all of my plants that are on my deck.... She helped me put together two hanging baskets, a planter with some chives, and some green onions, some celery and Romaine.

Participants also felt supportive and caring for their families when they worked alongside their parents. As Josée commented, "You're all together, sweating, and laughing too. It feels kind of good to be with your family." Catherine, Jessica, and Grace talked about how "their family pulls together" in making their family business successful. The girls helped their dads by piling lumber, running the forklift, or doing the books. Josée assisted her parents by splitting and piling the winter's wood supply.

Being able to provide emotional support to the family was also identified as an important family role.

I take care of my little sister. She does a lot more interacting than I ever did in high school and I want to make sure that she's okay and everything. She has lots of friends in different grades and is more involved in extras than I was. She stays with me when she wants to visit friends or be involved in some school thing. (Jessica)

Above all else, participants stated time and time again how much they valued their parent(s) for passing on standards to live by.

Josée's family taught her how important it was for everybody to work together. Grace's mother showed her the importance of acting in a loving manner. "[L]ike love is basically God and so acts of kindness is the way to go."

Jessica's mother taught her "to stick together and to do stuff together so I find myself doing stuff like that with my younger sisters." Her step-dad passed on the value of being responsible.

When I was younger I thought that it was just being mean and pouring stuff on us [giving his step-daughter chores to do around the yard and in the

small mill that he ran], but in reality he was just teaching us responsibility and giving us that advantage over some kids who didn't get that when they were growing up.

Lyn's family transmitted the belief in having respect for herself and respect for others.

[T]hat I can be honest and that it's better to be honest. Like having that trust between my parents and myself and being able to share what I'm doing in an honest way is something that I've learned to value. And it involves... not always telling my parents positive things about myself or things that go along with their value system....but also knowing that they still accept me and love me.

According to a recent Canadian report on the health behaviours of school-aged children (King, Boyce, & King, 1999), the majority of youth respect their parents, feel a sense of belonging in the family, and share similar values. Parents who provide standards of behaviour, set clear expectations, and who provide emotional support encourage healthy development in their children (Jacobson & Crockett, 2000; Kosterman et al., 2001). The young women in the study held their parents in high regard and showed their respect by reciprocating emotional support when needed.

Feeling support within the school environment. Supportive and caring school environments transpired when teachers made subject areas interesting; when they encouraged students, and when they provided a variety of extracurricular activities. Students supported the school environment when they

engaged in school activities and when they had a positive and respectful attitude towards teachers.

Good teaching involved being organized and making sure that students were challenged and supported. Lyn was impressed when her principal set up special math and biology classes in the evening to prepare students for the provincial exams. Anita acknowledged the support of her English teacher in her success as writer. Grace was pleasantly surprised when the school counsellor found a work placement for her at a horse farm and a place for her to board. Josée was delighted with her success in Calculus. "I didn't want to take it at all but the principal encouraged me and like when he's teaching, I can ask questions and it's okay. And I'm like, Wow, I get that!"

Participants formed caring connections with some of their teachers. Although Suzanne had had shaky relationships with most of her teachers, she enjoyed the experience of being taught by four temporary teachers who didn't have preconceptions about her. Being given the opportunity to enact her "school" self differently, Suzanne took part in school activities and attended school regularly in contrast to her previous behaviour.

They try to know more, like personally about me... [T]hey'd ask questions about your assignments and you'd know that they'd read them.... It made you actually feel that you belong somewhere. Which was nice for me....

They have made me want to actually learn and go to school and come out on top in my life, but like most of the teachers that are at school now, I don't even really have that kind of relationship with...

Jessica related a story about her English teacher who went out of her way to encourage her and to make English 12 a great experience for her.

She was really interested in what you had to say and what your ideas were and what you thought was a good idea. She really listened. And when it came to the provincials I passed it with high marks and it was fun doing it and I felt proud of myself for doing so well. I never knew I could.

Although a small school, the staff provided a number of activities: cross country running, basketball, volleyball, drama, band, student parliament, and the yearbook. Josée, Catherine, Lyn and to a lesser extent Grace took advantage of the opportunities at school and were involved in a wide range of activities. As Catherine stated, "I really really enjoyed myself, I really had a good time. It was like I found myself there." Students who were involved seemed to enjoy school more.

One of the benefits of being involved was the chance to travel and to interact with other students. Each year students travelled to the Regional Drama Festival, went on a band trip to California, and attended games throughout the area. For those students who were involved, teachers were more likely to consider sending them to various conferences out of town. Lyn attended a Racism conference while Grace went to Ottawa to the Improv Games.

Feeling unsupported within the school environment. Suzanne and Tina felt most discouraged within the school system. These two participants viewed teachers as "boring and old-fashioned" (Suzanne). They reacted negatively when teachers inquired as to how they were doing. "Kinda nosy like" (Tina). Additionally, the activities provided did not appeal. Suzanne wanted to see non-competitive,

student-led activities that she thought would be more inclusive. Tina wished for more 'hands-on' activities and more variety in the classroom. Grace was still wary of school although she became quite involved in drama in her last year in high school. She resented the fact that "[Y]ou stay with the same people right through....if they've built an impression of you early on then that's what carries through."

The results from the American Association of University Women project, *Girls in the Middle: Working to Succeed in School* (AAUW; 1996) drew attention to school environment and teacher factors that encouraged female student success. Key factors included innovative and gender inclusive materials and strategies, lower levels of competitiveness, close ties with teachers, and a variety of extra-curricular activities within the school. Elder and Conger (2000) also found that school activities provide rural students with an arena for achieving success and for contributing to the good of others.

Feeling supported by peers. According to participants, with the exception of Jessica, friends had more influence on their behaviour than parents. Suzanne seemed to follow her peers far more than the other girls.

My friends basically influence everything I end up doing. My mom tries to get me to do the right thing, but my friends actually influence everything that actually happens to me. What I do, if I go home after a party, or if I go on time, if I drink, if I do any drugs, what I wear.

Within a supportive network of friends, participants learned important communication skills. Grace noted that she learned about

getting along with people and really being there for them. In my small group, like if we're going to do something, we do it by consensus like if someone has a problem we still address it to the group and anybody in the group can be one on one with another person without discomfort and whereas in a lot of groups, it's like there's one person who's friends with 3 or 4 people but those 3 or 4 people won't be that good of friends with each other. I guess there's just a really tight net in our group where everybody has a connection to everybody else.... We do sharing circles, just be with each other and be supportive.

Lyn's friends are also really supportive and they have fun together. "We just sit around and laugh. Like a lot of it is humour. It's just awesome hanging out with them. You learn to lighten up a bit and recognize that it's okay to make mistakes and everything."

The young women gave me many examples of supporting their friends. Lyn accompanied a friend who was going to an interview on the Coast. After the interview, they travelled to California to join the school band trip. Suzanne said she provides her friends with a listening post. "What people say they find about me is that I'll listen and I'll listen through the whole thing, I won't give my two cents unless I'm asked."

Feeling unsupported by peers. Participants were more apt to describe times when they saw others being teased and bullied by peers than they were themselves. Josée and Grace were protective of themselves and did not have many close friends. Grace would not disclose times when she had been humiliated but she

alluded to several experiences of rejection throughout her narrative. Anita's close male friend was a victim of bullying for years.

I don't even understand why he's been picked on forever. It's just, he's never, they created him. They haven't given him a chance to be anything else so it keeps going and going. But he knows that and he just... He doesn't react violently toward them, he doesn't say anything to them, he just carries on.

Anita remembers her own pain. "Even if it's not continuously. But when it is, it's kind of really hard. You don't want to get up in the morning and go to school."

Suzanne described how difficult it was to be supportive of her peers because cliques or groups formed common views.

[I]f I don't like someone, it's sometimes hard for my friends not to have a grudge on that same person. That's how it is in Asgard. If one person doesn't like someone, almost everyone in that group can't like that person.

Evans and Eder (1993) outline a "cycle of isolation" that occurs when students were perceived as different from other students in appearance, mental maturity, and gender identification (p. 164). Once given one label, other negative qualities, for example, "slut" or "faggot" are attributed. Evans and Eder hold certain school environments responsible. Schools where labelling goes unchecked and where social acceptance develops through "social policies and practices that promote social visibility and social hierarchy among students" (p. 168) cultivate cycles of isolation.

Feeling supported in relationships with boys. The girls referred to their male friends as special types of peers. Their close male friends were encouraging

and showed good listening skills. Male friends tended to be “outsiders” to the main groups. Jessica stated that her boyfriend was “someone who’s there for me all the time.... He was another one [besides her parents] who encouraged me to go out and get my job.” Suzanne, on the other hand, tried to be a positive influence on her boyfriend. “[H]e used to be one of the biggest troublemakers.... But I kind of made him use his brain more...”

Feeling unsupportive in relationships with boys. There was nothing in the interviews to indicate that the girls were unsupportive of male friends or boyfriends nor vice versa. What stood out for me, was the lack of talk about female-male relationships. During my stay in Asgard, I picked up a couple of girls who had bruises on their face. I heard through the rumour mill that they were in abusive relationships. I also saw other girls hit their boyfriends at a beach party. The girls would not freely talk about what happens in their relationships.

Little information is available on dating relationships in rural communities. However self-reports on dating violence as reported by Spencer and Bryant (2000) suggest that young people in rural high schools were more likely than urban youth to be in violent relationships, with rural female students at the greatest risk.

Feeling supported by employers. Not surprisingly, those girls whose parents had connections in the community had no difficulty finding part-time jobs. Josée and Lyn had worked since they were young adolescents. Grace volunteered at the library until they were able to hire her. Catherine and Jessica worked for their families until they finished high school. There was little available in the small community north of Asgard, however, Catherine was able to work occasionally at a small family-run ski lodge where her mother worked. Employers were only able

to supply part-time work. However, longer hours (20-25 hours per week) were available in the summer when the tourists visited the area. When there were rainy summers, the hours worked dropped to less than 10 a week. Occasionally federally and provincially funded programs made it possible for 6 to 8 youth to be employed full-time through the summer months.

For those participants who worked, their employers were very supportive and encouraging. Lyn stated that her boss had helped her with fund-raising and gave her time off when she needed it. Catherine's employer at the ski lodge pointed out skills that she had developed and suggested that she consider Adventure Tourism as a career. Anita's employer also was flexible in scheduling her shifts so that she was able to play ice hockey.

Feeling unsupported by employers. In Asgard where jobs were scarce and the tourist season short, many businesses were reluctant to hire young people. "Some businesses are just close-minded and I can't totally blame them because say that they get someone who's good on the outside and turns out to be bad, that's going to ruin it [their business] for them." However, Jessica believed that employers could "talk to other people and find out what the kids are like" rather than consider all youth as "bad apples."

Anita made the connection between lack of jobs and the vandalism in town. "There's not many jobs and so most kids don't get jobs. And maybe those kids would be less rebellious and dress nicer and all that if they had jobs and felt included and worthwhile."

Productive activities of young people represent an important path to adulthood and this is particularly true in rural communities (Montemayor, Adams,

& Gullota, 2000; Shanahan, Elder, Burchinal & Conger, 1996) where their contributions add to the economic well-being of rural households. In this sample, Suzanne, Josée, Grace and Catherine spent some of their wages on their family by contributing to the groceries each week. Employers' negative attitudes toward youth are problematic since research with rural youth has indicated that earnings increase feelings of self-efficacy and contribute to both family and community (Elder, King & Conger, 1996).

Summary

Overall, this group of young women felt close to and supported by their social worlds in the community of Asgard. They valued the friendliness of their community, their close ties with parents, the smallness of their school, their devoted friendships, and the opportunities for employment. At the same time, participants pointed out how cliques separated young people and caused hurt feelings and isolation. They were adamant in stating that adults in the community overlooked their need for a place of their own. Participants recognized how labels and gossip prevented youth from being hired by employers and from being included in extra-curricular activities at school.

Metatheme: Committed ---Uncommitted

Just as in an ecosystem, where species interact in various ways, so to do community members. Community membership implies commitment and responsibility towards each other. The Metatheme of *Committed---Uncommitted* emerged as participants reflected upon intentional, purposeful interactions in Asgard. What are the obligations of adult members in responding to the needs of

their young women? How do adults and community organizations demonstrate their commitment to encouraging young women to be all that they can be? As members of a symbiotic, interdependent system, what are the responsibilities of the young women?

Residents in Asgard were also perceived as uninterested and uninvolved by these young women. How do young women respond to adult apathy? Who else do they turn to for guidance? Young people depend on adults to guide them through adolescence to adulthood. When the concerns of youth are ignored, it is likely that young people will react. For many youth in Asgard, a cycle of increased frustration led to acts of vandalism and drinking, and decreased involvement by adult residents.

Commitment in the community. Catherine provides her perception of community responsiveness by contrasting Asgard to another community.

In those towns up-the-lake, it's really different from Asgard. Up there no one really cares--they have big families, they live in trailers, and everyone goes to the bar a lot.... There is no real community. But in Asgard, there is more of a (pause) centre. It's a closer community. And it has more things like banks, shops and things, a good school, a library, more types of work...

Participants listed ways in which the community showed commitment. They cited the positive consequences of providing role models and mentors, financial support, practical information, and meaningful roles for youth.

Although Suzanne was in two community-based mentorship programs, mentoring for the rest of the participants was informal. For instance, Tina and her

friends saw an older man as their mentor. "He was a really spiritual person and ... he helped out ... lots of teenagers like when they were fighting with their parents and stuff. He always gave them a place to stay." Tina liked to talk with him about issues facing young people or what she saw as the "ignorance in the schools." Her mentor encouraged her to continue at the alternative school because that system provided the flexibility that she needed.

Anita's hockey coach was her mentor who gave her the support and guidance she needed in order to play on an all-boys team.

I was the only girl on the team that year and it was just like completely hormonal, horrible raw emotion hockey season of death ... I really learned more about having pride and about being honest with yourself. Realizing, okay these boys are bigger and stronger than you, but it doesn't matter, I can still be there. He just taught me more about pride and acceptance when you're the only girl and there's tons of other guys.

For Suzanne, her mentors provided her with "ways to be in organizations." Although Suzanne was initially quite shy and sat back at council meetings, she began to pattern herself after the adult president.

You know if she wants to stand tall and speak her mind, she'll do it. So I try to watch her and try to do the same thing and everything. Try to mimic her and everything. She's just taught me how to speak out more, kind of. I'm kind of shy speaking in a big group and she's taught me how to do that more. Just different things like that. Making presentations. Writing proposals.

Mentoring can be a powerful means of providing supportive adult contacts for youth. In studying the role of mentors in the lives of American adolescents, Hamilton and Darling (1996) found that unrelated adult mentors tended to complement the important role played by parents. They were not viewed as substitutes for parental support. In their study, they pointed out the many roles played by mentors as challengers (to their thinking), as teachers, and as supporters. Dondero (1999) discovered that mentors also benefited from the relationship as well. Helping young people enhance their self-esteem, confidence, knowledge base, and abilities provided personal satisfaction and accomplishment for the mentors.

Lyn and Josée were pleasantly surprised by the financial and practical support offered by the community. As Josée commented, "It's a small town with only a few dollars to go around." When Josée planned a Mission trip to Fiji through her church, residents gave her donations that totaled \$2500. As part of her commitment to the Canada World Youth, Lyn had to fund-raise her airfare to Ontario and India.

[I]t's just amazing I've been like so shocked.... I handed out letters--a lot of letters ... Letters to the Chamber of Commerce, letters to the Legion, letters to different businesses, letters to some school organizations and every single one has been answered. I mean, not necessarily with a whole bunch of money, but just that we're going to try to see what we can do to help you. Like the Chamber of Commerce they don't have any money, but like the president ... called my house and we tried to talk about what I

could do, you know, to raise some funds and stuff. Like letting me use my art show as a fund-raiser at the museum.

The young women frequently stated that they needed more information about the world beyond Asgard. Lyn found as she talked with people while fundraising that residents had a wide-range of experiences to share with youth. Through a chance encounter in the community, Anita made contact with a playwright. Catherine heard about WWOOFing (Willing Workers on Organic Farms) from an older co-worker. During Lyn's art show, a resident shared his experiences of working with the World Youth Organization. Jessica met an accountant at her workplace who suggested that she consider correspondence programs in accounting which would allow her to further her education in Asgard.

Participants put the onus on the community to find ways to provide youth with meaningful roles. Two of the participants had represented their community as Spring Queens and were proud of their contributions. Suzanne, although on two committees, questioned whether she was a "token" member. Josée maintained that first, adults needed to be aware of young people's needs. They needed to "get off their cloud" and look around and take action as they did for high school graduation.

Just...caring about what their kids are doing... like organizing our wet grad to make sure that nobody dies from drinking and driving....

[P]arents who were designated drivers drove back into town for people who wanted to go back in or had to work or whatever...

The girls had also taken steps to make a difference in their community. Lyn started a recycling program in the community and then at her school. Grace volunteered at the library while Josée helped with luncheons at her church.

Researchers (Johnson et al., 1998; Youniss, McLellan & Mazer, 2001) have suggested that voluntary service has positive developmental outcomes for young people. Adolescents who take part in community and school social services activities tend to have higher educational plans and aspirations, higher academic self-esteem, and higher intrinsic motivation towards school work (Johnson et al.). Youniss et al. emphasize the benefits of young people making contact with normative adult worlds. When youth are provided with opportunities to use their developing social skills on committees and in social organizations, they experience themselves as having agency to improve conditions and as part of the larger whole. Additionally, these experiences give young people another social world in which to clarify their identities.

Lack of commitment in the community. Participants also highlighted a number of ways in which community members were apathetic or indifferent towards young people.

I think adults need to be looking out for us. Taking time to notice what's happening in our community as a result....because I believe that what you see happening around you is a reflection of yourself directly—or indirectly. So if people see... that there's a rise in vandalism, then they should see... that there's something wrong with the actual community itself. If they see there's a rise in love or that there's a rise in good things, then they should see it as a reflection of something good that they're doing. (Josée)

Anita was critical of both the community and school in their duties as community leaders. She felt that responsibility was “just sort of shrugged off.”

The girls struggled with the idea that adults should be involved in providing opportunities for them. Yet the young women did not want adults interfering too much in their lives. In other words, they wanted commitment from adults on their own terms.

There were several areas that the young women were especially concerned about, including denial of drug use by both young people and adults and not protecting young girls from the advances of older males.

I'm not into that scene really but I know from hearsay who the dealers are but most of them are adults, We have the best pot in the world. There's lots of mushrooms, acid is pretty predominant and that totally turns me off.... Hash is pretty predominant too. Like it's coming down to the kids now where a few years ago it was hard to get. Cocaine is starting to be on the rise in town. There was a big bust when someone got killed like a couple of years ago and this drug dealer was involved—that's part of the adult scene and I don't know much more about it but it does set a bad example for kids here. (Josée)

They wondered at the inaction of the police in curbing the spread of drugs in the area, but most of all they questioned the large number of adults who openly used drugs.

A puzzling thread through participants' narratives was the lack of adult involvement in confronting drug and alcohol use, vandalism, and possible physical and sexual abuse of young women. Certainly British Columbia has earned a

reputation for growing potent marijuana. Apparently many British Columbians smoke pot regularly. Marc Emery, a Vancouver-based hemp entrepreneur (as cited in *Economist*, June 27, 1998) estimates that 10% of BC's 3.5 million residents either smoke or grow marijuana.

Journalist Drew Edwards (2000) interviewed growers, sellers, police, and youth about the use of marijuana in a town in southern BC.

The first thing that is evident is that kids [in the area] have almost laughably easy access to marijuana. It is easier to obtain...than alcohol, especially in a small town with only three places to buy beer and one liquor store. It [marijuana] has very little negative stigma attached to it, even less than cigarettes... (p. 182)

According to the youth he interviewed, there was usually at least one house party per weekend and that increased during the summer. Young people classified potsmokers as "mellow" while alcohol drinkers were viewed as more likely to be violent and confrontational.

While the adolescents who were interviewed stated that parental views had a strong impact on their decision-making processes, many young people stated that they were first exposed to pot by their parents. Several adolescents perceived pot as part of the economic structure of their community.

In the current study, the young women believed that parents "knew there was nothing to do" (Grace) and therefore, were less likely to condemn "some drinking and smoking pot." However tragedies happened which impacted the entire community.

I lost three friends to a car accident....It was kind of reckless driving, Like, it was way up the lake and the road is like a logging road and his truck wasn't in good shape and he took a corner too fast and the weight of the truck pulled him off the cliff... [T]hat was a huge tragedy in this town and it was to do with drinking...maybe smoking. (Young woman from Asgard in her twenties)

Results of a study by Kearns and Rosenthal (2001) pointed to certain parenting behaviours as vital in addressing rural substance abuse. Parental monitoring of their children's behaviour, their friends, and their time spent away from adult supervision were key. Limit setting and time spent nurturing and interacting with their children were identified as parental behaviours that could exert a protective influence on children.

Participants looked out for younger girls because Asgard was not always a safe place, especially on the weekends when the bars were full. "They will be getting in fights or they will walk up and down the street and like hassle all the girls or something. So everyone is kind of affected by it" (Josée).

Anita also knew the dangers for young women.

The older guys who stay here do hit on the younger girls. We call them pedophiles, they're like guys that stuck around and graduated 3 years ago and they are still here, going out with grade 9's.... Like when you're 14, it's like getting drunk and sleeping with all these older guys and trying to hang out with them and stuff. We laugh about it, because it doesn't really matter-- because it keeps going on.

Jessica gave voice to an overriding concern expressed by several participants. "A lot of adults are more concerned with their own lives. They aren't really --as long as the kids here aren't vandalizing things, they don't get in an uproar or anything like that."

The girls also acknowledged that young people themselves were not always committed to creating a positive community. Those that were "heavy partiers" gave youth a bad reputation in town that impacted all youth especially in terms of finding places to rent and in finding employment.

There's a lot of people in town who just let the parties and stuff like that take over and they just end up ruining their houses and they ruin their chances of ever getting somewhere else to rent...like most young people here are into partying. A younger person who was actually younger than me and still going to school, but she's living on her own, and she was in the apartment next to us, but her life revolved around partying, almost every night. And that was driving us nuts and I guess it eventually drove the landlord nuts too, because he evicted her. (Jessica)

As Jessica found out when she went looking for a job, it was difficult to be even considered.

Everybody pretty much knows everybody and everybody hears about everything else so if you were at a function where something terrible happened, and somebody got beaten up, or there was vandalism, and you know about it, people automatically think that you're one of the bad apples. It just makes it harder for kids around here to prove their responsibility.

Jessica made responsibility her principal standard to live by. She intentionally dressed in plain clothing so adults in the community would see her as a trustworthy youth.

Vandalism was a main topic of conversation among the adult population when I was in Asgard. Initially, vandalism was initiated by the young men but now according to Anita,

[I] was a girl that trashed J.'s window boxes. It is mostly guys, it's mostly the same guys over and over again, but the girls are doing it, like they are aggressive. How it happens is like this, they've smoked themselves retarded, start scratching their names in a bench, start complaining about Asgard, start getting frustrated, start breaking things, and it just goes from there.

Destruction of property was making Suzanne's task of getting a community centre off the ground more difficult. "It's going to make it worse for the rest of us."

Although most of the girls would not go as far as Anita or Tina in expressing their boredom through drinking and doing drugs, Tina's attitude was shared by many of the young people I talked with.

[I]n a small town, people have nothing to do so they're like, 'What are we going to do, well let's go smoke a joint, or let's go get a 2-6.' Like there's just nothing to do so people are just like, 'Let's go get hammered!' (laughs). 'Let's go lay in the sun and get drunk' all the time. They just get so bored, like there's nothing to do. There's like no activities really. [Y]ou can't just go to the mall and walk around the mall with your friends or something... There's nothing to do. That's

why they drink and do drugs. (laughs) I don't know why people don't expect it. You don't give them anything to do so...they'll find something else.

Commitment in the family. The girls' parents seemed committed to passing on useful skills to their daughters. The girls were taught a variety of skills including butchering, shooting game, fishing, milking cows, splitting wood, operating various machinery, canning, and planting gardens. Jessica told an amusing story of "bonding" with her step-father.

He called it quality time (laughs). When we'd do hard work together (laughs). It was quite interesting, yeah. We'd be out there, ah, I don't know, doing a brake job on a logging truck. I really don't want to be here, but it's quality time! So I had to stick there and help.

Catherine related the joys of learning to drive a standard transmission vehicle with her mother on a logging road in the winter.

The girls seemed especially proud of their mothers and what they had accomplished.

Like my mom, she really likes to work in the garden and she's...my dad's always gone to work and stuff, but she's always fixed stuff, like she does kind of the masculinity side, like she's, she's pretty buff (laugh). She's a pretty strong chick. But she loves to work in her garden and do whatever, as long as she's in her yard, she's happy. My mom has made it really beautiful and that's the view from my house looking toward the lake. (Tina)

Suzanne expressed her pride in her mother's patience with people. That was a quality that Suzanne aspired to.

My mom's ... the Child and Youth Care Worker. She works with autistic kids, and she worked with a Down's Syndrome boy so she's got a lot of experience in that kind of stuff. She graduated with the Autistic boy. She was with him for four years. She's really good at her job. [I]t's amazing the stuff she puts up with. Like it's incredible. Like those guys can be so cruel. It's all guys. There's like 20 guys, and like two girls who go down there and it's just incredible the stuff she puts up with.

Participants discussed the various duties and roles they played in their families. José's response was typical of what I heard during the interviews.

I'm responsible for splitting all the wood and hauling --bucking and hauling all the wood, splitting it with my brother, um...I used to feed the animals, but now I don't --now it's my sister's and brother's responsibility, laying the table, doing the dishes, keeping the house clean, my room.... [M]aking sure that my homework's done.

The young women in this study viewed their parents as positive role models. They possessed skills that the young women wanted to emulate. In their study of mentors, Hamilton and Darling (1996) also found parents listed as mentors. Young women were more likely to do so than young men.

Commitment within the school environment. In rural settings, schools are prevailed upon to provide a wide range of services and resources to students. Providing career planning resources, computers, funding for post-secondary

education and training, and a wide variety of courses are challenges that face rural schools (Canadian Rural Partnership, 1998).

Over the last two years with the implementation of the Career and Personal Planning Program (CaPP), students saw more effort placed on obtaining work experience. The school counsellor went out of his way to find good placements, often out of town.

He's found some really cool places... [H]e's like gotten some people on movie sets. Really neat placements. And like my friend, she's really interested in acting and she went to the Calgary Shakespeare in the Park last summer and I'm to go into [larger centre] Recycling Depot because I'm also kind of interested in Ecology and recycling and stuff like that.

(Lyn)

The new principal took on the challenge of finding funding for students who wanted to further their education.

[O]ur Principal has been really good about scholarships and stuff. With scholarships, he's like, he has been on the Internet and found all these different scholarships for us.... He just gave us this booklet and like said, "These are all that are available for you guys" so he was very good about that. He's like awesome! (Lyn)

Although Suzanne was not taking higher level math courses, she recognized the benefits of having those courses for those students who were interested in the sciences. Again the new principal was instrumental in providing Math 12 and Calculus. "He's teaching courses that we've never had at school before like Math 12 and Calculus...since I've lived here. Like there's 25 students

in his class that are taking Math 12 and Calculus.” The vice-principal obtained funds to create an up-to-date computer lab.

Lack of commitment within the school environment. There were a number of areas where participants felt that the school was not living up to its obligations. Included in this list were denial of the drug problem, poor attitude towards some students, lack of professional development, lack of courses, limited allocation of funding, and unrealistic grades.

Anita was the most vocal about (and most involved in) the use of drugs on school property.

Our school has a huge drug problem, but it seems like everyone’s in denial about it. Everyone’s either in denial about it or they really know but just don’t want to do anything... because there’s a lot of drug use at our school. It’s pretty much, you can yell down the hallway at lunch time and say, “Hey anybody got a roolly? Let’s go smoke a joint!” And it doesn’t really seem like, that anyone really pays attention... Sometimes they[adults] come out and they just sort of look over the bank and I’m sure that they can smell it... but it doesn’t seem like they’ve cracked down on it at all. ... I think they’re completely in denial about it and they don’t know what to do... I mean you can pretty much skid around all through lunch hour and there will be like a little session here and a little session there and then we go back to school.

Other participants pointed to the unprofessional attitude taken by teachers.

For Jessica, who travelled to Asgard for her education at the end of grade 7, it was

the favouritism shown to students who had always attended school in Asgard.

Anita found the way she was approached by some of her teachers as disrespectful.

The attitude is, 'Come see me, now!' [H]e's kind of in your face completely and like you can tell most teachers pick favourites in the school. A lot of them do. And you sort of see that and it's kind of hard. This one teacher has a huge problem with it. And he's always--he doesn't mind embarrassing you and yelling out in front of the whole classroom and drawing attention to you and telling you personal stuff. (Anita)

Suzanne believed that some of the older teachers could benefit from professional development.

Now all our old teachers came back and it's bad because a lot of the teachers are in their 50's and like one of our teachers is going deaf , and the other one has been teaching the same thing for 20 years. Like exactly the same thing. Because like I've given my notes to people younger than me and they pass them on. It's exactly the same. In the same order, everything. He doesn't change one thing. It just kind of makes you wonder. Why they are still here?

When I visited the school I noticed the large number of students on the Honour Role. Some students accepted that they were straight A students, although they questioned their poor performance on the provincial examinations. Anita and Suzanne wondered if teachers "were being straight with us."

I don't even know right now if I'm good at writing. Because they know me and it's really not a hard school, it's really not at all...like so I don't

even know if my writing's good. Just because I don't even have to do it and I can get an A. (Anita)

Suzanne noticed how much harder school was in Calgary. These two participants questioned how prepared they actually were if they decided to further their education.

The final area of concern had to do with the allocation of the limited funding available for extra-curricular activities. According to the participants, the majority of the funds went towards the basketball team. "[T]hat's big here, extremely big like that's basically what everyone concentrates on that's basically what all the school sport's money goes towards-is the senior, junior and both guys and girls teams" (Suzanne).

Catherine who played on a number of other sports teams discovered that:

None of the other sports can get anything. So they wanted to try to start a floor hockey team and a lacrosse team and all this, but there's no money left. Like cross-country and stuff, basketball used all the money so everyone is kind of negative towards the basketball players.

With the exception of Lyn all students had stories to tell of "not being the greatest student." Anita, Tina, and Suzanne were more likely to share these stories than the other participants. Anita was the most vocal and highlighted her "negative attitude" in her photo display.

Um...that's me in front of the school and that's our school motto: What we do today, creates tomorrow. But we get away with anything there-- I've never been caught skipping in my life and I skip all the time. I took

all day Friday off and I went and got drunk with my girlfriends for Grad and we didn't get caught. I've never been caught skipping. So what we do today, creates tomorrow, but what I've learned is that I can skip anytime and I can get away with whatever...

This is an example of where the message seems to be contradicting the experiences of some of the young women. Anita used the words, "Never been caught" when in fact she meant no one had confronted her on her school absences. Anita understood the lack of response to mean the "adults were shrugging off their responsibilities."

Many of the concerns raised by the participants in relation to community responsibilities surfaced within the microcosm of their school. Responding to the needs of young people in schools is a daunting task. Schools have enormous variability in the needs and requirements of its students, and more so in a K-12 school setting. Hargreaves, Earl & Ryan (1996) argue that schools must play a more vital role in community building, in providing care, developing relationships, and fostering a sense of attachment among people. While some specific innovations like mentoring or peer-helping may counter feelings of neglect, it is the routine relationships among teachers and students that matter most. Noddings (1995) calls for schools to develop an "ethic of care" involving modeling caring behaviours, dialoguing about caring with students and staff, practicing caring with students and teachers, and confirming or encouraging the best in others.

Commitment to peers. Throughout adolescence, girls' friendships become more intimate and stable over time (Berndt, 1996; Brown, Way & Duff, 1999). This group of young women was committed to investing time and energy into their

friendships. During their interviews several participants remarked that they were responsible for offering feedback to, and sharing information with their peers.

[W]e're open enough with each other that we do tell the truth and like one of my best friends, she tells me just how much of a good change that I've gone through... My friend S. always had good self-respect. I think we all learn a lot from each other about stuff like that. (Anita)

Some peers shared information about employment opportunities within the community and discussed their plans for the future together. Catherine, Lyn, Anita, and Grace were in this group. For example, Lyn found some information about a writing program at BCIT that she passed on to Anita. Tina learned important life skills from the boys that she chummed with.

Like you have to compete with those guys, like you learn a lot. Like I went camping out last week or something, like you learn lots of stuff, hanging around the guys. Like if I was, like if I got lost in the bushes, I could probably last like a few weeks just from what, like they've taught me

Lack of commitment with peers. Although identified by most participants as their most important support group, negotiating through the world of peers was not always easy or pleasant. Suzanne said that she felt "pulled" in all directions when she tried to be friends with people her group did not care for. "It's so hard. Like I try so much. I try to be nice to every person, but it's so hard because of the friends, you know. They're all on your back for trying to do something. It's hard."

Suzanne also recognized that she wasn't always trustworthy in her friendships.

[T]he way it works in Asgard, is you've got to watch out for your friends because they turn their backs on you in 2 seconds. Like I'm sure I've done the same thing once or twice before, but if something comes around that's better than you, that has better stories, they'll turn back and back stab you and talk about you.

Young et al. (1999) found that dialoguing with peers can create a space where young people can internalize goals and values and explore possible life-career plans in an exploratory manner. In Felsman and Blustein's (1999) study, adolescents who reported greater levels of attachment to peers were more likely to have engaged in career exploration and career commitment than those who were less attached. These results support Berndt's (1996) hypotheses that supportive friendships represent a facilitative factor in managing life-career development tasks of late adolescence.

Committed in heterosexual relationships. Out of the eight participants, only four of the girls were dating or in relationships. The social world of boyfriends was fraught with tension and unease. The four girls wanted a committed relationship but at the same time struggled with keeping their sense of self while in an intimate relationship. For example, Anita wanted to maintain her values while in the relationship, but did not know if that was possible.

I feel responsible to keep my self-respect. And to keep the way I am...

I'm not going to start buying Roxy clothing and trying to snowboard

...because that's not who I am. I just feel responsible for staying true to

myself in all relationships. Yet when you want to be with someone like I

want to be with T. then it's easy to...well it's hard to hold on to what you believe in.

Jessica was committed to her relationship and hoped to marry her partner in the future. Although they shared an apartment and "split pretty much all the bills. He pays a bit more rent than I do cause I go home and stay with my mom... He doesn't consider me living there...he's afraid of that or something." Jessica laughed when I questioned what he was afraid of. "Oh, he's totally committed and everything, just like I am."

In *Losing Out*, Lees (1996) presents the narratives of 15-and 16-year-old British girls who discuss, among other topics, gender relations. In her interviews with girls, Lees observed the extent to which feminine identity and social relationships rested on sexual reputation. The threat of exclusion by being labeled a "slag" or "slut" motivated young British women to regulate their emotions in their relationships and to take responsibility for their boyfriends' actions. This seemed to be similar to the experience of three of the young women in the current study.

In considering the influence of educational aspirations and romantic relationships on the development of career interests in adolescent women, Meinster and Rose (2001) found that there seemed to be two groups of female "daters" in high school. One group focused on dating to the exclusion of making future plans while the other group viewed dating as one component of their multiple worlds. In the current group of rural participants, Anita continued to plan for her future, while Suzanne, Tina, and Jessica's focus remained on their relationship.

Commitment by employers. Participants looked to their families, their teachers, and employers for giving them skills for their futures. As Suzanne stated,

Employers have a responsibility to supply some jobs so that we can go further. Like, cooking at the restaurant. You move up in stages. Like you start as a dishwasher and you want to be a cook or if you want to be a waitress or whatever, you move up so... employers are responsible for helping you get used to jobs in the future.

Jessica thought that businesses could do more to help young people by “offering either summer jobs or just little programs that get the youth involved.” She noted how the owners of the convenience store in town took time to train their employees.

They have several youth that just work there, they pay them to work there either behind the till or stocking shelves....[T]here's several kids who I see in there daily who don't really have a home... I mean--they have a house to stay in but it's not a family. Whereas, [the owners] are their family. They spend so much time with them and like one of the sixteen year olds who hangs out there just got his learner's and [the owner] is out driving with him and teaching how to drive and getting him ready for his license and I think that's great. That's showing that the youth can be...like the one kid who's doing this--I would have thought well this kid is a real disturber in the community, but when he's with them, he, he has kind of a sense of responsibility and he has to live up to what they're expecting of him and be well-behaved around them... So they help them out--some of them will just help stock shelves or wash off the deck and [the owners] will be out there rewarding them with favours--like helping them drive and taking them to

like a concert in Calgary or whatever. That's something that I wish more businesses would do.

With the exception of Tina who did not work, participants were thankful to their employers for taking the time to teach them as many skills as they could within the limits of their business. Josée appreciated the professional attitude that was expected of her at the bakery. Jessica felt that she had learned more from her employer than she had in all the courses she took in grade 12.

[I]t's a self-serve station so we don't have to pump gas so I'm not a gas jockey. And we are also a bulk oil agency. So all of the loggers and stuff around here get all of their oil from us. We have a card lock gas and diesel so that's where they come and get all of their diesel so we have to do monthly billings and stuff like that. And one of my responsibilities is making sure that the bulk oils and lubes and greases and all that stuff that people use, is ordered every week and another one is to make sure that...there's regular diesel and then there's dyed diesel and I have to make sure that the dye regulations are all okay and there's dye in the diesel and so that involves dealing with the government in Victoria.

However not all young people were able to find work in Asgard either because there weren't enough jobs to go around or because they belonged to the "hard-core" group. For many youth who couldn't find work, growing marijuana was the other possibility. As Suzanne stated, "Growing pot gives them money, but not necessarily something to put on their resumés. You can make an incredible amount of money and most of the pot smokers sell pot."

Rural youth increasingly have to compete with nonrural youth who have had access to urban-based skill training, for example in fast food restaurants and in department stores. Employers in smaller communities can provide youth with much needed abilities that give them opportunities beyond their community.

I've appreciated the students that I've worked with. They were all good kids and they made a mark.... There could be more opportunities... I don't know if working here has prepared them for the world as well as they might have been if they had gotten a tough boss right off the bat... It's hard because we all know each other. (Store owner)

Summary

According to Canadian trends in youth health attitudes and behaviour (King et al., 1999), most adolescents who have good relationships with parents are more likely to be socially, physically, and psychologically healthy. Participants generally acknowledged good relations with one parent and were disinclined to discuss strains in families. Given the information available from across Canada, it is unlikely that family interactions were as positive as portrayed. Participants' reluctance to delve into family matters may portray what they have learned in their small community. "Affairs and break-ups are played out in front of the whole town" (Josée).

Adolescents spend much of their time in school settings and therefore, school environments have a significant impact on their development. For most of the participants school was a positive experience and their positive attitude was reinforced by teachers' recognition of their contributions in the classroom and to the school community. However, for participants who felt excluded and criticized

at school or who could not see the purpose of school, attending school regularly was a challenge. Skipping school has been associated with increased involvement with unhealthy behaviours such as alcohol and drug use (King et al., 1999).

These young women value their friendships. Strong peer relationships are associated with self-confidence, positive school experiences, harmonious relations with parents and with physical and mental health (King et al., 1999). Adolescents who see themselves as unaccepted by peers are more likely to withdraw and become victims of bullying (Hurrelman & Hamilton, 1996). Those peers who spend their evenings with their peer groups and without adult supervision are more likely to share health-risk behaviours such as smoking, alcohol abuse and drug use (King et al.) Three of the participants continued to place “partying” at the centre of their lives. However, the remainder of the girls remarked that the amount of time spent partying tended to decrease with age. This suggests that as the girls mature, they develop a sense of self-responsibility for their actions and responses to the community. For example, Lyn and Jessica stated that it was up to youth to develop their own interests.

Metatheme: Opening ----- Limiting

Significant research has emerged in the field of place attachment (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Proshansky et al., 1983; Tuan, 1980). According to these researchers, the physical environment affects our sense of identity and our worldviews. For example, Orr, as cited in Bushnell (1999) presented the argument that individuals become more involved with a place as they develop an awareness of the impact the environment has on them. “Place, particularly a rural place,

becomes more than an opportunity for learning—it is the central cohesion point of a life connected with other beings” (Bushnell, p. 81).

The participants, who were all long-term residents, identified strongly with their physical environment yet noted the restrictive characteristics too. They discerned the benefits of living in an area that afforded them chances to acquire rural skills, to participate in outdoor leisure activities, to breath clean air, to experience equanimity, to appreciate the beautiful surroundings, and to construct memorable places.

Nonetheless, the young women also realized the limitations of their environment in preparing them for other life-career experiences. Without further schooling, most youth who remained in Asgard lacked the skills and the financial resources to make the transition from the community. The occupational structure within the area limited the variety of role models available. The distance from Asgard to larger communities restricted services while the kilometres separating outlying communities from Asgard prevented some young people from seeing friends outside of school.

The metatheme *Opening---- Limiting* has several implications for rural adolescent girls. Young women who experience a wish to remain near family and community may find themselves entrapped in the community they love. With predominantly low paying jobs and limited options, female youth may be presented with few chances to be self-supportive. One of their options may be to move into relationships as a way to obtain economic independence. Crockett and Bingham (2000) found that rural youth anticipated earlier entry into parenthood when compared with urban youth. Urban raised counsellors may not value rural

girls' outdoor interests and rural skills or may have difficulty assisting them in transferring their skills and interests into viable career options.

Opening

The physical environment provided opportunities for developing special skills. Catherine, for example, was building her future career in Adventure Tourism based on skills learned in childhood and adolescence.

Actually, I am interested in going to school...but there are prerequisites that I need. Basically I need more outdoor experience so that's what I'm doing right now--which is really fun! (laughs) The lake, it's really warm and there's swimming lessons. They were really great. I've taken swimming lessons since I was like five. Like I've always done swimming lessons and when I finished swimming lessons then I started helping the teacher and that was a summer job for me and so I've done lots of rescue breathing! (laughs) [T]hen I did St. John's First Aid and I baby-sat... I didn't do the baby-sitting course, but I did Infancy CPR twice, I think, and um, St. John's First Aid was in school and I did this Wilderness First Aid. I did Bronze Medallion and Bronze Cross which are the two courses you need for life guarding.

The young women listed many skills that Holland (1985) would classify as Realistic. Gardening, brushing (pruning undergrowth back in new forests), placing boards on the planer, driving heavy machinery, butchering farm animals and game, shooting game, cutting and splitting wood, fixing machinery, and canning were

some of the rural-based skills that were cited. Social skills, particularly the ability to communicate with everyone in the community, were identified.

The environment also provided a number of activities for youth although participants hankered after urban activities such as shopping malls, movie theatres, and large recreation centres. However, participants spoke with enthusiasm about outside activities. Tina, for instance portrayed her outdoor activities in her photo display.

That's a picture of where we were camping the other week. There's the dip where the lake is and there's another dip where the second lake is. It's really neat. There was quite a bit of snow when we were up there. ... When you pull off the road, you have to walk down to the lake and it's-- it was brutal. If you fell through the snow you were totally waist-deep in snow and it was a brutal walk with all our camping equipment and everything. And here's another picture of the place we go when we just want to get away from all the people. So we go down to the river and sit in the sun and played in the river, walked around, wading.

The physical environment gave Grace places to take solitary walks by the river and through the woods.

Well, just that fact that we've got a river and we have the lake and they're both relatively clean and um, and there's like... a really nice walk that goes down like from behind my house, down, well, sort of, along from my house down by the river. You can walk all the way down and then you come out and walk up along the road for a bit and then you get to the lake. And that's like a walk. It's just--like all the stuff on here is sort of stuff that

grounds me. Like it's a walk I can sort of take on foot or I'll ride the horse down there. And I think cause I think, I'm a pretty volatile person, but um, like water is another thing that sort of balances me. And just swimming, like I love swimming and, and, just being by the sound of a river and like, and so I think growing up by a lake and a river had a lot to do with who I am then if I lived on a prairie or something.

In Jessica's family, the outdoors provided opportunities for leisure activities and times to be together.

We had several forts going in the woods and every winter, we'd go sliding every day. In the summer my grandparents live right on the beach-- so we were always at the beach. And now with my stepdad having a boat and everything, I'm really into water skiing and all sorts of water sports and stuff like that. We have a sea-do so that's kind of fun. Camping was one of our biggest things. Throughout the summer, my family probably spent three-quarters of the summer up camping.

The physical environment provided opportunities for physical development and health. Tina and Catherine both commented that women in the area tended to be physically strong because of the amount of physical activity in their everyday lives.

I think living in a small community, you do live healthier. There are few pollutants, there's no transportation system so you have to walk everywhere or bike. You have to be active if you live here, at least I think you do, because there's like I said wood to be cut and split and stacked, gardening and all that. Definitely living here has kept me very fit. I was

also active in school and girls here are encouraged to take up sports and to help around the place—like canning and gardening, and things. (Catherine)

Tina recalled her cousin's reaction to the young women of Asgard.

My cousin said, cause he lives in Calgary, and he says, 'Wow, there's a lot of difference in the way your bodies are.' Like chicks in the city are really, really small. Like petite and the girls here, like you do so much more muscle building anywhere. Like you go for a walk and it's uphill--pretty much both ways! (laughs).

The young women responded to their physical environment both spiritually and aesthetically. For Lyn, Grace, and Josée the silence of the forest gave a sense of peace and restfulness. Lyn noticed the stillness when she returned from a recent trip to the Coast.

It's appreciating, like the silence of it all. And the quietness and the fact that I can come home here and it's really silent. Whereas in bigger places there's always this hum, kind of, like in the back of your ear. Like I know I've talked to this person that has lived in big cities all their lives and he was just saying that he always had that hum and when he moves to the country, it will still be here for a couple of days. It's still there you know. I appreciate that about living here. Like appreciating the quietness and the silence and the calmness.

Both Grace and Josée felt like they were the only ones in the world when they walked through the forests.

Just being able to go to a spot and be alone--like outside. I notice that when I'm in Vancouver and I want to go and be by myself outside, like there's

nowhere, because everyone's always around--like everything's inhabited there. Like here, you can always go out and find yourself a spot to be alone.
(Josée)

Participants believed that they lived in the most beautiful place in the world. "Like I used to sit there and just look out at the lake and the mountains and now it's just like, I've seen it all before, but still like it" (Anita). During an interview, Lyn painted this picture of Asgard.

Well, mountains and lakes would be predominant. It would be a very colourful picture of different kind of segments but because it's a small town, it wouldn't mostly be people. I think it would mostly be the environment --the trees and the mountains and the lake. And then there would be bits and pieces of old buildings and some of the history with a brush of the modern--the young people, the beach, and things like that.

The physical community had special places that hold memories of childhood and special occasions.

I used to go and sit on the bench up there before I had to work and I'd just sit there ... and this spot has given me like the motivation of a story that I want to write because sometimes when I'd be there in the summer and it's like little kids and their little bathing suits and no hips and they're straight and they're just running around having so much fun and that's like me when I was them...it sort of reminds me of that and it's also weird now, because I just realized that the bench that I'm sitting on where I took this picture from is where I first kissed T. and we like sat there for hours and talked. It was cool. I like that spot a lot. And like that beach is my favourite

spot: I've partied down there, sat down there, cried down there lots, walked down there, everything down there. (Anita)

The beach was a favourite spot to be alone. Josée had her special place where she could go swimming by herself.

I like skinny dipping so I got to go skinny dipping lots. And that's one thing also about Asgard is there's lots of private beach area where people can actually even go skinny dipping whereas in the city, you go to the beach--it's like people, people, people everywhere.

The beach was a special place to most participants. It was where most participants went with their boyfriends or attended parties. "We had partied two days straight and we got a sleeping bag and we went and put it down at the beach under a tree cause it was so hot out and we just lay there and sweated" (Anita).

This rural sample of young women appeared to have strong attachment to the land. Yet attachment itself does not translate into furnishing solutions to remaining in the community.

Limiting

The rural setting also presented a number of limitations. An excerpt from Catherine's interview advances this idea.

In small communities, it is hard to have variety--that includes variety of friends, teachers, courses, job opportunities, points of view. I guess I would say that living here is...restricting--maybe even (laughs) constricting! I think that's the big one and it covers so much--the labeling, the cliques, the

pettiness that you sometimes see. It's just narrow in so manyways.

(Catherine)

The eight young women felt and saw the pull of the community on the choices young people made for the future. For some the community provided so much beauty, safety and security that made it difficult to leave. "But there's also a drawback to that. It's because if you feel so secure in town, it's hard to leave" (Anita). For those young people who don't leave, they end up "doing the same thing everyday, pretty much seeing the same people everyday. You keep busy at the same job [often part-time at minimum wage] which keeps you from doing the things that you really want to do." In other words, further education becomes more difficult to obtain the longer young people stay. Saving enough funds to move and to pay city rents is not possible when earning minimum wages doing part-time work.

Asgard's predominantly resource-based industries provided training for a narrow range of occupations. Furthermore, the occupations available in the area provided a limited range of role models. While Suzanne delighted in the scenery, she commented on the limited opportunities in the area, especially for those in logging.

[There's]nothing and no place to go for people unless you have a business set up here already or unless you're retiring and you are older. There's nothing. Like my brother's class of 96, most of them are still around here and they are doing nothing. They are wasting away, they are miserable.... Logging was a big thing but it's not doing too good right now and I don't know how good it's going to end up doing. And that's where a lot of the

guys are employed by. There's really nothing to do here unless you have a business already set up and you are making money. You're going to get screwed around and you're not going to make any money. You're going to end up living off welfare or unemployment insurance.

Catherine too thought the area was a wonderful place to grow up in, but she recognised its occupational limitations.

It's just a narrower place because there are so few people and not that much of a variety of people. And that means too, that there are fewer job opportunities and not much variety there either--pumping gas, waitressing, working a cash register, or if you're lucky tree planting or working in the mill.

Jessica found the process of thinking about future careers difficult because she lacked exposure to a variety of occupational roles.

I didn't see the different lawyers everywhere and I didn't see the bankers or whatever, so...I just kind of ...did what I had to do and now that I'm out of school, I think that's why I'm not as independent as I am that way. Cause it's all of a sudden--I don't have school to go to anymore and so...now what? And that's why I think it's taken me longer to figure out what I'm going to do with my life, because I've just always had that set path....

You're not seeing the big city people everyday and the different careers that are out there. I mean, you see the careers that are in Asgard and that's it or the made up ones on TV, but how realistic are those?

Isolation and disconnection with the outside world was cited as a limiting factor.

Lyn commented,

It's hard to know what's available. Of course, you can go anywhere in the world, but it's just kind of like, like how possible is that? Sometimes it's the steps to... it's even like going to university...we know where the universities are, we know what's being offered, but how do you make the step from here to the big city to the university and be able to do okay there?

A common theme in the literature on rural adolescents is "dealing with distance." Distance separates youth from services, from participating in extra-curricular activities, from friends, from activities, and from boyfriends.

Anita noted the lack of accessibility to services such as practising for and obtaining her driver's licence or in getting adequate medical care.

You have to go to [the nearest centre] to get your driver's license. You have to take your road test there. I mean I had to take my test on December 1st and the roads were all slushy and stuff, I mean (sighs). Having access to necessities like that. And like, I think the doctor in this town thinks I'm like a crackhead or something. A lot of people won't go to the doctor....here.

It's not private at all. It's really not. Its like basically they might as well hand someone a big huge prescription and run around the drugstore with it.

For the young women living in smaller communities outside of Asgard, taking part in after school activities can be difficult. Just getting to school involved an hour long bus ride.

I'd sprint down to the bus stop and get on the bus. It was kind of too bad that the bus ride was over an hour long, cause you managed to wake yourself up and you'd get the energy and you get to the bus, and you'd sit still for an hour and when you get to school you're a zombie.... I probably

would have joined the basketball team but it's so hard to commit to that sort of thing. I would have had to move into Asgard to do that.

As a result, Jessica, an up-the-laker, found that she participated in few social activities with friends.

I didn't really do much throughout high school--as much as my other friends did. We were up the lake and we're kind of isolated from the rest of the people so....it was harder that way....I played volleyball in Grade 10 and 11that took a lot of time.

Tina, who also lived in a smaller community, found it hard to see friends on a regular basis. She ended up spending all her time in Asgard. "Where I live, I think there was just like one girl that lived there and another girl who came up on weekends. So it was me in Asgard all the time."

For Catherine, being involved with social activities was a priority and she figured out a way to make it work.

I was out of town and you'd end up spending the night at someone's house and you didn't really know them that well. And then of course it progresses from there. You'd stay at their house so that you could go to the party and come back and sleep there and then...go home the next day... because I lived 45 minutes out of town, staying in Asgard is a big deal. You have to arrange for a place to stay. Like you can't just pop over to a friend's house. You either...it's like, you have to spend the night so that made getting to know people in Asgard a little bit harder for me. Not anymore, but I used to feel I got kind of gypped of some good friendships and being closer to people because I couldn't just pop over.

Maintaining steady relationships with boys from the nearby centre was usually unsuccessful unless both parties had access to vehicles. In the winter the road was treacherous. “I’ve gone out with guys from [nearest centre] and it’s been difficult because—it either it hasn’t been a serious enough relationship that they would come to Asgard or I would bother going there to spend time with them” (Anita).

This group of rural youth observed both advantages and disadvantages to living in a rural setting. Sarigiani et al. (1990) and Schonert-Reichl et al. (1993) have suggested that rural youth often struggle as they try to make practical sense out of the pull they feel to leave and the desire to remain in a community that has many valuable features. Hektner (1995) found that these youth were more likely to experience anger and emptiness than youth who did not have conflicting goals. In a study of Iowa youth, Elder & Conger (2000) found that the intention to leave was associated with greater psychological vulnerability.

Metatheme: Tangling with Lines of Tension

This metatheme focuses on how participants managed their reactions to the tensions or pulls felt within themselves and their social worlds. Lyn was the most explicit of the young women in describing the paradoxes she experienced within herself and in her social relationships. I have included the entire section of her story about being “full of opposites.”

I’d say a pretty complicated person is probably behind that door (pause).
Like, well like (pause), full of opposites, sort of. Happy and laughing and making jokes and well, (pause) like fearful and insecure too. Wanting to be

with people and friends, but also wanting to be safe and secure in my bedroom. I mean--look at the words I use--home on one branch and freedom right below it (points to photo display). Those seem almost like opposites, but I do have freedom in my family but living in Asgard also limits, I think, like it has to...it has to limit your freedom. I mean, you can't go very far... and then there's the kid who listens to loud music, but wants to save the environment and have everybody recycle. (lengthy pause)

And what do I need shelter from? That's hard to say...sometimes from myself--like the person who is so critical and so, and so insecure at times (lengthy pause). I mean I've come a long way, but, I mean, I know...I know, like I go there at times. And there are the insecurities I feel about, about my mom and knowing, just knowing that the whole town knows and I want to hide from that sometimes.... And yet, I also want to say that the town accepts all its people on some level, like I don't want you to think that only healthy...what's the word I want here, uh, uh, good? or whatever, people are accepted. Also really, I don't think that, just that people aren't prying and saying things as much as I think. And I have so much support, but there are times when I feel really insecure.

Lyn's story emphasizes the paradoxical character of teen years (Bell et al., 1996; Petersen & Leffert, 1995; Rutter, 1995; Silbereisen & Todt, 1994) which tends to level out during late adolescence.

As researchers in the area of adolescent development have observed (Crockett & Silbereisen, 2000; Feldman & Elliot, 1990; Harter, 1986, 1999; Johnson & Roberts, 1999) the adolescent self is differentiated into multiple roles in

different relational contexts. Harter found, for example, that young people tend to describe themselves in contradictory terms. At times they described themselves as introverted, at other times, they were outgoing. Rosenberg (1986) described the fluctuating nature of the adolescent self by using the metaphor of “the barometric self.” In the young women’s narratives, these disparate parts of the self were evident. For instance, Jessica stated vehemently that she did not like partying yet she also recounted a time when she begged her parents to let her stay in town and party. The shifting narratives made it difficult to grasp how the participants saw their relationship to their different social worlds and to the future.

During my initial forays into the young women’s narratives, I tended to picture their self views in dichotomies (e.g., desiring freedom vs. desiring closeness). What slowly emerged from the data was quite different. Dichotomous characterizations were too simplistic. Rather than observing sharp dichotomies between “feeling connected” and “feeling separate,” for example, participants seemed more like travellers who situated themselves at different places on a continuum depending on the situation and the people involved. Instead of either-or descriptions, participants held both. They felt both connected to and disconnected from their multiple worlds. They viewed their social worlds as both committed to and uncommitted to their needs. Their community was perceived as a physical place that provided opportunity and at the same time limited opportunities. In fact when asked to describe their relationship to their community, several participants referred to their interactions as “fluctuating” and “changeable” or stated that they felt “pulled.”

The young women tangle with these lines of tension in their daily lives. There are many ways in which each individual finds ways to manage these contradictions, tensions, or dualities. Eccles, Lord, & Buchanan's (1996) research suggests that environments that are responsive and developmentally sensitive to changes in adolescents' needs may serve as protective factors for transitions. Prior research on resiliency (e.g., Garmezy, 1983; Lazarus, 1991; Rutter, 1991) points to the importance of both social support and personal coping styles in how individual approach and adjust to tension and confusion in their environments.

Coping is defined by Lazarus (1991) as "... the cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external or internal demands (and conflicts between them) that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of a person" (p. 112). Coping strategies are learned within specific cultures and contexts. Each culture provides "a toolkit of techniques and procedures for understanding and for managing" (J. Bruner as cited in Frydenberg, 1999, p. 23).

Five categories of coping strategies were identified in the narratives of this sample including: (a) social activities, (b) intentional activities, (c) isolating, avoiding and distracting activities, (d) spiritual activities, and (e) anticipatory activities.

Social activities. Participants named several sources of social support involving the use of role models, networking and travelling beyond the community, reaching out to others, and assuming responsibilities in the community.

All participants in the study identified community members, family members, or members of the media as role models. Grace went to the librarian for

advice, Anita listened to her hockey coach and English teacher, while Suzanne modeled herself after two committee members. Her male role model was described as “a very strong person. Yeah and that’s what I’d like to be. I would like to be more like him but a lot of time I just keep things in and I don’t say anything. It’s the whole deal about small town type of thing I don’t want my reputation to get trashed.” He modeled how to speak out in a community.

Tina befriended an older man in the community, while both Catherine and Jessica viewed their mothers as heroes. Rather than locating a role model in the community, Josée adopted Tank Girl as her hero. “[S]he’s this totally tough chick who like kicks, like everybody’s butt and drives a tank (laughs). So she’s a sort of role model for me, I guess. Like the toughness and like she follows her own path and stuff.”

Extending networks and making connections to other places outside the community was another means by which the young women gained different perspectives and obtained social support. As Lyn commented, opportunities outside the community can be a broadening experience.

[I]t can introduce you to whole different worlds too. Like, just like,rave music and stuff like that. Like they have Raves and those are really fun to go to. Like dances and like, it’s just like, it introduces you to a whole different world.

Grace agreed. “[T]he Rave culture is sort of another social thing and it’s like spreading here from the coast as far as I know. They’re good too. They expand your social sphere. A lot of people get together.”

Catherine has benefited from being exposed to a varied group of people. The experience has “help[ed] to develop a wider point of view.” She discovered that new views helped her to see the narrowness of her own community. “I really see that now--how narrow and narrow-minded it can be.” She looked forward to developing a wider view, her “globe-trotter self,” as she becomes more involved in her chosen career.

I think I’ll get that more when I travel and when I work in Adventure Tourism. Many of the people who are involved in river rafting, heliskiing, and things like that are from overseas so I think that I will be around a more varied group of people in that career.

For Anita, having a boyfriend from a larger centre had opened her eyes and involved her in a world where there were more options and fewer prying eyes.

I’ve never gone out for dinner with anybody until last weekend. It was really nice and I couldn’t even pronounce anything on the menu—I just closed it and put it down and I was like ‘You order because I have no idea.’ Like I had left leg of duck or something... and that’s expensive and he got this really expensive bottle of wine and I was like...yeah, it was cool.... And I could relax...there wasn’t anyone there that I knew...that was different.

When recalling the event, Anita stated she felt like she was somewhere far away from Asgard and that the experience was pleasant for a number of reasons, including not having to worry about what others would say.

Lyn found that experiences outside the community opened up new possibilities for herself within her community.

Like this was a really big turning point for me when I went to California last summer.... Well, it's a Youth for Environmental Sanity and it's a really, awesome, like it's a youth camp that I went to and we did African dancing (laughs), they were just really awesome people that I'm really thankful to because they ...like they really opened my mind and my eyes to a lot of different things. And, like, it's just a really good example about all the people that I meet when I go away. Cause I travel a lot and I meet a lot of really wicked people and just kind of...reconnecting yourself with people and just...just discovering a lot of stuff about yourself and um...how it's all connected to the earth and how it's...I don't know...just, yeah...a lot about connections (laughs)... It just sort of opens me up--like just different people besides just the Asgard, not that it's bad but it's...just a little wider than Asgard

On returning to Asgard, Lyn petitioned the town council to start a recycling program and received help in finding funds for implementing her plan. Her success led her to approach the principal at the high school to develop a school-based recycling program. Both of these positive experiences gave Lyn the confidence to consider more options for herself. "That's when I thought, 'Hey I could go somewhere else and do this kind of work..' And then that very fall , I saw the poster for Canada World Youth."

After two weeks at summer camp, Catherine viewed herself in a different light.

...I was one of the most popular people in the camp and it just opened my eyes and so when I came into Asgard school, I was ready to meet

new people and I didn't realize I could have friends outside of the friends who weren't friends in [her community]. And so this summer.... [i]t showed me where my life could go...

During her trip to New York City, Grace realized how much she enjoyed living in a small community surrounded by "nature's beauty."

I went to the Museum of Natural History, we went to the Empire State Building, all the famous places and looked at the Statue of Liberty. Did like the normal tourist tour. It was just amazing, just seeing stuff up close, other than mountains and trees.... Yeah, and it's sort of creepy when there's no trees and lakes and stuff.

Jessica also realized how important rural living was for her during her trips to Vancouver.

And I think growing up the lake and being restricted that way has helped me to deal with that [wanting to move away]. Like I've been down to Vancouver and there's no way that I would want to live there.

I...I...just...I love visiting there. I love the stores, I love the people. It's fun to visit, but I just...I have been growing up in such a place that it's been so much quieter and so much calmer that I don't think I could move that far away.

For several of the participants connecting with others in the community helped them to form social ties which gave them further resources for managing the stresses and tensions in their lives.

Anita wanted to widen her circle of friends and did not want to be stuck with one group of people.

Like last night I just hung out with my friends that--they're labeled as geeky people or they're not cool or whatever. We just played cards and hung out and stuff. But like, tonight I'm going out with all my girlfriends that are in the more "cool" group and doing their own thing.

For a period of time Lyn had a narrow range of friends. She found the effort that it took to be one of the "cool people" wearing and stressful. Lyn stated "I'm yeah...just completely appreciating more the different ones, instead of finding...having to be in all these different groups, kind of like having an in-group and not having enough time and thinking and worrying about it too much. And now...I'm...(laughs)...and now I'm way less stressed out than I used to be, too."

Participants sought out particular social relationships to fit their needs. One advantage of establishing these social ties was the development of a new perspective on self and others. New perspectives helped them to make sense of some of the contradictions they experienced in Asgard.

Intentional activities. Participants desired to be seen as responsible, contributing members of the community although they didn't always feel like they were valued. One way in which they dealt with this tension was to assume the status of a role model to a younger generation. One of the outcomes of being a role model was the pride parents communicated to their daughters reinforcing their intentional activities. Another way that they took deliberate steps to create a new inner sense of direction was through decisions made and activities chosen.

Jessica described how she made up her mind in high school that she was not going to party. She wanted to "stay in charge" of her life and to make good decisions.

If you're going to choose to party and you're going to choose to throw your life away then go for it, but I'm going to go out, and I'm going to swim, and I'm going to go skiing, and I'm going to spend time with my family, and cook, and garden, and I'm going to grow up with a lot more background than you are...

As the oldest sibling in the family, Jessica was aware of the hazards facing her sisters. Jessica committed herself to watching out for her younger sister.

[L]ike my sister, some of the people she'll hang out with. I know that person hangs out with a certain group of people and I kind of have...not a closed mind, but I know that in the past he's hung out with these people and he's done these bad things around the community and he's vandalized this and he may have changed, but as far as I'm concerned, he hasn't proved to me that he's a worthy person and I'm not saying he has to prove to me that, but I'm not going to say to my sister that I'm okay with her hanging out with this person just because I know that he has been a reckless kid around the community.

Jessica believed that if she took responsibility for watching over her sisters while they were away from her parents, she would strengthen her family. "You have to look after each other and do things together...that's how you make it through here."

Catherine, too, was a role model for her younger sisters and also pointed out that her family had different values than many others in the community. By being a role model she hoped that all of her siblings would have a safe passage

through adolescence. "I just...like my little sisters have looked up to me and I'd like to continue to be the type of person.... I'd like to continue to do something that makes them want to be like me." For Catherine the "role model self" not only helped her sisters, but provided her with guidelines and standards for her behaviour. She stated that she "knew who I was and what I wanted and that is such a great feeling to have."

Anita was determined to provide others with the guidance that she did not always receive.

I just, I hate it when I see all these young girls that are at parties and they're thirteen years old and they're smoking and they're totally loaded and they're just falling all over any boy.... But I can't do anything about it. I can't... be like, " Hey listen you need to have self-respect and you need to care about yourself." I just hope that some of them will figure it out on their own because there's already a lot of young girls that remind me so much of me that it sort of makes me sick. I just try to make sure that ...someone pays attention, like I write about the situation here in (pause) journalism, but 'Hello is anybody at home out there?'

Participants also described how they deliberately made choices about the values they would assume and the behaviour they would engage in. Catherine wanted to move beyond what she saw as the narrowness of her community to develop a more inclusive attitude towards people.

Well, there's quite a bit of intolerance in [her community]-- there's like homophobia and yucky stuff like that and people are like (pause) they [the students at the local school] my sister tells me, I guess they decided that

Jew was a really funny insult and I was like, “Wow, they’re regressing!” It’s awful, you know, and I (pause) I have become--because of not fitting in and really, really wanting to fit in, in Grade 7...it’s really important to me to always be on good terms with everybody. So I really strive to put myself on a level with everybody, so I am good friends with the inbreds [local name for residents of a very small community] or the kind of hardcore people who have some not so nice opinions and I’m good friends with the stinky hippies and I am good friends cause like even people who are mean to me.

Anita, who had felt the sting of rumours, made the commitment to herself not to gossip.

A lot of people would go, “Anita’s just talks about people too much.” But the thing is there’s two kinds of gossip, there’s talking about people and then there’s talking hurtful about people and I sort of just switched over to the better-just talking about people and not hurtful about them.

In her mid-teens, Lyn decided to liberate herself from the “worrier self” because she was not sleeping and was not enjoying her life. She took an intentional stance that seemed to work for her.

I was just a worrier. Worried about like, the ozone layer, worried about my mom, worried about my dad, worried about our mortgage, worried about everything! Like and um, I ...I...wasn’t sleeping, I was just...it was awful! Um...and so, I mean I’ve kind of carried that really stressful...like I won’t give out things for other people to do if I want something done right, I’m going to do it myself! (laughs)--type of person.... But lately, I’ve been kind

of ...not being as stressed out about that type of thing. Whereas now I just take it as it comes, like okay, this is what I have to do so I'll do it and I won't worry about it, I'll just do it.

Suzanne and Grace made the decision not to smoke marijuana although most of their friends did on a regular basis. "Most of the people in my group smoke a lot of pot. That's very common in Asgard, but I don't. I did for awhile and like I had a very bad experience with it" (Grace).

Anita also considered her behaviour and decided to make changes in how she presented herself. Although the transformation was a difficult process for her, she gained self-esteem through the experience.

I've been screwed over millions of times and I've been hurt a lot and I've probably hurt a lot of people too, but just from stuff like that, you get a reputation or a name, dirty looks and everything. I just sort of lost it, and spent this month like wearing track pants and a sweatshirt for like everyday and I was just, this is horrible....and I didn't kiss anybody for 10 months!... Now there's days when I'm like, "Hey, I look really good today." And I can say that now and I never used to be able to. I seriously had zero-self-esteem like two years ago and now I'm extremely confident now self-respect is like a big issue that people need to have in this town. I think everywhere, but mostly in this town, because no one's going to pride it for you.

A choice made by several participants involved spending time alone each week. Anita used the time to write poetry and short stories that she had published

in a writing magazine for adolescents. Grace used private moments to “ground” herself in nature. Lyn used her private time to create.

I like doing art-- like painting. I like writing. I like just creating little things. Like, I like decorating my room (laughs). Like I like being in my room a lot (laughs) and um, just feeling like, “Oh, I need a cupholder or like I need a pencil holder--let’s make one of those.”

Intentional activities utilized by the individuals included taking on the “role model” self, making decisions about ways of behaving, and developing the “private self.” This coping strategy reflects the young women’s creation of and implementation of “intentional, purposive” selves, selves that were directed towards positive engagements with others and with themselves.

Isolating, avoiding, and distracting activities. The participants who were struggling with feeling vulnerable in the community, experiencing boredom, or dealing with family stress did not always feel connected to or involved in their community. This group of girls developed several isolating and avoidance activities that included withdrawal, substance use, and escape from the community.

Some participants coped through a variety of avoidance strategies. Grace withdrew from others and melted into the background so that no one would notice her.

[B]asically the way I dress now is to just blend in to the school.... Like, who I am alone and who I am in public is very different. I’m still on the outside looking in and I haven’t figured out...like if that’s because that’s just me sort of, or whether I’m still afraid on some level....Where am I? I am here...I’m just sort of, you know, invisible. (laughs) Like I’m out there

sometimes, but I don't...I try not to be visible (whispers). I'm there in the water, in the lake, in the forest...I don't know, I'm in the eyes of Shank and my cat and all the beauty around me.

A coping strategy used by Tina and Anita involved taking drugs and drinking. When asked the reasons for "partying" Anita and Tina said that they were bored and wanted to do something about it. Instead of working toward changes in the community, they chose to "get hammered."

Another method of coping from stressful situations especially in the family, was to escape from the community. Tina and Suzanne used this coping strategy when they were younger by escaping to Calgary. Even yet, Suzanne would leave home for several days when "mom and me weren't getting along."

These coping strategies adopted in these situations separated them from the supports, sense of belonging, and involvement with the community. Isolating and avoiding activities also prevented community members from engaging with youth during these times.

Spiritual activities. One way that participants created further connections and support was through their attachment to the physical environment or to a spiritual being. Participants all felt connected to the natural environment that gave them a feeling of support. The "ecological self" was evident in Catherine, Lyn, and Grace's poems. Catherine described her connection in this way. "It's um...home to me...the mountains and a lake and a river, and green trees and good smells and close people. That's what's really important about here. Oh, it runs in your veins (laughs)."

Josée held on to her belief in a higher power to help her through stressful times and to provide guidelines for her social interactions.

Just to treat people good. To be like a positive reflection on...being a Christian, because I believe in God... to be like what God would want you to be...like if you see somebody that doesn't have something, give it to them. I...I believe that I'm personally responsible in my community to do things like that and to talk to kids or to talk to people, you know, try to make them feel better if they look low, just try and be a positive reflection of my faith.

Spiritual activities provided participants with inner peace and a sense of belonging to something bigger than their community. Such strategies allow individuals to experience a grounded sense of self. "I am the mountains that have endured the passage of time" (Catherine). "I am the snow falling on the mountains, the water rushing in the river" (Grace).

Anticipating activities. By projecting themselves into a future time, participants could disentangle from the lines of tension in their lives. Participants anticipated a better future for themselves than their current situation. This was particularly true for Josée and Grace who felt that they could not be themselves within the community. Grace expressed her views in this way:

I don't have all that many expectations of what [the future] should be like. Like I think ... because it will be a lot more my choice rather than these are the options, I'll have whatever options and then I can choose a path that really suits me. So I project feeling a lot more satisfied with myself and with my life after I leave Asgard.

Catherine also looked forward to the future because she trusted that opportunities in the future would allow her to acquire a wider support system and to develop more confidence in her abilities.

I didn't want to be anchored to Asgard for six months. I wanted to get out and see the world so...I'm just going to....I'm actually just about to do that. I want to go off and do something all by myself....I guess the...a...the outgoing unafraid part of me is still developing.

Anticipating activities was a coping strategy participants used in looking beyond their current situation. These activities were not necessarily based on concrete plans but tended to involve vague pictures of themselves in another time and place.

Summary

Participants used five main coping activities to address the lines of tension that they experienced. These involved social activities, intentional activities, isolating, avoiding and distracting activities, spiritual activities, and anticipatory activities.

Intentional and spiritual strategies involved addressing strains and stresses and considering how to resolve them. Activities that allowed individuals to gain confidence in their abilities to face difficulties would seem to provide them with skills that they could use when facing future challenges. Isolating, avoiding and distracting and perhaps anticipatory activities did not eliminate problems instead individuals continued to face unresolved issues such as feelings of being disconnected and unsupported by important others. Partying and withdrawing

would seem to prohibit taking purposeful steps to dealing with contradictions and dualities in their lives.

In an examination of social supports available and coping strategies employed by rural Appalachian youth (Markstrom, Marshall, & Tryon, 2000), social support from families, but not peers, and problem-focused coping were the strongest predictors of resiliency. The researchers postulated that peer support was not substantiated as a coping strategy because participants in their study had limited contact with friends. This did not appear to fit with the current life situation of the present participants who were generally less isolated.

Metatheme: Looking Within and Looking Beyond

The metatheme: *Looking within and Looking beyond* focuses on the life-career development and planning of participants. Looking within and looking beyond includes examining the life-career messages heard in the community; exploring community and school resources, including the use of computer; identifying life-career options within and outside the community; and implementing plans.

A major developmental task of the years before adulthood is the acquisition of knowledge about the world of work (Super 1953, 1980, 1990; Super et al., 1996). Comparisons with urban and suburban youth indicate that rural youth expect earlier transitions into the worlds of work, marriage, and parenthood (Crockett & Bingham, 2000). Local conditions, such as economic decline, may limit young people's perceptions of their future educational and recreational options. Youth develop expectations about the future within the context of their

community and social worlds. What messages do they hear from parents, teachers, peers and community residents?

School-based career programs can provide students with opportunities to appraise their own abilities, achievements, and interests. Learning about career options can increase awareness of exploration opportunities. Computer programs and Internet connections can provide information about a wide range of careers. How do young women perceive school career programs and resources?

In rural communities where there is limited exposure to the world of work and a lack of work-related role models (Apostal & Bilden, 1991, Jeffery et al., 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996), how do young women locate and evaluate career information? For the young women in this study relationships were clearly important. What pull did the need for closeness and support have on the choices they made?

Abstract thinking is a process that facilitates career planning. According to Piaget (as cited in Dreyer, 1994), adolescents start a gradual process of developing their ability to solve problems and to plan. With maturity, their plans become more ordered, allowing youth to introspect and think about themselves in a variety of situations. How did these rural participants think about and work with their personal goals?

Community Expectations

Within a close-knit community, young people assimilate the expectations held by important others (Haller & Virkler, 1993; Hektner, 1995; Quaglia & Cobb, 1996; Sarigiani et al., 1990). The core messages heard by the present participants

through their teachers, family members, peers and other community members were to move out, to travel and to obtain further education.

Suzanne received the message to move out by watching her brother and his friends.

Like my brother's class of 96, most of them are still around here and they are doing nothing... [T]hey are wasting away, they are miserable.

Move out, Get out of here. Get out of Asgard. That's basically the main message. Get out of Asgard. Anyone that has brain, has a brain in their head, needs to get out of Asgard.

When Grace looked around her community, she noticed "a large percentage of the people that graduate go away to school, whatever form of school." Other choices included "work[ing] for a couple of years toward going to school or toward travel." For those youth that did not complete high school, there appeared to be few choices.

[A] lot of them end up staying here and working in a restaurant or in a store...for a long time. Like actually my friend who quit in grade 9, she actually just only left Asgard after 3 years of not doing anything, like working and being really dissatisfied and I think the people who hate Asgard the most are the teenagers that don't finish school that feel like they're stuck here.

Jessica who had graduated a year before observed that "A lot of the students now are more into leaving then staying cause as everybody says, There's nothing to do here, I need to move out." Most of her class moved to either Calgary or Vancouver but were finding it difficult to make ends meet in the larger city.

[S]ome people move down to Vancouver and some people love it and some people have been coming back and they're still like stationed out of here so there's the cost of coming back to their families all the time, but...a lot of the people and a lot of my classmates were just interested in leaving.

From their parents, the participants heard they would be missed but their futures were not in Asgard. "It's more like they want the kids who grew up here to be happy and successful and miss them when they go away, you know. And know that a lot will come back either to visit or to retire" (Catherine). Catherine laughed when asked what messages she heard from her parents. "They weren't too subtle!" When Catherine returned home for the summer, she found that her sisters had taken over her room. "Now where do I fit?" I've got a transient room that's like, the fourth wall is a curtain, it's part of the livingroom."

Most residents that I talked to were encouraging youth to expand their horizons through travel. Teachers recommended that students contact the exchange students that had visited the school over the past few years from Columbia, Australia, and Japan. Additionally, teachers suggested that students consider the Students Working Abroad Program (SWAP) and Canada World Youth as options for travel and experience in other countries. Lyn agreed.

I think the message I hear is big time--travel, I think... Travel now while you can (laughs). That's what I've heard mostly.... And like experience the world before you decide what you want to do, and like no rushing, like a lot of the people in my class are like not really rushing, and like last year, very few people went right to school. They either worked or traveled or both. Other things are technical schools or things like that. I don't think

[residents] would be happy to see me not leaving. I think they all want to see me leave rather than like just being here and not doing anything.

Teachers also encouraged their students to consider educational options.

Participants noted how their teachers took an interest in their exploration process by pointing out their skills. Anita was encouraged to take journalism, Jessica was supported in obtaining further training in accounting and office work, Grace was given information about the Equine program at Olds, while Josée was counseled to consider something in the area of biology such as medicine.

Daily Anita has watched her co-workers at the restaurant who made the decision to stay in the community.

I don't think there's anyone saying "stay here," that you should stay here because everyone knows that you can't stay here. You really can't. Unless I want to be a dishwasher for the rest of my life.... [L]ike education is basically the only way to get out of this town because if you get trapped in here, and you end up having kids then you, like, don't have a father or whatever, then you are kind of ...there's no way out. You're kind of stuck here..... Yeah, for sure. And it's the education. It seriously is. It's the only way to get out of here.

Within this group, Suzanne and Lyn's parents wanted them to obtain further education, preferably at a university. Both of Suzanne's parents and Lyn's father had university degrees. Catherine's parents wanted her to find something that would allow her to build on her skills and interests. Neither of her parents had finished university. They saw many alternatives for Catherine and encouraged her to obtain certificates in Adventure Tourism and then if she was happy in the field,

to obtain a diploma or certificate at College of the Rockies. According to Grace, Jessica, Josée, Anita, and Tina, they received no message from their parents to further their education and skill training. However, the young women felt that their parents would be supportive of whatever they chose to do.

In summary, participants heard the messages “leave the community” in order to experience educational, occupational, and cultural opportunities. According to the girls, their parents did not have specific career expectations for their daughters but encouraged them to obtain more skills and education.

Exploring Resources

Rural communities because of their small size and relative isolations from larger centers do not have a range of life-career roles that young people can learn from. Therefore, rural youth rely on a narrower range of resources in exploring life-career choices. Participants drew on personal contacts, especially their parents, considered their current activities and interests, and accessed information through career programs at school.

Not surprisingly given their close relationships in the community, participants relied on word of mouth and personal contacts in exploring their choices. Anita received ideas from both her teachers and co-workers.

Certain teachers definitely and a lot of other people around town, they see you on a regular basis or if you work with them or spend a lot of time with them at school, they know what you're interested in and they know what's out there so they can sort of give you a pointer, “You should go to this city”

or “ Maybe you should travel to Europe because you’re good with languages”. They know who you are and what’s out there.

As Lyn commented, “At times I think the entire community is involved (laughs). Lyn appreciated how willing residents were to share their experiences when they learned about her plans. “[T]hey’ll step out and say, “Hey you know, I know a bit about this”, and will talk to you about that.”

Jessica learned from her step-brother’s wife of a training program that would allow her to return to her community.

[S]he took this course and she learned all about this stuff [computer course at SAIT]. There’s like a 95% employment rate after graduation. And a lot of it is working out of the home. She has her own computer at home. She does a lot of designing web pages, designing graphics for companies, um, different advertising things. And she gets paid, like almost \$30. per hour. So to me, that is well worth it! This is something that has a huge employment rate afterwards. You’re getting paid well. You can work out of your home.

As previously mentioned, those parents with university degrees seemed to encourage their children to go on to university and spent time discussing possibilities with them. Suzanne’s parents, particularly her father, spoke with her during every phone call about her options. Suzanne resisted thinking about her future. “So my mom, my dad they’re always like, ‘You know you’re almost done high school. What are you going to do? Where are you going to go?’”

Lyn found her parents supportive of a range of options within the university setting. She also turned to them for advice because they had made the transition from a small town when they were her age.

Like my dad wants me to ...basically they want me to go to school. Like they...that's not really, like it's an option, of course, but it's not really, like it's my choice where I want to go, but it's definitely, "You're going!"(laughs) Which is good, because I want to go too. Like going and getting a degree. But like, they are pretty open too. Like traveling and doing whatever, they are really happy that I'm doing this next year.

Anita, Catherine and Lyn considered their current activities and interests and sought ways to build on them. Anita wanted to build on her hockey experience by becoming a coach although she did not expect coaching to be a full-time position.

Actually, I do want to coach....The hockey coach is a good friend of my parents...[W]ell playing hockey has affected the things I want to do. Coaching for sure, because after seeing the ignorance put on me and the sexism and stuff, it's really made me want to coach and school's maybe just helped me to get where I want to go. And then it's a friend of the family and my father's influence, probably it's all those tied together too....

For Lyn, taking her interest in art and music into the future was something she desired.

Art, definitely. Art will always be something. I don't think it's looking into, like a career or anything like that. Cause...I have a tendency to be horribly realistic and that's just not really realistic (laughs) as a career, but um, it's

something that I like to do for a therapeutic thing, so I'll always do that.

Music...big time. I'll always have music in my life. It's a biological necessity...it's like my total vice.

Catherine looked for ways to continue to teach swimming in her future. She planned to take the National Certificate Course in lifeguarding as her next step.

Career resources in the school environment received mixed reviews by the participants. Anita found Career and Personal Planning (CaPP) a useful program.

You just kind of explore different opportunities and learn about different jobs. You do like sheets of who you are and things like that. Like what your attributes are and what you need to work on. Like you just can find things you're interested in and things that connect to you and then you read all about the colleges, like different places that would suit what you want to do and stuff. That's what's really helped me a lot. And before I entered the CaPP class that's what I wanted to do. It just sort of gave me access. I needed to find things that I wanted to do.

Catherine and Lyn on the other hand found that CaPP teachers did not use a variety of instructional techniques nor did they present a range of options. "We looked up different careers and I think, I kind of knew what I wanted to do already. I knew how I felt and so I didn't go on the Internet and go, "Oh, wow! This is what Marine Biology is" (Catherine). Both Lyn and Catherine stated that CaPP needed more development.

It's really hard in grade 9 to pursue careers and find out about them when you have no idea what you want to do....I think the teachers who are teaching it are just handed the book. I think there should be specialized

CaPP teachers...I think you should...you should take the kids out and like show them outdoors and show them camping and that kind of thing and show them you can do this and then take them into a big corporate building and like look at what life is like there. (Catherine)

Lyn, who referred to the course as “CRAP” commented that she found the resumé writing and interviewing skills useful, but found the focus was just on universities and on computer technology. “You should have these courses and you should get into computers and technology” and stuff like that but if you don’t want to get into that, then it’s like, “AHHH!”

Because the governments of Canada and British Columbia are committed to the development of electronic learning resources for the dissemination of career information and opportunities (OECD 1998, 2000; BC WorkInfoNet, <http://workinonet.bc.ca>), I asked each participant to describe how she used computers. Jessica became familiar with computers through her work and was interested in learning more about them. She liked how the computer linked her to other places without her having to leave the area. Lyn’s father and brother were avid computer users. Lyn liked chat-rooms and used e-mail on a regular basis. While she saw computers as useful, she did not want become “a slave to one.” Catherine and her family used the computer to access information. As well her family members were avid readers.

I devour magazines, like, like National Geographic and Equinox and Discovery. And so...I think because I’m an information person, because I really enjoy reading and I actually watch the news with interest the Internet is...just another way of obtaining information and I think it’s really handy

and I enjoy being able to connect things and look up web sites and it really helped me with my trip. We looked up bed and breakfasts and that kind of thing.

Most participants were quite ambivalent about using the computer for anything except e-mail. Josée and Grace used the computer to type up assignments and to e-mail a few friends that no longer lived in the area. Neither one had any desire to learn more about how the computer could be used for exposing them to career options. Josée stated: “[P]eople have their lives put into them and what happens if they all crash. I don’t trust them and I don’t want to become dependent on them.” Tina also stated, “I’ve never really been really big on the Internet. I’ve never really been interested in it. I’ve gone on it a couple of times for school work-like for assignments and research projects and stuff, but never...been big on it” (laughs).

Anita had the strongest reaction to the computer.

I hate computer. I’m really a computer-ignorant person. There’s something that I don’t like about computers. But I have to for journalism. Like I have to know. I basically just do word processing. I don’t go on the Internet at all.... [W]e have our counselling room that has all the college catalogues and calendars in it. Mostly I do that, and just find through word of mouth, good places to go.... [E]veryone’s like, “You’ve got to go on the Internet, it’s so cool! You can do anything...” and I hate it. I’d rather read a book or do something else. Like there’s all these other options--I’d just rather not sit in front of the computer screen and fiddle around for hours.

Two of the participants believed that each individual had to find their own life-career path. Josée trusted in God to unveil his path for her. Grace viewed the life-career development process as a personal process. "Everyone has to figure out what their path is and then find a way to follow it." In Grace's eyes, the community had little responsibility in helping its youth. "I don't think it's really a ... problem for the community to address at all." Rather she saw the exploration process as a personal journey in which each person examined choices through conversations with parents, teachers and employers.

As adolescents progress through high school, their self-awareness becomes more pronounced and sense of self as distinct becomes apparent. During these years they modify, refine, and expand their views of self as a person. Many young people begin to think of themselves in terms of the world of work. One of the primary sources of influence in career development are parents (Kracke, 1997; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996; Vondracek, 1993).

Vondracek (1993) highlighted specific family interactions beyond warmth and support as particularly relevant for adolescent exploration. Parents can encourage active exploration by discussing issues openly, by being open to new information and new developments from their offspring, and by fostering independent thinking and action. Kracke found that authoritative parenting, individuated female relationships, parental openness for adolescents' concerns and parental behaviour directly related to career investigation also promoted exploration by their children. Participants cited their parents, particularly their mothers, as significant resources in exploring their options for the future. Within households, the young women were actively involved in helping behaviours.

Helping that occurs in family contexts appears to promote both independence and a sense of being needed and could involve an anticipatory realization of adultlike possible selves, such as future family and work roles.

In the schools, career development programming is essential in broadening students' views of themselves in relation to careers and future roles. In British Columbia, CaPP provides a framework for encouraging life-career exploration, planning and implementation. The girls in this study found the program to be only slightly useful. Their lack of exploration beyond parents and community residents was disquieting. Clearly more needs to be done in the area of career development within the school but such efforts must fit with the worldviews held by students and their families. Because each school district and different sections of each school district have different types of students, various approaches to career development need to be developed.

Participants drew on community information and personally relevant experiences when exploring career options. Their personal connections within the community provided them with ideas, possibilities, and feedback regarding their abilities. Community members also shared their own experiences with the young women. Participants also reflected on their community roles as potential future roles. What was clearly evident in their narratives was the importance of receiving information in a personally meaningful manner or what Belenky et al. (1986) described as "connected knowing." Therefore, the young women did not find career classes where information was handed out as personally relevant. Likewise computer resources did not entice them to explore possible future selves.

Identifying Options

The young women in the study generally saw their futures beyond the community of Asgard. Participants described a future based on what they were familiar with. Their career choices built on their present experiences in the community and with family. The young women looked forward to developing future relationships and having their own families in their mid-twenties. Participants also recognized that they would be making new friends in their future but would always value past friendships.

Jessica was the only participant who saw her future within the community of Asgard.

What I am thinking right now is maybe I will move away somewhere for school [to take a computer program], but I would like to take something that's going to give me the opportunity to either work from home around here or work somewhere around here, because I want to move back here. Like, I'm hoping that I will be back here within five years and close to my parents because I am close to my parents and I can't stand to be away from them for too long.... I mean with the way Internet is and everything, I could send my work to them. And still make enough money to pay off my student loan and not be stuck with it until I'm 50. There's a lot of people that I've heard of who have student loans and they just...you're paying it off for so long it's just ...it's stupid. I feel that if you're going to go and use that money for something, then use it wisely.... And then I just talked with this accountant in town, so maybe I can take correspondence and not even have to go away to school.

Tina stated that she just wanted to graduate. "That's all I'm really headed for and then whatever comes after that... if I find something that I really like to do, like accounting..." Tina had no plans as yet, but saw her future in a larger centre such as Calgary. Her long-term plans included returning to the community to have her family.

I think that after I graduate, I'll go to the city. I like Calgary, and not so much Edmonton. I don't think I'd move to Vancouver. I have a friend there, but I don't think I'd move there. Calgary, like I know more people there, and ...that definitely helps.... (pause) I'm not sure what will happen in the future. I'll probably go live in the city for however long, until I decide to start a family. Once that happens, I'll be back.

Josée wanted to do some mission work through her church within the next few years and then live in a foreign country.

Like I want to go to Sudan and help the victims of that famine, that man-made famine. I really have it in my heart to help people, to make a difference that way. Not in a way that would bring me money or fame or anything like that, but a way that I know that I could help other people because there is so much unfairness...I can speak French pretty fluently, not completely fluently because I learned in school. But like working in France to improve my French, or wherever. And just working menial jobs just waitressing or something, I could do that for the rest of my life, but then I stop and think, well maybe like, I want to stop working or whatever age then I'm like I don't really want to worry about the future.

Grace went through a process of considering possibilities upon graduating. She discussed library science with the librarian but decided she was not that interested in going to school for that many years. "I can't even imagine looking that far ahead." At one point in grade 12 she was positive that she wanted to do massage therapy and "I'm actually keeping that option open because I like, I'm doing chemistry this year and I looked into what you needed to get into Massage therapy." When Grace thought about what she wanted in her future, she realized that she wanted to keep her relationship with horses. "It came down to horses, just because that, it's just something that I couldn't imagine ever losing interest in."

Anita's plans changed during the eight weeks that I resided in Asgard. She had applied to Mount Royal in early February after putting together a portfolio. "I'm going to take television journalism and be a sports broadcaster and then work for TSN." Anita thought that she could also play on the women's hockey team in Calgary while going to school. Unfortunately, in late May, Anita heard that she was not accepted because so many students had applied to the program. Because she was from out of the province, her grade point average needed to be exceptionally high in order to compete. Anita began to explore other options in the same field. "I want to write movies, commercials and like scripts and maybe get into the motion picture industry." She phoned the Vancouver Film school where she discovered that the tuition was \$12, 000 a year. When I last talked with Anita, she was considering enrolling in writing courses in a nearby community and then applying to the Writing program at the University of Victoria for the following fall.

Catherine continued to take certificates in outdoor recreation (Backcountry Survival, River Rafting Level 1) and planned on gaining another year of

experience before she applied to a college program. Suzanne did not see her “future unfolding.” She had not explored her options and when pressed had no idea of her plans for the fall. She hoped to travel to Australia as part of her graduation present from her father. Beyond that, she might go into Tourism but could supply no details.

When Lyn returned from India, she would apply to the University of Victoria to the Arts and Science program. She wanted to use her year away to consider her options and then take general courses at university until she discovered what her interests were.

Not all discussions about the future revolved around career options. Participants also thought about future life options including relationships. One of the limitations of living in a small community for these participants was the lack of possible boyfriends. As Lyn pointed out, “When you’ve gone to school together since Kindergarten, it makes it kind of hard.” Catherine would like to be in a relationship within the next few months.

I never really had a good like relationship with a guy as a boyfriend... [I]t is something that I would like to have right now, but the way my life is working is because I’m doing so much independently, um...and I’m meeting so many new people, if I meet a guy who I click with, that would be great

Grace, too, hoped to meet someone over the next year. “I’m going to meet guys that are actually interested in a serious relationship. Because there aren’t really any guys here that I’m sort of interested...”

All the young women recognized the importance of their friendships in Asgard. However, with the exception of Suzanne who wanted to remain with her friends forever, the rest of the participants believed that their friendships would change over the next few years. "I'll probably change with friends. But, you know, it's like you'll still keep a piece of them cause you had lots of good times with them" (Tina).

Anita knew that she would miss her friends but was viewing the move from Asgard as an opportunity for old cliques to break up.

Friends in this town that are extremely important. Extremely important. It really will be kind of hard to let go of all of them. Leaving them, but it's also the best thing.... Because it's kind of like... a lot of those people that pick on people and stuff, they don't put up with stuff like that in college and when those people move away, well it's going to be a completely different cup ...and they might be the ones that are picked on. It will be completely different. And maybe those kids that were picked on are going to go to school and they are going to be the most popular person in school and they are going to realize not to pick on people.

When thinking about their future families, the young women wanted to raise their children in small communities. Some of the participants wanted to return to the area.

I can't imagine growing up anywhere else. I never want to lose touch with my childhood, because it's made me who I am today. I thought it was cool growing up in a small town. So that's how I'd want it for my kids cause I

know what it's like to live in the city. It's not that great. So the kids aren't really violent here, so it's safe here. (Tina)

Jessica had no doubts that she would have her family in the area even though they might not have all the activities and choices that children in larger centers have.

But, now that I look back on it, this is...really the place that I want to be and I want to raise my children here even though they might not have opportunities, but I mean you can make opportunities.... I'm always going to come back here. Even if I decide to move away. This will be where I come back eventually. I will retire here if it kills me (laughs). I love the lake. I could do anything on the lake despite the fact that it's freezing cold! I love everything you can do with the lake. I love water skiing. I don't know there's something that gives you the sense of freedom--it's just being out there.

Josée and Catherine wanted their children to be raised in a place where they could be free to enjoy nature. "I definitely would raise my children in an area like this, either in Asgard or in a community similar to this because of the freedom..." (Josée). Catherine stated, "I think I will have to come back or live in a place a lot like this because it's... home to me ...mountains and a lake and a river and green trees and good smells and close people. That's what's really important about here."

Lyn saw herself initially living in a larger centre and then moving to a smaller centre when she was ready to have children.

Well, I can see myself living in a city--like a bigger place. Cause I really like the city. So, um, I can see myself living in Vancouver, but I also like, some places in Oregon, I really like it around there... [T]here's so many

places I'd like to see and live in. So I'm going to go to the city and then...but I think ultimately like when...after I retire or ready to retire...like coming back to a place like Asgard or a smaller community. I know though that I don't want to raise kids in a large city.

Grace also wanted to raise her children in a small town when she had paid off her student loans and had a stable life.

I would definitely be into raising kids in a small town even though I would know that as soon as they reached my age they'd be like 'I've got to leave', but I would say like overall it's, it's a pretty positive thing.

Catherine, too, wanted to wait for parenthood. "I want to be selfish a little bit longer, for sure. Like I'd like to establish a ...I want to be as established financially and have done my travelling... I really want to get out and see the world and make my life and...go with the flow (laughs) and see what happens..."

The young women in this study all hoped to have children in the future. Suzanne planned on adopting at least one child. However, none of the girls wanted to have children in the next five years. Participants recalled how their friends who had children at an early age were "really tied down.... And like you can't live your own life. I want to be grown up before I have kids." Catherine felt that if she "got pregnant by mistake, I'd consider aborting, because it would be so hard, I don't want to bring up a child that I resent because it stopped my life short." Anita wanted her children in the "[e]xtremely distant future. There's just so much I want to do before I have kids." Lyn said that she was in no hurry to have her own family. She wanted to travel and do many things before she turned her attention to

having children. "Like I want to be sure that I'm completely stable before I have children....[T]here's things that I want to do first."

For Jessica having a long-term permanent relationship was a prerequisite to having children. She recalled her parents' divorce and how hard it was on her.

Kids are probably a must for me. I'm gonna have to have kids....I've been through my parents divorcing and everything like that.... I'm so aware of it now that I am really watching out for that or will be when I'm going to find a husband and when I'm ready well than I will get married.

In summary, the limited options contemplated by these rural participants seem to substantiate the concern expressed by a number of researchers (Apostal and Bilden, 1991; Jeffery et al., 1992; Lehr & Jeffery, 1996) that the lack of career models inhibits the life-career development of rural youth. Additionally, lack of career counselling and a limited career education program may have contributed to the narrow range and lack of options considered by participants.

These young women considered options based on their limited experience. It was difficult for them to consider different aspirations when they had no personal experience from which to draw from. When considering their future relationships and families, the young women pictured themselves living in a rural community where their children could run free in nature. While they saw their present world as limited in life-career options and in intimate relationships, they saw a distant future based on the "rural myth." They aspired to raise their children as they were raised.

Implementing Plans

Participants had general ideas for their immediate futures. Their transition plans were broad rather than specific. Even the most planful of the participants seemed to keep their options open in order to take advantage of new life-career paths.

Because Catherine had graduated a year ago, she had more opportunity than the participants in high school to carry out her plans.

I took Essentials for Leaders and Wilderness First Aid and ...I'm taking this rafting course and my scholarships have been used for those... and I got 1700 dollars in scholarships and it doesn't matter when I use it--as it is it turns out I'm using them within a year and a half....

In March, Grace contacted Olds College in Alberta to find out more details about their program.

I didn't do anything big like.... we called Olds like after I knew what the requirements were, so we called them and asked. Like me and my mom. And actually talked to them more about what the programs are like. But, yeah, I guess I haven't done all that much research.

Before Grace had her admission interview over the phone, her parents asked her questions to help her prepare.

Just my parents asking me questions about taking care of horses and why I want to go into this type of area. I was talking to someone who said I should find out what they ask in 4-H--like at shows and stuff...but it's too late now. They'll probably ask weird questions, "Like does your father have blue eyes" or something that has nothing to do with horses.

Lyn had carried out her plans to be a member of the Canada World Youth team. She had progressed through a three-stage process of providing an application and three references, taking part in a six-hour interview, and participating in group-building exercises. During the spring, Lyn continued to fund raise for her airfare to India. She had gathered calendars from three universities and was ready to apply when she returned from India in the late winter.

Josée had also carried through with applying to SWAP and submitted an application for her passport. She had a job at the bakery for the summer and hoped to have saved enough money to leave in October. She had not made plans beyond her trip to Australia.

Jessica wanted to work for one more year at the bulk gas station while her partner finished his apprenticeship. They looked forward to traveling for a few months after he obtained his papers before returning to the area to look for work. Jessica was giving some thought to options in the area but had not yet obtained detailed information from SAIT or about distance learning.

As noted Anita's plans had not come to fruition but she was actively seeking out possible options for the fall. Tina planned on continuing to go to school while Suzanne had not made any plans and was not sure whether she would continue to work at the gas station.

Identifying a goal, in and of itself, does not ensure success. For goals to be actualized, people must enter a phase in which plans are constructed followed by a phase in which elements of the plan are executed (Gollwitzer, 1996). Vaguely formed plans seldom suffice in carrying out goals that require long-term commitment such as becoming a university student or becoming an apprentice.

Concrete, detailed plans provide specific steps necessary to attain the goal. When participants were asked for details about the steps involved in moving to Olds or the exact prerequisites needed for Adventure Tourism, very few details could be provided. Because their goal seemed so far in the future, participants often responded with, "Oh, I haven't thought that far ahead" or "I am just concentrating on today." Such limited procedural knowledge might represent a developmental stage, although participants seemed capable of formal operations thinking. Perhaps their limited understanding of plans and strategies needed to fulfill their hoped-for selves represent limited information within their homes and school settings.

Participants looked within themselves and their relationships when considering possible future plans. Important others supplied them with information about their capabilities and share their own life-career paths. Almost all the young women looked beyond their community when envisioning the immediate future.

Conclusion

The culture of Asgard had a strong influence on how the young women saw themselves and on their perceptions of real choices for their future. The agents of culture within the community, including community organizations and schools, seemed to restrict their options through informal methods of social control. Gossip, rumours, name-calling, labelling, and ostracism were employed as a way to punish those young women who challenged local values and norms. The message sent to participants was to passively accept the status quo and to keep community problems, such as drug use, hidden. However, in this study participants responded in one of two ways. Some young women silenced and distanced themselves from

others while some participants confronted perceived injustices by speaking their minds or by acting out in front of the whole town.

Those young women who conformed to these norms were rewarded with employment, funding for travel, scholarships, and opportunities to visit other communities through school programs. The words “responsible” and “respectable” were used frequently in their conversations. These participants tended to be compliant and accepting of the community rules.

The process of conforming to the norms and values of Asgard seemed to hinder self-exploration by restricting the range of acceptable possible selves. Perhaps the young women’s lack of thoughtful planning for the future stemmed from a lack of opportunity to try out different ways of being. As Grace stated, “You can’t aspire to what you don’t know.” Most of the young women interviewed believed that they would have to move from the community in order to discover what was possible for them.

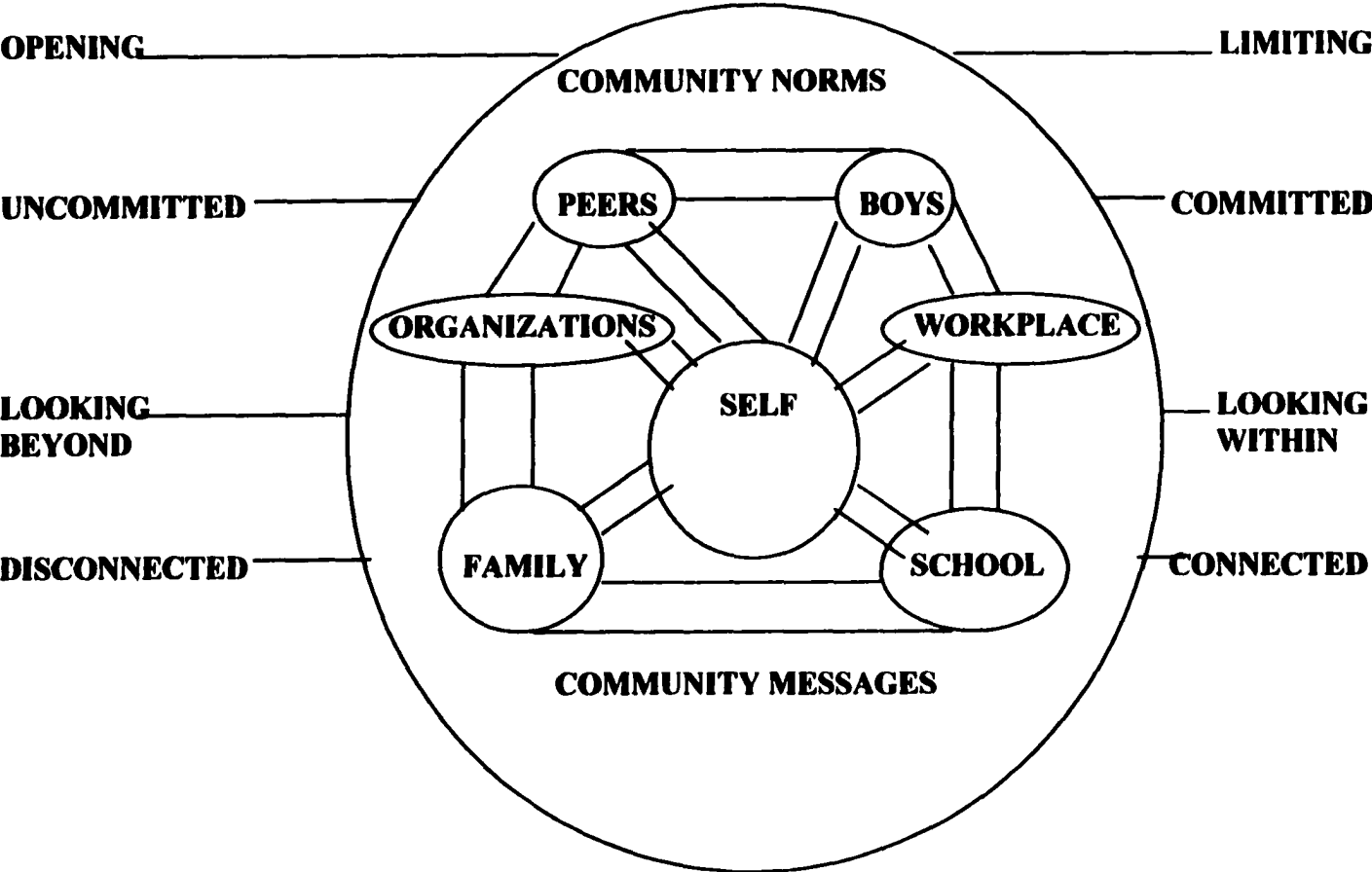
This chapter provided an analysis of the metathemes and themes that emerged from the interviews with participants. The metathemes captured overall patterns in the young women’s experience of living in their rural community. Four of the five metathemes collected from across participants’ narratives are presented as continua: Connected---Disconnected, Committed----Uncommitted, Opening---Limiting and Looking Within and Looking Beyond. Participants experienced themselves as feeling both, depending on the situation and the context. The metatheme, Tangling with Lines of Tension reflects participants’ ways of handling the tensions, dichotomies and pulls that they feel in their day-to-day interactions. A

conceptual model of the Metathemes and themes are portrayed in Figure 15:

Themes and Metathemes.

In the last chapter, the research questions will be discussed in light of the analyses. Reflection on the research method will be presented. Future research agendas will be addressed and implications for research, counselling and policy will be outlined. In addition, strengths and limitations of the study will be delineated.

FIGURE 15: METATHEMES



CHAPTER 6

Weaving Together the Threads and Implications of the Study

In this chapter, a summary of the research findings will be presented. The dissertation will conclude with consideration of further research agendas, the effectiveness of the methodology, the implications of the study, and the strengths and weaknesses of the study.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of growing up in a rural community for eight young women and the perceived impact of those socio-cultural, educational, and environmental experiences on their life-career development process and plans. Life-career development cannot be understood without an accompanying analysis of the contextual framework and the relationships between developing individuals and their changing contexts (Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986; Patton & McMahon, 1999).

Four major research questions were asked:

1. How do young women perceive themselves within the context of a rural community, now and in the future?
2. How do these self-perceptions affect their life-career plans?
3. How do they think their rural living has impacted their education, training, life plans, and work opportunities?
4. How active are these young women in the construction and organization of future plans?

The research questions themselves were not answered in a direct manner. Rather, comprehension occurred through the process of listening to the voices of the participants;

paying attention to the voices of other researchers and theorists; and hearing the self-reflexive voice of the researcher (Lieblich et al., 1998). Narrative processing was an ongoing and reflexive process involving the continual examination of text against interpretations and vice versa.

*How do young women perceive themselves within the context of a rural community.
now and in the future?*

Participants perceived themselves as closely linked to the worlds of family, school settings, peers, boyfriends, employers and community members. Their relationships with their social worlds fluctuated depending on the circumstances. However, adolescence has been identified as a time of change and transition between young people and their contexts (Graber et al., 1996; Johnson, Roberts, & Worell, 1999; Montemayor et al., 2000) so changeable relationships would be expected. The changing relations constitute the basic processes of development in adolescence and underlie both positive and negative outcomes. Furthermore, the contextualist approach taken in this study focuses on the processes involved in the changing associations between individuals and their multiple worlds. In other words, the guiding metaphor of the study, contextualism, presupposes a range of responses to a variety of contexts.

Nevertheless, participants' self-perceptions were similar to the experiences of other rural youth who were involved in large-scale studies (Armstrong, 1993; D'Amico et al., 1996; Hedlund, 1993). This group of young women were strongly attached to their physical environment (Cahill & Martland, 1994; Carter, 1997; Shepard & Marshall,

2000). They identified their families as sources of support and were particularly close to their mothers (Armstrong; D'Amico et al.). Their relationships with peers fluctuated, but overall were described as sources of comfort, confidence, and companionship (D'Amico et al.). The majority of participants were active in either school or in the community (Hine & Hedlund, 1995; Shepard & Marshall). Each participant recalled times of loneliness and isolation (Puskar et al., 1999b) and times of peer rejection and subsequent emotional distress (Hendry & Reid, 2000). The young women reported heavy alcohol and drug use within their cohort, similar to the findings of Kosterman et al.'s (2001) study of a rural community in the American Midwest. A prevailing theme was a lack of place for young people to meet with peers informally (Hedlund; Hine & Hedlund; Shepard & Marshall).

Participants in this study perceived themselves as highly visible in and connected to their community. In a study of a small community in Alberta, Bonner (1997) observed that the smallness of the community created the effect that an individual's actions were being observed and commented on by community members. The young women in the current study also felt as though they were living under a "microscope." For young people who already assume that other people are as interested in them and their behaviour as they are themselves (Elkind, 1981; Reid & Paludi, 1993), the close eye of the community produced feelings of vulnerability and violation as well as feelings of safety and freedom.

The tensions around wanting to be close but not too close can be understood by adopting Bonner's (1997) conception of a rural community as similar to the polis or an Athenian town square.

The experience of visibility in smaller communities is mediated through communication, and simultaneously expresses community (“the town talks”). It is a capacity developed in and through community as both the surveyor and the surveyed are embedded in communal discourse. (p. 190)

Embeddedness in the community implies both surveyability and accountability. In this study, participants felt the tension between the freedom to gain a sense of the whole and their place in it and the restrictions created by responsibility for their actions. In particular, those young people who challenged traditionally held values with new ideas and new ways of thinking and behaving struggled with the tendency of Asgard to hold on to old ways. Yet, from those struggles, new energy and new ideas could emerge to contribute to the health of the community.

The young women hoped to return to Asgard to visit family, friends, and special places in the future. I noticed that young people seemed to return during the Spring Festival and throughout the summer months. Community members appeared happy to see them and had extended visits with them on the village streets. When thinking about their future residence, four of the eight participants pictured themselves living in an urban environment until they had children. However, they expected to raise their children in a small community similar to Asgard.

How do these self-perceptions affect their life-career plans?

Examined within the context of relatedness, identity develops from individuals’ increasing ability to make use of and to respond to others. Josselson (1988) uses the term

rapprochement to describe the process of “preserving bonds of relationship in the presence of increasing autonomy” (p. 95). The process of identity development lies in the tension or space between the need for connection and closeness and the need for independence and separation (Josselson, 1988). Eight dimensions or anchor points (Josselson, 1994) characterize the relational space in which people live their lives: holding, attachment, passionate experience, eye to eye validation, idealization and identification, mutuality and resonance, embeddedness, and tending or care.

We are embedded in our culture which is embedded in us. This embeddedness creates a sense of identity that, if firm and well-integrated, organizes us to the extent that we become unaware of it. We belong, we are connected, we are ‘in’ the world that is ‘in’ us. (Josselson, 1992, p, 179)

Feeling connected to others and to the physical environment was evident in many of the narratives.

Participants perceived themselves as growing and developing within their relationships. They defined themselves in relationship; they conveyed their sense of who they were with others while responding to others’ demands, and they acquired skills in coping with conflicts while maintaining connection. By way of the relational world, the rural young women discovered, formulated, and asserted their identity.

Recent work in the area of relationships and career development (Blustein et al., 1991; Blustein & Noumair, 1996) suggests that emotional support from family members and other close relationships fosters identity exploration. The secure base formed in relationships should allow for more risk taking in their overall exploration of the environment.

The young women in this study eloquently acknowledged the contribution of their families in the development of their personal values, sense of support and skill base. Most of their occupational information during childhood came through direct experience and observation of “family work.” The work experiences provided by their parents were part of the family lifestyle. Many participants attributed the development of their work ethic to observing their parents at work and to the fact that they had responsibilities in their families’ businesses. Parents provided guidance and the young women felt recognized for their achievements. They were made to feel that they could be successful in what they chose to do.

Family closeness and support have been found to have a positive influence on enhancing the career development process. O’Brien (1996) found that attachment to mother and the sharing of similar views were strongly predictive of career decision-making self-efficacy in young women. Palmer and Cochran (1988) demonstrated that when parents were trained to be supportive in the career development process of their high school adolescents, their children were more likely to engage in career exploration and planning. Young et al. (1994, 1997b, 2001) have also documented the importance of involving parents as active agents in the career development of their children.

In this rural community, the parents appeared to be more important than the schools in fostering career exploration. While providing support for students on a college-university track, the rural school did not provide systematic career exploration and development. The work experience program was quite open-ended and students could count hours that they gained while volunteering at school or by taking on a familiar

role in the community. Participants preferred to receive occupational information orally through parents and community members rather than in an indirect manner.

Belenky et al.'s (1986) concept of "connected" knowing that is knowledge that comes from personal experience rather than from those in "authority" may shed light on their perspectives. Connected knowledge comes from shared experiences, from personal firsthand experience. Connected knowers develop confidence in their abilities when they receive validation and reinforcement that they are capable of making decisions (Belenky et al.). Because information available through the Internet or through class handouts was not part of their personal lives, participants were unable to make the connections to that information. For example, Lyn had visited the school counsellor for ideas and he gave her some university and college calendars. She was unable to make the connections between her interests, abilities, and the choices available. However, when a teacher shared her experiences of traveling after high school and gave Lyn information on Canada World Youth, Lyn was then able to see how her people abilities, organizational skills, and her love of travel could be implemented.

How do they think their rural living has impacted their education, training, life plans, and work opportunities?

The young women in the current study perceived environmental variables as the most important influence on their choices regarding education, training, and life plans. For instance, they described their current sources of support with parents, teachers, and mentors. They had ideas about the support required in planning their futures. They were

very optimistic about their ability to do whatever they chose to do regardless of their gender or the economic resources of their parents. However, they did not perceive background variables as important factors. Participants believed that personal variables such as ability, values, and interests were important to consider in thinking about their futures. However, several participants claimed they had not discovered their interests because of community limitations. Grace, for example, pointed out, “you can’t know what you want, when you haven’t experienced it.” Anita, Lyn and Catherine did have a solid sense of their interests, abilities, and values and built their future plans on those personal variables. For instance, Lyn wanted to use her community building skills and ecological values when deciding upon future plans.

Lent et al. (1994) suggested, “supports, opportunities, and barriers—like beauty—lie at least partly in the eye of the beholder” (p. 106). For example, Josée who had been employed since age 14, believed that there were job opportunities in Asgard. Tina, on the other hand, had only found one part-time summer job and was currently not working. Jessica believed that individuals could make a place for themselves in the community if they took some initiative. Grace, however, believed that the only way to find a place to be oneself was to leave the community. As Lent et al. (1994, 2000) proposed, individuals construe particular factors as supports, opportunities and constraints.

Some participants saw the benefit of having a variety of rural skills learned through their work experience, leisure activities, and family duties. However, they did express concern about the transferability of these skills into occupations. For instance, the participants listed many skills in the Realistic theme (Holland, 1985) but aspired to careers in Social and Conventional occupational environments. Others saw the limitations

of occupational role models in their community. Since these young women seemed to learn best from first-hand and personal experiences, parents and community members were an important source of information. As a result, the young women's career options were limited to the knowledge of important others. All participants noted the lack of work opportunities in their community. Limited choices provided incentive to leave the community to seek wider work and educational choices. However, the limited choices also created stress for those participants who wanted to stay.

Participants described their relationship to the community as "highly visible" and restrained by community norms. Through the constant dynamic relationship between selves and social worlds, the young women developed a set of possible selves. While all of their possible selves seemed important to them, participants felt constrained from trying on some of their possible selves in front of the community. They feared that they would be judged or labelled by peers and residents.

The main conclusion to be drawn from these results is how essential dense networks of support seemed to be for the rural participants. Participants identified several key sources of social support or social capital (Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1994)--their relationships with parents, school staff, and community members. However, although the young women indicated many beneficial consequences that derived from their social relationships, they also believed that the community and the local school could better serve them.

Herzog and Pittman (1995) suggested, "for rural schools to be successful in combating their problems, they will have to capitalize on their community and family ties" (p. 118). During the group feedback/closure, participants recommended that the

school invite parent participation during high school (eg. come in and teach simple auto repairs). They also wanted business people to share their expertise with senior high school students.

Researchers in rural communities (Haller & Monk, 1992; Khattri et al., 1997; Theobald & Nachitigal, 1995; Wotherspoon, 1998) have identified the widespread advantage of rural school-community connections in developing social support for young people. Beneficial outcomes include closer parent-teacher connections that can foster academic success; educational opportunities beyond the classroom that promote community attachment; and dynamic and fruitful school-business relations that can improve students' transition from school to work and provide skill training. In contrast, these participants reported that their parents were uninvolved in their schools with the exception of helping with their graduation celebrations.

Participants expressed resentment about their lack of involvement in local affairs. There was a strong sense that no one was listening and that youth had no say in the decision-making that affected their community. Feelings of powerlessness, exclusion, and tokenism were evident. While participants agreed that they had much to learn from adults, they also believed that they had much to contribute to the community.

In summary, although all rural areas by definition have in common a relatively small population and low population density, there would be great diversity across small communities in terms of social capital (Coleman, 1987, 1988, 1994). The economic, social and geographic factors that affect the life-career development of young women are important to identify. For example, some community structures may provide strong school-community connections while other organizational features may not. The notion

of social capital that is available to participants is based on a variety of factors including family makeup, parental expectations, employment status of parents, school opportunities, and youth participation in community organizations. These factors may help to explain some of the variation in young women's experience and certainly highlight the importance of using a contextual framework. A developmental-contextual perspective provides an avenue for seeing the multiple connections and attachments that form the basis of young women's life-career development in their rural community.

How active are these young women in the construction and organization of future plans?

The participants in this study had a strong sense of "place," of being rooted in their rural communities. The rural community they lived in was a part of who they were, part of their identity. Some participants were more "bound," than others. To the degree that they were "place" bound, they experienced varying degrees of efficacy in constructing and organizing future plans.

Similar to several other studies of rural youth's residential plans (Elder et al., 1996; Hektner, 1995; Sarigiani et al., 1990), the young women in this study realized little meaningful employment and few opportunities for personal growth were available in Asgard. Moving out seemed to be an open door to opportunity. But could they bring who there were with them? What is the real or hidden cost of this transition? Is it a transition that they want to make? How do they feel about moving toward future hoped-for selves?

In order to realize personal, educational, occupational, and lifestyle goals, participants would have to leave their family and home community. The tension between community attachment and life-career goals appeared to affect the choices of the young rural women. Possibly, this explains why many of the participants had made few plans. The decision to stay or leave was fraught with stress and it was perhaps easier not to think about or make decisions. Leaving the future to “fate” has repercussions for the young women of Asgard.

If they miss the bus out of town, they're stuck. It's about 18 months. I think that's about all they get. And then they're scared to leave. And then the longer they stay, then they're here. And it's really hard for them to go (Asgard parent).

One option was for the young women to base their aspirations on what they could achieve if they remained in the community. For example, Jessica was choosing an option that would allow her to stay and set up a home-based business. For those that were planning on leaving the community, there was some evidence that they fully appreciated their rural close-knit community. Half of the participants (Jessica, Catherine, Grace, and Josée) were looking for a rural lifestyle and were considering options that would give them the opportunity to live in small communities. The other four participants were urban bound but would like to raise their children in either Asgard or in another small community.

Similar to the findings of McCracken and Weitzman (1997), these young women were overly optimistic of being able to have it all without much thoughtful planning. When asked how they would be able to live in a small community in the future, participants had few ideas. During the group meeting, participants suggested that their

husband would have a “great job” and they would be able to stay home with their children. Considering the current economic realities in Asgard and other small communities in British Columbia or even in urban settings, this possible self seems unlikely for the majority of young women. The participants could benefit from anticipating the future and making plans now that could help them obtain their future dreams.

The young women in this study generated a variety of possible selves; however, they constructed few occupational selves. Markus and her colleagues (Cross & Markus, 1991; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Oyserman, 1989; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989) have drawn attention to the motivating qualities of possible selves. Since possible selves are unique to each individual, they give personal meaning to goals. Detailed and complete descriptions of possible selves are more motivating than less descriptive selves. While participants in the present study provided comprehensive descriptions of selves in personal, family, and lifestyle domains, their descriptions of occupational selves were general and vague. For example, Anita had no idea of the years involved in becoming a journalist. She did not know their income level.

Possible selves that are associated with affective experiences provide motivation to move toward hoped-for selves and to avoid feared future selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Markus & Ruvolo, 1989). Catherine, Lyn, and Anita had experienced themselves as being praised and rewarded for their efforts in specific skill domains and were motivated to move towards future occupational selves related to those skills.

According to Markus, well-developed possible selves contain the means or plans to reach important goals. One of the discoveries of this study was the lack of blueprints

for action. There are a number of tenable reasons for the lack of well-constructed future plans. Perhaps adolescents believed that they have plenty of time to make plans once they finish high school, not realizing, for example, applications to university must be in several months before graduation. Anita, for example, asked me if she could apply in late June to the University of Victoria when she was not accepted in Alberta. I also noted that participants were unclear as to the courses they would need in order to apply to specific programs. For example, Josée was surprised to learn that she would need Chemistry 11 and Chemistry 12 if she decided to go “the science route.”

Another possibility for poorly constructed plans was the prevalent belief held by returning graduates. Their view that “nobody was getting jobs anyways” spread through the community to the high school students. Possibly due to recent labour market trends, youth were hearing the message from the media and their older siblings that the lack of jobs for young people rendered planning irrelevant.

Krumboltz (1993) has suggested another possibility. Career indecision can also be interpreted as a personal fear, a fear of career exploration that he terms “zeteophobia.” Krumboltz implies that college students avoid planning for their careers after graduation because they believe it is so important and therefore to make decisions about career plans makes them anxious.

An underlying assumption to this study was the belief that the young women knew how to make plans. In order to be planful, participants needed to be future-oriented (Super et al., 1996). Many of the participants were very much embedded in the present. Adaptive transitions from school to work are characterized by transitioners who are “purposeful, active, and assertive in their developmental tasks, despite the awareness of

the obstacles that face[d] them. The transitioners appeared to approach—rather than avoid—their decisions, explored their options” (Blustein, Phillips, Jobin-Davis, Finkelberg, & Roarke, 1997, p. 395).

Perhaps participants’ ill-defined career plans may not be signs of passivity but rather could illustrate the flexible, open-ended nature of their life-career goals.

The process of women’s decision-making may be quite different from that of men. Choices are influenced by “other’s plans,” compromising personal goals, or balancing the needs of self and others, contributing to uncertainty in long-term goals. In comparison to the traditional career planning models, this can sound like a passivity about career plans. (Lalande et al., 2000)

Rather than passivity, the present study suggests that at least some of the young women may take an “untraditional” approach to career decision-making. Rather than making firm plans, they prefer to keep their options open so that they can be open to new relationships and new possibilities.

Future Research Agendas

This ethnographic-narrative study of rural young women raised several promising research questions. In order to keep the amount of data manageable, only females were included in the current study. An obvious next step would be to interview young men from the same community. By comparing the experiences of female youth with male youth, any relevant differences attributable to gender should emerge. Do male youth experience the same levels of connection to the community as female youth? Eccles (1987), Josselson (1992), Miller (1991), and McCracken and Weitzman (1997) would

suggest that boys would be less affected by relational decisions. How do young men make their future plans? Are young men able to cross easily borders between social worlds? Do young men draw on different resources than young women?

A follow-up study of the eight young women at ages 21-23 would provide more information about the transition process from high school. At the time of the current study, the majority of the young women were “thinking about” the upcoming transition but had not entered it. What decisions were implemented? How many of the participants stayed in the community? Why did they stay? What did they do? Where did the other participants move to and what resources were helpful in making that transition? What other supports did they need? What do they now see as the benefits and limitations of living in a small town?

A longitudinal perspective using the developmental-contextual model of career development (Vondracek et al., 1983, 1986) to guide the selection of individual and contextual variables could isolate the relative impact of individual and contextual factors in the formulation and realization of career aspirations of rural young women. A logistic regression analysis could be run to identify the combined impact of the different person- and context-related factors in the formulation of life-career aspirations. What role do individual variables play in determining life-career aspirations? Are rural adolescents’ aspirations predictive of occupational attainment in adulthood? What factors in the community other than personal preferences determine occupational development? Of life-career choices?

If schools provide important social capital for students, it is necessary to discover the structures and relationships that bestow students with pertinent resources and

information. Further research using a focused case study methodology could be undertaken in rural schools. More information is needed on school –community connections, school processes, community characteristics and student outcomes. A series of case studies of small rural Canadian communities (e.g., mining, farming, fishing, First Nations communities) would offer similarities and differences among school environments in a variety of communities across geographic locations. What are the characteristics of effective rural education? What unique factors affect students in different rural areas? What type of rural education provides students with the ability to function in either rural or urban settings?

Overall, participants in the present study did not access information about occupations and the labour market. The young women put little effort into thinking about their interests in relation to occupational fields. When they did think about their futures, they frequently turned to parents for help in discussing their ideas. Future research is needed to understand the process of life-career planning by parents and their children. What are their perceptions of the planning process? What do they see as the reasons for planning or not planning for the future? What different styles of planning are undertaken?

As demonstrated by this study, little understanding of the life-career development process in young women's lives can be gained without an accompanying analysis of the contextual framework and the relationships between developing individuals and their changing contexts. While some research has been undertaken to identify these relationships, there is scant information on the impact of mental health issues on young rural women's life-career development. Further research is needed to study the mental health of the young women who remain in their communities. Interpersonal violence is

increasing in small communities (Kosterman et al., 2001; Puskar et al., 1999a, 1999b; Spencer & Bryant, 2000; Websdale, 1998). Young people in rural communities are more likely to be victims of dating violence than their urban counterparts (Spencer & Bryant). High levels of loneliness (Chipuer & Pretty, 2000) and depression (Puskar et al., 1999a, 1999b) have been reported in rural communities. Yet healthcare, social services and local transportation available in rural communities are limited. Medical and mental health services often lack the privacy needed in order for women to feel comfortable in accessing support and young women often lack access to transportation that would allow them to access medical services in larger centres.

The young women in the current study wanted to be part of the community planning and decision-making process. Community-based action research could be carried out to help youth and their communities develop strategies that could enhance the contexts that support adolescent development. For example, Stephen Small (1995) created a program entitled, Teen Assessment Project (TAP) to “tap” into young people’s behaviours and concerns. A steering committee of local leaders, including youth, generate the questions to be included on a community survey. Issues around adolescent health and development as well as protective and risk factors could be included. From this information, programs that are based on local knowledge could be developed.

Implications of the Study

Implications for Research

Research on adolescent life-career development should be predicated on integrative, developmental systems models of human development. The artificial

boundaries researchers have placed around differentiating leisure, school and work activities, for example, miss the naturally integrative quality of adolescent development. The embeddedness of adolescents in complex developmental systems requires integrated innovations in theory and method.

Research efforts need to continue inquiry into the differences among girls. Programs and policies can then be specifically targeted to benefit girls from different geographic regions in their preparation for the future. Longitudinal research needs to be conducted to track educational and career outcomes and evaluation research to identify successful programs and policies.

Describing adolescent development as a process of goal-setting, planning, and evaluation emphasises the importance of developing research methods that would take into account the complexity and idiographic nature of this process. Recent research on personality has focused on self-articulated goals and how these goals shaped the future-oriented actions (Cross & Markus, 1991; Nurmi, 1991). This approach might be useful in adolescent research, because it provides tools for analyzing how young people think about and work with their personal goals.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The young women in this study seemed to exemplify what Belenky et al. (1986) mean by “connected knowers.” They learn from each other and enjoy sharing one another’s visions. Group settings could provide a same-gender forum for the young women to personalize their life-career selves and develop vivid descriptions of their possible selves. In addition, discussions and plans could be developed for balancing

family and career roles; for coping with multiple-role conflict and overload; for postponing or forgoing childbearing; and for deciding about geographic mobility.

Adolescents need an opportunity to talk about peer, family, and personal problems, along with and often related to career choice. While a school cannot become a mental health centre, some attention has to be given to emotional factors since these interfere with academic or personal success. School counsellor training and professional development could include mental health information and interventions that would be appropriate for use in school settings.

Career information is important at the elementary and secondary level. Young women can be encouraged to explore a variety of careers and life roles and the issues involved in combining work and family. Exposure to positive role models and a variety of lifestyles with regard to combining work and family would be helpful. Young women could benefit from active career exploration in order to make informed life-career plans. School programs can provide opportunities for challenging educational and occupational assumptions and for evaluating life-career plans in terms of their abilities, values, interests, and expressed needs.

Guidance activities can provide not only specific information but also teach exploration and decision-making approaches. Students would benefit from strategies that help them cope with the overwhelming amount of information available. Programs could be developed that look at a variety of options for rural youth including options that allow them to stay or return to their community. Additionally, curriculum that acknowledges local values and views of success and achievement may help some students make the link between educational activities and future roles.

Vocational and academic courses can be linked with current and future educational training. The same substantive attention can be given to work-bound and vocational-bound youth as is given to students going directly to university. Learning environments that are sensitive to cultural and learning style preferences could support students in exploring themselves and the world of work. Within group negative social comparisons could be reduced by creating opportunities for unique leadership roles for each student and using individual progress as a measure of success.

Counsellors could use the “narrative metaphor” to help youth think about their lives as stories and to work with them to experience their life stories in ways that are meaningful and positive. For instance, counsellors could encourage young people to create stories of actions that can result in achieved goals, such as obtaining a certificate. By taking personal actions, young people are more likely to develop interests, skills, attitudes, and life roles that could be useful in moving towards life-career goals.

Implications for Policy

Rural residents living in the same locale could build upon the common ground they share by organising and activating alliances. For example, local rural communities could form partnerships that would give them opportunities to share physical, financial, human, and social capital.

Rural programs that promote community stewardship and a better understanding of rural life could create a sense of community among students. Rural-based career programs that start early and involve community exploration would likely help students to identify local educational and economic opportunities. Networking with other rural

schools could aid in the development of databases for job shadows and work experience placements.

With the decline in resource-based industry, many rural residents have started their own businesses. Community leaders could aim their economic development efforts at attracting local young people. A high school course on starting and running a business might be of interest to many students.

Career information activities can be integrated throughout the curriculum. A structured K-12 career exploration and development program that involves parents and other community members could assist students in seeking out information locally. While parents are good resources in terms of their own occupations, they also would benefit from the opportunity to learn about other occupations so that they can assist with their children's career exploration.

Institutional linkages between employers and high schools, comparable to those between employers and college and university placement offices could create tangible, direct, school-based school-to-work trajectories. Models that facilitate school-to-work transitions by offering job openings would ensure that students are not forced to enter the impersonal labour market without specific steps. Additionally, community colleges could expand their outreach services to rural areas through external degree programs, distance learning opportunities, perhaps through local school districts and public library systems, and career counselling services. Active and sustained involvement of community leaders representing employers, secondary educators, postsecondary educators, and parents and students is required in order to provide rural young people the services they need to enter the work world.

When planning programs it would be important to invite young people to participate in the decision-making and to serve as experts on the kinds of messages likely to have the greatest impact on their age group. Adolescents want a voice in the decisions that affect their own age group. They can also contribute to planning for other age groups—children, adults, and the elderly who make up the community in which they live. Young people can learn about decision-making and planning by participating on local committees and by becoming involved in local projects. Given the ecological selves expressed by the present participants, environmental initiatives could provide opportunities for involvement by young people.

Reflection on the Research Methodology

Ethnographic-narrative research, as developed in this study, incorporated a rural focus and also centred attention on the narratives of eight young women's self-understanding of their rural experiences. Prolonged involvement with participants within their community setting provided a sound understanding of their multiple social worlds and participants' views of those worlds.

The use of open-ended questions gave participants an opportunity to form narratives of the self, in which they reconstructed the past and projected themselves into the future. The narratives were often fragmentary, shifting and at points inconsistent—much like a great novel and just as intriguing. Although I knew theoretically that identities are not an individual achievement but a work of, and in, culture, my first-hand experiences allowed me to see this process. Yet I struggled to find ways to portray the complex fashioning of their stories and narrative selves on paper.

How can I depict a multifaceted individual like Anita on a sheet of paper? She's the struggling high school student, the gutsy hockey player on the boys' team, a dope smoking, in-your-face adolescent, a hardworking employee, and a thoughtful, reflective writer. And when I watch her move among her social settings, I see someone who can easily shift among these obviously tension-filled and even partly conflicting identities—emphasizing one identity here, and other identities less so. And as I work with her transcript, I am saddened at the static text that sits before me. I feel as if I've already lost parts of Anita. (Journal, October, 5th 2001)

Each interview was another indication to me of the complexity and multiple layers that form human identity. The amount and types of information gathered appeared overwhelming. After several months of skirting around the issue of analysis, I decided to take multiple readings of the transcripts (Lieblich et al., 1998) that I hoped would allow me to highlight different layers of the text. McAdams' life story model of identity (1985, 1993, 1996, 1999) was invaluable in presenting the complexity and fragmented nature of the young women's narratives while at the same time providing methods (e.g., themes, imagoes, ideological settings, narrative tone, metaphors) that emphasized the integrative nature of stories. My ideas about the process of identity formation evolved.

Their trajectories involve detours, recursions, embedded cycles, that are responsive to culturally framed and socially situated alternatives... the emphasis is on the person as an active agent.... we act as agents in the continuing and non-ending process of making and remaking ourselves. (Mishler, 1992, pp. 36-37)

The intent of this research was to portray the experiences of how rural young women experience their communities and how they develop life-career plans. My aim was to provide insight into this process and portray each participants' experiences and social worlds in such a way that you, the reader, could empathise with them and understand the situations they negotiate in their daily lives.

Strengths and limitations of the study

This study adds to our understanding of how socio-cultural contexts interact with young rural women in shaping their life-career plans. The findings lend further support for a contextual-developmental explanation of career based on constructivist propositions (Cochran, 1990; Patton & McMahon, 1999; Young et al., 1996). The constructivist position suggests that individuals construct their own way of organizing information and that truth or reality is a matter of perception. Each of the young women's unique characteristics and life experiences interacted with their rural socio-cultural environment. In turn, the rural environment placed demands on each participant by virtue of the social and physical components of the setting. These demands included attitudes, values and expectations held by important others. As well, the physical characteristics of the setting constituted contextual demands.

This study also highlights some of the recent trends in adolescent research (Galambos & Leadbeater, 2000; Lerner, Lerner, De Stefanis, & Apfel, 2001) including the idea of multiple pathways through adolescence; the focus on the late teens to early twenties as a time of transition; and the spotlight on "local" cultures. Participants in this study portrayed a range of differences in how they negotiated their way through adolescence. The concept of "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2001) has developed to

describe the years from late teens to early twenties as a time conspicuous by a lack of normative expectations. Many of these young women also seemed to lack a sense of direction. The current study contributes to our knowledge of an often overlooked group of adolescents, rural female youth. The qualitative approaches used add to our understanding of the transition process from the perspectives of rural young women. The subjective experience of young rural women may yield new ideas and relationships that current theoretical life-career models have either overlooked or neglected.

Galambos and Leadbeater (2000) encourage the continuing emphasis on health rather than focusing only on the problems of youth. The metatheme, *Tangling with Lines of Tension*, explored participants' competencies as well as the actions taken to cope with the strains experienced in their communities. According to Galambos and Leadbeater, qualitative data analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of unique differences in individuals. In the present study, for example, four approaches to the transition process were identified (apprehension, holding pattern, tentative, and anticipation).

The purposeful sample in the study was comprised of eight young women who currently lived in or around Asgard. Although a small number, there was diversity within the sample. Three participants lived in smaller communities in the area. Two participants had graduated the year before. Two participants were from single parent families while two participants were from blended families. However, similar themes and patterns appeared across participants' narratives. In addition, I heard similar motifs in informal conversations with other youth living in Asgard. During the group feedback/closure

meeting, attended by five out of the eight participants, key themes were presented and acknowledged by participants as true to their experience.

Nevertheless, participants were of the same age and therefore cohort effects will have affected the data. For example, this sample's sensitivity to economic restrictions as a result of slow steady growth over the past five years might not be present in a sample of slightly older women. In addition, the young women narrated a life-course that was either progressive or static in tone. Participants were willing to participate and engage in the research process. They all had positive relationships with at least one parent. Perhaps the young women who chose not to participate would have presented a different life-course graph and narrative tone. For example, young women who were currently coping with depression, eating disorders or other mental illnesses were not part of the study. This set of adolescent girls probably face the biggest challenges yet are the least heard in rural research.

The focus of this study was on the voices of the young women. Nevertheless, demographic information obtained from their parents would have generated hypotheses for future research. For example, previous research on rural adolescent career aspirations has shown strong links to the level of parents' educational attainment (Legutko, 1998). Those students whose parents attended a postsecondary institution were more likely to choose postsecondary education themselves. Most participants were able to give me this information, but not all. This information would be necessary to obtain if a follow-up study is undertaken.

As noted, the analysis phase of the research involved four different readings in order to capture the complexity of the young women's lives. Although this process was

time consuming, the readings provided new ways of considering adolescent life-career development. For instance, the snapshot reading, life-course graph reading, and emotional charge reading stayed close to the uniqueness of individual's stories while the themes and metathemes cut across the narratives looking for commonalities.

This study was exploratory and the questions posed were broad. Participants raised the issues that were pertinent to them and their narratives provided rich data. However, the information provided did not centre on life-career exploration and planning. It was obvious during the interviews, that the young women were not as interested in that topic as they were in discussing their relationships and connections with others. Perhaps with a more focused and narrowed approach, more details could be elicited about their life-career exploration and planning process. The drawback to such an approach would be the possible loss of complexity in their narratives.

Summary

The life-course development of the participants in this study was complex, multidimensional, interactive, individual, and affected by the environmental context of the rural community. Identity development was a process of ongoing experience in and identification with a multiplicity of contexts. The paths taken were varied, malleable, and sometimes transitory. Notions of the self as bounded and discrete made way for a view of permeable, connected selves through which experience flowed.

This study revealed the powerful influence of rural families and communities. Rural young women draw conclusions and make educational and life-career choices without the benefit of knowing what opportunities exist outside their rural areas. Rural

communities would benefit from programs that enlist parents in assessments of local opportunities. An open, realistic dialogue among parents, students and educators about educational and career opportunities and options would be beneficial. What rural young people seem to need is information that allows them to make choices, choices that are made with understanding and realization of the costs and benefits. Legislators and local leaders could focus on identifying and attracting industry that complements and preserves the rural way of life. Rural young women want the options of moving out or staying in their small town communities. Rural communities have the human resources to produce solid economies given the opportunity.

A holistic, life-course perspective of life-career development widens the focus from the individual to include the social realm. Contexts, values, beliefs, psycho-social factors and other influences and their interrelatedness constitute the system of young rural women's life-career development.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A**Letter of Contact to Possible Participants**

Date: May 5, 1999

Dear Possible Participant:

My name is Blythe Shepard (353-2244) and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychological Foundations at the University of Victoria. I am presently working on my dissertation. The topic of my research is Rural Adolescent Girls' Experiences of Career Development and Planning under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815).

I am looking for young women between the ages of 17 and 19 who are willing to:

- (a) take part in two interviews
- (b) develop a photo-essay
- (c) consider attending one group meeting.

Participants must be willing to talk about growing up in a rural community and how they think that has affected plans for the future. You will be asked to discuss future work, education and relationships as well as your life in this community. I anticipate that about six hours of your time will be required. Each participant will receive \$40.00 for participating in the research. This research will be carried out between May 5th and June 20th.

Interviews will be tape recorded so that I can keep track of all the things that are said. After all interviews have been completed, you will also be invited to a Closure/Feedback Group Meeting. This meeting is optional. At that time I will give you an overview of the findings and ask for feedback. This meeting will be video-taped.

I hope that this experience will be helpful for you in thinking about your future plans. If you have a friend that might be interested, could you pass on my phone number and have them contact me?

If you would like to hear more about this study, I can be reached at (353-2244).

Thank you very much,

Blythe Shepard

APPENDIX B

Participants' Information and Consent Form: Interview #1

Information about the Research Project

My name is Blythe Shepard (353-2244) and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria, in the Department of Psychological Foundations. I am presently working on my dissertation. The topic of my research is Rural Adolescent Girls' Experiences of Career Development and Planning, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815).

I am looking for young women between the ages of 17 and 19 who have lived in this community for at least 8 years. Participants must be willing to talk about growing up in a rural community and how that has affected plans for the future. Participants will be asked to discuss future work, education, and relationships as well as their life in this community. I anticipate the six hours will be required of each participant. Each participant will receive \$40.00 for participating in the research. You will receive \$20.00 after the first interview and the remaining \$20.00 after the second interview. This research will be carried out between May 5th and June 20th. Information from this study will be used in writing my dissertation, in scholarly publications, and at conference presentations.

The research project is divided into three sections:

Interview #1:

1. You will be asked questions in four areas—growing up in this community, life-career plans, effects of rural community, and your hopes and fears for the future.
2. You will be given a disposable camera and instructions on how to develop a photo display of yourself in your community.
3. I will have your photographs developed, and return them to you.

Interview #2:

1. You will be asked to describe your photo displays.
2. You will be asked to review a written copy of your first interview for accuracy, make corrections, and contribute any additional comments.

Closure/Group Feedback:

1. You will be invited to attend a group meeting to discuss the general findings (attendance is optional).

Permission to Participate in Interview #1

I understand that I will be a participant in the study Rural Adolescent Girls' Experiences of Career Development and Planning conducted by Blythe Shepard, under the direction of Dr. Anne Marshall at the University of Victoria.

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. I have the right to refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer. If I have any questions at any time during the study, I will be answered right away. If I decide to quit, the audiotapes of this interview will be erased and any notes will be shredded.

I understand that individual interviews will be taperecorded. I understand that the audiotapes will be erased upon completion of the project in March, 2000.

With my signed permission, the photo-essay will become part of the dissertation and may be used in future publications. If I give permission for my photo-essay to be included in publications, I can decide which of my photos can be used. Copies of the photographs will then be made available to me. If I do not wish my photo-essay to be included in publications, the photo-essay and negatives will be returned to me.

The optional Closure/Group Feedback meeting will be videotaped. If I choose to participate in the group meeting, I will be identifiable to the other participants. Blythe Shepard will transcribe the video tape and it will be erased upon completion of the project in March 2000.

I understand that my name will not appear in the study. A code number will be used in place of my name. Only the researcher will know my identity from the code number. All information obtained will be kept confidential and interview results will be kept in a locked file cabinet. When the study is complete in March 2000, all records of transcripts will be destroyed. If you have any questions feel free to phone me (353-2244).

I, the undersigned, give my permission to take part in the study described in the above letter. I understand that my name will not be used on any report and that the information I give will be kept private.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Catherine: Community Life-Space Map

APPENDIX C

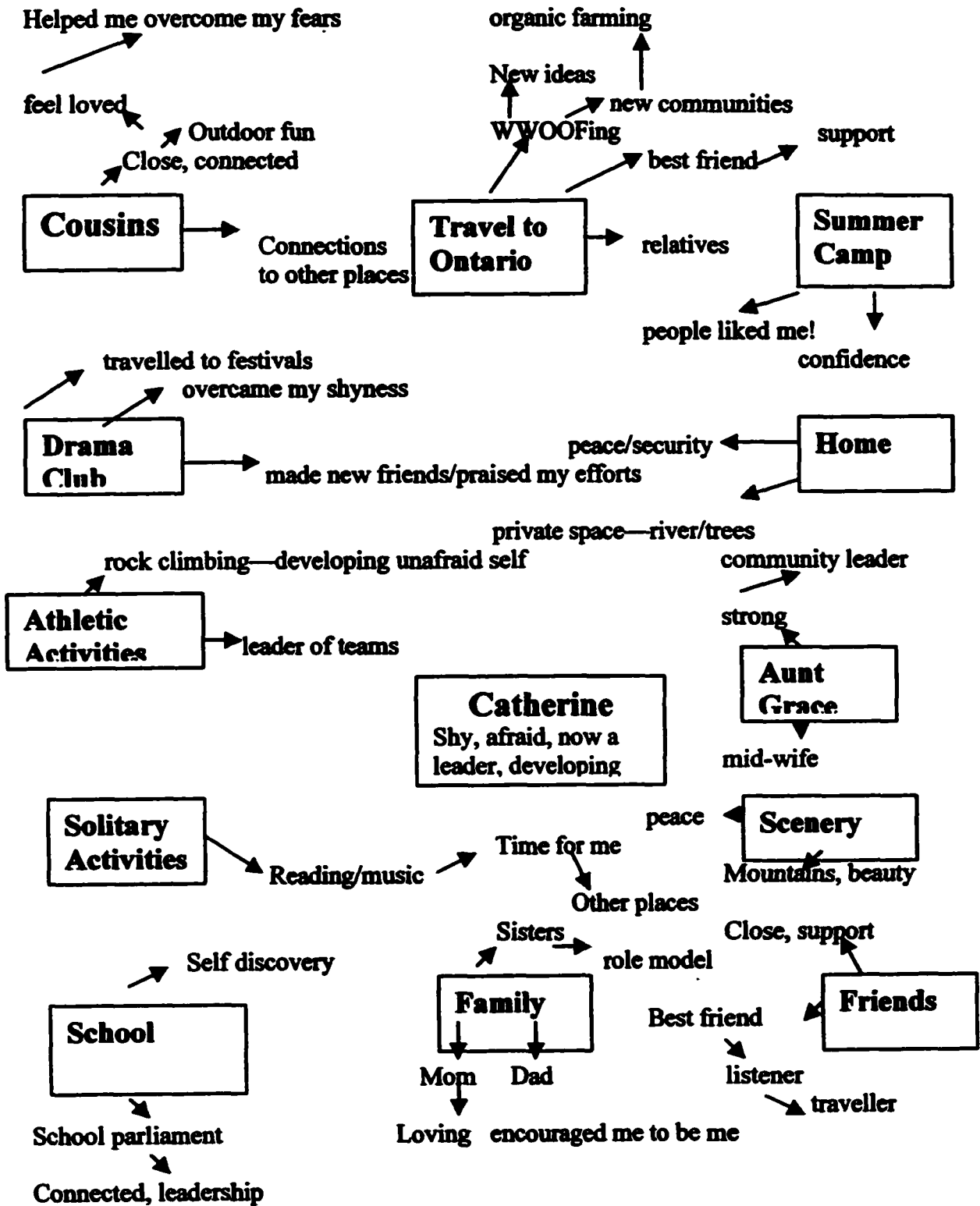


Figure 1
Community Life-space Map

APPENDIX D

Grace: Possible Selves Map

MAPPING of my POSSIBLE SELVES

I think I'm most able to be...

bring balance to my personal + private life so they aren't as separate.

I think I'm most able to prevent... allowing another person

to decide who I am

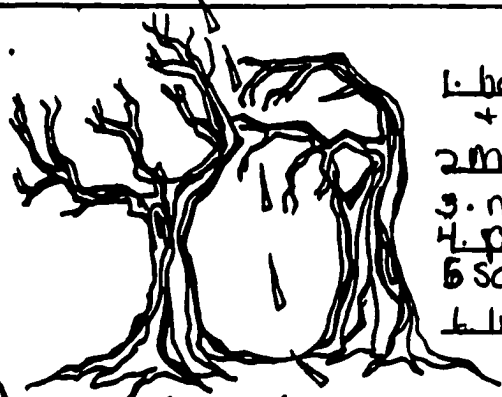
I think that...

allowing another person to decide who I am could happen

(just about 10 of preventing)

I expect that I will...

be able to find that balance

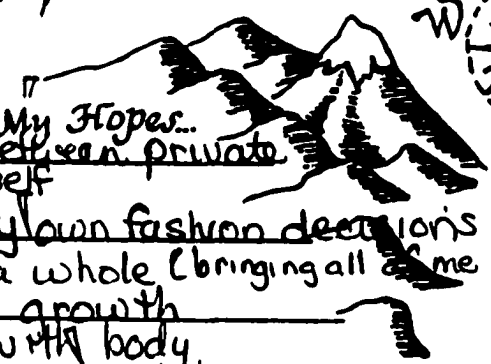


My Fears...

1. allowing others to decide who I am.
2. doing things to make me uncomfortable
3. being uncomfortable in social situations
4. in a relationship with someone who doesn't share my views
5. denying who I am
6. with a child before I'm ready

My Hopes...

1. balance between private + public self
2. making my own fashion decisions
3. me as a whole (bringing all of me, not split off)
4. personal growth
5. satisfied with body
6. in a serious relationship
7. in a job that fulfills + stimulates me
8. meeting people with similar plans + interests
9. getting my bartending certificate
10. own a jeep
11. not enough \$ to pay bills
12. working at a job I hate.



APPENDIX E

Photo-elicitation Interview

In the second interview, participants will be asked to review the transcript of their first interview for accuracy, make corrections, and contribute any additional comments. Participants will also be asked to explicate their photos and process around it. The three areas of focus will be around symbolic representation, hidden meanings and new meanings and patterns. These three areas may come out spontaneously in their description of their photo displays. However, I have created some probes in the three areas to use if the participant does not address them in her description. Symbolic representation questions will move back and forth between representation and symbolic possibility in an attempt to gain more understanding of the meaning of the photographs. Hidden meanings and the thoughts and feelings behind the photographic display will be elicited by a second set of questions. Questions about new meanings and patterns will challenge existing forms, understandings, and meanings.

The initial question: **Tell me about your photo(s) or photo-art production.**

Possible probes:

Symbolic Representation (Elicitive Approach, Barry, 1996)

- Describe your photo display to me
- How did you choose which photographs to include?
- How did you decide to display them in this way?
- Name three things you really like about your display.

Hidden Meanings (Revealing Approach, Barry, 1996)

- What do you like about this creation?
- What title would you give your creation?
- How would you describe your creation to someone who couldn't see?
- What is the story that goes with this photograph?
- If your creation (or what it represents) could talk, what might it say?
- What are the feelings, thoughts, imaginings that you have become aware of in this photograph?
- If members of this community saw this photos, They would likely say ____, think ____, feel _____, do _____.
- What changes would you make in your creation?

New Patterns and Meanings (Transformation Approach, Barry, 1996)

- Has there ever been a time where you might represent yourself differently?
- Three things I wouldn't know about you from these photos:
- Three ways that this photo fits and doesn't fit your general way of being in your regular daily life:
- If you were to create this display five years from now, how would it be different?

APPENDIX F

PHOTO DISPLAY

APPENDIX G

Participants' Information and Consent Form: Closure/Group Feedback

My name is Blythe Shepard (353-2244) and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Victoria, in the Department of Psychological Foundations in Education.

The topic of this research is Rural Adolescent Girls' Experiences of Career Development and Planning, under the supervision of Dr. Anne Marshall (250-721-7815). Information from this study will be used in writing my dissertation, in scholarly publications and at conference presentations.

The Closure/Group Feedback meeting is an opportunity to hear about the overall findings of the research project. Only general comments will be made. Specific comments made by participants in Interview #1 and Interview #2 will not be shared. This meeting will give you an opportunity to comment on the findings and to ask questions about how these findings will be used.

Permission to Participate in Closure/Group Feedback

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. I have the right to refuse to answer any questions I do not wish to answer. If I have any questions at any time during the study, I will be answered right away. If I decide to quit, the audiotapes of this interview will be erased and any notes will be shredded.

If I decide to attend this group meeting, I will be identifiable to the other participants and what I say at this meeting will be known to others in the group. The group meeting will be videotaped. The video tape will be transcribed by Blythe Shepard. The information will be used to add to and modify the research findings. The images from the video tape will not be used elsewhere. The purpose of the videotaping is to aid in the transcription; that is, to ascertain who responded to particular questions. **THE VIDEO TAPE WILL BE ERASED** upon completion of the study in March 2000.

I understand that my name will not appear in the study. A code number will be used in place of my name. Only the researcher will know my identity from the code number. All information obtained will be kept confidential and interview results will be kept in a locked file cabinet. When the study is complete in March 2000, all records of transcripts will be destroyed.

I, the undersigned, give permission to take part in the meeting described in the above letter.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX H**Snapshot Reading****Suzanne: Coded Section of Transcript**

Suzanne: Interview#1, Tenth interaction

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit more about your group and what types of things you might do?

Suzanne: Okay. Well the group of girls I hang out with - we do girly stuff- talk, we gossip, yeah, we do. And we do the girly stuff- go shopping, we talk about the guys and everything. But the Skid group I hang out with, I hate that word Skid, but that's what applies to them. Um, like beach parties.

Ciding

Peers: Activities

Thoughts

gossip - 3rd time
(Community, peers - "It hurts")

Peers: cliques

Skid
- sliding on a slippery slope
- also on the "skids" (defeated, discarded)
- also skid row?
- definitions from participants

Beach parties -
Community responses to?

There's not too much to do in Asgard, there really is a lack of stuff to do and

Thine?
Nothing to do

Community limitation

self-intentional activity

self. Community involvement

Community activism?

Boyfriend: activities

(Peers too)



we're playing golf right now, like it's the IN

Peers: boys: activities

thing, um, and in the hockey season, like during the

winter season, all the guys that I know play, hockey,

like I was kind of the little groupie, hockey groupie.

Self descriptor - (watcher?)



Here S. seems passive

Finding an anchor?
But what sports do the girls engage in