BECOMING A SEXUAL WOMAN:
A GROUNDED THEORY OF FEMALE ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY
MANAGEMENT

by
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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Multidisciplinary adolescent sexuality research deals mostly with risk- and demographic factors and intervention programs. The social-developmental process through which female adolescents manage relationships to become sexual women has not been defined. This research sought to bring to light the ways in which female adolescents discover, develop, and use management skills to navigate the socio-sexual environment of adolescence.

A synthesis of symbolic interactionist and life span developmental frameworks informed the research. Semi-structured interviews yielded data which were analyzed using the constant comparative method. A grounded theory pertaining to female adolescent sexuality management emerged with Relationship Management as its core category.

The causal conditions to Relationship Management were named Coming of Age and included Entering Puberty, Noticing Boys and Feeling Ready for a Relationship. The action/interaction strategies were named Dealing With Boys and included Public Presentation of Self, Profiling, Trying to Communicate, and Controlling the Relationship. The consequences of action/interaction strategies were named What Might Happen and consisted of Relationship Outcomes, Physical Outcomes, Effects on Reputation and Effects on the Life Course. The context for the action/interaction activities was named The Kind of Girl I Am and consisted of What I Know About Myself and What I Believe About Others. Intervening conditions were called My World and included Peer Group Influence,
Family influence and School Influence. The findings suggest the need to view female adolescents as active managers of their emerging sexuality.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, female adolescent sexuality has long been socially synonymous with adolescent pregnancy. In a society that constantly showcases and promotes sexuality in our popular media, the sexual development of our young women is paradoxically viewed in terms of the problems it brings. In the media, columnists, such as George Will and Ellen Goodman, concern themselves with the societal ills associated with teenage pregnancy and advocate a conservative (abstinence-only prevention programs) or liberal (teach kids about contraception) solution to the problem of teen pregnancy. As a result, adolescent pregnancy-focused research abounds, coming from a multitude of disciplines, but dealing mostly with risk factors, demographic predictors, and intervention programs. However, the underlying social-developmental process through which female adolescents manage to become sexual women has been neither widely studied nor defined. In particular, it has not been studied from a nursing perspective with female adolescents as the informants.

This critical feminist inspired research sought to bring to light the ways in which female adolescents discover, develop, and use sexuality management skills to achieve goals and maneuver through the changing socio-sexual environment of the teenage years. Of specific interest were the nature of female adolescents’ socio-sexual goals, the types of
skills they develop and employ, and the intra-, inter-, and extra-personal resources they incorporate into strategies for their emerging management style. The researcher used the grounded theory method developed by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and expanded by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The purpose of this research was, therefore, to develop a grounded theory of female adolescent sexuality management and with it to inform future adolescent socio-sexual development research.

**Background**

The remainder of this chapter clarifies the social and historical context of female adolescent sexuality and it was studied in this research. Further, this chapter connects the visible problem to the missing knowledge that is of interest in the research and discusses its significance for nursing. The purpose of the study, the research question and the writer’s personal perspective conclude the chapter.

**Social Context**

Sexuality and its expression are generally valued aspects of individual development, the creation of family, and the greater social good. However, when that expression occurs in those considered too young, or both too young and not married (Brown & Eisenberg, 1995), it is viewed as problematic, even deviant, both on the individual and the societal level (Miller & Moore, 1990). This view becomes apparent in the amount of research resources spent on the prevention of adolescent sexual expression as compared with time and resources spent listening to and nurturing our youth so they can function as healthy, sexual adults.

Much of the blame for our various physical and social ills is placed on the phenomenon of adolescent pregnancy and child bearing (Brown & Eisenberg, 1995). Female adolescents are also targets of welfare opponents and reformers who see teenage single mothers, especially minority members, as tax burdens. Teen pregnancy has gone to the top of the “most wanted” list on our socio-political agenda. However, while it is clear from our research that pregnancy prevention is a good thing, the question of whether prevention is possible without suppression of sexual activity is unanswered and no real progress has been made in the debate (Ehrhardt, 1996). Nowhere is the supremacy of the suppression paradigm more obvious than in the federal policy for research funding. Rather than funding research aimed at reducing unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, the federal government attempts to legislate morality through its funding policies that support only “abstinence only” sex education programs. This occurred at a time when research was beginning to focus more on sexual behavior (Eyre, Read, & Millstein, 1997) and even using qualitative methods that permit the girls’ voices to be heard (Rosenthal, Burklow, Lewis, Succop, & Biro, 1997). Furthermore, with the exception of
several popular published books (Brumberg, 1997; Pipher, 1994; Wolf, 1997), the conclusions of such research still suggest that the findings should be used to prevent sexual activity rather than guide normal sexual development.

**Historical Context**

Female adolescents past the age of menarche have been giving birth for as long as humankind has been on the Earth. The relatively low human life expectancy during prehistoric times made it necessary for proliferation of the species to begin as soon as it was possible for a female to procreate. Throughout history young women in their teens were married and had children as a matter of course (Vinovskis, 1988). Social concerns about adolescent pregnancy arose in industrialized nations primarily when pregnancy occurred out of wedlock and the mother and child became an expense to society (Vinovskis, 1988). Hence the appropriateness of giving birth to a child was viewed in relation to one’s marital status, rather than one’s age. Unwed women, including adolescents who became pregnant, were stigmatized by the public and concealed their condition whenever possible.

During the 1960s, perhaps as a result of the so-called Sexual Revolution, data began to emerge indicating a growing epidemic of pregnancy and childbirth among adolescents. Title X of the Public Health Service Act came into being in 1970 to provide family planning services to, primarily low-income, women in the United States, including sexually active adolescents. Along with Medicaid, Title X provided family planning on a national basis.
As the evidence mounted, first with the publication of ground-breaking research describing female adolescent sexuality (Kantner & Zelnik, 1972), and later with the publication of the Guttmacher Institute’s (1976) report of the epidemic of pregnancy among female adolescents (Institute, 1981), the federal government established the Office of Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention (OAPP). The legislation that followed was aimed primarily at helping pregnant and parenting teens. OAPP funded further research and demonstration projects to assist pregnant and parenting teens.

During the Reagan administration, funding for family planning fell considerably (Gold & Daley, 1991). Funding for most existing programs, the “caring” programs, was eliminated by the 1981 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act and the 1981 Adolescent Family Life Act (AFL), also known as Title XX of the Public Health Service Act, was enacted instead. Funding provided in this act was primarily intended for prevention programs stressing abstinence, and funding for programs that provided family planning services was denied, by law, unless these services were unavailable locally (Vinovskis, 1988). The role of the federal government as a sponsor of sex education programs was quite new, as sexuality previously had been addressed by home, school, and church (Brown & Eisenberg, 1995). The result of this policy change at the federal level is apparent in the change of focus from the care of pregnant and parenting teens to the prevention of pregnancy, primarily through the teaching of abstinence. In fiscal year 2003-2004, the AFL program is supporting 107 demonstration projects across the country. These projects consist of 62 abstinence education programs and 45 care programs. Six of the abstinence education projects are new programs in FY 2003.
These recent federal funding programs, authorized by the Welfare Reform Act of 1997 (Public Laws 104-193) by statute, pay for abstinence education only. In Fiscal Year 2003-04, $30.7 million were appropriated by OAPP through the AFL program enacted in 1997.

The social and political concern about adolescent pregnancy also has been the catalyst for much research about the causes and consequences of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing. The incidence has been quantified by scientists and government agencies, a profile of the high risk adolescent has been developed (Hayes, 1987), and the underlying factors associated with adolescent pregnancy have been identified (Miller & Moore, 1990). Therefore, a sizable body of substantive theory exists on the subject of adolescent pregnancy. Unfortunately, the theories have never been brought together into a comprehensive framework for use in prevention of negative consequences and promotion of healthy sexual development.

The Research Context

Miller and Fox have summarized the theoretical content of the adolescent sexuality literature under two major paradigms (Miller & Fox, 1987). In their view, adolescent sexuality is approached as either an emergent drive or as socially shaped and learned behavior over innate desires. Each approach views the phenomenon as problematic and due to either inadequate sexual control or inadequate pedagogy, respectively.

Under the emergent drive umbrella, three separate theoretical strands can be identified (Miller & Fox, 1987): Those that are biologically based, such as theories
related to hormone production, those that are psychologically based, relying for explanations upon personality types and psychological structures such as self esteem, and those that are concerned with social control, seeing sexuality as deviant and deviance as the norm. Research in each strand assumes adolescent sexuality is a biological emergence urgently pressing for expression. The premise is based on Freud’s psychoanalytic theory in which inner motivations strain against control.

Under the socially shaped behavior umbrella, similarly, three distinct theoretical directions have emerged (Miller & Fox, 1987). The first proposes socialization models for behavior, the second embraces symbolic interactionism whereby the sexual self is formed through reflected appraisals during interactions with others (Mead, 1934). These strands are based on the third, earlier approaches of Reiss and Gagnon and Simon who placed adolescent sexuality in a social context with social sources (Gagnon & Simon, 1973; Reiss, 1967). Socialization models hold that conformance and non-conformance to social norms are both based on social learning. Research under this strand identifies agents, mechanisms, and messages of socialization. Symbolic interaction approaches hold that how girls see themselves is important for the prediction of sexual experience timing and quality (Miller & Fox, 1987). Research programs under social contextual theories, of which Reiss (1967) is the originator, assert that social forces, such as family, peers, religion, and race, are major predictors of sexual activity.

More recent examples from the popular scholarly literature continue in these three directions (Brumberg, 1997; Wolf, 1997; Pipher, 1994) with a fundamental difference: The underlying assumption of female adolescent sexuality as something to be nurtured,
protected and held personally sacred. The path to fulfilling this assumption is the advocacy of our young women that must be undertaken by older women, particularly by nurses. The return of intergenerational mentoring through sexual health advocacy is an emerging research paradigm undertaken by multidisciplinary women researchers. Nursing must step under this umbrella.

The Nursing Perspective

Becoming a sexual, adult woman is not only a process of physical development. Physical development occurs, beginning in childhood, with the help of good health and nutrition (Baumrind, 1987) and barring extreme patterns of physical activity that can suppress hormonal changes (Armstrong, Welsman, & Kirby, 1999). But the personal and inter-personal emergence of sexuality involves a social process and a learning process, requiring the development and deployment of sexuality management strategies and skills for behavior (Clausen, 1991). The role of nurses includes the nurturing and fostering of healthy sexual adults through the dissemination of knowledge and the facilitation of healthy choices. But nurses’ knowledge of female adolescent sexuality is incomplete, because sexuality management is not in our research or middle range theoretical base.

The use of the term “management skills” in the proposal of this research can be linked to a nursing frame of the phenomenon. A nursing frame includes the dimensions of the metaparadigm concepts for nursing (Fawcett, 1993): Person, environment, health and nursing. “Management skills” is not a commonly used term in the context of sexuality. However, although female adolescents (person) generally receive much advice and many admonitions from parents and society (environment), in their socio-sexual conduct they
alone (person) must choose their actions and make decisions that have far-reaching impact on their own lives (health). They must develop ways to gather data about, evaluate, and manipulate their social environment and the people therein. Therefore, they must acquire what amount to management skills that help them achieve their socio-sexual goals. The nature, source and process of this emergence of sexuality management skills are the focus of this study. Its major importance for nursing is the mere addition to our primitive knowledge base in this area. Through the elucidation of female adolescent sexuality management processes we can explore how nursing can best influence them in a way that will promote healthy sexual outcomes that are beneficial to young women and avoid socially problematic outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

Adolescent pregnancy and its prevention are studied from a number of different philosophical approaches. However, in studying risk factors and attempting to predict who will become pregnant and who will not, in designing abstinence-only or abstinence-with sex-education intervention programs, we ignore the source of the phenomenon. Before we can identify risk factors and institute effective prevention programs, we must first understand the social developmental process that provides the context for unintended pregnancy.

The psychological and physiological bases of puberty and maturation are, of course, well researched. But the social developmental emergence of adolescent girls into sexual women, from the perspective of the adolescent herself, is not an issue that has been dealt
with to any degree in the research literature. Knowing how female adolescents actually manage their emerging sexuality is essential to the understanding of why some become pregnant and give birth in their teenage years and others do not.

Emerging sexuality in adolescence is a natural and normal part of becoming an adult. More than just a set of physiological changes, becoming sexual is a social developmental process and a birthright of all women. The developmental purpose of the process is to learn the ways of a female sexual being. As such, studying sexual activity among adolescents as something to be prevented does not produce helpful knowledge. Instead of studying risk factors and testing prevention programs aimed at adolescent pregnancy, our efforts should first be aimed at understanding this social developmental process of becoming a sexual woman, so that we can foster the development of healthy sexual adults. Until we understand how adolescents manage their emerging sexuality with varying outcomes, we cannot guide them in the establishment of effective sexual management practices.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory of how female adolescents discover, develop, and use sexuality management skills to achieve goals and maneuver through the changing socio-sexual environment of the teenage years. Specifically, the nature of female adolescents’ socio-sexual goals, the types of skills they develop and employ, and the intra-, inter-, and extra-personal resources they incorporate into strategies for their emerging management style are described in this research. This
research, thus, yields a grounded theory of female adolescent sexuality management. The research question was: What are the basic social processes by which female adolescents discover, develop, and use sexuality management skills to achieve goals and maneuver through the changing socio-sexual environment of the teenage years?

Significance of the Study

Although much is known about the demographics, risk profiles, and prevention approaches to adolescent sexuality (Brown & Eisenberg, 1995), it is important for nurses to know how female adolescents actually manage the process of becoming a sexual woman. Although adolescent pregnancy is generally perceived as a problem in the United States, nurses cannot deal with adolescents on a purely prescriptive basis. Adolescents do not readily accept advice that does not consider their life perspectives (Elkind, 1984). As school-based practitioners, nurses have access to female adolescents through health and sexuality education programs (Fielding & Williams, 1991). If we are to have any impact on their early sexual activity, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, we should first know how they are managing their emerging sexuality and the social processes it involves.

Female adolescents are in a state of confusion about the socio-sexual development they are undergoing (N. McKenzie, 1997). Not only do they enjoy telling their story, but they welcome feedback on what they have said. Female adolescents get a sense of what is normal sexuality management practice from peers, teen magazines, TV shows, and motion pictures (N. E. McKenzie, 1996). A clear synthesis of the accounts of female adolescents’ experiences with the process of managing sexuality would provide validation and
clarification of the experience of individuals and thus be of tremendous direct benefit to adolescents. Indirectly, they would benefit from having their perspective available to the adults with whom they interact about their social activities and sexual health, such as nurses, physicians, counselors, ministers and parents.

Society, parents, schools, churches, social agencies, and government at all levels do not have a reality-based frame of reference for the sexuality management goals, strategies and resources of female adolescents. All that is apparent to society is the manifest behavior of adolescents and the outcomes of the behavior (NCHS, 1996). The findings of this study can provide such a frame of reference and form a basis for understanding adolescent sexual behavior that has hitherto not existed. A clearer understanding among teens of what is normally experienced and felt by their peers may also be of great importance to society, because initiation of sexual behavior is highly associated with what is seen as normal in the adolescent peer group (Furstenberg, Moore, & Peterson, 1986). Female adolescents’ awareness of the strategies used by peers to manage sexuality may influence them to manage their own sexual activity more effectively, which may, in turn, raise the age of first intercourse and bring about a decrease in the incidence of adolescent pregnancy which is so desired by society. Without this type of knowledge, adults’ solutions are imposed on the problem without integrating the habits, skills, and techniques that develop within the female adolescent and her culture.
Researcher’s Professional and Personal Perspectives

All the effects of teen pregnancy and child-bearing are of grave concern to society, and are of particular concern to nursing, because our discipline is focused on the maintenance and improvement of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health. As a predominantly female profession, nurses, and this writer in particular, are also concerned about fostering healthy, strong women to extend the social gains of women in the face of traditional barriers including the imposition of outside control and dominance over women’s management of their own sexuality. Critical feminism, advocating for change in the lives of oppressed women and girls, underpins this personal perspective. Critical feminism, in the present context, holds that women are prevented from attaining their full potential by the oppressive views of female sexuality of the male mainstream (Friedan, 1963). This researcher believes female adolescents are overdue for liberation.

This personal perspective contributed to the emergence of this topic as the primary research interest of the researcher. In qualitative research, personal perspectives and experience of the researcher almost certainly impacts the interpretation of the data. Therefore it should be known to the reader. Through personal experience, the researcher had seen various outcomes of ineffective female adolescent sexuality management, including date rape, promiscuity, and abortion, much of it preceded by the promulgation of distorted ideals of virginity and morality. Through contact with female adolescents, many of them of social minorities, the writer had learned of young women for whom sexuality was a given, and a productive future was only a remote possibility. When sex was all a female adolescent had to offer, it became the defining aspect of her being, - always focused
on pleasing a male, always seeking ways to hold on to a male, sometimes the father of her child.

A preliminary study with two informants (McKenzie, 1996) further helped shape the researcher’s perspective and the a priori expectations about the theory developed. The small study suggested three possible categories relevant for sexuality management without suggesting any linkage. *Friends* are the people in whom young women confide and with whom they talk, conversation being, perhaps an early form of intimacy and testing of the trust in a relationship before contemplating intercourse. *Rules* are self identified resources to use as guidelines for sexual behavior. Everyone has some and many of them come from peers. *Assets* are all the “things you have going for you”, of which virginity could be one, and non-virginity another. Assets are used as negotiating points in the debate over initiating sexual intercourse. The more assets one has, the more one can talk one’s way out of sexual situations. All of these categories may be sexuality management resources and may play a major role in the theory about to be developed. This researcher’s a priori hunch was that female adolescents treat sex more as a means to an end than as an end in itself; and that adolescent girls would much rather be free of the pressure to be sexual or not be sexual. The sex act itself might, therefore, have been less central to the emergence of sexuality of adolescent girls than their behavior sometimes suggested.

**Summary**

This chapter has introduced the research problem as the need for discovery of sexuality management styles of adolescent females to assist with an informed approach to the problem of adolescent pregnancy and childbearing. The scope of research involving
pregnancy and childbearing in this age group and subculture has also been outlined briefly in this chapter. There is a lack of research in the area of sexuality management with the female adolescents themselves as the informants, and - especially from a nursing perspective. The purpose of this study was to develop a grounded theory that describes how female adolescents discover, develop, and use sexuality management skills to achieve goals and maneuver through the changing socio-sexual environment of the teenage years.
CHAPTER 2

POSITIONING THE PROBLEM: THEORETICAL APPROACHES AND THE ADOLESCENT SEXUALITY LITERATURE

It is sometimes said of qualitative research that one must enter the research setting with a blank slate and without the preconceptualizations that come with knowledge of current research findings. Some may even claim that the embrace of a particular approach influences the researcher, or that acknowledgment of a philosophical perspective leads to biased findings. However, no educated individual is without exposure to information or without a philosophical perspective. No researcher in any field who is familiar with the substantive aspects of that field is “untouched” by her or his readings. All that has gone before in the researcher’s experience and education serves to provide a filter through which the research is approached. It is, therefore, incumbent upon a researcher to acknowledge the underpinning paradigm and explain the defining approaches to the problem. Doing so serves as a self-declarative act, informs readers of underlying assumptions, and assures them that the research was not undertaken without attending to the existing body of knowledge and the position of the research problem in that body of knowledge. This chapter is organized into two logically distinct sections. The first section consists of: an explication of the philosophical assumptions, or paradigm, of the researcher; the introduction of two theoretical perspectives that guide this research; and, finally, a synthesis of these complementary perspectives into a framework which guides the literature review and serves as the lens through the research problems are viewed. The second section consists of a review of the literature relevant to adolescent sexuality management.
The premise of this review is the argument advanced in Chapter 1 that understanding of the emerging sexuality of adolescents and its management by adolescents is missing from the research literature. A possible cause of this void is the emphasis of governmental funding agencies on the prevention of adolescent pregnancy and repression of adolescent sexual activity altogether. The position of this researcher is that a better understanding of what sexuality means to female adolescents and the ways they manage their emerging sexuality promote knowledge of adolescent sexuality by adding subjectivity to the highly objective data already in the literature. In addition, such knowledge also supplies a platform from which to advance solutions related to adolescent sexuality including unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

World View of the Researcher

A researcher’s worldview, or paradigm, is the set of beliefs that guide research action (Guba, 1990). A worldview provides the epistemological, ontological and methodological basis for a researcher’s work (Denzin, 1994). Epistemology deals with questions about how the researcher can know the world. Ontology frames the researcher’s assumptions about reality: Is the truth really out there? Methodology, following logically from the other two aspects of a paradigm, consists of the assumptions of the researcher about how knowledge of the world can be accessed.

In nursing, the currently recognized alternative paradigms for inquiry include: positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, and critical theory. The first three will be briefly discussed here. The fourth provides the inspiration for the present research.
The positivist paradigm is characterized by an ontological position of naive realism, that is, a belief in a true, knowable reality supported by an epistemological position advancing the objectivity of scientific findings. The methodological approach taken by positivists is the methodical verification of hypotheses through experimentation (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In a human science, such as nursing, the positivist paradigm for inquiry takes a mechanistic perspective of the human body. Under the mechanistic perspective, the human being is regarded as similar to a machine, consisting of and reducible to component parts, reactively subject to universal laws, and ultimately knowable (Reese & Overton, 1970).

A second alternative paradigm for inquiry is post-positivism (Kuhn, 1962). This worldview holds the ontological assumption that there is a reality “out there” but that it is not knowable except probabilistically and without certainty. Associated with post-positivism is the organismic view of human development. Under an organismic worldview, the human being is seen as a living organism, interactive with the environment, emergent in development, and capable of qualitative as well as quantitative change. Quasi-experimental research designs are consistent with the post-positivist, organismic worldview.

A third paradigm for inquiry is constructivism. Under constructivism, ontological reality is constructed from interaction with the world and relative to the individual who is perceiving it. In constructivism, there is little distinction between reality and knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemologically, the researcher and the research participants create scientific findings jointly. This interaction is also the basis for the methodology of
constructivism, which is dialectical in nature, using comparison of the different constructions of reality to form a consensus construction of how things are. Constructions change as the researcher becomes better informed and has more exposure to the phenomena of interest (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The human being viewed in constructivist terms is consistent with a developmental contextual perspective. According to this conception of human existence and change, the person is an organism, disposed genetically in certain ways, but equally subject to environmental influence and self-construction of meaning. Human behavior is, therefore, not ultimately predictable, nor is it always subject to probability. It is however, always open to interpretation and construction, which furthers knowledge and improves understanding. The constructivist paradigm of inquiry coupled with a developmental contextualist view of the human being is part of the worldview taken in this research. The worldview is completed by a critical feminist foundation.

Critical theory, rather than a distinct worldview, is a tradition wherein theory and research become socio-political criticism (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Implicit in critical theory is the belief that power and the quest for dominance are at the heart of all social thought. The criticalist believes that facts and values are inseparable; that the relationship between concept and object is dynamic and dependent on social and political relations; and that language is at the heart of subjective understanding. Most fundamental to critical theory is the conviction that some classes of individuals are privileged and dominate other classes, the oppression being reproduced by the acquiescence of the oppressed, aided and abetted, even unintentionally, by most non-criticalist researchers.
The critical feminist bent that is inherent in this research is specifically grounded in the belief that female adolescents are among the most oppressed groups today, dominated by male peers and adults of both sexes. In an open environment no longer balanced by the protective umbrella of intergenerational mentoring of the Victorian and post-World War I era (Brumberg, 1997), female adolescents are now assaulted from all fronts with persuasive messages and physical cues for how they should conduct themselves. These beliefs are the motivation for this research.

Theoretical Orientations

The theoretical positioning of a grounded theory approach to female adolescent sexuality management includes the discussion of two guiding perspectives: Life span development (LSD) as it relates to the adolescents in the developmental process, and symbolic interactionism (SI) as it relates to the intra, inter-, and extra-personal aspects of this study. Each informed the study. Again, the explication of how each perspective sensitizes the researcher for the overall inquiry (Blumer, 1969) serves only as clarification of the theoretical underpinnings of the research. In no way was a theoretical preconception brought into the study. The data ultimately dominated the inquiry.

The Life Span Development Perspective.

Life span development (LSD) is a guiding perspective used in the study of human development. It consists of a number of statements, or principles, characterizing the nature of development as seen by its adherents. Four fundamental assumptions define the LSD perspective (Sugarman, 1986).
First, development can potentially occur throughout the life of a person, and decline is not necessarily a feature of age. There is no ultimate end state for sexuality management competence. The ideal is personal and contextual - that which leads to the best outcomes for the individual. Sexuality management skills and strategies are not confined to adolescence but continue to differentiate and integrate experiential and cognitive factors into adulthood and old age when they may apply, for example, in the maintenance of faithful love relationships or in obtaining sexual gratification through assertive communication with a partner.

Second, development is multidirectional, meaning that there is no single ideal direction development should take or any ideal milestones. Sexuality management strategies can develop by various routes and to varying extents and vary with the context of the developing person. For some, strategies that include intentional pregnancy may be a developmental solution to a difficult context (Musick, 1993). Development of sexuality management resources may be related to physical size or appearance that contribute to particular management needs or facilitate certain strategies.

Third, development occurs multidimensionally in many different areas of existence (Lerner, 1986), for example, physically, intellectually, emotionally, cognitively, spiritually, and sensually. Similarly, the resources and relationships that foster the development of a sexuality management style may derive from multiple sources through puberty including social, cultural, familial and psychological factors and relationships (DeFeo, 1990). The emergence of sexuality management may also manifest itself on many dimensions and in multidimensional behaviors.
Fourth, there is an interactional relationship between person and environment, with each influencing the other as a result. This last assumption is also a common theme in the other three, in that, it suggests the dependence of developmental trajectories on the context provided by historical events, whether personal, local, or global. Sexuality management strategies may be seen as products of multiple factors, both personal, environmental and interactive. Parental, peer, and societal values, sex educational and political inputs, and media portrayals may be among the sources of development of sexuality management strategies and skills.

A central tenet of some versions of LSD is the orthogenetic principle, first postulated by Werner and Kaplan, which states that change moves from the relatively undifferentiated toward more differentiation and higher integration (Lerner, 1986). Congruency with this principle separates development from mere change (Lerner, 1986). The notion of emergence of a style of sexuality management is consistent with the orthogenetic principle. This repertoire of strategies may have its origins in the first successful attempts to interact with the environment and have needs met in infancy. Less differentiated and less integrated resources may be found in crying, willfulness and the struggle for independence seen in toddlerhood. As higher reasoning, rational choice and cognitive development progress, integration of lessons and beliefs about results of behavior, societal values, parental values, role modeling, and peer influence may occur to produce different types of resources that include more differentiation and higher integration of influencing factors. As the details of socially and culturally acquired meanings are subsumed, the expression of the resources and relationships that support and enhance
sexuality management may become more specialized in how and to what situations they are applied.

The integration of inputs is expressed in another LSD principle: the individual as a self-organizing structure (Lerner, 1986). Different factors are assigned different levels of importance and meaning to shape the emergence of the resource. The scope, dimensions, quality, direction and extent of development are in the eye of the beholder and are intimately interwoven with present and historical context.

*Symbolic Interactionism.*

The symbolic interactionist perspective owes its philosophical origins to the Scottish philosophers Adam Smith, David Hume and others. The basis for their contribution lies in their emphasis on the empirical study of man and society as well as in their recognition of human association as central to understanding the species. The most seminal influence shaping symbolic interactionism, however came from George Herbert Mead. Mead saw mind, self, and society as deriving from the ongoing social process (Mead, 1934) and based his science on these relationships. The principles of symbolic interactionism can be summarized in three assumptions: 1) human beings act toward other beings and objects in the world according to the meaning derived from these beings and objects; 2) meaning is derived from social interaction; and 3) meanings are established and changed through an interpretive process (Blumer, 1969).

Stryker expanded this framework to allow for the inclusion of semi-stable social structures in the interaction process (Stryker, 1981). Rather than seeing a world that is continually reconstructed out of meaning derived in interaction, Stryker sees the result of
interpretation of shared meaning as classification or naming of aspects of the world. The names themselves carry meaning in the form of behavioral expectations derived from social interaction. Shared behavioral expectations, internally as well as externally applied, are roles. Behavior is role-making based on the expectations of a given situation as defined by social interaction. The degree to which the actor is role-making rather than role-playing (creating role rather than reenacting role) depends upon how deeply the interactive situations are imbedded in the larger social structure. Further, according to Stryker, (1981) changes in roles as a result of changes in meaning through interaction can ultimately change the social structure at large.

This theoretical perspective has made a contribution to grounded theory by providing focus on the social process itself and directing the investigator to look for understanding of behavior through the shared meanings constructed out of social interaction. Meanwhile, its underlying presence does not interfere with emergence of theory from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Synthesis of Two Theoretical Perspectives.

The two theoretical perspectives that guide this research are not difficult to unite. Both include a fundamental recognition that individual and societal change are reciprocal, dynamic, and intimately interrelated. Both hold the interaction between self and environment to be essential to behavior and fundamental to change. Both recognize that context and experience shape individual change as does individual behavior contribute to societal change.
The two perspectives are complementary in their contribution to the researcher’s approach to the inquiry. While LSD is primarily concerned with individual change, and secondarily with environmental change, symbolic interactionism is primarily concerned with societal change, and secondarily with individual change. Both are concerned with context and process, but at the individual and societal levels respectively. LSD and SI represent complementary perspectives from different disciplines: developmental psychology and sociological social psychology. As such they complete the theoretical perspective that frames this inquiry.

Emergent Adolescent Sexuality in the Research Literature.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, this research is based on a view that the research literature concerning adolescent sexuality is limited to a large extent to research aimed at preventing adolescent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (Ehrhardt, 1996). This limitation of the scope of research in this important area of human health and well-being may be due to the politically grounded emphasis on governmental funding for research that deals with these areas. While prevention of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) among adolescents is undoubtedly a worthwhile endeavor, it is not the only area within the adolescent sexuality domain worthy of inquiry. The focus of this literature review is to provide an overview of theories of adolescent sexuality as a body of knowledge.

Miller and Fox (1987) provide an analytical framework for integrating and organizing the knowledge that has been produced about the sexuality of adolescents. In this framework they propose that the literature has fallen within two major paradigms,
one proposing that sexuality is the result of an emergent drive, the other that it is socially learned. The emergent drive paradigm sees sexuality as a biological emergence that finds its most urgent expression during adolescence. The view can be traced to Freud’s psychoanalytic theory in which inner motivations are pitted in a struggle for control over desires. In the social learning paradigm, on the other hand, sexuality is seen as socially shaped and learned behavior and is based on the theoretical work of Reiss (1967) and Gagnon and Simon (1973). Each paradigm, then, sees a different problem in adolescent sexuality: the emergent drive position sees a problem of inadequate sexual control, while the social learning position sees the problem as inadequate pedagogy.

Miller and Fox (1987) further divide each paradigm into three theoretical strands. The emergent drive paradigm is seen as either biologically based, psychologically based, or rooted in issues of social control. In contrast, the social learning paradigm is divided into socialization models, symbolic interactionism, and social contextual theories. The framework of Miller and Fox (1987) is used to review the relevant adolescent sexuality literature.

**Sexuality as Emergent Drive**

Under the umbrella of this paradigm, human sexuality is viewed as a biologically emergent phenomenon most urgent in its drive for expression during adolescence (Miller & Fox, 1987). This view has its roots in Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theory in which the unconscious sexual drive of the id is engaged in a struggle with the superego trying to control it. While mostly applied at the level of the individual, psychological level, Freud’s theory also pertains to the relationship between parent and child. From the
view of sexuality as a natural force in need of control follows the interpretation of adolescent sexuality as dangerous or disruptive if given expression or left uncontrolled. Hence this paradigm sees adolescent sexuality as problematic and the foundation of the problem as inadequate sexual control at the personal, interpersonal and societal levels. Theories that follow logically from this view of sexuality include physiological, biological and ethological theories; psychological theories; and social control theories that emphasize the need for external, rather than internal, agents for the control of sexual behavior.

**Biologically based strands.**

Although biological explanations for behavior run contrary to the fundamental tenets of sociology, some sociologists have ventured into this territory. The work of these sociologists is based on the biological facts related to hormonal influence on individual physical changes in puberty. They merely make the step beyond and consider the possibility that hormones also may affect individual behavior. With recent advances in the genetic sciences they further consider the potential impact of genetic material on sexual behavior.

Already in the late 1970s, scientists connected mothers’ and daughters’ ages at menarche and were subsequently able to show a relationship between age at menarche and age at first intercourse (Presser, 1978; Udry & Cliquet, 1982). Newcomer and Udry made a strong argument for genetic similarity as a factor in the influence of mothers’ adolescent sexual experience on that of their daughters (Newcomer & Udry, 1985). But perhaps the most compelling evidence of biological effect on sexual behavior is in the
work measuring serum hormone content. The free testosterone index (FTI) in both males and females was the best indicator of circulating androgens and was strongly associated with virginity status, total sexual outlets (masturbation, coitus and wet dreams) and measures of sexual motivation in boys (Udry, Billy, Morris, Groff, & Raj, 1985). In girls, the evidence is less convincing, with FTI strongly associated with masturbation and sexual motivation, but not with intercourse (Udry, Talbert, & Morris, 1986). However, these appeared to be direct effects not mediated by age and puberty. Udry and colleagues found that girls follow a “socially learned sequence” (p.226) when engaging in increasing levels of physical intimacy, while the differential behavior of boys is primarily associated with hormones.

In more recent years, stronger support has been found for the implication of sex hormones in the differential sexual activity of female adolescents. Halpern, Udry and Suchindran found that increasing levels of testosterone (TES) in both black and white post-menarcheal female adolescents were strongly associated with the timing of first intercourse (Halpern, Udry, & Suchindran, 1997). The effect was moderated by regular church attendance as a social control mechanism. With the knowledge that alcohol can potentiate testosterone effects, Lindman, Koskelainen and Eriksson were able to demonstrate a significant association between alcohol intake and increased sexual motivation and arousal in female adolescents during post- and inter-menstrual phases (Lindman, Koskelainen, & Eriksson, 1999). It is important to note that even the most ardent proponents of sexual determinism through biology (Udry et al., 1986) suggest a
framework that includes social processes, at least where female adolescents are concerned.

*Psychologically based.*

Research under this strand proposes that differential sexual behavior among adolescents is linked with individual psychological factors. Among the most prevalent of factors considered is personality, with the risk-taking personality, in both sexes, being implicated in early engagement in sexual behavior (Farley, 1986; Kowaleski-Jones & Mott, 1998). Others have considered the need for affiliation and closeness, especially when contrasting boys and girls, finding that elements of bonding were important to females and not to males (Corwyn & Benda, 1999). Self-esteem and depression have also been considered for their explanatory power in the differential sexual behavior of adolescents. Chilman found that those with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in intercourse (Chilman, 1980). However, other studies found no significant differences between female adolescents with and without low self-esteem and their virginity status (Jessor & Jessor, 1975) or subsequent pregnancies (Vernon, Green, & Frothingham, 1983). In attempting to explain the apparent contradictions in this area of research, Miller, Christensen and Olson determined that the relationship between self-esteem and sexual experience is moderated by a normative context, that is, permissive norms make a positive relationship between self-esteem and sexual experience more likely, while restrictive, or abstinent, norms effect an inverse relationship (Miller, Christensen, & Olson, 1987).

*Social control theories.*
In the social control strand, deviance is assumed to be the normative state absent any constraints. Therefore, the behavior of interest becomes conformity, in this case, virginity or postponement of intercourse (Miller & Fox, 1986). Within the social control strand, Miller and Fox (1986) propose two distinct branches, the Parsonian and Hirschi models. Parsons proposed that parents prevent deviant behavior by acting as the social and sexual police (Parsons, 1951). Hirschi, on the other hand, proposed that children are constrained by the parent-child bond itself and strive to conform to their parents’ norms and expectations (Hirschi, 1969). Both strands are evident in the social control literature regarding adolescent sexuality.

Several investigators have studied the impact of parental supervision on adolescent sexual activity. Fox failed to find any effect of maternal supervision on the sexual activity of their daughters (Fox, 1981, 1986), but found instead a resistance on the part of parents to being policing agents of their adolescents’ activities (Fox, 1986). However, Jessor and Jessor (1975) discerned a relationship between parental supervision and postponement of sexual activity. The adolescent perception of parental supervision appeared to prevent sexual activity in other studies (Hanson, Myers, & Ginsburg, 1987; Hogan & Kitagawa, 1985), while still other researchers found a curvilinear relationship, wherein no parental control was most highly associated with sexual activity, moderate control least associated, and extreme control more associated with sexual activity than only moderate control (Miller, McCoy, Olson, & Wallace, 1986).

The Hirschi model has provided the framework for most of the modern research in the social control frame (Hirschi, 1969). Hirschi put forward four propositions:
1. Close attachment between adolescents and parents insulates adolescents from pressures to depart from conventional behavior.

2. Belief in conventional norms leads to conformity with those norms.

3. Commitment to conventional goals promotes conventional behavior.

4. Involvement with conventional significant others fosters conforming behaviors (Hirschi, 1969).

The majority of contemporary research under the social control umbrella follows the Hirschian strand. There is strong evidence throughout this literature that a positive mother-daughter relationship is associated with sexual inexperience in the daughter (Fox, 1981). However, it is difficult to derive the opposite from this literature, thus making the applicability of the findings moot. In more recent research with large data sets, Casper found no evidence that family interaction was able to prevent sexual activity in female adolescents (Casper, 1990).

Culturally specific research has come to similar conclusions. While the transfer of information from mother to daughter appears to increase from each generation to the next among African Americans, there is no indication that it has any impact on the age of first intercourse (Tucker, 1990). Furthermore, a growing immigrant population must deal with intergenerational differences brought about by the changing social context in the adopted country. Children find that the norms put forward by their parents do not agree with those they see around them (DeSantis, Thomas, & Sinnett, 1999).

Nevertheless, there is evidence that providing conventional, meaningful activity for adolescents can have an effect on their involvement in unprotected sex. Participants
in a community youth service program reported significantly less sexual activity than those who did not participate in the program (O'Donnell et al., 1999). Other studies have examined the effect of religious involvement on youth and found less sexual activity in those who participate in church activities (Lammers, Ireland, Resnick, & Blum, 2000; Poulson, Eppler, Satterwhite, Wuensch, & Bass, 1998; White & DeBlassie, 1992). The extension of the Hirschi account of social control of sex as an emergent drive has provided the theoretical framework for the majority of adolescent pregnancy prevention programs, especially those now legislated by the US Congress that urge abstinence without concurrent sex education.

Sexuality as Socially Learned

In contrast to the conception of sexuality as internally driven stands the paradigm in which sexuality is viewed as socially learned. The key areas for research in this paradigm deal with societal effects on the expression of sexuality and how behaviors are considered appropriate and inappropriate. Since socialization and social learning are dominant in answering these questions, the main problem for this paradigm is inadequate pedagogy (Miller & Fox, 1986). Also included under this umbrella are symbolic interactionist theories and the more macro-sociological theories of social contextualism.

Socialization models.

According to socialization models, all behavior, whether conforming to social norms or not, is socially learned. The objective of social learning theory is to identify the sources, content, and transmission methods of learning. In the case of adolescent
sexuality, parents, peers and media have been frequently examined for their role in the social learning of sexual behavior.

Parents are cited most frequently by adolescents as having taught them most about sexuality (Fox, 1986; Kahn, Roberts, & Smith, 1985; Miller et al., 1986). Paradoxically, Fox (1986b) found little direct discussion of sexual intercourse and contraception between parents and children. Mothers are more actively involved in sexual discussions with both daughters and sons than are fathers (Kahn, Smith & Roberts, 1984) and daughters are more frequently involved in discussions than are sons. Parental attitudes about sex are significant when examining the effect of interaction. The more traditional parents are in their attitudes about sex, the more impact they seem to have on the postponement of intercourse in daughters (Moore, Peterson, & Furstenberg, 1986).

Further, the active participation of the adolescents themselves in discussions of sexuality increases the complexity of their value systems, as opposed to unilateral conversations in which parents make controlling or judgmental statements (Fox, 1986). Kirby reviewed several decades of studies dealing with parent-adolescent communication and found no clear evidence suggesting that more communication produces less risk-taking sexual behavior (Kirby, 1999).

Modeling of behavior (Bandura, 1977), rather than direct transmission through discussion has also been studied. Studies of single women and their daughters suggest that daughters may model the behavior of their mothers (Miller & Bingham, 1989). This finding is supported by studies that examine multiple generations and the age at first intercourse (Fox, Fox, & Frohardt-Lane, 1982).
Recent improvements in data handling and multivariate techniques have enabled researchers to examine multiple factors in the effect of family on adolescent sexual behavior. Werner-Wilson determined that family factors pertaining to the transmission of information and values from parent to adolescent had greater power to explain differences in sexual behavior for female adolescent than they did for male adolescents (Werner-Wilson, 1998). Similarly, the growing acceptance of qualitative types of research has shed light on the patterns of communication between parents and adolescents. Interviews with mothers and adolescents were analyzed to determine agents of socialization with regard to sexuality (DiIorio, Kelley, & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). In early adolescence, the researchers found, mothers are more likely to participate with adolescents in discussions about sexuality than are either fathers or friends. Furthermore, daughters and sons talk about different topics with fathers, but fathers spend little time talking to their adolescent children about sex. Finally, female adolescents who talk about sex with their mothers more than they do with their friends are less likely to become sexually active (DiIorio, Kelley & Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). The socialization research forms the theoretical basis for pregnancy prevention programs that utilize peer educators, but it appears programs based on interaction with mothers could be more effective.

*Symbolic interaction.*

Symbolic interactionism (SI) has been explained elsewhere. Suffice it to say that research under this strand deals with how adolescents see themselves and how that perspective influences their sexual experience. In addition, the significance of parents, partners and friends in shaping the selves of adolescents is studied.
How female adolescents see themselves may be an important predictor of early sexual experience. MacCorquodale and Delamater found no relationship between self-esteem and permissiveness, but did find an association between perceived social desirability and sexual behavior (MacCorquodale & Delamater, 1979a). Shared meanings are at the heart of intimacy in the SI strand, but studies of intimate dyads are rare. Fox found that gender differences in meaning of contraception are a possible explanation for the differences in contraceptive use (Fox, 1977). In his study, females expressed a sense of powerlessness and resentment toward the male domination of contraceptive decisions. Along the same lines, Thompson and Spanier studied the influence patterns of parents, partners and peers on contraceptive use among college men and women (Thompson & Spanier, 1979). The authors found sexual partners to have the most influence over contraceptive use.

Tolman explored the understanding of female adolescents in their lived experience of sexual desire by looking for layered meanings with particular emphasis to giving the girls voice (Tolman, 1994). In the adolescent girls she studies, she uncovered patterns of disassociation from their bodies and focus on the pleasure and needs of males without concomitant acknowledgement of their own desire. She found the girls unable to talk about their own desire as something legitimate and normal, because of what she calls the “cultural stories” that they perceive to the contrary. Other recent authors have embraced what amounts to essentially symbolic interactionist frameworks with critical feminist undertones. Pipher’s popular work, “Reviving Ophelia”, about the oppression of female adolescents in their struggle towards womanhood combines a micro-interactionist
frame with a macro-contextualist frame (Pipher, 1994). Pipher used case studies from her work as a therapist to explore the ways girls perceive themselves in society and how society in turn perceives and poisons adolescent girls. She found a pervasive pattern of adolescent girls “losing themselves” when they enter adolescence, becoming what others want them to be. The adolescent response to Pipher also straddles both the dyad and society in its search for adolescent truth (Shandler, 1999). Shandler, herself an adolescent, was touched by Pipher’s book, but felt it was incomplete because Pipher’s perspective was that of an adult. Shandler set out to elucidate Pipher’s findings through the stories of adolescent girls themselves. Believing Pipher’s book had overstated the misery of girls, she solicited girls’ own stories. To her surprise, she received testimony that shattered her perceptions of normalcy among her friends and girls nationwide. She found a wide gap between what girls have been told to think, what they say they think, and what they actually think. She found a deeply ingrained ability of girls to regurgitate acceptable opinions and behavior with little awareness of the deep damage done by assuming such superficial happiness (Shandler, 1999). Both Shandler and Pipher express longing for more women taking on the task of mentoring their younger peers.

Intergenerational mentoring is a key recommendation of Brumberg’s powerful analysis of how American girls’ view themselves in the changing social and historical context (Brumberg, 1997). She found that female adolescents are torn between their own desires to be themselves sexually and the expectations of society. Young girls are constantly exposed to sexual images from an early age, coupled with messages about abstinence. It is no wonder they are confused. She sees intergenerational mentoring as a
protective and nurturing solution to this abusive manipulation of girls by social forces. Finally, Naomi Wolf provided a provocative analysis of how our current social context distorts the truth of female sexuality (Wolf, 1997). In her retrospective analysis of girls’ sexual stories in post-sexual revolution America she sought to uncover how our society turns girls into women. She concluded that the sexual revolution did not free young women but did endow girls with a new state of mind regarding sex. However, she concluded, the feminist revolution had a far greater impact by its efforts to emancipate women’s thinking about their right to control their own sexuality.

_Social contextual theories._

In social contextual theories, social forces, such as the orientation of family and peers, religious affiliations and political movements are viewed as immediate antecedents to early sexual activity in adolescents. The works discussed above under the symbolic interactionist strand straddle both dyadic and macro-social context. They differ from those in the social-contextual strand of the “sexuality as socially learned” umbrella in that the above works do not see sexuality as problematic and therefore do not seek to suppress it. In the problem-focused literature, Reiss (1967) initiated this literature strand when he theorized that allowing autonomous dating - permitting adolescent couples to spend unchaperoned time together - was key to sexual permissiveness. Therefore, he blamed parents for the growing incidence of adolescent pregnancy. There is no question that there has been a substantial, and apparently intentional, decrease in parental supervision of adolescent social activities (Alwin, 1986). In addition, minors have obtained increasingly autonomous legal standing (Rodman, Lewis, & Griffith, 1984) and, until the
Reagan administration, a growing acceptance of adolescent sexuality as a natural and accepted phenomenon (Back, 1983). However, this tendency seems to have been reversed in recent years (Ehrhardt, 1996; Visnoskis, 1988).

Summary

This chapter has introduced the perspective of the researcher and reviewed the adolescent sexuality literature. The perspective has been described in terms of the researcher’s critical feminist inspired social constructivist worldview and developmental contextualist research perspective. This chapter then positioned the researcher as being guided by two theoretical perspectives: life span development and symbolic interactionism. The perspectives have been explained individually and synthesized. Finally, the research literature pertaining to adolescent sexuality has been reviewed in terms of the Miller and Fox (1986) analytical framework. The literature has focused primarily on adolescent sexuality as problematic and has dealt with solutions of a preventive nature rather than looking beneath the surface in the world of the adolescents themselves for information about how they manage their sexuality. While the problematic approach has illuminated the field with respect to a limited set of behaviors, notably pregnancy and contraception, other subjectively experiential aspects of female adolescent sexuality, its meanings and management have been ignored.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into three major sections. The first section deals with the choice of a qualitative method, specifically the grounded theory method, for this research, and describes a pilot study. The second section consists of a description of protection of human subjects and the specific procedures that were used in the research. The third section addresses the ways in which the research was evaluated with regard to reliability of the data and the trustworthiness of the data representation.

Definition of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a qualitative method for generating substantive theory. First developed by Glaser and Strauss, it has been modified by Strauss and Corbin, whose definitions guided the current study. A grounded theory is generated inductively from the data gathered to study a phenomenon. Data on which the theory is built can include narratives from interviews as well as participant observation pertaining to the phenomenon of interest, or core category.

The data are analyzed qualitatively by grouping them into elements that convey similar conceptual meaning. Once refined, concepts are formed based on the grouped data. Constantly going from inductive to deductive reasoning and back, concepts become abstract and form categories. The categories necessary for a theory are defined by the Paradigm Model defined elsewhere in this dissertation.

Finally, categories are linked by associating them with propositions or hypotheses. These are statements that propose relationships between categories to
complete the theory. The relationships proposed in hypotheses are conceptual and not yet measured. Data collection, data analysis and theory generation are the elements of an iterative and reciprocal process which serves to answer a question by studying its setting and letting the relevant concepts, categories and hypotheses emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Choice of a Qualitative Research Method

Definition of Qualitative Research

In this study, the Grounded Theory method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used for data collection, analysis, and theory development. Grounded theory is considered a qualitative method, in that it uses non-mathematical analytical procedures to draw conclusions about data gathered in a variety of ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is also an inductive approach to knowledge generation in that it does not proceed from a theory or a set of hypotheses, rather, it begins with a relatively blank slate on which only the research questions and their related assumptions are written. The qualitative researcher studies phenomena in their natural settings and interprets them in terms of the meaning that informants place on them (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A qualitative researcher usually uses multiple methods to gain deeper understanding and greater rigor in the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). For this study data collection was by intensive interviewing and data analysis using the constant comparative method.

Advantages of a Qualitative Method

A qualitative method is chosen for reasons which include the paradigm and perspective of the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative research is built on a
belief that absolute truth is not obtainable, even if one believes it exists. Truth is in the interpretation that comes out of what phenomena mean to the individual. Therefore, personal experience and what people gain from it in their private lives can best be studied using a qualitative approach.

Generally, a qualitative approach lends itself well to questions for which the knowledge base is immature (Burns & Grove, 1995). Little first-hand, empirical knowledge exists about how adolescents manage their sexuality or what extra-personal resources and relationships they tap for support. That knowledge, or its basis, exists within the minds of female adolescents who may, perhaps, even be unaware of what they know and do, until they become qualitative research informants. A further advantage of a qualitative approach to the problem of interest in this study, which is dependent on the adolescent perspective, is that the informant, in this case the female adolescent, is the source of the data. The researcher’s task is to extract the reality from the informant (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

Suitability of Grounded Theory

Specifically, the grounded theory approach is appropriate because: (a) the goal of the research is to uncover meaning and processes about phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) from multiple perspectives of middle-adolescent females not found in the existing literature; (b) the method accommodates the plasticity and dynamic nature of social interaction; and (c) the approach allows the discovery of meaning in its native context, which is essential to understanding the social processes involved in female adolescent sexuality or Relationship Management.
Within nursing science, qualitative research has been characterized as a first step in uncovering concepts which can later be tested or validated quantitatively (Hinshaw, 1979c). However, the bricolage, or patchwork, developed by the researcher using a multi-method and multi-data source approach, supplants quantitative validation and provides rigor to the process of scientific discovery (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In this research the analytical method was the constant comparative method, while the data sources were interviews with multiple female adolescents.

*Theoretical Sensitivity*

Theoretical sensitivity is the insight with which the researcher enters the research which gives her or him the ability to perceive meaning in the data and to distinguish relevant from irrelevant material (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This quality can come from a variety of sources, including personal and professional experience, as well as the substantive literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through the constant comparative method, in which data collection and analysis are interwoven, and through asking questions about the data, theoretical sensitivity is enhanced further by the research process itself. In this research, where the researcher essentially entered the sub-culture of Southwestern American female adolescents, theoretical sensitivity was significantly enhanced in the course of the exposure to the informants. This was especially true in the area of language and the role of the peer group in female adolescent life.

*Glaser v. Strauss and Corbin*

Although Glaser and Strauss published their *Discovery of grounded theory* jointly, they subsequently took different directions in grounded theory to the extent that
some researchers consider their two versions as different qualitative methods. This researcher is not among those who believe so, but nevertheless feels it is necessary to state a commitment to Strauss and Corbin and not Glaser to clarify the direction of this research for those who believe in the dichotomy. The essential differences and the reasons for choosing Strauss and Corbin are outlined here.

Glaser (1992) maintains that Strauss never truly understood grounded theory and that he revealed this in his work with Juliet Corbin (1990). Glaser is committed to a flexible qualitative paradigm and is not concerned with issues of scientific rigor. He finds Strauss and Corbin’s systematic approach confining and maintains that his own method is self-correcting. For Glaser, the research problem is discovered as a by-product of analysis, while Strauss began with a research question as the definition of what is to be studied.

This investigator used the systematic approach and strategies outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990). In particular, the researcher used the Paradigm Model proposed by Strauss and Corbin as a framework for data analysis and data presentation. Having a specific research question is generally more useful to a novice researcher and a better fit for the dissertation process. In addition, use of a well-defined method is more likely to meet the standards of trustworthiness for the evaluation of the work of a novice researcher. This proved the case in the present research. Where Glaser’s work contributed to the approach of Strauss and Corbin, Glaser has been cited with the understanding that Strauss and Corbin’s method is the one used for this research.
Procedures

The specific procedures that were used in this research are outlined in this section. The issue of “bracketing” versus use of self in the research will be the first topic. Next, the protection of human subjects through informed consent, the ethics of conducting research with a vulnerable population, inclusion criteria, and sampling procedures will be described. A review of the data collection process follows, and, finally, the general and specific analytical methods that were used to deconstruct the data from various sources and reconstruct the theoretical model sought in the research questions are described.

Use of Self in the Research

In grounded theory research, the use of self and one’s theoretical sensitivity is critical. The researcher reacts to the data by pursuing new questions in response to the data and then interprets the data using the self. Unlike some researchers using phenomenology, the researcher in grounded theory does not “bracket out the self” (Lipson, 1991; Beech, 1999). The approach in this research was, therefore, not a bracketed approach. Theoretical sensitivity rules out bracketing of awareness. Nevertheless, the contamination from theoretical presuppositions can be avoided in grounded theory. In this research, the researcher maintained a journal containing the expected versus emerging findings based on the researcher’s perspective. In general, a declaration of a priori expectations allows the researcher, as well as auditors and readers, to compare the findings and the perspective and make determinations of the extent of influence exerted by the a priori perspective.
Gender and Minority Inclusion

This study included only females because males are not personally at risk for becoming pregnant and in all likelihood follow a different course in their management of emerging sexuality. Sexuality management in male adolescents could be the focus of future studies. The use of snowball sampling tended to limit inclusion of minority informants although conscious efforts were made to request referrals to individuals whose cultural experience is different. However, within the parameters of this study, time became limited, and recruitment of an ethnically diverse sample became less of a consideration, as the focus on theoretical sampling had to come first. Snowball sampling was a limitation when it came to minority inclusion in this study given the time constraints.

Human Subjects Protection

All informants interviewed in the study received explanatory material followed with one-on-one of telephonic contact. Parental signed informed consent was obtained (Appendix A) from a parent or guardian in accordance with requirements of the University of Arizona’s Human Subjects Protection Program (IRB) for protecting members of vulnerable populations. In addition, informants themselves were asked to sign an assent form (Appendix B) which described the purpose and procedures of the study in the much the same manner as did the parental consent form, only in simpler terms. Six informants were interviewed for this study. Human Subjects approval had been obtained for the recruitment of a maximum of 50 informants.
Parents and informants were given the list of sample questions of the type that were asked during interviewing (Appendix C). Prior knowledge of interview questions served to reassure parents and informants regarding the nature of the questions as well as to prepare informants for the kind of content about which they would be asked. No sexually explicit questions were asked. For the purposes of this study, a sexually explicit question was defined as any question which described, or asked for a description of, the physical aspects or performance of any sexual act.

Informants and parents were assured of the voluntary nature of participation in the study, and that they were free to withdraw at any time. In addition, informants and parents were informed that contents of the interviews, the audio tapes, and all coding would be kept strictly confidential. At no time were informants referred to by their name during taping, nor did real names appear on tapes, transcripts, data analysis documents or computer files. Further, parents and informants were assured that audio tapes would be erased after transcription of interviews and data analysis. Only the researcher and the dissertation committee have had access to the data.

Use of Informants from a Vulnerable Population

Two main issues emerge under this heading: (a) the protection of the informants and (b) the credibility of their data. When adolescents are approached by a researcher, they are potentially compromised by the perceived status difference between adult and child. They could have been further be intimidated by the academic researcher as an authority on the topic of sexuality. Informants in this study were protected from perceived coercion by: (a) being contacted through an introduction from someone they
knew, - indeed, from a peer; (b) not being approached by the researcher until they had agreed to talk with the researcher on the phone through their referring friend; and (c) having the opportunity to change their minds about their participation or the use of their data at any time, whether they had signed consent and assent forms, even during the interview or after its completion; and (d) being protected by the requirement of signed parental consent. If they did not feel they could say no to the researcher, they could do so through their parents. Of the nine girls referred for this study, only one did not wish to be interviewed. She felt she would not be comfortable talking about her experiences. Of the remaining eight, two could not be scheduled in a timely manner, and may, in fact, not have felt comfortable being interviewed.

In addition to protecting the adolescents in these ways, the researcher provided a careful explanation of what would be involved, including the use of audio tape recording. The researcher made it clear that there were no right or wrong answers (Faux, Walsh & Deatrick, 1988). The researcher also attempted to allay any anxiety in the adolescent by dressing informally, asking permission to take notes and explaining their utility, meeting in an informal setting of the adolescent’s choosing, and attempting to establish rapport before launching into the interview guide questions.

The credibility of the data given by adolescents has been discussed in the nursing literature. According to Faux, Walsh and Deatrick (1988), unstructured or semistructured interviewing facilitate data gathering from children and adolescents by letting them express their perspective in a way that no survey instrument developed by adults can do. The cognitive limitations in this age group (13-17 years) are minimal. Linguistic
considerations were acknowledged in the phrasing of the interview guide questions, which were tested for readability level by a software program and were given a Flesh-Kincaid grade level of 5.6. A number of researchers have found that children between 7 and 14 years of age are reliable informants (Edelbrock, Costello, Dulcan, Conover & Kala, 1985; Deatrick & Faux, 1991). The informants knew that the researcher was a nurse and that all information was given in strictest confidence. Specifically, they were told about the precise purpose for which the data would be used and that all tapes would be erased after transcription, ruling out recognition of their voices. Hopefully, this sense of anonymity increased the credibility of the informants’ stories. Indeed, none expressed concerns over confidentiality.

Sampling

The questions in this research concerned the ways female adolescents manage their sexuality as they move toward adulthood and the personal, inter-personal and extra-personal resources they call upon in the process. The setting, the informants, recruitment, and access are the framework of study sampling. The components are detailed in the following paragraphs.

Setting

The data in this study resided in the consciousness and experience of female adolescents. As such, the setting studied was the culture of adolescents from an emic perspective. Sexual behavior was not the focus of this study, per se. Therefore the majority of the data came from the life experience and resulting perspective of the female adolescent. Access to these data was most readily obtained in a face-to-face interview
setting. Interviews were conducted in the homes of informants or in other private settings chosen by informants and approved by their parent or guardian. Due to the sensitive nature of the study focus, it was thought some adolescents might be reluctant to be interviewed in their homes so they were offered the opportunity to select another location. Their choices reflected their level of comfort as well as convenience. Three informants were interviewed in their homes with a parent at home, but not in the interview area. Two were interviewed in a private room in a public library, and one was interviewed in the home of the referring friend.

Informant Characteristics

The researcher sought to interview middle adolescent females between the ages of 13 and 17. This age group was the focus of the study, because its members are likely to have reached sexual maturity (Zabin, 1990) and, more importantly, are likely to have begun to experience the issues of sexuality which necessitate its management. The six informants who provided data for this study ranged from 13 to 17 years of age. One informant was 13, two were 15, two were 16 and one was 17.

A heterogeneous sample was sought, in the sense that female adolescents of any race and ethnicity were of interest as context is not constrained in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and cultural differences illuminate the concepts in the study and provide direction for theoretical sampling. As data collection and analysis occurred almost simultaneously (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the direction of inquiry flowed from the material uncovered. In the course of seeking informants who would illuminate emerging concepts, it became apparent that the young women who were willing to be interviewed
were the closest associates of other informants, and therefore similar to those other informants. The sample therefore ended up more homogenous than had been anticipated. However, homogeneity of the sample can be a positive aspect of a study as distinctions in Grounded Theory must be earned rather than ascribed (Glaser, 1978). All informants were white and middle class. Siblings ranged from none to two. Four informants came from homes where parents had intact marriages and lived together. One informant was living with her mother and visited her father on weekends. One informant lived with her grandfather’s second family and visited her divorced mother and brothers on weekends and during vacations. Family incomes ranged from $40,000 to over 80,000 per year. All informants described themselves as “middle class”. In spite of the relatively homogenous nature of the informants, new informants, whose perspectives were likely to elucidate or contradict potentially emerging concepts, were selected on the basis of informant referral and were able to provide data because experiences that made up the emerging concepts were shared by several informants.

For example, an emerging concept was “power in a relationship”. One informant described an incident in which she felt dominated in her relationship with her boyfriend. After pursuing the concept with the informant, the researcher then asked the informant if she knew someone else who may have had similar experiences, and if that individual might be willing to become an informant. Subsequent informants who had experience with one or more relationships provided more data around this as well as other concepts. Thus the category, “Dealing with boys” eventually became a major theoretical component.
In grounded theory research the researcher continues to collect data until all categories and linkages are saturated. In other words, the researcher continues to seek out information from informants until new information stopped appearing and data provided support for existing categories and their linkages. In this study, sufficient data to support the emerging categories was obtained after six informants had been interviewed.

**Recruitment and Access**

Participants for the pilot study (McKenzie, 1996) were recruited by word-of-mouth referral. Contacts developed through this process formed the catalyst for the snowball sampling procedure used in the present study. In snowball sampling, the researcher obtains referral from informants to other individuals who meet the study criteria outlined below.

Polit and Hungler (1983) classify snowball sampling as a non-probability, accidental or convenience, type of sampling. The main drawback of the method is the potential for bias. The issues of bias in this context are due to the possibility that people who know each other have similar experiences and views on sexuality. However, as the phenomenon under study, sexuality management, occurs at highly individual levels in virtually all female adolescents, the potential for bias was fairly small. Trans-cultural, trans-ethnic, and trans-social referrals referrals did not occur, perhaps as a result of the highly isolating effect of the adolescent peer group.

Sampling, as described by Polit and Hungler, refers to the recruitment of individual study participants as distinct from theoretical sampling, which refers to the pursuit of events and experiences in the lives of those informants on the basis of
emerging concepts and categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Therefore, theoretical sampling occurs independently of snowball sampling and refers to data collection not recruitment of participants. Snowball sampling used with theoretical sampling, then, would be first the recruitment of informants, then the sampling of events and experiences from those informants.

Snowball sampling can also be a strategy to minimize the access problems associated with conducting research in a vulnerable population. Burke (1991) relates the issues that must be addressed when attempting to recruit adolescent research participants in public schools, including planning, advertisement, organization and flexibility. By using snowball sampling in this study, not only did the researcher approach the prospective informant with an introduction from a friend but knew beforehand that the adolescent was likely to meet the inclusion criteria of the research, thus avoiding fruitless expectations and expenditures of time.

**Inclusion Criteria**

The criteria for inclusion in this study were: (a) female, (b) between ages 13 and 17, (c) parental consent, (d) informant consent, (e) able to speak English (researcher speaks and understands only English), and (f) residents of the Greater Tucson, AZ area. This last criterion may have limited generalizability, but also helped avoid the introduction of regional differences which could not be confirmed by other, similar informants. The specific experience characteristics of the informants sought for subsequent interviews varied after the initial interviews, according to the emerging
categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), but the inclusion criteria prevailed throughout the study. No other criteria pertained.

Data Collection

In grounded theory methodology data collection and analysis are tightly interwoven (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and can scarcely be thought of as taking place independently of one another. Theory is developed using what Glaser and Strauss in their original formulation of the method called the “constant comparative method” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. vii). This interactive process will be described further in the data analysis section.

Chronology of Events

The researcher’s first contact with each informant was a telephone call to her parent or parents. The introductory phone call was preceded by a brief, personal overview of the study presented to the prospective informant by the referring individual. The researcher first introduced herself and provided her university affiliation. Having briefly described the research and answered the parent’s questions, the researcher obtained permission to speak with the adolescent. When the adolescent came to the phone, the researcher repeated the introductory information. She then explained the purpose of the study to the adolescent in lay terms and asked the adolescent if she would be interested in participating. If the prospective informant agreed, she was mailed a packet of information, including a further description of the study, a demographic data sheet (Appendix C), the parental informed consent form (Appendix A) and informant assent form (Appendix B). The researcher telephoned again within 7 days to inquire
whether the parents had given their consent and whether the adolescent was still interested in participating. If both agreed to proceed, the researcher made an appointment to interview the adolescent and negotiated a location agreeable to both. The agreed upon location for the interview might be the informant’s home in a private area. In the pilot study (McKenzie, 1996) this was easily achieved. However, a location in the College of Nursing or another public location with private space available was also given as an option. Ultimately, the informant, and possibly her parents, decided the setting for the interview. When necessary, the researcher asked parents and siblings to allow privacy for the interview. Two days prior to the interview, the researcher called the informant to confirm the appointment. The researcher picked up the completed and signed forms at the time of the interview.

**Interviewing**

Data collection consisted of loosely structured, audio-taped interviews. Permission to tape the interview was obtained in the consent and assent forms, however, the researcher was prepared for expensive memoing and immediate completion of filed notes should the informant change her mind about taping at the last minute. All informants agreed to be audiotaped, making verbatim transcription of the data possible. During each taped interview, the researcher wrote notes about possible themes or categories that are coming out in the informant’s narrative. The loose structure came from an interview guide consisting of a list of open-ended questions based on concepts from the literature. In a pilot study (McKenzie, 1996) this guide was used to begin the flow of information, however, other questions and statements emerged from the
informants’ narratives. Questions asked in grounded theory research can be interactional, biographical or organizational (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). To answer the research question, data generating questions included the following:

1. Girls your age are sometimes starting to develop close friendships with another young person. Are you experiencing that? How does that start?

2. Tell me about some ways that having a boy as a friend has been different than having a girl as a friend. Can you give me some examples from your experience?

3. What sort of expectations do you think a boy has of you when you have a close friendship?

4. How have you handled those kinds of expectations? Has anything helped you with that?

5. How do you know how to handle a relationship with a boy? If necessary, follow-up with: Do you ever read about it or watch programs?

6. Was there a time when a boy expected something from you and you disagreed with what he was expecting from you? Tell me about that.

7. How did you handle that whole situation?

8. What do you think was going on in that situation?

9. Have there been any other situations like that, maybe about getting romantically involved?

10. Can you tell me what was going on at that time?

As is apparent from the nature of the questions, the emphasis was on getting the informant to give a narrative about relationships she may have had. A pilot study gave
indications that informants were expecting a more structured approach and therefore were unsure of what type of answers were sought by the researcher. To avoid short, precise answers and encourage thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973, p. 16), informants were asked to think of each answer as a detailed narrative of her experience. In a pilot study, two interview transcripts yielded over 1000 lines of rich and complex data. In this study, the amount of data obtained varied greatly among the informants. Several spoke incessantly and produced well over 500 lines of transcript, while two spoke in short sentences and had to be prompted frequently to yield meaningful data.

Clarification and amplification of content during the interview was enhanced by a process described by Snow, Zurcher and Sjoberg (1982). The technique, known as interviewing by comment, entails the interjection of comments that call for clarification or amplification by the interviewee. For example, the interviewer can ask for clarification: "I am not sure I understand what you are getting at. Could you talk about that a little more?", or prompts the subject for more description: "So what you are saying is...". Not only did this approach produce more data, it produced more accurate data by checking with the informant about emerging themes even as they emerged.

The shaping of informant responses by the interviewer is inevitable (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The language introduced by the interviewer, such as asking for stories about certain kinds of experiences rather than a question and answer format, frames the data as a narrative. Doing so, however, does not contaminate the data, but rather helps make the focus of the research salient for the informant (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Nevertheless, the narrative must be that of the informant, and full attention must be given
to what the informant deems important, rather than what the researcher wants. To accomplish this and obtain genuine data, the researcher made a point of acknowledging the possibility that questions could be leading and encouraged the adolescent not only to talk about her own experience and reality but also to tell the researcher if she was getting off track. The adolescents willingly obliged.

As possible categories and subcategories became apparent during coding of each transcript, the researcher attempted to refine interview questions to uncover more dimensionality of the categories and the reality described by the participants. In addition, follow-up questions emerged as potentially fruitful prompts. Question refinement is based on the concepts salient to the researcher, who acquires growing theoretical sensitivity toward the topic (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and by the use of the constant comparative method.

Memoing and Field Notes

During, but mostly after, each interview, the interviewer wrote notes of a theoretical or operational nature (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, upon completing an interview, brief field notes (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) were written describing the circumstances of the interview, the informant’s demeanor, and formative ideas pertaining to emerging theoretical categories. Field notes are intended to incorporate the data elements of the setting as well as the emerging ideas of the researcher (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995) and provide a basis as well as data for the subsequent analysis of the interview transcripts. Field notes generally help keep recollections of the setting and context fresh in the mind of the researcher and focus subsequent coding of the data.
However, in this study, the interview setting was very neutral (for example, the informant’s home or a room in the public library), provided no observational data to speak of, and had no real bearing on the content of the interview, other than providing privacy. As can be expected, the initial thought processes written in the field notes frequently changed as the data were coded and the constant comparative method came into play.

*Media Mentioned by Informants*

Informants were asked if they ever read anything or watch programs about how to manage their relationships with boys. If an informant had referred to general types of media, such as teen magazines, motion pictures, or text books, the intention was that such sources would have been consulted. However, as described in Chapter 4, only few referred to media when asked, and then only peripherally. Therefore, teen media were consulted only prior to beginning data collection as a means of improving theoretical sensitivity and learning the adolescent language. Text from the selected sources was not included as data for analysis as the adolescents felt that teen-targeting media, while entertaining, had little, if any, basis in the reality of adolescent life. Indeed, several of the adolescents preferred music and fantasy books over teen magazines.

*Data Management*

The researcher transcribed the audio tapes to computer files. Later interviews were listened to and dictated into word processing software. The data were managed using Word for Windows 98 and XP (Microsoft Inc., Redmond, WA.). During initial, open coding, data were copied to files containing other data which, upon comparison,
seemed to convey similar content to support emerging categories. As data were moved or copied to new locations according to the coding decisions of the researcher, the original source informant identification code and the original transcript line numbers remained attached to the data. This procedure helped maintain the audit trail and enabled the researcher to return to the original data context with ease.

**Data Analysis**

The raw materials for data analysis consisted of interview transcripts, and observational and theoretical field notes and memos. Data analysis was repetitive and reiterative with each round of coding resulting in first more, then fewer categories, yielding greater density of data within categories. The following sections describe how the data were analyzed, how coding led to the emergence of categories and a grounded theory which became the end product of the research.

**Constant Comparison**

The analysis of data in the grounded theory method is ongoing from the time of the first interview (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The constant comparative method calls upon the investigator to engage in continuous comparison of observations and provisional concepts and categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Therefore, data collection and data analysis are simultaneous and ongoing, with each interview being coded before the next takes place. Ideally, data analysis begins during the first interview as initial ideas of the social process described begin to form.

To ensure accuracy and increase familiarity with the data, transcription of the interviews was performed by the investigator. This served as an essential feature of
ensuring accuracy of data and provided reminders of non-verbal behavior that enhanced
the meaning of the data. General impressions and early ideas that built upon the
interview notes were written as the transcripts were generated. Audio tapes were erased
once this dissertation was accepted.

Coding

Perhaps more than any other procedure in grounded theory, coding is aimed at
“identifying, developing and relating concepts” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 177).
In this study, coding began with open coding, continued with axial coding, and concluded
with selective coding. Prior to open coding, the data bits were created by breaking the
transcript narrative into meaningful and separate chunks. This was done by making
pencil marks around each data bit in the transcript text. The reasons for chunking a bit of
data, as described below as open coding, were written in the margin of the transcript for
later combination with chunks that were segregated for similar reasons.

Open coding.

Open coding is the process of identifying each data bit by asking: What is this?
Or, what is going on here? The answers provided the provisional names and descriptions
of phenomena related to the research question. Openness, in the sense of freedom to see
different categories, was critical to this early part of the data analytical process. Through
such open coding, and by poring over the data, categories and their properties were, at
first tentatively, identified. Open coding continued with more informants. The researcher
then began to identify more provisional categories and subcategories, while others
previously identified were set aside, eventually to be discarded in favor of more salient
ones. Interviewing and sampling became more purposeful or focused on validating, refining and finding contrast for the provisional categories and concepts already developed.

*Axial coding.*

Open coding was followed by axial coding, whereby the data, which were deconstructed during open coding, were put back together in new ways that suggested the linkages between categories and subcategories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories were refined and defined in terms of their relatedness. Strauss and Corbin (1990) propose a specific paradigm for axial coding which served as the organizing framework for data analysis in this study. Categories were related in terms of (a) conditions, (b) context, (c) action/interaction, and (d) consequences (p.185). The purpose of coding for these dimensions was to uncover change, variation, and process, and to develop from the coding, propositions about causality, conditions, and modifying elements of sexuality and its management in this population. These tentative propositions became hypotheses as they were strengthened and supported by data.

Relational and variational sampling were used during axial coding. This kind of sampling either samples purposefully on the variations and relationships that are proposed in the emerging framework, or seeks out informants who can provide support for or cast doubt on as many differences as possible in the data. In this study, the systematic approach was predominant since it was difficult to know in advance what an informant would say (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).
Selective coding.

Selective coding continued the work of developing hypotheses by completing any categories that seemed insufficiently defined, sought empirical validation of relationships between categories, and integrated categorical linkages to solidify the theory. Discriminative sampling was used in this phase to the extent possible. Discriminative sampling is the deliberate seeking out of individuals who can provide data to either support, or possibly refute a given hypothesis. For example, to provide for a hypothesis regarding the role of gender-based power difference in relationships, the researcher attempted to seek out a female adolescent who was seen by a referring informant as someone who might be dominated by her boyfriend. This level of deliberateness was necessary at this stage to assist in the empirical verification of categories, subcategories and relationships. During this period in the research, reality, as interpreted by the informants, was compared with emerging hypotheses, which in turn were revised to mirror reality (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The Core Category

The core category is the phenomenon of interest around which all the other categories and their relationships are integrated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The core category is the one category which has emerged and which is abstract enough to encompass the essential narrative presented by the sum of the analysis up until now. If no single category exists, one must be devised that sums up the social process under study. This study presupposed in its title that the phenomenon of interest would be sexuality management situated in the context of ‘becoming a sexual woman’. However,
this phase did not adequately summarize the study findings when the data were analyzed. While the original title suggested a process called sexuality management, the informants provided data that suggested Relationship Management. While sexuality management was part of this process, it was not the whole process. The core category was the basis for the name of the grounded theory generated. It contains the essential meaning of the social process studied. The only requirement of the core category name is that it must fit the concept it is intended to label (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). By re-titling the core category “Relationship Management” that was achieved.

Saturation

The explicit purpose of grounded theory is the generation of a theory, in this case a theory to explain how female adolescents manage emerging sexuality by managing relationships. Therefore, the end product of this study is a set of propositions. Data collection ceased when the categories were adequately complete, or saturated (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Saturation occurred when no new category properties emerged in sampling, when the category was seen as densely developed, and the relationships between categories were substantively supported (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 188). The objective of having complete categories was not similarity, but diversity. How did the researcher know when saturation had been reached? This occurred as a combination of: (a) the empirical limits of the data; (b) the completeness, or density, of the theoretical components and linkages; and (c) the level of theoretical sensitivity attained by the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 62).
End Product

In grounded theory, theoretical propositions are embedded in the narrative, not enumerated in a list (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The study findings consist of the story extracted from the data and the statements that tie the story together. The end product of the study is a substantive theory that can be applied to other groups that meet the same conditions as those met in the informant sample in this study.

Trustworthiness and Authenticity

A frequent criticism of all qualitative research is that it lacks rigor and certitude, an element that cannot be assured in the most carefully planned quantitative studies. However, trust in the data and their interpretation is dealt with in grounded theory and other methods of qualitative research in special ways. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explained the effect of their methods, especially the constant comparative method, on credibility of the data. A more formal approach to methods that assure the credibility of data collection and interpretation were introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and later modified by them (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln, 1991). The early methods were summarized under the heading of Trustworthiness. The later addition was referred to as Authenticity.

Trustworthiness

The evaluative methods that ensured trustworthiness were incorporated throughout the research. Specifically, Lincoln and Guba recommended that the data must be credible. Credibility is the sense of fit between the data and the reality they portray.
Several features of this research led to this sense of isomorphism: a) prolonged engagement, b) persistent observation, c) peer debriefing, and d) member checks.

Prolonged engagement, although it suggests the continued presence in a given setting, also applies to remaining in the sampling process until categories are saturated as in this study. Persistent observation was incorporated to the extent possible through the memoing of details in the informants’ environment and demeanor before, during and after interviews. These two features together added scope and depth to the research.

Peer debriefing and member checks are ways of discussing hunches, ideas, and conclusions with others. In the case of the former, discussions took place with the dissertation director over a period of several years. To carry out the latter, ideas were discussed with an informant as the best way to assure credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through these techniques, additional issues or possible misinterpretation of issues were addressed and explored.

**Member Checks**

The researcher sought to add validity and credibility to the emerging framework by going back to one informant to discuss tentative findings. This session took place by telephone and was not audio taped. However, the researcher documented the session in detail through complete, written notes. The relationships among categories in comparison with the informant’s own experiences were discussed with the selected informant who was asked to verify, modify, or reject the provisional categories and relationships. The informant who participated in the member check was selected based
on availability. The informant provided some additional insight to the interrelationship of categories and generally affirmed the approach to the data taken by the researcher.

**Transferability**

Transferability is equivalent to generalizability, or external validity, in traditional quantitative research. Through the process of thick description, suggested by Clifford Geertz (1973), the issue of transferability moves the onus of verification from the writer to the reader attempting to apply the findings. Thick description includes the complete recounting of details related to context, so that anyone wishing to apply the findings can see whether the setting to which s/he wishes to apply them is similar.

**Authenticity**

Lincoln and Guba’s (1989) final criterion related to this type of research is concerned with the assurance that all points of view are heard. This feature assures fairness in the portrayal of the social process. Multiple data sources, attention to heterogeneous sampling to the extent possible, and attention to all perspectives found or suggested by the setting, contributed to the fairness and authenticity of the research, although the informants were somewhat homogenous.

**Summary**

This chapter has described the procedures and methods used in the research. The first section was dedicated to the rationale for choosing a qualitative method in general, and grounded theory in particular, for this research. The second section dealt with the specific procedures used to recruit a sample, collect, and analyze data and finally produce
theory. The final section dealt with the issues of scientific rigor and trustworthiness and how they were addressed in the research.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The research question which guided this project and is answered in this chapter is:
What are the basic social processes by which female adolescents discover, develop and use management skills to achieve goals and maneuver through the changing socio-sexual environment of the teenage years? The strategy used to answer the question was to elicit the experiences and perceptions of the adolescents themselves through loosely structured interviews, as those perceptions were viewed as guideposts for their behavior. The question is answered by outlining a grounded theory of female adolescent sexuality management. The theory is framed in terms of adolescent understanding of relationship and sexuality management processes surrounding intimacy and socio-sexual self-determination. It consists of a delineation of strategies and understandings representing the dynamic elements of the sexuality management process.

The theory is presented using the Paradigm Model (Strauss, c1990) as an organizing framework for theory presentation. The Paradigm Model was also used to guide the axial coding process. The first section of this chapter consists of a summary presentation of the theory based on information gathered in the field. The theory is first delineated in tabular form. The individual categories are then described in detail with data cited in the text for support of the categories.

The second section details the relationships between the categories and how they interact to form a theory. This section is supported by the aid of a graphic model.
illustrating the theory and its component relationships. Data cited in support of categories were taken verbatim from participant interviews except where identifying information about individuals and institutions has been altered for the protection of human subjects. Data cited in the text are identified by participant number, for example (S1), and line number from the transcripts, for example (L345-48). The language of the informants includes a fair amount of slang, is quite graphic in places and has not been altered in any way except as noted above.

The Paradigm Model

The Paradigm Model was introduced by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss, c1990.) as a method for digesting and analyzing data in a systematic way. It provides a set of components required to provide a full theoretical explanation of a phenomenon of interest. The components include:

1. Phenomenon – the core category which a group of actions, interactions, and strategies are intended to manage.
2. Causal conditions – the events that lead to the development of the core category.
3. Context – the broad backdrop for the process, events and relationships described in the theory. The present use of “context” is much broader than that introduced and described by Strauss and Corbin (Strauss, c1990.).
4. Intervening conditions – the specific conditions that impact the management of the phenomenon. This use of “intervening conditions” is more specific than Strauss and Corbin’s version (Strauss, c1990.).
5. Action/interactional strategies – the processual, purposeful steps taken to manage the core category, successful or not, with intended consequences or not.

6. Consequences – the outcomes of strategies, actions and interactions undertaken to manage the core category for people, places and things.

This is the analytical framework used to present the theory in this chapter.

Theoretical Summary.

Designating the Core Category

The theory developed in this study focuses on female adolescents’ management of their emerging sexuality and has Relationship Management as its central category. This core category emerged from the research question as an inevitable focus of the study. The research question came about in response to the public discourse relating to teen pregnancy data and how the issue was framed in that discourse, lacking the adolescent perspective. Therefore, the research question was framed with sexuality at its core. However, data that emerged from adolescents told a story about relationships rather than sexuality. The questions that guided the interviews were related or pertained chiefly to sexuality in relationships, although female adolescents may not be chiefly concerned with sexuality management; - at least not in any deliberate sense. Instead, the informants in this study painted a picture of girls engaged in the management of relationships as they were learning a little about sexuality which they knew, reluctantly, they would have to manage in the future. The underlying goal of Relationship Management that emerged from the data was to exercise control in relationships, in which the girls were very much
interested, in order that they could make their own decisions about the timing and nature of their sexuality, when the time came.

**Summary of the Theory**

The theory advanced in this paper is summarized in the following. When puberty begins to bring bio-psycho-social changes to young females (Coming of Age), the need to manage relationships whose nature is affected by those changes, arises. In a context of how female adolescents think of themselves (The Kind of Girl I Am), motivated by a desire to determine their own socio-sexual destinies and life course (What Can Happen), female adolescents draw on the peer group as a major dynamic in their lives (My World) to filter and develop information used to guide their actions, to evaluate their choices, and to bestow or withhold help in difficult situations. The female adolescent strives to control relationships and situations with the opposite sex by bringing to bear actions and interactions with others (Dealing with boys) including developing and maintaining a public persona, learning and trying out tricks to manipulate behavior, engaging in typological behavior assessments of peers, and other strategic behaviors aimed at controlling relationships.

**Description of the Core Category: Relationship Management.**

**Definition**

The central phenomenon, or core category, in this study is Relationship Management, the process through which female middle adolescents, aged 13-17, manage relationships. Relationship Management is defined as the process by which female adolescents strive for control of their romantic relationships in middle adolescence.
through the application of strategies that enhance control (promoters) and overcome the barriers that can limit control (inhibitors). The goal of Relationship Management and the reason it is undertaken is to have positive relationship outcomes and to avoid unwanted relationship outcomes as described in the outcomes category, What Might Happen. The Relationship Management process is carried out chiefly through promoter and inhibitor action/interactions strategies defined in the category Dealing With Boys. The strategies that comprise this category can be purposeful or inadvertent, effective or ineffective. Each strategy has a unique set of properties and attributes, referred to as its characteristics, which makes it especially suited to managing the course of relationships and individual situations in relationships.

**Accounting for Variability**

Much of the variability in the ways girls deal with boys can be linked to the context category, the Kind of Girl I Am, which summarizes how each adolescent thinks of herself. The kind of girl the adolescent believes herself to be provides the context in which the action/interaction strategies are undertaken and affects how successful she is at developing and applying strategies for Dealing With Boys. The remaining variability in the ways girls deal with boys is accounted for in the intervening conditions that constitute the category My World. My World groups the resources and influences provided by the adolescent’s environment and peer group which she enlists for help and consults for information to help her deal with boys.
Antecedents and Duration

Relationship Management by female adolescents becomes salient and necessary when female adolescents start Coming of Age. That is when they enter puberty, begin to notice boys and develop a sense of readiness for developing romantic relationships. Timing of the onset of Relationship Management efforts differs among individual girls according to the nature of their Coming of Age. Relationship Management continues through puberty, as a strategic process of enlisting helpful resources, such as factors related to parents and peers for the successful management of relationships, and attempting to minimize possible barriers to exercising relationship control. A version of Relationship Management may continue through the lifespan, but as this study did not address women older than 17, such a claim cannot be made.

The major categories, framed in the Paradigm model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were broadly and specifically supported by the interview data. Where the major categories appeared to overlap, they were further condensed, defined and integrated. The model summarized above, is outlined in greater detail in Figure 4.1 and follows the organizing framework presented in the Paradigm Model. Following the outline of categories, each is defined in the text that follows. The definitions are supported and amplified by inclusion of directly quoted data from interviews.
Figure 1  Outline of Categories for Core Category: Relationship Management

Action/interaction Strategies: Dealing With Boys

- Public presentation of self
- Profiling
- Trying to communicate
- Controlling the relationship

Causal Conditions: Coming of Age

- Entering puberty
- Noticing boys
- Feeling ready for a relationship

Consequences: What Might Happen

- Relationship outcomes
- Physical outcomes
- Effects on reputation
- Effects on life course

Context: The Kind of Girl I Am

- What I know about myself
- What I believe about others

Intervening conditions: My World

- Peer group influence
- Family influence
- School influence
Media influence

Description of Action/ Interaction Strategies: Dealing With Boys

**Definition and Requirements**

The data presented represent a category of action/interaction strategies for implementing the Relationship Management process. These strategies are summarized under the title Dealing With Boys (DWB) and described in the following section. This category pertains to things girls do, or events that girls attempt to use to their advantage in the process of managing relationships. It is the success or failure of these strategies that help determine the quality of girls’ relationship outcomes. Apart from the strategic, active/interactive nature of data coded into this category, the chief requirement was that data had to support girl-initiated or manipulated events or actions. Data that were not girl-initiated were coded as part of the intervening conditions in My World.

In three of the four subcategories that comprise Dealing With Boys, strategies are either promoters, activities that enhance control activities that actively promote Relationship Management, or inhibitors, strategies and overcome the barriers that can limit control. In a fourth subcategory, Profiling, the action/interaction strategies are resources consulted for information or advice. Though often undertaken purposefully with an intended outcome or advantage in mind, these strategies can also sometimes be ineffective or backfire, having unintended and counterproductive results.

**Subcategories**

Four subcategories of activities form Dealing With Boys. The subcategories are:
1. Public Presentation of Self

2. Profiling [Typological behavior assessment]

3. Trying to Communicate

4. Controlling the relationship

The following section describes the four subcategories and provides specific support for promoters and inhibitors, or consulting resources and methods, in each from interview data.

Public Presentation of Self

As the title of this subcategory suggests, these types of activities consist of attempts to create public impressions, usually among the peer group, by either portraying oneself in a certain way or letting certain facts or lies about oneself be known and using the peer group to “spread” these impressions. In this subcategory, promoters serve mostly to attract the attention of boys. One can do that by creating a public impression of being different in appearance so as to be more readily noticed. A 17 year-old with oddly yellow contact lenses who will soon enter college said:

I enjoy being different. I, like, if I meet someone, like if I am in a big group of girls and some total hottie goes walking down the hall near the dorm room, I want to be the one, I don't know if I want to be THE one to stand out, but I want TO stand out I don't want to be just another girl in the crowd who thinks, talks, acts, dresses and has the same haircut as everybody else. I want to be different. And if, if... I think it would more of an incentive to me if everyone was because then I wouldn’t. {S2; L640-649}

Another young woman said:
And it just came. We wanted to be different. We were sick of being like everyone else. 90% of the people are preps.

One can also be different and increase one’s profile by acting older:

I think it might be help to a level, but then every girl wants to be older. But some older people do things to make themselves seem younger.

and to create a public impression of not being a virgin.

But a lot of times it is a self image thing. They think well people will laugh at me if they think I am still a virgin, before people actually laugh at them. They are afraid of what people will think and a lot of times that just isn’t true. I mean so many of my friends are virgins, but they keep it a secret because people will laugh at them.

I think they just want attention. Like my friend, she does it (dress provocatively) a lot. And we tell her but she doesn’t think she is.

This strategy lets boys think they may be able to get sex. However, this approach can backfire if one is, in fact, a virgin. Girls who create an impression of openness to sex may end up ceding control of the situation to a partner or they may pressure themselves into going along with the boy’s expectations:

I think they just don’t want to say no, they don’t want to feel like oh she’s..or want the guy to think oh she’s just a goody-two-shoes, she doesn’t want to. She’s scared that other people are going to look at her like this or like that or
whatever. I know girls are like that, and they’ll call me crying, you know. And I can’t really deal with it, you know, they made a choice. {S1; L402-407}

It is almost like, it more like pressure from your self to do what you think will make you fit in than what others think, because, - maybe I’ve just been incredibly lucky, but I haven’t had any friends who were so pushy and insecure that they pressured other people into doing things they didn’t want to, I’ve never known anyone like that. And I think that might be a little over-rated. But people tend to believe it, and then they pressure themselves into doing it. And I know people who really regret that. {S2; L543-558}

While standing out in a group is used strategically, so is being part of a group. Girls who run together attract more attention than do girls who include boys when out together.

…like it’s kind of funny, but when we go out, I don’t like guys being with us! ‘Cause, then other guys just don’t want to look at you, you know? So when we go out we make sure we are just a little girl group and we look really good and then other guys see us. {S3; L482-489}

But I’ve noticed when there is a guy with you, other guys just don’t look. Because they think you are taken, and you don’t want them to think that! {S5; L389-392}

However, being part of a group can also contribute to aloofness, a strategy that taps reverse psychology and borders on the magical. Aloofness in the group can be as simple as no longer showing any interest in boys. This informant believed this would magically put the “right one” in her path.

I have decided just to give up on guys and when you give up on guys you find the right one. {S3; L469-470}
This type of activity testifies to the underlying premise of Relationship Management: That girls want to exercise control over relationships. When there is no relationship to control, the only form of control that can take place is the designation of the unattached status as intentional and due to design. The activity also supports a willingness to let life take its course and enjoy it until it again becomes necessary to attend to Relationship Management.

Using the peer group to represent the public impression was a key activity. A barrier to relationship control that emerged in the data was the appearance of unwanted suitors who needed to be discouraged. Using the peer group as the hub of information the girls described how they spread a presentation of themselves which would serve this purpose. The information would eventually be conveyed to the people who needed to know. Phrases that suggested this subcategory included “everyone knows”, “people can just tell”, and “I let it be known”. By letting it be known that the advances are unwelcome, the girls could avoid the embarrassment of having to deal with boys honestly in a way that might bruise feelings.

Everyone knows I’ve been with a guy, the same guy for the last year.. So everyone knows I have a boyfriend. So when they try to approach me about it, I just tell them I would love to be your friend but I have a boyfriend. And almost everyone in my school knows that I have a boyfriend, but there are guys who think they can still try to get with me even though I have a boyfriend. There was one that did that, - thought that he could try to get me from him, - but the guy that I am with found out, and most of the time they know, they all know that I have a boyfriend. {S1, L150-161}
She may not even need to deal directly with the boy she is trying to avoid.

One guy named T., he sort of, he was interested in me. But I let it be known that I wasn’t really interested in dating anyone and then he moved on. {S2; L351-353}

By merely “letting it be known” that she was not interested in dating anyone, she had handed the information to the peer group for distribution, avoiding the need to reject the boy to his face.

Another use of the peer group is to carry rumors and lies. Girls can either spread rumor and lies about themselves or about others. Spreading a false rumor about oneself can be functional in dealing with boys. A girl who was sexually active made it a point to let it be known she was a virgin.

Like I tell new people, like new guys that I meet that I am a virgin. I think if you come across that you’re not, that they will take advantage of you they’ll think she’s not a virgin she’ll do it again, you know? Into the relationship obviously I tell them the truth. A lot of my friends think I am still a virgin. My boyfriend and my best friend are probably the only two people of my friends that know that I am not. {S1; L525-522}

For this girl, the purpose of keeping this fiction alive was to avoid having boys assume she was available for sex which would jeopardize her present relationship with her boyfriend.

Fictionalizing yourself can be a risky strategy. A 14 year-old girl with red hair and white make-up warned that lies about yourself always end up getting you "outed".
At school if you make up lies, somebody will find out that you lied. I mean they just know. \{S5; L488-489\}

The peer group is very powerful and very effective at uncovering the truth.

To summarize, in Dealing With Boys, constructing and maintaining a public presentation of self is a subcategory of promoters and inhibitors which functions by transmitting factual and fictitious information to and through the peer group. The peer group acts as an intermediary between girls and boys, both as individuals and as groups. Promoters actively facilitate the desired relationship outcome, attracting boys. Inhibitors in this subcategory block the attention of unwanted suitors and sometimes make direct rejection of attention unnecessary.

**Profiling**

A subcategory of the action/interaction category Dealing With Boys, profiling consists of a set of consultative activities which help the female adolescent assess the potential relationship behavior of a male adolescent who is “on her radar screen”. Three sets of characteristics emerged from the data in this subcategory: (a) The type of information the female adolescent was seeking, (b) the action she took in relation to the information, and (c) whom she consulted about the information. When profiling, girls tried to find out: (a) What kind of a boyfriend a boy was likely to be, (b) whether the boy was interested in a relationship, and if so, (c) what kind of relationship he was likely to be looking for. A girl gathered these profile elements in order to (a) decide whether she was interested in a relationship and once in one, (b) what to do in problem relationship
situations such as situations requiring crisis management. When profiling, girls consulted themselves, their friends, and their family.

*What kind of boyfriend.*

Girls used their own experience and logic to gather impressions for a profile. To assess what kind of boyfriend he might be, a 17 year-old girl sized up a boy like this:

P. is one of those rare guys, well there are a lot of guys who… He is not all that cute, but he is attractive. He is not built, well he’s got muscles, but he is still real skinny, he’s a string bean. He doesn’t have money, he doesn’t have fancy cars, lots of jewelry. He doesn’t buy everyone a dozen roses, but somehow, if you would go up to him, and pick any girl, without fail he could get her to like him. And I don’t know how he did it, I mean, I admit he is really charming, there is just something about him. {S2; L287-296}

She listed attributes that may or may not be important to her, but that are perhaps considered desirable in her peer group or perhaps the stereotypical attributes seen in the media. She decided he had none of these, and yet he had that certain something that would make him attractive to girls, including her. In contrast, another girl referred to boys as “commodities” which she defined as:

A commodity is just being there. Like if we need something, they’re there. Like if you need a boyfriend, you could go out with him for a week, get your fix and leave him. Or you, if you need some money “Can I have some money? (high-pitched)”And you get your money and then you go, you know, that kind of thing? But I think that’s just how I am right now in my life. {S3; L773-779}
*Does he like me.*

An important use of profiling was determining if a boy likes the girl. Girls profiled on the basis of reports from the peer group. For example,

M. is my best friend’s boyfriend, and so the four of us did a lot together. And she was always grounded, so P. and I talked a lot on the phone, because M. was always grounded. M. and P. had been best friends for years and C. and I had been best friends. And C. and M. were grounded so P. and I spent nearly all the time on the phone. And he confided in me, he said: “Don't tell P. I told you this, but you are the only girl who ever turned him down when he asked you out.”

In addition, they use their own experience to resolve this, citing the boy’s behavior as basis for their conclusion that he was interested.

The way they come out, if they are always touching you or always calling you just to like flirt or whatever. And they say: do you want to go out? {S1, L139-140}

He is closer to you… yeah…and he’s there all the time, calls you a lot…{S4; L65-69}

*What does he want.*

Once it became apparent that a boy was interested, it was important to find out what kind of relationship he was interested in pursuing. The data indicated that girls were aware of four kinds of relationships boys had in mind. The first in terms of attraction, though not chronologically, was described in the data as just being friends. Just being friends meant that a girl and boy did not engage in behavior that was usually
thought of as relationship behavior, such as public displays of affection. Girls often stated that they got along better with boys and that they had more “guy friends’ than girl friends. Girls determined when they were “just friends” by assessing how the boy behaved and by what their friends told them the boy had said, if anything.

A. and I are really good friends. We never date. We go out a few times just the two of us. And I know it sound really romantic, we go out on like long drives. We went out and he picked me up and we got cheesecake at Jack-in-the-Box and we went to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base and looked at the plane graveyards, because when I was a kid my dream was to become a naval fighter pilot. And I love to go out and look at the old forties planes and everything, so we drove out there and it was a full moon, so we just walked around and looked at the planes, and it sounds romantic but we didn’t hold hands, just walked around and we sat facing each other and just talked. {S2; L411-423}

Well, I did have a boyfriend, but not recently. It was like in third or fourth grade or something. But it was kind of on and off. It was more of a friend thing. {S4; L53-58}

Girls spoke of another type of relationship entered into at a young age and in which neither partner has relationship experience.

Well the first boyfriend I had was in the sixth grade. But it was not a real boyfriend, it was just like: I can’t talk to you! And hitting each other in the hall. The first real boyfriend I had was probably in the 8th grade. {S3; L101-104}
The longest boyfriend I have had was for like 23 days or something like that. OK? Just cause they are stupid. I don’t pick very good boyfriends. And I think like maybe in high school I will have a serious boyfriend. {S5; L334-337}

In a young relationship peers were used as direct conduits of information, sometimes to the point that the relationship was by note passing only through others in the peer group.

A third type of relationship, the serious relationship, with or without sex, usually occurred later in adolescence. Girls thought deeply about the serious relationship and how it was supposed to work. The serious relationship without sex was described in the data as follows.

I don’t know. It still was not what you would consider an intimate relationship. It was more along the lines of: yeah, this is my boyfriend. We would go and we would hang out. But it still wasn’t like we shouldn’t be alone together in a movie theater, because we would have nothing to say to each other, you know, so it was like… {S3; L109-112}

The guys that I have been really close to are: one was my first serious boyfriend. I met him at the beginning of my sophomore year. He was, I mean, I had a few guys I had seen before then, in junior high. You know, holding hands is a big symbolic thing, and it means that you’re going steady and you’re going to get married, but he was the first serious boyfriend I had and we went out for about a year. {S2; L37-44}

The data suggested that girls found management of relationships such a difficult task, that they preferred keeping them somewhat platonic to minimize the management required.
We didn’t want to ruin the relationship and it just slowly moved into where it is now. We are really committed, I mean, we know and we trust each other. It started slowly. It was a very slow start. {S1; L198-201}

I was always upset. I was always taking things too seriously. I mean, he said it. And for a while afterwards I thought he is just saying that. And now when I say it it is almost like oh he was right, I took everything too seriously, but he was right. I mean, it’s been 2.. see, it’s been about 2 and a half years and you know, uhmm, I was just always upset. {S2; L244-251}

The fourth and last type of relationship described in the data was the kind where the boy was just interested in the girl because he wanted to have sex with her. For all the girls interviewed for this study, this type of relationship was to be avoided.

I mean if I say no and they stop and then it’s fine then I’ll know maybe that’s not all they want, you know, maybe they do want to be good friends or a relationship, but that hasn’t happened in a while. {S1;L326-329}

Discovering the boy’s intentions was another purpose of profiling. As they contemplated potentially placing themselves at risk for being approached for sex, or “hit on”, the accuracy of the profile became more critical. Girls used a combination of their own experience and the advice of the peer group.

I dunno, I think you do have to wait and make sure that that’s not all they want and if you say no and they are still your, if they still want to be with you then you wait once until..well you can tell, I can tell after knowing them for a while. {S1; L440-444}
Yeah there were a lot of rumors about him going on vacation and doing stuff with like other girls out of I don’t even know where, just like random girls. But I was like I’m going to trust him, I’m just going to ask him if this stuff is true first. And he told me, of course, that it wasn’t. But I’m kind of thinking it was. Considering that he did that at the end.  {S6; L203-208}

**Crisis management**

A final aspect of profiling was crisis management. In the course of a relationship some situations required that the girl consult her own experience or the peer group to improve the usefulness of the profile in order to resolve specific problems or concerns. In the following situation, logic overruled charm.

And so he was charming, but I don’t want to go out with someone who sits there across the dinner table and brags about how many girls he can cheat on. He goes out with 3 or 4 and cheats with 3 or 4 more. And then he turns around and says, Oh, by the way, J. will you go out with me? And I say No! Dumb! Stupid! get a clue!  {S2; L387-394}

Girls who were inexperienced in Dealing with Boys, listened carefully to input from the peer group. A 15 year-old girl described her first serious relationship and how she had to try to figure out what was happening when she suspected her boyfriend of cheating.

Well everybody had opinions on him. Everybody would tell me different things about him. And I would hear all these rumors from my friends and things but overall, like, I should listen to my friends about boys, because he wasn’t very honest the whole time.  {S6; L88-92}
Information learned “the hard way” by inexperienced girls was filed away for future use as profiling data when another relationship or another situation in the same relationship called for it.

Occasionally, crisis situations, such as break-ups, required girls to consult parents or siblings. The data indicated it was difficult for girls to ask parents for advice until after the fact, when a profile may have failed. Reflecting on a conversation she had with her mother about breaking up with her first boyfriend who had cheated on her, a 15 year-old said:

It is really hard for me to ask for advice about that kind of stuff so I just told them (parents) about it afterwards. {S6; L492-493}

And then:

It was good but it was really hard to do because it was hard to listen to her (mother’s) advice, because it didn’t really feel like she knew what I was talking about, although obviously she did know seeing as she’s an adult. But listing to her advice about not holding grudges was hard. {S6; L515-519}

Another spoke about how, as a 13 year-old, she had told her mother and sister that she had had intercourse for the first time.

And I called my sister and told her what happened. And she came and picked me up and took me home. My sister is 25 now, she was 23 at the time and I just cried and cried. She came and picked me up and took me home and she called my mom and told my mom that I had to tell her something. And I told my mom and my mom came home and we had kind of a girls’ day together and she asked me if I was OK. {S1; L541-549}
She did have a discussion with her sister prior to deciding to go ahead and begin having sex with her boyfriend, but she did not feel able to talk to her mother. The data contained some support for girls’ use of school counselors for crisis management, but not sufficient to support this as a characteristic of profiling.

To summarize, Profiling is a subcategory of the action/interaction category Dealing With Boys. Girls profiled boys for the purpose of finding out what they were like, whether they were interested in a relationship, and if so, what kind of relationship. Profiling data came mostly from experience, intuition and the peer group. The family was of less importance than the peer group.

Yeah. I guess at our age our friends are more important to us than our parents, but we still love them. We just go to our friends more than our family. {S4; L108-110}

Girls used the profiles they created to decide whether to enter into a relationship with a boy and, once in one, how to manage situations.

**Trying to Communicate**

This section describes a subcategory of Dealing With Boys which is termed Trying to Communicate. An essential part of Dealing With Boys was being able to communicate with them. If the girl wanted to manage a relationship, she needed to be able to communicate. In the 3rd through 5th grades of elementary school, before girls realized that boys were different in an interesting way, communication was not as difficult as it was later on when a girl comes of age. The subcategory is defined as a learning process, varying a little from one girl to the next, but generally progressing from
middle school (age 13) to senior high school (17) age, through which girls learned to understand and manage the communication problem. Integrated into this framework and resulting from the levels of understanding were some strategic activities that girls used to get through to boys, get past their own reservations and open lines of communication. Though at times quite primitive these communication enhancing activities served as both promoters and inhibitors. By engaging in these activities, girls sought to promote better Relationship Management when Dealing With Boys, while at the same time inhibiting misunderstandings that could lead to negative relationship outcomes. The activities that eased communication included using go-betweens, talking on the telephone, and just hanging out.

Although girls found themselves becoming interested in boys as they came of age, they were not practiced in spending time talking with boys in ways that were rewarding to their new romantic perspective. The learning process consisted of (a) recognizing the ways that boys and girls differ in communication styles and perspectives, (b) learning to accept the difference and make adjustments to their expectations and communication style, and (c) integrating activities that promoted communication and inhibited misunderstandings.

The girls in this study recognized that talking to boys was more difficult as teens than it had been as kids. They spoke nostalgically of being more comfortable talking to boys when they were younger and boys were mere childhood friends.

In 5th grade nobody was mean to anybody else. It was really cool. {S5; L225-226}
I had been used to hanging out with guys so much I didn’t feel weird being around him by myself. I have an older brother who has a bunch of friends. They were always at the house, so later it would never get really quirky on a date, like be quiet or anything. {S3; L159-162}

Growing up with one or more older brothers was seen as helpful to being comfortable talking to boys. Familiarity with how older boys communicate, through casual observation and through direct contact as a non-threatening little sister, taught a greater sense of empowerment in later relationship communication.

The girls without older brothers spoke of awkwardness and embarrassment that began when boys started to be seen as potential boyfriends. The feelings became manifested in behavior, so that liking someone often resulted in acting in a hostile manner because of not knowing how to communicate romantically.

Well the first boyfriend I had was in the sixth grade. But it was not a real boyfriend, it was just like: I can’t talk to you! And hitting each other in the hall. The first boyfriend I had was probably in the 8th grade. {S3; L102-105}

Using a go-between was one way girls compensated for the difficulties with communicating directly.

Well, you have a crush on somebody and then you send your friend to ask them if they like you. And if they do, then your friend tells them to ask you out and if they do, then you start going out. {S5; L53-55}
He told one of my friends that he liked me and they told me, and then we started to be friends and then he asked me out. {S6; L34-36}

The girls interviewed came to understand through their relationship experiences and those of their peers, that there were big and important differences in how boys and girls thought and communicated. A high school sophomore confessed to frustration and confusion and experienced a great deal of difficulty in communicating with boys because, as she put it:

I think guys are the complete opposite, kind of. I don’t think they really look at the same way in a relationship, ‘cause it’s like they don’t get … I don’t know they don’t seem to take it as seriously. {S6; L115-118}

Another girl mourned, but understood, the fact that being young and romantically involved made communication more difficult. However, as she matured, now 16, she was much more able to talk to boys who were not her boyfriend.

In junior high I had guy friends, but they were more boyfriends, like I couldn’t really talk to them. Like I always wanted to be their girlfriend. I never really had a good guy friend in junior high. I never really had a good guy friend that I could just call and talk to about other things. Now I have a lot more guy friends than girl friends.

A 17 year-old about to start in college joked in earnest about discovering that a boy she had recently met was unusually easy to read:

And he said he would call me. And in “guy time” that means he’ll call me in two weeks, if they say I’ll call you tomorrow. But he called me the very next day. I
was so surprised. I thought: Wow! A guy who speaks girl language! {S2; L441-445}

But the joke illustrated her general perception that talking with boys required her to develop new understandings and to communicate differently, almost as with a different culture.

Girls expressed that communication with a boyfriend and getting to know each other was the key to a more satisfying relationship, so finding barriers in communication was frustrating. Getting together without knowing something about each other was seen as pointless. Asked what she liked about having a boyfriend, a high school sophomore spoke of her first relationship.

I don’t know, - just talking I guess. That’s pretty much all we did. I think having someone to talk to about everything. {S6; L122-123}

I have spent so much time trying to figure it out I have probably warped all reality in my mind. I tend to do that anyway. {S2; L125-127}

Once they overcame the early difficulty of communicating with boys, girls became so good at it, and enjoyed it so much that they preferred talking to boys over girls. This applied to virtually every girl interviewed.

But I just get along better with guys than I do girls. I don’t know why, but I do. And I have, my best friend’s a girl but, and I have couple of good girl friends but I have more guy friends that I can call and talk to about my problems. And I feel better talking to guys, I don’t know why. When I’ve got problems and things
like that, I always have a guy that I can call, whether it’s my boyfriend or not, I have a guy that I can call and talk to about, about anything. {S1; L74-83}

Most of my good friends are guys. {S2; L5}

I am still more comfortable with guys than I am with girls. {S3; L14}

Girls spoke of boys with whom they could eventually talk for hours on end, sharing their thoughts and exchanging intimacies.

He wants me to tell him what is going on in my life. He asks questions, if I am not talking about home and, like, how school is going, how everything is going, he’ll ask. I think he wants to know everything that’s going on in my life. Like he wants to be there and he expects me to tell him what’s going on and he wants me to tell him anything that’s going on, you know, anything. {S1; L206-214}

Sometimes conversations occurred on the telephone, providing a highly personal frame for the interaction, where the sharing of oneself was easy and came naturally.

I was at my father’s house and we talked on the phone, he used to call real late at night and I would answer the phone right away, my dad wouldn’t hear it. And we talked from like ten thirty to almost dawn. {S2; L217-221}

This section has dealt with the subcategory, Trying to Communicate, which delineates how girls learn to talk to boys in adolescence. The learning process consisted of (a) recognizing the ways boys and girls differ in communication styles and perspectives once they come of age, (b) learning to accept the difference and make adjustments to their expectations and communication style, and (c) integrating activities that promote communication and inhibit misunderstandings. By following this process,
girls learned to derive enjoyment and a level of emotional closeness only achieved through good communication.

*Controlling the Relationship*

The final subcategory of the action/interaction category, Dealing With Boys, was identified as Controlling the Relationship. Controlling the Relationship was defined as promoters and inhibitors girls use in trying to keep the direction of the relationship under their control including (a) having limits, (b) noticing pressure, (c) knowing when to leave, and (d) still being friends. Far from being hard-line steps to control, these were gentle ways in which girls asserted themselves to manage relationships on the basis of their values, preferences and regard for consequences. While they were not always successful at maintaining full control, girls usually knew when letting go of the relationship was preferable to staying but giving up all control. By trying to maintain some measure of control, girls were not only concerned with the possibility of being pressured into sexual intercourse before they were truly willing. They were equally or more concerned about maintaining their emotional independence, not being dominated or taken advantage of, standing by their values and fulfilling their relationship dreams.

*Having limits.*

Having limits was defined as girls knowing how far they would go sexually and what their expectations of fidelity were. Knowing what they would tolerate or engage in
inhibited unexpected situations in which they would not know how they wanted to manage. Although it was difficult at times for the informants in this study to have conversations with boyfriends, some felt it was important to let their relationship expectations be known. One informant described in detail how she and her first boyfriend together had decided upon limits to their behavior.

So, we set boundaries. We had discussions about how we felt about public displays of affection, you know, how comfortable we were with this, how comfortable we were with that, you know, like different situations, like how would you feel if... We set boundaries for movie theaters for cars, for the bus, or if we were at the football game, every situation we were ever in we set boundaries, and neither of us ever tried to go farther than that. {S2; L178-191}

In the case of this couple, they were fairly unanimous about these decisions. Another informant in this group came into her first relationship with a boy who had been in many prior relationships. Recognizing the difference in the levels of their relationship experience, she set down her expectations as well.

Well, he told my friends more than he told me about stuff he had done, and my friends know that I have limits, I won’t go very far. And so they told him that and they’re like “You better tell her what you’ve done, or she …, - you need to be straight with her”, and so he told me that and I told him how far I would go and stuff like that. {S6; L214-219}
Some girls had set limits for themselves, such as not tolerating infidelity or boys who were just after sex, but they had not made the limits clear to the boys with whom they became romantically involved.

Well, they are just not very good boyfriends. Like my boyfriend E, he was always with someone else so I just broke up with him. Then I went out with him again, and I broke up with him again, because he is stupid. I don’t know why I went out with him. A lot of girls are more mature than guys. A lot of guys are just in it for sex too. I don’t go out with guys like that. {S5; L444-452}

Sometimes the boy did not know at all until the two of them were engaged in kissing or foreplay.

For me, I know I can say yes and I know I can say no, and that’s not … I am glad I can do that. I don’t care if they never talk to me again, I’m gonna make the decision I am gonna make. {S1; L404-408}

Only one girl had never had a boyfriend and had never had to tell someone she just wanted to be friends. Asked how she thought she would know how to manage a relationship, she replied:

I don’t know…whatever happens, I guess. {S4; L96}

Another informant did not feel she needed to explain her limits and would simply take charge if a boy wanted to have intercourse with her and she did not want to.
See, I shouldn’t have to say anything else. I should say no and that should be the end of it. If its not, then I’ll come after you with a baseball bat and hit you over the head if you try to rape me. {S3; L723-726}

Having limits, expressed or internal, is the first tool of Controlling the Relationship.

*Noticing pressure.*

Noticing pressure was defined as girls knowing when they were pressured for sex or for other behavior that was beyond set limits by a boy they were with. Most of the time, girls noticed pressure in spite of declared limits. The question for girls was always: Do I want this boyfriend badly enough to put up with the pressure? They spoke of others who had been “afraid to lose him” and had gone along with being dominated or getting sexually involved although they did not want to. Having such examples seemed to help them define what they wanted their own behavior to be.

Informants in this study talked about making frequent checks of the status of their relationships. The purpose of doing so was to see if they were doing the right things to nurture the relationship while not putting their own wants on the back burner. The 17 year-old spoke of this as “paranoia”

But through that whole relationship I was just paranoid, and the least little thing was so significant. If he was five minutes late calling me it was oh my god he is dumping me. I was just real insecure, I don’t know why because I’d never had major insecurities like that before, but I’d never had a serious boyfriend before. Maybe it was just that I was kind of a late bloomer and it was too good to be true syndrome. . . Uhm, but I was always so pressured and when you are around your friends it is always like how do you act? Are you being too affectionate, are you acting cold, do you act different around him around other people. And just, is
she getting a better valentine gift than I am that kind of thing. And what do you get a guy for a gift? That drove me nuts. \{S2; L74-91\}

Asked whether she continued to be aware of pressure to have sex after having let her limits be known, another informant said of her first relationship which had recently failed:

Sometimes, but then I would get fed up with thinking about it and if he didn’t like what I was doing, that’s his problem, but it was on and off. \{S6; L171-173\}

In addition to feeling pressure to have sex, girls encountered boys who would exert relationship pressure by attempting to dominate them. Most rejected these attempts.

I wouldn’t get involved with a guy like that. Like, a lot of my friends, not my close friends, because I just have this one group of girls, but a lot of my acquaintances their guys are like that and they beat them and guys suck! \{S3; L314-317\}

A girl, whose boyfriend was 5 years older than her, and who was sexually active described the relationship.

Like he wants to be there and he expects me to tell him what’s going on and he wants me to tell him anything that’s going on, you know, anything. And some things it’s hard to tell him and he gets mad about other guys flirting with me or whatever. And he expects me to tell him that, and sometimes I can and sometimes I can’t when it is his good friend... There was just yesterday we got in a big fight because one of his good friends asked me for my number. And he got mad. I gave him my number and he got mad but we were totally friends and I had to call the other guy and tell him you know we can’t...my boyfriend doesn’t want me to. But he, he trusts me, but he doesn’t want me talking to his friends, but I can talk to anyone else. I think he definitely expects me to tell him
everything that’s going on in my life, where I know he doesn’t tell me everything...but I don’t expect him to, I don’t care what he does, if he goes out at night, that’s what he does, I don’t care. I don’t want to hear every detail about this night, so... but he wants to hear mine. He wants to know exactly what happened. I think he expects me to be more open to him than he is to me. \{S1; L211-234\}

Although she was describing a relationship where she was given permission to talk to certain people and asked to tell her boyfriend everything she was doing, she did not express that she felt dominated. She did, however, talk about the pressure to do the right thing in the relationship when she later spoke about the incident again.

Like, it backfired on me yesterday. Like, I mean, I don’t try to act anything that I’m not. I just act myself when I’m around him and I just trial and error [sic]. Like if something happens, then he’ll get mad at me for a while but then he’ll understand and ... I mean I’m only 15. He can’t expect me to know everything what not to do and what to do. \{L1; L246-252\}

Feeling and questioning the fairness of the pressure, enabled this informant to exert more control. Coupled with knowing her limits for domination the awareness of pressure gave her criteria for when and if to leave the relationship in the future, as she had earlier expressed that she would not be pressured into behavior in which she did not want to engage

Knowing when to leave.

Knowing when to leave was defined as being in possession of the syllogistic components of the following statement: My limits for sexual behaviors and other
relationship behavior are X, I am being pressured to go beyond X, and I value not doing or tolerating X more than I value this relationship, therefore I now have to leave the relationship. Having limits and noticing pressure on those limits led the adolescent to ask herself about when to leave when pressure to go beyond the limits became untenable. None of the informants in this study broke up with a boyfriend because he had pressured her to have sex. In all cases in which a breakup occurred with these informants, cheating was involved. The girls whose boyfriends cheated on them all left the relationship as a result.

When I was with the one serious boyfriend I had, that didn’t end well. That was real …, well he was going out with my best friend and he told me about a week later he didn’t want to go out with me any more. Tacky! {S2; L69-74}

He called me from her cell phone after they’d gone to the movies and told me that he was with another girl. So I said OK we will just be friends (laughs). {S6; L58-60}

The break-ups were troubling and hurtful to the informants and caused them to doubt themselves and avoid relationships.

And ever since that I have not wanted to deal with that. I thought if I get into another relationship I might get all paranoid, - I am paranoid about getting paranoid -, and then I might get paranoid again and then if we break up I’ll just get my heart broken again. Or if I break up with him I’ll feel guilty. And after him I have dated a, I won’t say a lot, that sounds sort of arrogant, but I have dated some guys. And I have been intimate with some of them, and I have never committed to any of them and a few have asked. But I just, they say the word
commitment, and I get very- it is not even emotional, it’s a very physical feeling that I am going to throw up right there. I just don’t like - it sounds like the stereotypical guy, you know, you know they go out on one date, the girl mentions marriage, and the guy loses her phone number. And I am like that. I just don’t like relationships, yech! I mean, gross, I don’t like it. {S2; L295-316}

Well, along with the fact that he cheated on me, I found out afterwards that he tried to go out with me again this summer as a bet so he never really did care to begin with, so I was a whole joke thing it seemed. {S6; L107-110}

In spite of the hurt of the breakups, the girls engaged in Relationship Management when they refused to tolerate infidelity. Girls knew that it was time to leave when their limits had been exceeded and they were unwilling to tolerate that.

Still being friends.

The final element of Controlling the Relationship is still being friends after a break up. Still being friends was defined as a girl offering a boy that they could still be friends after leaving the relationship. This olive branch seemed at first like a salvage maneuver, either to hang on to the boy or trying to be nice and to keep from totally severing relations. However, perhaps unwittingly, the notion of remaining friends allowed the informants to retire with grace and not burn bridges behind them. Informants applied the offer to remain friends in varying ways. A 14 year-old was as comfortable with being friends as she was with being a girlfriend.

Well, some of my boyfriends are also good friends. And sometimes even if we break up we are still cool. {S5; L48-49}
Another informant seemed to treat “just being friends” as synonymous with breaking up.

He called me from her cell phone after they’d gone to the movies and told me that he was with another girl. So I said OK we will just be friends (laughs). He expected me to understand and just go: Oh, it’s all alright. And I was like: I don’t want him doing something like going with me if he doesn’t want to. So I just thought it would be better if we were just friends. {S6; L58-67}

When the boyfriend refused to remain friends, she was disappointed in his rejection of her friendship.

Well then he tried to go out with me again, but I found out that that was just a bet and then I said well, then we can just be friends, but he doesn’t want to be friends, so now we just don’t see each other. We don’t even talk. I don’t get it and I said let’s be friends and he doesn’t even want to do that. {S6; L234-243}

Nonetheless, she did not go out with him again when he tried to get her back. She did not give up her control over ending the relationship.

Still being friends may also have functioned to control the relationship by preserving its meaning even after it was over.

At least I am still friends with the first boy I had sex with. He calls me and we talk sometimes. My girlfriend’s first lover dumped her and he acts like he doesn’t even know her, which makes her feel really bad. {S1; L 597-601}

This girl, whose first intercourse was at age 13, could look back on it as something that resulted in a friendship in the long run, thus preserving its meaning to her as a special relationship.
The subcategory, Controlling the Relationship, can be summarized as composed of 4 activities undertaken by girls to manage Dealing With Boys. The activities included having limits, noticing pressure, knowing when to leave, and remaining friends. Girls maintained some control by going into a relationship with conscious limits for relationship behavior and remaining aware of pressure on those limits. They could then decide when it was time to leave the relationship when the limits had been breached. Finally, by offering friendship after the break-up, they could preserve the special meaning of the relationship and avoid creating bad feeling which could lead to negative relationship outcomes in the future.
Description of Causal Conditions: Coming of Age

Definition and Requirements

Causal conditions are the events that lead to the development of the core category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, the causal conditions are defined as the markers of adolescent development that come about as natural events in the life course of the growing female adolescent. The causal conditions preceding Relationship Management, the core category, are described collectively as Coming of Age. In this study, Coming of Age is identified as having three distinct subcategories: Entering puberty, noticing boys, and feeling ready for a relationship.

Entering Puberty

Entering puberty is usually defined by specific physiological markers (Tanner & Marshall, 1969) which were not part of the data collected for this study. In this study, age and year in school, as reported by the informants themselves, were the data for entering puberty, as well as, their observations related to physical attributes associated with being a woman. Physiological development begins at different ages and occurs at different rates for different individuals. By way of introduction, informants spoke of their age or their year in school. For example, the first informant, a 15 year-old dark haired, attractive athletic looking young woman, had recently completed her first year of high school and described herself as:

I’ll be a sophomore. {S1; L5}
Another informant, who was 16 years old, had recently transferred into a new school in the middle of her high school career and stated:

I’m a junior. \{S3; L9\}

She had actually begun the year in another school, but had really disliked it there.

Being highly developed was sometimes interpreted as a sign that a girl was sexually active. For example, an eighth grade girl spoke of a peer’s voluptuousness and what that implied.

And she is 13. Because she has big boobs and all the guys like her because of that. \{S5; L265-266\}

Another informant decided to comment on a stranger’s display of her body and provocative dress:

Like the other day we were at this football game, the university football game? This girl’s shirt was really tight. You know it was really bad. You know you can see a boob without a shirt, but when you can see every little mole, roll, blahblah, you can count like the spinal cords on her back. I just put my hand up to her boob and I said, “Look. Your shirt is a little too tight.”

In the eyes of these informants, development and display of the physical characteristics of a grown woman was interpreted as advertising oneself as available for sex. This pubertal aspect also came into play in the action/interaction category, Dealing With Boys, and was accounted for in the discussion of that category.
Noticing Boys

Noticing boys, a second subcategory of Coming of Age, was defined as the degree to which girls were aware of boys and thinking about the future in a romantic relationship context. Prior to noticing boys, the girls had close girlfriends with whom they shared their lives and thoughts. For some, they had platonic friendships with boys or considered them a nuisance. As a one high school sophomore informant stated, there was a time before which she was simply not aware of members of the opposite sex as a romantic object of interest.

Because you see I always used to hang out with guys, but before 7th grade I just, you know, didn’t really…, I saw them as just guys who were just guys. But then I saw that they were…GUYS!
{S3; L192-195}

An eighth grade girl spoke of the year in school when she first began being interested in boys. Her peer group experienced that development along with her.

It happened in like 6th grade in the middle of the year, and, like, a lot of other people did, so like I didn’t really care {S5; L184-185}

A neatly dressed sophomore with long dark hair provided her assessment of when girls were just too young to be thinking about boys.

Too young?…before sixth grade. Before sixth grade you are still, like, hitting people. I don’t know how people mature, but for me, before sixth grade seeing guys was just seeing guys who play on the football field. {S3; L177-180}
She went on to reflect on the provocative manner of dress of girls younger than herself.

And I have noticed that younger and younger girls are getting hoochier and hoochier! {S3; L704-704}

In beginning to notice boys, informants in this study also began to consider their future in terms of marriage or another form of romantic relationship. An informant who was in a long term relationship spoke about the future of that relationship.

We want to stay together but we know it’s going to be hard. We don’t know when I go to college where I am going to go and what I am going to do, and if I get a scholarship to University or I want to go somewhere else, we don’t know, we don’t know what’s going to happen. {S1; L369-375}

Although they were uncertain about the future, they were thinking about spending life with a mate at some time in the future.

Because a relationship is something you have when you like someone, you know, it is one of those things that is a mutual relationship. It’s you like them, you like hanging out together. {S3; L371-374}

The future is dealt with more completely in the Consequences category, What Might Happen. The informants began noticing boys in their middle school years,
from sixth to seventh grade. However, as the final Coming of Age subcategory indicated, they were not all ready for a relationship at that time.

**Feeling Ready for a Relationship**

The girls spoke about the extent to which they were ready for romantic relationships. Feeling ready for a relationship was defined as liking someone and being liked by someone, then acting on the feelings by pursuing a relationship. It was not necessary for both to occur at the same time, but one or the other had to have occurred for a relationship to have existed. Informants in this study spoke in different ways about relationships. A relationship was defined as having a boyfriend and being someone’s girlfriend at the same time. The girls also used other terms to describe a relationship, such as “going with” and “going out”. An eighth grader spoke of “going out” in the 6th grade, while a high school student included another requirement for a relationship to be considered “dating”. For that informant, Feeling Ready involved having a boyfriend with a car.

And I never really believe you are dating until you have a car. Because if you are dating that means a guy comes to your house, picks you up, you know what I’m saying? It’s not your mom drops you off, his mom drops him off then you go to the movies together, that sort of thing. To me that’s just: Oh, we’re friends because we are too young to be dating anyway. {S3; L163-169}

The informants in this study reported various levels of experience with relationships, both in terms of quantity, duration and level of sexual involvement. A 16 year-old informant
had been sexually active since the age of 13 and with more than one partner. She was currently in a relationship that had lasted over a year. She described the degree to which she had felt ready at the outset.

It was kinda right there we decided that we wanted a relationship … we weren’t totally committed then, like, we were mostly…, and we talked and we were just really good friends and we didn’t want to ruin the friendship and that’s what we were really scared of and so we took it really slow about messing around or doing anything, like, we would hug or we would kiss but we didn’t want to do anything. {S1; L189-198}

A 15 year-old girl had not yet found someone to like and had therefore not yet been in a relationship. However, she was in no rush to begin.

But I don’t feel like I am getting left out, I just haven’t found someone. {S4; L179-180}

Another girl would not pursue boys whom she liked, hoping to get to know someone first as a friend. She had been liked by an older boy and had dated him, but very much at his instigation.

Well, I don’t tell them, because I don’t think they would like me back, so I just take what I get, I guess. But I’ve only had one boyfriend. {S6; L330-332}
A third informant had begun to like a boy who also liked her and they had spent time together at a party. As seen here, and in Dealing With Boys, details about whom a girl liked and who liked her were often transmitted through the peer group.

Like the other night we went to a party on Saturday night and this guy who has liked me forever, I kind of started liking him (because now he has a girlfriend, that’s why I like him, so now I can’t get him). Well, he found out that I like him so he came to the party with us, with my group. I guess you could say with me, but and he came to the party with us and his girlfriend was there and she didn’t really do anything because she is kind of nerdy, but like I went with him but she didn’t really think anything of it, but it’s like in these days, guys can be friends too, they don’t have to be like that. {S3; L279-288}

This informant had had a boyfriend before, but felt ready for a relationship with this boy, at least for the duration of that evening.

In summary, the three subcategories of Coming of Age are: Entering puberty, Noticing Boys, and Feeling ready for a relationship. Although all were necessary causal conditions for Relationship Management, they were not sufficient. Both contextual and intervening conditions impacted not only if, but how, relationships were managed by female adolescents.

Consequences: What Might Happen

*Definition and Requirements*

The category of data that represented consequences of action and interaction taken to manage relationships is called What Might Happen. What Might Happen is defined as the long-term or short-term, actual or potential, intended or unintended
consequences or outcomes, for others as well as for oneself, that may arise from the activities described in Dealing With Boys. The subcategories represented in the data included Relationship outcomes, Physical outcomes, Effects on reputation, and Effects on life course. This section summarizes the data that comprised this category.

**Relationship Outcomes**

Relationship outcomes were defined as those consequences of action/interaction activities that affected some aspect of relationships. Long-term consequences included goals, plans and dreams which Relationship Management was designed to fulfill, and they could include unintended results of failures to manage relationships. Perhaps due to the lack of sustained contact with informants and the fact that they were, for the most part, relative novices to relationships, few actual long-term relationship outcomes of Relationship Management strategies emerged from the data in this study. One informant had chosen to become sexually active at 13 years of age in order to prevent her boyfriend from leaving her. As an outcome of that choice, her subsequent serious relationship had also become a sexual relationship. Although she realized she could have decided not to be sexual again, she saw no reason to do so.

I think I made a mistake on doing it the first time. I don’t think... I have done it after that, and I think if I wouldn’t have done it the first time I wouldn’t have ever done it again. And I think now that I have done it, it ‘s like, well, I’ve already lost my virginity, and I love the guy, so why not? I think I love the guy, you know, and I think that was a mistake that I made, but I can’t go back and redo it, and I say I don’t want to have sex any more and it just doesn’t happen, I mean. It’s hard. I think…, I definitely wish I wouldn’t have. {S1; L550-560}
This fundamental change in the nature of future relationships occurred as a result of opting for early initiation of intercourse. Another informant made an opposite choice with her first boyfriend and did not get sexually involved.

I’ve never been really completely alone with a guy except Z. And that was definite boundary setting and he never over-stepped them. He didn’t want to be accused of sexual harassment or rape or anything either, that would hurt his precious budding career. So the situation never really came up. {S2; L596-603}

The outcome of that strategy was that no sexual relationship occurred and that the risks were avoided.

A short term consequence of early initiation of intercourse was profound unhappiness after the fact.

I did lose my virginity and I cried and cried, even though I wanted to, I cried and I cried the next day and I went to school and cried and I went to my counselor and I cried. S1; L537-541}

In contrast, informants reported that the relationship with a boy changed once he had tried to persuade the girl to have intercourse and she had turned him down. Informants described it as follows.

I think it has to change, I don’t think you can really look at some one the same way once they’ve tried to have sex with you. It’s totally different, you know.
You have that memory in the back of your mind all the time, every time you talk, even if you try not to. You still know that they wanted to. {S1; L420-426}

It’s not the same once they have tried to get with you. {S6; L305-306}

Other short term relationship consequences included losses of relationships due to break-ups. Informants decided to break up with boyfriends who cheated. Consequences of these break-ups were that the girls learned from experience and became more cautious about the boys they chose to go out with in the future.

I think… I will be friends with the person before I go out with him. Because going out with someone without really knowing them is sort of pointless. Because then I’m not really comfortable in front of them all the time. {S6; L362-367}

Or alternately, they decided to avoid relationships altogether, thus avoiding further heartbreak.

After that I didn’t really want to get involved. I am not the kind of person who likes strong emotion. It just gets to me. I like comedies, they don't have to be shallow, they can have a plot, but I don’t like drama movies, I don’t like movies that make you cry. I don’t like watching people be angry. I don’t like strong emotion in any form. And that was a very emotional, strong emotional relationship. And ever since that I have not wanted to deal with that. I thought if I get into another relationship I might get all paranoid, - I am paranoid about getting paranoid -, and then I might get paranoid again and then if we break up I’ll just get my heart broken again. Or if I break up with him I’ll feel guilty. {S2; L287-302}
An ideal relationship was a sought after outcome of Relationship Management. The informants in this study spoke of the kind of relationship they would like to have as an ideal.

I’ve seen, like, there are some at school who get along really well. They walk around on campus holding hands. And there some that just never talk and they just smile to each other when they walk past each other in the hall. I like the ones where you can walk around and talk and be out in the open. And then there’s some people who are embarrassed with each other. They don’t even look at each other in school. That is what I don’t want. {S6; L410-417}

One young woman wanted a relationship like the one she saw at home and sought that as an ideal relationship outcome.

My parents have been together for 23 years. Now sometimes I think they are a little weird because they are just too perfect. But, see, I try to make my life around how my mom and dad are. Because if they are acting that way and they have been together that long, either they are totally alienated weird people or they actually respect each other and find a way to get along with each other respectfully, you know? So, if I really like a guy, I will kind of build my relationship around how my parents do it, you know? Because my parents are really happy. I really consider my parents more like best friends than like the marriage kind of thing. After 23 years! But they have always been like that. And I would rather have, if I were ever to get married, if he was like my best friend. Guy friend, you know. So I base my relationships around that. {S3; L646-660}
Short-term consequences could be inadvertent outcomes that hurt others or the girl. An informant had decided she would give up on boys, so that the perfect boy would find her.

But I want a guy to find me. The perfect guy. But that hasn’t really happened yet. {S3; L674-675}

As a consequence, she was still waiting for that to happen. In addition, her high standards meant that no boy matched her expectations and she was still without the perfect boyfriend.

That is why I don’t have a boyfriend, because I have really high expectations and no guy I have ever met has like matched them. {S3; L259-261}

Relationship outcomes as represented in the data have been summarized. The consequences presented in this subcategory were quite simple, and perhaps self-evident. However, these informants were perhaps not as sensitive or attentive to the outcomes of their management activities as they might be when they have more experience with relationships.

Physical Outcomes

Physical outcomes of Relationship Management efforts were defined as those consequences the informants had experienced or that they feared might happen to them as a result of their activities described in Dealing With Boys. The main physical outcomes
discussed by the informants were concerned with instances of couple abuse or date rape they had witnessed or heard about, and which they did not want to have happen to them. None of the girls had herself experienced abuse at the hands of a boyfriend, but they described their fears of What Might Happen, sometimes quite graphically, if they failed to manage their relationships.

My best friend’s mom, I heard a terrible story about her when I was about twelve and it’s freaked me out ever since. She had cancer when she was 16 and she had to have one of her legs amputated. By the time she was seventeen or 18 she was completely healed, but obviously she had to have crutches all her life. And she didn’t have her fake leg with her. She went out on date with a guy, and he “ran out of gas” and he tried to put a move on her and when she said “No” he dumped her and they were out in the middle of the desert. This was when Tucson was real small, and they were way out on the East side. And he took her crutches, and she had to hop like 20 miles. And that freaked me out so bad, I thought I will never, ever put myself in that situation, even if I have to take a purse and a huge old gallon of gasoline I will never get in that situation. {S2; L506-522}

This horrific story and others like it represented stories with which girls were raised to warn them to keep themselves safe by staying in control of relationship situations. Another participant used her own experience and knowledge of her peers to construct a story about What Might Happen if one let a boyfriend dominate the relationship. She described the submissiveness of some of the girls in her school and the resulting abuse and went on to contemplate the consequences of enduring domination.

If they are dating these guys now, how are they going to be when they grow up? How are their children going to be? How are they going to act towards their children? And I don’t know. Right now is the time you are supposed to be
having fun and these girls are staying at home with their boyfriends. And I don’t know like, when I first came to Tucson High there was a couple there and we were like hanging out and he hit the girl. Like the girls I had just met and I was like: “Dude! I am going to shove my foot up your butt,” you know? Like “I will beat you down and you can’t hit me because I am a girl and if you do hit me I will tell everyone in Tucson and they will come and like kill you!” It was, like, SO inappropriate. {S3; L333-344}

In addition to harm from violence, the informants considered the possible health consequences of participating in unsafe or unprotected sex. In describing a boy with whom she had turned down a date, an informant predicted the consequences of his behavior and the reasons she had not gone out with him.

Now, P. has been with over a hundred girls. And he is going to be a junior in high school. And he has had sex, but I mean with girls, just total strangers. He is going to die of some sick disease before he is twenty. {S2; L301-305}

Another informant considered possible pregnancy consequences when she dealt with boys who wanted to have sex with her without using a condom.

Protection is a big issue. If they are not willing to use protection there is not even a question. They obviously don't care enough about you or themselves enough to have sex, to be mature enough to have sex without protection. They know they can’t have ..I can’t have a kid, it’s not even a question. And if they don’t have protection with them and they still want to have sex, then that’s all they want and they just didn’t bring protection on purpose. {S1; L492-502}
The potential pregnancy consequence was reinforced by actual pregnancies the girls had witnessed among their peers. One reported simply:

Well one of my friends did get pregnant, but they gave it up for adoption. {S5; L28-29}

Another provided a more analytical story of why some girls are not more careful and accept pregnancy as a consequence of their relationships.

And it’s not the kind of life I want to lead, but a lot of kids think, “Well, I am not dead, and my parents aren’t dead and I always have enough to eat, you know, why hope for anything more? My parents did it why don’t I? I don’t really care what happens to me. Cuz my mom was younger than I was when she had me…” So they have sex and they don’t really care about the consequences. And I have talked to girls who’ve had babies who’ve said, It’s not really that bad. I didn’t have plans to go to college anyway. And I just leave the baby with my mom when I go out and party, and it’s a really bad pattern, but as long as the parents keep food on the table they think: “My life is not so bad.” And that’s, I dunno, I hope that’s not the majority of them, but there are lot of people feel that way. They think: “I am alive and I am fed and so it’s not so bad if I fall into this and if I get pregnant, I get pregnant”. {S2; L582-604}

Physical outcomes emerged as potential consequences of failed Relationship Management efforts. These potential consequences, including unintended pregnancy, served as motivation for vigilance in managing relationships and as deterrents to giving up control.
Effects on Reputation

Effects on reputation was defined as temporary or permanent derogatory labeling of a girl by peers. The double standard is alive and well according to the participants in this study. There were still instances of girls getting stigmatized as a result of rumors and vendettas emanating from their peers, often as a result of steps taken to manage a relationship. Girls were aware that this kind of labeling could happen to them. One girl described it to the interviewer.

Like people try to go to bed with girls and then she doesn’t and they go back to school and say she is a lesbo or something? That hasn’t happened to me yet. {S3; L739-741}

Another described how her friends treated a girl they considered a slut.

They call her whorebag and stuff like that every time they see her in the hallway. {S5; L284}

According to the informant, the girl had earned the title by dressing “slutty” to make boys pay attention to her, a way of Dealing With Boys, and because she broke the peer group’s no snitching rule.

Although there were consequences, and fears of consequences, to a girl’s reputation, they were not as prevalent as the researcher anticipated, at least among this group of informants. Among girls who were more sexually active, such consequences might be more evident.
Effects on Life Course

The subcategory Effects on life course was defined as actual or potential permanent alterations to the plans or life aspirations of girls. No actual Relationship Management consequences to the life course of informants were evident in the data, but potential consequences to the life course were in the forefront of their considerations for action/interaction strategies of Dealing With Boys. Thus girls structured their Relationship Management behaviors so as to safeguard against the potential consequences they could foresee. From the girl who set limits for behavior jointly with her first boyfriend:

You know he wasn’t going to pay child support to some girl he might only go out with a few months and never see again for the next eighteen years. And he didn’t want that. He was much too involved in school. {S2; L172-177}

Life course consequences were not only concerned with what might happen as a result of pregnancy. Another informant spoke of the mistake a friend was making, in her view, by committing herself to one boyfriend while still in high school. The informant was determined not to make the same mistake by just not dating boys at all.

Didn’t you, when you were young, didn’t you have friends who had a boyfriend all through high school I mean that’s such a burden. When you think back on your high school career, maybe you dumped him in your senior year and then through the years you think that other guy was really hot but he never even talked to me because I was dating Joe-Bobby, or somebody. But like that’s something
you should be able to do because you are only in high school once you are only a teenager once. And if you, like, commit your life to that, I don’t know. {S3; L508-517}

Consequences resulting from Relationship Management activities have been described and included those impacting relationships in the future, one’s physical well-being, one’s reputation, and one’s life course.

Context: The Kind of Girl I Am

*Definition and Requirements*

In the Paradigm model as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990), context “represents the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon” (pg. 101). They also describe the context as the set of conditions in which the action/interaction strategies are undertaken in the management of the central phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In this study, the set of conditions that serve as the context for Relationship Management can be referred to as The Kind of Girl I Am. The Kind of Girls I Am is defined as the female adolescent’s evaluation of herself with regard to relationship behavior. The Kind of Girls I am is composed of two subcategories that summarize the descriptions that female adolescents offered about themselves relative to Relationship Management. The subcategories are: What I know about myself and What I believe about others. In the present study, adolescent girls frequently explained their behavior or anticipated behavior in terms of the kind of girls they were. They spoke of what they would or would not do because “that is just how I am” or because they were “just not like that”. They also spoke about what they believed about others that might be reflected in their relationship
behaviour given the meaning that was derived from interaction with others. The Relationship Management approaches female adolescents undertook occurred in the context of the knowledge they had about themselves and the beliefs they had about others and relationships.

*What I Know About Myself*

The subcategory, What I know about myself, was defined as the descriptors girls asserted about themselves. Girls often named their level of openness with others as something they knew about themselves and by which they defined the kind of girl they were. They spoke of themselves in terms such as “outgoing”, “reserved”, or “shy”.

I am a real outgoing person. I’m not the kind of person that feels sketchy when I am alone with another person, because I am kind of loud so I always have something to say even if it is just like whatever, {S3; L153-156}

I am real reserved, I mean I will talk freely to strangers, I am not shy, but I don’t open up to people. I usually listen to what they have to say, and I’ll respond, but I don’t talk about me. {S2; L45-48}

Openness with others could impact the ability of talking with members of the opposite sex and being assertive. Communication was key to Dealing with boys (DWB), the action/interaction category of this study. One of the girls was a petite girl with pale blond hair, rosy cheeks and beautiful blue, heavily lashed eyes. Her quiet voice and demeanor made one wonder how difficult it would have been to interview her before she, as she described, “came out of her shell” having been “shy when I was little”.
A second area girls spoke of as defining them was their level of independence. They spoke of this characteristic in terms of the extent to which they felt they exerted free will as opposed to being easily dominated. They spoke about this area often, some at length, others in terse statements mirroring their language. One of the girls described herself as always having been a “free spirit” and spoke of her freedom to act:

I act like I want to act. {S5; L231}

She spoke in short sentences, using a lot of interesting slang and terms that betrayed a good deal of anger. Another informant expressed a similar sentiment saying:

I’m not going to do what someone tells me to do, you know, I’m just not like that. {S1; L282-283}

In addition to direct descriptions of their ability and intention to act according to their free will, girls spoke about the same theme indirectly by disavowing dependence on a boy or having a boy depend on them.

But I am a real independent person. I would never rely on another person or have anyone else rely on me. {S3; L394-395}

A boyfriend is not that important to me to not be able to live the life that I want to live. {S1, L290-292}
Both, they held, diminished their ability to act with free will. Similarly, they spoke of not being the kind of girl that “has to have a guy by my side” {S3; L120} implying other girls do, and that it diminishes them and their free will.

*What I Believe About Others*

The category The Kind of Girl I Am was supported in the data by a second subcategory entitled What I believe about others. This subcategory was defined as the judgments girls made about others which reflected their own beliefs. In describing their beliefs about others the girls revealed beliefs on which they acted or assumptions to which they reacted in their relationship behavior.

The data fell into two themes in this subcategory. One dealt with Beliefs about what boys are like, the second with Beliefs about what other girls are like. The prevalent belief was that boys behaved according to their desires and were unlikely to change for a girl. This was expressed by the informants in several different ways.

But I think if the guy, you know, if they have any mind at all, if they do care about you they are not going to not like you and tell other people you wouldn’t have sex with them. {S1; L414-417}

In this statement, the informant was saying that if the boy’s main focus was his care (or love) for a girl, her refusing to have sex with him would not make him change that focus. Another informant felt that a boy continued to apply pressure because of prior experience with sex. She did not believe he cared for her and left because she would not have sex with him.
Yes, especially with him because he'd done a lot of stuff. \{S6; L165\}

She expressed a belief that this boy did not change for her and eventually went out with another girl because of his wanting sex. Another informant described how, believing his intentions had not changed, she was cautious about being friends with a boy who had asked her to have sex.

You have that memory in the back of your mind all the time, every time you talk, even if you try not to. You still know that they wanted to. It’s harder to tell them, you know, your problems and stuff, just because you think will they just try to come over and hug you and try to get sex again, you know? \{S1; L423-429\}

This informant applied the principle that boys don’t change for a girl fearing that boys who were interested in having sex would continue to try, even if they were told “no”.

The informants also spoke about what other girls were like in contrast to themselves. The predominant theme under which this occurred was the belief that most other girls were looking for a boyfriend, some to the extent that their free will was impaired. These informants believed that some girls were looking for a boyfriend because they were lonely and feeling unloved. With compassion, a beautiful, blonde high school sophomore spoke of girls she knew who were always searching.

Yes, because they are lonely and they want to find love, \{S4; L190\}
A young and angry informant shared that belief, but did not have compassion for her former friend for whom she felt nothing but disdain.

She depends on them for friendship, so she won’t be alone. {S5; L291}

A third girl simply, and without judgment, believed that girls by nature want to have boyfriends.

Well, overall I think girls really want boyfriends so when they don’t have one, they are kind of sad. {S6; L461-462}

Some other girls, “average teenagers” who were not in this study but known to our informants, center their lives around boys and changed their behavior to keep a boy around. An outspoken high school junior explained the difference.

I am not one of those girls that centers my life around guys. I don’t, like, believe in it, you know? I don’t want to be like the average teenager. {S3; L661-662;667}

A younger informant described a peer’s habit of dressing very provocatively in order to be attractive to boys.

And I think she just depends on guys. And so she doesn’t want to lose them. So that is what she does to keep them (dress provocatively). {S5; L285-286}

Becoming dependent on boys for esteem represented a risky situation for another girl who described how other girls claimed to be unable to say “no” to boyfriends
who wanted to have sex. She explained how girls were afraid to be left alone unless they agreed.

I think it’s a mistake they are making (having sex although they do not want to), but some of them can’t say no. They say they can’t, because they don’t want that (the boy leaving them) to happen.

{S1; L417-419}

The implication in all these stories of girls being dependent on boys was that the informants were not dependent and that their independence was reinforced by seeing others make dependency mistakes.

In describing what other girls were like, the informants in this study provided data to support further, by contrast, what they themselves were like. The contrast between other girls and the informants provided such data.

In summary, the Context category The Kind of Girl I Am consists of two subcategories that provide data about the informants in this study. They are What I know about myself and What I believe about others. The first of these was comprised of direct, descriptive data. The second was comprised of indirect and contrasting data that further defined the informants.

Intervening Conditions: My World

Definition and Requirements

In the Paradigm Model, intervening conditions provide the broader structural context in which the action/interaction strategies to manage the central
phenomenon occur (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Among the intervening conditions were the factors that emerged pertaining to female adolescent social structure, especially aspects pertaining to the peer group, its composition and influence. The category summarizing intervening conditions is referred to as My World. My World is defined as the conditions that describe and circumscribe the female adolescent’s immediate world and the characteristics of that world as they affect the management of emerging sexuality.

The category was comprised of four subcategories: Peer group influence, Family influence, and School influence, and Media influence. In reviewing intervening conditions, the reader should be aware of a conscious deviation from the Paradigm model as analytical framework. Strauss and Corbin (1990) specifically note that:

It is these intervening conditions that explain why one person has a certain outcome or chooses a certain set of strategies while another person doesn’t (Pg. 125).

However, in this theory, both context, which can be thought of as “self”, and intervening conditions, which can be thought of as “others”, influence socio-sexual self-determination outcomes. In other words, as categories emerged from the data, it became clear that explanations for variation in outcomes were related to “self”, the Kind of girl I Am, as well as, to “others”, My World.

The subcategories of My World define the different social structures which, according to the data, impact female adolescents’ actions/ interactions relating to Relationship Management. In each subcategory, influence comes in the form of standards. Standards provide implied or stated rules for conduct as a dynamic reference
for Relationship Management. Situational assistance is also available to or sought by the female adolescent when it becomes necessary to manage a particular relationship situation.

*Peer Group Influence*

Peer group influence was defined as the composition and norms ascribed to the girl’s immediate or extended cohort of friends. This complex subcategory is dealt with by first describing the peer group, which consisted of girl friends, guy friends, and boyfriends, and then describing the group norms ascribed to the peer group by informants.

*The peer group.*

The adolescent peer group consisted of friends, often broken down into girl friends and guy friends. For some informants, their peer group was highly homogenous to the point of being defined by a name, given either by the members themselves or by others. An eighth grade girl dressed almost completely in black described her peer group.

Well, me and my friends are in a group of about 40 people and they consider us the freaks. (They call us “freaks” because of) our music and how we dress because we dress kind of Goth and in boy clothes and a lot of my friends have dyed their hair this color (burgundy red) and black. And we are really mean to people. {S5; L235-242}
She also described her group as being “juggaloes”, which, she defined as people who like a band named “Insane Clown Posse”. Her description of interaction between groups was quite hostile.

A high school sophomore wearing blue jeans and a pastel colored, fitted lacy top described the presence of peer groups in her school in terms of their styles of dress, noting though that attire did not always signify a particular behavior.

Like, my friends and I like to surf, so I like to dress kind of surfish sometimes. And people who are, like, punk, they wear like punk clothes and, like, preppies, there are all kinds of groups and categories for people by what they wear…. but I think there’s a big difference between dressing preppy and acting preppy. What you can dress preppy but not act preppy and you can dress punk but not really be a punk at all. {S6; L628-638}

For other informants, the peer group environment was more integrated, heterogeneous, and comprised of all kinds of kids.

See it is the kind of school they call a magnet, so there are kids from all over the city even though it is downtown and it’s a very big public school and they like…, we really are diverse, so we really have a lot of gays a lot of lesbians, a lot of bisexuals, and then a lot of rich kids and a lot of ghetto kids. Like I was walking around school the other day and it’s so weird this gay kid grabbed another gay kids butt. And then there was a gangster that you’d think would like want to shoot them, but they’re like: what’s up? I mean everyone just gets along and it’s like nobody goes round in groups everybody just kind goes around. And you meet new people around their everyday. And people you think they’re like ghetto
or people you would think were like white trash? Well everybody’s just so nice to you. {S3; L43-55}

For the informants, the peer group provided a safe harbor. These were, in some cases, the kids they had grown up with. When changing schools, going on to a new environment without them could be significant. As the 16 year-old in jeans explained:

Like I’ve been friends with the same group of kids since kindergarten. I don’t know we’ve always had a clique together and we have something we can all go back to and we can talk about anything with each other and feel safe like they are safe people. {S6; L L648; 705-708}

The middle school girl who described herself as a “juggalo” expressed concern that she might be separated from her peer group when moving to high school.

None of my friends will be going there with me unless I don’t get good grades. {S5; L341-342}

The informant who was new to her school told about getting along well with everyone at her new school, but she emphasized that she remained more connected with her old group of friends.

Like I have so many friends from there, but I don’t hang around with those people on weekends. Because they’re really nice people but they’re not, like, my crowd. I might be choosy, but I like it. {S3; L55-58}
However, regardless of the composition of their peer group, the girls described their close
girl friends as people who were like them and with whom they “had a lot in common”.

A 17 year-old recent high school graduate described her best friend.

She and I had a lot in common, our boyfriends were best friends. We liked the
same music, we liked the same food, and plus, we made up a lot of the routines
together, and so we spent all the way up until I graduated almost all of our time
together. {S2; L31-36}

The outspoken high school junior also spoke of commonalities among her peer
group.

I swear my friends are the only three people in Tucson that are exactly like me. I
don’t know how I found them. We all have, like, psychiatrists for, like, being
such bitches, like, we hate the world, we hate Tucson, we hate everybody. So …
But we do it in a funny sense, so that people just have to laugh at us, you know?
We walk along like we are shit, but then we’ll, like, trip on something, you know.
So, they are exactly like me. We all have the exact same views except for one of
them. {S3; L398-405}

Most of the informants indicated that their best friends were boys. They referred
to boys with whom they had a platonic friendship as “guy friends”.

The middle school student explained the difference.

Some of my best friends are boys… When they are boyfriends you hold hands
and kiss and stuff and when they are just friends, you just hang out and stuff.
{S5; L35-40}

Guy friends did not enter the picture at the same age for all the girls. The high school girl
who had been in several relationships expressed the following:
I never really had a good guy friend in junior high. I never really had a good guy friend that I could just call and talk to about other things. Now I have a lot more guy friends than girl friends. \{S1; L68-72\}

Other informants also made a distinction between “guy friends” and “boyfriends”. Guy friends were considered more comfortable to be around than both boyfriends and girlfriends.

With a guy friend, you are not worried. Like even when you like the guy, it is kind of like being around a girl, it is kind of like being in competition, worried about what you say or what you do, worried about what they are going to think about you that is how it is with a boy friend. With a guy friend it is like, oh he comes to the door and you just got out of bed and you really don’t care because you don’t need to show off for him because you don’t find him attractive. And with a guy friend he is, like, there to talk with about guys that you like, like, from a guy perspective, what they think. Because you always have girl friends, but with guy friends they can tell you, like, is he popular with guys, and he will tell you that. But with guy friends, like, in a sense, some of my guy friends are better friends to me than my girl friends. \{S3; L238-250\}

The recent graduate spoke of feelings of pressure around boyfriends, feelings that were absent around both girl friends and guy friends.

So I’d say I like having guy friends better just because I hate pressure and I always felt so on the spot and I didn’t like it. Whereas right now, with my guy friends and I have a lot of them, you can just be yourself just like it was with my female friends. \{S2; L98-103\}
Although guy friends were often the preferred individuals to talk to, they were not necessarily called upon for highly personal advice. Such advice was obtained from girl friends. One informant explained:

I can’t call a guy to talk about other guys but...I still…I mean I talk about some other guys, but not my boyfriend and stuff like that …{S1; L85-88}

Another preferred an older female confidante:

My girlfriend’s older sister and I are really close, so I talk to her. {S4; L118}

In summary, the data suggested the peer group as consisting of individuals as well as the group in general. Within the “crowd” individuals stood out, including girlfriends, boyfriends, and guy friends.

Peer norms.

While individuals were mostly consulted for situational support, the informants interpreted norms as coming from the peer group. Peer norms included standards for sexual behavior, often unspoken and based on fears of being different and assumptions about what others were saying about the girl. A recent high school graduate reflected on the way her friends referenced what they perceived as the group norms relating to sexuality.

The thought simply crosses their mind that, what if other people are having sex and I am not. It is this in-grown fear that humans always seem to have that they’re left out in some way, that everyone else is in a group, and they are apart.
And most people feel that way. Most people feel they are the odd man out in some incredibly important way. \{S2; L569-574\}

Another high school girl had the same experience with her friends.

She’s scared that other people are going to look at her like this or like that or whatever. I know girls are like that, and they’ll call me crying, you know. \{S1; L438-441\}

Group norms did not deal exclusively with sexuality. To illustrate, norms of “juggaloes” or “freaks” included:

- Juggaloes don’t get along with most of the other students at school.

Well our group isn’t mean to each other but if we don’t like another group, we all start arguing and getting pissed off at each other and sometimes it goes on in fights, And like some groups get along. We get along with some of the nerds, and I get along with some of the preps, and a lot of people don’t get along with the roamers, they just go from group to group. A lot of people don’t get along with them. \{S5; L250-255\}

- Juggaloes reject provocative dress as a group norm.

Like she wears small shirt where her boobs hang out and always flirts and stuff. But we ditched her and told her to stay away from us. \{S3; L270-271\}

- Juggaloes reject snitching as a group norm.

But two of my friends, that’s why we don’t like F. she told on them and they got in trouble. They got expelled or suspended. For, like, 90 days.

- Juggaloes set themselves apart from other groups but tolerate deviance from their norms only to a point.

Yeah, but you can’t be too weird or they kick you out. Then you have to find another group to go into. \{S5; L311-312\}
Informants varied greatly in how involved they were with a distinct peer group. While the “juggalo” girl portrayed her peer group as her source of knowledge for how to manage relationships, when asked how girls knew how to grow up, she replied:

I just became a freak. Me and my inner group were the first ones started that and then other people came over with us. It was pretty cool. {S5; L386-388}

She saw the Juggaloes as her vehicle to growing up. Others were far less attached to the group.

In summary, peer group norms were used as filters for action/interaction strategies in Relationship Management. Individuals within the group provided situational assistance or advice for crisis management, for example. The level of peer group influence varied among informants.

**Family Influence**

Parents, siblings, family structure and family rules influenced Relationship Management in this group of informants. Although the influence of parents had begun to wane for these adolescent girls in favor of friends, most of them described some level of influence from parents. Some informants were reluctant to go to their parents for advice, although they felt they had received good values. Mothers were seen as easier to talk to than fathers, especially when the matters included sex. Family rules about dating and other social behavior clearly imposed a framework on the informants’ social lives, but the informants did not express any frustration with any limits placed on them. Structural aspects of the family, such as divorce and sibling gender, also emerged as influential.
An informant who considered herself a product of her mother’s feminist activism spoke of her acquiring her awareness of feminist ideals from her mother. She described her mother’s work in research and the posters that decorated her mother’s office when she would visit there as a child.

Like my mom would also keep condoms in her office. So I always knew about awareness. And I remember she had this one poster of people with beaten faces, standing there with her baby and beaten. I don’t know. It’s not just the way I was raised, it is what I believe is right and what I believe is wrong. {S3; L442-447}

Another informant reported that her mother had provided general guidelines for behavior, and that she was open to talking to her mother about her problems, but that her mother seemed not to be able to help much.

She..she..we talk a lot, but she doesn’t really tell me what to do and what not to do. I don’t know if she..I mean we don’t talk about it like that, we talk a lot, but not about.. she never tells me what to do. She’ll tell me what not to do and stuff. {S1; L260-264}

When asked, the informant clarified that her mother had talked her about not smoking or doing drugs.

Just in terms of everything else, drugs..smoking.. you know, I mean we talk a lot, but we don’t talk about that kind of stuff. Like I know I can go to her if I have a problem with anything, but otherwise we don’t really talk unless I have a problem. I don’t talk to my dad at all. {S1; L266-271}
This informant explained that her father was very protective. Although he did not support her long-term relationship with someone five years older than herself, he had come to terms with it.

He’s 20 and I’m only 15, and my dad accepts him, I mean he doesn’t want us to be really into each other, like, he knows we are really good friends and that we have a relationship going on, but he doesn’t want it to go too far. He is scared. {S1; L357-362}

Another informant spoke about her discomfort discussing her love life with her mother although she felt she had been taught good values by her parents. As with other informants, the peer group weighed in more heavily with this teen.

Well, my parents have given me expectations, but, like, then I think it through and about which one I will do, and then I talk to my friends and see what they think, so it’s kind of a mixture between my friends and my sister and my mom. {S6; L250-253}

The difficulty with talking to her mother about problems was that she did not have faith that her mother could help.

It was hard to listen to her advice, because it didn’t really feel like she knew what I was talking about, although obviously she did know seeing as she’s an adult. {S6; L517-520}

An informant whose parents were divorced also felt that the advice of friends was more valuable to her than that of her family.
I guess at our age our friends are more important to us than our parents, but we still love them. We just go to our friends more than our family. {S4; L108-110}

There were also informants who did not discuss anything with their parents. Either parents were not even mentioned, or they were described as outside the adolescent’s life.

No. Don’t talk to them about anything. {S5; L354}

However, the general perception of the parents’ relationship was a part of the informant’s frame of reference all the same.

No. They’re just real good friends. {S5; L363}

My parents are divorced. {S2; L216}

In spite of never talking to her parents, the first of the informants just cited went on to joke darkly about what she would do if she saw her parents displaying affection.

Yeah. If they did kiss in front of me I would get grossed out and tell them to get away from me. It’s kind of gross you know. {S5; L367-368}

She did not have negative feelings about her parents, just a complete lack of belief that they could be an influence on her.
Family rules imposed by parents provided some structural influence on the girls in this study. None complained about parents being too strict. Rules were mainly confined to parameters around dating such as:

I could not go with one date, so I had to go with other people. {S6; L504-504}

Or

I’m not allowed to date during the week during the school year {S2; L448-449}

Managing relationships therefore had to occur within the framework of these and other rules imposed by the family. The informants did not express any reluctance to accept these rules.

All the informants but one had siblings. Compared to other family members, older sisters were seen as highly influential by the informants. Some remarked about the fact that their older sister had less experience with boys than the informants themselves, but that they were a positive influence on them all the same. Said one informant with a sister only two years older than her:

She hasn’t had a boyfriend yet, so she was sad when I had one and she didn’t. But she still gave me advice when he was messing around on me, even though she hadn’t had a boyfriend. She still talked to me about it and stuff. {S6; L472-476}

Another informant minimized the value of her sister’s influence, because of her lack of experience with boys.
I know more about boys than she does. {S5; L162}

A girl who had only brothers remarked on the lack of a sister and explained how she filled the void by talking to a friend’s older sister.

Because I don’t have a sister, so I go to my friends. {S4; L123}

Having brothers conferred the benefit of familiarity with a male perspective and, as discussed earlier, gave younger sisters the advantage of learning how to interact with boys at an early age.

Well, I still view guys differently because of my older brother. {S3; L201}

As far as older brothers having a significant influence, other than for general sibling friendship and protectiveness, the data supported this only weakly. A girl with two older brothers spoke of how she was more likely to help them with their problems than the other way around.

Well, it’s sort of like I help them, in a way. But they help me sometimes, but.. {S4; L127-128}

A girl without brothers, but who had guy friends, talked about pseudo brothers who fulfilled a male sibling role for her.
And M. and I had sort of a big brother-little sister relationship, and M.’s about 200 pounds and he’s about 6 ft 3 and he’s real protective of me, and P. is about 5’8” and about 110 pounds. And if had ever said no to P. and P. said Why?, M. would have been right there saying: “The Lady said No!”.

One of the girls summarized the story of her family’s involvement in her management of relationships by describing a scenario where she in the final analysis was the one who had to make decisions for herself.

I can’t talk to my dad about it, my mom doesn’t remember. I have an older sister that helps me a lot, other than that I just try, I can’t do anything more, I don’t know.

In summary, family provided influence through the values taught over time and through situational consultation. Parents varied in their level of management of the adolescents. For the most part, they stepped back and waited to be asked for advice. Siblings were perceived as highly influential, especially sisters.

*School Influence*

Aspects of school life served as potential influences on female adolescents and their efforts to manage relationships. Informants in this study attended both public and private schools. Most were in high school, but one was in middle school and one was a recent graduate. The data indicated that the size and organization of the school tended to structure informants’ access to peers and the opportunities available to them for the management of relationship. School activities provided settings that could enhance
Relationship Management but also limited the time available for Dealing With Boys. Finally, the student body was the most frequent source of the informants’ peer group associations.

Large schools had the advantage of exposing informants to a diverse as well as plentiful supply of friends. However, schools were sometimes found to be too large, limiting access to peers unless they specifically were placed in classes or joined activities in order to be together. An informant described the large high school she had recently left.

Like there were so many people. You would meet somebody and they would be really cool, then you would never see them again. {S3; L65-66}

Another girl was unable to see much of her boyfriend because:

We were a year apart in school and we didn’t have any classes together. {S2; L170-171}

Smaller, private schools had the disadvantage, from a social point of view, of requiring more and harder school work, thus limiting time available for Dealing With Boys.

Last year was hard, but that was because I went from a public school to a private school. The studies were harder and before I really didn’t have to study. {S1, L11-14}

On the other hand, school was a place to meet and make new friends. As an informant explained, she got to know boys through class work.
Like with classes or if you get partnered up then you just talk. And it becomes like a friendship afterwards. \{S4; L11-12\}

Private schools with smaller student bodies and a smaller teacher to student ratio meant that teachers were more in tune with student behavior. Relationship behavior, such as holding hands and kissing was a rare phenomenon in a private school. As a private school informant described:

I don’t really see it much at my school, because there is always someone watching us at school, and we have a dress code. \{S4; L243-244\}

Dress codes were, of course, influential in how informants were able to present themselves. Private school attendees also talked about a proposed uniform policy. The school community debate on this issue raised questions about who was more responsible for student behavior. One of the informants who spoke quietly for most of her interview became animated in her reaction to the issue.

Well, we are having this problem with the dress code at school. How the girls’ shirts are too short. And they want them tucked in. They brought all the parents in and told them that they’re gonna change the dress code next year. Then the parents of the guys’ moms were sitting behind me, and they were like :”Make the girls do this! They’re the ones that are causing the trouble. Bad girls go to this school!” That kind of made me feel like it’s all the girls fault. And the girls’ moms were, like: “My daughter isn’t always like that.“ There are a couple of girls that get away with it all the time and those are the girls that, like, are making it so we can’t have free dress code. But the fact that they were generalizing that
much was, like: “I don’t believe this! I am sitting right here and I go to this school!” {S6; L540-553}

She felt it would be simpler if the school did adopt uniforms. At least then everyone would be judged on the same standard.

Public school dress was described as diverse and fairly liberal. However, as one public school informant voiced, the manner of dress was highly individual and sometimes sent out messages.

What is in fashion is looking nice, clean cut, well managed and very elegant. Elegant is not, Tommy Hilfiger shorts up to here is not fashion. If that is really fashion, to some people that is fashion, but if they want to be fashionable, put some clothes on because nobody wants to see that ass, you know? So I guess you can call it their kind of fashion. {S3;L601-607}

A full discussion of messages related to dress is found in the Public Presentation of Self portion of the discussion of Dealing With Boys.

School activities, such as sports and band also served to provide structure for Relationship Management activities. Sports generally kept girls so busy they had little time to deal with boys.

School is over at 2:30 and softball starts at 3 until 5:30, then I go home and eat, do my homework and by that time there isn’t much time for anything else. {S1, L24-27}
Participating in band posed similar barriers to going on dates, as one band member related.

The dates I’ve been on, I mean there haven’t been a lot, because all through high school every Friday and Saturday were taken up. Every single one! {S2; L445-446}

Band, on the other hand, provided opportunities for meeting boys and spending time together. While softball is a female sport, both boys and girls participate in band, and, as a performance activity, members spend a lot of time together.

We were both in band, we took long bus trips to Phoenix, *at night*, you know and there were a lot of couples there. {S2; L152-154}

However, couples were limited in what they could talk about and the type of behavior they could engage in, because, as the band member said:

And in band there are always way too many people around and plus we are always performing or seated in the stands, and even then you always perform. {S2; L172-174}

Furthermore, she said:

We ended up at a lot of parties together, because the whole band, the 50 of us always threw parties, and it was always the same 50 people so we were always in a big group. {S2; L455-462}
Band kids did most things as a group and enjoyed each others’ company rather than getting off as couples. While providing a limited pool of friends, this added to the cohesiveness and safety of peer group.

Media Influence

Contrary to the researcher’s expectations, adolescent media did not have much of an acknowledged impact on girls and their Relationship Management. While most girls read magazines and books, watched movies and music videos, the data indicated they did not believe the media had a bearing on their reality. A 17 year-old questioned the reality of situations presented in teen magazines.

All forms of media, like magazines, Teen, Seventeen, Cosmo have all these articles about peer pressure these days. And maybe that is overrated, I think it is. Because I read about all these situations that I have never seen a single one come up. {S2; L561-566}

Another informant did not believe the scenarios she saw in movies and television had any relevance for her because they bore no resemblance to what she saw as real.

No I don’t think anything like that could really happen to… some of those things are really not real. {S6; L264-265}

These and other views of the impact of media support the notion that girls admitted to little or no impact of the media on their management of relationships. The peer group was far more influential.
The foregoing account of intervening conditions, My World, has described the areas of potential influence on female adolescents’ efforts at Relationship Management. While parents and siblings, especially older sisters had an acknowledged role in the social lives of the informants, the peer groups of which the girls were a part were far more prominent. Contrary to expectations, the girls did not consider the media relevant to their efforts as they felt the media had little or no basis in reality.

**Linking the Categories**

*Doing Relationship Management*

When female adolescents begin to come of age, they develop as a goal the desire to have positive relationship outcomes. In order to strive for these positive outcomes they develop ways to manage their relationships so they are in a position to exercise control over the quality of their relationship outcomes. In the context of how they see themselves and influenced by elements of their environment, they work to promote positive outcomes and inhibit negative outcomes.

Coming of age occurs as a developmental set of events the first of which is entering puberty. The age at which girls enter puberty differs from one girl to the next, so the timing of Coming of Age, and hence the onset of Relationship Management, varies according to when a girl enters puberty. Girls then begin to notice that boys take on a different meaning of a romantic nature. Finally, sometimes aided by what their peers are doing and talking about, girls begin to feel ready for a relationship with a boy. They begin to distinguish between boyfriends and guy friends and begin to define for themselves goals related to positive outcomes for the future.

In order to promote the positive relationship goals they desire, girls take steps to be in charge of their future by developing strategies to manage relationships or “deal with boys”. They develop methods for presenting themselves publicly in ways that promote positive relationship
outcomes and inhibit barriers to positive outcomes. The primary purpose of a public presentation of the self is to attract the attention of some boys and discourage unwanted attention of others. The determination of the boys to continue to attract is accomplished using a strategy called profiling. Profiling occurs as an ongoing process of consulting data resources, including intuition, experience and the knowledge of others, especially the peer group. Girls profile boys by finding out, among other things, what kind of boyfriend they might make and whether the attraction is mutual. If one or more boys pass the screening process called profiling, the girl then seeks to establish a friendship by getting to know him and by trying to communicate with him and begin a relationship. As a relationship begins and progresses, communication continues as a key to controlling the direction of the relationship.

Relationship Management results in various outcomes depending on how successfully the relationship was managed. The primary intent of Relationship Management is to have positive relationship outcomes, but quality and type of outcomes vary. In addition to relationship outcomes of varying quality, girls can also experience physical outcomes relating to safety, pregnancy and health. Furthermore, they may find their reputation affected by how they choose to deal with boys and even long term effects on their life course.

The quality of outcomes is influenced by the kind of girl who is doing Relationship Management and on the impact of the important aspects of her world. Girls define themselves by what they know about themselves and what they believe about others. How a girl defines herself consists of an assessment, firstly, of how open she is with others and how open she can be with boys. Being open and straight forward with boys is essential to good communication. Secondly what a girl knows about herself includes the extent to which she can be independent. Exercising free will as opposed to being easily dominated impacts the level of success with controlling the relationship. Beliefs about others include beliefs about what boys are like and what other girls
are like. Beliefs about what boys are like lays out assumptions, such as “boys are selfish”, that may establish the need to control the relationship. Beliefs about what other girls are like reinforce what is known about the self by providing a contrast to the self and a potential model for improvement. For example, if other girls are seen as dependent, the girl’s view of her own independence is enhanced.

The quality of outcomes is also influenced by the world of the female adolescent. My World consists of the influences exerted by the girl’s environment which is comprised of the peer group, the family, the school and the media. Relationship Management outcomes are affected by the norms of the peer group, the extent to which the girl is embedded within it, and the type of ad hoc assistance available from the peer group. Outcomes are affected by the family to the extent that values taught in the family enhance Relationship Management strategies, the house rules facilitate all aspects of Dealing With Boys, and the family’s openness and availability to crisis counseling. The school attended by the adolescent influences Relationship Management by imposing structure on social settings and activities within the school, requiring compliance with rules which may or may not facilitate Dealing With Boys in daily life, and by having counseling available if family help is unavailable. Media may also exercise some weak influence on how girls deal with boys and how successful their strategies are.

What follows, in Figure 2, is a graphic representation or model of the foregoing account of how this theory works. The model presents, in a summary form the effects proposed between the various parts of the theory. Following the model is a set of hypotheses or propositions which represent the relational elements of the theory and what relationships can be tested in future research. The chapter concludes with a final summary of the grounded theory.
Figure 2. Graphic Model of Theory

The Kind of Girl I Am

My World

What I know about myself

What I believe about others

Peer group influence

School influence

Family influence

Media influence

Dealing With Boys

What might happen

Public presentation of self

Coming of Age

Relationship outcomes

Profiling

Physical outcomes

Trying to communicate

Effects on reputation

Feeling ready for a relationship

Effects on life course

Controlling the relationship
Hypotheses

The following hypotheses provide a summary of the theory presented in this chapter. These hypotheses provide the basis for future research stemming from this grounded theory. Only hypotheses that are grounded, that is, that have these data as their basis and that were derived through constant comparative analysis alternating between induction and deduction are presented. Once again, the hypotheses are organized according to the Paradigm Model.

Causal Conditions

- Entering puberty is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition of managing relationships by Dealing With Boys.
- Noticing boys is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition of managing relationships by Dealing With Boys.
- When girls begin to notice boys, they embark on strategies to:
  - create a public presentation of themselves;
  - profile boys
  - try to communicate with boys
- Feeling ready for a relationship is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition of managing relationships by Dealing With Boys.
- When girls begin to feel ready for a relationship, they embark on strategies to:
  - create a public presentation of themselves;
Female adolescents create a public presentation of themselves to:

- Promote getting boys’ attention
- Inhibit unwanted attention

The quality of profiling affects the quality of:

- relationship outcomes
- physical outcomes
- effects on reputation
- effects on life course.

The quality of profiling is determined by the accuracy of the data used to profile.

The quality of communication affects the quality of:

- relationship outcomes
- physical outcomes
- effects on reputation
- effects on life course.

The quality of communication is affected by the quality of the execution of the strategies used to communicate.

The quality of relationship control affects the quality of:
o relationship outcomes

o physical outcomes

o effects on reputation

o effects on life course.

• The quality of relationship control is affected by the quality of the strategies used.

• Having limits inhibits the pressure to exceed limits.

• Noticing pressure inhibits domination and loss of control.

• Girls know when to leave when their limits have been exceeded and they are unwilling to tolerate that.

Consequences

• Relationship outcomes affect:
  o the public presentation of self
  o quality of profiling of boys by providing experience based data
  o quality of communication depending on quality of relationship outcome
  o quality of relationship control depending on quality of relationship outcome

• Anticipated or imagined physical outcomes affect:
  o the public presentation of self
  o quality of profiling of boys by providing experience based data
- quality of communication depending on quality of relationship outcome
- quality of relationship control depending on quality of relationship outcome

- Anticipated or imagined effects on the life course of female adolescents in turn affect:
  - the public presentation of self
  - quality of profiling of boys by providing experience based data
  - quality of communication depending on quality of relationship outcome
  - quality of relationship control depending on quality of relationship outcome

**Context**

- What girls know about themselves affects how they present themselves publicly.

- What girls know about themselves affects how they profile boys. (For example, girls who are reserved are less likely to ask many questions of friends for fear of revealing that they like someone.)

- What girls know about themselves affects how they communicate with boys.

- What girls know about themselves affects how well they control relationships.
• What girls believe about others affects how they present themselves publicly.
• What girls believe about others affects how they profile boys.
• What girls believe about others affects how they communicate with boys.
• What girls believe about others affects how well they control relationships.

*Intervening Conditions*

• The peer group, through group norms and situational help, affects how well girls deal with boys.
• The family affects how well girls deal with boys through:
  o family values
  o house rules
  o situational help.
• The school affects how well girls deal with boys through:
  o Structure
  o Organization
  o and rules.
Summary

In this chapter a grounded theory of female adolescent Relationship Management was presented. Using the Paradigm Model, a theory was proposed that has as its core category Relationship Management. The causal conditions to Relationship Management were defined as the concept, Coming of Age, which consists of entering puberty, noticing boys, and feeling ready for a relationship. The action/interaction strategies that serve as Relationship Management activities were named Dealing With Boys and defined as being comprised of public presentation of self, profiling, trying to communicate, and controlling the relationship. The consequences of these action/interaction strategies were referred to as What Might Happen and outlined as consisting of relationship outcomes, physical outcomes, effects on reputation and effects on life course. The category The Kind of Girl I Am provides the context for the action/interaction activities. This category defines female adolescents in terms of what they know about themselves and what they believe about others. Finally, a category of intervening conditions called My World was identified. My World is comprised of peer group influence, family influence, school influence, and media influence.
Overview

The findings presented in Chapter 4 proposed a grounded theory to account for Relationship Management in females in middle adolescence. On entering puberty, female adolescents begin to notice boys and feel ready for a romantic relationship. Motivated by a desire for positive relationship outcomes, girls develop and use strategies and resources that help them manage their relationships to promote, and inhibit barriers to, positive relationship outcomes. Relationship Management activities are comprised of strategies to establish and maintain a public presentation of self, resources and methods for profiling boys as potential relationship partners, strategies to communicate with boys, and strategies to control relationships. The degree to which the adolescents are successful is governed, in part, by the way they perceive themselves and others. Further, the success of their Relationship Management activities is due also, in part, to their environment, including their peer group, their family, and their school.

In this concluding chapter, the concepts introduced in this theory will be examined in light of the existing literature and contemporary nursing theories. Then the findings will be considered in light of the theoretical frameworks that formed the underpinnings of this study. In order to assess the utility of this work, its implications for nursing theory, nursing research, and nursing practice will be considered. Finally, future steps to develop this theory, evaluate its suitability for testing, and consider the form,
scope and direction of further research and for the eventual development of interventions targeting female adolescent health knowledge, attitudes and behaviors will be discussed.

Linkage with the Literature

It is helpful to consult the existing literature in order to enhance the perspective on what was found in the current research. This research differed from most other clinical behavioral research in that the intent was not to predict health behavior or explain risk behavior, but rather to uncover the nature of actual patterns in the behavior of adolescent girls in managing the changing nature of their relationships with boys. This kind of research is scarce. Researchers have studied the development of relationships more than their management. Knapp’s model for relationship development provides one framework for understanding relationships (Knapp & Taylor, 1994). This model presents five stages which Knapp refers to as Relationship Escalation. In the very short initiation stage, participants seek to make a favorable impression, exchanging greetings and quickly observing each other. The experimenting stage consists of the process of exchanging basic information and deciding whether to continue in the relationship, which many do not. In the intensifying stage self-disclosure may begin, formality begins to disappear and participants being to talk about the relationship. The integrating stage follows in which the participants become a couple, doing things together and acquiring a shared relational identity in which others see them as a couple. The final stage, which occurs only infrequently, is the bonding stage in which a symbolic announcement of the relationship, such as engagement or marriage, is made. Knapp’s model may shed some
light on adolescent relationships, but seems better suited to adults with whom relationship formation is less hectic and more long term.

In his research, Stephen Duck developed the Relationship Filtering Model (Duck, 1995). Similar to Knapp’s model it describes a set of filters through which individuals make choices with regard to with whom and how far they want to take a relationship. This model, while too limited to encompass what has been referred to as Relationship Management, is an interesting way of enhancing the concept of profiling and is discussed below.

Porter has pointed out that the inclusion of sexuality on the list of risk behaviors has masked the effects of normal, societal influences and upbringing on sexual development (Porter, 2002b) and this study started from a similar position. The literature differs considerably from this perspective.

In the literature review, the existing literature was framed in terms of two major paradigms (Miller & Fox, 1987). One paradigm proposes that sexuality behavior is the result of an emergent, biological drive while the other sees it as socially learned. In reviewing the core category presented, this grounded theory borrows, at least a little, from both. In examining links to the literature, the narratives are again organized according to the Paradigm model.

**Literature pertaining to Action/ Interaction**

Two distinct theoretical perspectives are suggested when considering links to the concept Public presentation of self. One is Goffman’s presentation of self (Goffman,
1959). The other is Elkind’s theory of adolescent egocentrism with its constructs, the imaginary audience and the personal fable (Elkind, 1967).

Goffman in his fieldwork studied interactions in everyday life and described the “dramaturgical” process of establishing a social identity. He viewed interaction as “performance,” shaped by context and environment, and formed to provide others with a display of “impressions” consonant with the goals of the actor (Goffman, 1967). Goffman associated this process of establishing a social identity with the concept of the “front” which he defined as an individual’s normative performance, which is generally visible and allows others to understand that individual through a “collective representation” that communicates the desired role to others in a consistent manner. Public presentation of self, as defined in the current work, can be compared to Goffman’s “front”, though Goffman’s construct is far more mundane and far less purposeful in its application. While Goffman described everyday events and interactions, the informants in this study were dedicated to the specific effect of each action and interaction, each presentation, and to the nature of the audience, namely boys and the peer group, reminiscent of Elkind’s approach below.

Elkind offered an interpretation of adolescent behavior with his theory of adolescent egocentrism, which delineated two distinct but related constructs, which Elkind referred to as cognitive structures, the imaginary audience and the personal fable (Elkind, 1967). With the imaginary audience, Elkind proposed that adolescents believe others are always watching and evaluating them. The personal fable refers to the belief that “the self is unique, invulnerable and omnipotent”. However, Elkind’s implication is
that these constructs represent distortions in “self-other understanding”. The theory
generated in this study, in taking data at face value, proposes that the public presentation
of self in which adolescents engaged was a deliberate strategy to attract attention in order
to get sufficiently close and personal with boys so they could be profiled for suitability in
a relationship. Furthermore, the data in which the individual adolescent was increasingly
engaged with the peer group, both individuals and the group as a whole, suggest that the
audience for these adolescents was not so imaginary after all. While Elkind admits the
audience is very real for the adolescent and this should be considered when healthcare
providers work with adolescents (Elkind, 1984), the data in the present study suggested
the adolescent’s engagement with the peer group was real and reciprocal.

Elkind’s “personal fable” construction was also challenged by the data in the
present study. According to the personal fable, adolescents believe themselves to be
unique and invulnerable. Elkind suggests that the construct increases risky behavior
among adolescents (Elkind, 1984). However, the category dealing with outcomes in this
study told a different tale. Far from thinking no bad things could happen to them, the
girls in this study spoke of potential and anticipated negative outcomes that might happen
to them if they failed to manage their relationships. Elkind’s solution to both the
imaginary audience and the personal fable is to call attention to others with similar
experiences (Elkind, 1984). The data in the present study suggested the adolescents
already did that for themselves.

Taking a somewhat different approach to the initiation of dating relationships,
Berger described three different ways people use to meet another person (Berger, 1987).
They a) introduce themselves, b) make non-verbal cues and wait for the other person to introduce him- or herself, or c) have a friend make an introduction. The Berger study was conducted in an adult population, but the data in the present study supported a passive approach of being in the right place, waiting for things to happen and making non-verbal cues, as well as the use of a go-between. Berger noted that females were more likely to use the last two, more indirect strategies.

A few concepts comparable to profiling were found in the literature. The Duck Relationship Filtering model referred to above is one (Duck, 1995). Duck described four filters through which we sort and winnow people whom we meet into the people we want to be close with. The filters (or cues) are the sociological or incidental, pre-interaction, interaction, and cognitive cues. The sociological/incidental refers to the geographical practicality of being with another person, with regard to where one lives or goes to school, for example. Pre-interaction cues are the information we obtain about someone before ever meeting them, and which may exclude them, such as appearance or social class. Interaction clues are the bases for inclusion or exclusion decisions once an interaction has actually taken place. Finally, the cognitive cues are the judgments made about people and the extent to which they match expectations of someone with whom a close relationship is desirable.

Another related approach is the close relationship model (Kelley et al., 1983). This model describes four types of causal conditions that have an effect on relationship attraction: person factors, “other” factors, person and “other” factors, and environmental factors. Person factors refer to the current state and characteristics of the individual, in
this case the female adolescent. One such characteristic is availability. A girl who has a boyfriend is not as likely to be attracted to another boy. If, on the other hand, she is lonely or emotionally isolated, she is more likely to look for love. These data support both of these notions. “Other” factors refer to the things a female finds attractive in a male. Physical attractiveness is an important initial trigger, but it is not as important in the longer term (Buss & Barnes, 1986). In the longer term, women value social standing and earning capacity more (Buss & Barnes, 1986). This view of attraction factors most nearly resembles the profiling process. Person and “other” factors are those on which two people perceive themselves to be similar or complementary to each other. Environmental factors refer mainly to the social environment, or more specifically, the peer group. The notion that the peer group contributes to profiling was strongly emphasized in our data.

The communication literature is so vast that it constitutes its own academic specialty. However, some strands in that literature stand out as particularly pertinent to the present investigation. These are the gendered discourse frameworks of Sanford and Eder, Maltz and Borker, Carol Gilligan and Deborah Tannen.

The subcategory “Trying to communicate” in the present study comprised the data that explicated girls’ difficulties bridging the gender gap in communication. Sanford and Eder examined adolescent humor and how it is used for various purposes in various contexts (Sanford & Eder, 1984). In large groups, adolescents employ humor in the form of memorized jokes to establish a more sophisticated social identity, or public presentation of self. When among close peers, humor became less competitive, and focused on the challenge of adult social norms. Jokes were also used to enhance
friendships or even show dislike. Maltz and Borker presented a framework wherein boys use language to assert a “position of dominance”, while girls use language to “create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality” (Maltz & Borker, 1982).

These interpretations are congruent with Gilligan’s theory of moral development which accounts for the difference in communication by distinguishing the male and female moral imperatives as justice and care, respectively (Gilligan, 1982). While there is overlap with both able to see ethical issues from two perspectives, males tend to select an ethic of justice while women select an ethic of care. The choice, according to Gilligan, is based on self-image. The evidence for Gilligan’s theory is based on the quantity and quality of relationships. The ethical goals of a justice orientation, such as fair play or equality before the law, are impersonal and solitary ideals which can be sought without interpersonal relationships. Ethical goals of care, such as loyalty and peacemaking, on the other hand, are achieved only through interpersonal involvement. Gilligan believes that the female need for relationships stems from a particularly female identity which forms in girls. Links to Gilligan’s framework are apparent throughout this current study. Not only did girls see differences in male and female behavior in relationships, they reacted to disloyalty by breaking up with boyfriends and then tried to avoid hurt feelings by offering friendship instead.

Deborah Tannen has written extensively about barriers to male-female communication. She poses the notion that male-female communication should be treated as cross-cultural (Tannen, 1990), that men and women speak in different genderlects. Women seek human connection as their primary goal while men seek primarily status. In
private conversations, women talk more than men and try to establish connections by asking questions, while the opposite is true in public settings where men try to achieve ascendancy. Women are more attentive listeners, showing agreement and acknowledgement of understanding, but men interrupt as a power move. Tannen does not label one style as better than the other. She merely points out that men and women need to recognize that their communication styles and goals are different and that they need to learn to adopt the voice of the other gender. Not only did the girls in the present study recognize the differences in communication goals, they actually labeled “guy talk” as a different language.

Aspects of relationship control have been discussed in the literature. Mitchell and Wellings identified the use of ambiguity by female young adults in romantic relationships as a way to exercise control (Mitchell & Wellings, 2002). The use of unclear communication appeared to help in the management of ambivalence about the direction and intensity of a relationship. Further Mitchell and Wellings concluded that ambiguity had a protective affect against rejection and guarded against the possibility of false assumptions being drawn about the desires of the female adolescent (Mitchell & Wellings, 2002).

*Literature pertaining to Causal Conditions*

Causal conditions of Relationship Management efforts are the factors comprising the category Coming of Age. Age and pubertal development serve as the causal conditions for when girls begin to think about and construct strategies for Dealing With Boys. Brooks-Gunn described the pubertal changes that occur in adolescence and
pointed out that these changes are not only biological, but are interpreted as sociocultural events that carry with them some very specific symbolic meanings (Brooks-Gunn, 1992). Among these meanings is the belief that girls who enter relationships after puberty do so as sexual beings. Thus Coming of Age brings with it a distinct role change which includes that of a potentially sexual woman (Porter, 2002a). Along with the new role ascribed to the female adolescent come some very unclear societal messages regarding acceptable sexual behavior (Pipher, 1994). Teens have to sort out their perspective of themselves as compared to the new social construction, which frequently does not fit them (Shandler, 1999). The adolescents in the present research dealt with this challenge through self-evaluation and introspection in defining themselves as the context for their behavior (The Kind of Girl I Am), creating a “Public presentation” of themselves, as a management strategy, and by staying in constant touch with the peer group that evaluated them in turn.

Stevens-Simon distinguished between puberty, which is the physical growth and development, and adolescence, which is the cognitive and psychosocial processes that go along with puberty (Stevens-Simon, 1993). In encouraging health care providers to be knowledgeable about female adolescent puberty she stressed the importance of considering both aspects. Stevens-Simon stressed the importance of being alert to “asynchrony” between physical and psychosocial maturation, pointing to the notable decline in the age at menarche and the need for girls to deal with feelings and pressures for which they are unprepared (Stevens-Simon, 1993). Embracing Elkind’s personal fable of invulnerability, she attributes the high rate of adolescent pregnancy and sexually
transmitted diseases to this asynchrony and the tendency in this population to take sexual
risks. As noted above, the adolescents in the present study did not supply data indicating
they took risks with their health or safety.

Literature pertaining to Consequences

The vast majority of literature pertaining to relationship outcomes deals with data
and analyses of adolescent pregnancy and the risk factors that contribute to it.
Researchers have consistently found that a very high proportion (as high as 82%) of teen
(age 15-19) pregnancies are an unwanted relationship outcome (Brown & Eisenberg,
1995). Scott questions these findings, proposing instead that many girls who became
pregnant were convinced that their pregnancy would lead to marriage with the child’s
father (Scott, 1983). Mothering teens, he held, did not believe they would be unwed
mothers.

Stewart found that gender ideology, self-concept and aspirations for life were
strongly related to the age of first motherhood (Stewart, 2003). Young women with a
more traditional ideology with regard to gender roles were more likely to become
mothers at an early age. On the other hand, educational and work aspirations were
predictive of later first motherhood. Stewart suggested that having a vision for the future
prompted teens to take active steps to manage relationship by preventing pregnancy, thus
making the realization of their goals more achievable (Stewart, 2003). Finally, she found
that adolescents with a better self-image and strong sense of control have their first child
at a later age. This she attributed to a greater level of confidence with taking control of
relationships and insisting on protection or abstinence. The data in the present study
supported Stewart’s conclusions, at least in the short term. Follow-up research with the study informants could explore the effect of gender ideology on longer term relationship outcomes.

Using a psychopathological approach, Henninghausen and colleagues found that young adults with higher levels of ego development in adolescence had better long-term relationship outcomes, including complex sharing of experiences, collaborative conflict resolution strategies and were rated more flexible and collaborative by their peers than were those with less developed ego development trajectories (Hennighausen, Hauser, Billings, Schultz, & Allen, 2004). The present study suggested that self-evaluation and introspection were used to achieve positive relationship outcomes, but the informants supplied few long term outcomes and yielded insufficient data pertaining to ego development to compare them to Henninghausen’s findings.

Duerst and colleagues researched perceived consequences of sexual behavior in a population of rural adolescents. Half of the sample believed abstinence was associated with positive consequences, but also with the possibility of losing the relationship (Duerst, Keller, Mockrud, & Zimmerman, 1997). Intercourse with a condom also was perceived as having positive outcomes and to be a sign of responsibility and caring. Unprotected sexual activity was almost universally perceived as leading to negative outcomes. These findings are consistent with the perceptions expressed by the informants in the present study.
Literature pertaining to Context

The contextual factors for the theory developed in this research are summarized in the self-evaluative category “The Kind of Girl I Am”. This category was comprised of two subcategories: What I know about myself and What I believe about others. Daniel Offer spent a considerable portion of his career studying the self-images of psychologically “normal” adolescents and found virtually “no support for adolescent turmoil” theories or hormonal debilities (Offer, Ostrov, Howard, & Atkinson, 1990). Only about ten percent of adolescents reported dissatisfaction with themselves, their lives or their relationship with parents. Essentially, Offer held that adolescents were equivalent to adults in their capacity for knowing themselves and their capabilities. He further reported that most adolescents felt in control of their lives and were happy (Offer et al., 1990). Data from the informants in the present study generally supported Offer’s account. They did not express extreme despair or dissatisfaction with themselves or with others around them, rather showing a good deal of comfort with themselves and a strong desire to know more about others.

In his classic work on early adolescence, Hamburg proposed three issues for adolescents: The bodily changes connected with puberty, psychosocial changes, and role changes relative to family and peers (Hamburg, 1974). Hamburg found that late maturing girls adapted to puberty better than early-maturing girls. The present study did not collect data concerning time of maturation. However, the issues proposed by Hamburg can be found in the categories proposed in the present study. The physical
changes are contained in the category Coming of Age and family and peer relations emerged as salient intervening factors in the present study.

Pletsch, Johnson, Tosi, Thurston and Riesch found that girls when assessing themselves are less comfortable with matters relating to sex than boys, but that they aspire to higher vocational and educational goals while attributing their successes to luck rather that talent (Pletsch, Johnson, Tosi, Thurston, & Riesch, 1991). The current study found that girls have a difficult time communicating about sex, but that they see it as necessary to effective management of relationships. In addition, the girls in this study said that they structured their behavior with their future aspirations in mind.

MacCorquodale and Delamater studied the relationship between self-image and premarital sexuality in students between the ages of 18 and 23 (MacCorquodale & Delamater, 1979b). No consistent relationship was found between these variables in females. Using a version of Reiss’ permissiveness scale (Reiss, 1967) the investigators assessed the premarital standards. Attitudes for this sample, reflective of the time, perhaps, were described as liberal with regard to premarital sexual behavior (MacCorquodale & Delamater, 1979b). The girls in the present study suggested that girls who have a poor self-image were more likely to become sexually active because they were trying to keep a boyfriend. The girls consistently mentioned the need to avoid unsafe sex. Learning about AIDS/HIV may have had an impact on sexual attitudes and permissiveness in the present group of informants. Furthermore, the sample in MacCorquodale and Delamater’s study was comprised of females who were older than the informants in the present research.
Literature pertaining to Intervening variables

The variables in the category My World which included the intervening variables in the present study included the peer group, the family, school, and the media. Research on the effect of the peer group on adolescent behavior is plentiful. Ennett and Bauman studied the concepts of influence and selection in relation to behavior and peer group homogeneity (Ennett & Bauman, 1994). Using social network analysis they sought to determine whether smoking teens sought out a group where group members also smoked, or whether smoking behavior was initiated as a result of belonging to a group where most members smoked. Influence refers to the initiation of a behavior as a result of group behavior, while selection refers to seeking out others who engage in similar behavior (Ennett & Bauman, 1994). The hypotheses were studied in the context of social positions related to level of group involvement. The present study provided evidence of selection in the story of the “Juggaloes” as well as influence, in the stories about doing things as a group. While Ennett and Bauman’s findings did not pertain to relationship behavior, influence and selection accounted equally for smoking behavior. In the present study as well, a plausible explanation was that both selection and influence impacted peer relationships and behavior. In future studies of Relationship Management, social network analysis would be an interesting method.

Siman applied a new model of peer influence to adolescent peer groups (Siman, 1977). The model tested two group components: the trend toward homogeneity and the existence of diversity when compared to group norms. The study indicated support for the peer group as a filter for parent norms before they become meaningful to individuals
in a peer friendship group. While the girls in the present study were positively disposed to parent norms and advice, they preferred to use the peer group as a sounding board for their relationship behavior. The study did not examine whether parent norms were actually filtered through the peer group.

Family influence on adolescent relationship behavior is well represented in the literature. Crosby and Miller found several factors relating to family influence on adolescent sexual behavior including: Parental monitoring, parent-adolescent communication, mother-daughter relationship satisfaction, parental modeling of sexual values, and family structure (Crosby & Miller, 2002). The informants in the present study spoke of the influence of their families, particularly mothers, older sisters and older brothers on their efforts to manage their relationships. Girls related the extent to which they were guided by parents, the presence and relevance of communicating with their parents, the extent to which they appreciated their mothers, how they had been brought up to think about sexuality, and how the structure of their family impacted their management of relationships.

Lammers and colleagues analyzed a number of parameters pertaining to adolescents that might have protective effects in sexual activity (Lammers et al., 2000). Being in a dual parent family was found to be protective against early initiation of sexual activity. However, while high parental expectations were a significant protective factor for males the same was not true for females. The present study did not produce significant data about these factors and, although some girls had divorced parents, they did not attribute any particular problems to this fact. High parental expectations came up
in the data, but could not be analyzed in light of age at initiation of intercourse. However, there were also no data to suggest the opposite effect on initiation of sexual activity.

In the current study, school emerged as a structural intervening variable. Large schools, where one can meet someone and seldom see one another again were one of the settings described by the informants. Murstein would describe such a school as an open field, a setting which contains too many people to make attention and contact likely. Study participants described classes, activities, and the peer group as places where they could create a Public presentation and access boys. Such settings would be characterized by Murstein as closed fields, in which the number of people is small enough that all the individuals in the group are almost certain to interact (Murstein, 1970, 1986). The structured interaction of a closed field makes it unnecessary to manage contact, while an open field makes extensive planning and contact management necessary. This distinction validates and is helpful in understanding and situating the present data pertaining to social settings.

*Linkage with the Theoretical Framework*

The theoretical framework discussed as providing the general perspective for this study was composed of Critical feminism, symbolic interactionism and life span development. The findings of this study did not develop independently of these perspectives and remained congruent with them at the backward looking appraisal of what had been discovered. Indeed, the appropriateness of all became even more evident
as the study progressed. This section examines some of the linkages between the
discoveries in this study and these supporting paradigms.

The critical feminist perspective that motivated this research was based on the
belief that female adolescents are among the most oppressed groups today, dominated by
male peers and adults of both sexes. This research presented a picture of adolescents who
were active participants in the management of relationships and who were selective about
their sources of support. While there was evidence of domination in the data, the
informants all felt they were able to manage their relationships to some extent. No data
or concepts specifically supported a yearning for intergenerational mentoring among
women, but neither the data exclude this type of support. The adoption by one informant
of the older sister of a friend offered some sense that other women could be helpful as
confidantes.

Some key principles in the lifespan development perspective are: development can
potentially occur throughout the life of a person; development is multidirectional;
development occurs multidimensionally in many different areas of existence; and there is
an interactional relationship between person and environment, with each influencing the
other as a result (Lerner, 1986; Sugarman, 1986). Although this study was concerned with
only a short segment of the life span, development in middle adolescence cannot be seen in
isolation with so many life-long effects having their origin in this time. Outcome
considerations in Relationship Management included not only What Might Happen during
adolescence, but long term effects on vocational, relational and educational aspirations.
The multidirectionality of development was comprehended in the diverse approaches to
Relationship Management taken by the adolescents in this study. The nature of the resources and influences, described in this study - peer groups, parents and school - spoke to the multidimensionality of the process that emerged. Finally, the life span principle of person-environment interaction is affirmed by the strong portrayal of contextual and environmental influences as providing the setting into which the developmental process of Relationship Management is embedded.

The symbolic interactionist perspective includes the following primary principles: the effect of social forces on the self through the vehicle of communication, the interactional relationship between self and society, the capacity for self-evaluation, and the importance of meaning in choosing behavior in light of the interpretation of events (Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1981). The effect of communicated influence pervaded this study from the reflected nature of the context category, the Kind of Girl I Am, to the impact of peer group interaction and the persistent attempts to communicate in relationships. The interactional nature of the process by which girls created a public presentation of themselves emerged as much a product of what girls wanted to portray as a product of what the portrayal meant to the observer by conveying meaning in order to attract. The context category is in itself a validation of the notion that human beings are capable of self-evaluation. Throughout the story of Relationship Management the girls derived and conveyed meaning from the reactions and interactions of others reflecting their own behavior and resulting from events in their relationship experiences.

This section has reflected on the appropriateness of the theoretical underpinnings proposed for this study. The findings are congruent with the principles of both life span
development and symbolic interactionism. This apparent and smooth congruence is no accident given the presence of these perspectives in the thinking behind the study, the guiding questions the pervasive presence of the perspective in the researcher's beliefs.

**Implications for Nursing Theory**

Nursing theory derives its structural legitimacy through the metaparadigm of nursing (Fawcett, 1993). Nursing theories encompass and serve to explain each of the metaparadigm concepts, person, environment, health and nursing. In the present research, person is the female adolescent, the Kind of Girl I Am, environment is the category of intervening influences, My World, and health is the consequences category, What Might Happen. Where does nursing fit in this explanation of Relationship Management?

The final metaparadigm concept, nursing, became a part of the theoretical whole through the nurse researcher as theorist. Meleis described grounded theory as a “research-theory” strategy for theory development (Meleis, 1991), where research is the starting point for theory development. Middle range theories can be synthesized using a grounded theory approach (Walker & Avant, 1995). While the adolescent informants provided the strands that told the story, the nurse researcher wove the fabric that represented the story’s meaning and colored the pattern that became the theory. The lesson of the story now has to be translated into action by nursing. What has been presented here already existed in the lives of the adolescents who graciously shared their lives. The nursing perspective helped create a nursing theory which can be of use in future investigations of female adolescent Relationship Management by proposing the
questions to be asked and of whom. Grounded theory is by its very nature always substantive and concrete, rather than formal and abstract. The present theory is situated in nursing knowledge at or somewhat below the middle range. The complexity of the phenomenon of Relationship Management can now be simplified by refining the concepts and relationships.

Middle range theories guiding the study of adolescent health reside mostly in disciplines other than nursing. There are a few exceptions, including Pender’s theory of health promotion (Pender, 1996), which applies to, but is not limited to adolescents, and Rew’s conceptual model for sexual health practices among homeless adolescents (Rew, 2001). In an in depth review of adolescent health theories, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), the health belief model (Becker, 1974), and the health promotion model (Pender, 1996) emerged as the most significant theories for adolescent health promotion research (Montgomery, 2002). Of these, only Pender’s work comes out of nursing. Other popular frameworks for adolescent health behavioral research come from family studies, sociology, social psychology, and psychology.

More theories with origins in nursing are needed to engage nurse researchers in the generation of knowledge from a nursing perspective. A nursing theory is one that concerns itself with the metaparadigm concepts of person, environment, health and nursing (Fawcett, 1993). Other disciplines can generate and have generated theories that work in the field of adolescent health promotion. Nursing theory overlaps with that of other disciplines, and nursing knowledge overlaps with knowledge from other disciplines. Yet the importance of developing nursing theory for nursing knowledge lies in the
uniqueness of how nursing focuses on health promotion (Smith, 1990). Smith explained that uniqueness by identifying five common themes apparent in the diverse ideas about health promotion found in nursing’s grand theories (Smith, 1990). First, non-nursing theories see health promotion in terms of the identification and alleviation of risk factors (Laffrey, 1985), a focus more suited to the medical or public health/epidemiology perspective. Secondly, nursing theories for health promotion are holistic in that they pertain to the person, family and community, including the peer group. Thirdly, health promotion brings about a change in the relationship between person and environment, or within the person-environment whole. Fourthly, Smith sees health promotion as more than health education, rather it is an intense interaction between person and nurse where the nurse supports the direction that is sought by the person. Finally, outcomes are broadly defined by the person and effectiveness of nursing activities are generally evaluated accordingly (Smith, 1990).

Smith’s examination of commonalities pertained to grand theories, while the present research is at or somewhat below the middle range. The importance of the present research for nursing theory, however, is its value as an informant-derived explanation of a process that has implications for health promotion in female adolescents through a nursing lens as described above. While a theory is not automatically a nursing theory because it was developed by a nurse, the nursing perspective is unique in its focus on health promotion. By embracing and embodying the themes described by Smith, the present theory can guide the development of nursing knowledge necessary for female adolescent health promotion. Smith has also suggested that all knowing is “personal
knowing” (Smith, 1992) or at least that personal knowing is primary. Certainly, personal knowing is implicit in theoretical sensitivity and the insight required to present the data in the current study in the form of the proposed theory. The theory emerged as fully nursing theory, with the person forming the context, the environment representing the immediate world of the person, and outcomes emerging as well-being in the physical as well as the emotional and social sense.

**Implications for Nursing Research**

One of the underlying motivations of this research was to uncover phenomena of interest in the area of female adolescent sexuality and present them from an approach that emphasized normal sexual development. Risk behaviors studied in the research literature generally include smoking, drinking, drug use and sexual activity (Hollen, 2000; Lindenberg, Solorzano, Vilaro, & Westbrook, 2001; Robrecht, 2001). In particular, studies in sexuality related to condom use and other aspects of HIV prevention are seen with frequency. Less common are studies that focus on adolescent sexuality as a normative developmental process (Porter, 2002a) in which nurses can promote healthy outcomes. This study contributes to this perspective by proposing a set of concepts that link to form a model of how female adolescents actually manage their relationships.

In the context of this model, potential research questions would fall within the area of sexual health promotion. A number of hypotheses were proposed in the previous chapter which could be the basis for nursing research questions. A few examples are:

1. What are the factors associated with the creation of an effective public presentation of self?
This question has to do with explaining the choices of public presentations of self in terms the desired outcomes and could be answered through focus group research followed by scale development with questions coming directly from the informant data (Fern, 2001). A scale developed in such a way would measure effectiveness of public presentations of self in achieving desired relationship outcomes.

2. What are the factors associated with accurate profiling results?

The research to answer this question would provide information about the most effective ways to judge the extent to which boys will make safe, healthy and rewarding partners.

3. What are the factors associated with positive communication outcomes?

This research question seeks to create a complete picture of communication styles and strategies that promote effective communication in adolescent relationships.

4. What factors determine the balance of control in an adolescent romantic relationship?

The importance of the balance of control in relationship is its impact on outcomes that are good for the female adolescent. When the girl has little control, her ability to choose healthy outcomes, both physical and emotional, is diminished. This question could also be studied through a more focused grounded theory approach or by focus group based scale development.
5. How do anticipated relationship outcomes affect the decision to leave a relationship?

This study would look at the extent to which pre-defined aspirations have an effect on what girls will tolerate in relationships. This information would provide knowledge that could help nurses focus girls on healthy long term goals and potential abandonment of unhealthy relationships. This could eventually help girls define their dreams for the future and find ways to make them happen.

All these questions pertain specifically to the current phenomenon of interest, namely Relationship Management. Future research in a different area of interest can also be derived from the present research. In another area of health promotion, specific behavioral paths to carcinogenesis are known that, if managed, can be inhibited. Smoking is a known causative factor leading to various kinds of cancer, which, if related behavior is managed, for example by never starting and avoiding second hand smoke, can be prevented. Similarly, exposure to UVA and UVB radiation is a known skin cancer carcinogen. Interventions to manage sun exposure behavior can also be targeted with the concepts of this research in mind. The theory presented in this research could inform and guide other health promotion research in terms of what kinds of girls begin smoking, or actively engage in tanning; how a public presentation of self promotes sun avoidance; or how the peer group sets a norm of awareness around human papilloma virus and its known role in cancer of the cervix. Thus, research could focus on how adolescents can manage cancer prevention activities using strategies similar to those employed in
Relationship Management. Intervention studies could include treatment through the peer group, the family and the school.

Finally, this study has ethical implications for nursing research. All nursing research in adolescent populations carries with it ethical considerations regarding privacy and potential coercive factors always considered in research with vulnerable populations (Mahon & Yarcheski, 1988). These concerns are most particularly essential when the topic is as intensely personal as sexuality and close relationships. Approaching questions from a management perspective that focuses on the female adolescent as an active participant and empowers the informant as a life manager can help alleviate these ethical considerations, remove potential suggestions of coercion created by closed ended questions and leave the scope and nature of revelations up to the individual.

Implications for Nursing Practice

The focus of this study began as sexuality management and emerged after data analysis as Relationship Management. The significance of Relationship Management and the ideas presented in this study to nursing practice may not be readily apparent. This section clarifies the utility of the theory for nursing practice.

Many female adolescent health issues can be linked to the interaction between the girl and her peers including girlfriends, guy friends and boyfriends. The ways that peers influence girls’ behavior have an impact on the paths girls choose and whether those paths lead to healthy outcomes. Among the outcomes girls in this study named were relationship outcomes, physical outcomes, effects on reputation, and life course effects.
Relationship outcomes included initiation of sexual activity. Nursing interventions in the school setting can be enhanced by knowing that girls who become sexually active tend to continue to be sexual because they may not feel they have options. Nurses can counsel girls about options for future sexual behavior once the first sexual relationship is over, sharing the experiences of other adolescents who choose not to continue being sexual. They can also counsel girls about strategies such as safe sex practices and contraception in healthy sexual relationships if they choose to remain sexual in future relationships. Anticipated physical outcomes discussed in this study included date rape and abuse. Nurses can use this research to understand the role of stories passed along in the teen’s environment, counsel girls with research based information about the signs of domination that sometimes lead to abuse and help girls recognize dangerous physical situations. Health and sexual development is part of the curriculum presented in schools by school nurses, and can also include content on sexual harassment. Effects of stigmatization and bullying discussed in this study as an anticipated outcome should be a part of these curricula. Nurses can gain insight into this phenomenon by referring to this portion of the present study. Girls want input from healthcare providers about the direction of their relationships (Porter, 2002a).

Nurses can incorporate self-evaluation and introspection into advice and curricula for female adolescents as suggested by the salience of The Kind of Girl I Am in this study. Nurses can also filter information through the peer group as well as provide up-to-date information to families about the most effective ways to discuss relationships with
teens. Gender differentiated communication styles suggested by this study support separate health education settings for the genders.

Nurses may feel uncomfortable and inadequately prepared to counsel adolescents about their sexual development (Blum, Beuhring, Wunderlich, & Resnick, 1996; Matocha & Waterhouse, 1993). Knowing more about the approaches taken by adolescents themselves may be helpful to nurses who are in a position to counsel adolescents in this area. Although what used to be described as an epidemic of teen pregnancy seems to be on the decline (NCHS, 2003), there is still a multitude of issues that adolescents need to discuss with nurses, not the least of which are the ways they manage their relationships.

This study has proposed a theory to explain how informants managed relationships. While the applicability of the findings is limited by the homogeneity of the sample, the concepts can help provide perspective and guidance to nurses dealing with adolescents in schools and health care settings. The study highlights adolescents’ capacity for self-management as well as Relationship Management and thus opens up new approaches to health interventions that take this capability into account rather than portraying passive recipients of care.

In an environment where much sex education in schools focuses on abstinence (Kaiser Family Foundation, 1999), approaches that take into account the reality of adolescent experience are vital to healthy sexual development. Nurses require current and correct knowledge about sexual development as they educate both teens and parents (Few, 1996; Kobokovich & Bonovich, 1992). Nurses in both school and clinical settings
as well as nurses in the media have many opportunities to understand and facilitate
healthy sexual development and relationship dynamics in their female adolescent clients.
This role is not only implicit in nursing as a holistic practice but is expected by the
adolescents themselves (Porter, 2002a). A national survey (The Kaiser Family
Foundation, 2001) of 530 teens between the ages of 12 and 17 found that teens were as
likely to have received information about sex and relationships from the media (60%) as
from a healthcare provider (62%). The source referred to most frequently (75%) was
school health or sex education classes with parents referred to almost as frequently (70%)
as sources of information about relationships and sexual development. The survey
indicated that teens would prefer to receive information from a healthcare professional or
in classes at school (The Kaiser Family Foundation, 2001). While 61% reported having
discussed diet and exercise with a healthcare provider, only 23% had ever discussed their
sexual history with a healthcare provider. Clearly there is willingness on the part of teens
to use healthcare providers including nurses as advisors and sources of information to
assist them in the management of relationships. This research has provided a framework
for how the teens in this study managed relationships that can be of use for nurses who
teach, care for or treat teens.

Recommendations

This research has provided a look into the lives of female adolescents and their
relationships with boys. The research, while interesting and compelling, is not of a
terminal nature. Further knowledge development should be pursued in this area of
Relationship Management. The informants in this study were quite homogenous with
regard to socioeconomics and ethnicity. More work should be undertaken with adolescents from poor and disadvantaged families, adolescents living alone, and adolescents of color (Dodson, 1998) to assess the fit of the current model in a different population. In addition, work could begin to test the hypotheses proposed in this study. This can be accomplished by developing instruments to measure the concepts presented in this dissertation and testing their psychometric properties. This would eventually be followed by studies using predictive modeling of the concept relationships.

Relationship Management is an important phenomenon for adolescents as well as social policy. In addition to sexual development, the phenomenon has implications for the reduction of relationship violence if girls can be taught and empowered to manage relationships actively and use the resources available to them. This research may be helpful in identifying other areas of adolescent life that can be celebrated as sources of positive influence for the women of the future.

Conclusion

The research described in this dissertation was undertaken in order to gain insight into the strategies employed by female adolescents to manage their emerging sexuality, departing from the more common path of developing knowledge about adolescents by looking at their risk factors. Underway, it became apparent that the informants were more concerned with managing relationships in which sexuality was embedded, thus managing sexuality in its natural context. The process outlined in the grounded theory of female adolescent Relationship Management emerged from the reality of the lives of the
girls who provided the interview data and revealed them as very much engaged and active in their own sociosexual development.

It remains for this researcher to send out the hope that this research will be read, will be seen as true to the life of other adolescents and useful to theorists, researchers, clinical nurses and other healthcare providers. While this research has answered some questions about how girls deal with boys, it has almost certainly raised many more. In the final analysis, society cannot through public policies shelter and protect girls from themselves and from growing up. As future leaders, nurturers, producers, parents, and peace makers, the girls of this nation must become fully sexual women through their own efforts, under their own power, and for their own hopes and dreams.
APPENDIX A

Parental Consent Form
APPENDIX B

Informant Assent
APPENDIX C

Interview Guide
1. Girls your age are sometimes starting to develop close friendships with another young person. Are you experiencing that? How does that start?

2. Tell me about some ways that having a boy as a friend has been different than having a girl as a friend. Can you give me some examples from your experience?

3. What sort of expectations do you think a boy has of you when you have a close friendship?

4. How have you handled those kinds of expectations? Has anything helped you with that?

5. How do you know how to handle a relationship with a boy? If necessary, follow-up with: Do you ever read about it or watch programs?

6. Was there a time when a boy expected something from you and you disagreed with what he was expecting from you? Tell me about that.

7. How did you handle that whole situation?

8. What do you think was going on in that situation?

9. Have there been any other situations like that, maybe about getting romantically involved?

10. Can you tell me what was going on at that time?
REFERENCES


