

ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EXPERIENCES OF MUSIC LISTENING
AND ROMANCE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience and meaning of adolescent girls' music listening experiences as related to romantic experience. Previous research identified mood management as a key use of music listening, and teenage girls were identified as listening to music when they were sad. Popular music's romantic themes suggested that perhaps adolescent girls use music to explore and reflect upon romantic experiences. Hermeneutic-phenomenology was used to investigate music listening as experienced in everyday life. Data were generated through multiple, in-depth interviews with five adolescent girls aged 17 and 18 years old. Interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and analyzed in keeping with van Manen's (1990) method of applied hermeneutic-phenomenology. Analysis of the interviews involved hermeneutic phenomenological reflection on the experiences described by the participants and subsequently representing the findings through diary entries of a fictional teenage girl, Sophie, a "composite" character who embodied the thoughts and experiences of each participant, and who gave voice to the lived experiences that the actual participants related to the interviewer.

Findings confirmed that adolescent girls' music listening is a deeply meaningful activity, which in the context of romantic experiences, was associated with celebration, connection, coping, and comfort. The participants used music with intention and in technologically sophisticated ways. Music listening provided participants with a voice to celebrate happy and mourn sad romantic experiences, to normalize experiences of romantic rejection and sadness, to offer comfort that they were "not alone" in their

romantic experiences, and to assist them in coping with romantic “break-ups”.

Implications for further research as well as counseling practice are noted.

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For Andrianne, Allison, and Evan

my raison d'être

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

Throughout my adolescence, I used popular music to normalize, and validate the experience of romantic rejection. Popular music provided me with an outlet through which I could express my sorrow. Songs became an emotional salve that I used to soothe my wounded heart; they provided me with comfort during periods of sadness because I knew that at least one other person (the writer of the song) felt as sad and hurt as I did. As I reflected on this particular time in my life and the role of popular music, I wondered if I could use this as the starting point for a phenomenological study. This snapshot from my past generated a curiosity about the experiences of adolescent girls today. I began to wonder what role popular music played in the lives of others—my daughters, my young clients. What did they experience when they listened to music? What music might be associated with their romantic relationships? Would they have experiences similar to or different from mine? What would those experiences be? What would be common across those experiences? How would each of them understand the experience of music listening? How would it relate to their romantic experiences?

As I reflected on my interests, it became clear to me that a hermeneutic-phenomenological study would allow me to explore these wonderings. In turning to the literature, I discovered that research in the areas of adolescent romantic experiences and use of music media was limited, and what there was, was primarily experimental or theoretical in nature. For example, in the opening chapter of their book on adolescent romantic relationships (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999), the editors observed that research on the topic was sparse. Of the research conducted, much has involved the study of college students by social scientists who are not adolescent researchers.

Developmental theories about adolescent romantic relationships, rather than theories based on adult relationships, have begun to emerge only recently.

The body of research on the effects of mass media on adolescents is much larger. The literature describes adolescents as active users of media (Rubin, 2002) and even delineates what uses adolescents ascribe to music listening (Arnett, 1995; Steele, 1999; Brown, Steele & Childers, 2002). As well, gender differences in media use have been identified (Larson et al, 1989; Robertson & Christenson, 2001).

Television is the media most researched (Robertson & Christenson, 2001) and therefore, less data is available on the effects of music media (e.g., radio, CD's and music videos). Because of the problems of youth crime and teen pregnancy, research into the influence of music media and its link to sexual activity or violence have predominated (Malamuth & Impett, 2001; Christenson & Roberts, 1998). Content analysis of popular songs indicate that the subject of romance is a ubiquitous theme (Strasburger, 1995), but how does music influence adolescent romantic relationships? The majority of sexual activity among adolescents occurs in romantic relationships, yet rarely have researchers explored the link between music media and adolescent romantic relationships.

Consequently, I decided listening to what adolescents have to say about the role of music listening in their romantic experiences would enrich understanding of this adolescent phenomenon and add a qualitative depth to the current literature. In particular, a hermeneutic-phenomenological inquiry, which explicated lived experience and lived meaning, was appropriate. The enrichment and enlightenment about the adolescent milieu would be valuable for both developmental researchers, adolescent counselors and family therapists. The current research on adolescents and media influence as well as

adolescent romantic relationships would be supplemented, and helping professionals working with youth would gain insight and perhaps develop new applications for therapeutic practice with youth.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I examine the extant research literature relevant to the present study. A brief introduction on the uniqueness of research into adolescent romance is included followed by a discussion of developmental theories of adolescent romantic relationships, research into the characteristics of these relationships and the factors affecting their development. Because popular music is a category of mass media, research findings that discuss the role of music in the formation of adolescent views of romance, the use by adolescents of the media of music, and the context in which adolescents listen to music, are also included as well as the results of research into gender differences between adolescent males and females in their media preferences. A final summary statement of the literature is presented that concludes with a statement of the research question.

Current Status of Research on Adolescent Romantic Life

Prior to the 1990's, research on adolescent romantic relationships was scarce. Previous research focused on dating relationships or sexual activity, neither of which are essential to a romantic relationship. In studies conducted before 1990, participants were commonly college students who are considered developmentally either to be late adolescents or young adults. This early research "was not derived from developmental theories, nor was it conducted by adolescent researchers" (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999, p. 1); rather, the research was based on adult relationship theories and the researchers intended the studies to be of adult relationships.

Since the early 1990's, social scientists, and developmental psychologists in particular, have become interested in understanding romantic relationships in adolescence

(Furman & Wehner, 1994; Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999; Feiring, 1996; Brown, 1999; Connolly and Goldberg, 1999). However, it is still a very young branch of study.

Although it is clear that romantic relationships typically undergo many changes over the course of development, social scientists have yet to delineate the precise nature of such changes. Most of the empirical work has focused on romantic relationships in the college years or adulthood, and relatively few studies have examined romantic relationships in adolescence. Almost no work has considered age differences in these relationships. Consequently, we have little scientific data on the developmental course of romantic relationships (Furman & Wehrer, 1997, p.21).

In current research undertaken with adolescents, researchers have discovered the challenge of delineating essential features of a prototypical adolescent romantic relationship. Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) noted that not all adolescent romantic experiences occur in “real” relationships and that “critical components of adolescent romance exist outside of a concrete relationship with a specific romantic partner” (p.2) and that “all of these forms of romantic experiences, from fantasies to interactions to relationships of short and long duration, must be considered in order to fully understand the development of adolescent romance” (p.2).

So while “real” romantic relationships are an important class of romantic experience, critical learning about romantic relationships can also take place through experiences such as an early adolescent crush and conversations about romance with friends.

Larson’s (1995) findings on adolescent uses of music media suggest that listening to popular music (where the major theme centers on romance) is another class of

romantic experience. These songs “describe an idealizing transference [whereby] they construct a partner who is perfect. . . with whom merger is fantasized, and with whom the negative feelings and loneliness one is currently experiencing will be forever banished (Larson, 1995, p.6).

Theories of Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Dr. Wyndol Furman is recognized for his research in the area of children and adolescents, and more recently, in the area of adolescent romantic relationships. Furman extended the work of other researchers on the development adult romantic relationships and developed a theoretical model (Furman & Simon, 1999) about how romantic relationships develop in adolescence, which drew on the work of the attachment theorists. Attachment theory focuses on early emotional relationships that occur between a child and her caregiver(s). The quality of these attachments is believed to shape human development (Fabes & Martin, 2000). Attachment theorists (e.g., Hazen & Shaver, 1987) proposed that both parent-child relationships and romantic relationships are types of attachment relationships, as both share the elements of care-giving and affection.

However, the differences between these two types of relationships led to a refinement of the theory, which proposed that romantic relationships be re-conceptualized as integrating the behaviours associated with attachment, caregiving, and sexual/reproductive systems (Shaver, Hazan, & Bradshaw, 1988). To these, Furman added the behavioural system of affiliation (Furman & Wehner, 1994) and proposed a hierarchical model to explain the “relational views” individuals have of romantic relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994). The theory can be summarized as follows: “individuals have views or representations of a romantic relationship that refer to and

reflect the functioning of all four behavioral systems. In effect, such views are expectations regarding intimacy and closeness, which may be enacted in terms of attachment, caretaking, sexuality, and affiliation.” (Furman & Simon, 1999, p. 80). These relational views are described as hierarchically organized, such that an individual has views about specific relationships, about different types of relationships (such as parent-child or peer relationships), and about the broad area of relationships collectively (Furman & Simon, 1999). This model of relational views addresses the multi-deterministic nature of relationship development because it “. . . allows for any type of relational view to be influenced by experience and views of other relationships, both directly and indirectly via general views of close relationships” (Simon, Bouchev & Furman, 1998, p.9).

Furman and Simon (1999) used this framework as a basis for describing adolescent romantic relationships as significantly different from those of adults, because the systems of affiliation and sexuality are considered most salient. The attachment and caregiving systems continue to be the domain of the parent-child relationship until late adolescence, and thus, are not common features of the adolescent’s romantic relationships.

A “developmental-contextual” perspective of adolescent romantic relationships incorporates elements of ecological developmental psychology and emphasizes the importance of context on the development of adolescent romantic relationships (Brown, 1999). Brown (1999) suggested that adolescent romantic relationships “change dramatically in form, substance, and function over the course of this stage of life, and that they both shape and are shaped by the broader peer context in which they are rooted” (p.

291). This model of adolescent romantic relationships recognizes the importance context, other social relationships, and historical changes have on the development of these romantic relationships. A prototypical model consists of four sequential phases: initiation, status, affection, and bonding. The four phases are not descriptive of an adolescent's movement through a specific relationship, "but rather developmental shifts in individuals' basic orientation toward romantic relationships" (Brown, 1999, p. 296). These phases are loose in structure, and as such, phases may be omitted entirely, repeated several times, or sequentially re-ordered.

The initiation phase starts with the beginning of puberty, which sets the stage for the adolescent's initial foray into the world of romantic relationships. For both sexes, the biological changes associated with puberty include heightened sexual interest (Katchadourian, 1990) and are typically accompanied by a shift from the same-sex friendships of preadolescence to other-sex friendships:

This [increased sexual drive] spurs an interest in sexual expression and relationships, which, for the preponderance of youths, who are heterosexually oriented, inspires a new dimension to interactions with the other sex. Ironically, young people who have followed the normative trend in peer relationships over the course of childhood have systematically withdrawn from other-sex interaction. Thus, these youths need to become reoriented toward and reacquainted with the other sex—but with a markedly different objective: as potential romantic and sexual partners rather than just as friends and playmates. (p. 296)

During the initiation phase, the adolescent still demonstrates an ego-centric perspective in that her/his primary concern is not the romantic relationship per se, but her competency in relating to an other-sex peer as a romantic partner (Brown, 1999).

In the second, or status phase, adolescents are shifting the focus from themselves to their relationships with other-sex peers. However, the focus is “not as much toward the prospective partner or relationship as to the broader peer culture in which such relationships will be enacted. . . .” where “. . .romantic relationships are an important means of establishing, improving, or maintaining peer group status” (Brown, 1999, p. 297).

The affection phase again shifts the focus, this time from the milieu in which the relationship is enacted to the actual relationship. Whereas in the first two phases, the influence of peer group was significant, it now begins to decrease. Relationships in this phase become more serious, and have the potential to develop into meaningful connections with a partner.

The fourth, or bonding phase, represents the mature romantic relationship where commitment becomes possible. This shift occurs as the adolescent moves into young adulthood, and connects the romantic world of the adolescent with the romantic world of the adult.

While it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the contextual factors in each phase, it is important to note that the type of romantic activity, as well as role of the adolescent’s peers changes in each of these phases. To understand fully the developmental phenomenon of adolescent romantic relationships, one must not lose sight

of the “big picture” that includes the adolescent’s self-concept, romantic orientation, and relationship skills (Brown, 1999).

Characteristics of Adolescent Romantic Relationships

Because adolescent romantic relationships are a developmental phenomenon, defining them is akin to a dog chasing its tail—just as the dog reaches for it, it moves! Brown (1999) considered the substantive changes that take place across adolescence in his effort to construct a definition of these relationships.

I regard relationships as romantic if they are dyadic peer associations that are perceived by the participants or their close peer associates to include strong feelings of liking and caring and at least the potential for sexual activity. The strong feelings may be genuine or feigned for the sake of impression management. One individual may have romantic interests in another (feelings of liking and caring, combined with some sense of sexual attraction), but these must be reciprocal – again, in reality or at least in appearance to peers – for the association to be considered a romantic relationship. (p. 292)

The characteristics of adolescent romantic relationships are either elucidated or can be inferred in Brown’s definition. Most salient are the ideas of strong feelings or passion, caring, potential for sexual expression, and mutuality of feelings. Length of time is not a key parameter. The ephemeral nature of adolescent relationships is precisely what makes them so difficult to study. In a sympathetic discourse on why researchers shy away from studying adolescent romantic relationships, Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) noted: “Romantic ties in this context [of temporality] can be remarkably short, lasting a matter of weeks, if not days. By the time researchers are geared up to study the

relationship, it's over! Then, several weeks later, it's back on again, but only for another month" (p. 9).

Feiring (1996) characterized adolescent romantic relationships as having intimacy, affiliation, and companionship. In younger adolescents, infatuation (irrational and passionate feelings for a person of the opposite sex of a temporary nature) was likely, whereas in older adolescents infatuation was typically replaced by passion and commitment.

Another area of interest to adolescent researchers is determining how adolescents view their romantic relationships. In a discussion of the characteristics of adolescent romantic relationships, Laursen and Jensen-Campbell (1999) stated that "adolescents consistently rate romantic relationships as significant sources of affection, companionship, and support" (p. 62). A study of fifteen-year-olds' romantic concepts reported that "the affiliative qualities of companionship, intimacy, and support were frequently mentioned as positive aspects of romantic relationships" (Feiring, 1996, p.194) with companionship being mentioned most often. These findings are consistent with the work of Furman and Wehner (1994), who concluded that the affiliative and sexual behavioral systems were most salient in adolescent romantic relationships.

Factors Influencing the Development of Adolescent Romantic Relationships

From a developmental perspective, adolescent romantic relationships grow out of the more general motivation humans possess to establish and maintain close relationships that are part of ". . . a meaningful progression of relationships across the life course" (Collins & Sroufe, 1999 p. 125). Both early parent-child relationships and peer relationships influence the development of adolescent romantic relationships.

Parent-Child Relationships

While most developmental researchers agree that parent-child relationships exert an influence on the romantic relationships that develop in adolescence, there is less certainty as to how this influence is exerted. Collins and Sroufe (1999) suggested that the intimacy a child experiences in early, non-romantic relationships is closely connected to the intimacy that develops in the romantic relationships of adolescence. Parent-child relationships have significance as one of the developmental precursors of adolescent romantic relationships.

Early secure attachment has been linked to successful adjustment to preschool, effective peer relationships in middle childhood and increased social competence in peer relationships prior to puberty (Collins & Sroufe, 1999). Furman and Wehner (1997) linked relational views of parent-child relationships to views of romantic relationships among college students.

In short, experiences in parent-child relationships will affect general views of close relationships, which, in turn, influence views of romantic relationships. During adolescence, when the romantic arena is new, these general views may provide a template for guiding one's own expectations and behavior with romantic partners as they are enacted in the new ways and in unfamiliar contexts. Similarly, general views may also provide a template for making sense of partners' behavior in these unfamiliar domains. . . (Simon, Bouchey & Furman, 1998, p.11).

While further research (Furman et al., 2002) substantiated links between peer relationships and romantic relationships in adolescents, no significant correlations were found between parent relationships and adolescent romantic relationships. Possible

explanations include reluctance of adolescents to acknowledge similarities between their relationships to their parents and romantic partners (Furman et al., 2002); or that different behavioural systems are involved in the two types of relationships. However, the hierarchical model proposed by Furman and Wehner (1994) with its roots in attachment theory, remains speculative.

Peer Relationships

Peer relationships clearly influence the development of romantic relationships in adolescence, particularly in the structural and qualitative dimensions. Dunphy's (1963) ethnographic analysis of peer groups laid the groundwork for current research. He identified two types of peer groups: cliques, which are small groups of same-sex friends, and crowds, which are larger groups of mixed-sex friends and suggested that it is in the context of crowds that heterosexual adolescents are provided with opportunities for socialization with other-sex peers, and that without access to other-sex friends, the formation of romantic relationships is restricted. Connolly, Furman & Konarski (2000) reported a positive correlation between the number of other-sex peers in a heterosexual adolescent's peer network and the development of a romantic relationship. This replicated an earlier study by Connolly and Johnson (1996), which found that heterosexual adolescents who had a romantic relationship were part of larger peer networks and had more opposite-sex friends. Because this study was correlational, the researchers could not determine causality. "One might speculate that peer networks form the context within which romantic relationships are first explored, providing access to romantic partners and opportunities for ongoing dialogue with peers about this new relationship (Connolly & Johnson, 1996, p. 192).

As adolescents construct their cognitive views of what to expect from heterosexual romantic relationships, peer groups, particularly small same-sex cliques, provide the primary context for these discussions of romance (Simon et al, 1992). Connolly and Goldberg (1999) speculated that it is in these cliques that “adolescents explore romantic expectations and norms” (p. 275).

Peer groups also have a qualitative influence on romantic relationships. Connolly, Furman and Konarski (2000) reported that “. . . perceptions of support and negative interactions in friendships are associated with similar characteristics in concurrent romantic relationships” (p.1406). Further data analysis suggested that “. . . friendships may have an influence on contemporaneous romantic relationships, which in turn are predictive of subsequent romantic experiences” (p. 1406).

Cultural Images as Represented by the Media

Adolescents form cognitive views or ideas about romantic relationships (Furman & Wehner, 1994), which include the expectations they have for these relationships; but only some of these views result from experiences in romantic relationships. Connolly and Goldberg (1999) advanced the idea that “romantic expectations can arise prior to the initiation of actual romantic relationships and derive, at least in part, from portrayals of idealized romantic relationships” (p. 275). A study of adolescents’ development of expectations for romantic relationships concluded that adolescents were influenced by media images, specifically “that media romance had the strongest links with expectations of romantic passion, as well as commitment and negative emotions” (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999, p. 276).

Theories of Media Use

Research into the effects of mass media began less than 10 years after the introduction of the radio and public broadcasting. The first studies were published in the 1930's by Lasswell and Lazarsfeld and since that time, studying the effects of mass media has become the single most prevalent issue for mass communication researchers (Rogers, 2002).

As research into this area advanced, two different research paradigms developed. The first model is that of media effects research and is based on the following concepts: a passive and reactive audience, a focus on immediate and measurable changes in thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours, and an assumption of direct audience influence (Rubin, 2002). The second model arose out of the hypothesis that other variables intervened between message and effect, leading researchers to construct a uses and gratifications approach to the study of media (Rubin, 2002). "Uses and gratifications sees a medium or message as a source of influence within the context of other influences. It sees media audiences as variably active communicators, rather than passive recipients of messages. . . and sees mediated communication as being socially and psychologically constrained" (Rubin, 2002, pps. 526-527).

Rubin (2002) suggested that a contemporary view of uses and gratifications theory is based on five assumptions: a) communication behaviour (i.e., selection and use of media) is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated; b) individuals initiate the selection and use of communication media; c) many social and psychological factors guide, filter, and mediate the individual's media choices; d) media compete with other forms of

communication, such as interpersonal interaction; and e) the individual is usually more influential than the media in the process of media use.

Building on the media uses and gratifications theory, Steele (1999) developed the Adolescent's Media Practice Model. Similar to uses and gratifications, this model assumes that adolescents are active media users in several processes: selection of the medium and genre, interpretation of the media message, and application of what they have interpreted (Brown, Steele & Walsh-Childers, 2002). The media practice model also assumes the adolescent's emerging identity will mediate the aforementioned process of active media use. Specifically, it assumes "that adolescents will choose media and interact with media based on who they are or who they want to be at the moment" (Brown, Steele & Walsh-Childers, 2002, p. 9).

Where the adolescent media practice model extends beyond uses and gratifications theory is in its assertion that the variables of identity (sense of self) and lived experience influence what adolescents learn from the media. The authors explained that lived experience "is a socio-genetic construct that accounts for the complex ways in which race, class, gender, developmental stage, and many other factors differentiate one person's day-to-day occurrences from another person's" (Steele, Brown, & Walsh-Childers, 2002, pps, 9-10).

Common Uses of Media in Adolescents

Based on the uses and gratifications theory of media use, Arnett (1995) described the five most common uses of media by adolescents: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification. Entertainment stands out as the ubiquitous reason for listening to music, however, this particular use has often been

ignored by researchers. Brake (1985) observed, “The central theme of leisure is fun, a feature often overlooked in sociological studies of mass culture” (p. 187). Larson (1995) agreed, “Since its beginnings, rock [pop] music has been equated with fun” (p. 2). Ban (1986) found that adolescents placed music near the top of the list of things that make them happy. “Music pulls us away from our responsibilities, asks us to live in the present, to be dramatic, to be outrageous—and to do it without apology” (Snow, 1987, p. 327). Many adolescents embrace this message, and their much of their music embodies these ideas of immediacy, passion, and the extreme.

Identity formation is a key developmental challenge of adolescence, and with media, adolescents can explore the themes of gender, sexuality, and relationships (Arnett, 1995). Brown et al (1990) found that the media of film/television, as well that of music and music videos provide adolescents with information about the above areas (of gender, sexuality, relationships) which adolescents then use to learn sexual and romantic scripts.

Adolescents also use media to elicit high sensation. The personality trait of sensation seeking reflects the degree of novelty and intensity a person prefers, and although adolescents will vary in the degree to which they pursue high sensation, Arnett (1995b) explained that during adolescence, the love of intense sensations is more acute than at any other stage of life. The music styles of rap and heavy metal are commonly used to elicit these intense sensations (Arnett, 1995, 1995b); and these music genres are popular with teens (Bezilla, 1993).

Coping, or mood management, is another common use of music media among adolescents. For example, Knobloch and Zillman (2002) used popular music from the Top 30 charts, selecting music that was either high or low for the qualities of joyfulness

and energy. The songs were classified as slow-fast/ soft-hard and negative-positive/sad-happy; the 16 songs that received the highest ratings in each category were used in the study. Researchers categorized the participants in bad, neutral, or good moods in the first part of the study, which the participants understood to be independent of the second part. In fact, the first part of the study was used to manipulate the participants' moods in order to proceed with the actual study in which the participants were allowed to choose the music they wanted to listen to from sets of musical selections. Selection of highly energetic-joyful music increased with the negativity of the mood, suggesting that individuals use music to manage moods.

In a study of adolescents' private use of music media, Larson (1995) noted that when teens listen to music in their bedrooms, they ponder the song's themes and consider how these themes relate to their own lives. Larson (1995) proposed that this process helps adolescents regulate their emotions. Larson, Kubey, and Colletti (1989) found that adolescents self-identified a significantly lower affect when listening to music alone, than when listening to music with friends. Of further interest was their finding that as adolescent girls increase their frequency of listening to music over the course of adolescence, their affect during music listening declined. They suggest this indicates "a deliberate use of this media, with its strong emotional messages, for rumination, reflection upon, and perhaps discharge of negative feelings" (p. 595).

Youth culture identification is the fifth common use of media in adolescents. Larson (1995) suggested that, unlike television, Top 40 music "is produced by and for young people, thus it reflects adolescent concerns with autonomy, identity, love, and sexuality" (p. 6), and this may be responsible for the switch from the media of television

to music during early adolescence. In a study of Swedish youth and music listening patterns, Roe (1985) found that music in particular was the medium that expressed values specific to adolescents. From these and similar findings, researchers theorize that media consumption may give individual adolescents a sense of connection to a larger peer network who share values and interests specific to youth (Arnett, 1995).

Arnett (1995) suggested that socialization is an over-arching theme in the five common uses of media by adolescents. In all these five uses, adolescents are participating in activities that contribute to their socialization. The media “are part of the process by which adolescents acquire—or resist acquiring—the behaviors and beliefs of the social world, the culture, in which they live” (Arnett, 1995, p. 4).

There are seven principal agents of socialization (Arnett, 1995): family, peers, school, community, the media, and the legal system. Arnett (1995) proposed a fundamental difference between the media and the other agents of socialization. Agents such as family members, schools, churches, community members, and law enforcement agencies encourage the adolescent to accept the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the culture to preserve and pass it on to the next generation. In contrast, economic success not socialization motivates the media. “As a result, the content of media consumed by adolescents is driven not by a desire to promote social order and pass on the culture but by the uses adolescents themselves can make of media. . . media providers are likely to provide to adolescents whatever it is they believe adolescents want” (Arnett, 1995, p. 4).

Because of this fundamental difference, adolescents have much greater control over their socialization from the media than from other sources such as parents, school, community, and the legal system. In fact, the media and peers are the two sources of

socialization over which adolescents exert the most control. Choices about friends and media are decisions over which parents have little control. Restrictions on either do not usually work, as parents and adolescents simply do not spend enough time in each others' company for such restrictions to be enforceable (Larson & Richards, 1994).

Developmental Context of Adolescent Media Use

Adolescents “become less involved in and subject to the family environment, and more capable of ‘creating their own environments’ by seeking out experiences that correspond to their particular interests and preferences” (Arnett, Larson, & Offer, p. 2). As children move into adolescence, there is a significant decrease in time spent with parents and an increase in that spent with friends and alone (Larson and Richards, 1994). Larson (1995) concluded: “Rather than being merely the absence of people, aloneness becomes recognized as an experiential niche providing valuable personal opportunities for emotional self-regulation and cultivation of the private self” (p. 4).

Change does not only occur in the environment in which media use takes place; there is also a shift in the type of media used by adolescents. Television viewing decreases significantly with early adolescence (Larson, 1995). At the same time, popular music listening shows a marked increase (Larson et al., 1987) and in fact, time spent listening to music peaks during this developmental stage (Arnett, 1992). Larson (1995) made the following observation: “First, adolescents shift their media time toward greater music listening, because it speaks to adolescent issues, and, second, they engage in more media use in solitude” (p. 5). He then suggests, “the synthesis of these two points is that we would expect private adolescent media use, especially music listening, to be a context for cultivation of the private self [self-exploration]” (p. 5). It is this theory—the

cultivation of the private self—which compels me to explore the experience of adolescent girls and music listening, and how this process informs their romantic experiences.

Gender Differences in Media Preferences

Studies indicate that adolescent girls choose soft rock and Top 40 music, while boys, in addition to Top 40 songs, listen to hard rock and heavy metal music (Larsen & Thompson, 1995). If one examines the content of popular music, romantic love remains the ubiquitous theme (Strasburger, 1995). While the majority of adolescent girls (about 75%) regularly read a magazine (Arnett, 2000), the time spent listening to music, by both adolescent boys and girls, consumes the largest proportion of media use.

There are gender differences related to listening to popular music, particularly in the area of mood management. Research indicates that boys, more often than girls, listen to music to “pump themselves up”; girls more frequently listen to music when they are sad or lonely (Roberts & Christenson, 2001). Larson (et al, 1989) explained that “young adolescent girls’ use of music may be driven more by a need to both explore and cope with new concerns and worries that accompany this age period, perhaps especially those surrounding intimate relations that are so often the themes of these songs” (p. 596).

Summary

An integration of the findings in the preceding literature review of adolescent romantic relationships and adolescent media use point to the importance of studying adolescent romantic experiences with music media and the relevance of a qualitative inquiry.

Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) declared that romance is a central focus of adolescent pop culture in the Western society, and that “romance is also in the forefront

of adolescents' minds" (p. 5). Strong emotions over real or fantasized romantic relationships are experienced by 34% of girls and 25% of boys, a proportion higher than experienced for any other reason (Wilson-Shockley, 1995). The hierarchical model of relationship views (Furman & Simon, 1999) hypothesized that specific romantic experiences inform adolescent's views of romantic relationships. Building on this concept, Connolly and Goldberg (1999) suggested that adolescent expectations of romantic relationships influence their views of romantic relationships. In the same study, Connolly and Goldberg (1999) found that media images of romantic relationships influenced adolescents, particularly concerning expectations of passion, commitment, and negative emotions. Communication research indicates that adolescents spend more time listening to music than watching television (Strasburger & Wilson, 2002). Adolescents exert choice and control over the music they listen to, spending a significant of time listening to that music in the privacy of their own room (Larson, 1995).

Quantitative researchers have elucidated how adolescents use music (Arnett, 1995), and as well, have identified the shift that takes place in the type of media adolescents use (Arnett, 1992; Larsen, 1995), and the context in which they use this media (Larsen, 1995). Qualitative inquiry presents an opportunity to add another dimension to adolescent research by detailing every-day lived experiences. For example, I wanted to ask adolescent girls to describe the experience of music listening and romance, in order to help me understand its lived meaning.

Steele and Brown (1995) "took a tour" of adolescents' bedrooms while the adolescents described the importance of different objects or pictures in their rooms. These interviews gave the researchers considerable insight into the relationship between

teens and the media. Using a similar research design, the purpose of my research was to explore adolescent girls' experience of music listening and romance, by asking them to describe this process and consider its experiential meaning. The research question informing the study was "What is the lived experience and lived meaning of music listening in the context of romance for adolescent girls?"

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Paradigm

Philosophical assumptions about knowledge, reality, and values are foundational to all research. Creswell (1998) described the link between philosophical issues and research designs and procedures as inextricable. In his book, *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*, Michael Crotty advises that in the development of a research proposal, the investigator needs to devote a significant amount of time to answering two fundamental questions: “First, what methodologies and methods will we be employing in the research we propose to do? Second, how do we justify this choice and use of methodologies and methods? (1998, p.2)” In answering the second question, the researcher does not simply select a process of inquiry designed to answer the research question. Crotty (1998) explains:

Justification of our choice and particular use of methodology and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that we bring to our work. To ask about these assumptions is to ask about our theoretical perspective. It also reaches into the understanding you and I have of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribe to it. What kind of knowledge do we believe will be attained by our research? What characteristics do we believe that knowledge to have? Here we are touching upon a pivotal issue. How should observers of our research—for example, readers of our thesis or research report—regard the outcomes we lay out before them? And why should our readers take these outcomes seriously? These are epistemological questions (p. 2).

This chapter seeks to answer Crotty's questions.

Epistemology, or "*how we know what we know*" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) is the foundation on which our understanding of the human world rests. Constructionism is the epistemological stance most often invoked by qualitative researchers: "One or other form of constructionism is the epistemology found, or at least claimed, in most perspectives other than those representing positivist and post-positivist paradigms (Crotty, 1998, p.4)."

The constructionist view of epistemology "begins with the premise that the human world is different from the natural, physical world and therefore must be studied differently (Patton, 2002, p. 96)." Patton elaborates:

Because human beings have evolved the capacity to interpret and *construct* reality—indeed, they cannot do otherwise—the world of human perception is not real in an absolute sense, as the sun is real, but is "made up" and shaped by cultural and linguistic constructs. To say that the socially constructed world of humans is not physically real like the sun doesn't mean that it isn't perceived and experienced as real by real people (p. 96).

While there are considerable differences in some areas of constructionist theory, constructionists generally presuppose that human beings "do not have direct access to a singular, stable, fully knowable external reality. . . ." but rather, their "understandings are contextually embedded, interpersonally forged, and necessarily limited (Neimeyer, 1993, pp. 1-2)".

In reading the literature on constructionist epistemology, I discovered that the terms "constructionist" and "constructivist" are both used to describe what is referred to in this paper as *constructionist* epistemology. Some texts use one of these words

exclusively, while others use both—effectively leaving the reader confused as to whether these terms are synonymous. Crotty (1998) offers the following distinction:

It would appear useful . . . to reserve the term *constructivism* for epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’ and to use *constructionism* where the focus includes ‘the collective generation [and transmission] of meaning’ Whatever the terminology, the distinction itself is an important one. Constructivism taken in this sense points up the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit. On the other hand, social constructionism emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things (even the way in which we feel things!) and gives us a quite definite view of the world. . . . On these terms, it can be said that constructivism tends to resist the critical spirit, while constructionism tends to foster it (p. 58).

To be consistent with the above definition, the study of an everyday phenomenon implies that many individuals share the lived experience, or it would not be recognized as a phenomenon. An adolescent girl comes to the experience of music listening with views about romance that represent her own previous romantic experience (imagined or real), the romantic experiences of her peers and her family, and from mass media representations of romance. While the listening most likely occurs in solitude, the *cultural influences* on the meaning she makes of the music come from outside.

Thus, while humans may be described, in constructionist spirit, as engaging with their world and making sense of it, such a description is misleading if it is not set in a genuinely historical and social perspective. It is clearly not the case that individuals encounter phenomena in the world and make sense of them one by one. Instead, we are all born into a world of meaning. We enter a social milieu in which a 'system of intelligibility' prevails. We inherit a 'system of significant symbols'. For each of us, when we first see the world in meaningful fashion, we are inevitable viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by our culture. Our culture brings things into view for us and endows them with meaning and, by the same token, leads us to ignore other things (Crotty, 1998, p. 54).

While this research assumes a constructionist epistemology (including its invitation to critical analysis), it is still possible to honour each participant's experience as unique because although the lived experience may be shared by others, phenomena cannot be fully explicated (van Manen, 1997), nor can each individual's interpretation of her lived experience be entirely understood by another.

Another philosophical issue that researchers must wrestle with is ontology, or the study of reality. The constructionist philosophy is based on the premise of ontological relativity, "which holds that all tenable statements about existence depend on a worldview, and no worldview is uniquely determined by empirical or sense data about the world. Hence, two people can live in the same empirical world, even though one's world is haunted by demons and the other's, by subatomic particles (Patton, 2002, p. 97)."

The qualitative researcher views reality as constructed by individuals (Creswell, 1998) who interpret the experience and transform it into awareness both individually and as shared meaning (Patton, 2002). In phenomenological inquiry, the researcher strives to capture and describe how individuals experience the phenomenon “how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it to others” (Patton, 2002, p 104).

In qualitative research, multiple realities are involved—those of the researcher, those being researched, and those reading the study (Creswell, 1998). Indeed, there will be multiple and diverse interpretations. It is incumbent on the researcher to report these different perspectives and give each a voice. As a qualitative researcher, I conducted the research with the assumption that each adolescent girl brought her own perception of reality and meaning to the interviews with me.

A third supposition is axiological in nature, that is, it describes the role of values and value judgments in research. Each researcher, as an individual, has beliefs or opinions on a variety of subject matters, which impact the research being conducted. For example, they might influence the questions asked, the assumptions made about the phenomenon, or the interpretations applied to the data. “In a qualitative study, the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered” (Creswell, 1998, p. 76). Rather than trying to eliminate bias, the qualitative researcher reports the personal biases and values brought to the research; such transparency allows the *reader* to judge in what way these biases may have influenced the research.

Phenomenological Research

The theoretical perspective chosen for this research is that of phenomenology.

“Phenomenology asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes a some-‘thing’ what it is—and without which it could not be what it is (Van Manen, 1997, p.10). It is the study of our lived world— “the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively” (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9). Phenomenology focuses on experiential meaning *without* reflecting back on it.

For example, the moment I bite into a sweet, ripe strawberry is the moment I want to capture—not my thoughts, but my experience. Van Manen (1994) explains that an individual cannot reflect on the experience while it is taking place, for at the moment of reflection, the experience ceases or changes.

There are two important phenomenological traditions: empirical phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology. I first learned about the empirical approach, as described by Creswell (1998). This approach suggests that all (phenomenological) experiences have an underlying (internal) structure and that an emotion like grief has the same essence or structure, regardless of the object of the grief, describing this essence as “a single unifying meaning of the experience exists” (p. 55). The notion of absolutes or universal truths defining experience within a constructionist viewpoint of phenomenology puzzled me. I began to have some doubts as to whether I wanted to embark on this kind of research, as I could not resolve the dissonance between constructivist assumptions of qualitative research on the one hand, while declaring that I had found the singular essence of a phenomenon on the other.

Further reading ensued and with it came my introduction to hermeneutic phenomenology. I found a most compelling description of this type of phenomenology in the work of Van Manen (1997).

The aim [of phenomenology] is to construct an animating, evocative description (text) of human actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences as we meet them in the life world. . . But although this knowledge can be written and presented in textual form, ultimately it must animate and live in the human being who dialogues with the text (pps. 21-22).

Not only must I, as the researcher, discover what an experience means, but my written descriptions also demand a level of creativity that breathes life into the interpretation of the experience. They must be evocative. This contrasts with empirical phenomenology, which is “an attempt to return to the immediate meaning and structure of behavior as it actually presents itself” (van Kaam, 1966, pp. 28-29) wherein the structure of the phenomenon is described with an emphasis on the commonality of the experience. Hein and Austin (2001) explained that hermeneutic phenomenology, by contrast, “involves a process of contextualization and amplification rather than of structural essentialization” (p. 9), where the “researcher aims to create a rich, deep account of a particular phenomenon, an uncovering rather than an accurate analysis of participants’ descriptions” (p. 9).

With a beginning knowledge about the “what” of hermeneutic phenomenology, I began expanding my knowledge to include the “how”. My readings emphasized to me that I would not find a manual of procedure for conducting this type of research. Rather, van Manen (1990) described what he terms the “elemental methodical structure” of

hermeneutic phenomenology that involves the dynamic interplay of six research activities. These include: focusing on a phenomenon which seriously interests us, investigating the experience as it is lived not conceptualized, reflecting on essential themes of the phenomenon, describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and re-writing, maintaining a strong and oriented connection to the phenomenon, and balancing the research context between the parts and the whole. These research activities occur intermittently or simultaneously rather than sequentially.

As I learned more about hermeneutic phenomenology, I could see that this tradition of inquiry fit well with my philosophic assumptions, intellectual interests and my often insatiable curiosity to explore and understand the experiences of others.

The Research Question

Throughout my adolescence, I used popular music to normalize and validate the experience of romantic rejection. Popular music provided me with an outlet through which I could express my sorrow. Songs became an emotional salve that I used to soothe my wounded heart; they provided me with comfort during periods of sadness because I knew that at least one other person (the writer of the song) felt as sad and hurt as I did. As I reflected on this particular time in my life and the role of popular music, I wondered if I could use this as the starting point for a phenomenological study. This snapshot from my past generated a curiosity about the experiences of adolescent girls today. I began to wonder what role popular music played in the lives of others—my daughters, my young clients. What did they experience when they listened to music? What music might be associated with their romantic relationships? Would they have experiences similar to or different from mine? What would those experiences be? What would be common across

those experiences? How would each of them understand the experience of music listening? How would it relate to their romantic experiences?

As I explored my research question, it became clear to me that a phenomenological study would represent my interests best. There were two phenomena in which I was interested: adolescent girls' experience of romantic relationships and adolescent girls' experience of music listening. How could I combine these two interests into *one* phenomenological study? More reflection on my own adolescent experiences clarified the topic of interest. I thought about my own experience of listening to music and linking it to my romantic relationships. These experiences aroused a curiosity about this phenomenon in adolescent girls. From this, I derived the question: What is the lived experience and meaning of music listening in the context of adolescent girls' romantic experiences, both real and fantasized?

While pondering the "final" version of my research question, I continued to reflect on my own adolescence. I remembered times when I had strong feelings for a boy who had never said more than "hi" to me. Adolescent researchers have described adolescent experiences similar to mine, and commented: "It is essential to recognize that not all of an adolescent's romantic experiences stem from romantic relationships. Critical components of adolescent romance exist outside of a concrete relationship with a specific romantic partner" (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999, p. 2). For this reason, it was prudent to broaden the scope of my research to include *all* romantic experiences, not just those occurring in a romantic relationship. I wanted to understand the phenomenon of music listening in the context of unfulfilled romantic relationships, as well as actual romantic relationships. I wanted to hear the stories about the adolescent girl who has a

crush on the boy in her English class or, her thoughts about meeting someone she would like to share her life with, and how she used music to make meaning of these events.

Generating Phenomenological Data

Three major sources of data for qualitative research are interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 2002). Merriam (2002) recommended that researchers choose a primary method of data collection and then add support for the data by choosing a secondary method. Interviews were the primary source of data in this study, as is usually the case in phenomenological research.

What these various phenomenological and phenomenographic approaches share in common is a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning. This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interviews with people who have *directly* experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have “lived experience” as opposed to secondhand experience (Patton, 2002, p. 104).

In phenomenological research the emphasis is always on the meaning of lived experience. The point of phenomenological research is to “borrow” other people’s experiences in order to better be able to come to an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience, in the context of the whole of human experience (van Manen, 1997).

Patton (2002) argued that multiple sources of data enhance the credibility of the research findings; and Creswell (1998) explained that in phenomenological research, self-reflection on the phenomenon, and descriptions obtained from artistic works such as literature, poetry, movies and art can augment participant interview data.

Hermeneutic phenomenological research introduces a unique perspective to the gathering of data in that “the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research (van Manen, 1997, p. 53)”. Moreover, Van Manen (1997) proposed that if one wants to study the lived experience of a phenomenon, one must assume a robust orientation to the question of what the phenomenon means, for the meaning of a phenomenon is found in the experience of the phenomenon. The researcher’s goal is to carry out a thorough exploration of the world we live in for “lived-experience material” (p. 53). Then, through a thoughtful examination of these data the researcher gains insight into the fundamental nature of the phenomenon. Van Manen (1997) suggested that a logical starting point for gathering “lifeworld material” (p. 53) is the researcher’s personal experience of the phenomenon under study, particularly because these experiences are immediately accessible to the researcher. Furthermore, “in drawing up personal descriptions of lived experiences, the phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others (van Manen, 1997, p.54)”.

Before participant selection for this study, I spent time reflecting on my own experiences as an adolescent girl and my recollections of how I related my music to my romantic experiences. Periodically throughout the duration of the study—often after an interview with one of the participants—my mind would once again search through my adolescent years and compare or contrast my experience to that of my participants.

Van Manen suggested another source of data in phenomenological research is discovering the etymological sources of the words used to describe the phenomenon. For this study, I examined the origin of the words “music”, “listen”, and “romance” in order to uncover some of the earliest meanings of these words and allow the words to echo long-forgotten meanings that more fully clarify present day experience.

Another source of “lifeworld material” came from the lyrics of popular songs. Many of these songs spoke of a connection between music and romance and, as such, brought deeper understanding to the experience of adolescent girls as they used their music to interpret their romantic experiences.

Interviews

Seidman’s (1998) guidelines for phenomenological research interviews informed my approach to conducting the interviews, in particular, his suggestion to use a series of three separate 90-minute interviews with each participant.

The first interview establishes the context of the participants’ experience. The second allows participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. And the third encourages the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience holds for them (p. 11).

My intention was to follow these guidelines and use multiple interviews. For the first interview, I asked the interviewee to bring along some of her favorite music, particularly any which is associated with romance. At the beginning of the each initial interview, I introduced myself and gave each participant a brief overview of my research. I then invited each participant to share anything about herself that she wanted me to know and subsequently spent time establishing a connection with each participant, in order to

make her feel comfortable and safe with the interview process. Once I sensed the participant was ready to proceed, I asked her to select a song that she wanted us to listen to. After listening to the song, I asked a variety of questions: when she first heard the song; what it was about that song that made it special; the circumstances or times when she listens to it; and what meanings the song has for her. With each subsequent song, I asked her to describe her experiences of listening to that song. At the end of the interview, each participant was invited to use a small tape recorder for a week and record thoughts she had over the course of the week about music and how it related to her romantic experiences. Several of the girls decided to do this.

At the second interview, I first asked for the participant's reflections on the previous interview; I then asked if the participant had discovered further insights into music listening and how she related it to romance. I found that these two questions were often sufficient to gain many new insights from each participant. Each of them reported that after the first interview, they had become much more conscious of what music they were listening to and spent time reflecting on the meanings the music had for them, particularly in terms of romantic experience. If there was any time left, the participants shared more music with me. All of the participants brought more music to the second interview and each had further insights into the importance of the songs she played for me.

The data I gathered from the first two interviews made a third interview unnecessary, other than to have each girl sign a consent giving permission to quote from the interviews.

Interviews were also informed by Fontana and Frey's (2000) discussion about the essential elements of unstructured interviewing. Adapting these to my research topic involved understanding the culture of the participants, deciding how to present myself to the participants in order to gain trust, and establish rapport. As in my family therapy work with adolescents, I found adopting a "one down" attitude was helpful. A "one-down attitude" means that the therapist acknowledges a youth client's expertise on adolescent issues and asks her to share her insights. Imperative to success with this method is sincerity and a genuine belief that indeed the youth *are* the experts.

All interviews were taped-recorded and transcribed. The organization and labeling of the audiotapes was handled in a way that preserved participants' anonymity. I coded the transcribed protocols, masked participants' names in the data, and stored both tapes and transcriptions in a locked facility. I developed back-up files for all computer data and restricted access to my research computer files and folders.

Participant Selection. Criteria used to select participants for this study included gender, age, and sexual orientation. While both adolescent boys and girls demonstrate a shift in the use of media from television viewing to music listening (Larson, 1995), there are gender-based preferences in the types of music to which they listen (Larson & Thompson, 1995). Gender differences also exist in the area of mood management. While adolescent boys listen to music to "pump themselves up", adolescent girls more frequently choose to use music when they are "down" or lonely (Roberts & Christenson, 2001). Because of these differences, I selected only adolescent girls to participate in this study

Age was also a criterion used in participant selection. During adolescence, changes in cognition occur. Adolescents begin to develop the ability to think in hypothetical terms, and systematic, abstract thinking becomes more advanced (Steinberg, 1999). Cognitive development also enables the adolescent to engage in monitoring his or her own cognitive activity during the process of thinking, and the ability to think in multiple dimensions (Steinberg, 1999). The adolescent becomes more competent with these skills as adolescence progresses and employs them on a more consistent basis as they mature. The essential objective of each interview is to elicit from the participants examples of music listening and how it relates to romantic experience. While these more advanced cognitive skills may not be necessary for the interviews, adolescents who are more cognitively mature will have a greater understanding of the purpose of the research. As well, older adolescents are better able to read and understand the subsequent data analysis and provide feedback to the researcher on the interpretations arising from this analysis of their interviews. Therefore, participants who are 17 or 18 years of age, either entering or graduating from Grade 12, were selected for this study.

The third criterion was sexual orientation. Because adolescent romance is a relatively new area of study, research into heterosexual romantic relationships is still far from complete. This study sought to continue research into heterosexual romantic experience.

Observation and Documents

Observation of the participants during the interview provided me with another source of data for this study, as each participant engaged in conversation I took note of her affect and body language, primarily as a way to confirm what she was saying. If

there seemed to be incongruence between what was said and a participant's behaviour, I would use this as a cue to delve further into the topic of discussion for added clarity.

In order to find the lyrics of popular music, I accessed internet websites that contain archives of the names, albums, and lyrics of popular music artists. I searched the word "music" on these websites in order to generate a list of song lyrics articulating the artists' thoughts on what music means to them.

Analyzing Phenomenological Data

What is hermeneutic phenomenology? There is a difference between comprehending the project of phenomenology intellectually and understanding it "from the inside" (van Manen, 1997, p. 8). My first attempts to grasp the meaning of phenomenological inquiry resulted in only brief glimpses of phenomenology "from the inside"; after weeks of immersing myself in readings of how to conduct phenomenological research I finally began to feel like an "insider".

In discussing what is involved in hermeneutic phenomenological data analysis, van Manen (2002) differentiated between the methodology and method(s) of phenomenological inquiry. He explained that methodology refers to "the philosophical methods or general attitude" of the researcher (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/9.html>) and also encompasses the underlying assumptions and beliefs characteristic of hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 1997). In other words, the methodology is the "theory behind the method" (van Manen, 1997, p. 28), including methodology of reflective and thoughtful data analysis. The term 'method' refers to the "procedural methods or activities that the

researcher may employ in particular investigations” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/24.html>).

Philosophical Methods of “Reductio” and “Vocatio”

The two philosophical methods that van Manen (2002) described are “reductio” and “vocatio”. In order to maintain rigor in my work, I adopted a stance that incorporated both of these attitudes.

Reductio. The first of these terms, reductio, is a kind of “reflective attentiveness” (van Manen, 2002) that must be practiced to gain phenomenological understanding. It is not a procedure applied to the phenomenon being studied, but rather, an intentional thoughtfulness that focuses on the uniqueness and significance of the phenomenon under study. Noted van Manen (2002), “The aim of the reductio (the reduction or epochè) is to re-achieve direct contact with the world by suspending prejudgments, bracketing assumptions, deconstructing claims, and restoring openness” (<http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/10.html>). He described six types of reduction: heuristic, hermeneutic, phenomenological, eidetic, methodological, and ontological.

Heuristic reduction, the most rudimentary level, involves a profound sense of wonder about the phenomenon in which I am interested: “an unwilling willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/11.html>). At this level, I bracketed my attitude of taking everyday experiences for granted. I recalled seeing my children shriek with excitement as they saw, for the first time, a frog or a ladybug—and it is this “wide-eyed wonder” that I brought to the research.

The focus of hermeneutic reduction is openness (van Manen, 2002), and it is here that the concept of bracketing is introduced. Even before the phenomenon is studied, the phenomenological researcher possesses scientific and general knowledge about the phenomenon. Van Manen (1997) proposed that these “pre-understandings”, beliefs, and personal theories about the phenomenon can influence the researcher to prematurely interpret the phenomenon. Bracketing describes the process of immersing one’s self in the study of a phenomenon while at the same time cognitively positioning one’s knowledge about the phenomenon *outside* of the inquiry (van Manen, 1997). In her discussion of phenomenological research, Merriam (2002) suggested:

Prior to interviewing others, phenomenological researchers usually explore their own experiences, in part to examine dimensions of the experiences and in part to become aware of their own prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. These prejudices are then *bracketed*, or set aside, so as not to influence the process. (pp. 93-94).

Merriam’s understanding of bracketing reflects the empirical or transcendental tradition of phenomenology. While hermeneutic phenomenology also asks the researcher to engage in the practice of critical self-awareness, Lavery (2003) suggested the objective is different.

In contrast, a hermeneutical approach asks the researcher to engage in a process of self-reflection to quite a different end than that of [empirical] phenomenology. Specifically, the biases and assumptions of the researcher are not bracketed or set aside, but rather embedded and essential to interpretive process. The researcher is called, on an ongoing basis, to give considerable thought to their own experience

and to explicitly claim the ways in which their positions or experience relates to the issues being researched (p. 17).

In seeking clarity on this idea of bracketing, I returned to the work of van Manen (1997) whose work embodies the hermeneutic phenomenological tradition described by Lavery (2003). Van Manen (1997) clarified the concept:

On the one hand this [bracketing] means that one needs to practice a critical self-awareness with respect to the assumptions that prevent one from being as open as possible to the sense and significance of the phenomenon. We need to forget as it were our vested interests and preunderstandings. . . On the other hand it means that one needs to realize that forgetting all of one's preunderstandings is not really possible and therefore these various assumptions and interests may need to be explicated so as to exorcise them in an attempt to let speak that what wishes to speak" (p. 12).

In seeking to be open, I engaged in self-reflection to become aware of my biases and assumptions. However, in my genuine desire to bring openness and transparency to my research, I not only identified these areas, but sought to explicate them textually and included them in my final document.

Another level of reduction was "phenomenological reduction" (van Manen, 1997), or concreteness. In other words, I sought to avoid abstraction, set aside all theory and belief about what is real, and focused on "lived meaning". Van Manen suggested (1997) even a dream or hallucination can feel just as real as an actual event. As with hermeneutic reduction, I endeavoured to bracket the theoretical meaning by *examining* (rather than ignoring) the theories in search of phenomenological insights and hidden

understandings; I also used reflective thinking to focus on how theories hide or minimize experiential reality. As I continued to analyze the phenomenological data, the question I repeatedly asked myself was: how is this phenomenon actually experienced?

The “research process involves reflective inquiry into ‘concealed’ meaning while reconciling universality and particularity by holding them in tension” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/14.html>). This is the “eidetic” level of reduction in which “one needs to see past or through the particularity of lived experience toward the iconic universal, essence or **eidōs** that lies on the other side of the concreteness of lived meaning” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/14.html>). To help focus on this level of reduction, I pondered what it was about the phenomenon that made it different from other experiences. For example, I reflected on how listening to romantic music was different for adolescent girls than listening to music with a non-romantic theme.

Methodological reduction refers to the how the researcher approaches the study (van Manen, 2002). The researcher is encouraged to set aside “established” methods of investigation and employ an approach that “fits” the phenomenon under study. The pursuit of creative, inventive style is necessary to integrate reflective and pre-reflective meanings into a “recognizable” text or, as van Manen (2002) described it: a text described in “feelingly knowable” textual form. Finding an approach to data analysis that fit with the lived experience of adolescent girls as they listen to music and relating it to romance represented the most daunting, yet fascinating, challenge in the present research. This development of a textual form complementary to the phenomenon I studied is described more fully at the end of the section on phenomenological data analysis.

Ontological reduction involves exploring the implications for human action or social policy suggested by the phenomenological study (van Manen, 2002) therefore I have included implications for practice, detailed in the last chapter.

Vocatio. The vocative dimension is the second component of phenomenological methodology (van Manen, 2002). The intent of “vocatio” is “to produce textual portrayals that resonate the kinds of meanings that we seem to recognize in pre-reflective experience” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/9.html>); and language is the tool used to convey the vocative dimension in phenomenological research. The word “vocative” refers to the grammatical form of a word indicating that the speaker is directly addressing someone or something (Encarta, 2002). It derives from the Latin “vocare”, meaning call. The aim of “vocatio” is to create a phenomenological text that calls or summons us in such a way that we feel or sense what the text is “saying” to us (van Manen, 2002).

A number of vocative methods can cement meaning into the phenomenological text. The tone (“vocative turn”) of the text shows insight into the “lived sense” of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2002). It can intimate the mood of the text: contemplative, sober, soothing. The “revocative turn” proposes that, by the use of anecdote and imagery, experience (through language) is brought vividly into the present (van Manen, 2002). The “evocative turn” describes the act of drawing forth a memory, image, or feeling from the past (van Manen, 2002). By using words carefully and intentionally it is possible to bring to mind or recreate, in the imagination, a past memory. The “invocative turn” uses the power of language to intensify the meaning in the text. “What happens is that the ‘feeling understanding’ communicated through the intensification of language

has an augmenting, enlarging effect. It intensifies our sense of meaningfulness” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/21.html>). Finally, the “convocative turn” means that a qualitative text can give a sudden fundamental insight to the reader that cannot be reduced to a conceptual phrase (van Manen, 2002). In qualitative analysis, this is also referred to as an epiphany, or a moment of profound meaningfulness.

Throughout the writing and re-writing of the phenomenological data analysis, it was my goal to bring these vocative features of phenomenology into the spotlight, as a way of honouring each of the participants’ life-world experiences. It must be left to the participants and other readers to affirm whether or not I achieved my goal.

Reflective Inquiry Activities

In addition to assuming the general attitude of “reductio” and “vocatio”, I relied on other methods, which van Manen (2002) has described as empirical and reflective activities: “Empirical inquiry activities aim to explore the range and varieties of prereflective experiential material that is appropriate for the phenomenon under study. Reflective inquiry activities aim to interpret the aspects of meaning or meaningfulness that are associated with this phenomenon” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/24.html>).

Empirical methods were used to generate data, the experiential material speaking to the phenomenon of music listening and romantic experience for adolescent girls. In this study, empirical methods included: personal experiences with the phenomenon, interviews of adolescent girls’ about their experiences with the phenomenon, and descriptions of the phenomenon in the lyrics of popular songs.

Reflective activities speak to intention to understand the meaning of something (van Manen, 2002), and herein lies the difficulty of reflecting on everyday life experiences. We continually perceive meaning in human experiences each day of our lives, but “the determination and explication of meaning . . . is the more difficult task of phenomenological reflection” (<http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/32.html>) because, according to van Manen (2002), there is a difference between our pre-reflective lived understanding of meaning and the self-reflective comprehension of the essential aspects of that lived meaning.

A person cannot reflect on lived experience while living through the experience. For example, if one tries to reflect on one’s anger while being angry, one finds that the anger has already changed or dissipated. Thus, phenomenological reflection is not *introspective* but *retrospective*. Reflection on lived experiences is always recollective; it is reflection on experience that is already passed or lived through (van Manen, 1997, p. 10).

If I am involved in phenomenological reflection about sadness, I am thinking about my thought processes during the experience of sadness. In my reflection, I recall particular instances of sadness and contemplate what or how I was thinking at that time. However, it is much more difficult for me to *explain* sadness than to *feel* sad.

Using various methods of reflection can assist me in this undertaking. In this study, reflective activities included use of the lifeworld existentials, thematic analysis, hermeneutic analysis, linguistic reflection, and phenomenological writing and re-writing.

Lifeworld Existentials. There are four lifeworld themes, or existentials that are helpful in understanding the lived meaning of an experience (van Manen, 1997): lived

space—spatiality, lived body—corporeality, lived time—temporality, and lived human relation—relationality or communality. Lived space refers to how one feels space; whether it be in a crowded elevator or a baseball stadium, one has a sense of the personal space around them. Corporeality, or lived body, is the human experience of being physically present in the world. For example, in meeting another person, one comes into contact with them in a corporeal way; one begins to know them by the colour of their eyes, the shape of their face, the curve of their smile, and one reveals oneself to others in a similar way—perhaps through a nervous laugh, or through shy, downcast eyes. Lived time describes the sense we have of time in various situations: sometimes it seems that time speeds up as a deadline approaches, or that time slows time, as when a child is counting down the days until Christmas. Lastly, relationality describes how we experience another human being and relate to them when we are together (in interpersonal space) with them.

A phenomenon may be understood more fully by asking ourselves how the phenomenon presents itself in these basic human experiences. For example, as I was interviewing one participant, I asked her about her sense of lived time as she listened to music, and she responded that it was non-existent—she did not have any sense of the passing of time, as she was completely immersed in her music and romantic thoughts.

In phenomenological literature, these four categories important aspects of the lifeworld. The researcher can always ask questions about any experiences that correspond to these four lifeworld existentials. Therefore, spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality are productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing (van Manen, 1997, p. 102).

Interview questions were posed around these four fundamental themes. Questions such as: what physical sensations were you aware of during this experience? What did you notice about yourself in relation to others (family, friends) during this experience? How did you experience the sensation of time? How did your surroundings affect this experience?

Thematic Analysis. Another method of reflection was thematic analysis, which required a thoughtful reading and reflection on the interview transcripts with the intent of uncovering important aspects of the experience. Morse (2002) described the thematic analysis of phenomenology:

Researchers gain insights into the phenomena they study by . . . obtaining experiential descriptions from participants. . . Researchers select words or phrases [from the interview transcripts] that describe particular aspects of the lived experience they are studying and reflect on these. They may group and label similar expressions and eliminate expressions they believe are irrelevant. They then cluster and label groups of expressions that bear close relationships to one another and check this identified core of common elements against a selection of original descriptors obtained in conversations with participants (p. 147).

Hermeneutic Reflection. I also engaged in collaborative and hermeneutic reflection with the study participants. After the interviews were completed, participants were invited to read the transcripts of their previous interviews and share their insights on the subject matter of the conversation. Later, participants were provided with the results chapter of the thesis. Then, follow-up “hermeneutic conversations” took place, during which participants affirmed the preliminary themes and discussed whether the text

actually described their lived experience (van Manen, 2002). One participant confirmed that my interpretation of the interviews with her were “almost perfect”!

Linguistic Reflection. Another type of reflection involved linguistic reflection, that is, paying attention to the etymological and conceptual significance of words and phrases. For example, exegetical reflection “involves the critical, sensitive, and creative reading of related texts” (van Manen, 2002, <http://www.phenomenologyonline.com/inquiry/45.html>), including literature and poetry. I also explored the etymological meanings of words such as “music”, “romance”, and “listen”, all of which are key words in this phenomenological study.

Phenomenological Writing and Re-Writing. Phenomenological analysis is conducted with an attitude of “reductio” and “vocatio”; it is grounded in the activity of thoughtful reflection; and it is realized through the written word. Morse (2002) succinctly described this analysis as “a process of reading, reflection, and writing and rewriting that enables the researcher to transform the lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (p. 147), and concluded that “for the phenomenological researcher, the value of the process of writing and rewriting cannot be overestimated” (p. 147).

Van Manen (1997) further clarified the activity of phenomenological writing by explaining that writing is not the final stage in the process of conducting a phenomenological study, but rather, “writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself” (p. 125). Writing fixes my thoughts on paper and is a continuation of my thinking; and now the text “confronts” me (van Manen, 1997, p. 125).

To this end, I reflected on the words I used and asked myself whether the text reflected my thinking, whether the lived experience I described was understandable. As I began writing my phenomenological analysis, I understood Morse's conclusions about the value of writing and re-writing; the process of written reflection assisted me to a clearer understanding of the phenomenon

One particular aspect of phenomenological writing is the use of anecdotes or stories. Phenomenological description aims for concrete meaning instead of abstract theory. Anecdotes are life stories of the "real world" that capture elements of the phenomenon as lived. During interviews with participants, I encouraged them to describe particular instances of the phenomenon in order to collect anecdotes, which then became anchors around which to write and explore for meaning. Anecdotes are valuable in phenomenological inquiry because they can demonstrate wisdom, insight, or show an example of a certain truth otherwise difficult to put into clear language (van Manen, 1997).

Finally, phenomenological writing challenges us to extend the text beyond its thematic element and reach out to capture the expressive dimension. Thematic analysis is concerned with *what* the text says, whereas the expressive component of the text tries to capture *how* the text speaks (van Manen, 1997). Both elements "are methodologically of critical importance to hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry" (p. 346). While "vocatio" is the general attitude essential to phenomenological writing, there are writing techniques or methods that help create an evocative text. Van Manen (1997) goes on to explain that imagery in language can bring about in the reader what he calls a "phenomenological reverberation", and "the formative power of phenomenological texts lies precisely in this

resonance that the word can effect” (p. 345). Poetic devices such as alliteration, repetition, and metaphors were invaluable tools that helped create a phenomenological text replete with word pictures that evoke memories of the phenomenon in the reader.

In support of the poetic aspect of phenomenological text, Kockelmans (1987) explained:

Often an appeal to poetry and literature is almost unavoidable in that poetic language with its use of symbolism is able to refer beyond the realm of what can be said ‘clearly and distinctly’. In other words. . . in human reality there are certain phenomena which reach so deeply into a man’s life and the world in which he lives that poetic language is the only adequate way through which to point to and to make present a meaning which we are unable to express clearly in any other way (p. ix).

Once the interviews are complete, read and re-read with thoughtful reflection, once the researcher has culled through her own experiences of the phenomenon, and once examples of the phenomenon have been found in various cultural art or literature, there comes a time when the researcher must begin the painstaking work of weaving the language of literature, poetry, anecdote and images into the phenomenological text to make the meaning of the phenomenon clearer, so clear in fact, that memories of the phenomenon stir within the reader (van Manen, 1997).

The text must situate the phenomenon in the everyday world of common experience; it must also create a vibrant description of the phenomenon that imbues a sense of aliveness, or, as van Manen (1997) suggested, the textual portrayal “creates the experience of nearness or presence (p. 353)”. Furthermore, as the text seeks to convey

the meaning of the phenomenon, the researcher/author strives “to give key words their full value, so that layers of phenomenological meaning become strongly embedded in the text (van Manen, 1997, p.355)”. The literary techniques of alliteration and repetition enhance the intensification, or thickening, of the textual portrayal. In the tone of the text, the researcher/author strives to create meaning that the reader can “hear”; for example, as I talk about the end of an adolescent romance, I may select lyrics from a sad piece of music evoke auditory memories of sad songs.

Lastly, the overriding objective of a phenomenological text is to create, through its description, an unexpected, abrupt insight into the “life meaning” (van Manen, 1997, p. 364) of the phenomenon. At this moment the textual description creates a burst of understanding in the reader, instantly revealing the deeper meaning of the phenomenon; a moment like this can be so intense that the reader is deeply touched in a way that is difficult to describe.

Representing Phenomenological Data

Finding a way to re-present the data seemed to parallel the Arthurian legend of Sir Galahad’s search for the Holy Grail—that, indeed, was my perception of this particular challenge! Each transcript had been read thoroughly and reflected upon; themes had been generated as I engaged in further study of the transcripts and further reflection; and a thematic richness and repetition became apparent. It was time to write!

The first attempt at textural portrayal of the data involved a discussion of the various themes replete with quotations from the participant interviews. However, the description lacked the excitement, enthusiasm, and passion that I had heard in the interviews; I felt nothing as I read my carefully-worded descriptions.

The second attempt at re-presenting the data involved an attempt to describe the lived experience of each participant with a focus on individual experiences with music listening and romance. Almost immediately it became apparent that this approach would lead to repetition of themes, as participants often described similar experiences. Once again, the text clung to the page and refused to evoke any emotions or past experience in me.

Another problem that arose was a difficulty in protecting the anonymity of the participants. Direct responses from the participants revealed patterns of language unique to each girl; and whether each girl was assigned a fictitious name or quoted anonymously, I became increasingly concerned that I would not be able to protect their privacy.

At this point, I made a decision to revisit recent literature on qualitative research, and data re-presentation in particular. Of particular interest was an article in the *Harvard Educational Review* by Sconiers and Rosiek (2000) in which the authors created a case study told from the perspective of a fictional teacher, whose story was based on Sconier's actual teaching experience as well as those of ten other teachers with whom the authors collaborated as part of their work in the Fresno Science Education Equity Teacher Research Project. This article represents one of an increasing number of studies written in the last decade at a time of change in qualitative research where the "boundaries between the social sciences and the humanities had become blurred" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 18). At a time when the majority of educational researchers steered clear of employing fiction in their data analysis, Sconiers and Rosiek achieved the "coup de grace" of publishing in a prestigious journal of educational research.

In the second edition of their text *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) continued to push the boundaries separating the texts of human science research from those found in imaginative literature. Janesick (2000) authored a chapter in Denzin and Lincoln's text in which she likens qualitative research design to the choreography of dance:

. . . the essence of good qualitative research design turns on the use of a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study. A good choreographer captures the complexity of the dance/story by using rigorous and tested procedures and in fact refuses to be limited to one approach to choreography (p. 379).

Creating a fictional character, Sophie, a composite of the five adolescent girls who participated in the research, addressed both my concern to maintain confidentiality and to create a more evocative text. Sophie could "speak" for each participant and she could do so in the language of teenagers. Indeed, this approach to data representation also provided an opportunity to discover whether my interpretive sense remained true to each participant's lived experience.

Sophie's journal entries represent the participants' conversations; and the actual quotes of the participants are shown in italicized font. The goal of this imaginary diary was to pull readers into the lived-worlds of five unique adolescent girls, to remind readers of their own experiences of listening to music as a teenager, and to enhance readers' understanding of the complex world of the adolescent.

Establishing Phenomenological Trustworthiness

Just as naturalistic research methods continue to undergo development, so, too, do the criteria for evaluating the quality of these studies. To impose the measurements designed to evaluate quantitative research on naturalistic inquiry makes no more sense than evaluating a textbook with the same standards used in judging a work of literature. Different paradigms require different methods to determine the quality of each.

Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed a set of criteria for evaluating naturalistic or constructivist inquiry different from that used in quantitative research. They use the term “trustworthiness” to describe the various criteria, as opposed to the scientific label of “rigour”. The authors recommended that credibility correlates with internal validity, transferability with external validity, dependability with reliability.

These terms are introduced not simply to add to naturalism’s mystique or to provide it with its fair share of arcane concepts, but to make clear the inappropriateness of the conventional terms when applied to naturalism and to provide alternatives that stand in a more logical and derivative relation to the naturalistic axioms (pps. 301-2).

Credibility

In demonstrating the credibility of a qualitative study, the question we must answer is whether we are actually observing what we *think* we are observing (Merriam, 2002). In applying this concept to hermeneutic phenomenology, Van Manen (1997) proposed that “a good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience—is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience” (p. 27). This concept is sometimes referred to as the “phenomenological nod” (van Manen, 1997), meaning that when we read a credible phenomenological

description, we recognize it as an experience we have had; in other words it is a description to which we can “nod”.

One indication of this research’s credibility was the participants’ response to data analysis and interpretations of their recollected experiences. Feedback from the participants affirmed the findings of the study [examples forthcoming]. A conference paper (Siemens & Nicol, 2005) presenting initial findings was also well received.

Dependability

In naturalistic inquiry, dependability is the parallel concept to reliability; it determines whether the results are consistent with the data collected (Merriam, 2002). “That is, rather than insisting that others get the same results as the original researcher, reliability lies in others concurring that given the data collected, the results make sense—they are consistent and dependable (p. 27).

To ensure dependability, advice was sought from my research committee about whether the data analysis makes sense.

Transferability

Another criterion for evaluating qualitative research is that of transferability, which parallels the concept of external validity or generalizability. Transferability describes “what can be learned from an in-depth analysis of a particular situation or incident and how that knowledge can be transferred to another situation” (Merriam, 2002, p. 28). This criterion most often refers to reader, or user, transferability. The readers themselves decide which of the study’s findings apply to their own situations.

To ensure transferability, enough data and description must be provided so that readers can discern the similarities and differences to their own situation. Referred to as

“thick description” (Denzin & Lincoln, ed. 2000; Patton, 2002), this kind of concrete, evocative writing is one of the goals of data analysis.

Recently there has been some debate questioning the use of alternate terminology, suggesting that it marginalizes qualitative research by implying the implementation of less rigorous strategies (Morse *et al*, 2002). Regardless of one’s position on this issue, another important point was raised in this article. The authors suggested that “ensuring rigor” needs to take place throughout the course of the research activity, not *post priori*. Morse (2002) concluded that qualitative researchers should implement “verification strategies integral and self-correcting during the conduct of inquiry itself”, as this “ensures the attainment of rigor using strategies inherent within each qualitative design” (p. 1).

The methodological structure employed by van Manen (1997) answers Morse’s (2002) call to rigor. Self-correction is built into the study as the researcher commits to studying the phenomenon as an “abiding concern”, engages in ongoing reflection on the themes, disciplines herself to writing and re-writing in order to achieve evocative description, maintains a strong oriented stance to the phenomenon being studied, and, finally, situates the research contextually so the parts are balanced within the whole (van Manen, 1997).

Transparency

The concept of transparency is another criterion appropriately used in judging a phenomenological study’s trustworthiness. When a researcher’s assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientations are acknowledged, a researcher is being transparent about what he or she brings to the research and how it may or may not shape

the findings. Researcher credibility is enhanced by transparency. Some researchers (e.g., empirical phenomenologists) utilize the concept of “bracketing”, which Patton (2002) likens to a “mental cleansing process” (p. 553), wherein the researcher determines to set aside preconceived experiences in order to attend to the experiences described by the participants (Creswell, 1998) and to explore the research data fully. As mentioned earlier, hermeneutic phenomenologists employ a different approach, Hein and Austin (2001) explained: “In the hermeneutic stance, it is acknowledged that researchers cannot bracket and place aside implicit assumptions and perspectives that are embedded in their own biology and history; rather, they need to acknowledge them and make them explicit” (p. 9).

Ethical Considerations

In preparation for this study, ethical issues attendant to research endeavours involving human participants were addressed; moreover, the author gave consideration to the specific difficulties of qualitative inquiry by maintaining an awareness of and sensitivity to these potential problems.

In addition to undertaking a study that has addressed the ethical issues of human participant research, and addressing the specific issues necessary, it is also important for the qualitative researcher to include a broader focus on ethics. Phenomenological research mandates compassion and respect for all participants in the study.

Indeed, if there is one word that most aptly characterizes phenomenology itself, then this word is “thoughtfulness”. In the works of the great phenomenologists, thoughtfulness is described as a minding, a heeding, a caring attunement. . . of what it means to live a life (van Manen, 1997, p. 12)

For the researcher, living her ethics becomes a matter of ideology and attitude. As I engaged in the research, I endeavoured to remain sensitive to the participants and to any distress they may have experienced while talking about sad events.

Van Manen (1997) suggested awareness of the effects my research may have on the people with whom my research is concerned. They may experience divergent feelings from discomfort and self-doubt to increased self-awareness and thoughtfulness. The participants of a research study may also encounter long-term effects of in-depth interviewing.

I obtained approval for this study from the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board (certificate number: 04-185).

Chapter 4: RESULTS

Orienting to Music, Listening, and Romance

Writing is at the heart of the phenomenological process and represents the very act of making contact with the things of our world (van Manen, 2002). The connection with the lived every-day world experience intensifies as the writer engages in various reflective activities of phenomenological writing: seeking, entering, traversing, gazing, drawing, and touching (van Manen, 2002).

A phenomenologist is a seeker of lived meanings. The phenomenologist seeks to be a writer, and as writer she seeks to enter the space of the text to gain a view of or to touch the subject she is trying to describe (van Manen, 2002).

As I seek to enter this textual space, I consider the words “music,” “listen,” and “romance”. Words commonly lose some of their original meaning over the course of time (van Manen, 1997) so “being attentive to the etymological origins of words may sometimes put us in touch with the original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experiences from which they originally sprang” (van Manen, 1997, p. 590). Delving into the original meanings of these words can illuminate and enhance understanding about lived experience and meaning.

The earliest origins of the word “music” come from the Greek word “mousikos,” which means “pertaining to the Muses” (Klein, p. 483, 1971). In Greek mythology, the Muses were nine Greek goddesses, the children of Zeus, supreme god of the immortals, and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. The Muses inspired and presided over the various creative arts such as song, dance, music, and poetry, with each goddess

representing a specific art. Ancient Greeks believed that the Muses bestowed artistic talent, and prayers were offered to the appropriate Muse before a performance.

“Muse” refers to someone who inspires an artist, someone who is a source of inspiration (Encarta, 2003). “Muse” can also refer directly to the artist’s inspiration, and is personified as visiting the artist, imbuing her with creative ideas, and then leaving. Thus, the origin of “music” connotes an art inflamed or infused into the artist’s mind by divine agency (Onions, 1966). Thoughtful contemplation on the etymology of “music” may lead one to ask various questions. If an artist is inspired to write music, might the song also inspire those who listen to it? If the listener believes the music to be inspired, does the listener also expect the music to inspire? How does music inspire?

The word “listen” is a blend of the middle English word “*hlystan*”, literally meaning “a hearing”, and an old English word “*hlosnian*” which means “to listen in suspense” (Klein, 2003). Listening implies more than hearing, which is the physical ability to perceive sound (Barber ed., 1998).

On a family vacation in Prince Albert National Park, my husband and I took our three children boating on the Hanging Heart Lakes. I heard the sound of a loon calling her ducklings. “Did you hear the loon?” I asked my children. All three shook their heads “no”. “Shhhhhh. . . . listen,” I replied.

Listening involves a conscious effort to hear something or somebody, a focusing of attention on what is being heard (Encarta Dictionary, 2003). If we listen “in suspense” as described by the old English word “*hlosian*”, our state of mind is one of uncertainty or expectation.

In listening to music, we are waiting to hear something and wondering what the music will tell us – excited or anxious (why anxious?) about the message it conveys. As we listen to this artist who has been inspired to write/compose/sing her music, we may expect her to pass her inspiration on to us. And what is the lived experience and meaning of this focused listening? That is the focus of this research study.

The origins of the word “romance” are traced back to the time of the Roman empire, when it was so vast that it included present-day Britain, France, and Spain. In these far-away geographical areas, classical Latin evolved into local dialects of Latin, and was described in old French by the term “romans”. While serious literature continued to be written in Latin, the French began to write entertaining verse in the local vernacular, and the word “romans” came to mean “a tale in verse based chiefly on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural” (Merriam-Webster, 2004, p. 401). Chivalric, or courtly love

came to define relationships between knights and ladies in the feudal court. The ideals of courtly love stressed that a knight should devote himself completely to a married or betrothed woman at court. In his lady’s name, he waged war or jousted in tournaments, trying to win her favor. After a period of courtship, the two might consummate their love secretly. Courtly love’s influence among the feudal nobility was undeniable, despite the fact that its ideals ran counter to the Christian ideals of chivalry. Courtly love helped refine relationships between men and women at court. To please their ladies, knights labored to master the artsas [sic] intently as they did the skills of warfare. Writing poetry, singing love songs, and

playing musical instruments became indispensable to the feudal knight hoping to entertain his lady (Microsoft® Encarta® Reference Library, 2005).

Because so many of these “romans” tales included chivalric love, the meaning of “romance” gradually “came to mean simply ‘a love story’ (Merriam-Webster, 2004, p.401)”. By the nineteenth century, largely as a result of the writings of poets such as Byron, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth, “romantic” poetry involved imaginative stories that contained elements of the heroic, adventurous, mysterious, or idealized and appealed to the reader’s emotions (Merriam-Webster, 2004). With each of these events in history adding layers to the meaning of the word “romance”, the current definition includes “a love affair . . . a sentimental or idealized love . . . a prevailing sense of wonder or mystery surrounding the mutual attraction in a love affair (Barber, 1998, p. 1251)”.

Now we are about to enter the world of the contemporary adolescent girl, as she listens to music, experiences romance, and connects the two to create meaning for what she lives.

Sophie's Diary

*I've been alive forever
And I wrote the very first song.
I put the words and the melodies together.
I am music
and I write the songs.
Barry Mannilow*

Dear Diary,

It's me, Sophie. I know, I haven't written anything for a long time and I've really missed journaling. So here I am, back at it again!

Today when I was out with my girlfriends, I met Gerri, a woman who I kind of know from school 'cause she did some volunteer work there. She was telling me about going back to university and doing some kind of research with girls my age. She wants them to tell her about the music they listen to and what it means to them and then write about this in some sort of research paper. I dunno, but it sounded sort of interesting, and I said 'hey, you could talk to me about that!' and she, like, said 'yeah, I'll call you when I start my research and you can be one of the participants.' I think it's kinda cool, 'cause she said I was the expert and she wanted to know what kind of music I listened to and what I liked about it, and if it related to my experiences with love and romance. LOL!!

Adults just don't get it. *It's not all, like, Britney Spears and sex.* Maybe adults forget about being a teenager and the romance part. I'm gonna have to explain to her that music *plays a huge role* in my experiences of love. *Because . . . with all the media and stuff like Oprah—"your kids are having sex at increasingly younger ages", it just keeps going on and on . . . For me, it's not all about that . . . I think some people do judge teenagers that way . . . just because, you know, Brittany Spears says "I'm a slave for you", dances*

around in her thong over top of her jeans. I would want them [adults] to know that we pick our music carefully. We don't listen to anything and we don't believe everything . . . I think we make our own judgements on everything. At least I do. There are some songs that say a lot of what I believe, but there's so many songs that you're just like, "Pfffft, yeah, right!"—either because it's too far in one spectrum or the other.

I've been thinking about what kind of questions Gerri will ask; I'd bet that one of them will be, "What does music mean to you?" *I would say, first of all, it's very personal. Everyone is going to be different . . . I would say that to me, romantic music inspires thought a lot, whether it's, you know, fantasies about certain boys or . . . it's used as a comfort tool or it can be used as therapy, it's just . . . the list goes on for me . . . 'cause for every different kind of music or for every song or for every different artist, I get something different from it.*

It will be so weird to have an adult asking **me** what I think—that's **so** not like school! LOL! "Sophie, could you give me your opinion about how Shakespeare relates to your everyday life?" Pigs will fly before that happens! Come to think of it, I can't imagine my **parents** asking me about my music either! Too funny! All I hear from them is, "turn that noise **DOWN!!!!**" Well, I guess if someone's going to write about the music girls listen to, it only makes sense to actually talk to girls! LOL! In a way, it might be fun, who knows?

The "expert",
Sophie

Dear Diary,

Here I am, sitting at the computer looking through all the songs I've downloaded. Tomorrow I meet with Gerri. She asked if I would bring along a few of my favourite

songs for her to listen to; and then she wants me to talk about what makes them special to me. Weird! Do you think she'll understand? I dunno. It's hard to explain. So many of these songs are personal songs—like the one I'm listening to now. *I listen to it mostly, like, in my room or in my car when I'm by myself. It's a 'by myself' song . . . I don't like to really, I mean I listen to it with my—you know, my mom really likes this song, too. We'll sit down and listen to it. But when I'm by myself it's really more of a personal . . . deep intimate experience with myself rather than just a, you know, listening for pleasure kind of thing . . . I don't think I could explain this to my parents, just 'cause they're so out of your element and just don't listen to the same kind of music . . . they are like the adult authority figure . . . and you don't always, like, let them in on what you're thinking . . . and something like music is just a little too personal . . . just 'cause it's opening up so much to somebody. Listening to music almost becomes an out-of-body experience. Like, I don't have any sense of time . . . it's a very personal experience for me . . . it's what makes you vulnerable and . . . that's one of the things I love so much about music. I can listen. I can sing. I can cry. No one is watching me or wondering what I could **possibly** like about the songs I listen to. No one is looking into my soul. I am here alone, with just one intimate, understanding friend. It's just me and the music.*

*My home lies deep within you
And I've got my own place in your soul. . .
. . . I am music
and I write the songs.
Barry Mannilow*

There are other reasons why music is so personal. Like what happened when I was in Grade 9. I went through a really bad time that year, when *I was kind of in with a*

bad crowd, doing things I really shouldn't be doing . . . I tried to get out of this group . . . and so, pretty much all I had at that time was music. That was the only thing that kept me going. Like for awhile I pretty much had no friends. . . Music was the only thing that I had left for a long time. . . so music became very, very deep to me. Music wrapped itself around me, like a blanket around a baby. When the friends were gone, the blanket was still there. I held it around me tightly, never letting go of it and even when I felt so alone, I wasn't completely alone, because my blanket kept me warm and secure.

*Don't take away the music
It's the only thing I've got,
It's my piece of the rock.
Don't take away the music,
Everything else is gone.
Don't strip my world of its song.
911*

Music is my "bridge over troubled water",
Sophie

Dear Diary,

This afternoon I met with Gerri for my first interview with her. Man, does she ask a lot of questions! It was really weird though, because some of my answers—well I've never really thought about what connects me to my music—and yet I had answers for her questions. I had answers I didn't know I had! Gerri asked if I would write down my thoughts in a journal for her, to show her next week. So yeah, that's cool; I'm always journaling anyway, now there'll just be lots written about my music.

The first song that we listened to was one of my favourites by John Mayer. . .
John Mayer is really good with lyrics. [He] draws on your own experience . . . Like, you

don't listen to music. . . to experience something that you haven't [experienced]. You listen to it so that you know that somebody else has experienced the same thing. . . That's really comforting for a teenager. . . because the stuff that they are going through. . . who knows. . . if other people are feeling this way? . . . And so, when you hear a song that says, like, exactly how you're feeling, better than you could say it, then you know. . . the other person must have felt that way somehow and then it becomes a little bit more, like, normal. . . I think it's mostly about hearing that somebody else is feeling the same thing. . . [I] don't feel so alone. . . he says things that are exactly what I'm feeling. . . and so. . . you know he understands . . . when . . . no other people do. . . or when you can't make another person. . . understand it. He gets it! So many of his songs are about love, and I guess that's one reason why I like him so much. It's not that he's telling me what love should be like, it's just that I can relate to him because his songs talk about romantic experiences that are the same as mine—like exactly! That's kind of why I listen to the songs that I do. I listen to music to find somebody else that's like me in a relationship. I know that when I listen to his songs I'm not alone. . . John Mayer's feeling that way too!

Another song that we listened to was an India Arie song called “Ready for Love”. I won't ever forget the first time I heard it. *I kind of leaned forward, kind of like intently in, and it was almost like a realization, like **this is it! . . . This is what my experience with love would be.** . . .* There's a part in the song where she talks about the guy she loves, and when I heard the words “. . . a man who loves music, a man who loves art. . .” *it was. . . as if I wrote the song, like it [suited] me so perfectly in that way. . . Probably when I . . . get a boyfriend and start to fall in love it will be—I might refer back to that song.* The song—well—I think it connects so much with who I am and what I believe love to be!

It's amazing—someone else, who doesn't even know me, writes a song about her experience with love, and when I listen to her song, I can totally relate because I have had the same experiences with love. A stranger, singing words I could have written, about experiences I have had or want to have. Someone I have never met has the same thoughts about love that I have. I am not alone. The music builds a bridge from her to me. It links us on such an intimate level—these are thoughts and feelings that I haven't told anyone else; and there is someone else who shares them, and the music is what links me and the singer. . .

Just me and my music,

Sophie

Dear Diary

There's this guy at school who I really like. He is in my biology class and sits across the aisle from me. He is **so** hot! I didn't think he even knew my name, but yesterday as I was walking out of class, he said hi and walked with me down to the commons. We hung out at lunch and just talked. Then last night he called me and we talked on the phone for an hour! Today he found me at break and asked if he could see me at lunch, and guess what? He asked me to the dance Friday night!!! I could hardly believe it! I felt like I was in a dream all afternoon; all I could think about in class was him and I'd catch myself smiling. I don't even know what we did in class!

And now, here I am in my room on my computer listening to music. *Like right now* [I'm] *completely obsessed with—wrapped up in new songs*. I found this one by Jessica Simpson called "Irresistible", and when I listen to it . . . *it just, like, it gives me butterflies . . . it's like excitement*. . . 'cause what they're singing about is happening to me and the music, well, *it makes me very happy*. I'm in the clouds! This feeling is

incredible! It's happy, but there's almost an ache—it's as if my heart is going to burst because it's so happy and so full of love. I just can't stop listening to this song. . . .

Totally happy,

Sophie

Dear Diary

It was one of those crappy days, when I woke up feeling 'blah', but not knowing why. I hate those days. School dragged on and on—I thought it would never end! I could hardly wait to go home, back to my room . . . I put on one of my favourite CD's . . . but I didn't even listen to one song. . . I wasn't in the mood and listening just made me feel more yucky. I don't know what I want; I don't know how I feel . . . I'm so confused. So here I am, downloading some music that one of my girlfriends said I'd like. More later. . .

Here I am journaling again! It hasn't even been an hour since my last entry, but I gotta write this down. I found some music that my girlfriend was talking about and as soon as I downloaded it, I played the songs. The first song was okay, but the second song—AMAZING! It was as if the writer knew what kind of a day I'd been having! So many of my own thoughts and feelings were in the song! The song *got out what I couldn't say, you know*—feelings that I *didn't know how to put into words*. But the songwriter did, and said them better than I could have said them myself! *It just makes me, like, laugh thinking about it 'cause it's . . . the perfect. . . words for. . . everything.*

And so I'm sitting here feeling 'blah', and then I hear this song and I'm laughing and almost crying too, 'cause someone found the words to express **my** thoughts! *It's just the words are so true, so true to me*. How do I explain this to Gerri? Well . . . it's as if my feelings were imprisoned in my head—locked in because I didn't have the words to say

how I felt. And these feelings are making me uncomfortable because I can't figure out how to express them and so it's like **I'm** in prison because I can't set them free with words—I don't know the right words. The songwriter is the prison guard and the lyrics are the key—opening the cell door in my mind and putting my feelings into words! The words said a lot of things that I felt. Does that make any sense?

. . . singing my life with his words. . .
Norman Gimbel

I'm freed!
Sophie

Dear Diary

Right after school today, my boyfriend left for a hockey tournament in Edmonton. He'll be gone for the whole weekend. I'm feeling lonely—you know—Friday night and no boyfriend around, and all my girlfriends planning stuff with their boyfriends except for me and Megan. Her boyfriend is on the same hockey team as Sean is, so I guess we'll hang out together tonight.

I turned on the radio and heard this Jessica Simpson song for the first time . . . *I was like, "WOW!" Like gone. . . As soon as I heard it I just. . . saw his face and . . . heard him talking to me and—I don't know—I don't know how to describe it. . . it just hit me.* It was as if he were here: I remembered the smell of his cologne, the colour of his eyes, the way he smiles, and that sexy little wink he gives me when he sees me from across a room. There's something in that song . . . *it's just like that passion again. . . that desire, that burning feeling that [I] really want to be with [him] and, like so much, that even [his] memory can be enough.* That song brings him back here to me . . . *and so, in a*

way, *I don't want to stop listening to it . . . because I'm afraid I'll lose that link with him.*
I'll write later, I gotta find this song and download it. . . .

I found the Jessica Simpson song and now it's on my mp3 player. I've played it so many times that I have the words down cold! Geez, if I could only memorize lines from Hamlet this well! When I was looking through my mp3's, I found a couple of songs that remind me of Sean and our times together. I found one by John Mayer that I listened to when we just started going out. *I haven't heard that song for awhile* and I thought it *would feel good* to listen to it again 'cause *it does bring back that . . . excited feeling* of when we first got together. *If I listen to a song that reminds me of him, then I'll get to feel that way again.* I like that.

Sean and I, well, *we have a song . . . I guess in that sense it's kind of like having . . . a symbol—like the same way . . . countries have flags. And you know . . . it's something that keeps you together and is, like, almost . . . a secret between you, even though it's not a secret. . . It's just something that you share . . . that would . . . bring you closer together, kind of like a symbol for your relationship. . .* and I found that song too, and wow, listening to it reminds me of dancing with him while this song was playing. And this song so totally *reminds me of him* and makes me *feel that excited feeling* again. I can't hear that song without seeing him or feeling those feelings. . . .

*. . . You've got me singin' a love song,
And it keeps you on my mind.
Amy Grant*

Connected, and lovin' it,
Sophie

Dear Diary,

It's only been a day since Sean left, and the time is dragging on so slowly. Late last night I was lying on the bed in my brother's room, listening to some of his music. He has a CD by Enrique Iglesias that we were listening to, *and his new song was on. . .*

"Addicted" I think it's called. . . and as I'm listening to it, I remembered Amy, a girl from school who's obsessed with this song. It was the first time I'd heard the whole song, and my first thought was, "I kind of like this song. . . I think the song, like, evokes a lot more. . . into the future. . . I mean you get all these . . . little dreams, like in your head, like little fantasies . . . my wedding . . . getting your first home . . . growing old together. Just being with someone forever, which is . . . the ultimate destiny, really, for most people." It was so easy to think about Sean as I listened to it. I borrowed the CD from my brother so I could listen to it in my room. I got into bed and put on my earphones, and *I remember listening to that . . . song over and over just 'cause I kept thinking about him. I fell asleep with my mind miles away, dreaming about Sean. Sometimes I do that with songs—either because I really like them or 'cause I like what I think when I listen to [them] . . . It's all about wishing and hoping . . . finding that special someone.*

*'Cause I'm dreaming of you tonight
'Til tomorrow I'll be holding you tight
And there's nowhere in the world I'd rather be
Than here in my room dreaming about you and me
Selena*

Sleeping to dream,
Sophie

Dear Diary,

Tanya and her boyfriend broke up today! I can hardly believe it—they were like the perfect couple. After being together eight months, Zack just walks up to her after last class and says they need to talk, and gives her this dumb-ass explanation about needing time for himself and not being ready for a relationship. I'll bet he likes someone else! I feel so bad for Tanya. She's really torn up over this! So I went over to her house as soon as she phoned and told me. We lay on her bed, saying very little. My big contribution was to hand her a fresh tissue—while Tanya cried and listened to sad music. It was almost as if I was invisible—well, maybe not invisible, but Tanya was in a world of her own that was only big enough for her. When the song was over, she'd stop crying, and we'd talk a bit or look at a magazine, and then she'd replay the song and the tears would start again! I said to Tanya maybe she should stop listening to this song because it made her cry, and she turned to me and said that she *needed time to remember everything that happened and deal with [it] before seeing everybody else again*; that she *had to listen to it just to have good cries and just remember him*. I figured, “Okay, she knows what she needs to do.” So I gave her a hug and told her I loved her. Man, I will never be able to listen to that song again without thinking of Tanya and that awful day that Zack broke up with her! I guess *that song was almost like [Tanya's] good-bye to him*. . .

I write the songs that make the young girls cry. . .

Barry Manilow

Still sad for Tanya,

Sophie

Dear Diary,

Today I met with Gerri again. I liked this interview more than the last one. I think both of us were a bit nervous at the first one; you see, I was the first girl interviewed. Maybe I was a bit shy, and Gerri was very excited to start her research; sometimes she kinda would finish a sentence for me or not give me enough time to think before I answered. But today, it just felt very easy, and I even forgot she was almost as old as my mom (oops, I forgot that she's going to read this!); it was more like talking to an older cousin or something. Today, she asked me some questions that I had never thought about before—at least I didn't **think** I had, but I surprised myself because I gave answers that I never knew I had! It was so bizarre! I sort of had the same feeling after the first interview—it was like I was super-aware of what music I was listening to, and instead of just listening, I was **thinking** about listening and my reasons for choosing the songs I was listening to. Gerri said I was “thinking about thinking” and called it something like meta-cognition. That's so sweet—there's even a fancy name for what I was doing!

How the hell did I get so off-track? Now I have to re-read this all and figure out where I was going. . . .oh yeah, the interview . . . and answers I didn't know I had. Today I played a John Mayer song for Gerri called “Not Myself”. *When I first heard it. . . I thought it was like. . . a completely romantic connection. . . you know, boy-girl. . . “when-I'm-pissed-off-are-you-still-going-to-love-me” kind of thing. And I thought that until. . . one day in the summer [when] I was listening to it and I was, like, “This goes beyond that for me.”* I was telling Gerri how this song is about my relationship with my boyfriend but *that in a deeper sense, it was [about] my relationship with myself.* . . [The song] *went*

from . . . being a song I thought was cute and I really loved, to a song that totally meant so much, so much more to me in a sense, just related to my personal experience. . . yes, there's a romantic connection. . . but it's more than that. . . It's almost like a reflection song. And while I was saying this, I realized I play this song when I'm feeling down and hating myself. The song asks the question of a lover, "Do you love me when I am not acting like me?" It is a question that I have asked my boyfriend; but on another level, it is a question I can ask myself: do I forgive **me** when I screw up, or when I don't live up to my own expectations, or those that others set for me? I have a hard time with that. I guess this is an example of how *you take the lyrics and kind of relate them to your own life.* It takes awhile before I put together the meaning of a song 'cause there's so much in it to think about. *This actually reminds me of . . . like, in school right now we're . . . studying Shakespeare; and . . . every saying . . . you have to, like, analyze every line 'cause there's something else that's . . . being said.* It's like that with the songs I listen to. While I'm listening, I'm thinking, analyzing; and at some point, a thought comes to me about a particular line, or maybe about a whole song—and then it all makes sense! The song becomes special—now it's my song because it speaks to me.

Always growing,

Sophie

Dear Diary,

Today was one of those days—dunno how else to describe it, other than saying I felt 'blah'. I wasn't really sad, but I wasn't happy either. I'm doing a really shitty job of describing how I feel: not happy, not sad—what is that??? So much for creative writing!

It's hard to listen to music and then, just like, get happy. I can't play a song that I listen to when I'm up. It just doesn't feel right. Emotions aren't wired to an on/off switch and I can't make myself feel happy by playing upbeat music. It doesn't work.

The weird thing is that I don't want to listen to romantic songs either—things just aren't that great between Sean and me right now, and hearing songs that I listened to when I felt so strongly toward him doesn't cut it either. So here I am, flipping through all my CD's, trying to find **something** that I can listen to. Wish me luck!

. . .

Oops! It's been almost a week since I started this journal entry. Life kinda got in the way, I guess. I found some music that fit with how I have been feeling. *This week I didn't want to be sad, I didn't want to be upbeat—just kind of in the middle. And these songs just kind of keep me nice and mellow.* That's what I was looking for, something that I can listen to that evens things out for me, that gives me a calmness, without being either super-happy or down-in-the-dumps sad. Sometimes the highs and lows wear me out and mellow is how I need to feel. It's like eating too many fuzzy peaches at the movies—doesn't matter how good they are, there's a point when I just say, "Enough!" I can't eat one more!!" After that happens, I don't eat fuzzy peaches for awhile. That break, well, that's like listening to mellow music. "Mellow" brings balance to my emotions. It helps smooth out those romantic highs and lows. Yeah, kinda like the acoustic walls in our band room at school—helping to even out the sound. Mellow. . . mmmmm. . . it's good to be in the middle—not high, not low—forgetting about romance for awhile and just chillin'. . . .

I need good music—good, good music

It always feels so good to hear good music.
Joan Jett

Mellow and lovin' it,
Sophie

Dear Diary,

Yeah, I'm still feelin' mellow. I think a lot more when I'm in this place, and I'm thinkin' right now. Music doesn't just help me feel mellow. I started lookin' through my music library of mp3's. Wow! As I see the different songs that are listed, my feelings change as I go from one title to another. Gerri is never going to understand this—it's so weird. . . Okay, there's this Shania Twain song—a *very girly romantic song*. *I love it. . . 'cause you start to think, "oh, who can I see myself growing old with?"* I can hear bits of it in my head and as it plays in my mind I get dreamy and think about the kind of guy I will end up marrying. *This one is nice because. . . you get all these types of like little dreams. . . in your head, like little fantasies. . . every girl dreams of getting married, and . . . getting your first home and stuff like that. . . growing old together. . . just being with someone forever.*

And then there's "Ready for Love", by India Arie. . . *I also get that tingly feeling. I don't even know how to describe it. You know, that tingly feeling when you're listening to music?* Anticipation about the future—maybe that's what it is. *I get that a lot. . . that comes along with the music.* India's song—the lyrics—*almost kind of give me a little faith. . . and hope. I won't say solemn. . . but more kind of a tranquil [feeling] really, kind of at peace.*

Oh, and here's one by Kyle Riabko and "Carry On". As soon as I recall the opening bars of this song, I feel comforted. I remember at night, playing this song on my stereo. In fact, *I put the song on 'repeat' and fell asleep to it. Sometimes I do that with songs. Either because I really like them or 'cause I like what I think about when I listen to it. . . you go to sleep happy, not worrying.* I fall asleep listening to songs a lot, but I've never really thought why before. But yeah, it just occurred to me that I get comfort from that song and I play it when I am worried or tense. Man, I'm never going to be able to listen to another song again and just enjoy it! LOL!

Oh damn! It's another John Mayer song. I wish I hadn't seen this one. It's called "Comfortable". I will never forget one of the first times I listened to it. I had played it a couple of times, and then, I heard it again just after my boyfriend broke up with me last year. *I turned it off first because I knew that I was gonna freak out if I listened to it and be upset. And then, I don't know. . . I think maybe I subconsciously thought I needed to hear it or. . . I think I was probably thinking, "Oh, it's such a pretty song." And that's why I turned it back on—because I do really love it. . . I knew it was going to, like, rip my heart out—for five seconds or whatever, and make me think about what had happened, instead of trying to ignore it and pretend nothing happened. . . I'm not sure exactly what was going on in my head, but I did have an idea that it might hurt to listen to this song. . . but, I have. . a little bit of addiction to the song too, 'cause when I hear like, that opening—the strum of the guitar, it's like, "Oh I have to listen to it." And I probably was like, "I'll be fine, who cares? It doesn't matter." Yeah (wryly) . . . no, **it mattered.** . . I sat there and I was so upset, and I was thinking. . . of. . . exactly what the words said—'cause it's all about breaking up and how everything was perfect and now everything*

sucks. . . that was one time when I really lost it. . . it just magnified the whole break-up thing, like times ten. . . It definitely made me feel crappy at the time. I think it might have been a little therapeutic in a way, because I was getting something out that I was like, a little bit afraid to. So I think it helped in that way. . . I got. . . a little bit of closure, thinking about what happened. It kind of helps with the analysis of, “Why did that happen?” Whether you want it to go there or not. . . and then it might force you to either. . . try to restore it or. . . seek closure—to just forget about it. And this all happened just ‘cause I love John Mayer [his music] . . so I was just like, “Well, let’s put John Mayer on. . . he’ll have some insight into this, as he always does.” So I put on his CD, and I was listening to the next song that came on, and it was “Comfortable”. . . I forgot it was on that CD. This was one of the first times that romantic music helped me get through the pain of a breakup. Yeah, I guess it was therapeutic for me ‘cause it helped me heal emotionally.

*No more sad songs,
I'm letting you go now,
Switched off switched on,
I'm letting you know,
you turned out the light.
I'm gonna be alright
when I... turn the radio on.
No more sad songs.
Clay Aiken*

No sadness today,
Sophie

Dear Diary,

I can't BELIEVE I didn't notice this before! Last night when I was reading through my journal, it came to me: *songs are really powerful!* There are times when I feel that music draws me, like iron filings to a magnet or a moth to the light. Music has the power to affect the way I feel. *It can evoke specific emotions;* it can make me feel happy or sad or mellow or sexy—and that is a big part of the attraction to a song. When I first listen to a song, these feelings take me by surprise. *And . . . depending on the song . . . after you've listened to it . . . you might be more depressed or you might . . . feel better. Depends on . . . what the message in the song is. . . they [songs] can make you feel the way that the writer intended.* There are other times, when I know instinctively that a song will make me feel a certain way and so I listen to that song to feel that emotion. *I think it's a tool in that way . . . it can bring out certain emotions.* A song can soothe my pain, intensify my excitement, or remind me of how much I am hurting. It seduces me with its melody, rhythm, and lyrics; the voice of the singer pulls me into the song and I listen over and over and over again.

*. . . It's strange the way your mood
It swings and it changes as each song starts
Gary Barlow*

Sophie

Gerri's Letter to Sophie

Dear Sophie,

Before I talk about what I have learned from my interviews with you, I want to tell you how very honoured I am to have been allowed into your private world of music, romance and guys. You were so open and honest about your thoughts and feelings, and I cannot tell you how much this helped me deepen my understanding of how girls your age

connect with music and how they relate it to their romantic experiences. Thank you for taking me into your confidence, for ignoring the fact that I am “old”, and for being patient with my endless questions.

One of the first things I learned about you, Sophie, is that you and your girlfriends have music with you wherever you are. Music is available to you on such a variety of media; of course, just like in the “old” days, you have the radio to listen to—but now you have much more access to FM stations, with their improved sound, and even satellite radio stations. But in addition to the radio and personal stereo systems, you also have a computer, a CD player, and that cool little thing you call an “iPod” that holds all the songs (mp3’s, right?) you download off the internet. Sophie, you can have music with you wherever you go, and you can choose what music you want to listen to at anytime. That is so different from my teenage years, when the only portable music we had was a little transistor radio and we had to listen to whatever the deejay decided to play!

There is something else that impressed me about how you use music. Do you remember me telling you about some of the books I read, suggesting that kids are heavily influenced by the music they listen to? Well, from what you told me about the music you listen to and why you listen to it, I discovered that **you** are a very much in charge selecting the music you want to hear. You choose music, it does not choose you! I also realized, Sophie, that you are a very “savvy” user of music media. Not only are you in control of what music you choose, you use a variety of media to deliver that music: your computer, your CD player, your iPod, in addition to your stereo in your room and your car. Wherever you first hear a song—on the radio, on a MuchMusic video, or on a CD, if you decide you like it, you can then make a personal recording of it for your iPod,

picking only the songs you like, or you can copy songs from various CD's onto a new CD, so that you are, once again, only choosing songs you really want to hear. Wow! You have some much choice and you use that to your advantage—that's what makes you a "sophisticated" user of music media.

However, the types of music media you use and the songs you select are not the most important things I have learned. I discovered that you use music all the time and for many different reasons, even though you may not always be completely aware of this process.

At our first interview, I told you that you were the expert on the subject of adolescent girls' music listening and how it relates to romance. I meant it. In the rest of this letter to you, I will do my best to describe what you told me about the meaning of music and how it relates to your romantic experiences. As you read this, you will find out how well I listened and whether I understood your answers to my questions. I will do my best to stay true to what you have told me, as I attempt to illustrate with words your experiences of life with music and romance. I hope you don't mind if I speak of you and your girlfriends in the third person—otherwise it sounds like a horoscope! LOL!

Sophie and her friends: their music and their romance

For Sophie and her girlfriends, music is integral to their romantic experiences. Listening to music enhances their joy as they celebrate a new love. It connects them to the experiences of others, assuring them that they are not alone as they live through new and unfamiliar emotions and events. Music listening takes them back in time to feelings, events, and people which have touched their lives. As they listen, they can be comforted,

encouraged, inspired and allowed to grieve, and, music can put words to their hopes and dreams of finding someone to love and who loves them.

Celebration

Music provides Sophie with the dais on which to stand, and from where she cheers and celebrates as she experiences a new romance. She chooses songs that emulate her joyfulness, and as she finds these songs, she plays them over and over again. The songs buoy up her mood and enhance her feelings of excitement. Music is a close friend who shares in the thrill of infatuation and the mysterious stirrings of new-found emotions. Music affirms these feelings as those of a girl falling in love and amplifies the “high” of the moment.

*Patiently I've waited for this day to finally come.
Knowing someday, somehow, I would find that special one.
Someone perfect, someone true, someone that I knew was you. . .
. . . you're the answer,
You're my answer.
Britney Spears*

*Everybody sing, every body dance
Lose yourself in wild romance.
We're going to party,
Karamu, fiesta, forever;
Come on and sing along!
Lionel Richie*

Connection

Listening to music can link Sophie and her friends to past feelings and experiences, as well as bring about an emotional connection and closeness to a person

who is not present, often an absent boyfriend. As Sophie listens to songs about experiences that are new to her, she can identify with the singer/songwriter; and hearing lyrics that speak of the experience that they both share becomes a powerful link between them. Not only does she feel connected to the songwriter, but more generally to humanity—because if there is **one** person who knows what she is going through, maybe there are others! In this way, music serves to normalize and validate new encounters and emotions with which Sophie is unfamiliar. Listening to this music reminds Sophie that she’s “okay”, that she isn’t “weird” or different from everyone else.

*Did you ever love somebody?
Nothing else the heart could do.
Did you ever love somebody
Who never knew?
And if you did, Well, you know I'd understand
I could, I would
More than anybody can.
Jessica Simpson*

Comfort

At times when Sophie is lonely, sad, or despondent about her romantic experiences (or lack thereof) listening to music creates a cushion, a “soft place” where she receives comfort from the sometimes harsh reality of everyday life. Alone in her room, Sophie chooses music that “wraps its arms around her” and she feels acceptance and freedom to be sad or lonely or peaceful without any explanations. She is free to “just be”. Sophie gives herself emotional space from others and as well as time to reflect on what is happening in her life. Sometimes as she listens, she finds that a certain song

expresses thoughts yet unvoiced. She experiences a sense of release, as her thoughts are now freed and she can explore them more deeply.

*They reach into your room.
Just feel their gentle touch
When all hope is gone,
Sad songs say so much.
Elton John*

*. . . still like that old time rock 'n' roll.
That kind of music just soothes the soul. . .
Bob Seger*

Coping

Showing the ability to deal with situations and emotions that are part of the various stages of romance, Sophie and her friends demonstrate a healthy ability to use music as support amidst difficult circumstances.

Grieving is an essential, though difficult, component of the break-up stage in a romantic relationship. At the time of a break-up, Sophie and her friends turn to music as a catalyst to grief. This action is not always intentional, and at times, Sophie will turn off a song that she knows will make her cry. However, when she is ready, she will listen to a song that she knows is sad and use it to help her work through the pain of a broken relationship. The songs she chooses help her to grieve and to let go at a pace that is completely her own. Part of grieving for Sophie is remembering the relationship that has ended, and she may play music that reminds her of her ex-boyfriend and their relationship. This intensifies the sorrow, but the subsequent tears help Sophie purge the negative feelings she holds inside. In time, she listens to this music less frequently as the

grief lessens. Once grieving is past, Sophie may never listen to some of those same songs again.

*If someone else is suffering enough to write it down,
When every single word makes sense
Then it's easier to have those songs around.
The kick inside is in the line that finally gets to you
And it feels so good to hurt so bad
And suffer just enough to sing the blues.
Elton John*

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I begin by providing an overview of the study and summary of the findings as well as a statement of the study's context and by extension, its limitations. This is followed by a discussion of the research findings placed within the extant literature on adolescent romance and music listening. The chapter concludes with suggested directions for future research, and possible implications for practice.

Overview of Study

The impetus for this study originated in my own adolescent experiences of music listening and romance. Observing my children's use of music media further piqued my interest in this area of study. Just as I did thirty-five years ago, they now listen to popular music; so do their friends. As I reflected on the specific memory of a painful break-up with my 'high school sweetheart' and the intrinsic role of music in that experience, I began to wonder if my children and their friends could recount similar experiences.

Hermeneutic-phenomenology was used to investigate adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and romance. Five participants, aged either 17 or 18 years, engaged in multiple interviews of approximately 90 minutes each. The interviews consisted of listening to favorite songs that the participants shared with me, using semi-structured open-ended interview questions to explore the experience and meaning of the favorite songs. Secondary sources of data included the lyrics from popular songs and my own adolescent experiences of music listening and relating them to romance.

Findings were represented in a narrative form. Diary entries written by Sophie, a composite of the five participants, were used to convey the rich and nuanced romantic music listening experiences of the adolescent girls. Meaning was identified in terms of

four important ways that the adolescents' experienced romance and music: music listening as celebration, music listening as connection, music listening as comfort, and music listening as coping.

Context and Limitations of Study

Phenomenology is the study of lived experience, and as such, attempts to study an event as it happens, *during* the lived experience, before we have a chance to reflect on it (van Manen, 1997). Hermeneutic phenomenology endeavours to uncover the *meanings* of this experience at the moment that it is lived, as it shows itself to us in our everyday existence (van Manen, 1997). Phenomenological findings reveal the everyday in such a way that readers can see “the consequential in the inconsequential, the significant in the taken-for-granted” (van Manen, 1997, p. 8). However, phenomenological findings are always partial and incomplete because a phenomenological project is unending.

To *do* hermeneutic phenomenology is to attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the lifeworld, and yet to remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal . . . full or final descriptions are unattainable (van Manen, 1997, p. 18)

Phenomenological research presents a challenge because it investigates an aspect of our lived-world. Just like other humans, the phenomenological researcher lives in the everyday world, and has experienced the phenomenon under investigation. This familiarity can be a rich source of data but it also can be problematic because our ‘common sense’ pre-understandings, our suppositions, assumptions, and the existing bodies of scientific knowledge, predispose us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon

before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question (van Manen, 1997, p. 46).

In order to preserve the validity and rigour of methodology, phenomenological inquiry encourages the researcher to expose her presuppositions, biases, beliefs, and theories about the phenomenon that she is studying. This exercise in transparency assists the researcher in coming to terms with her assumptions in order “to hold them deliberately at bay and even to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character” (van Manen, 1997, p. 47). I have endeavoured throughout this research, to describe my own assumptions by reflecting on my own experience of listening to music as an adolescent girl.

Phenomenological research, of necessity uses in-depth interviewing to generate phenomenological data.

The fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about these things (Patton, 2002, p 341).

Patton (2002) discusses the challenge of interviewing: “An evaluator, or any interviewer, faces the challenge of making it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world. **The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer** (p. 341)”. The challenge of being a skillful interviewer and asking questions that allow us to enter another person’s

perspective presents a limitation inherent in phenomenological research. The findings are dependent on the researcher's interviewing skills. The respective ages of the interviewer and the participants may also affect the interview data; if the adolescent interviewees perceived me cautiously as a parent figure, disclosure of information might have been hindered. The degree to which I, as the interviewer, was able to establish rapport with each participant—creating an atmosphere that allowed each girl to feel comfortable sharing personal thoughts without fear of risk of judgment or breach of privacy—will have determined whether I entered into the lived experience of each participant.

In contrast to quantitative research, phenomenological data analysis is composed wholly of creative writing that involves “a process of reading, reflection, and writing and rewriting that enables the researcher to transform the lived experience into a textual expression of its essence.” (van Manen, 1990, p. 10 as quoted in Morse & Richards, 2002) *Vocatio* and *reductio* permeate the process of writing. As one reads the phenomenological text, it will become obvious whether or not the writer successfully weaves them into the phenomenological description.

When data analysis achieves its goal, the writing will evoke in the reader what has been termed the “phenomenological nod”, wherein the reader has a sense of a similar lived experience to that described in the research results. For the phenomenological researcher, the “Holy Grail” becomes the pursuit of the evocative as well as the descriptive—transporting the reader to a memory in her past and presenting such a vivid description of that event that she “re-lives” the event in her mind.

Phenomenological research is always on-going; and as such, never purports to present studies that are exhaustive in nature. This study presents what the participants

described to be their experiences at the time the interviews were conducted. Meanings of lived experience change over time and are different for different individuals. The object of this research was to communicate both the individual particulars and the broader common experience, so that the research remained true to the experiences of the participants, yet also evoked memories of similar experiences in the reader.

Discussion of the Findings within the Current Research Literature

Adolescent Romantic Experiences

Extant quantitative research findings provide valuable insight into the context in which adolescent relationships unfold. Throughout the study's interview process, familiarity with the most current research on the development of adolescent romantic relationships and their unique characteristics enhanced my understanding of the participants' romantic experiences.

Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) suggested that in the development of adolescent romance, fantasies play a critical role in an adolescent's romantic experiences, and essential learning about romantic relationships can result from daydreaming about romance. Throughout the interviews for this study, the participants spoke of "daydreaming", "fantasizing" or thinking about the kind of romantic relationship they wanted. Some participants described more fantasizing experiences than others, but each girl related experiences of this kind, confirming the theory of Brown et al. The participants reported listening to music while they daydreamed about romantic relationships; indeed, the lyrics often facilitated their fantasies, giving them "subject material" about which to think.

Brown, Feiring, and Furman (1999) also suggested that critical learning about romantic relationships can take place in conversations with friends. In the interviews conducted for this study, the participants often spoke of the singer/songwriter in terms that would suggest the familiarity of a friend. Could the connection an adolescent girl makes with the singer/songwriter be an extension of learning through “conversations with friends”? One participant in particular recounted situations where she would listen to the music of John Mayer to help her work through romantic issues. She developed a sense of trust in him based on the thoughts he had shared through his songs’ lyrics and so she would turn to his music when she was contemplating different ideas about romance (interview transcripts).

Larson (1995) suggested that popular music with a romantic theme offers a romantic experience where the adolescent listener can idealize about a partner who is perfect, who loves them and drives away the loneliness. This was true of the adolescent girls whom I interviewed. Each participant offered descriptions of romantic experiences in which they contemplated the qualities they wanted in a boyfriend, or the characteristics of their ideal romantic relationship.

Nonetheless, each adolescent girl interviewed clearly understood the difference between her idealistic daydreams of a fantasy lover and the “real world” knowledge that no lover or relationship is perfect. More than fantasizing about the unattainable, the participants reflected on qualities they would look for in a partner; as well, they contemplated the values, such as loyalty and honesty, they deemed important in a long term relationship. From the discussions with the participants, it became apparent that

each girl understood the romantic idealism so prevalent in popular songs; and yet they still valued the songs as a means of exploring what encompasses real-life relationships.

Not only did they fantasize about future romantic experiences, but the participants also reported drawing hope from these ideations. The participants used popular music as much more than a means of idealizing romance. All but one of the participants described instances of music listening that helped in working through the grief after the ending of a romantic relationship. They sought consolation in the lyrics. If a popular song described a romantic heartbreak, the participants assumed that the singer and/or the songwriter had experienced what they were singing/writing about. This interpretation normalized their experiences of 'love lost' and offered comfort — that is, each girl understood from listening to various songs that she was not the only one who had endured the break-up of a romantic relationship.

Developmental theorists propose that adolescent romantic relationships differ notably from those of adults. Whereas adult romantic relationships include behaviours associated with attachment and care-giving, systems of affiliation and sexuality are salient in adolescent relationships (Furman & Simon, 1999). Attachment and care-giving behaviours begin to characterize adolescent romantic relationships only in late adolescence. The female adolescents interviewed for this study described romantic relationships that were close emotionally and, to varying degrees, physically (sexually) intimate. Developmentally, each participant had reached late adolescence; however, the interviews lacked content describing aspects of care-giving behaviour. Based on the research findings of Furman and Simon (1999), this observation would be expected, given the age of the participants. However, the research question did not encompass this

aspect of adolescent romantic relationships and while these late adolescent participants may indeed demonstrate care-giving in their romantic relationships, it was absent from the interview data.

Bradford Brown (1999) developed a model of adolescent romantic relationships that situates them in the peer context where they have their beginnings. This four-phase model describes how these relationships change over the period of adolescence. Brown himself described the model as “loosely structured” (1999), and while keeping this in mind, the female participants in this phenomenological research study described romantic relationships less susceptible to peer group influence and more serious in nature than those of early adolescence. The participants’ romantic encounters depicted the relationship phase particular to late adolescence where meaningful connections are established with adolescent males. In some cases, the adolescent females described significant relationships that exhibited the beginnings of commitment to their romantic partner. Brown (1999) noted that the introduction of commitment into adolescent relationships signifies the developmental transformation towards adult romantic relationships. My observations that the romantic relationships of the participants included meaningful connections and rudimentary beginnings of commitment are consistent with Brown’s findings.

As described in quantitative research literature on adolescent romantic relationships, the ephemeral nature of these relationships evidenced itself during the course of research interviews for this study. While some of the participants experienced romantic ties of a short nature, they also experienced strong feelings for the individual,

the promise of sexual expression and mutuality (although fleeting) of feelings (Brown, Feiring & Furman, 1999).

Media portrayals of adolescent romance also connect closely to the extant research question. Connolly and Goldberg (1999) examined the influence of romantic images in the media on adolescents and their expectations of romance, to discover what particular areas of a romantic relationship might be susceptible to media influence. They found that media portrayals of adolescent romantic relationships linked most strongly to the adolescent's expectation of romantic passion, romantic commitment, and the negative emotions associated with the ending of a romantic relationship (Connolly & Goldberg, 1999). The current study describes how the participants connected their own romantic experience with those of the songs to which they listened.

Music Listening

Although qualitative phenomenological inquiry cannot substantiate or corroborate experimental findings, phenomenology *can* add insight and complexity to the findings of quantitative studies. The beauty of phenomenology is that it provides rich descriptions of experience that offer new and deeper insight into the lived experience of adolescent female romance. Research interviews conducted for this study generated in-depth descriptions of how female participants constructed the relationship between their and their romantic experiences. Data clearly indicated that the adolescent participants constructed meaning from popular music which helped to inspire, encourage, and shape their reflections on romance. More profound were the descriptions of sophisticated use of music media by the female participants. They “manipulated” the media to meet their own emotional needs: favourite music is purchased at a music store or downloaded to

CD's or mp3 players in order to provide them with instant access to their favourite songs, and the participants related how they chose music for the feelings it evokes. Personal narratives from each participant increase the reader's understanding of the quantitative research finding that suggests media portrayals of music possess a strong link to aspects of adolescent romantic relationships such as passion and negative romantic feelings.

Current research literature into the effects of mass media offers prolific set of findings that contextualize this phenomenological study. Significant work yielded Blumler and Katz's (1974) "uses and gratifications" approach to the study of media, with refinements by Rubin (2002). Steele (1999) developed the Adolescent's Media Practice Model which acknowledges that adolescent development also mediates active media use. Perhaps most pertinent is the work of Arnett (1995) in describing the five most common uses of media by adolescents: entertainment, identity formation, high sensation, coping, and youth culture identification.

The current study explored the uses of music as entertainment as when participants described using music to celebrate happy times and new romance. There are also many descriptions of the participants using music to cope with difficult or unhappy circumstances; participants describe using music as a catharsis for their grief. The study helped illustrate how participants use music to achieve high sensation—either elation or deep sadness; and portrayed examples where the participants used music lyrics to reflect on their own beliefs about romance.

Connecting music listening to romantic experience

Interviews conducted for this study enrich Arnett's work with in-depth discussion of how the adolescent female participants use the media of music, and how they relate it, in particular, to their romantic experiences.

The research interviews contained extensive descriptions detailing how these adolescent girls use music and relate it to romance in their everyday world. In their world of music listening and romance, the participants related experiences where they used music to celebrate new love, to connect emotionally with their boyfriend, to cope with the grief of a romantic break-up, and to comfort them during negative romantic experiences or in the absence of romance.

During the course of the research interviews, each participant recounted the experience of celebrating romantic love through music. Many of the songs the adolescent girls shared with me portrayed the joy and excitement of new love, or of an ongoing romantic relationship. The participants recognized the romantic idealism present in many of these songs as unrealistic, yet continued to take pleasure in the upbeat celebratory theme of the song.

Listening to popular music frequently enabled the adolescent females to sense a close emotional connection with their romantic partner. The interviews contained anecdotal narratives describing how participants sought out popular music that reminded them of their boyfriend, in order to "feel closer" to him. These songs may have been songs that the couple listened to when they were together, songs that might have been playing when they first met or first danced together, or songs the participants interpreted

as having been written “just for them”. Songs “given” to them, that is, songs that their boyfriend burned onto a CD for them also comprised this category.

Participants also described popular songs about romantic “heartbreak” that assisted them both in grieving the end of a romantic relationship. They spoke of times when they would listen to a certain popular songs that would cause tears and sadness, but which helped them deal with their grief.

As well, the participants’ detailed experiences of listening to songs which offered comfort after breaking up with a boyfriend or during times when they longed for a romantic relationship. The music was personified, becoming a friend who cried with them and offered emotional support to them during these times of melancholy. Music chosen at these times matched their feelings of unhappiness, and just like a good friend, the music chosen did not dismiss their sadness, but allowed them to explore and find a way to cope with it.

Phenomenologies of music listening

A search of extant research literature yielded three phenomenological investigations (Nicol, 2002; Nelson, 1994; Pederson, 1994) into music listening. Pederson (1994) noted that music listening played a significant role in the experiences and struggles of the study participants; furthermore, music listening was intentional and at times addressed the unrecognized needs of the individual’s listening. The present study described the importance of music listening to the participants as they used it to relate to the highs and lows of their romantic experiences as well as to their hopes and dreams of romance. Nelson (1994) described music listening in the study participants as meaningful, personal, and powerful. The current study also described participants’

experiences of music listening in the context of romantic experience as very intimate, meaningful and capable of eliciting emotion. Nicol (2002) placed music listening in the lived experience of women who cope with chronic illness and the important lived experience and meaning of music listening as a companion and savior. The present study differs from the other three in that it examined music listening within the developmental framework of the adolescent (in this case, the female), rather than that of the adult. Moreover, it inquired into romantic experiences.

In data analysis, Pederson (1994) utilized the four-step methodology of Giorgi (1985); Nelson (1994) engaged in data analysis using the previously developed categories of Howes (1970). Nicol (2002) chose van Manen's method of data analysis, which focused on creating a text that evoked the meaning of the phenomenon for those who have experienced it. A vocative text was crafted to illuminate the phenomenon of music listening in the lives of women who cope with chronic illness. Just as a painter uses a wide array of colours, various painting techniques and brushes in the creation of a painting, so Nicol (2002) painted word pictures, with words as her colours and literary techniques such as the metaphor in a vivid expression of the meaning of music for the women involved in her study. The text engaged the reader and transported the reader to the world of those women. The goal of the present study was to describe the romantic meanings that female participants attribute to their music listening in such a way as to provide readers with echoes of their own adolescent memories, where music listening and romantic experience were woven together into the memorable experiences of love discovered, love lost. The literary devices of alliteration, metaphor and anecdote serve to "thicken" the description in an effort to nudge the reader into remembrance of similar

long-past experience and connecting it with the experience of the young women in the present study.

Implications for Practice

Enhancing knowledge about the cultural milieu that surrounds the adolescent female is perhaps the broadest application of this study. High school teachers, guidance counsellors, mental health professionals, and adolescent researchers can gain deeper insight into the impact of popular music and its link to romance for the adolescent female. The resultant sensitivity to the adolescent girl's world might serve to foster appreciation for her sophistication in managing music media and using music-based coping skills.

For the counsellor, psychologist, or other mental health professional working with adolescent females in a therapeutic setting, this study may provide new tools useful in the helping professions. For example, when the helping professional recognizes how important music can be to a teenage girl, the therapist may decide to become more familiar with the popular music listened to by adolescents, in order to help establish rapport and a therapeutic alliance with their adolescent clients. A therapist might consider exploring and discussing the music preferences of an adolescent client. Inviting a client to share this music in a therapy session might enhance the therapeutic experience. Engaging the adolescent girl in a process of finding popular music that she finds encouraging, comforting or helpful in connecting her with the world around her may prove valuable in terms of developing coping skills.

Directions for Future Research

Future research could take significantly divergent pathways. Importantly, qualitative investigation into the various ways that adolescents use music media to meet

such goals as identity formation, coping, and youth culture identification, would broaden and add depth to the work of mass communication theorists. In turn, this research would enhance therapeutic relationships between adolescents and their counselors, as well as the day-to-day relationships between adolescents and their teachers and coaches.

The phenomenologic data for this research portrays the lived experience of five adolescent females, all of whom came from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and are European-descent Canadians. Future phenomenological study focusing on a group of adolescent females of a different ethnic group or different socioeconomic status would further enrich and deepen the body of knowledge on adolescent research.

Further phenomenological inquiry that explores the connection between music listening and other areas in the life of the female adolescent, such as music and self-esteem or music and body image, might produce rich and fascinating data. It would be interesting to compare and contrast the differences and/or similarities in how adolescent males and females experience music listening. Research findings indicate that adolescent boys manage their mood by using popular music to “pump themselves up” (Singer & Singer, 2001) whereas adolescent girls listen to music when they feel “down” or lonely (Singer & Singer, 2001). What does music offer the adolescents in these circumstances? What happens as they listen to music when they are sad? How does music relate to sadness? What happens as they listen to music to energize themselves? How does music relate to feeling “pumped up?” These are all questions that would benefit from phenomenological inquiry.

Other research designs might be used to further the findings of this study. For example, depression occurs approximately 30% more in adolescent females than

adolescent males. Qualitative research could further explore how adolescent girls manage depression with music listening; experimental research might be used to contrast the effectiveness of music-based coping techniques with other types of interventions.

The current study describes how the participants would, at certain times of romantic emotional highs or lows, listen to the same song over and over. Does this practice simply reflect the emotional state of the young woman, or is it a catalyst that enables the adolescent to ascend to even higher euphoria or plummet into the depths of potentially dangerous despair? Can listening to dark, brooding music generate deeper depression or does it offer solace? Is there a point when listening to sad music alone becomes detrimental to an adolescent's mental health? What implications does this have for therapeutic intervention with adolescent girls who are living with depression?

In reviewing the research literature, I cited the work of Reed Larson (1995), developmental psychologist, who made the following observation: "First, adolescents shift their media time toward greater music listening, because it speaks to adolescent issues, and, second, they engage in more media use in solitude" (p. 5). He suggested, "the synthesis of these two points is that we would expect private adolescent media use, especially music listening, to be a context for cultivation of the private self (p. 5)."

The adolescent participants of this study describe their thoughts and feelings as they listened to music. In considering Larson's findings as well, another question for study arises: what is the "private self"? Is it possible to have a private self? How does an adolescent "cultivate" this self? What are the messages an adolescent receives from popular music media?

Final Reflection

My earliest memories of childhood include recollections of music listening. I can still envision the thin cardboard record jacket that stored a recording of Tchaikovsky's "Sleeping Beauty": the cover was pink in colour with a photograph of a beautiful doll on it. I was eight years old and can even now recall sitting on the floor next to the record player, holding the record cover and staring at the picture while daydreaming about the story of Sleeping Beauty and the handsome prince who wakes her with a kiss. At this early juncture in my life, music and romance began weaving themselves together—inextricably and unconsciously—in my mind . . . while I was listening to Tchaikovsky's famous ballet music.

My mother enriched my childhood by introducing me to classical as well as gospel music. As I reflect on that period of my life, I realize that one of the greatest gifts she gave me was enrolling me in piano lessons. As I became a proficient pianist, I would use my time at the piano not only to practice my scales, but also to work through feelings of sadness and depression. I discovered that I could 'lose' myself music and take all the energy from my emotions of disappointment or sadness or anger and channel it into interpreting a particular music composition. Music helped me regain balance of my emotions, soothing the hurts and disappointments and restoring peace of mind.

As I moved into adolescence and became aware of a new world of boyfriends and dating, I listened to popular music, and found myself daydreaming romantically about a boy at school on whom I had a "crush". Listening to popular music also became a way to work through both positive and negative emotions, and from time to time it replaced playing classical music at the piano as my method of coping.

As an adult, listening to music continues to enhance my life both as a means of celebrating happiness, love, and wonder and offering comfort in times of difficulty. It is pure joy to “discover” a new recording that captures a thought or feeling I have experienced but perhaps never put into words . . .

. . .

I am on the treadmill for a thirty-minute jog; the physical exertion allows me to maintain some sense of balance during this turbulent, chaotic time in my life—the breakdown of my marriage. Music is the incentive that gets me on the treadmill, as this is the only time in my day where I can listen, uninterrupted, to my CD’s. The day has drained my emotional energy; I choose the music of a Canadian artist, Paul Janz. I don’t even remember what songs are on this album. The song begins, and I am instantly drawn to the melancholic sounds of the saxophone, as sadness is a recurring theme at this juncture of my life.

*Sometimes love feels like heaven.
But now another wounded heart lies aching,
And the hurt feels like a mountain;
All you thought that you had has been taken.
I know you’re bleeding
Behind those dark eyes . . .
Paul Janz*

There is instant recognition of the sadness of the words. The pain catches me off-guard and I inhale my breath sharply; tears well up in my eyes and then spill onto my cheeks while I am running. . .

The songwriter has gained credibility with me. I think, “Anyone who writes music like that knows pain.” I am willing to listen to the rest of the song. The lyrics continue:

*Stand, stand like a rock;
When courage is gone
Stand and be strong.
Open your eyes
Don't let them win
Reach out and find the power within. . . .
Paul Janz*

Perhaps at another time, under different circumstances, coming from someone who hasn't lived my experience, I would perceive these words as nothing more than full of trite clichés. Today, however, they offer me profound encouragement to keep going, when all I feel like doing is giving up as a relationship ends.

. . .

This anecdote is one of many. It is this kind of experience that, for me, endows music with the power to comfort, to offer solace—a soft place to fall. Experiences such as this have occurred at different times throughout my life. Music has been a witness to both my sad and happy romantic experiences. And it is these occurrences that led me to wonder whether others have had similar experiences; in particular, I wondered about the experiences of adolescent girls. I remember being an adolescent, I remember the romantic turbulence of boy-girl relationships. To me, through the eyes of an adolescent, that turbulence was every bit as major as the trauma of divorce. And music was every bit as important in experiencing and traversing the turbulence.

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APPENDIX A: Application for Approval of Research Protocol

1. Names of Researchers:

Dr. Jennifer Nicol, Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
College of Education

Dr. Vicki Schwean, Professor
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
College of Education

Gerri Siemens, M.Ed. (candidate)
Department Educational Psychology and Special Education
College of Education

2. Start date of research: August 2004

3. Expected completion date: January 2005

4. Title of Study: Adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and romance.

5. Abstract:

Adolescents are active users of media. It is during adolescence that they shift their media preference from television viewing to music listening. One of the main uses of listening to music is coping or management of negative moods (Arnett, 1995), and Larsen (1989) suggests that girls in particular listen to music when they are sad. He speculates that adolescent girls use music to help them explore or reflect upon their intimate romantic experiences. In fact, most of the popular music that adolescent girls listen to is in the categories of Top 40 music and soft rock music both of which carry a romantic theme over 70% of the time (Larson & Thompson, 1995).

The purpose of the proposed research is to conduct a hermeneutic-phenomenological investigation of adolescent girls' experiences of music listening as related to romantic experience. Multiple interviews with 4 to 6 adolescent girls between 17 and 18 years of age will be conducted, in order to obtain descriptions of their use of this media and explore the meanings given to these experiences. The findings will increase understanding of this adolescent phenomenon with anticipated implications for counseling practice and further research.

6. Funding: No funding has been awarded for this study.

7. Participants:

Four to six female volunteers, aged 17 to 18 years, will be recruited and selected for this study. A brief description of the study and an invitation to participate will be posted in several libraries, community centers, and local churches (see Appendix D). The poster will include a phone number for interested individuals to call if they are interested. Once a student contacts me, I will explain the criteria for participation, which includes that the participant must be (a) an adolescent girl, 17 or 18 years of age, who considers music listening to be an important part of her life, (b) have had romantic feelings for an adolescent boy, and (c) be willing to share these experiences with the researcher. If they meet these criteria, I will explain the purpose of the research, its procedures, provisions for confidentiality, and the voluntary nature of participation. I will explain their right to withdraw at any time. I will obtain parental consent for participants who are still in high school. Upon verbal approval, I will obtain a written informed consent from both the parent/guardian (if the participant is still in high school) and the student by visiting their home prior to the first interview. At this time I will also make an appointment for the first interview, which will take place at a mutually convenient time and place.

8. Consent

When a potential participant initiates contact with me regarding her interest in my research, I will make an appointment to see her and her parents, in order to explain the role and the rights of the participant (see Appendices A and B for consent forms).

9. Methods

Two unstructured interviews, of approximately 90 minutes each, will be conducted with each participant and audio taped (see Appendix E for questions). Before the first session, I will explain the purpose of my study. Each participant will be asked to bring some of her favorite music CD's or tapes to the first interview. She will then talk about the music that she likes and give me examples of what her experiences are as she listens to this music. Between the first and second interview, the participants will be asked to use a tape recorder to record their thoughts and feelings while listening to music. The data from these tape recordings will be discussed at the subsequent interview. The third interview will involve discussion of the data analysis and will give participants an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the analysis and acknowledge this with their informed consent on a transcript release form.

In order to gain some experience in phenomenological interviewing and to help me refine the interview questions, I plan to conduct a pilot interview with an adolescent girl who meets the criteria for the study. I will use the same procedures for obtaining an informed consent as I use with the actual participants for the study. In addition to the questions that I will refine as a result of the pilot interview, I have formulated a tentative outline for each of the interviews, which is outlined in Appendix E. If appropriate, the pilot interview will be included in the actual study.

10. Storage of Data

All data collected for this study will be secured in a locked drawer in the office of the researcher. At the completion of the study, all materials from the study will be turned over to Dr. Jennifer Nicol for storage and safekeeping for a minimum of five years, in accordance with the research regulations for the University of Saskatchewan.

11. Dissemination of Results

The data collected through this study will form the basis of my master's thesis, and may also be used as the basis for future journal articles and conference papers. The thesis will be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan

12. Risk or Deception

This study involves minimal risk for the participants. Prior to conducting the first interview, each participant and her parents/guardians will be thoroughly briefed on the nature of the research and will be given an outline of the interview protocol. Written consents will be obtained from each participant and her parents/guardians giving their permission to be interviewed and for the interviews to be audiotaped. Participants will be informed that they are only to answer the questions that they feel comfortable answering, that they may turn off the tape recorder at any point in the interview, and that they may withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. If a participant withdraws from the study, any data pertaining to that participant will be destroyed immediately.

Information in each participant's data file will be kept confidential. Any data used in the written thesis document will not disclose any information that might identify a specific participant. Pseudonyms will be used in the final thesis document so as to protect each participant's anonymity.

Participants will receive no compensation for their involvement in this research. They will be given the opportunity to share their experiences and know that they will be contributing to an increased understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

If it becomes apparent that any participant experiences psychological distress during participation in this study, a list of resources will be made available to the individual. My co-adviser Dr. Jennifer Nicol, who is a Registered Psychologist, has agreed to provide consultative advice to me, should I have any concerns about a participant. No deception will be used in the course of this study.

13. Confidentiality

In order to preserve each participant's anonymity, the following measures will be undertaken. An informed consent will be obtained from each participant and her parents/guardians, detailing the nature of the study, the right of the participant to expect her anonymity to be protected, the right of the participant to refuse to answer any questions she does not want to answer, and the right of the participant to withdraw from the study at any time. Care will be taken when scheduling participant interviews, so that other participants will not meet when coming to or leaving the interview. All data pertaining to each participant will be coded and given a pseudonym. Participants will be invited to read the chapter results upon its completion in order to ensure that nothing in the thesis might endanger their right to privacy. If the participant finds identifying factors in written material, these will be eliminated before the final revision of the thesis is completed. Any quotations that will become part of the final thesis will be reviewed with the respective participant and consent to use the quotations will be obtained prior to completion of the thesis. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss and edit any material that gives them cause for concern.

14. Data/Transcript Release

Each participant will be given the opportunity to review the final transcript of their interviews. Once the transcript has been reviewed, the participant will be asked to sign a transcript release form (see Appendix C) indicating that the transcript accurately reflects what they said or intended to say. Participants may decline to review the transcripts. Participants will be advised of their right to withdraw any or all of their responses.

15. Debriefing and Feedback

At the same time as the participant signs the transcript release form, they will be given the opportunity to debrief their experience with this research study. Each participant will be given a copy of the completed thesis.

16. Required Signatures

Gerri Siemens
Master of Education Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education

Dr. Jennifer Nicol
Co-Supervisor, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education

Dr. Vicki Schwean
Co-Supervisor & Department Head
Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education

17. Contact Name

Gerri Siemens Phone: 306-933-2710
 Email: gsiemens@shaw.ca
 Address: 143 Trotchie Crescent,
 Saskatoon, SK
 S7K 7V9

APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled: Adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and romance. Please read this entire form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researcher:

Gerri Siemens, Master of Education Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. My phone number is: (306) 933-2710.

This study is co-supervised by Dr. Jennifer Nicol (966-5261) and Dr. Vicki Schwean (966-5246), Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Purpose and Procedure:

The purpose of this study is to understand adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and what relationship it has to their romantic experiences, that is, your feelings and thoughts about romance. As you tell me about your experiences, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of what your music means to you and how it relates to your experience of romance. This research will help adolescent researchers and counselors understand the importance of music to adolescent girls.

To participate in this study, it would be necessary to meet with me, in person, for three separate interviews. The first two interviews will be approximately 90 minutes. I will ask you to bring with you some of your favourite romantic music, and tell me about the experiences you have had listening to this music. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed, so that I can have an accurate record of our interviews. After these interviews, I will write up my findings and ask you to read this chapter of my research. At the last interview, I will ask you to give me your thoughts on my research findings. You may choose not to read the chapter. You will also have an opportunity to tell me about any further ideas you have had on the topic of music listening and romance. After you have read my research and agree that what I have written expresses your experiences, I will ask you to sign a consent form that allows me to publish my research findings.

The interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient time and location. If you need transportation to and from the interview, I will arrange to provide this for you.

Potential Risks:

Some of your experiences may be quite personal and sensitive in nature. It is possible that you will experience some feelings of sadness or discomfort when you tell me about them. It is very important for you to know that you are free to decide what you will or will not tell me. You may choose what questions you want or do not want to answer, and you may turn off the tape recorder at any point in the interview. After any of the interviews, if you want to talk about the thoughts and feelings you are having, I will give you a list of counselors in your community that you may contact.

Potential Benefits:

Your involvement in this study may give you a greater self-awareness. As well, your experiences will enrich the research on adolescent music listening and romantic experiences by adding to my understanding of these experiences as I describe them in my study.

Storage of Data:

Upon completion of the study, one of the co-supervisors of this project will securely store all the data, including the audiotapes, transcripts, and consent forms, in a secure location at the University of Saskatchewan. This data is kept for a minimum of five years.

Confidentiality:

During the course of the study, all audiotapes will be stored in a secure location to assure confidentiality. The individual who transcribes the audiotapes will also store the audiotapes and transcribed data in a secure location and maintain confidentiality of all the data you have contributed to this study.

The results of this study will be published in a Master of Education thesis, and portions of this thesis may be used in subsequent academic publications and/or conference presentations.

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure your privacy. As well, any information that might identify you will not be included in the final report.

Prior to publishing the thesis, you will be given an opportunity to review the research report and discuss and edit any material that causes you concern.

Right to Withdraw:

You may choose to withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed will be destroyed.

Questions:

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researcher or the supervisors at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences Research Ethics Board on September 8, 2004. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed through the Office of Research Services (966-4053). Each participant will be provided with a copy of the thesis when it is completed.

Consent for Participation:

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study as described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my personal records.

Signature of Participant	Date
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Signature of Participant's Parent/Guardian	Date
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Signature of Researcher	Date
-------------------------	------

APPENDIX C: Parental Consent Form

Researcher:

Gerri Siemens, Master of Education Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. My phone number is: (306) 933-2710.

This study is co-supervised by Dr. Jennifer Nicol (966-5261) and Dr. Vicki Schwan (966-5246), Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Purpose and Procedure

The purpose of this study is to understand adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and what relationship it has to their romantic experiences, that is, her thoughts and feelings about romance. As your daughter tells me about her experiences, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of what her music means to her and how it relates to her experience of romance. This research will help adolescent researchers and counselors understand the importance of music to adolescent girls.

To participate in this study, it would be necessary to meet with your daughter, in person, for three separate interviews. The first two interviews will be approximately 90 minutes. I will ask your daughter to bring with her some of your favourite romantic music, and tell me about the feelings she had listening to this music. The interviews will be audiotaped and transcribed, so that I can have an accurate record of our interviews. After these interviews, I will write up my findings and ask your daughter to read this chapter of my research. At the last interview, I will ask you to give me your thoughts on my research findings. She may choose not to read this chapter. She will also have an opportunity to tell me about any further ideas she has had on the topic of music listening and romance. After she has read my research and agrees that what I have written expresses her experiences, I will ask her to sign a consent form that allows me to publish my research findings.

The interviews will be conducted at a mutually convenient time and location. If your daughter needs transportation to and from the interview, I will arrange to provide this for her, with your approval.

Potential Risks

Some of your daughter's experiences may be quite personal and sensitive in nature. It is possible that she will experience some feelings of sadness or discomfort when she tells me about them. It is very important for you and your daughter to know that she is free to decide what she will or will not tell me. She may choose what questions she wants or does not want to answer and she may turn off the tape recorder at any point during any of the interviews. After any of the interviews, if your daughter wants to talk about the thoughts and feelings she is having, I will give her a list of counselors in your community that she may contact.

Information in each participant's data file will be kept confidential. Any data used in the written thesis document will not disclose any information that might identify a specific

participant. Pseudonyms will be used in the final thesis document so as to protect each participant's anonymity.

Potential Benefits

Your daughter's involvement in this study may give her a greater self-awareness. As well, her experiences will enrich the research on adolescent music listening and romantic experiences by adding to my understanding of these experiences as I describe them in my study.

Storage of Data

All data collected for this study will be secured in a locked drawer in the office of the researcher. At the completion of the study, all materials from the study will be turned over to Dr. Jennifer Nicol for storage and safekeeping for a minimum of five years, in accordance with the research regulations for the University of Saskatchewan.

Confidentiality

During the course of the study, all audiotapes will be stored in a secure location to assure confidentiality. The individual who transcribes the audiotapes will also store the audiotapes and transcribed data in a secure location and maintain confidentiality of all the data you have contributed to this study.

The results of this study will be published in a Master of Education thesis, and portions of this thesis may be used in subsequent academic publications and/or conference presentations.

Your daughter will be given a pseudonym to ensure her privacy. As well, any information that might identify her will not be included in the final report.

Prior to publishing the thesis, your daughter will be given an opportunity, if she wishes, to review the transcripts of her interviews and the research report. She will have the opportunity to discuss and edit any material that causes her concern.

Right to Withdraw

Your daughter may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If she withdraws from the study at any time, any data that she has contributed will be destroyed.

Questions

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds on September 10, 2004. Any questions regarding your daughter's rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). You may find out about the results of the study by contacting Gerri Siemens (933-2710).

Consent for your daughter to participate

I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to allow my daughter to participate in the study described above, understanding

that she may withdraw at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

Name of participant (daughter)

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Researcher

APPENDIX D: Data/Transcript Release Form

1. For participants who have chosen to read the transcripts:

I, _____, have reviewed the complete transcript of my personal interviews in this study, and have been provided with the opportunity to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript as appropriate. I acknowledge that the transcript accurately reflects what I said in my persona interviews with Gerri Siemens. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Gerri Siemens to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

2. For participants who have chosen not to read the transcripts:

I, _____, have chosen not to review the transcript of my personal interviews in this study, even though I have been provided with the opportunity to do so and to add, alter, and delete information from the transcript. I hereby authorize the release of this transcript to Gerri Siemens to be used in the manner described in the consent form. I have received a copy of this Data/Transcript Release Form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

APPENDIX E: Poster Advertisement Used to Solicit Participants

**ARE YOU A TEENAGE GIRL WHO ENJOYS LISTENING TO POPULAR
MUSIC?**

DO YOU LIKE TO LISTEN TO ROMANTIC SONGS?

If so, I would like to hear about your experiences.

I am a master of education student in Educational Psychology at the University of Saskatchewan. Part of my research involves interviewing adolescent girls who listen to popular music and describe how this music relates to their romantic experiences (that is, the romantic thoughts and feelings they may have). The purpose of my research is to answer the question:

**What is the experience and meaning of music listening
and romantic experience
for adolescent girls?**

Are you interested in being interviewed for this study? Your participation would involve 3 interviews with me where you will tell me about your experiences of music listening. Each interview takes about 90 minutes and will be tape recorded. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Your privacy will be protected and all information you provide to me will be treated confidentially.

To participate in this study you must:

- be an adolescent girl, 17 or 18 years of age, who considers music listening to be an important part of her life
- have had romantic feelings for an adolescent boy
- be willing to share these experiences with the researcher

If you would like to participate or find out more about the study, please contact me at 933-2710, or my Supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Nicol at 966-5261.

Thank you,

Gerri Siemens (B.S.N.)

APPENDIX F: Interview Format

First Interview:

I will begin this interview by introducing myself and briefly describing the purpose and method for my research study. The participant will be asked to bring with her some of her favourite music CD's and/or tapes. We will listen to this music together, and I will ask her to tell me what she likes about this music. I will ask her to talk about specific times when she listened to this music and to describe these examples to me. The subsequent questions asked of the participant will vary according to the responses received, however, the purpose of all questions in this interview, is to gain a deeper understanding of how music listening relates to the participant's romantic feelings.

Template (the script I will follow is in italicized print):

I thought you might like to know a little bit about me. I used to work as a nurse, and then I decided to go back to school and get my master's degree so that I could work as a counselor with teenagers and their families. This research study will help me finish my degree.

The purpose of my study is to understand adolescent girls' experiences of music listening and find out how it relates to their feelings and thoughts about romance. As you tell me about your experiences, you will help me gain a deeper understanding of what your music means to you and how it relates to your feelings about romance. This research will help adolescent researchers and counselors understand the importance of music to adolescent girls.

I see you brought some music CD's with you. Why don't you pick one of your favourite songs and we can listen to it. If it's OK with you, we will listen quietly the first time; then we can talk about it. We can then listen to it again and you can talk about it while we're listening to it, OK?

After listening to the song, I will ask the participant to tell me what the song means to her. I will use the following questions as guidelines:

- 1) What romantic thoughts and feelings did you have while listening to this music?
- 2) Describe them for me.
- 3) What did you notice about yourself in relations to others—your friends or your family—while you listened to your music?
- 4) While you were listening, what did you notice about time?
- 5) While you were listening, what did you notice about your surrounding?
- 6) What did you notice about your surrounding while you were listening to the music?

After the participant has made her comments, I will describe to her any observations I made about her while we were listening to the song, and ask her what she was thinking or

feeling at that time. Example: *I noticed that while we were listening to the song, when the singer was singing “[repeat the phrase]”, it looked as though you were thinking something about those words (participant’s eyes moved up to the right). Could you describe what was going through your mind?*

At the end of the session, if the participant agrees, I will ask her to use a small tape recorder to document her thoughts and feelings about her music listening over the period of time during which the interviews are conducted. The participant will not be required to share her audio-taped reflections with me, but if she is willing, I will invite her to talk about what she has recorded and share whatever she wishes at a subsequent interview.

Second Interview:

The second interview will be comprised of presenting my initial understandings of the content of our first interview and will also be used to increase my understanding of material that was not clear to me. If the participant has recorded her thoughts on audiotape, I will invite her to share these recorded reflections at this interview. It will be made clear to each participant that they are free to share as much or as little as they wish.

Third Interview:

The third interview will be used to obtain feedback from the participant about my study results. She will have the opportunity to read the material before the interview if she wishes, and then provide me with information as to the accuracy of my understanding of the interviews with her. At this time she will be able to alter, add, or delete any information that she feels does not accurately represent our previous interviews. She will also be asked for any new insights that she may have gained since our last interview. (A data/transcript release form will also be signed at this interview.)