LOST MOON: A DEPTH PSYCHOLOGICAL AND INTERPETIVE
PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ADOLSECENT HEARTBREAK

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ABSTRACT

Lost Moon: A Depth Psychological and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of
Adolescent Heartbreak

by

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Loving is an authentic psychological task. Falling in love is a creative act, an initiatory process, and an opportunity for psychological transformation. Adolescence is a phase of life when one lives on the border, no longer a child, not yet an adult. It is during this phase when psychic and cultural imbalances are most acutely felt, making heartbreak and loss particularly difficult. This dissertation asks: how does the loss of first love, leading to a journey of descent, transform an adolescent girl's identity? This study explores the view that when we begin to view loss not as a failure, but as a journey of discovery and meaning, the adolescent girl will be transformed in a positive way.

Review of the literature establishes the work in the overlap of four key areas of study: psychological perspectives on adolescence, images of ritual of initiation, experiences of grief and loss of love for adolescents, and popular culture studies featuring adolescence. The depth psychological perspective allows commonly held beliefs about romance and love to be held up to question, most explicitly the romantic notion of the Magical Other, the idea that another person is responsible for our happiness. Depression is an important part of the initiatory process if we are to raise consciousness and make space for a new way of being.

Utilizing interpretive phenomenological analysis as a research methodology, six women shared their stories of heartbreak in an interview format. Although each case is

analyzed individually, in each account there are several overlapping themes, most notably around the shadow side of love. Some encountered suffering through the loss of the relationship, whereas others during the relationship. Each participant experienced love's pathos in relationship to power, emotions, culture, sexuality, and the media. The findings of this study suggest that if we can view heartbreak as an initiatory step towards wisdom, this may help teenage girls change their view of their darkest moments as opportunities toward a meaningful life.

Key words: adolescence, depth psychology, heartbreak, initiation, love, grief

Dedication

For Anton, Mom, my furry children, the women who shared their stories with me, and to the rest of my tribe.

I am blessed.

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The style used throughout this dissertation is in accordance with the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th edition, 2009) and *Pacifica Graduate Institute's Dissertation Handbook* (2014-2015).

Chapter 1
Introduction

HEARTBREAK

is unpreventable; the natural outcome of caring for people and things over which we have no control, of holding in our affections those who inevitably move beyond our line of sight. Heartbreak begins the moment we are asked to let go but cannot, in other words, it colors and inhabits and magnifies each and every day; heartbreak is not a visitation, but a path that human beings follow through even the most average life. Heartbreak is our indication of sincerity: in a love relationship, in a work, in trying to learn a musical instrument, in the attempt to shape a better more generous self. Heartbreak is the beautifully helpless side of love and affection and is just as much an essence and emblem of care as the spiritual athlete's quick but abstract ability to let go. Heartbreak has its own way of inhabiting time and its own beautiful and trying patience in coming and going. Heartbreak is inescapable; yet we use the word heartbreak as if it only occurs when things have gone wrong: an unrequited love, a shattered dream, a child lost before their time. Heartbreak, we hope, is something we hope we can avoid; something to guard against, a chasm to be carefully looked for and then walked around; the hope is to find a way to place our feet where the elemental forces of life will keep us in the manner to which we want to be accustomed and which will keep us from the losses that all other human beings have experienced without exception since the beginning of conscious time. But heartbreak may be the very essence of being human, of being on the journey from here to there, and of coming to care deeply for what we find along the way…

From the upcoming Third Readers' Circle Essay,
'HEARTBREAK'
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Falling in love can turn our world upside down, especially when it happens for the first time. Many first loves happen in adolescence, a time full of discovery and challenges. Falling in love captures the soul, and it can be difficult for anyone to balance their selfhood with their relationship, but it can be particularly harder for young adults. Jungian analyst Verena Kast (1986) investigates the fantasies underlying our relationships, finding the ones in love relationships the most compelling. Her exploration focuses on how the act of falling in love opens our imagination, and as a result we form an inner image of the ideal self, ours as well as that of the beloved. We also fantasize

ourselves into our best possibilities from the beloved's eyes, thereby becoming more of

ourselves. In the beginning, love is lively and colorful; idealizing not only our partner,

but our self as well, opening ourselves to the questions: who would we like to be or who

could we be? This person taps something in our psyche that is brought to life, Kast

writes:

> Whenever we are loved, we also experience ourselves as God could have intended us. Such an experience is part of the essence of love. Perhaps love only arises and blossoms when we envision a beloved's best possibilities and are able to draw them out through love. These possibilities transport the beloved out of the narrowness of his or her life and open that person to something he or she had not thought possible. By eliciting a beloved's potential, the lover gains a part of that person, and something in the lover is also transformed in the process. (p. 4)

Basically, Kast's argument explains that love relationships are not immune from

projection, that something in us is being awoken or being brought to life in our

imagination by the presence of this other person.

Similarly, Johnson (1989) acknowledges that although love may "tear you into

bits" (p. 48), within love there lives tremendous creative potential. He writes, "almost the

only place where ordinary people are touched by the gods in our time is in romance.

Falling in love is the experience of looking through that person and seeing the god or

goddess who stands behind" (p. 38). Although Johnson's and Kast's analysis is

invaluable, my argument is in our culture there is an overemphasis placed upon falling in

love and a subsequent de-emphasis and sometimes devaluing of falling out of love. In a

sense, I argue the contrary that there is as much value in the loss of love, in the descent

that happens afterwards. Examining why falling in love is emphasized whereas losing

love is not offers a needed critical analysis of our culture.

In exchange for giving ourselves over to love, we expect a lot in return, but our expectations often pertain to romantic notions perpetuated by our culture (Moore, 1992). As therapists, Moore explains, the wounds of love's failure to meet our expectations often show up in the consulting room. Perhaps our constant striving for the perfect relationship needs adjustment. Thus Moore asks us to look beyond the relationship and see it as a soul event, an opportunity to initiate our soul in some way. Making this adjustment creates an opening, a new way to view loss and separation, beyond one of failure. Moore writes that "by nature love feels inadequate, but this inadequacy rounds out the wide range of love's emotions. Love finds its soul in its feelings of incompleteness, impossibility, and imperfection" (p. 89). The rounding out of love's emotions brings up my interest—the heartbreak. I argue that heartbreak creates the ideal environment for psyche to enter.

Understanding heartbreak requires a broader understanding of wounding. Henderson (2005) argues that our woundings are initiations; this perspective allows us to remove the victim from the situation by reclaiming ourselves as initiates. "Just because the situation is strange, difficult, and beset by certain ritual obstacles, the psyche deepens its experience of itself and finds a way to the sickness needing to be healed" (p. 7). In my own experience it was in my broken places that I found what made me unique, leading me to my vocation as a psychotherapist. In my clinical work I have witnessed patients find initiation in their broken places as well. These moments of wounding and subsequent initiation carry our uniqueness.

A large part of my clinical work was spent working with adolescents. I found the response to the hardships of adolescents by family, friends, and community lacking, yet

telling of a larger cultural pattern. Most often, heartbreak was treated *not* as an opportunity for initiation but as something to be avoided or denied. Further still, much of the adolescent wounding resulted from the unreasonable expectations placed upon these young people and in particular, the young women. Young people are easily overwhelmed in the pursuit of perfection. I will argue that culturally, we have ignored the initiatory and psychological aspects of this phase of life. Competiveness as an adult is emphasized instead. Unfortunately, these pressures and expectations have the opposite effect: our adolescents are not becoming adults. The transition of young people beyond the family is handled indecisively, whereas preserving indefinite ties to family is

> encouraging young adults to laziness and dependency, with the mature, responsible members carrying an ever larger burden of immature people, the deadwood of the family tree. It is also apparent that an individual does not break his infantile family ties merely by leaving home; some form of the initiation archetype must be activated appropriately. (Henderson, 2005, p. 134)

The *puer* archetype in American culture illustrates how it is becoming hard for young adults to grow up, when everything reflected in our ideals and mass media discourages this.

Complicating matters further, this is the age when most adolescents fall in love for the first time. Often the unreasonable expectations that we place on ourselves get projected onto the new relationships. As a therapist I witnessed many young women preoccupied with matters of the heart. Many of these women did not enter the relationship with an adequate sense of their own identity and thus became overly dependent upon the presence of another person. Consequently losing the relationship feels like a death, leaving them to grapple with crucial questions of identity: Who am I without this person? What will become of me?

Mary Pipher (1995) uses the character of Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a metaphor for the forces adolescent girls face while struggling to find their selves in the face of the conflicting demands of others. The two opposing forces of Hamlet and her father tear her apart, and with her whole self-concept reliant on their approval, the conflict eventually leads to her self-destruction. Pipher felt that psychology had a tendency to ignore adolescent girls, as they are complex subjects to study. Although this may be true, it is these complexities that make them worthy subjects for understanding love and all of its soul possibilities. Just as the stage of adolescence has puzzled psychologists, this same puzzlement extends to how we perceive love. Perhaps it is as Moore (1992) suggests, that our attachment to reason has left our imagination anemic. This anemia is one reason why we "lose our heads" in love; part of the solution is moving out of our heads and into our hearts.

Adolescence is a chaotic yet rich time of life, and compounded with the experience of falling in love, it becomes particularly overwhelming. Goodchild (2001) suggests that the act of falling in love is not only a sacred experience; it also conjures up our insecurities, doubts, and fears. Breakdown is necessary for growth to occur:

> The coniunctio first takes place in the underworld, in the New Moon, where there is no light, when we are in the deepest depression, and most alienated from ourselves, others, and life. It is only in these dark, vegetative, abysmal states that the nigredo can dissolve old structures that no longer accord with our soul's essence. Thus these states of deadness, withdrawal, and fragmentation are essential to the rhythm of transformation. (pp. 46-47)

If we adopt Goodchild's approach, then we may cease pathologizing the depression that often occurs after the loss of love. Instead, love and its accompanying suffering may be understood as an opportunity to shed the ideas that no longer serve, to reclaim parts of

self that are lost and bring our uniqueness closer. Moore (1992) also recognizes the

soul's need for pathos and tragedy, seeing them as our initiation into the ways of the soul:

> Love is the means of entry and our guide. Love keeps us on the labyrinthine path.
> If we can honor love as it presents itself, taking shapes and directions we would
> never have predicted or desired, then we are on the way toward discovering the
> lower levels of soul, where meaning and value reveal themselves slowly and
> paradoxically. (p. 85)

Loving is an initiatory act, a way to soul. By caring for the soul, by witnessing pain and

struggle without denial, real transformation can take place.

When faced with challenges or difficulty, our impetus is to search for the culprit

and find a solution. As adults, our tendency is to look for causal explanation when faced

with adolescent wounding. Frankel (1998) insists that most parents and psychological

theories adopt this approach. Adults tend to project their perspective onto adolescents,

and in doing so, they tend to miss a lot. As Frankel explains, "adolescence as a

psychological phenomenon is crying out for renewed attention. Perhaps our psychology

has kept itself too distant, safely locked up in the fantasy of childhood, to hear its cry" (p.

9). Instead of looking for causal answers, it is better to investigate and to

> focus a psychological eye on the books, television shows, movies, and music that
> adolescents find so appealing. Such an inquiry seeks to understand which
> components of the popular culture an adolescent draws upon for life-power and
> which plays a life-negating role. (p. 224)

Rather than approach adolescents with a cultural bias that emphasizes achievement and

power, it is better to approach them from a place of curiosity and understanding. The

stories, characters, and music that capture the attention of adolescents offer one important

portal into their psychic lives. By looking specifically at the portrayal of young women

in contemporary art and entertainment, I hope to glimpse the variety of adolescence

experience.

In my clinical work with girls in various settings, I noticed their fascination with a young adult series by Stephenie Meyer, titled the *Twilight Saga* (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008). The saga chronicles the experience of Bella, the protagonist, who falls in love for the first time. Although her situation is extraordinary—the object of her affection is a vampire—the emotional journey that she experiences is universal. In the first novel, Bella falls in love with Edward. The second novel follows her journey after Edward ends the relationship in an attempt to give her a chance for a normal teenage existence.

Edward's abandonment and Bella's ensuing heartbreak is a reminder to adults how devastating the loss of a first love can be for a young person who does not have previous experience to draw from. Meyer (2006) depicts how it feels to have a broken heart, "I was like a lost moon—my planet destroyed in some cataclysmic, disaster-movie scenario of desolation—that continued, nevertheless, to circle in a tight little orbit around the empty space left behind, ignoring the laws of gravity" (p. 201). Loss can feel like death. What Meyer captures well is the devastation one feels when one's object of affection is lost. Unfortunately adults often make the mistake of minimizing adolescent heartbreak.

Although "teenage girl in high school" is a common premise, the power with which the series captured the imagination of women—both adolescent and middle-aged—is not. Novels rarely portray such a protagonist: a young woman who is presented with the opportunity to know herself more fully and become more complex, to search for her place in the world, to deal with her insecurities, and to find love. Further still, the story is told in a way that many women relate to. The *Twilight Saga* is a cultural phenomenon because young women choose it. Perhaps middle-aged women read

Twilight Saga because they feel an activation of their archetypal adolescent. In the documentary following the making of her 2011 album, *In Your Dreams,* Stevie Nicks describes her experience seeing the film *New Moon,* which inspired her song *Moonlight: A Vampire's Dream*:

> I was so taken with this movie because what happened to Bella, absolutely happened to me. When Edward leaves her and just leaves her, she's out there in the forest and she just kind of drops to her knees and that's it, she's just going to lay there and die. I have been in that position where I thought my life was over. And somebody did just leave me. I just started to slowly cry from the deepest part of my heart. I started thinking about the words to Lady from the Mountains, I felt this was Bella's story and also mine and at that point I became forever entrenched in the *Twilight* story. I hope people, I hope when they hear it they feel the hopeless desperation that she felt and that I felt when somebody calls you up and says the love of my life has walked away from me. Maybe this song will help. To know it's happened to other people. That same thing happened to Stevie Nicks and she's still alive. (Nicks, Stewart, & Boyd, 2013)

What Nicks illustrates is how the archetypal adolescent, the lost moon, is always present. These experiences of love, heartbreak and loss will forever exist in our consciousness.

Chapter 2
Overview of Literature

The literature review presented here comprises five areas: psychological perspectives on adolescence, images and ritual of initiation, experiences of grief and loss of love for adolescents, popular culture studies featuring adolescence, and literature relevant to researcher's theoretical approach.

Psychological Perspectives on Adolescence

It is an impossible task to separate adolescence and culture, for the two are interdependent. Referring to adolescence as a universal experience, framed primarily from the standpoint of biological change, is incorrect. Although puberty is universal and affects all young people as they approach physical and sexual maturity, adolescence refers to the transitory phase between the beginnings of puberty and the time when one becomes an adult (Arnett, 2010). Culture determines when adolescence begins and ends. In parts of the world, Arnett explains, one begins life as a child, then after puberty, begins anew as an adult. In the United States, the phase of adolescence is ever evolving, a situation that is historically unique.

The stage of life referred to as adolescence is a relatively new cultural phenomenon (Gil, 1996). The years 1890 to 1920 have been termed by some as the "Age of Adolescence" (Kett, 1977). Prior to the Industrial Revolution, children began work as soon as they were physically able. During the Industrial Revolution, there was tremendous demand for labor. At the same time, laws preventing child labor did not exist, making preadolescent and adolescent youth appealing workers (Tyak, 1990). The lack of age and hour limits made children easy targets for exploitation, and reformers

advocated for legislation to prevent further abuses (Kett, 1977). With these new labor

laws came requirements for longer periods of schooling. Up until the late 19th century, if

a state had mandatory school attendance laws, they applied only to primary school. In

the Age of Adolescence, requirements expanded to include secondary school as well

(Tyak, 1990).

Scholarship in adolescence began with G. Stanley Hall (1904), the first recipient

of the psychology PhD in the United States. He helped initiate the child study movement

by advocating for scientific research and better conditions in the home, school, and

workplace. He also authored the first textbook on adolescence (Arnett, 2010).   His

textbook covered a wide range of topics, and many of his descriptions of biological

development, mood, and peer susceptibility have been verified and expanded upon.

Psychoanalysis focused on adolescence as the time in development when earlier

Oedipal conflicts ideally reach their final resolution. Freud's theory of development

highlights the psychosexual stages in which sexual growth originates in early childhood

and after a period of latency, returns again in puberty for final resolution (Frankel, 1998).

Anna Freud (1966) found fault with psychological theories that saw adolescence as the

beginning of an individual's sexual life. She believed the true genesis was early

childhood, thereby charging psychoanalysis with correcting this view. Instead, she

viewed adolescence as the time when instincts become most important in development.

Her theories are a great example of the tendency to look at this stage as a time of "storm

and stress," a time full of contradictions and disturbance (Arnett, 2010; Mclean-Taylor,

1994). Peter Blos describes the theory as recapitulation, where the "adolescent seeks

sexual objects outside the family, sexual identity formation being an integral part of adolescent development" (Mclean-Taylor, p. 31).

Frankel (1998) highlights the psychoanalytic tendency to frame adolescence as a recapitulation of earlier development, a tendency which "nullifies a phenomenological viewing of the adolescent process" (p. 32). I agree with Frankel's assessment. Looking only to an adolescent's past developmental experiences is an oversimplification, and I find Anna Freud's tone towards this stage of development dismissive. Instead of being under an instinctual cloud, I witnessed my adolescent patients in the presence of fierce vulnerability and complexity. Not only did they face challenges from their personal and school lives, but also they struggled to find their voice and place in the world.

Erikson (1950) was an influential scholar in the field of adolescent development, to which he brought skills as an ethnographer, psychoanalyst, and teacher. His theory presents eight stages of psychosocial development, with each stage containing a central crisis. Adolescence, the fifth stage, is assigned the task of building a coherent sense of self and autonomy in order to prepare for the adult tasks of love and work. Although all stages of life address issues of identity, he believed that none focus as intensely on identity as adolescence. The term *identity crisis* does not point to impending catastrophe; instead "it is now being accepted as designating a necessary turning point, a crucial moment, when development must move one way or another, marshalling resources of growth, recovery, and further differentiation" (Erikson, 1968, p. 16). In order to pass successfully through the fifth stage of development, an adolescent needs to feel a clear and definite sense of who one is and how one fits into the world.

Erikson emphasized that identity formation depends upon self-reflection, the process of knowing one's talents and abilities and how to make these outward opportunities available in the environment (1968). In *Young Man Luther* (1958), Erikson emphasized the impact of context on identity; if Luther had grown up in a different historical period, his adult life would have been very different. Erikson was not only sensitive to the cultural context of an adolescent's time period, he believed that adolescence was influenced more by cultural context than any other stage of life.

Erikson's theories significantly impacted identity theory and research for over half a century (Arnett, 2010). His theories have been modified and critiqued. Critics suggest that identity formation is not as stable as Erikson's model suggested. For example, the *postmodern* perspective suggests that identity is more fluid and more dependent upon context. Further still, Carol Gilligan (1993) acknowledges an inherent bias in Erikson's life stages, and with those of other developmental theorists, towards male development. By applying a male-centric model to both sexes, some adolescents were seen as deviating from this benchmark and thus were unnecessarily labeled as deviant or deficient.

The research of Carol Gilligan (1991; 1993) highlights the fact that discussions of psychotherapy and developmental psychology in the past overlooked women in general and adolescent girls in particular. She asserts that adolescence is a particularly difficult time in girls' development. Girls are more likely to suffer during this period when compared with boys:

> Opening their ears to the world, listening in, eavesdropping on the daily conversations, girls take in voices, which silence their relational knowledge. And as their experience and their bodies change with adolescence, girls are more apt to discount the experiences of their childhood or to place a cover over their

childhood world so that it remains intact. Yet, closing the door on their childhood, girls are in danger of knocking out what are in effect the T-cells of their psychological immune system—their seemingly effortless ability to tune into the relational world. Voices which intentionally or unintentionally interfere with girls' knowing, or encourage girls to silence themselves, keep girls from picking up or bringing out into open a series of relational violations which they are acutely tuned into. (1991, p. 19)

For girls, adolescence becomes a revisioning of their relational lives. Relational feelings, dismissed by culture as groundless, become buried for the sake of preserving relationships. Consequently many girls lose an important resource for maintaining psychological health (Gilligan, 1991). Gilligan's work with bringing the importance of our relational lives into the conversation is exceptional, and I agree with her up to a point, as I think defining the identity crisis experience for either gender (and race or class) puts one on tenuous ground.

Influenced by the work of Gilligan, Pipher (1995) focuses exclusively on adolescent girls. She brings an understanding of the cultural forces facing girls, and she believes that our adolescent questions and struggles continue with us as adults. In her work, she gives context to the different familial, peer, and cultural forces activated at this stage for young women. She believes that we live in a girl-poisoning culture, which makes them vulnerable on multiple levels. At the same time as girls undergo many developmental changes, she explains, they are confronted by the -isms alive in our culture—sexism, capitalism, and lookism, all of which can be detrimental to development because they perpetrate the insidious objectification of women.

This is often the time when girls feel the effects of our cultural ambivalence regarding the feminine. They are marketed heavily with messages that perfecting physical appearance provides happiness and fulfillment. Worse still, they receive

contradictory messages about what it means to be a woman and an adult. I find the incident of physical abuse between Chris Brown and Rihanna, two popular music performers, particularly poignant. Both performers were marketed to this age group not only as an ideal example of fame, but of young love. At the time of the incident, I was working with young women recovering from sexual and substance abuse. In lieu of juvenile detention, they were at a camp for girls with the goal of ending the cycle of violence and abuse. When the photo of Rihanna's bruised face surfaced, I witnessed many girls struggling to make meaning, and many related the moment to their personal experience. It felt as if the photo of her blackened eyes made Rihanna more relatable to them because she was no longer an airbrushed face from glossy magazines. The contradictory messages girls receive are summed up in a comment one girl made, "He shouldn't have done what he did, but she must have made him really angry."

Images and Ritual of Initiation

In the previous section, we looked to some of the historical perspectives on adolescence; next I will discuss the work of some depth psychologists who view this phase of life through a different lens. Many scholars point to the fact that in our modern world, we do not initiate our adolescents into adulthood (Eliade & Trask, 1965; Henderson, 2005; Zoja, 1989; Frankel, 1998). Depth psychology views adolescence from the archetypal perspective of initiation, which at a psychological level involves pain, ambivalence, confusion, and dismemberment as the old identity dies and the new one emerges (Blos, 1967; Blos, 1974; Corbett, 2007; Sullwood, 1988; Keipenheur, 1990). Although the archetype of initiation can be accessed throughout one's lifetime

(Henderson, 2005), the initiatory impulse is first activated during adolescence (Frankel, 1998). First, let us look to see what is meant when we refer to initiation.

Initiation is stepping into the darkness, to face an ordeal, not necessarily to make one whole, but to be more alive (Hall, 1994). Aligning the archetype of initiation with rebirth, Hall writes:

> It means to "enter into" an experience of psychic significance with one's eyes closed, mouth shut, wearing a veil—a kind of veiling that paradoxically permits seeing. Covering the eyes for a time to the external world permits an inward focusing that tends to draw one's attention "down" and sometimes "backward." (p. 24)

This active entry into darkness creates the space for the internal self to speak, giving the sense that a transformation is occurring. Hall (1994) insists that although the rites of initiation are mostly gone in our culture, the energy of initiation remains; it is now an internal journey:

> The unconscious self has an autonomous way of making itself known; if people do not gather anymore on a sacred road to search for their lost souls, the gathering together and the search will be translated into the movement and language of our interiors. Rites of passage have turned inward where they can be lived out as stages of psychic transformation. (p. 85)

In short, our initiations have withdrawn from the outer world to the inner one; the crucial life passages are now experienced as stages of inner transformation.

Working from an ecopsychological perspective, the work of Foster and Little (1998) links the initiatory seasons of human nature with the four seasons—fall, winter, spring, and summer. Using this model, fall is linked with the adolescent phase, described as a liminal, initiatory time when the child must become prepared to become an adult. It is a time for turning inward, and it is a dangerous phase of willing surrender to the mystery of death. Foster emphasizes that although there is a death,

something else lies embedded in uneasy darkness. A flake, a gleam, a flame, a gift, a knowing, a way of holding on in the flux of unknowing. The fall initiate finds this thing. It is the means with which she will transform herself. (p. 47)

In death and darkness there is the potential for rebirth and transformation.

Interested in tales of initiation, Henderson (1964) traces initiation through the symbolic images and myth of the ancients and relates them to the modern world. He points out that in the idealism of youth, children are often led to become overconfident, a tendency that sometimes leads to disaster. However, "the youthful ego must always run this risk, for if a young man does not strive for a higher goal than he can safely reach, he cannot surmount the obstacles between adolescence and maturity" (p. 113). Although some of our rituals of hazing resemble rites in tribal societies, "the modern equivalents of initiation rites are strictly secular, organized and led by boys only a little older than the neophytes" (p. 89). Henderson (2005) refers to Erikson's work with identity exploration, where ties easily shift from one force to another. Referring to adolescents, he stresses the importance of

a span of time after they have ceased being children, but before their deeds and works count toward a future identity. Because modern education has become in many ways so active and so competitive, it frequently frustrates rather than furthers this natural moratorium which is a desirable period of introversion in the psychological sense. (p. 143)

The modern education system tells our youth that every decision they make directly influences future opportunities. Many who would benefit from a time of internal exploration are instead thrust into the competitive world of achievement and ranking.

Corbett (2007) posits that Western societies' reliance on social compliance, rather than spiritual initiation, makes the markers of a young person's passage to adulthood "relatively superficial and they are not necessarily transformative" (p. 71). Although the

rites are gone, the impulses are not. Unfortunately many adolescents do not have the support needed to undergo an internal journey of psychic transformation. Although they are left with the need to initiate themselves in some way, the options are limited (Allan & Dyck, 1988; Corbett 2007, Kiepenheur, 1990). Because we have failed to address the adolescent initiatory rite of passage, young people must make or discover their own challenges and initiatory rites. Frankel (1998) sees what is often described as adolescents' acting out, such as experimentation with drugs and alcohol, as an attempt at self-initiation. Beyond physical harm, he argues, these attempts lack initiatory supervision, guidance from tribal elders, and those who have gone before. I argue that the lack goes further: initiating our youth is no longer recognized as a cultural need.

Sullwood (1988) describes the function of spontaneously created ritual action in helping adolescents make the transition to adulthood. She charges our educational system with not offering structure to enter the adult world beyond academic expectations and development of work skills. The depth of the changes in self are largely ignored, thereby creating a necessity for initiatory education in schools, which help young people, discover their own inner resources (Sulwood; Frankel, 1998). Although the role of the education system is beyond the scope of this study, the intensity of this life stage is not. It is a vulnerable time for many adolescents; adults not only place heavy expectations upon youth to prepare for their future adult selves, but they fail to provide adequate guides for what adulthood is supposed to be:

> Because of the complexities of our culture, not only is there a lack of formal initiators, but in general the model for adulthood is not always clear for adolescents. The primary source of modeling for many young people is in the figures of mass media. (Sullwood, p. 116)

Western culture puts forth the myth that anything is possible, with the unspoken caveat that this is true primarily for those born in the right place and with the right skin color. Yet limitless potential is an overwhelming prospect for young adults. Not only do they feel pressure to figure out their entire future, beyond school obligations, and extracurricular activities, but they feel pressure to resist or meet the hundreds of media images they encounter daily, messages that provide superficial examples of success and fulfillment.

Kiepenheur (1990) sees the threshold stage of adolescence as a suitable model for the process of human development and transformation; a prototype for how future crossroads will be met. Given its importance, it is odd that adolescence is not ritually acknowledged in the same way that marriage, childbirth, and death are acknowledged (Kiepenheur; Lewis, 1993; Turner, 1988; Frankel, 1998). Within the stage of adolescence, these researchers claim, there is the opportunity to allow for the discovery of one's own inner resources to overcome crisis and pave the way for new growth.

Kiepenheur (1990) emphasizes the archetypal patterns present in the adolescent phase and the importance of being alone, the time when one must separate from the external world. Unfortunately young people are not given the opportunity to "hide themselves away, in order to find the aloneness they want. . . . One aspect of this solitude is regression into a safe and contained place, which allows energies to gather for the next step of the maturation process" (p. 10). Woodman (1985) compares this state to the chrysalis phase of the butterfly, and writes of its essential aspect in the discovery of our identity:

> The chrysalis is essential if we are to find ourselves. Yet very little in our extroverted society supports introverted withdrawal. . . . If we choose to simply

be, our loved ones may automatically assume we are doing nothing, and at first we may feel that way ourselves. . . . But the truth is I can't do anything useful if there's no I to do it. I can't love anyone else, if there's no I to do the loving. If I don't know myself, I cannot love myself, and if I do not love myself, my love of others is probably my projected need of their acceptance. . . .

That is what going into the chrysalis is all about—undergoing a metamorphosis in order one day to be able to stand up and say *I am.* (pp. 21-22)

Both Kiepenheur and Woodman stress the importance of the chrysalis phase in adolescence, and Kiepenheur goes further, saying that it is needed in any time of our lives when we undergo transformation. Patterns that begin in adolescence affect how we approach crisis and intense change throughout the rest of our life. The act of "not doing" or "not being productive" is held with little or no value, and because of this attitude, I argue that the consequences for adolescents are very serious.

Descent/Experiences of Grief and Loss of Love for Adolescents

There is a growing interest from psychologists to study grief and depression in the adolescent and emerging adult population (LaGrand, 1986, 1989; Robak & Weitzman, 1998; Monroe, Ronde, Seeley, & Lewinshohn, 1999; Field, Diego, Pelaez, & Deeds, Delgado, 2009). The work finds that although heartbreak plays a large role in depression and grief (Monroe et al., 1999), grief as a result of heartbreak often goes unacknowledged by adults and peers, leaving the adolescent feeling disenfranchised (LaGrand 1986, 1989; Robak & Weitzman, 1998). Disappointment in love is the primary source for our dark nights (Moore, 2004). Pulling from different traditions, it is clear that meaning is gained from our suffering (Meador, 1992; Paris 2011; Chodron, 2001).

Knowing that stressful life events are often linked with major depressive disorder, Monroe et al. (1999) studied young adult survivors because it is the stage of life when

most people experience their first episode of depression. Their findings found that for

nearly half, the first onset was preceded by a break-up in the prior year. They infer that

> it may be that during adolescence, when romantic interactional patterns develop
> and lay the foundations for future style of initiating and terminating intimate
> relations, relationship loss may be especially meaningful psychologically and
> have important consequences for emotional development and psychological
> vulnerability. (p. 661)

Although it was not the study's intention to make a connection between heartbreak and

depression, it was made nonetheless. The connection suggests how important

relationship loss is to adolescents as they lay down the foundations for future ways of

relating.

Field et al. (2009) studied a group of adolescents who experienced a recent break-

up. Those that reported high distress had less time since the break-up occurred, did not

initiate the break-up, and felt it was sudden and unexpected, leading them to feel rejected

and betrayed. Robak and Weitzman (1998) examined the loss of a love relationship in

young adulthood with the goal of understanding the grieving experience. Their view

suggests that loss of love for the adolescent is significant, yet it is often overlooked in our

culture. Subjects that had more intimate relationships, such as ones with marriage as a

consideration, suffered a greater loss at the conclusion of the relationship. The results of

these studies show how adolescent heartbreak is a vulnerable experience that is

compounded by the fact that adolescents often feel their grief is unmerited because it

goes acknowledged by their peers or adults. In other words, their grief is

disenfranchised.

Disenfranchised grief is grief primarily unacknowledged by family and friends,

which can eventually lead to depression. This is a grief

that persons experience when they incur a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported. The concept of disenfranchised grief recognizes that societies have sets of norms—in effect, "grieving rules"—that attempt to specify who, when, where, how, how long, and for whom people should grieve. (Doka, 1989, p. 4)

If the relationship, the loss, or the griever is not recognized, then disenfranchisement may result. Where do the feelings go if people do not believe they have the right to the feelings in the first place? Without support for grieving, Doka believes, problems may arise from intensifying feelings of anger, guilt, or powerlessness.

Conclusion of a romantic relationship is a significant loss for adolescents (LaGrand, 1986, 1989). Conducting a study of over four thousand college students about the major types of loss experiences they encountered, 27% reported their most recent major loss was the loss of a relationship. In some cases, the grief response was as devastating as the loss of a loved one (1986). The results of a study published by Kaczmarek and Backlund (1991) found that when adults deal with adolescent grief, there are often many misconceptions. Because the ego of adolescents is still evolving and their range of coping skills may be limited, when a relationship ends, the loss extends beyond the loss of the person, to one's sense of personal identity. While in the relationship, many engage in fantasies of a future with this person, so they are often grieving something they never had the opportunity to experience. The amount of time in the relationship is not a factor of the amount of grief experienced; the very nature of feeling attached makes one vulnerable to the loss.

LaGrand (1989) similarly became interested in the reasons why loss of relationship was so significant for some in adolescence. The themes of this time of life surround growth and development, with finding one's identity and place in the world,

making any loss especially significant. Additionally, most young people (and many older ones as well) assume that loss and grief are associated exclusively with death:

> young and old alike seem to fail to recognize the results of separations other than death as grief response. But grief is present in *all* separation experiences. It is manifested in shock, numbness, disbelief, anger, guilt and a host of other emotions. (p. 176)

Grief is present when any type of separation happens and the grief response tends to be more significant, with greater instances of disenfranchisement, for those who have had the break-up minimized by adults or their peers.

It is easy for adults to forget the significant loss of a first break-up, seeing it as a part of growing up. Many peers believe that getting over someone means immediately moving on with another person, leaving little space or time for young people to process their feelings about the relationship, which may leave them feeling isolated and misunderstood (LaGrand, 1989). In love relationships of any age, there is a tendency for one person to forgo their individuality and to look to the other person for all their needs, leading to overdependence on the other person. It is almost as if the person chooses to not grow anymore, therefore making the break-up for this person all the more difficult. Although I agree with the significance of adolescent heartbreak as a risk, and with the importance of acknowledging grief experienced at this stage of life particularly, it might be more productive to reframe the failure and disappointment experienced from loss as presenting an opportunity for deeper knowing.

Love often fails to meet our expectations, thereby forcing us to face our inadequacies (Moore, 1992, 2004). Disappointment in love can be an opportunity to initiate our soul (Paris, 2011). Love is a soul event where separation and loss both play parts. In order to care for our soul, we need to shift away from the model of symptom

management, which often disguises the fact that our symptoms can be an invitation into

mystery (Moore, 1992). A dark night of the soul is a development that takes us outside

of our ordinary life—it is a rupture in our very being. Our challenge is to enter the

darkness with our strength and intelligence, and we may find a deeper sense of self

(Moore, 2004). Love is a primary source of our dark nights:

> Love is not about making you happy. It is a form of initiation that may radically
> transform you making you more of who you are but less of who you have been. . .
> Love gives you a sense of meaning, but it asks a price. It will make you into the
> person you are called to be, but only if you endure its pains and allow it to empty
> you as much as it fills you. . . love is in service of the soul, and so its natural
> direction is down into the depths. (p. 125)

Seeing love as initiation rather than a vehicle for happiness is an adjustment for many.

The price that is asked from love to make us more of who we are meant to be is missing

from our discussions and assumptions regarding love. Moore's assertion that love's

natural direction is not one of ascension and expansion, but down in the depths is

pertinent because love cannot be separated from its shadows.

Within the shadows of love, Paris (2011) reminds us, there is a "transcendent

quality of human life" (p. 112). "Love grounds you in the concreteness of daily life,

while at the same time reflecting the infinity of the cosmos in the inner sanctum of the

heart" (p. 112). Paris writes:

> For the ancient Greeks, falling in love turns you into a fool, but refusing love
> makes you an even bigger fool because it deprives you of the only way to
> experience the full extent of human emotions. . . . One of the many paradoxes of
> psychic life, maybe the most interesting one, is that love hurts—those damned
> arrows—and love teaches; love heals and love wounds, hence the necessity to
> befriend the tears that make us wiser. (pp. 123-124)

Our protective and reticent approach to the shadows of love does not ensure protection;

all it provides is stagnation.

Romanyshyn (1999) was thrust into the shadow side of love when his wife died unexpectedly in front of him. He describes his mourning process: "Everything I ever was, and everything I ever imagined I could be, was torn away" (p. 7). States of deadness, withdrawal, and fragmentation are essential to transformation; through this pain is the possibility of rebirth (Goodchild, 2001; George, 1992; Wikman, 2004). Odajnyk (1988) stresses the need and value of depression as an important part of any initiatory process, especially at adolescence and mid-life. The *nigredo* and *separatio* must be encountered and endured for the sake of raising consciousness; every significant change in our lives is accompanied by the demise and mourning of a former condition. Only through these dark nights can one be reborn into a new way of being.

Betty Meador (1992) argues that for thousands of years, women have lived in a culture and religion that celebrates light and reason, thereby separating them from their true nature. Ancient women living when the Great Goddess was worshipped, Meador explains, found ways to ritualize and celebrate the power of the dark. In her book, *Mysteries of the Dark Moon,* Demetra George (1992) presents a lunar-based model for moving through the dark times in our lives. She argues that reclaiming the Dark Goddess will allow us to rescue darkness from oppressive, fear-based images. Both authors offer an alternative to the way we view the dark times in our life. Instead of feeling fearful, perhaps we can begin to see these times as valuable and powerful.

George (1992) refers to the dark phase of the lunar cycle as a time of great power and mystery. Any descent requires a dark phase, which is the

> transition between the death of the old and the birth of the new. The dark time is a time of retreat, of healing, and of dreaming the future. The darkness is lit with the translucent quality of transformation; and during this essential and necessary period, life is prepared to be born. (p. 5)

Meador (1992) claims the way we view descent, currently in the mainstream, is a deviation from what is normal, feeling disorientated and despair, often our hope is to find the way out as soon as possible. In order for a woman to connect with the true source of creativity, a descent is required to the realm of the "dark, underworld feminine" (p. 44). While here, one encounters a

> hungry, greedy, ruthless goddess who shakes her to her bones. This goddess demands that she let go of her narrow spectrum of desires, her stunted vision of what life is and can be. . . . The gift of the goddess is the full range of the woman's instinctual nature which is the energetic force of her individuality and her creativity. Along with this gift, the goddess infuses the woman with the daring to carry her new vision into the world. The woman in her meeting with the goddess encounters the Self, that is, the archetypal design which carries the essential pattern and meaning of her life. Stripped and laid bare, the woman receives the coherent gift of her true essence. (pp. 44-45)

Meador and George both bring view to the descent that happens, whenever we are pulled out of our everyday lives from what is "normal." They reframe these times not as deviations from the normal, but a part of the natural process during any time of transformation in our lives. Although this descent requires a complete surrender to the suffering, the gift of our woundings carries the knowledge of the divine feminine and our instinctuality.

Working within separate spiritual and psychological traditions, Chodron (2001) and Luke (1996) both have similar views in regard to the value of suffering. For Chodron shows that we have a choice: we can let the circumstances of our lives harden us and make us increasingly resentful and afraid, or we can let them soften us and make us kinder. When we move past the surface of our hardened armor, and we are allowed to touch our vulnerability and sadness, "this is our link with all those who have ever loved.

This genuine heart of sadness can teach us great compassion" (2001 p. 4). Chodron writes:

> When we touch the center of sorrow, when we sit with the discomfort without trying to fix it, when we stay present to the pain of disapproval or betrayal and let it soften us, these are the times we connect with bodhichitta. . .
>   Tapping into that shaky and tender place has a transformative effect. Being in this place may feel uncertain and edgy but it's also a big relief. Just to stay there, even for a moment, feels like a genuine act of kindness to ourselves. (p. 9)

So often we hide from facing aspects of ourselves that we do not like, because we feel we are protecting ourselves from further hurt. But staying in this fear blocks a deeper relationship with not only us, but with others as well. This leaves us with a choice: we can let the circumstances of our lives harden us or we can move past our fears, and allow in the wisdom and compassion that come from facing ourselves completely.

With the intention to help women on a path to true understanding of their essential feminine nature, Luke (1996) draws on the Bible, mythology, Greek tragedies, and modern poetry to unveil the essence of womanhood. She makes the distinction between suffering and depression—suffering is carrying our burden rather than being pressed down upon externally. It is only the infantile psyche that believes the way out of depression is through pleasant feeling—when what is needed is acceptance and real suffering, for therein one finds the meaning:

> Every time a person exchanges neurotic depression for real suffering, he or she is sharing to some small degree in the carrying of the suffering of mankind, in bearing a tiny part of the darkness of the world. Such a one is released from his small personal concern into a sense of *meaning*. One may not be consciously thinking in those terms but the transition can immediately be recognized by the disappearance of the frustrated pointlessness of mood and depression. It is as though we become aware of a new dimension. Meaning has entered the experience. (p. 59)

Making a distinction between depression and suffering shows that the only way meaning will arise is if one bears a small part of the suffering of the world, moving beyond one's personal concerns. What Chodron and Luke both show is that suffering is beyond the personal, beyond our individual story, but has the potential to bring us into contact with the soul of the world.

Popular Culture Studies Featuring Adolescence

Adolescence is a cultural construction and any undertaking of the topic of adolescence, would be remiss that does not include a cultural component, with specific attention given to mass media. Some critics have declared our culture stuck in the complex of the *puer aeternus*, refusing to move from adolescence to adulthood (Porterfield, Polette, & Baumlin, 2009). Feminist scholars show how what we value as a culture is reflected in the bodies of adolescent girls (Brumberg, 1997) and are looking to the influence of mass media and how it perpetuates these ideals, often at the peril of girls and women (Durham, 2008; Redlich & Newsom, 2011). Stephenie Meyers' *Twilight Saga* (2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) has been a pop culture phenomenon appealing to many girls and women, drawing the attention of scholars and critics from a variety of fields, analyzing its impact and influence (Anatol & Kramar, 2011; Click, Aubrey, & Behm-Morawitz, 2010a, Park & Wilson, 2011; Housel & Wisnewski, 2009; Reagin, 2010). Although some argue that popular culture's affiliation with commerce exploits myth, Rowland (2010) argues that "Hollywood corruption cannot wholly pervade meaning because the creative and partly unknowable unconscious is never completely overwhelmed" (p. 70). With Rowland I tend to agree that the unconscious is always present and I find the recent interest in the population of adolescent girls encouraging.

In the anthology, *Perpetual Adolescence,* the writers critique Western culture, insisting that just as individuals, society can become arrested at a certain stage of development (Porterfield, Polette, & Baumlin, 2009). The collective American psyche is "developmentally stuck in a protracted adolescent phase of psychological puerility, unconsciously identified with the negative aspect of the archetype of the *puer aeternus* or *puella aeterna*" (Gosling, 2009, p. 137). Porterfield et al. (2009) claims that America's fixation on the archetype of the hero keeps us in state of the *puer aeternus*. As our cultural history reveals our shadow, we have retreated further into denial, leaving us unable to construct our own images or connect to myth. Instead we rely on others to tell us how to live, retreating to simplicity and ambiguity, "terrified of the dangers of growing up and contending with the complexity of coming to consciousness that is essential to individuation in our contemporary world" (p. 97).

Judith (2009) argues that we have reacted to our current ecological and political problems, as if stagnated in adolescence. She claims that our planet is teacher and initiator, taking us as a civilization on a rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood. What is required of us is an awakening of the heart, because the puer society is consuming the world; its "rampant consumption and delusions of grandeur needs to find its sacred ground in the Earth, acknowledge its denied Shadow, and balance the archetypal energies of Masculine and Feminine" (p. 17). The rugged individualist has become the perpetual adolescent, still seeking adventure and change at a time when he should be moving into the middle period of his life in which he begins the process of individuation (Porterfield, 2009 p. 100). Being overwhelmed by the world's problems can cause us to look to other sources to find a guide for success. The mass media is only

happy to oblige, imposing "conformity masquerading as individualism" (p. 98), with lots

of ideas and suggestions:

> "Assert your independence," "Do your own thing;" all it takes is the magic
> potion, the hot car, the right shoes, the right home gym, and you can stand out
> from the crowd of wannabes who are striving for all of the same thing. Be
> unforgettable, quirky, bohemian, sophisticated, slim, smart, strong, and young.
> *Especially young.* Is it then surprising that we have become a nation of perpetual
> adolescents, *pueri aeterni* and *puella aeterna,* whose normal attempts at
> development into adults are thwarted at every turn by the constant assurance that
> we can stay young forever and, indeed, had better try or be left in the cold, as
> useless as yesterday's newspaper. (pp. 98-99)

This emphasis on youth and disposability has a particular affect on women. In a culture

where women are often valued only as virgins or mothers, the value of our Crone aspect

has been lost. This leads to many women focusing their energy on what they no longer

have rather than embracing change.

Bringing particular attention to how the values of a culture affect girls, Brumberg

(1997) analyzed how our cultural values were represented in the bodies of adolescent

girls. Historically, Brumberg explains, girls in the 18th and 19th centuries were

constricted and sheltered and left mostly ignorant about the workings of their own bodies.

Although there was ignorance, society provided a "protective umbrella" under which

older adult women nurtured girls. The emphasis was on building female relationships

and service to community and god, in order to protect them from premature sexuality and

manipulation by the hands of men. Today girls benefit from less constriction and enjoy

more freedom, but now they are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation and the values of

a consumer culture—with an emphasis on sense of worth related to one's physical

appearance. Girls now mature physically and sexually at an earlier age, yet we have

fewer social supports to help them process these changes, leaving them

extremely vulnerable to the excesses of popular culture and to pressure from peer groups. But the current body problem is not just an external issue resulting from a lack of societal vigilance or adult support; it has also become an internal, psychological problem: girls today make the body into an all-consuming project in ways young women of the past did not. (p. xvii)

In sum, the rise of scientific medicine, the decline of parental and community involvement, the importance of the visual consumer culture are all reflected in the bodies of young women. "More than any other group in the population, girls and their bodies have borne the brunt of twentieth-century social change, and we ignore that fact at our peril" (p. 214). Although I do not advocate going back to the days of moralizing and repressing young women's sexuality, the alternative we have modeled for us in our culture may not be more empowering for young women and at the very least presents particular problems, the most insidious one being mass media.

There is a strong historical connection in the role of media and its definition of our cultural value (Redlich & Newsom, 2011; Susan Douglas 1995). Douglas (1995) argues that most girls and women have a "schizophrenic" (p. 9) relationship with the media, mostly due to the contradictory messages it conveys "about what women should and should not do, what women could and could not be" (p. 9). The first time women were encouraged to work outside the home was during World War II. Six million women worked in factories to support the war effort, with a majority wanting to remain in the workforce after the GIs returned. Many were fired, and there was a huge media campaign to get women back in the home, seen in magazines as well as the growing instrument of the influence of television (Redlich & Newsom, 2011). The backlash in the media was felt as the strong women characters on television such as Lucy and Gracie Allen of the late 1940s and early 1950s gave way to *Father Knows Best* in the late 1950s.

> While endless movies in the 1950s and '60s glorified male heroism during World War II, our mothers' roles in helping win the war were repressed, and they appeared primarily as the sweethearts left behind, not as the welders and riveters who built the ships and planes. It was as if their experiences—including nascent feminism of the time—had never really happened. But repressing public memories doesn't mean that private ones are forgotten. (Douglas, 1995, p. 54)

Although a concerted effort was being made to ignore women's contributions in World War II, another cultural occurrence confused the situation further—that of the burgeoning consumer culture. In order to afford these goods, most women needed to work outside the home, paired with the fact that most women did the majority of the shopping. How did the media choose to respond? By targeting them as wives and mothers, not as professionals (Douglas, 1995).

In the time of the Cold War and John F. Kennedy, there was an emphasis on science and technology. This generation was told they could make a valuable contribution to our world and their country. Their parents, survivors of the Great Depression, wanted a better life for their children. In this culture, a better life is often equated with consuming more, and the marketers responded by targeting children. For the first time in the 1960s, preadolescent and adolescents were targeted as a market, as the baby boom produced a significant market of 22 million potential consumers (Douglas, 1995).

A lot of attention has been given to the late 1960s and 1970s sexual movement in which young women and men began to challenge long held views of sexuality, class, race, and gender. Douglas (1995) traces the seeds of this dissent and gives credit to the girls groups of the 1960s as being one of the first areas of popular culture, where the voices of young women were given expression. However the cultural impact of these

women is often overlooked and trivialized, with favor given to the male musicians of that same time period.

> In the early 1960s, pop music became the one area of popular culture in which adolescent female voices could be clearly heard. They sang about the pull between the need to conform and the often overwhelming desire to rebel, about the tension between restraint and freedom, and about the rewards—and the costs—of prevailing gender roles. They sang, in other words, about getting mixed messages and about being ambivalent in the face of the upheaval in sex roles. (p. 87)

Film and music began to open up the discussion of young women's sexuality, although they still got the contradictory messages to be a good girl and the subsequent shaming if they did not comply. It then became a time when girls openly challenged old notions that girls are not sexual and that they need to be guardians of their sexuality.

The 1980s and 1990s, in the wave of the AIDS crisis, show a recent example of the "cultural panic" (Irvine, 1994, p. 3) regarding adolescent sexuality, especially focusing on sexually active teenage girls. During this time, many aspects of young women's lives changed. Because of the fruits of the women's movement, young women began to see expanding educational opportunities, better paying jobs, and increased political power. Christian-Smith (1994) writes:

> However, there is a dark side to this legacy, since many young women also confront the realities of early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs); a job structure segmented by gender, class, race, and sexuality, and an intense national debate over the control of women's bodies. Teen romance fiction's popularity makes a great deal of sense in light of these realities, especially current concerns over young women's sexuality. According to Steven Seidman, sexuality has been a prominent feature of the many "purity campaigns" that have swept the United States since the 1970s. Expanding sexual choices and preferences throughout the twentieth century have recently led to demands from many sectors for greater control of sexuality. (pp. 206-207)

Although greater freedoms were awarded to the young generation in the 1980s and 1990s, the drawbacks of freedom became part of the cultural narrative. When a group is

given more liberties, there are those who want to exert political control. In this case, the

focus of the discussion became about the dangers of sexuality, with a greater emphasis on

the importance of monogamy. The rise of romantic literature is logical considering this

context, when considerable attention has been given to the dangers of adolescent

sexuality.

Adolescent sexuality has mostly been approached from the perspective of medical

discourse rather than a conversation that acknowledges the complicated socio-cultural

components. One problem with the bio-medical model is that it puts forth a monolithic

view of adolescents, read as White, middle class, and heterosexual. When adolescents of

color are brought forth in literature the focus is on social problems, such as early

pregnancy. The results of the concern end up becoming a political battle over abortion

and sex education. Irvine (1994) explains that the

> discourse on adolescent sexuality, social history and cultural analysis are
> important tools to challenge the biomedical model that privileges individual
> behavior. This means grappling with the ambiguities of identities, the paradoxes
> of culture, the multiplicities of communities, and the complexities of meaning. (p.
> 24)

The discussion of sexuality would benefit if we allow in multiplicity, complexity, and

diversity, eschewing the political pandering and moralizing.

Deborah Tolman (1994; 2002) answers this call, focusing on the sexual desire of

adolescent girls, challenging the biases held around the sexuality of young women. The

foundation of these biases is built on the idea that girls do not like sex and long for

intimacy and relationship instead. Tolman (1994) began to take stock of the educational

and psychological research on girls' sexuality and found a lack of research on sexual

desire, finding that the research tended to focus on intimacy and feelings, ignoring

discussions about sexuality and the bodies of girls. Explanations of girls' sexual activity have a propensity to be seen in service to the relationship. She posits that many adults aspire to protect girls from danger and finding the topic too risky, ignore desire. Tolman argues that this approach is not only a mistake but it inhibits young women from developing an empowered sexuality:

> Perhaps the best women can do in a bad situation is to speak the truths of both sides of the reality that women live in their female bodies at this time in this society, women to women, women to girls, girls to girls. Speaking the truths about female sexual desire—both the pleasures and the dangers—and voicing the real experiences that girls and women have in their bodies may be a most crucial and a truly education and psychological intervention. (1994, p. 276)

Acknowledging the realities of the danger faced being a female in our culture is important, but it is only half the story, because focusing only on danger deprives women from a valuable resource for psychological health and sexual empowerment.

Tolman's (2002) research consisted of speaking to a diverse group of young women about their experiences of sexual desire. Many girls explain their involvement in sexual activity with the phrase that sex "just happens." Tolman maintains that this is

> one of few acceptable ways available to adolescent girls for making sense of and describing sexual experiences. . . .
> 	It just happened, then, can also be understood as a cover story. It is a story about the necessity for girls to cover their desire. It is also a story that covers over active choice, agency, and responsibility, which serves to 'disappear' desire, in the telling and in the living. (pp. 2-3)

Her findings suggest that by focusing on the idea that boys have raging hormones whereas girls long for emotional connection, romance, and relationship has desexualized girls. Additionally, girls do not receive many positive messages regarding their sexuality.

When one looks at the messages adolescent girls receive about sexuality, it is not hard to see that the Madonna-Whore complex is alive and well. Tolman (2002) writes:

> They are barraged with an ever more confusing and contradictory set of guidelines for how they should manage their developing sexuality: don't be a prude but don't be a slut; have (or fake) orgasms to ensure that your boyfriend is not made to feel inadequate, if you want to keep him. Ultimately, though subtly, the media continue to represent the belief that adolescent girls should be sexy for boys and not have their *own* sexual desires. (p. 7)

This reinforces the belief that women should be sexual objects not active agents and that their sexuality is not their own. Although the risks of adolescent sexual activity can have undesirable consequences, such as early pregnancy, sexual violence, and sexually transmitted diseases, the obsession paid to behavior is not matched by action. In Tolman's (2002) words,

> if these risks were our deepest concerns, we would be pouring funds into effective, accessible forms of birth control and protection against diseases, providing comprehensive sexuality education. . . . And if these risks accounted for all our concerns, we would be conducting may more studies of adolescent boys' sexuality. (pp. 12-13)

As boys carry the same burdens as girls in engaging in sexual activity, the obsession in our culture is not matched in the same ways it is regarding girls.

The way we conceptualize male adolescent sexual desire is deeply problematic. Boys' sexual desire is seen as something instinctual, physical, "impossible to control, and aggressive to the point of violence" (Tolman, 2002, p. 13). Tolman argues that this definition is socially constructed and is not a biological definition. The consequence of labeling adolescent male sexuality as dangerous then holds girls responsible to keep it under control. What is a social problem then becomes an individual one. Society's ambivalence around girls and sexuality has led us "to focus on those with the least power; we are able to constrain, blame, and punish them for the anxiety they provoke in us" (p. 18). Tolman turns the argument on its head—it is not the feeling of desire that is dangerous, not feeling it is.

> When a girl does not know what her own feelings are, when she disconnects the apprehending psychic part of herself from what is happening in her own body, she then becomes especially vulnerable to the power of others' feelings, as well as to what others say she does and does not feel. (p. 21)

Sexual desire is an important part of our psychosocial development and psychological health, and is a part of authentic and meaningful relationships. Divorcing girls from their bodies makes them vulnerable to the control of others.

The romance narrative, with its heteronormative ideas of relating, consisting of male dominance and female submissiveness, tends to be the acceptable template for gender relations (Tolman, 2002). "Romance provides a script not only for how males and females interact but also for expectation about female and male sexuality, including that resilient distinction between 'good' and 'bad' girls, as defined by the presence, respectively, of sexual desire" (p. 81). Girls are faced with a choice, and both options have repercussions. If one chooses the dominant ideal of the romantic narrative, then in exchange for security and commitment, a part of self may be lost; anything labeled as taboo or unacceptable, needs to be left behind. By choosing freedom and embracing one's desire, one risks being labeled a bad girl or a slut. Although the sexual revolution began to challenge ideas about women's desire, the issue is far from being resolved. Girls' sexuality remains under the male gaze, Tolman explains. It is performative rather than personal.

Two of the most insidious stereotypes of female sexual behavior Tolman (2002) describes are the Urban Girl and the Perfect Girl. After the Civil War there was an influx of immigrants into urban areas, bringing about rapid demographic changes. This shift led to the fantasy of the overly sexual urban women—"poor, working class, and white, African American, Latina, or Asian. . . . As a society, we hold certain negative beliefs

and assumptions about urban girls that emphasize their sexuality" (p. 169). Conversely the Perfect Girl lives in the suburbs, segregated from the Urban Girl, "the icon of white, middle-class or monied womanhood" (p. 170). This is the world Brumberg (1997) describes after the Industrial Revolution, in the 19th century a social class was created where men occupied public life, whereas women supervised over the private sphere of girls:

> From the perspective of dominant society, it is only this Perfect Girl who is even eligible for the category of 'good' girl. She is also thus at a risk of falling off, or getting knocked off, this precarious pedestal and being branded a 'bad' girl. (Tolman, 2002, p. 171)

Both the Urban and Perfect girl are social constructions, again ways in which society can create wounds in individuals. Tolman uses the phrase *dilemmas of desire* to describe how girls' "desire *feels* like a dilemma as a direct result of social constructions of gendered sexuality" (p. 199). For example, although there is now public awareness of sexual violence, it is still often blamed on boys' inability to control their sexuality, with blame placed on the victims for putting themselves in the situation. There have been several high profile cases in the past year involving adolescent sexual abuse, which have cast an unfavorable light on our problematic relationship to adolescent sexuality in this culture.

Our advice to girls has been to "just say no," which has led to "it just happened." Such advice has not been healthy or effective. Tolman (2002) asks pertinent questions, including "Why is it the girl who has to say no? And to what and whom is she saying no?" (p. 204). Not only is this not healthy for psychological development, as it teaches girls to divorce their feelings from their bodies, but it also allows their "no" to be dismissed as "token resistance" (p. 204).

Tolman insists that "we have to demand, ensure, and protect girls' right to feel and act upon their own sexual feelings without having to be encumbered by unfair and unnecessary dilemmas of desire" (p. 206).

Historically, as Brumberg (1997) and Tolman (1994; 2002) illustrate, girls' sexuality has been repressed and moralized; however, our version of girls' sexuality can in its own way be abusive and exploitative. Durham (2008) points out that the media is in business to make a profit, with the goal of cultivating consumers as early as possible. This is one of the reasons why adult content is being aimed at young children. She terms the mishandling and distorting of girls' sexuality the Lolita Effect. The "Lolita" is the sexy little girl, with the attitude of "if you've got it, flaunt it." It is an artifice imposed, framed in rhetoric of empowerment and choice, liberation, and power. This approach exploits and limits sexual expression and agency and is deliberately focused on young girls who are told their worth is linked to their ability to attract male desire.

Durham (2008) claims that the Lolita Effect perpetuates myths of sexuality: sex as girls' exhibitionism, myth of sex in terms of ideal body type, myth of sex linked to youth, myth of sex linked to violence against women, and the myth of the male gaze. This effect is important to anyone interested in the psychology of contemporary young women, because of the pervasive influence of media in their lives in ways never seen before. Love and sexuality are not being shown as a place for young women to discover aspects of themselves; the path is already clearly defined for them.

With the variety of sources available, media is an integral part of most children's lives. Feminist scholars are pointing to the ways in which a girl or young woman's value is linked to her appearance. This illustrates why it is valuable for us to become and teach

young adults to be critical media consumers. Redlich and Newsom (2011) explore how the pressure to conform to the cultural ideal and its impact on self-esteem has consequences seen in the way girls are unhappy with their bodies, leading to eating disorders, self-injurious behaviors, and depression. Impacted with the introduction of computers and digital alteration, the ideal image of beauty is more extreme and impossible to achieve than ever before.

These critiques have led me on a deeper exploration of what it is like to be a young woman in our culture today. Do I think the people making these decisions are deliberately out to make girls feel bad about their selves? Mostly no, but what is helpful to remember is that most of the media content we consume is supported by advertising, which has consumption as its primary goal, and producing healthy girl-empowering content is not the norm. Historically, media campaigns, in order to counteract strides made by women, often portray women in power in negative ways. This is seen in the way the media disrespects our female leaders (Redlich & Newsom, 2011). For example, in the U.S. presidential election of 2008 there were multiple comments from journalists on television and in print regarding the appearances of both Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin, therefore trivializing them as candidates. Another example offered by Redlich and Newsom of the difference in gender treatment in politics is that in John Boehner's first four weeks as Speaker of the House of Representatives he was on the cover of five national weekly magazines, compared to Nancy Pelosi, who was Speaker for four years, and she never received a cover. As women have challenged men's power, images of women in media conversely are portrayed as physically taking up less space, highly sexualized, less threatening, and not whole people. Those behind the scenes making the

decisions—CEOs, board members, writers, directors, producers, cinematographers, and editors, are mostly men, as Redlich and Newsom point out.

Significant strides were made toward the equal treatment of women in the 1960s and 1970s. The women's movement was met by a well-funded conservative effort to fight the progress made, with the goal of a return to traditional values. In the 1980s there was a deregulation of media, with the aim of allowing corporations an increase in revenue from advertising. The unforeseen consequence has been more content with fewer limits, and marketers in many ways are dictating cultural norms and values. This growth has been met with no policy changes and with little media accountability (Redlich & Newsom, 2011).

Teen romance fiction began in the 1940s and 1950s when Betty Cavanna, Maureen Daly, and Rosamond du Jardin wrote stories of young women's first love experiences (Christian-Smith, 1994). The genre gained prominence in 1980 when Scholastic Inc. appeared in school book clubs and stories, expanding readership internationally. This literature saw adolescent girls explore themes around sexual knowledge and expression, shifting to stories in which young women were beginning to have more power and control over their bodies with an authority to make choices (Bowles-Reyer, 2002).

These novels were written at a time when cultural representations of femininity and women were being renegotiated; challenging the dominant cultural representation of femininity by drawing on feminist discourse provides a language for adolescent female sexual identity and rights as women (Bowles-Reyer, 2002). In comparison to male coming of age novels, which are often physical journeys, these novels are stories of

finding one's self and one's calling—these characters are in a state of confusion and are found in a complicated process of self-awareness that may not be resolved at the end of the novel. The journey is a psychic rather than a physical one, requiring psychological learning and intimate connections with others (Bowles-Reyer, 2002). With the emergence of the young adult genre, commercial interests take hold and this brings with it its own complexities and consequences.

Thompson (1994) illustrates that in the 1980s there were a lot of economic changes when major corporations "consolidated the control of the business sector" (p. 208). During this time corporations acquired many publishing houses. Because corporations tend to espouse conservative values, Thompson was curious about how this affected the content in female young adult fiction. Her study coded the values and thematic content in the top-selling teenage romance fiction of 1942-1982. Her findings show the propagation of the romance narrative, where boys awaken the heroine's sexuality and "privileging romance [is] the only legitimate context for sexual expression" (p. 211). In the novels boys were the legitimate objects of desire, yet genital relationships were infrequent. Girls were shown as submissive, letting the boys take the lead. Summarizing her findings, Thompson writes:

> Another important lesson is that women should demonstrate a low level of sexual desire and should appear passive, a lesson related to the Victorian view that an adult woman's sexuality is "passionless." However, romance fiction contains strong undercurrents: heroines strain against this passionlessness and endeavor to control their own sexuality. Michele Barrett contends that sexuality has a political character in that it involves the unequal power relations between women and men. The romance novels I have analyzed certainly exemplify this. (pp. 221-222)

The contradictory messages of the media are felt in the young adult romance genre: on one hand it espouses traditional values whereas on the other it features young protagonists struggling against an oppressive system.

Similarly, Pecora (2002) examines the way decisions in the publishing industry change the genre of teen novels. Her concern is with the ideological consequences of these economic decisions. By analyzing the evolution of the Nancy Drew storylines, she found that over time the Nancy Drew character evolved to include more romantic storylines than her earlier incarnations. Her findings suggest that previous strong characters, such as Nancy Drew, are being changed by corporations to include romance and glamour, leaving less of an opportunity for characters that are strong and independent, fulfilling stereotypical ideas of femininity. Her research was enlightening and thought provoking; however her focus relies exclusively on a feminist interpretation of the text. Although some feminists argue that the way women are represented in literature has an impact on the way women define themselves as subjects in their own lives (Bowles-Reyer, 2002); Frazer (1987) recounts that readers are not in the grips of ideology. She disputes the notion of a single reading of the text. In her study of teen readers, Barrett (1988) asserts that reading teenage romances is

> a complex practice in which readers put on center stage their sexual fears and desires. They unilaterally neither accept nor reject teen romance fiction's version of sexual relations, but they construct the selves they hope to become and the dream lovers they hope to have. (p. 220)

Inclusion of the readers' qualitative experience of teenage romance novels is beneficial, for any discussion regarding sexuality is complex, and we should avoid becoming bogged down in any specific ideology. However, what these studies point to is that in corporate culture the main concern will be what is profitable over what is best for young women.

Is it possible to have a balanced account of female characters if there is no one to speak up for them? Again I would answer, mostly no. However, there has been some movement in the right direction. In the 1990s there was a sociological and cultural shift with a new focus on adolescent girls, evidenced by stories centering on their lives in film, television, literature, and music (Orenstein, 1996). Previously dismissed as unmarketable, the genre of young female protagonists in search of self and voice became common, rather than being projections of fantasies or in relationship to men, Orenstein explains. For the past fifty years, men dominated the most popular franchises; recently, three young women captured the attention of readers and filmgoers—Bella from *Twilight* (Meyer, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008), Lisbeth Salander from the *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* series (Larsson, 2008; 2009; 2010), and Katniss Eberdeen from *The Hunger Games Trilogy* (Collins, 2008; 2009; 2010). Commenting on the distinct differences between the characters of Bella and Lisbeth Salander and their appeal to different audiences, Powers (2010) writes:

> Yet the strength of both series lies in something their heroines do have in common—an absolute willingness to go the distance. Say what you will against them, Bella and Salander are not the silly, shop-till-they-drop mediocrities celebrated in chick-lit comedies. They are mythically passionate souls who will do what it takes—even give up their humanity—in order to achieve perfection. 007 and Luke Skywalker couldn't do any better that that. (pp. 2-3)

Although I take issue with Power's point about the character's pursuit of perfection and find his tone chauvinistic, what he does illustrate well is that there seems to be a cultural shift displayed by these two mythic characters that allows for women's stories of transformation to appeal to a popular audience. There is an assumption that women will watch stories about men, but men won't watch stories about women; with most decisions in Hollywood based on these assumptions. I hope that due to this recent interest and

commercial success, the trend will continue. One good sign is that in March of 2014 another popular literary franchise with a female protagonist Tris Prior, released the first film of the series, *Divergent* (Roth, 2012a; 2012b; 2013).

The first *Twilight* film proved that women would go see movies based on a female protagonist made by a female director. However, in order to broaden its appeal to include men, the other movies in the franchise have all been directed by men (Harding, 2009). Although some strides have been made for women's representation in Hollywood, with films like *The Help* and *Breaking Dawn* in 2011, there is still a lot of room for improvement (Lauzen, 2012). In her study, *It's a Man's Celluloid World,* Lauzen shows that women still represent one third of all characters in top grossing films. Although the number of female characters has increased, the percentage of female protagonists declined to 11%. Female characters remain younger than their male counterparts and are less likely to be portrayed as leaders, yet are more likely to be known by their marital status rather than their occupation, Lauzen reports. According to the Center for the Study of Women in Television and Film's report (Lauzen, 2013) the dismal portrayal of women in film and television (although slightly better) may be due to the demographics behind the screen. Of the top 250 films of 2013 in the United States, women comprised only 6% of directors, 15% of executive producers, 25% of producers, 10% of writers, 17% of editors, and 3% of cinematographers.

These statistics are not shocking to anyone who pays attention to film, so when there is a female oriented protagonist, it often catches the attention of a lot of people, as is the case with *Twilight*. The popularity of the *Twiligh*t phenomenon as well as the backlash against it has caught the attention of scholars from a variety of fields (Anatol &

Kramar, 2011; Click et al., 2010a; Park & Wilson, 2011; Housel & Wisnewski, 2009; Reagin, 2010; Wilson, 2011). Many scholars refer to Auberbach's seminal study of literary vampires in her book, *Our Vampires, Ourselves,* where she argues, "every age embraces the vampire it needs" (1995, p. 145). Margot Adler (2010) wonders about the cultural surge of vampires this past decade and takes note of the ways they are different from vampires from other times. These new vampires have tortured souls—who know their power but are struggling to be responsible, good, and moral. These two authors lead to the question, what is it about us that we are attracted to a story of a human girl falling in love with a conflicted vampire? If you look to the scholars, as with any analysis, one leaves with more questions rather than answers.

The critical response to *Twilight* has been mostly ambivalent. Although there is excitement about the money made by a female-oriented franchise and its implications for the state of women's representation in Hollywood, at the same time, many feminists feel there are problems with the franchise itself and the values it espouses (Harding, 2009). Some critics attack the author Stephenie Meyer's writing style (Thomas, 2009). Others, as Dietz (2011), a former Mormon, critique the portrayal of gender in the novels, which she credits to the author's Mormon faith. Traditionally in vampire literature, the vampire characters are depicted as queer creatures, living a subversive lifestyle outside the norm. Dietz explains that Meyer deviates from this depiction with the Cullen family, which symbolizes heteronormativity and conservative values, as they are elevated as a symbol of the ideal patriarchal family, a point also made by Kane (2010). Although critics find many problems in these novels, the one most referenced is the relationship at the center of this series—the relationship between the mortal girl and the conflicted vampire.

The relationship between Bella and Edward seems to draw the most concern. Some such as Collins and Carmody (2012) cite images of dating violence in the novels; many feeling that Edward is a creepy stalker (Wilson, 2011). Others are concerned with the views of traditional sexuality, such as Platt (2010), who in her analysis of the Bella and Edward relationship believes the intersection of sexuality and gender in the texts is problematic for female sexuality. Others agree, insisting that the series tends to champion traditional gender roles and conservative sexual politics (Wilson, 2011). Some critique Bella for being passive and vulnerable (Siering, 2009), insisting that she has an unhealthy reliance on Edward. Taylor (2011) labels Bella's desire for Edward masochistic. Kramar (2011) fears their relationship perpetuates many conventional fairy tales' insistence on women's sexual chastity and submission to male authority. The critiques extend to Bella's love interest, Edward, whose protective behavior is faulted as condescending and patriarchal; Merskin (2011) goes so far as to diagnose him as a compensated psychopath.

One particular criticism piqued my interest: it compared Bella to the character Buffy Summers from the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Whedon et al., 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c; Whedon, Gellar, et al., 2004; Whedon, Solomon, et al., 2004), regarded by many as a feminist icon (Fudge, 1999; Mangan, 2008; McIntosh, 2009; Miller, 2009; Seltzer, 2008; Stevens, 2008). Basically, when the two characters are compared, the argument is: why can't Bella be more like Buffy? In fact, the two characters have a lot of similarities in that they are both normal teenagers found in extraordinary circumstances, and they both fall in love with vampires, in Buffy's case, two. Where they differ is in their approach to the supernatural. Buffy's approach is

mostly to defeat the demons that are threatening humans, whereas in Bella's world there is a lot more subtlety, and she embraces the supernatural lifestyle in which she finds her true family. This leads me to the question, if Bella had what looks like a more traditional male hero's journey, with her fighting and defeating demons, would there be less criticism of her? We live in a patriarchal society that celebrates the active and the strong, finding those vulnerable and soft less valuable.

Speaking to the critics in their introduction to the anthology *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, and the Vampire Franchise,* Click, Aubrey, and Behm-Morawitz (2010) point out how critiques aimed at *Twilight* fans are often gendered, as if fandom is reserved only for men—even though *Twilight* has made profits close to *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings.* They also refer to the poor reviews the movies receive, insisting that film critics, who are mostly male, have fixed ideas about vampires and that they do not appreciate vampires being moved from the horror genre to romance.

For every assertion made by a critic, there is another contradicting it making almost the opposite claim. For example, some feminist critics worry about the heteronormative and conservative messages about gender and female sexuality and about its impact on girl readers (Wilson, 2011). Other critics, such as Parrish (2010), do not see *Twilight* fans as passive consumers, who are not able to think critically about the novels and the choices of the characters. To illustrate this point, she analyzes the fan fiction that has sprung over the Internet giving alternatives to the *Twilight* stories.

 Additionally, Toscano (2010) responds to critics who felt Meyers pushes a conservative agenda. In her piece she connects the theology and cosmology of Meyers' religion, Mormonism, to the messages about love, family, choice, and morality in the

Twilight series. She claims that although on the surface Meyer underwrites Mormon beliefs, there are other ways she re-interprets Mormon doctrine, seen in the way the character of Bella often chooses love over obedience. Susan Jeffers (2010), a practicing Mormon feminist scholar, links the character of Bella to the biblical figure, Eve, for in Mormonism Eve is credited as a women of character who had agency in her own story and is held in high esteem by Mormons, for without her action in the garden of Eden, humans would have been denied the human experience. Jeffers maintains that masculine models should not always be held as the ones to emulate and views Bella's choice to become a vampire and mother as empowered choices, rather than what others deem as "evidence of submission to a traditional patriarchal mindset" (p. 146). She argues, "in order to be respected or to be a feminist or to forward the cause of women it is not always necessary to emulate masculine role models" (p. 146).

There have been comparisons, by both critics and fans, between the *Twilight* novels and Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. The main focus has been on comparisons of the protagonists Bella and Jane, who both love men named Edward (Wilson, 2011). Although both stories fall within the genre of *bildungsroman*, novel of development, many have *Twilight* come up short in comparison, with specific criticism reserved for the character of Bella. In their article, "Textual Vampirism" (2011), Deffenbacer and Zagoria-Moffet respond to this criticism by applying the theory of intertextuality, describing it as a type of vampirism, drawing life from and simultaneously transforming other narratives. In reaction to feminist critics who find Bella's character too passive and vulnerable, they find that

> vampirism grants Rosalie, Alice, and later Bella the ability to throw off
> traditional, normative gender expectations and overcome repeated instances of

woman's victimization, created a complicated dialogue between overarching narrative of modern, Western female traumatic experience and the fantasy of a future devoid of these stories. (p. 34)

They insist that Meyer, as Bronte, attempts to confront tensions between women's sexuality and desire. By juxtaposing choices for the other female characters in the novels, Bella's choice of vampirism "is more empowering than the alternatives represented by the mortal women in her life" (p. 37). And through her transformation she finds the "realization of full selfhood and romantic love" (p. 38). Bella's journey "reveals the enduring significance of a woman's physical and sexual vulnerability and fear, an issue central to many contemporary young women's negotiations of independent self-hood, romantic love, and heterosexual desire" (p. 39). Kisor (2010) claims that *Twilight* was intended to be a story about first love and utilizes a narrative layering technique which entails borrowing "from high-culture or canonical romantic literature helps give her story a resonance that puts it in dialogue with the archetypal love stories of the western world" (p. 35). Each book of the series borrows from famous love stories of the past: *Twilight* from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, *New Moon* from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, *Eclipse* from Bronte's *Wuthering Heights,* and finally *Breaking Dawn* from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

Despite all of the feminist research and interest in "girls studies," there is still a cultural bias that stories about men are more important.

> Scholars continue to fight the persistent cultural assumption that male-targeted texts are authentic and interesting, whereas female-targeted texts are schlocky and mindless—and further that men and boys are active users of media while women and girls are passive consumers. (Click et al., 2010, p. 8)

The fact that the story of Bella is shrouded in romance is one of the reasons why many are critical of her journey as a character, because they want so badly for the stories of

girls to be taken serious. If we can expand our idea of what a hero is or what a hero's journey looks like, maybe it would allow for a variety of narratives to be seen as valuable.

Murphy (2011) acknowledges that in the beginning of the series, Edward is a modern day Prince Charming and Bella is the damsel in distress. Disney's *Snow White* is the standard of the fairytale prince and the model formula for romantic stories, "boy and girl meet. Boy and girl fall in love. Something threatens (once or repeatedly) to tear boy and girl apart. Love conquers all and they ride off together in the sunset" (p. 60). Traditionally the Prince Charming character is the hero, but this is not the case. Murphy points to Luthi's definition of the hero as someone who moves from an inauthentic existence to a true one: "by this definition, by the end of the saga, the true hero is Bella. . . . [in recognition that she was destined to become a vampire] Bella's claim confirms Luthi's argument; she was never meant to be a human girl, she was meant to be a vampire" (p. 62). In the novels we see the character of Bella grapple with issues of identity: struggling with who she wants to be as opposed to who she feels she should be. "Unlike previous heroines who passively sought inclusion into the Prince's reality, Bella recognizes that she is not simply choosing Edward. . . she is choosing to begin her true identity" (pp. 62-63). Choosing to spend her life with Edward did not mean she was giving up her human life to become a vampire, her choice aligns with her personal truth, which she feels she was meant to be.

Anatol (2011) argues for the *Twilight* series to not be dismissed as "simply pulp, pop culture, or the latest fad" (p. 2). She insists that because of its popularity it is intellectually and socially significant. Stating the goal in analyzing this series is to

uncover "the emotional responses that readers have to the characters and situations" (p. 5). My clinical work with young women allowed me to see the impact of this character's journey on them. In describing the second book of *New Moon,* Dietz (2011) writes that it is "643 pages of very little action other than the protagonist's yearning for her vampire love" (p. 105). With this assertion I strongly disagree—what she calls little action, others would describe as someone undergoing a grieving process. The blank pages suggest the shock and emptiness that occur after a traumatic loss, followed by the reoccurring nightmares that are the only vehicle through which she allows herself expression of her deep sadness. It is as if Bella is Persephone, needing to be violently removed from what she knows in order to touch the depths of the underworld, where her path of individuation begins. In the words of George (1992), for many women Persephone can become an active archetype

> when we experience a violent trauma that leads to endings, loss and transition. As we make our descent into the darkness, Persephone waits for us in the subliminal gray realm where we are suspended between the closure of an important phase of our lives and the beginning of the next one. (p. 261)

My critique is that many critics of Bella's character focus exclusively on the heteronormative quality of the story, often leaving out her moments of rebellion and her intelligence. When I read many interpretations of her I feel she has been presented as a static character, when her presentation is anything but. She goes from an awkward high school student to mother, wife, and protector of her family.

Nelson (2009) begs us to "look closer" to not only the *Twilight* myth but also to the myth of Eros and Psyche—finding similarities between the journeys of Psyche and Bella. The myth of Eros and Psyche illustrates the soul's need for relationship in order to undergo the path of individuation. Steering us from the cultural preoccupation with the

solitary hero's journey, Nelson presents Psyche and Bella as models for this soul need for

both separation and union, as

> neither Psyche nor Bella is cast in a conventional heroic mold. They are pliable,
> vulnerable, and loving young women who develop, over time and through
> adversity, a surprising core of resilience. Their challenge to their respective
> lovers forces the relationship to new ground, immortality. (p. 6)

Bella and Psyche (and Persephone) are heroes, but not in the classical sense. They are

models of individuating while in relationship, as well as finding strength in vulnerability.

Nelson (2009) claims that although Bella is in a relationship with Edward, a

vampire, the relationship is not vampiric, in the final novel shows a relationship between

equals, because Bella individuates. We often do not see ourselves clearly and "we need

parents, friends, lovers, and mentors to help us become visible to ourselves (Nelson, 2012

p. 8). Through the course of her journey she finds a family, an authentic identity that

blends her skill with her own values, and she "achieves self-knowledge and self-mastery

to play a genuinely meaningful part in her own story" (p. 7). And although "the arena [in

which] she chooses to act is, from a feminist perspective, quite traditional… within that

sphere she becomes powerful and effective. Just because a sphere is traditional does not

mean it is trivial" (p. 8). As it relates to the soul and the process of individuation, it does

not matter so much how one goes about it. Bella is neither an Artemis nor an Athena.

She does not make the choice to undergo her journey alone, but she chooses to do so in a

relationship. My intention is not to defend against critics of *Twilight*, and I concede that

there are problems with both the novels and the films. Instead, Bella needs to be seen as

a flawed and complex character who evolves throughout the novels. Critics often take

her choices out of context and present her as a static character, although she is anything

but.

Literature Relevant to the Researcher's Theoretical Approach

Most of my professional experience has been in the settings of schools and juvenile detention centers, where I have been witness to what Paris (2007) refers to as the grand maternal failure. Most psychological approaches look to causal methods, explanations, and solutions to fix our problems, whereas I feel there are deeper issues these symptoms are calling to in our culture. That is why depth psychology, along with its interest in bringing the psyche with all of its complexity back into psychology, is the basis of my theoretical approach. In *The Art of Inquiry* (2005), Coppin and Nelson acknowledge that this is a challenging task for one to undergo, because psyche is immeasurable and soul is not quantifiable. Many researchers are concerned with reaching up towards knowledge, thereby leaving the soul behind. My hope is to strive for a balance between the two—to reach upward, along with going into the depths, which I find brings a deeper and richer perspective.

Jung and Hillman have both contributed to bringing the depth perspective to our psychological understanding. Jung built upon Freud's idea of the unconscious with the belief that we should find ways to tap the unconscious for its valuable resources. In his essay, "On the Nature of the Psyche" (1954/1981), Jung expresses the importance of listening to soul rather than continuing the tradition of psychology, which historically imposes its theories on the soul. He writes:

> The position of psychology is comparable with that of a psychic function which is inhibited by the conscious mind: only such components of it are admitted to exist as accord with the prevailing trend of consciousness. Whatever fails to accord is actually denied existence, in defiance of the fact that there are numerous phenomena or symptoms to prove the contrary. (p. 162 [*CW* 8, para. 347])

To summarize, if psychologists cling too tightly to our theories, the tendency is to sift out the information that substantiates our own views and ignore that which does not. To borrow a term from behaviorists, psychologists often engage in confirmation bias. Jung's passage above gives a different view of consciousness. His language choice in relating to consciousness, using words such as *inhibited, denied,* and *defiance,* suggests that in order for something to become conscious, something else is lost. Turning toward art, dreams, and myth provides an opportunity to witness the messages the unconscious holds. The ideas of the unconscious, psyche, and soul represent both the known and the unknown. Jung writes, "if the soul is really only an idea, this idea has an alarming air of unpredictability about it—something with qualities no one would ever have imagined" (p. 168 [*CW* 8, para. 356]). Although unpredictability can be overwhelming and anxiety-provoking, it provides an opportunity for us to live a more expansive existence, no longer prisoners of our own consciousness.

Hillman (1977) speaks to this when he suggests that we should keep an "eye attuned to the dark" (p. 82). In his book, *Revisioning Psychology* (1975), Hillman emphasizes the need to personify not only in our lives, but also in the field of psychology. Personifying is a "way of knowing, especially what is invisible, hidden in the heart" (p. 15). He believes that our emphasis in the field of psychology has been the ego at the expense of the soul and advocates for a change from ego-building to soul-making. Similarly to Jung, he reminds us how uncomfortable we have become with mystery by responding to dream and myth with interpretations and symbols:

> Disciplines of the imagination turn into a disciplining of the images. Insidiously we become biased against the world we wish to enter. . . . We sin against the imagination whenever we ask an image for it's meaning, requiring that images be translated into concepts. . . . And these interpretations forget too that they are

themselves fantasies induced by the image, no more meaningful than the image itself. (p. 39)

A combination of our fear of not knowing, with our need to find meaning has led us to interpret our own souls and claim the images as our own:

> No friend or animal wants to be interpreted even though it may cry for understanding. We might equally call the unfathomable depth in the image, love or at least say we cannot get to the soul of the image without love for the image. (p. 81)

Interpretation suggests a hierarchal structure of knower and known, whereas understanding has parity. There is also a quality of ownership when we speak of symbols, claiming them as aspects of our souls. Soul lives in the depths, and the only thing we can say for certain is that it is never ending. My clinical work has taught me that what many long for is not interpretation, but understanding.

Frankel (1998) insists that it is our limited view of birth being confined to only early childhood that limits the possibility of allowing something new to be born during adolescence:

> This spirit in adolescence is hungry for experience and seeks to extreme states of being, whether they be emotional, bodily or ideational. To comprehend this, we must attend to how the adolescent's imagination is fed through the music, movies, television, literature, and poetry that adolescents are attracted to and actively seek out. (p. 49)

He directs therapists working with adolescents not to expect to alleviate all suffering. Instead he suggests that our task is helping them move through their difficulties by allowing them to grow and mature—"the psyche knows how to heal itself" (p. 46). He advocates for those working with this population to encourage their imaginations and fantasies, although our own woundings might want to protect them from disappointment. Adolescence is a liminal state, a state of becoming which can be difficult to tolerate.

> It requires an ability to tolerate a borderline state. Culturally we do not do well with the unformed. We prematurely force children into adult patterns of being, and harbor the crazy expectation that an adolescent will have his life all figured out and ordered by the time high school begins. (p. 49)

In our culture there is an incredible pressure to achieve external success, whereas little if any value is given to our internal worlds. This is another consequence of the collective mother crisis we suffer under in our culture. In psychological theories the blame is placed mostly on the shoulders of our biological mother, but this lack of support and tenderness is experienced in our schools and workplaces as well (Paris, 2007). The culture wounds, and it is often the youngest and most vulnerable who suffer the most. But in our suffering, there is opportunity. Our suffering is a "cry of the soul" (Carotenuto, 1989, p. 120). When we suffer, it "makes us aware that we have an inner life" (p. 120). For, Carotenuto explains, it is our difficulties that shape us,

> just as the resistance of a piece of marble opposes the sculptor, we become stronger to the degree we are tested. And it is here that we can forge our destinies; in these crucial situations we must ask ourselves what we have made and what we are making of our uniqueness. (p. 120)

It is in our times of challenge and periods of suffering that we have the opportunity to find our personal truth and evolve beyond what we were. In this Hollis (1996) agrees, "without the suffering, which seems the epiphenomenal requisite for psychological and spiritual maturation, one would remain unconscious, infantile, and dependent. Yet many of our addictions, ideological attachments and neuroses are flights from suffering" (p. 8). If we choose to cling to our ideas, attachments, and addictions, we may prevent suffering for a time, but the loss will be great.

Statement of the Research Problem and Question

    The Research Problem.

Adolescence as a stage of life deserves renewed attention, not one that can be explained by looking to our pasts, nor as an intermediary between childhood and adulthood, but as a liminal stage in its own right, one ripe with possibility. Yet in our culture, we often ignore the initiatory and psychological phases of life, this denial being particularly felt in adolescence. The *puer aeternus* has become a complex of Western Civilization—we are not initiating our adolescents into future adults nor are we modeling how to deal with complex situations as mature adults. Examples of this can be found in how we have approached contemporary ecological, economical, and political problems. There is a cultural imbalance of competitiveness, greed, and achievement causing many to feel disenfranchised.

The consequences of our imbalance are often activated when we fall in love; we often have impossible expectations and make unreasonable demands, setting ourselves up for failure. If we begin to view the loss one suffers from heartbreak not as a failure but as a journey of psychic transformation or a soul opportunity—as a natural, necessary process—not one only to be avoided or moved through as quickly as possible, we can find meaning and power in our descents.

The depth psychological approach allows one to view adolescence from the archetypal perspective of initiation, seeing it in accord with the alchemical stage of *nigredo*, a necessary disintegration that allows the old identity to die and the seeds for the birth of the new self begin to emerge. This perspective is important because the way we

approach this initiatory aspect in our adolescence will continue to be activated throughout our lifetimes, when we face times of challenge or transformation.

The *Twilight* series (Meyer, 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008) gives young women a protagonist, crossing the threshold into adulthood, falling in love for the first time. Letting go of childhood dependence and descending to the depths of individuation, love took her to places she never imagined, she experienced pain never before would she have thought possible, but in the process found a strength and authenticity previously undiscovered. Just as Persephone and Psyche before her, she travels to a place where the innocent maiden dies and a young woman discovers the depth and intensity of her emotional, spiritual, and sexual life. Through relatedness, individuation is possible.

Research Question.

How does the loss of first love leading to a journey of descent transform an adolescent girl's identity?

Methodology

Approach.

My vocation as a psychotherapist has a strong influence on my approach to my research topic. Feeling drawn to people and the complexity of their stories, it is important for me to have the direct and involved experience of the interview.

Methodology.

Phenomenology, according to Giorgi and Giorgi (2008), is a qualitative psychological research approach that aims to clarify lived experiences of everyday

people, remaining faithful to the context while determining the "psychological essence of the phenomenon" (p. 28). Phenomenology "seeks the psychological meanings that constitute the phenomenon through investigating and analyzing lived examples of the phenomenon within the context of the participants' lives" (p. 28).

Smith and Osborn (2008) describe interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) as a way to explore how participants make sense of their personal and social world. Beyond the meaning of particular experience and events, IPA also emphasizes that research is a "dynamic process with an active role for the researcher in that process . . . combining an empathic hermeneutics with a questioning hermeneutics" (p. 53). Smith and Osborn posit that it is a suitable approach when a researcher is interested in finding out how individuals perceive particular situations they face, finding it helpful when one is concerned with "complexity, process, or novelty" (p. 55). Adding this extra layer onto phenomenology lends itself to my topic as well as to my own research style.

Participants.

According to Smith and Osborn (2008) when conducting interpretive phenomenological analysis, smaller sample sizes are best because the detailed analysis of each transcript is time consuming and the aim is to say something in detail about a specific group rather than making general claims (p. 56). For my study, I will select six women between the ages of 18 and 40 who have had the experience of falling in love and have recovered from the loss of this love. Through my professional connection with therapists working with the late adolescent population, I will pull from those that have received professional support and have had time to reflect on and heal from their experiences.

Data Collection/Interview Protocol.

The method of data collection will be a semi-structured, in-depth interview; allowing me to have questions available as a guide, rather than a strict directive that the researcher is required to follow. Smith and Osborn (2008) argue for this structure because it allows the researcher to build a rapport with the participants, thereby producing richer material and a clearer picture of their psychological world. The interview will take place in a neutral and comfortable location negotiated with each participant individually. A couple of weeks before the initial interview, in order to prepare the interviewee, I will give them a short write-up about the general topics that will be covered. The interview will consist of two parts; first will be the initial recorded session in which I will ask about their experience of falling in love for the first time. After I complete the transcription, I will give a copy to the participant to provide the opportunity for modifications and their confirmation that the transcript is an accurate account of their experience. There will then be a second short 15-30 minute follow-up for any questions or clarifications left over from the first interview.

Data Analysis.

The goal of analysis in interpretive phenomenological analysis with its emphasis on meaning is to "understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than measure their frequency. This involves the investigator engaging in an interpretive relationship with the transcript" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 66). Although dealing with multiple subjects, the transcripts will be analyzed one at a time. This "follows the idiographic approach to analysis, beginning with particular examples and only slowly working up to more general categorization or claims" (p. 67).

The first stage of analysis is to become extremely familiar with the transcript.

Upon the first few readings the researcher keeps note of what is interesting and

significant. There are no rules or standards applied to these notes; some may be

summarizations, others associations, and preliminary interpretations. During the early

stages of the analysis, I will pay attention to the interviewee's use of language, while

trying to get a sense of what type of person they are. As Smith and Osborn instruct

researchers, "you are likely to comment on similarities, differences, echoes,

amplifications, and contradictions in what a person is saying" (2008, p. 67). During the

second stage of analysis, the researcher searches the transcript for emerging themes,

transforming what is found in the text into concise phrases. "The skill at this stage is

finding expressions which are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within

and across cases but which are still grounded in the particularity of the specific thing

said" (p. 68). A chronological list of themes is then produced and the researcher then

looks for connections within the themes, creating an "analytical or theoretical ordering, as

the researcher tries to make sense of the connections between themes which are

emerging" (p. 70).

Smith and Osborn (2008) believe that after clustering the themes, one needs to

check back to the original document in order to make sure they are appropriate, whereas

clustering it can be useful to concurrently create a directory of phrases in which the

themes are supported. "As a researcher one is drawing on one's interpretive resources to

make sense of what a person is saying, but at the same time one is constantly checking

one's own sense-making against what the person actually said" (p. 72). A final table of

themes is named, along with identifiers that indicate where in the transcript instances of

the theme occur is produced. After analysis of the transcript, the researcher will pursue

analysis of the next transcript from scratch: "when the number of cases is very small, it is

best to start analysis of each from scratch and then look for convergence and divergence

once one has done each case separately" (p. 74).

Validity and Reflexivity.

In order to ensure validity, after completion of the transcription and analytic

process, the researcher will bring findings to participants for verification, allowing for

modification or addition if necessary. The researcher will work closely with her

dissertation chair throughout the length of the involvement with the research topic.

Chapter 3
Depth Psychology and Initiation, Grief, and Love

The following section addresses three particular issues central to this study:

archetype of initiation, depth psychology and grief, and depth psychology and love.

Archetype of Initiation

Henderson (2005) examines the ancient myth of the hero and the archetype of

initiation, believing this to be the first stage of differentiation for the psyche and the

process under which one graduates from childhood to manhood. Tribal societies use

initiation to tame the Trickster, requiring the initiate to undergo a rite of submission: "he

must be prepared to die; and though the token of his ordeal may be mild. . . or agonizing

the purpose remains always the same; to create the symbolic mood of death from which

may spring the symbolic mood of rebirth" (p. 124). This act of submission is followed by

containment, and then liberation, finally allowing an individual to reconcile conflicting

elements of his personality (Henderson, 1964). Through the work of Joseph Campbell

and countless storytellers and filmmakers, the cultural consciousness has become well

acquainted with the hero's journey (Campbell, 1968; Campbell, Cousineau, & Brown,

1990).

Kiepenheur (1990) focuses on the archetypal patterns awakened in adolescence.

Our culture, with its widespread overvaluation of Enlightenment values, mostly ignores

them. These patterns he found in adolescence are similar to the findings of Henderson.

Both place importance on being alone, suffering a symbolic death, a great desire for

ordeal, new birth, and acceptance into community. Although the larger social institutions

in our culture do not support these inclinations, the impulses are not lost, as reflected by popular culture's preoccupation with ordeal and current obsession with the superhero.

In his academic work, Bruce Lincoln (1981) studies the initiation rituals of women specifically because he found that despite there being many more rituals for women throughout the world, most academics focus on the initiatory rites of men. Therefore most of what we know about ritual relates to men specifically. The rites of passage for men are about transformation, "replacing old roles, statuses, and identities with new ones" (p. 6). For women the goal is expanded:

> The goal of initiation is not merely to make a better, stronger, or more knowledgeable person of the initiand, however much this may be desired, but to transform her utterly, make her totally different from what she had been, and radically separate her from her childhood existence. The cosmic journey makes the immature girl into a woman whose proper field of activity is in the cosmos, who has transcended the bounds of her mundane existence and has become a truly cosmic being, jolted out of her immediate locale and introduced to the universe at large. (p. 97)

After initiation, boys become men and enjoy new status in the community. The option is not available to many women, as they are not able to hold any position of power in most cases. Therefore, puberty rites for girls address ontological concerns and changes to their fundamental being.

The formal rites of initiation from childhood to adulthood in Western culture, beyond material concerns such as graduation money, have lost significance (Henderson 2005; Corbett, 2007; Hall, 1994; Kiepenheur, 1990; Sullwood, 1988). However, as Hall (1994) and others (Harding, 1990; Woodman, 1985) show, the psychological impulse for psychic transformation remains mostly in our unconscious. Hall makes a distinction between the initiation of girls and boys. Cultural norms state that it is normal for girls to remain in relation to their mothers throughout childhood and adolescence, whereas boys

are encouraged to break the maternal bond in order to find adventure and identity outside

of the maternal realm. For girls the separation happens later. Often

> a girl's first seduction is when the separation from her mother begins. . . . The
> event of first enrapturement seduces one out of childhood. One is snatched or
> seized by a totally unfamiliar attitude, caught against one's will, it seems, by the
> recognition of something beyond mother. (pp. 75-76)

Hall reflects on a tale of a noblewoman from Abyssinia whose first love cuts her in two,

causing her to form a new identity. She writes, "only when a woman has been split in

two can she know what it is to be whole" (p. 98). Although applying any concept to

either gender exclusively is an overgeneralization, the approach was only recently called

into question, therefore impacting the cultural psyche for many generations. Despite the

strides towards progress, we do not live in a *postgender* society. We live in a patriarchal

one where true shifts take time; certain concepts are set deeply within the cultural fabric,

and it will take many generations to transcend them. With this in mind, the impetus for

girls to move towards relationship in order to become adults is a tricky thing in a

patriarchal society, and it has adverse consequences.

Rutter (1996) addresses these concerns. As a mother and psychotherapist, it is her

goal to raise girls with a strong self-esteem and sense of self, to find ways that women

can help strengthen girls' sense of autonomy, and to instill pride and confidence in being

female. Living in a culture where being female means being less than, she advocates

affirming and nurturing female bodies from birth, including bathing, hair washing, hair

combing, and all of the other intimate ways daily. These

> elements from everyday life that are part of most girl initiation ceremonies in
> other cultures have disappeared from ours. Our task is to invest our daughters'
> everyday care with purpose, intention, and awareness of their feminine value, and
> then to create celebrations to mark the passages in their lives. (pp. 2-3)

Establishing a sense of self-worth in girls' minds and bodies from birth helps prevent

them from turning away from femininity in order to identify with men.

> That is why girls radically shift their attention to boys at adolescence, influenced
> by school socialization and being treated in increasingly trivialized or denigrating
> ways as they approach puberty. They become the objects of boys' lives instead of
> being the subjects of their own lives. (p. 10)

Shifting girls' attention away from relationship and sexuality in adolescence is neither the

goal, nor is it probable. Rather it is placing value on relating to others while leaving open

the possibility to explore identity, to keep the relationship with our inner-self open when

we expand our worlds through friends and lovers.

Woodman (1985) explores the struggle women undergo to become conscious,

with the concern of how our thinking hearts bring us closer to our inner virgin, the one-

in-herself, who is forever open to new life, new possibilities, and our own unique truth.

Drawing from history, mythology, art, psychology, and religion, Woodman and Dickson

(1996) find examples of the power of the Dark Goddess, the carrier of transformative

power and feminine wisdom. In all her forms—Virgin, Mother, and Crone, the Dark

Goddess holds the task of soul making. The Dark Goddess is exiled into the

unconscious, and culture represses the Crone because she is a great threat to the

patriarchal world. The Crone represents

> that part of her psyche that is not identified with any relationship nor confined by
> any bond. She infuses an intrinsic sense of self-worth, or autonomy, into the role
> of virgin and mother, and gives the woman strength to stand to her own creative
> experience. (p. 134)

Examples of devaluation of the Crone are not hard to find. Once a woman is beyond

childbearing age, she is made to feel that she has lost her usefulness, when in fact, it is

often the time when she is the most powerful. It feels as if our economy depends on

women chasing youth, no matter what age. Someone once told me, if women woke up

one day feeling good about themselves, the economy would collapse. Although the

Crone's absence affects all women, it affects young women the most:

> Young girls in our society are not initiated by older women into womanhood with
> its accompanying dignity and power. Instead, for their models, they look to
> fashion magazines, where they see the kinds of bodies and faces that they
> themselves can never have. Paradoxically, these are the ideals that are held up for
> them if they want to be successful, particularly with men. . . .
> With no inner Wisdom figure to guide them, and no outward model to
> help them set boundaries and be their own person, young women often fall victim
> to false and superficial ideals, such as pleasing others. Ironically, they achieve
> their greatest success at the cost of their own emerging sense of self. (pp. 139-
> 140)

Most young women are left with role models that define womanhood as being appealing

to men.

Over five thousand years ago, before the rise of male religions, Old Europe was a

matriarchal culture that worshiped the Great Goddess, who was deeply connected to

nature and fertility (Bolen, 1985; Gimbutas, 1982). Invaders encroached on these

cultures and incorporated the powers of the Great Goddess into their male deity (Bolen,

1985). As seen in Greek mythology, the Great Goddess's attributes became fragmented,

assigned to several lesser goddesses (Harrison, 1962). With the arrival of the Hebrew,

Christian, and Muslim religions, the male deity now took the prominent place (Stone,

1978). The move towards monotheistic male-figure religions led to the denigration of the

feminine principle. The subsequent overvaluing of one principle over another leaves us

out of balance. In order to individuate as individuals and as a society, a reintegration of

what has been lost must occur.

Harding (1990) critiques the modern "age of executives and scientists" (p. xiii), in

which

> little attention is paid to the achievement of an inner development in the emotional realm. Indeed it is generally taken for granted that an individual's emotions are what they are and that they are not subject to development—certainly not to education. (p. xiii)

In order to fulfill the need for an emotional education, her work looks to the goddesses of the moon as a way to be initiated into and expanding our understanding of the emotional realm. Harding encourages fresh exploration of the masculine and feminine principles, which are "inherent in the nature of things and function unerringly and inevitably" (p. 16). Throughout the ages, the moon is the symbol most associated with the feminine principle, whereas the sun symbolizes the masculine. By paying attention to the lunar aspects of consciousness, we may reclaim the disowned or orphaned parts of ourselves that never seem to fit in or belong, but are the source of our uniqueness.

In ancient times, the lives of women revolved around the physiological changes experienced during menstruation. In these moments women were isolated and removed from daily tasks, and "the days spent alone, in the menstrual lodge, fasting and performing other purificatory rites is, perhaps, equivalent to the initiation ceremonies which are so generally practiced by the men and boys at puberty" (Harding, 1990, p. 70). These monthly rituals of being removed from outside life cannot be dismissed as purely superstitious, for they are a reminder that it is through the female body that we experience the sacred or the divine. Although we have moved beyond the superstition, the rituals based on beliefs that menstruating women are dangerous or unclean, now most women go about their daily lives believing that nothing is lost. The fact that monthly isolation was a time for a woman "to get into touch with a deeper and more fundamental layer of her own psychic life" (p. 74) makes it easy to argue that indeed much has been lost. Difficulties during menstrual cycles may in fact be a call for a woman to withdraw from

external pressures, go within, and re-establish contact with her deeper nature (p. 75).

Perhaps it is an opportunity to look into that which is lost when the goal is power over

rather than an attitude of relation.

The modern conception of the virgin changed significantly from past

understanding. In the past, *virgin* referred more to a quality of being and less to external

fact, "its real significance is to be found in its use as contrasted with married" (Harding,

1990, p. 103). In our system of thought, an unmarried girl belongs to her father and

becomes the property of her husband after marriage; however, in other times and still

today in other communities,

> she was her own mistress until she married. . . . A girl belongs to *herself* while
> she is virgin—unwed—and may not be compelled either to maintain chastity or to
> yield to an unwanted embrace.
> As virgin she belongs to herself alone, she is one-in-herself. (p. 103)

Therefore, the Moon Goddesses are not just female counterparts of male gods, they are

virgin goddesses representing sexuality sans marriage, and they belong to themselves

alone. They are symbols of duality, "the Moon Goddess was thus giver of life and of all

that promotes fertility, and at the same time she was the wielder of the destructive powers

of nature" (Harding, p. 111). As a culture we have subscribed to the tenets of progress

without understanding the cost.   Much of what gives life its potency is lost as we gaze at

our smart phones.

Woodman (1985) acknowledges the loss that occurs when we disparage the

feminine principle, one of the most profound being the removal of the ritual of initiation.

The psychological impulse remains, but we are left with mostly superficial objects to fill

the void. Consider marriage and the many couples who ignore the initiatory aspect of the

wedding ritual. The fact is no surprise considering how commodified and industrialized

the ritual has become. At the time of writing, a Google search for "wedding dresses" returns over 276,000,000 results. Economics and aesthetics shape the choice of dress, and little if any attention is given to the dress's symbolism, let alone the psychological aspect of planning a marriage ritual. *Sex and the City: The Movie* (King & Parker, 2008) conveys this well. The lead character Carrie originally plans to marry her fiancé in a simple suit with a ceremony at city hall. When she is given an extravagant couture gown, the emphasis of the wedding becomes spectacle. She loses her sense of self and almost destroys the relationship. We would all do well to restore some of the significance lost from the major transitory events in our lives.

With the emphasis on achievement and progress, the valuable time of the chrysalis, "the twilight zone between past and future that is the precarious world of transformation" (Woodman, 1985, p. 14), loses its place. In order to tolerate this state, there has to be an acceptance of the "life/death paradox…[that] birth is the death of the life we have known; death is the birth of the life we have yet to live" (p. 14). Woodman charges society with not teaching our children about the "courage to stand alone" because "from infancy, children have been programmed to perform. Rather than living from their own needs and feeling, they learn to assess situations in order to please others" (p. 16). The message is particularly harmful to young women in a patriarchal society. Children are now

> pummeled by mass media and peer group pressures, their identity may be utterly absorbed by collective stereotypes. In the absence of adequate rites of passage, ad-men become the high priests of an initiation into the addictions of consumerism. Everywhere the ceremony of innocence is exploited.
>
> Without recognized rites, members of a society are not sure who they are within the structure. Children who have fumbled their way through puberty find themselves in adolescence raging for independence, at the same time furious when asked to take responsibility. (p. 16)

A society that lacks the tools for awareness and introversion, that encourages its members to look externally for mirroring and validation, makes becoming a critical thinking individual difficult. Media is allowed to become more insidious and invasive as a result. Seen in this way, it is hard to dispute the idea that corporations and advertisers are not only initiating our youth, but that they should not be the ones doing so.

Women psychologists have continued the work to bring forth different modes of existence that have been suppressed by patriarchy (Hall, 1994; Bolen, 1985; Paris, 1986). Bolen's (1985) approach utilizes the goddesses of the Greek pantheon as archetypal patterns. These patterns are unconscious, powerful forces that all women can identify with. Her approach divides the seven goddesses into three categories—the virgin goddesses, the vulnerable goddesses, and the alchemical or transformative goddess, Aphrodite. Women's relationships to the goddesses are not fixed; they shift with hormonal changes and life crises. The virgin goddesses—Artemis, Athena, and Hestia— represent the independent, self-sufficient aspects of the feminine. These goddesses are not susceptible to falling in love. They have a need for autonomy and focus on personal meaning. The vulnerable goddesses—Hera, Demeter, and Persephone, represent the traditional roles of wife, mother, and daughter. They are relationship-oriented, with a need for affiliation and bonding, as they are often attuned to the needs of others. Each goddess undergoes suffering and evolves in her own way, thereby showing the potential for growth through suffering. Aphrodite is the alchemical goddess, the one who generates love, beauty, erotic attraction, sensuality, sexuality, and new life. She enters relationships by her own choosing and maintains autonomy throughout.

Hall's (1994) perspective examines myth and literature in order to give new meaning to underlying archetypes, with the goal of freeing us from the limits imposed by society, while prescribing reclamation of feminine ritual and initiation. She argues that every daughter who leaves her mother is Persephone, but every girl must also leave her father, making her Aphrodite. Persephone's split is healed when she becomes a mother, and Aphrodite becomes her own father, meaning that one must learn to become independent in thought and action, especially in the realm of love. Paris (1986) finds that for Aphrodite, sexual union is part of her individuation, making it not only "a source of joy, but a path of inner knowledge as well" (p. 60). Hall (1994) adds,

> When someone is awakened by love, they see things within and without as if for the first time. Aphrodite teaches the secrets of the heart. She shows the value of spontaneous feeling and opens an undisclosed cache of creativity and imagination in both lover and loved. (p. 151)

Aphrodite's story suggests a way of healing the damage inflicted on the souls of women around sexuality by the patriarch. She is also present during times of initiation, as we see in the myth of Psyche and Eros. Aphrodite's role in Psyche's individuation process was previously overlooked and has been an important focus for some depth psychologists (Neumann, 1956/1971; Woodman & Dickson, 1996; Paris, 1986; Bolen, 1985; Johnson, 1989). Woodman and Dickson (1996) assert that "her severe and unfeeling demeanor may seem cruel, but in fact she, as dark goddess, is the catalyst that brings out all the strength and defiance and individuality that sleeping Psyche never had" (p. 130). Although Aphrodite's intent was not to initiate but to destroy her competition (Paris, 1986; Bolen, 1985), the tasks she assigned ultimately led to Psyche's individuation. Johnson (1989) states,

Aphrodite, who is criticized at every turn, does what is necessary to make Psyche's evolution possible. It is easy to be optimistic after the fact, but it is devilishly painful while it is happening. There is a sort of evolutionary warfare happening during this time. The old way, the Aphrodite nature, is regressive. It pulls a woman back into unconsciousness, while at the same time it forces her forward into new life—sometimes at great risk. It may be that evolution could be accomplished in another way; or it may be that at times Aphrodite is the only element that can bring about growth. (pp. 6-7)

Aphrodite's role in Psyche's evolution illustrates the great risk that comes from choosing one's personal truth; it is a regressive and painful process. Because something is difficult does not mean it should be avoided, and the alternative, staying in place or being stuck in the past, is equally if not more painful. Rituals of initiation are about transformation. A woman's first love begins the end of her childhood. Because we live in a time when inner development is given little merit, when activity and achievement are overvalued, we leave our young women to be initiated into womanhood by mass media and peers. Disparaging the feminine principle results in the removal of initiatory rites and makes it harder to find one's personal truth although messages of conformity abound.

Depth Psychology and Grief

Although the rites of initiation have mostly vanished in our modern world, the psychological impulse has not (Hall, 1994; Woodman, 1985). Much of what we deem as failures and losses, the places in which we feel vulnerable or victimized, may in fact be initiatory calls to a new life. In order for something new to be born, what went before must be lost,

but because they do not understand, people cling to the familiar, refuse to make the necessary sacrifices, resist their own growth. Unable to give up their habitual lives, they are unable to receive new life. . . . Initiation rites, experienced at the appropriate times in our lives, burn off what is no longer relevant, opening our eyes to new possibilities of our own uniqueness. They tear off the protective veils

of illusion until at last we are strong enough to stand in our own naked truth. (Woodman, 1985, p. 26)

Our lack of knowledge of the initiatory and transformation process becomes apparent through our resistance to change. In order for the alchemical phase of psychic transformation to occur, the persona needs to be stripped, and oftentimes the ego needs to be defeated. The initiation rite provides a holding, an allowing of space for the vulnerable task of exposing the parts of self we would like to ignore, but are needed for our growth. These parts of self are often referred to as the shadow, and the experience of exposing them is often depicted as undergoing a descent into the underworld.

Meador advocates that we "uncurse the dark," for even mentioning "the word *descent* immediately conjures up periods of crisis, depression, loss, tragedy, or madness" (1992, xi). This is broadly unappealing and makes the distinction that descent is a deviation from normal life, when in fact it is not. Instead of seeing these periods of descent for their possibility, the hope instead becomes "to get out of the downward spiral as fast as possible" (p. xi). Meador's goal then is helping "revise our understanding of descent's meaning. We have lost the ritual enactment, which served to orient us during such periods. With our ritual meaning gone, we flounder, mapless and rudderless, at the mercy of tides of emotion" (p. xi).

Lincoln (1981) credits the myth of Demeter and Persephone as the most important myth of antiquity to portray the lives of women, and there is real possibility that it was once tied to ancient women's rites. The myth portrays a bond between two women that is disrupted when Hades abducts Persephone and brings her to the underworld. Demeter's heartbreak over her loss ensues, and she pleads with the gods to return her daughter. Zeus, Persephone's father, refuses her request, and she becomes despondent. It is

commonly believed that the myth is an allegory of women's initiation. The arrival of

Indo-Europeans in Greek civilization precipitated a modification to the ritual pattern, for

their

> religious system emphasized male deities, ideologies, and rituals in contrast to the
> matri-centered religion of the Old European peoples who inhabited Greece before
> their coming. As a result, rituals that spoke directly to the lives of women must
> have declined in importance, disappeared entirely, or modified their form.
> (Lincoln, 1981, p. 73)

At the same time, Lincoln explains, Greece was undergoing change from becoming a

tribal society to an urban one, forcing a

> change in the nature of initiatory rituals, whereby rites of passage that had been
> mandatory for all youths and that conveyed full membership and adult status in
> society, became impractical as population increased and as social roles became
> more differentiated. As a result, these tribal initiations were transformed,
> becoming elective cults into which individuals might be inducted and through
> which they would be promised salvation. (p. 73)

Women's initiatory rites were deeply affected by the rise of monotheistic religions, and

because of the shift to an urban society, it was no longer practical to prescribe rituals as

they once had. It would be helpful now to turn back to the myth of Persephone for some

more reflections on the story itself.

Lincoln (1981) brings up some interesting points. He questions the conventional

tendency to sympathize with Demeter and to fault Zeus for his decision to leave

Persephone in the underworld. Lincoln suggests the possibility that Zeus too had her best

interest at heart, but his idea deviated from what Demeter felt was best. To explain the

alternate point of view, Lincoln introduces the concept of Greek kinship ideology, for

they

> believed that there was a profound difference between mother and father, the
> former being seen as the biological parent, who gave birth, and the latter as the

social parent, who gave and continues to give his children a place in the world throughout their lives. (pp. 76-77)

So in this way, Zeus was fulfilling his responsibility to Persephone by facilitating her change in status from daughter to wife. This brings up another important point: because the story describes a goddess, it is easy to forget the role of context and culture. Her initiation happened essentially through a physical violation. Rape is a common theme among rituals in male-centered cultures, where a primary goal is subjugation to male control.

Persephone received her name only after she lost her virginity; beforehand she was named Kore, which literally translates as "the maiden." Lincoln continues (1981), "it thus appears that prior to her stay with Hades, Persephone has no proper name, being known only by her status: *kore,* the maiden, the virgin, the young girl" (p. 79). The girl's proper name was bestowed on her only after she was initiated, became an adult, and lost her maiden status. Eventually she is allowed to return to her mother, with the promise of returning to the underworld for a portion of the year. Upon her return, it is apparent that she is forever transformed by her time in the underworld. In the archetypal pattern of descent, the disintegration process in psychic transformation, our ego is defeated, our persona is shed, and we are pulled down, and it is here "at the bottom we meet ourselves stripped bare with nothing left but our mere existence" (Meador, 1992, p. xiii). This is neither something we can escape nor something we should take lightly. As Persephone before, these encounters can cause tremendous suffering, but may also leave us forever changed.

Paris (2011) reminds us that everything, even the most painful things that happen to us, are usable. However the physical effects of heartbreak are so severe that she finds

mourning and heartbreak to be neurologically similar to torture; they cause a major disruption in our psyche, equally affecting our mind, heart, and imagination. Advice for those who suffer heartbreak is often lacking, but if advice is given at all, its message is often "you just need to move on." Paris argues that an evolutionary jump and an increase in consciousness are needed:

> Recovery is *not,* as so many are tempted to believe, a simple decision to "move on," which too often leads to an emotional shutting down, the closing of the heart. The *evolutionary jump*, paradoxically, happens only if the heart continues its painful expansion, and stays open until one learns something crucial about love and relationships. (p. xix)

Probably finding it hard to advise an evolutionary jump, the most common advice given to people recovering from heartbreak is reentering life as if nothing has occurred, as if we can distract or can will ourselves out of this process. In order to truly gain the wisdom available, to allow ourselves to be educated and initiated by love, we must allow an expansion and vulnerability in our heart, advice that goes against conventional wisdom, wisdom that suggests we shut down the internal process.

Education or initiation touches both the heart and the intellect, "because both the notions of *education* and that of *initiation* imply an intense intellectual adventure, combined with an intense emotional engagement" (Paris, 2011, p. 55). Here is one of the gifts of the broken heart: it is an invitation to wisdom *if* we are willing to do the work. It is important to avoid victimization from the trauma of the loss; often our approach is denying the painful feelings. Paris believes that

> your painful feelings contain the energy to propel you beyond your current state of devastation. Don't deny the pain, but sit instead in silence, feel it, suffer it, analyze it, become interested in it, and study the many psychological maps that lead out of this prison of the heart. (p. 3)

By expanding our definition of love, we learn to love in a wiser manner. Rather than being a victim of circumstance or of another person, our pain is a push from nature to initiate us into our next level of development. If our grief is left unmourned, we will keep recreating these same patterns in our relationships. Comparing recovering from heartbreak to the ancient process of alchemy, Paris believes that

> overcoming of difficulties will purify love of its infantile attachments, and *transmute* the sexual urge into the golden sentiment of love. . . . Knowing that one has loved, and has been loved, is a reward of a life well lived, the real gold, the alchemical *opus.* (p. 170)

In other words, learning to love is the real work of our life. The difficulties and heartbreak we experience in loving are the opportunities for us to grow and become wiser. As the initiations of Inanna and Persephone, they allowed their previous identities to die in order to reach their next stage of development; similarly,

> a heartbreak-through follows the same process: the way back is blocked, and you have no choice but to go through periods of angst, alienation, isolation, fear of the void, tears and loss of identity. Solitude and silence are prescribed to shed the old identity and propel yourself into the next chapter of your life. (p. 209)

Following a prescription for disorientation and despair in a logos-driven culture is extremely challenging, yet it is needed most in times of transition and grief. By beginning to shift our values, we may begin viewing these times in the underworld as something not to be avoided, but as a necessary and an unavoidable part of our development towards living a more meaningful life.

Wikman (2004) encourages us to court these dark times in our lives as an opportunity for transformation and renewal. Often we enter these dark times unwillingly because they are so painful, but

crisis contains a fire capable of clearing the attitudes that blind us to the
mysteries, if we will but allow the reality of our inner death to the old ways. The
dark night of the soul may bring us into contact with the inner light that expands
our mortal lives through connection with the eternal essence dwelling in each of
us. (p. xx)

Crisis is more than something to just survive in order to go on as usual; it is an

opportunity to expand our lives, to expand what is possible. In order to do this we need

to acquaint ourselves with what the alchemists refer to as the "stinking waters," for they

contain everything necessary for transformation (p. 62). What we call depression is often

the state necessary to make way for initiation, for when we are comfortable and happy,

we are less inclined to evolve. Love and relationships make us aware of the things that

otherwise go unnoticed:

> Love is a most important experience in the life of the soul, and how we hold the
> mystery of love plays a crucial role in our individuation. . . . The archetypal
> constellations that inform personality are often noticeable when we are under
> love's influence. (p. 166)

Wikman finds it important to acknowledge Hermes' crucial role, for "he plays his tricky

hand behind love relationships," making sure that two lovers cross paths and "fall in love,

for the sake of soul development" (p. 167).

Harding (1970) distinguishes between the causes of depression. A setback or loss

in life causes the loss of libido, such that "the life energy and interest disappear into the

unconscious, and the conscious life is left high and dry" (p. 5). A creative depression

occurs when something from the unconscious seeks our attention. Harding argues that

there is value in depression by

> calling a halt to our incessant busy-ness, but then the question of what the
> meaning of the experience may be, has to be faced. . . meaning as such is not only
> concerned with intellectual understanding in a static sense, but implies a purpose,
> it has a teleological quality, it leads to the future and is concerned with oneself. It

is this quality of meaning that evokes an emotional participation, and which makes it significant to us. (pp. 5-6)

The value of creative depression is to slow us down and force us to give consciousness to something we have been ignoring. Not only do we have an opportunity for intellectual understanding but also for finding our teleological purpose that spurs us forward into a deeper sense of whom we are to be.

In the opening of his book, *Swamplands of the Soul*, Hollis (1996) maintains that "there is a thought, a recurrent fantasy perhaps, that the purpose of life is to achieve happiness. After all, even the Constitution of the United States promises life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (p. 7). The belief that we will somehow find ourselves in a trouble-free life is a fantasy. Happiness is ephemeral, and Jungian psychology teaches us that "the goal of life is not happiness but meaning" (p. 8). Most of modern psychology has drifted towards symptom palliation, or reprogramming cognitions, and he warns that "any therapy which does not address the issues of soul must remain superficial in the end" (p. 9). Instead he encourages us to view symptoms as "expressions of a desire for healing" (p. 10). Hollis's work is important because our quest to be happy and to strive for external manifestations of perfection does us more harm than good. Dealing only with the ego's needs and desires is a missed opportunity, and many in the field of psychology are complicit in this state of affairs.

Although ego is only a small part of our soul, its longing for control and security has a large impact on the entirety of our psyche. Clinging to security often impedes our opportunities for transformation—the larger goal of individuation. "The goal of individuation is not narcissistic self-absorption. . . the task of individuation is wholeness, not goodness, not purity, not happiness. Any wholeness includes the descent which the

psyche frequently imposes upon the unwilling ego" (Hollis, 1996, p. 14). Hollis states that the true "essence of therapy is the acknowledgement of responsibility for one's choices, for one's life. Anything else is an evasion of genuine adulthood" (p. 26). Taking responsibility is now a revolutionary act, for in taking responsibility we must admit our limitations, which some find as terrifying as death itself. Why is death so terrifying? It is the biggest threat to the ego, and it is something over which we have no control. But loss is an inevitable part of life. Hollis helps reframe loss, as an opportunity to see the valuable things in our life that have been granted to us. "The power to affirm value amid loss is a source of deep meaning. Holding to the meaning and letting go of control is the double work of loss and grief" (p. 46). There is value not only in grieving what we have lost in an authentic way, but in recognizing the contribution that these things have in our lives, a contribution that can never be lost.

A powerful fantasy held by many is the search for the Magical Other, a perfect partner and soul mate, a person who will meet all of our needs. Not only does such a person not exist, but also Hollis (1998) maintains that it would not be good for our development to find such a person anyway:

> Ultimately, the Magical Other, were we to find such a person, would be our greatest threat for he or she would keep us from our fuller selves. . .
> Both fantasies, of immortality and magical rescue, impede our engagement with this life, the here-and-now. . . .
> Each of us has been offered a journey. Each of us is responsible for the fullest possible expression of this individuation imperative. (p. 144)

Admittedly, this is a powerful fantasy, to which few of us are immune. The belief is in fact harmful to our development, for if we linger in a paradisiacal slumber with our beloved for the remainder of our days, our life would in fact be wasted.

Depth Psychology and Love

In his book, *We: Understanding the Psychology of Romantic Love,* Robert Johnson (1985) describes the cult of romance, which has formed our modern ideas of love. Our modern beliefs often use romance and love interchangeably, when in fact the two are different. Johnson points to this confusion as evidence that

> we have lost the consciousness of what love is, what romance is, and what the differences are between them. We are confusing two great psychological systems within us, and this has a devastating effect on our lives and our relationships. (p. 44)

In order to understand and distinguish between love and romance, it is necessary to begin with their origins.

The West began combining love and romance around the 12th century, with the idea of *courtezia* or "courtly love." Courtly love idealized the feminine and was a spiritual relationship; the woman often served as a symbol for the universal feminine. In order to not debase this love, the participants were not married and the relationship was never consummated. Between them there was an understanding that they were seeing each other as "symbols of the divine archetypal world" and that they would never be satisfied by "reducing their passion to the ordinariness of sex or marriage" (Johnson, 1985 p. 46). Catching the imagination of Western culture, courtly love became "the driving force behind a flow of poetry, song, love stories, and plays" (p. 46). It is a happily-ever-after story that most of us attempt "to live out in our own ways within the down-to-earth world of human relationships and human practicality" (p. 46). This romantic ideal still holds a powerful sway over our imagination, but it is a mistake to look to another human for what in essence is a spiritual longing.

Johnson (1985) warns us of the danger of basing our approach to human relationships on an ideal that is spiritual and superhuman in nature; valuing passion above all else creates expectations that are unattainable and leads to constant disappointment and discontent. We need not look too far for examples, as popular culture is only too happy to provide us with many examples of the unattainable. The hope is to arrive at a point in our psychological development when we realize that these are buried beliefs and desires that were never actively chosen. The intent is not to dismiss romantic love, but to see it as a symbol of a deep psychological truth, one that reminds us of our potential rather than of a concretized ideal:

> One of the great needs of modern people is to learn the difference between human love as a basis for relationship, and romantic love as an inner ideal, a path to the inner world. . . . We analyze romantic love, not to destroy it, but to understand what it is and where it belongs in our lives. (p. 49)

Romantic love is a journey to the interior, a call towards our soul's potential; instead we have misused the symbol and have externalized the ideal in our love relationships.

The real gift of romanticism and romantic love is its attempt at restoring a sense of the divine side of life, a facet that widely has been lost in Western consciousness. What has been lost is "the inner life, the power of imagination, myth, dream, and vision. . . we misuse the ideal of romanticism, misplace the divine love, and in the process we destroy our human relationships" (Johnson, 1985, p. 131). It is important to realize that romantic love is a necessary part of our evolution that we have inherited as a resource for initiation into a deeper sense of the divinity of life, especially in a world where religion no longer has the same hold as it once did. Our unconscious pull to romantic love provides us with the ecstasy and suffering, Johnson explains, "but most of all it is a taste of what used to be sought in the afterlife: transfiguration" (p. 131).

This leads to the question: why is this so? Western dualism has left us divided and separated from the spiritual side of life. The spiritual life is seen as something not within us, but as something to be pursued externally. Although we talk of soul and spirit, "we don't really believe in them. Over the centuries we have lost contact with the inner life and with its symbolism as our culture has turned ever more literal and materialist" (Johnson, 1985, p. 153). In order to avoid suffering, we suffer by unconsciously striving and looking to others or for things to provide what we feel is missing. Our mistake is subscribing to these unconscious beliefs and patterns unconditionally. The next step, Johnson explains, is to begin withdrawing our projections and submitting to the initiation of our inner life:

> It means to take responsibility for discovering one's own totality, one's own unconscious possibilities. It means to question one's old patterns—to be willing to change. All of this involves conflict, self-questioning, uncovering duplicities one would rather not face. It is painful and difficult.
> But this suffering leads us to our totality. It elevates romance into a path to the divine world. (pp. 155-156)

Examining unconscious beliefs and patterns is not self-indulgent or navel-gazing but the necessary work required in striving for authenticity outside the confines of the ego. Perhaps romantic love is the only belief powerful enough to challenge the ego.

Even though the ego longs for security and control, it lacks the power to totally insulate us from the call of the soul; romantic love is one way that we are able to break through the ego's defenses.

> Romantic love, this curious blend of the numinous and the deadly, has become the strongest single force in our culture: It has become, by default, the vessel in which we struggle to contain everything that has been excluded from our ego empires, everything of the unconscious—all that is numinous, unfathomable, awesome, all that inspires worship in us. (Johnson, 1985, p. 185)

Romantic love has become the strongest force in our culture, surpassing religion in its

hold over the unconscious and all of its contents. Like Johnson, Hollis (1998), shows that

romantic love is the "greatest source of energy and the chief narcotic of our time," and it

is possible "that romantic love has replaced institutional religion as the greatest motive

power and influence in our lives" (pp. 42-43). We are in fact a grand experiment, Hollis

asserts, because just

> as no popular culture has built itself upon the idea of romance more than
> twentieth-century America has, so none has founded itself on more shifting
> ground. A necessary corollary, then, is that no culture has more set itself up for
> disappointment than the one which seeks its affirmation in projection, illusion and
> delusion. (p. 45)

The idea of romance has permeated our popular culture in every way, setting us up for

disappointment and disillusionment. It is also offers the most powerful addiction

available, that of the Magical Other:

> Nothing has greater power over our lives than the hint, the promise, the
> intimation, of the recovery of Eden through that Magical Other. No wonder, then,
> the dismay, the horror, of losing Eden again, when its precincts were glimpsed
> from afar. Who would want to live on, having lost it yet again? The repeated loss
> of Eden is the human condition, even as the hope for its recover is our chief
> fantasy. (p. 50)

Seeking the Magical Other describes the modern state of heartbreak, which explains why

we do our best to avoid it, even if doing so requires that we remain in stale relationships

that have outlasted their significance, and it explains why the loss of love is often an

overwhelming experience filled with despair. A very different understanding of

heartbreak is thus presented.

Antonio Canova's sculpture, *Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss*, is inspired by the

myth of Psyche and Eros, a myth that has enormous influence on our cultural psyche,

albeit mostly unconscious. Depth psychologists have called upon this myth as an

example of feminine initiation and the work of the soul (Neumann, 1956/1971; Johnson, 1989; Bolen, 1985; Paris, 1986; Nelson, 2012). Psyche (Soul) and Eros (Love) are united in the Greek pantheon "for the Greeks understood that love, being an archetype of the collective unconscious, is both eternal and universal in humankind" (Johnson, 1985, p. 189). Love has "its own character, its own traits, its own 'personality.' Like a god, love behaves as a 'person' in the unconscious, a separate being in the psyche" (p. 189). Love is distinct from the ego, it is "a force that acts from within, that enables my ego to look outside itself, to see my fellow humans as something to be valued and cherished, rather than used" (p. 189).

James Hillman (Hillman & Moore, 1989) utilizes the myth of Eros and Psyche as a representation of the process of psychoanalysis, and his view explores "the betrayals and impossibilities of love as valuable initiatory moments of the soul" (p. 266). In order for initiation to occur, our innocence and idealized view of things need to touch the shadows, and by doing so, our innocence and idealization are lost. The loss is necessary, as the shocks and disappointments of life would otherwise become too unbearable. He adds:

> Eros always leads to psyche. Even, and perhaps especially, impossible loves invite interiorizing. . . the soul tortured by love is in an ordeal in which specific initiations are carried out. The psyche's attachment to the love that is so difficult keeps it within the work of initiation. Its leaning toward death echoes the subtle relationship between eros and death, both enticing consciousness away from the logic of reason and pragmatics. (p. 266)

The work of love and soul are entwined. We need to do our inner work in order for the initiation to occur. Soul work is not easy and is often tormenting for those who choose to undergo its ordeal.

According to Hillman (Hillman & Moore, 1989), one of the main themes of the Psyche and Eros myth is the torment of the soul that happens in the relationship. He maintains, "before connection is possible, psyche goes through the dark night of the soul" (p. 269), as reflected in the tasks given to her by Aphrodite. Relating the story to ancient Isis mysteries, "the suffering in our tale has something to do with initiation, with changing the structure of consciousness" (p. 270). By engaging with the other, both Eros and Psyche are transformed. Eros is born from chaos; it is from the dark nights that he receives revivification. Psyche, by relating with him, goes through her dark night. They are not simple characters from a story. They are not only "archetypal components, but are two ends of every psychic process. They always imply and require each other. We cannot view anything psychologically without an involvement with it: we cannot be involved with anything without its entering our soul" (p. 273). Undergoing the initiation of the soul cannot be completed with logic and reasoning alone; it requires emotional engagement and transformation as well. Just as Rilke laments:

> Most people have (with the help of conventions) turned their solutions toward what is easy and toward the easiest side of the easy; but it is clear that we must trust in what is difficult; everything alive trusts in it. . . .
> It is also good to love: because love is difficult. For one human being to love another human being: that is perhaps the most difficult task that has been entrusted to us, the ultimate task, the final test and proof, the work for which all other work is merely preparation. . . . Loving does not at first mean merging, surrendering, and uniting with another person (for what would a union be of two people who are unclarified, unfinished, and still incoherent--?), it is a high inducement for the individual to ripen, to become something in himself, to become world, to become world in himself for the sake of another person; it is a great, demanding claim on him, something that chooses him and calls him to vast distances. (Rilke & Mitchell, 2001, pp. 67-70)

This is the task that Psyche chooses when she defies Eros, becomes active, and consciously gives herself over to love, thereby bringing sacrifice and loss into her life.

Her desire for consciousness is stronger than her desire for love; it is her most important choice. It is only at this moment that the members of the pair become equals, but at the same time, the moment requires them to separate. "Psyche's subsequent development is nothing other than an attempt to transcend, through suffering and struggle, the separation accomplished by her act" (Neumann, 1956/1971, p. 83). When gods mate with mortals, the human is usually left destroyed, but in Psyche's act, it changes her fate. For we find that "love as an expression of feminine wholeness is not possible in the dark, as a merely unconscious process; an authentic encounter with another involves consciousness, hence also the aspect of suffering and separation" (p. 85). Her act leads to "all the pain of individuation" (p. 85).

Neumann (1956/1971) insists that feminine individuation and spiritual development "are always effected through love" (p. 110). In the myth of Eros and Psyche, this happens through the four tasks Aphrodite bestows on Psyche—as the number four symbolizes wholeness. In the first three tasks, unconscious helpers aid Psyche, but the fourth task, she must complete herself. It is here "in her last and fourth task she enters into a direct struggle with the central feminine principle, with Aphrodite-Persephone" (p. 111). This is when Psyche makes her descent to the underworld. Psyche tests her feminine ego stability by showing resistance to pity, refusing the "danger of distraction through relatedness" (p.113), and keeping her larger goal in mind. She is thrust between Aphrodite, the goddess of the upperworld, and Persephone, the goddess of the underworld. Once again, Psyche does not do as she is told, and in consequence, she falls into a deep slumber; it falls upon Eros to awaken and rescue her from the underworld. This is the moment Canova captures in his sculpture—the moment Eros

awakens Psyche. Psyche's admission into Olympus is significant because it "has been

done not by a masculine deified hero, but by a loving soul" (p. 137). She is different

from every other goddess, and her ascension had a profound effect on the Western

psyche:

> For two millenniums the mystery phenomenon of love has occupied the center of
> psychic development and of culture, art, and religion. The mysticism of the
> medieval nuns, the courtly love of the troubadours, Dante's love for Beatrice,
> Faust's Eternal Feminine—all reflect this never-resting mystery—like
> development of the psyche in woman and man. It has brought both good and evil,
> but in any event it has been an essential ferment of the psychic and spiritual life of
> the West down to the present day. (Neumann, 1956/1971, pp. 139-140)

No mortal is immune to this preoccupation with psyche to which we have now devoted a

field of study.

In his book, *The Eden Project: In Search of the Magical Other,* Hollis (1998)

explores the role of projection in our relationships; the ideas we put upon others, in

relationships or in therapy, are parts of our own psychology, which remain unconscious.

The cultural obsession with the Magical Other is a reflection and an undesired

consequence of our projections. Not knowing ourselves has led us to crave mirroring in

other people, as we once looked to our parents in our early childhood. "Virtually all

popular culture is fueled by this idea and its fallout—the search for the Magical Other,

finding him or her, the dismaying discovery of the Other's humanness, and the renewed

search" (p. 37). This constant search is repetitive and unconscious, as

> who in their right mind would seek out someone and say, 'I want you to repeat
> my childhood wounding. I will love you because you are so familiar.' But we do
> this all the time. It is truly frightening to realize how little one is conscious in the
> formation of intimate relationship, how powerful is our programmed desire for
> what we have known. What is known is what is sought, even if what is known is
> wounding. (p. 38)

Our histories have a powerful effect on our choices and our consciousness, repeating

patterns we do not realize are being enacted. This is important, especially in intimate

relationships; when the other catches our attention, the reasons for the attraction are often

unconscious. When we are not aware, what we want may be harmful to us, and Hollis

warns, "we should be wary of getting what we want" (p. 42). Requiring us to take

responsibility for our own individuation, the best we can try for is not making the other

responsible for our own unconscious material. This is easy to say, but it is the most

difficult of tasks, because the pull towards the familiar is so strong.

The entanglement between love and work of the soul continues. Hollis (1998)

defines the concept of the soul as "that energy which wants something of us, which

impels us to live up to who we potentially are. . . Relationship is sacred as an arena for

the enlargement of the soul" (p. 61). By opening ourselves to care for another person, we

may suffer, but the suffering often results in transformation. We can say relationships are

not about happiness, but about transformation, for

> transformation is about enlargement, and enlargement generally comes only from
> suffering. Stop and reflect on growth experiences. Invariably they arise out of
> conflict and loss, for consciousness only comes from the tension of opposites.
> Discovering the otherness of the Other can lead to disinterested love, the energy
> which incarnates through caring for the other as Other, valuing and celebrating
> their otherness. (p. 85)

Upon reflection, we see that growth often comes from periods of conflict and loss.

Removing projections from our love relationships allows us to see and value our partners,

as they are, not for what we want or need them to be. Not only is this freeing for them,

but also it frees us to do our own spiritual work.

Hollis (1998) advocates taking responsibility for our own spirituality and for our

relationship to soul. He mentions three modalities, which are *resonance*, *depth*, and

numinosity, to help carry this approach forward. Questions about where we find resonance—in affect, physical sensation, dream, or images that speak to us—tell us where soul is present. Paying attention to what pulls us into the depths is necessary because "whatever pulls us deeper into life, even painfully so, opens us to the great life that courses beneath history and below the surface of everyday appearance" (p. 125). Describing numinosity, Hollis explains that "when Mystery winks at us, we realize that soul is not only in us, but also in the outer world. That glimmer is the autonomy of soul in world which seeks to connect with us" (p. 126). Soul is available to lift us up to our potential, but it requires us to find our own path, not by looking to others, but by looking within.

In his book, *Eros and Pathos: Shades of Love and Suffering*, Aldo Carotenuto (1989) examines his experience with love and suffering through his many years of analytic practice. He states, "love reveals us to ourselves. . . we can say a person knows his or her true nature only through falling in love" (p. 9.) The parts of us that are revealed are not only affection and tenderness but negative aspects as well; again what is referred to as the shadow. Referring to the shadow as the underside of love, Carotenuto gives the image of "a tangled web that weaves together such strategic threads as deceit, betrayal and jealousy. . . . The conflict between love and hate is always present in passionate relationships even if it remains unconscious. . . wherever emotion is present so is its opposite" (p. 10). This needs to be emphasized because the cultural relationship to shadow in the West desperately needs attention, given that the idea has been propagated that giving attention to something gives it voice, gives it power over us. So the conventional attitude de-emphasizes the negative and focuses exclusively on the positive.

Depth psychologists tend to disagree and suggest the opposite. Repressing something actually gives these aspects unconscious power over us, and denying that something is present does not affect its existence. Acknowledging and becoming acquainted with our inner depths actually helps to prevent us from over identifying with our darkness.

Because the psychic field activated by love is so rich and complex, Carotenuto (1989) says that loving is an authentic psychological task,

> the most demanding there is, just because it activates in us new ways of knowing ourselves. The moment love enters the picture, you must learn to deal with an entirely new world. . . . This change, which seems to be given to me by the other, has made a new person of me, and now my very way of seeing this experience, of living it, has been transformed. (p. 17)

In other words, love is an initiation process, an opportunity for psychic transformation. In any initiation process there is an amount of fear involved, in fact Carotenuto suggests that love and fear are so entwined that if there is an absence of fear, it may be a sign that we are not really in love. Love also leads to a large amount of our suffering, "only those we love can make us suffer with the same intensity of love. . . the pain of love deeply involves the whole person, like an open wound" (p. 59). Only those we love can hurt us, so it is understandable to experience fear in relationship; in any initiatory process, fear is present.

Carotenuto (1989) describes the encounters of love as an un-ending initiation— unlike puberty rites where one enters one way and emerges transformed. Once begun, love constantly transforms, "as we grow psychologically, we are constantly changing, so it can happen that we lose the beloved because we have reached the point where he or she no longer fills our sense of emptiness" (p. 59). This leads us to question our conventional view that measures the value of a relationship by its length; just because a couple remains

together does not necessarily mean it is a successful relationship. As we mature, we are

given the choice to conform to external models or to pursue our personal truth. If we

choose the latter, then frequent encounters with the shadow are guaranteed:

> The collective path has already been leveled by others, and thus you always know where you are going. The individual path, on the other hand, has numerous signposts but no indication of the "right" direction. When we accept the risk of choosing between contradictory solutions, we feel the life of the soul. To be psychologically vital we must always fluctuate between poles. Every choice we make implies the sacrifice of other possibilities, and there is no one who can tell us if the choice is right or wrong. (pp. 121-122)

The psychological act of loving is constantly changing. Choosing a path of personal truth

over conformity transcends right or wrong, good or bad; it means finding resonance,

depth, and the numinous in the world and following where soul leads.

The underside of relationship, the *pathos*, is where we encounter heartbreak. A

frequent theme found in heartbreak is betrayal, and James Hillman (Hillman & Moore,

1989) claims that we can only be betrayed in the relationships in those with whom we are

the closest and in whom we trust the most. He argues that betrayal is inevitable and is to

be expected in order for a relationship to advance:

> There will be a crisis, a break characterized by betrayal. . .
> For we must be clear that to live or love only where one can trust, where there is security and containment, where one cannot be hurt or let down, where what is pledged in words is forever binding, means really to be out of harm's way and so to be out of real life. (p. 278)

Conventional wisdom has us believe that betrayal is a negative experience that we should

only strive to avoid. Hillman disputes this assumption and asserts that on the contrary

striving for security and containment is not truly living.

Additionally, Carotenuto (1989) shows that our experiences are not just facts but

opportunities to experience the love-hate dichotomy that is a constant presence in our

intimate relationships, and the act of betrayal gives us the opportunity to experience them psychologically (pp. 81-82). Betrayal is a loss, and "what is lost is innocence, trust and simple relationship" (Hollis, 1996, p. 47). Although difficult, once our beliefs are shaken "in such an altered state, considerable growth is possible. We can learn from our wounds, but if we do not, we will repeat them in another forum or identify ourselves with them" (p. 49). This is difficult work for anyone to undergo, let alone someone who is young.

Hollis (1996) asserts that "trust and betrayal are necessary opposites. If one has been betrayed and who has not—how difficult it is then to trust" (p. 48). Investing in a relationship assumes the possibility for betrayal. For,

> if we do not trust, then we are not invested at the depth that makes intimacy possible. If we do not invest at this risk-laden depth, then genuine intimacy is precluded. The paradox of the trust/betrayal dyad, then, is that each is presupposed by the other. Without trust, no depth; without depth, no true betrayal. (p. 48)

When we invest ourselves so intimately, betrayal is not only a possibility but also an inevitable risk. Many people who have experienced betrayal choose to seek revenge or generalize the experience onto future relationships and experiences; both approaches keep us stuck in the past and inhibit growth. But it does not have to be this way, for betrayal can "sting us toward individuation. . . . In every case, if we do not remain behind, stuck in recriminations, we are enlarged, more complex, more conscious" (p. 50). There is an alternative path.

Rejection is a close relative to betrayal. Declaring love and making one vulnerable to another is a brave and mature act, but it also can be terrifying. Carotenuto

says, "hell and heaven meet at this time as at no other" (1989, p. 56). He argues that

although it is difficult, and we may not receive what we desire,

> I would answer that it is always important to take the risk, because even if our love is not returned, aspects of ourselves that were hitherto unknown become visible. When things go well and we get as good as we give, a type of harmony is created that cover up the wrong notes in our personality. When, however, we meet with rejection, we are repaid with psychological knowledge, which, however painful, can be especially rewarding. We can say, 'I was capable of displaying my vulnerability, of making my request; I was able to give life and breath to those psychological entreaties that the beloved evoked in me and challenged me to express.' (p. 56)

In other words, asking for love is a great risk, but it is a risk that offers rewards. For if

our feelings are returned, we will have the opportunity to learn more about ourselves in

the relationship, or we will gain psychological knowledge from having an experience of

declaring our vulnerability.

We can only experience grief or loss if what we lost was valuable in our lives.

Our task is then "to discern the value we have been granted and to hold it even when we

cannot hold to what concretely gave rise to it " (Hollis, 1996, p. 44). For even if someone

is no longer in our lives, something soulful remains. Grieving is difficult in Western

culture because it requires introspection and solitude, qualities not held in high esteem.

Many times we try to outrun our grief or deny the effect our loss has had, which is not

only dishonest, but it does not spare us any pain. Finding meaning in grief, while being

within grief itself, requires much of a person and is difficult to achieve.

Life is unpredictable, but we know we will experience pain at some point, and

nothing we do can help us escape this fact. What is always available during these times

is the possibility of consciousness:

> What is constant amid inconstancy is the summons to individuation. We are neither our point of origin nor our goal; the former is long gone, the latter forever

recedes as we move forwards. We are the journey itself. Loss, grief and betrayal are not just dismal places we must unwillingly visit, they are integral to the maturation of consciousness. They are as much a part of the journey as the places where we feel respite and would tarry. The great rhythm of gain and loss is outside of our control; what remains within our control is the attitude of willingness to find in even the bitterest losses what remains to be lived. (Hollis, 1996, p. 51)

It can be tempting to cling to the fantasy of control, but in the end we are going to suffer and experience pain no matter what. In my work, these times are often seen or treated as happenings we would like to quickly forget and move on from. I join those who speak up for the value of these periods and declare that there is value in these in-between places— the liminal space when we are not where we began nor where we want to be, a time full of both loss and potential.

Chapter 4
Part 1 of Results

The results presented here are the outcome from lengthy interviews I had with participants regarding their first experience of heartbreak. I opened each interview with the question, "can you tell me in as much detail as you can about your first experience of heartbreak?" I let the interview proceed according to their story, but I wanted to pay particular attention to the dynamic of their relationship, how the relationship ended, and their experience of this loss. In most cases, the first interview was close to two hours and in one case, over three. A second, shorter interview was necessary with all participants except two. I include parts of each interview in the analysis because each story is best told in the participant's words. The excerpts are their own words; however I found some edits of filler speech necessary in order to make the reader's experience easier. This chapter presents the first interviews for Jennifer, Yesenia, and Christine.

Interview #1: Jennifer

Jennifer was in her mid-20s, pursuing her degree while also working full-time. The oldest of three children, her parents emigrated from Southeast Asia when they were children. A common assumption about heartbreak is that it occurs when the love is lost. Jennifer's story illustrates how being in a relationship can be heartbreaking. When she was 18 years old she met and began dating her boss a few weeks after starting a new job. Although they initially kept their relationship secret from their coworkers, they eventually told others of their involvement. She assumed that he was close to her age, but a few months in, she discovered he was 28 years old. Initially the age difference seemed exciting, and she felt rebellious dating her boss. Although she had some

experience dating in high school, this was her first love, "I never felt like this, this way about anyone my whole entire life." As many others before, she assumed the relationship would last forever and he was the person she would be with for the rest of her life.

Pathos in relationship: Power.

Quickly the imbalance of power began showing up in the relationship. Given his age, coupled with his position as her superior, she put him on a pedestal and felt that she was not in a position to question any of his actions. He took advantage of this power over her, and when she began to feel uncomfortable about his activities, she did not feel it was her place to question him:

> J: He knew that I thought he was God, so when he would say he was going out, I said ok—no questions asked, I never questioned what he did because, when we started dating I thought who am I to tell him he can't go out, I'm not going to tell him he can't see his friends or go to a bar, he's 28.

The imbalance of power in the relationship began to creep into all aspects of the relationship. She began feeling lost, almost as if she did not recognize herself anymore.

Disavowal of self.

Prior to her relationship with Brian she describes herself as being tough, mean, and outspoken. When she began showing him her more vulnerable parts of herself, she felt him pull away, and she internalized the distance as a rejection:

> J: When I was younger I was really tough and I was mean and I was outspoken and I never let anyone step over me. No one would ever think to cross me, in any kind of negative way. He had seen that side of me but then when we became more serious, I cried in front of him and I said things like I would die without you and if you ever cheated on me I would die, I would commit suicide. Just stupid things like that, saying if you ever did something to me I would just die without you. I felt he took advantage of me and that he knew that no matter what he did, no matter what he said to me, that I will still be in his corner no matter what.

She found herself sobbing, telling him she would die without him and if he cheated on her, she would commit suicide. Knowing his power over her, she felt he took advantage of her, knowing that no matter what he did or said, she would stay committed. After taking the risk of being vulnerable and feeling these parts rejected, she kept these parts of herself out of the relationship for fear of losing him.

Perfect girl.

It is common for girls to display a strong sense of self. Upon falling in love for the first time, many shift away from this position, especially if they feel exposing certain aspects of themselves risks ending the relationship. The loss of self is often painful and in Jennifer's case, she was particularly affected by the pursuit of his expectations for the perfect girl, which included an emphasis on appearance and material possessions:

> J: In high school I was skinny and I put make-up on sometimes, but when I was with Brian I felt I always had to maintain a certain thing that I felt that naturally I was not; I always had to be skinny, I always had to wear the nicest clothes, I had to either be better or up to par with what he was or what his standards were. I also felt I had to agree to everything he wanted, he would say something like, oh gosh that car's ugly how can anyone drive that, I would agree. Or if there's something on TV that he didn't like I could never say, oh my god I actually really like that, I want to watch it, just things like that, I always had to agree with him or be on the same path. He never said I had to be perfect all the time, but I felt like it was expected and when I wasn't dressed up, he would look at me different and I would change.

Brian was interested more with how she could be a reflection of him rather than knowing her as a person, and with his age and experience, she believed he knew better and consented to her treatment as an object. The old Jennifer was comfortable attending school in pajamas or without make-up, something that would never happen while in her relationship with Brian. Although this was foreign to her and she felt his standards were unnatural, she did her best to maintain them. Believing this was what growing up looked

like, she followed his lead. His expectations were mostly unspoken. If she wore an outfit

he did not like or chose not to wear make-up, he would give her a look. After seeing his

expression change, she would fix whatever met his disapproval. Not only did all this

attention to appearance feel unnatural to her way of being, financially it was difficult, and

almost impossible for her to maintain the lifestyle. When she began voicing her concerns

about the state of the relationship, it surprised him and he deflected responsibility, instead

accusing her of being immature. Once she became more of a real person and less of an

admiring object, the relationship no longer worked. Her pursuit of being the "perfect

girl" is something to which many can relate. Per her own admission, Jennifer was far

from the cultural definition of the perfect girl before the relationship, yet in the

relationship, she found herself in its grip.

Pathos: Manipulation and dismissiveness.

The behavior extended beyond the superficial. She felt she had to agree with his

opinions, and there was no space for disagreement, because it was his territory, "his

place." The fact that he was literally her boss cannot be underestimated. He played the

role by being emotionally manipulative and overpowering her will. This was the

dynamic from the beginning and any deviation was not tolerated. Despite actively

participating, it felt counterintuitive for her to remain submissive and disempowered. We

can only suppress our true selves for so long. Although she had a strong voice with

peers, her experience as a child was different. Her father was in the military and did not

tolerate answers such as "I'm not sure" or "I don't know." If asked a question or told to

do something, she was expected to give a direct response, and saying no too often had

consequences. She thinks this may be part of the reason why she was so pliable in the

relationship. She felt she had to keep silent in order to maintain the peace, and when she began finding her voice again, conflict began.

Suspicion: The crazy detective.

Jennifer's shadow began surfacing after a year with Brian. With the age difference, he would often go places she was not allowed, and it began to bother her that there was a whole part of his life to which she did not have access:

> J: I started snooping through his emails and read his instant messages and text messages and saw that he was talking to other girls. For example, if he wasn't online, some girl would say well where were you last night, he would say, oh I was out with my friends. But that night, he was with me, but he would never say that he had a girlfriend. After that if someone were to be crazy, I would consider myself crazy. I would look everyday, I would drive to his apartment and just park outside and see if anyone came over and at this time. We were still together, it wasn't as if we broke up and got back together—we were always together.

> E: I don't mean to stop you but was there something that triggered you, did something change in his behavior or what made you—

> J: I think what really made me think about looking at his emails, was that I wasn't 21. Obviously he was almost 10 years older than me. He went out late at night and he was at bars and clubs, or whatever he was doing after hours, and I couldn't go to clubs and things like that. So when, I would go home for the night and he would go out, he wouldn't answer his phone or he wouldn't text me and that made me think. If he's going out and seeing these people and I don't know who he's seeing, he could be with another girl. Since I can't go out, I don't know what time he's coming home, I don't know if he's at the apartment now or if he's ignoring me. So, I thought to myself, oh I need to do some research, I need to find out what he's doing or who he's hanging out with. That is what initially started it and after that, I just couldn't stop. I literally did my research. I found out how to find out what his password was or I would look over his shoulder to see what his password on his phone was. I felt like a crazy detective because nothing stopped me from finding out what he was doing. If it was me following him or if it was me having my friend follow him—I felt like a huge part of him being more distant was because I started acting different as well.

She began snooping, what she describes as "crazy behavior." Becoming the "crazy detective," she began following him and reading his personal communications. She

found out that he was contacting other women without mentioning their relationship to these other people. After failing one time to cover up her spying, he found out, and a confrontation ensued. She became more vocal about her concerns and raised questions about his behavior, to which he responded with denial. What she defined as crazy behavior was in fact her once again becoming a whole person. No longer able to repress the parts of self that were either deemed undesirable or a threat to the security of the relationship, no longer able to be contained, her intuition signaled that something was amiss and could no longer be ignored. When the conflict began, she started realizing the truth: the relationship was not beneficial to her well-being.

Everything culminated when they traveled out of state for his friend's wedding, where she was to meet his parents for the first time. Things were going well until the day before the wedding. He attended the rehearsal and left her stranded at a spa appointment with no way to contact him. There was an explosive confrontation, in which everything that had been unspoken erupted. She did not trust him, and although he continued to deny that he was unfaithful, she vocalized all the doubts and fears about his secretive behavior. Chaos ensued and conflict escalated when he continuously dismissed her feelings, blamed her, and eschewed responsibility. After waiting for an apology or some form of acknowledgement that never came, she returned home early and alone.

The descent.

Immediately after she left, she had regrets for speaking out, most likely because she knew the relationship was forever changed:

> J: All I could think about was, oh my god if I just shut my mouth that day after the spa, then this wouldn't have happened. He sent me a text later and I told him I was on my way home. He seemed to not understand why I left and seemed more

concerned about needing a ride home from the airport than he did about me. When I get home I was so upset because I was confused and he kept telling me it was my fault, so I was blaming myself, wishing I could take back everything I had done wrong.

Often when we make a move in a relationship that may be beneficial to us individually but not the relationship, we still want to avoid the loss that ensues. This is the turning point in the relationship. Perhaps it could have been salvaged if she had backed away from her allegations and admitted wrongdoing, ignoring all of her own complaints and concerns. Even though a big part of her wanted this, she could not return to the perfect girl: the girl that ignored her feelings about his probable unfaithfulness, the girl content to take whatever he was willing to give.

Jennifer's story is a good representation of the amount of grief experienced during the loss of a relationship. Even though the relationship was not going well, she was not ready to let go. She hoped for reconciliation. A couple days after returning home, Brian went to her house and returned her stuff, and with that act, she realized that their relationship was over:

> J: He calls the next day to tell me that we are not working and we got into all of the same stuff from the past again. He just never took responsibility for any of his part. It ended with him saying we weren't working out and he wanted to break up and I lost my mind. I think I physically blocked it out of my memory, but I don't remember what happened after that. I don't remember but it must have been my brother who called my best friend and told her I was crying in my room and that he could hear me breaking things. I barely remember what happened. I vaguely have a recollection of waking up and I'm just crying on the floor with my friend and my brother in my room. I had thrown my cell phone against the wall, my friend stays with me all night because I kept saying, that I'm going to kill myself. I told him that if he broke up with me I would kill myself, I'm just going to die and I felt like I was going to do it. I felt if I hung myself I wouldn't even care about how my parents would feel, I don't care about leaving my brother behind, I didn't care because I wanted it to be his fault**;** why I killed myself. [It] is because you did that to me. That night passed and I didn't talk to him. He comes over the next day and when he opens his car door to bring out a box with my stuff in it, I knew he was for real. I asked him if this is what he really wanted, because there

was no going back. I was hoping he would apologize and want to make up. I told him this isn't what I want and I don't want to end it and he said for now this is what I want and we didn't talk for 3 months.

E: How was it at work, did you still work together?

J: After we broke up, I never went back, I didn't want to show my face. I am embarrassed over everything that had happened.

E: So how were those 3 months for you?

J: I think I turned into a completely different person, I never went out, I stopped going to school, I failed my classes, I never opened a computer, I never did anything.

E: What were you doing?

J: From what I remember, I did nothing. I stayed in my room for 3 months. I didn't do anything. I stopped talking to my friends, because I didn't talk to anybody, I had lost friends.   My friends were just like, she must have just fallen off the face of the earth because I didn't have a cell phone because it was broken. I barely opened my computer, I never went out of my room. I think I lost 30 pounds, I barely went to the bathroom because I wasn't eating; I had a water bottle in my room. I didn't watch TV. I felt like I was under this depression, and I felt like I've never been depressed. I lost my grandma who I was really close to and then six months later I had a brother die and I've never been that depressed. Because of him I feel like he had surpassed my grandma and brother in terms of being sad.

Embarrassed to return to work, she never went back. Jennifer stopped attending classes and descended into isolation in her room for 3 months, describing the moment as turning into a completely different person. Having experienced loss and grief before, after the loss of her grandmother a couple of years earlier and the death of her younger brother soon after, this loss felt even worse. She felt guilty that her feelings of loss from the relationship surpassed the importance of her family members.

Qualifying the loss from a love relationship is common: it is hardest the first time, harder the longer you have been with someone, and easier when it is expected; but I argue that such a loss is never easy, and each loss feels like the first. Jennifer's example

shows how lonely loss feels. We are no longer the same person we were before entering the relationship; it changes us and we are forever transformed. Loss helps break the fantasy that someone else will ever be able to complete us, in spite of Disney and Hollywood trying to convince us otherwise. Left alone, as a different person, we feel like a failure, or we feel as if we were not enough for that person. Often we long for escape from the pain. Jennifer mentioned suicide, feeling so inadequate that the separation was unbearable. These feelings explain why Jennifer's loss of her love relationship stung more than the loss of her family members: they did not leave her because she was inadequate.

At the time of her isolation, she lived with her parents and her brother. Every morning they knocked to make sure she was ok. She cut off all communication: she had no phone or television, and she didn't open her computer. She ate little and rarely showered—with the shades drawn, she was alone in a dark room. Losing track of days, she had little recollection of what occurred beyond crying and sleeping. When she began coming back to life, she started emerging from her room late at night; her mother would hear her wake up, get up herself, and make food or talk to her. It gradually became easier, she started venturing out more, and when she opened her computer, he contacted her.

During the time of her seclusion, she began blogging about her experience of the break-up. Blogging allowed her to make new connections safely before she was ready to leave her room. It was helpful for her to learn that others had similar experiences:

> J: I also started online blogging, which is how I made new friends, people I'm still close with to this day. I wrote about all the things that happened and what I was going through. I wasn't ready to leave my room yet and come into contact with people yet, but it helped to know that others had gone through the same thing

as I was. I think it really helped me open up a lot more in terms of talking to others and getting out of my room. I started to put make-up again, I showered, and I was eating. I'm still friends with a lot of them today, having them know me at that time and having them know me now, it's nice for them to see how I am a completely different person.

This community not only helped her during the break-up, but it has helped her continue to stay connected to the person she wants to be, even though she is now in a new relationship. They witnessed her transition from "that depressing girl" to the woman she is now.

The break-up and subsequent seclusion did not officially end their involvement. After he contacted her again, she became curious about his behavior during the time of her isolation. She went into his accounts and saw that he was contacting other women. Despite his engagement in the same behavior that upset her in the first place, she agreed to meet with him. When they finally spoke again, he declared his love for her and how he regretted the way things had ended between them:

> J: Everything was fine but in the back of my mind I know he's still doing the same stuff and he's talking to other girls already. He's feeding me all these lines like I really care about you and I wish things didn't end that way, but I knew that if he cared he wouldn't be with other girls already. Even though I knew this, I decided to shut my mouth and that everything was fine as long as we're back together. We never said we were back together, it was just more hooking up, but in my mind I'm thinking, if we're just going to sleep together, to me that's better than nothing, even though all of my friends are saying he's using you.

No longer being an official couple went on for the next year and a half. Both dated other people while continuing contact, a situation that prevented her from moving forward. She had a difficult time discussing this particular period of the relationship, repeatedly using the words "disgusted" and "embarrassed" to describe her participation:

> J: I felt like I was doing the right thing, because I think still in the back of my mind, I wanted to be with him. But looking back at it, I just looked like I would never tell this to my friends, but I'm embarrassed. I'm embarrassed because of all the things he did to me, of all the things I've told my friends. I'm that girl that just keeps going back to some guy who is treating her like crap. . . . I was that girl

who wants to get stepped on, who wants to get used. . . it was as if I don't even know who this person was, it's something that I never experienced before and I don't want to experience again.

It is common for those that work with young women to hear of the mysterious "that girl." The archetype of That Girl has infiltrated our culture, and as I understand it, it expresses a woman's fear of being labeled too needy or demanding. By being That Girl, Jennifer allowed herself to be used and treated unfairly; she put the relationship above her own needs for a time. Being That Girl is shameful and embarrassing, to be kept in the shadows, and something to be avoided. There is a symbiotic relationship between Perfect Girl and That Girl. The Perfect Girl prescribes how one should behave, whereas That Girl describes what happens if you do not obey: you will be labeled unlovable and find yourself alone.

Throughout their reunification, she seemed aware that nothing had really changed in the relationship since their break-up. He had the power and did what he wanted. She still felt a need to maintain perfection, but now the need was greater because the relationship was not exclusive. There were other women. She began obsessing over her appearance; she did everything possible to change her look short of plastic surgery. She began seeing other people and went out as a way to rebel against the relationship, feeling the need to break the toxic bond but unsure of how to do so. She felt stuck, and after realizing that she was waiting for him to change, she finally began seeing that change was up to her:

> J: I think I knew that it was not going to work out; that he still thinks he has this power over me and I didn't want him to have that power over me anymore. It was more of me wanting to meet someone else, to let go. I think after a year and a half of doing the same stuff I got to the point that it's me that needs to change, he's not going to change. I realized he's not doing anything for me, he was never

bad to me, but he wasn't good to me either. I just felt I was at his disposal, when he needed someone I was there. I felt like a rag doll just being thrown around. I feel embarrassed talking about it, it's not easy to talk about, especially when it comes to the fact that I kept going back.

He finally cut contact with her after hearing that she met someone else that she could love as much as she loved him. She made it clear that he was the most important person in her life, but seeing that he might be replaced, the relationship no longer held any interest for him.

Emerging: Just me.

The fact she went back to him after the break-up was the hardest for her to disclose in our interview and she was conflicted about it as it was happening, which led her to keep it a secret from everyone except for one or two friends. Once she broke free, she felt she was closer to the girl she was in high school. She reclaimed her inner "bad kid," the one who had agency and confidence. She no longer felt as if she was a rag doll or a puppy following its owner; she felt powerful again. Although losing her sense of self was painful, she felt authentic again and even grateful for the experience, because, she explained, "I think that no one ever realizes who they are until they are not themselves."

Growing up, she had an idealized perception of relationships. Her parents never fought in front of her, and she did not know about divorce until middle school, when her friends' parents separated. Love and heartbreak were not what she expected:

> J: I didn't think you would fall so fast and would get hurt as much as I did, because this hurt in my bones, when we fought it hurt. You know when you see those depression commercials that say can you not get out of bed, does it feel like it's raining everyday? I'm saying oh my gosh, that is me or that was me. I couldn't get out of bed, I didn't want the lights on or any noise and I love music, I

didn't want to hear anything. I didn't think it would hurt so much and that I would fall so fast because you always hear advice about waiting six months before you sleep with someone or a year before you say I love you. I felt like we didn't fit the mold when it came to that stereotype, it all happened so fast. In the beginning things were happening fast and I kept thinking about the time-line and if it was right. I thought even though it was early meant I was really important to him. Then when we started to fight, I didn't know if this was right either, because I never saw my parents fight. . . . Maybe the movies I watched were all perfect movies or something but overall I just didn't think that love would hurt so much.

When she was going through the pain and suffering of heartbreak she felt apathetic, no longer interested in any of the things that used to bring her joy. She also felt that navigating oneself in the relationship was a challenge, it was hard to remain objective or to notice when things were going too quickly. When asked if she would do something different or if she had any regrets, she replied, "I don't know what I would do different, because I think if I did something different than I think I would be hurting a lot more now."

Sometimes she regretted dating him, but she believed she learned a lot about herself, knowing now what she can handle, that she can survive a significant loss, and that she is less willing to sacrifice herself for a relationship:

J: I know what I can handle. I was 18 and yeah I went crazy but now that I'm 24, I know how to react and I know how to deal with a situation better than throwing things, and yelling, or breaking things. I still get mad, I raise my voice, I get annoyed, those things are normal, but now I know that it's not about saying I'm going to take my own life. All of that is in the past and not that I hate reflecting back but now I don't want to dwell on it and have it affect my relationships in the future. Sometimes I think he made me all jaded, but I have a thicker skin now.

Relationships change us. Jennifer acknowledges that even though she is in a new and better relationship, she still felt the effects of her heartbreak. Before her heartbreak, she felt she had a strong sense of self, and afterwards, much of what she believed in was

called into question. Previously the Tough Girl, she became the Perfect Girl, followed by Crazy Detective and then That Girl, ending with just me.

The imbalance of power in the relationship allowed Jennifer to discover parts of her personality she did not like. In order to please Brian, she became the Perfect Girl, which led her to disavow parts of self that she knew he would disapprove of. These dark parts of self, her shadow, remained the only avenue for her intuition to break through. The process was not immediate, and she stayed entangled in the relationship for a while. Once she was able to speak from her true self, she found her voice again. One of the most moving parts of the story was her family's response to her post break-up behavior. For 3 months she isolated herself. She stopped working and going to school. Although our culture judges these things as overly indulgent or unproductive, her family responded by letting her be, giving her time and space. And because of this, she slowly emerged when she was ready.

Interview #2: Yesenia

Yesenia was in her early 20s and close to finishing her bachelor's degree. Her parents, fearful of an unstable government and wanting more opportunities for their daughter, emigrated from South America when she was 2 years old. She was the only child, and her parents divorced when she was 11 years old. She had not visited her extended family nor returned to her home country since emigrating. Yesenia's first love occurred her freshman year of high school after mutual friends introduced her to Carlos. Their relationship began as a friendship, and they gradually got to know each other through conversations both in person and online. When he asked her to be his date for the winter dance, she accepted and they became a couple shortly thereafter.

With no prior relationship experience, she found herself enjoying the male attention and soon grew quickly attached. She remembers this time as one of her happiest; they were getting to know each other and bonding over their shared experience of difficulty with their fathers. Even though the relationship lasted only for a few months, it felt much longer. After a disagreement, she felt him begin pulling away. When she finally decided to reach out to him, he told her he wanted to end the relationship. Her first instinct was asking if he was interested in someone else, to which he replied yes. Shocked and despondent, she described the feeling as unlike anything she had experienced before:

> Y: I just remember hanging up the phone and I lost it and cried. I was at a friend's house and then my mom picked me up and she consoled me, but I just remember I didn't go to sleep that night. I'd never felt like that before and being 14, it's not like I'd been through a lot anyway, but it was my own heartache rather than somebody else's.

Descent/break-up.

Yesenia looked up to another couple in her friend group who had been together longer than her relationship with Carlos, and to everyone's surprise, they ended their relationship the same day. Once she found out, she wondered if this girl was the same one that Carlos was interested in. Her suspicions were confirmed when neither of them showed up for lunch the next day and although it took them a while to officially announce their relationship, intuitively she knew. Adding to the difficulty, her high school divided each grade into smaller learning communities, called houses, so that students had the same teachers for their core classes. Both Carlos and his new love interest were in her house, providing many opportunities for her to be reminded of her loss.

After the break-up, she felt as if she was a "zombie." Nights of crying and losing

sleep left her exhausted. This time was the most difficult for her. Missing his friendship

and their shared connection, the depth of her sadness scared her, and in her heartbreak,

she experienced emotions not previously felt:

> Y: For me it was just hard because I think I got really attached, because I had this male figure that's giving me attention and love and being really nice and sweet, something I'm not used to and they just left, they just walked away. That's what my dad did, he just walked away, he was still there financially, but it was just hard. That first night I didn't sleep and going to school the next day I was just a zombie, my friends were like what's wrong with you. Really that's the only time, I always feel like I'm cursed because I haven't met anybody else after that, I'm so used to being by myself, I'm used to being independent. Also I think that's kind of my problem, I'm so used to being by myself that I don't know how to let someone in. So, but I'm aware and it's something that I'm working on. . . .
>
> At the time, when all that stuff happened, because we didn't talk for a year because it was too hard for me and I just couldn't deal. We're friends but you're with my friend, I just couldn't come to terms with that. I really didn't want to talk to him and I just think I needed that time to get it together and it was good because all of this happened toward the end of the year and then summer it was like, oh I don't have to see you. And it was hard, because he was always a good person to talk to and we would always have these really long conversations about anything and everything and so it was something I missed. Seeing him around or seeing her wear his jacket and I used to wear that jacket. It was very awkward and frustrating. . . .
>
> It was scary, I was just really sad and I was in a really deep deep funk. It didn't seem like I was but I was; I was crying every day. I would see something that would remind me of him and I would cry and I didn't understand it because at the time I didn't realize that this is what heartbreak is. But it was crazy, I know it's something that I have to go through again, in order for me to find the man of my dreams or whatever I have to go through heartache. I feel like I've just been alone for so long that I'm just like afraid of the risk and taking the fall—
>
> E: Because it was so hard the first time?
>
> Y: Yeah, I wouldn't say it traumatized me but it definitely changed me, I can say that.
>
> E: Can you tell me how it changed you?
>
> Y: Because I just felt like it crushed who I was. When it happened before it happened I was just happy and didn't have a care in the world. Then I met him and we got together and I was extra happy and I was at my peak. I experienced

the fall and then hitting rock bottom and just being almost depressed. Because I just didn't know what to do with myself because I was so upset and crying and not happy, which I wasn't used to. Even through everything, even when my parents divorced and my grandma died and stuff like that, I was always happy for the most part and I think it was because it wasn't my heartbreak. Losing my grandma was sad but I didn't know her as much, it was different, this was something that hit me really close to home. So it was just like, how do I deal; especially after a few months I thought it was going to go away but it didn't go away. So then I felt like I was losing it, how do I get myself back together and I guess that's when summer came a long and I really was just by myself.

I sensed a lot of unexpressed pain and sadness from her childhood, and by having her heart broken, it was the first time that these emotions were allowed to break through. The path of love has its own course, and it often ends before we are ready. During heartbreak, ego and its craving for security lose control. As with death, we learn that we cannot evade abandonment or heartbreak. It is a valuable discovery to learn that not only our joys, but our losses as well, make us who we are. Her feelings of desperation stirred up the creative process and allowed her to discover her true self and to encounter soul. Yet it is hard to find these periods of crisis meaningful while undergoing such a painful process.

At first she directed her anger solely at Carlos; however, as time went on, she extended responsibility to both of them equally. It surprised her how long it took to recover, and when the summer came, she was finally able to experience some relief. Not having to see Carlos in a new relationship everyday was immediately helpful. At the same time, she developed a new friendship that gave her a lot of support and acceptance, which she credited most for helping heal her broken heart.

Family: Immigration.

In order to explain the circumstances of her heartbreak, Yesenia described the

events of her past. When Yesenia's parents emigrated, they sought the promise of a

better future, not realizing the loss incurred by leaving one's home country. Her parents

left their home and families behind in order to build a new life in the United States.

When they settled here, they cleaned houses and delivered newspapers in order to make a

living. In many ways the life here was more difficult than the life they left behind:

> Y: I knew my mom had a lot of pain because she had never been separated from
> my grandma her whole life. My uncle and my grandpa, all of her family and
> friends they basically just had to get up and leave and go to a new world, they
> started off cleaning houses, cleaning huge houses for 50 or 100 bucks, which is
> nothing, really I think about it it's really nothing and I would be there, sitting or
> keeping me distracted somehow. Even with the paper route, to get your Sunday
> paper they had to be up around 4 or 5 to wrap them up, especially when it was
> raining, put them in the bags, all that stuff they do themselves and when they were
> doing that I was in the car sleeping. 'Cause my mom didn't want to leave me, she
> didn't believe in sitters and stuff, nothing like that, that wasn't like here. That's
> not something she ever had to do, she always had help. It's very custom over
> there to have help, to have someone cook for you or clean for you, coming here
> you're the help. So, it was a big wake-up for her and she instills that in me, she
> says don't ever get too comfortable because you never know, things can change
> like that. I get sad for her sometimes cause she left my grandma, my grandma
> came here and was with us for like 6 months and that was pretty much the last
> time she saw her. Because after that it was hard for my grandma to get her visa
> and then she got sick and passed away. So, I think that's always hard for my
> mom, even with my dad he has a huge family, he has seven brothers and sisters
> and they all have kids and those kids have kids. I'm probably a great great aunt
> already and I'm just starting to meet all of this family through Facebook and
> starting to get that connection. But I can't imagine how they feel in the sense that
> all their family is so far away. The good thing is though my mom has been able
> to go back twice and it was good, she got to make peace with my grandma and
> say goodbye, 'cause we weren't there for the funeral because it was too expensive
> and work wouldn't let them leave. But my dad hasn't been back, so for him I
> think that's really hard—he talks to his brothers and sisters every weekend, they
> catch up and he always sends money, but I think that's his heartbreak. He just
> wants to go back and see everybody.

The experience Yesenia described is common for immigrants. Fleeing hardship, it is easy to idealize the future and how things will be in the new place, but the reality is often different. In the case of Yesenia and her parents, they lost an important support system: culture, language, and family, only to be faced with underpaid menial labor. They missed important family events and were unable to return home to grieve the loss of parents, all of which impacted the family tremendously.

Although Yesenia's mother returned home a couple of times, neither she nor her father was able to visit. Although he did not talk about it, she knew her father missed his family greatly. Yesenia described her own experience:

> Y: I feel like I have to do this for my parents [finish college] because they sacrificed so much to just come here. So I feel like I have to check that off my list, because I can be whatever I want to be but most importantly, I want to make my parents proud. That can be hard sometimes, it's a lot of pressure—yeah, it's a lot. It can be overwhelming sometimes, this is all I know. But they know so much more, they know a life I don't know and my mom always tells me, you would understand more if you go. I always tell her, I always feel like there is a missing piece of the puzzle, like there's this life I was born into that I don't know about, a family I don't know, places I've never been to and I'm just dying—I'm dying to go there, hopefully soon. I just want to go and see all this family that knows about me and wants to see me, just be there and take it for all that it is. . . One day hopefully soon, that would be great—It can be hard sometimes. But I feel really grateful that I was raised here, I don't really picture my life anywhere else. This place and everything and I have to thank my parents for it, they made the decision to come here of all places. I'm really grateful for them and the decisions they made, because I feel like their choice of coming here made me who I am and I am just really grateful in that sense.

It is easy to imagine the burden of responsibility placed on a child when parents give up their lives in order to provide a better future with more opportunity. Only to witness parents experience hardship and pain as a result of this choice, it would be hard to feel anything but responsibility, and even more, to feel an overwhelming need to make them proud. In Yesenia's case, it left her with complicated feelings, a mix of feeling pressure

to succeed accompanied with a sense of gratefulness for the life she had experienced. There was also a sense of loss for the family and country she does not remember, but they were also a large part of who she was, and it was important for her to claim them for herself.

Difficulty in childhood.

Being the only child, she described herself as the "fix it baby," the child parents have in an attempt to keep a failing relationship together. Her father showed troubling signs in the beginning of the marriage, and her mother hoped his behavior would improve once they had a child, but instead it only worsened:

> Y: They had always been friends, they'd been friends for a while and I think they just got together and she noticed things about my dad that she didn't like, but she didn't care at the time. I don't know how long it was before she had me, probably a year or so, she thought that when he has a baby he'll change, but he didn't. He got worse. She didn't want to be a single mom, but I told her she was, even with dad around she was. With my dad we were more financially stable, but she was still a single mom. She always had me, I have always been and will always be attached to my mom. So I think for her that was her heartbreak, the fact that she stayed in a marriage with hopes that it was going to turn out different and because she just wanted me to have a dad. But I didn't in that aspect, the things that kids do with their dads I didn't have that growing up, so it was just she kind of had to play both roles.

Throughout her childhood and her parents' marriage, Yesenia witnessed domestic violence and the impact it had on her mother. She would often ask her mother why she stayed, and her mother would tell Yesenia that she wanted her to have a father. Unfortunately, he worked all the time, and the times when he was home, he was not present. When she was 11 years old, they divorced.

> Y: He would accuse her of being unfaithful and stuff like that. It was in his head, my mom would have never cheated on him. I think it's because of his temper it made him think that way; it wasn't like that at all. My mom would not have had

time to be with another man when she was with me all the time. Growing up, my mom never left me, she went on field trips, she did all the little school parties, and she was just always around. So I don't know where that's coming from. I told my mom this, but after the divorce I feel like I finally saw my mom for the first time. Because she was just so reserved with my dad. I see pictures of my mom, she didn't show her legs, and she didn't call attention to herself. When I was younger she was a lot more overweight and she lost most of that and now she's down to a decent size. But she just wore these really long dresses, very Mormon-like in a sense. When they got divorced I saw that free side of her, her wild side— but it was fun and I saw her for who she really was and that's not what she was when she was with my dad.

Being in the marriage caused her mother a lot of heartbreak, and when she decided to end it, she felt free. After many years of abuse and hiding, she felt safe to express herself again. On the other hand, her father took the separation harder. At first he accused the mother of cheating, even though Yesenia believes deep down he knew the reason was his violence. When her parents divorced, Yesenia hoped to improve her relationship with her father now that they would have to spend time together alone. However, he rented a room in a house instead of getting an apartment, thus making it hard for them to have space to build a relationship. They talk on the phone daily and have a weekly meal every Saturday.

> Y: I see him every Saturday we go out and we get breakfast or lunch and we're together for a couple of hours and then that's it. I'm used to it, that's how it's been for the past 10, 11 years since their divorce. But it's weird when I talk to my friends about it and they say, I'm going to be at my dad's this weekend or my dad has me, it's not something I can relate to. I've even brought up the idea of us getting an apartment, because I'm an adult, I'm responsible and I could take care of him. But he is very independent and doesn't want that. I get that from him, I'm very independent, and I don't like things to be done for me. But it also makes me sad that he's alone, even though I know he has a girlfriend that he won't tell me about.

When her parents first divorced, Yesenia hoped it would allow for a deeper relationship with her dad, but unfortunately that was not the case. The father hid parts of himself from Yesenia. She had never been to where he lives and had never met his girlfriend,

whom he had been with at least 10 years. He was always reliable financially and showed

his affection through buying her things:

> Y: But it's not the kind of affection I'm looking for. . . that's all I've really ever
> known from my dad. When I was little it was toys and stuff like that, but as I got
> older I started to realize it's not about the money, it's about the love and the
> affection and that's what I would get from my mom. That's why I'm so close to
> my mom, because my mom can't give me all the stuff that my dad can give me,
> but I don't care because at the end of the day, I can go to her and with my dad it's
> harder. Now that I'm older we're starting to go in that direction but it's been such
> a long time, it's still hard to bring stuff up to him.

Although the pattern was present throughout her childhood, giving financial rather than

emotional support, she still hoped for more.

Yesenia was working on having a different relationship with her father. To

people around them and casual observers, her father appeared to be a nice, sweet man. To

Yesenia, she had seen too much of his anger to agree and found it difficult to move

beyond:

> Y: I feel like with my dad I have to be more reserved, just because that's how he
> is, he's very closed—he's a nice guy. I feel like I'm making him sound like a bad
> guy—if anybody else were to meet my dad they would say oh my gosh, he's the
> nicest guy ever, and really he is. I do see how nice he is and really deep down
> he's a kind person. But I've just seen so much of the angry side of him, I'm not
> used to that side that he portrays to other people. Both of us have done a lot of
> growing this past year, cause there's been a lot of fights and now that I'm older I
> got sick of it and I put my foot down and it opened up his eyes. I think he saw
> that the only relationship he has is with me and it's changed him a little bit.
> Because we would get into these fights about really stupid stuff and he would say
> things that upset me. I decided if he's going to do this, I'm not going to not talk
> to you. Nothing changed when I didn't talk to my dad, even though we speak
> everyday. But everything, my life was still the same, except I didn't talk to him
> and see him on Saturdays. It wasn't a big deal for me, but for him he started to
> realize that he needed to make amends and this whole thing happened twice. The
> first time it was only 3 weeks that I didn't talk to him and he apologized and then
> it happened again, so I think I saw my dad twice last summer. I saw that some of
> my friends don't have a strong father figure either, I might not have the best dad
> around, but my dad's still here. So, I think that kind of opened my eyes too. But
> it had to be 50/50 because I can't be angry and hold a grudge, but at the same time

he has to work on controlling his anger and not getting mad at the little things. Now we're doing a lot better, now we don't argue and I talk to him more.

In the year before the interview, there were a couple of incidents in which the father's anger publicly humiliated Yesenia. During these times, she decided to no longer tolerate his behavior and cut off contact as a response. She had the realization that not having him as part of her life impacted him more than it did her. Moving towards an adult relationship, she put up boundaries defining what was not allowed and what was expected, rather than using her mom as an intermediary as she had in the past. She confronted him directly and told him:

> Y: This isn't a relationship, what is this? What are you doing? You need to get it through your head that you're not going to talk to me like that and if you ever do, I can easily walk away from you [and] that will affect me and it will hurt me, but it will hurt you more. Because with me, I'll always have someone to fall back on and he doesn't have anybody here, he only has me, I'm his bloodline he doesn't have anybody else. I tried to say this in the best way possible, not in a mean way. I just said he needs to open his eyes or else I'm going to disappear. Of course when I think about things in the future, like when I get married or when I have kids I want him to be a part of all that stuff. But he needs to change in order for that to happen. Ever since then we've been working on it. It's still a work in progress but it's definitely a lot better than it was 6 months ago.

Although not perfect, the relationship significantly improved. Yesenia may not have been a victim of his physical violence, but she suffered his emotional abuse. In the past, she had let her mom try to talk with her father about his behavior. This time she put up a boundary and gave him consequences when he violated them.

Relationships.

Although friendships gave Yesenia the strength to recover, they were also a source of great pain and loss. A girl bullied her throughout high school, making her experience far more difficult. She attended high school during the origins of social

media. After becoming tired of the fighting and the back and forth of their relationship,

she ended the friendship:

> Y: I was done, I couldn't keep doing this—you like me one day and you don't like me another day and you just talk all this stuff and start rumors—back and forth back and forth, I couldn't do it anymore. When I was done, it just catapulted and she would somehow find the passwords to my personal account and would log in. I had my MySpace hacked twice because of her, she won't admit it but I know it was her and her friends. One of the meanest, most intense things that happened was they took off all my pictures and put up pictures of really obese women in bathing suits. They would write to people that I was friends with and be like, delete me off your friends, I don't deserve to be friends with you. She would yell out, bitch or slut, stuff like that in the halls and then would deny she was saying it to my face. Looking back, gosh I think about kids now that get bullied, kids that kill themselves over this stuff. I was affected by the stuff that she did, but it was never to the point that I would take my own life. I think about now social media is so involved, it's such a big part of an adolescent's life, it is just crazy. She was not a nice person, but people always had my back to the point that she would never have done anything physically. I mean I don't think she would have; now I look back she was just all talk. . . over the summer she found me on Instagram and I just hit deny, but Facebook, I have her blocked. I don't know if it's the trauma, but from all the stuff from high school, I just have that in the back of my mind and I remember being in high school I was always scared. I was glad I didn't have my license because what if she did something to my car or I just always had that in the back of my mind—

> E: So, did you feel threatened?

> Y: Yeah, I'm not going to lie, I felt threatened in that sense, because I didn't know what she was capable of, especially with stuff like haunting me on the internet. She was very good at using her words, now I can see she was totally a bully, I just didn't realize it at the time. I talk to people that are in high school now and I'm just high school isn't forever. . . . High school really isn't forever, I think about who I was and I think I had a lot of insecurities and I was scared and nothing like who I am now. I'm still that happy person and nice, always willing to help others but I think I'm a lot stronger. I have a lot more confidence than I had in high school, cause there wasn't someone who was criticizing my every move and starting rumors and poking at me about my weight. I wasn't around that and there's only a handful of people that I even still talk to from high school, I could care less about anybody else.

During adolescence, peer relationships are extremely important, and having difficulties

with them negatively affects one's sense of self. Yesenia's experience spoke to her

ability to work through insecurities and become comfortable with her identity,

particularly after she left high school and was in a safer environment. It is easy for adults

to forget the scrutiny teenagers feel in high school and the impact that it has on their

sense of well-being.

Yesenia was an open person who never limited herself to cliques, and the break-up taught her who were true friends and who were not. After the break-up she formed a tight group of friends and was able to recover. Unfortunately she had a falling out with these friends, and it was only through a new, close friendship that she was able to recover from this significant loss. The experience of loss, recovery, and true friendship encouraged her to evaluate the quality of her relationships and to decide which ones were worth continuing and which ones were not. For the first time, she formed deep friendships with young men with whom she had strong, authentic bonds and whom she felt safe to reveal herself to:

> Y: I'm always open to meet new people, I like to meet people that aren't like me. I don't judge and that always worked out in my favor because I never really fell into a category, where in high school there's all these cliques. I was just kind of all over the place with different friends and acquaintances. I don't think that was hard, I think what was hard realizing who your true friends were when you go through something negative and I've had to learn that twice. I had to learn that when I went through the break-up and I had to learn it again when I lost all my friends a couple of years ago. Because for me it highlighted my friends and those are the people I'm still friends with now. So for me it was like I had kind of shut the door, I have this group of friends I don't need anybody else, I'm good I'm set for life and then this happened and I was like, what do I do now? At that time, with Jennie, we were just getting to know each other and she's such a humble and kind person. She just let me in completely and she really helped me get back on my feet and realize those people are gone, but it's not the end of your life, you lost your friend but it's really not the end of the world. You're not dead you're still breathing, you're ok! She's amazing, she's a really good friend and I tell her all the time. I don't know what I would do without you, because she really did help me. She was there through all the times where I would freak out if I saw them, or if I would think of something and get upset. After all that stuff happened, I lost all the confidence I had and I think she brought that out in me

again. Now with everything that happened, I'm much more positive and I had to do a lot of self-reflection too and I had to look at my friendships and be like, who's actually a good person and who's not. There were people that were not good people and weren't doing anything at all, very negative and bad blood and I just had to cut it off. It's hard to stop being friends or having a talk with someone that I've put up with you long enough, I can't do this anymore and I had to do that with some people. It was also crazy because there were people that I was friends with that came back and it makes me see, sometimes you need a break, you need to grow or the other person needs to grow and then you come back and it's great, not perfect but it's right.

Being heartbroken from other forms of loss is important. As Yesenia's story illustrates well, it was extremely difficult for her to lose friendships. She felt lost and left behind for a long time. Although difficult, it led her to become more discerning in all of her relationships, which is an important lesson, especially for a trauma survivor.

Yesenia eventually received an apology from Carlos, but the friendship did not continue. The experience with him left her with ambivalent feelings about love relationships. She often described herself with the word "cursed" because she had not been in a relationship since:

Y: For a while there's been guys I've had crushes on, but I haven't been in a relationship with anybody else after Carlos and I don't know why. I used to look within myself, is it you? I realized I can't do that, I'm not insecure, I like who I am and what I represent. Sometimes I'll be by myself and I feel like, why aren't I in a relationship and then I also think, I'm just in my early 20s I still have a long ways to go. But I go back and think, I want to have kids before I'm 30 and get married. 'Cause I always said when I'm younger I'll be married by the time I'm 21 and I'm 22. Right now at this moment I'm just letting things be, I'm enjoying the fact I can go out with whoever I want, do whatever I want and not have to check-in with somebody. I like the independence that I have, I also think I don't have a couple I can look up to. Because even my friends that have been in relationships, like one of my friends had a boyfriend and I never saw her because he never wanted to go out and they always stayed at home. I was like I don't want to do that, I don't like staying at home. I like being out, going out, doing new things. And I have another friend who has a boyfriend but she pays for everything, because he is just lazy and won't get a job and I don't know why she's with him, but that's her choice. I don't want to have to support, unless I was married and they lost a job that's a special circumstance. But if I'm in a relationship with somebody and I have to pay for everything and there's no half

way. I just don't think I've had a good example of what a good relationship is. I've been around people who have cheated, or have been cheated on or the boyfriend is just not a good guy. I think a lot of it is, I don't have someone to be like, oh that's the trophy couple. But at the same time, not all couples are perfect, they go through their stuff, but that's what I've been around and that's what I know and I don't like it and I think that's why I would prefer to be by myself. It's hard—but there's a guy now that I am interested in, but I just—I don't know. It's hard because it then just goes to the emotions. How do I know he likes me, because I don't know because I don't have any experience. It's scary, that stuff scares me, and I go to my girlfriends because they've been in plenty of relationships and so they know, but they only know so much. All my friends are like, oh my gosh he totally likes you, but you really don't know if he does. It's just what you think in your mind or you want to be happy for me, so you want to believe that he does and then I get scared, because what if he does and we are in a relationship and then what now? Because I'm older, I'm not 14, I'm 22, and it's different now. You're in a grown-up relationship; you're not in young, "I'll get dropped off at your house" kind of thing. It's different; the rules are a little different this time in my opinion. That's the part that scares me.

Curious as to why she had not been in a relationship since Carlos, Yesenia felt maybe the reason was her own insecurities. She feels that many of her issues had been resolved, and she valued who she was and what she stood for. She appreciated her independence and although she wanted to eventually be in a relationship, she had a lot of examples of friends sacrificing too much for the person they were with and felt it would be helpful to have a model of a healthy relationship. Realizing also that being in a relationship at the age of 22 is different than at 14, she felt inexperienced:

> Y: I think if I had more relationships in high school and then been single now, I think I would have totally been fine, because it would have been like I had my relationships and now I'm in my 20s. I'm going to enjoy being single and I'm fine now and I'm enjoying the life I have. But now it's harder, because I know eventually I'll have a relationship and it'll be a serious one, but I don't know what I'm doing. I have no idea. I know it's not a manual like this is going to happen, this is going to happen, there's just a lot of factors like intimacy and communication, all of these factors now, when before it was different. But when you're younger all that stuff is there, but it's different and also you're mindset, when you're young you don't think about things that you think about when you're 22. When I was younger I didn't have a care in the world, now I have responsibilities, things I have to pay for, so it's different. I think that's scary to me.

Her lack of experience made her anxious about any future intimate relationships, because

she knew the expectations were different when you were older. The underlying fear is

common for children of divorced parents. When the model in which you are raised is a

dysfunctional one, it is difficult to trust your own choices and easy to question whether

those whom you are attracted to are the best choice.

The shadow side of love, the heartbreak and its effects, was something Yesenia

holds close:

> Y: I think falling in love, not that there was a cloud in judgment but I think I was
> just so happy nothing could upset me. But I think because it was so short-lived. I
> think it was what they call the honeymoon stage, where it's like you guys are
> together all the time and I was still getting to know him and he was getting to
> know me. He knew all the stuff with my dad and he didn't have a dad either, his
> dad walked out on him when he was little, so we could relate to the fact that we
> didn't have a dad figure at all. But it was still. . . the heartbreak I couldn't have
> expected that at all. I knew it was going to be hard, but I didn't think it was going
> to be as hard, and I don't know if I had to do with that, if I made it worse for
> myself or that's just how it was going to be. I just didn't expect it to be like that.

Just as many others did before, Yesenia was easily seduced by the romance, and she

believed that love would always feel good and that it would last forever. Love hurts and

is always changing, she learned this lesson. Although mass media creates very clear

pictures of what romance is, it rarely shows the complexity of what love actually is,

leaving many romantics shocked and despondent when things do not go as they expected.

Her advice to others going through a first heartbreak said a lot about her own outlook:

> Y: You think your life is over, but it's not. You'll look back, you'll look at the
> other side and you'll realize that you're a lot stronger. When things like that
> happen they do make you stronger and also it's how you take it. You can either
> let something change you or you can let it make you stronger. It's not bad to let
> something change you, but just don't let it ruin who you are. I know people who
> have gone through stuff and it's made them mean and angry and that's not
> something I've ever wanted to happen to me. I've been through my share of stuff,
> I'm still happy, I'm still smiling, I'm still me, that's what I would tell. It's hard,

talking to my mom and older people, older women, my high school counselor, I got all the advice. When you're 14 and when you're in those teen years, you just don't want to listen to anybody. You are just in that pain and you're just blocked, all the words they just hit a wall. You just have to listen to the words that people are telling you and believe that it does get better, because it does. It will get better, it will.

Love may change you, but as Yesenia said, it did not have to ruin who you are. In Yesenia's case, it made her become more discerning about whom she lets into her life, it made her grateful for her independence and her friendships. She put up boundaries and changed familial patterns, and although she felt a lack in having a model of a healthy relationship, she was beginning to find a valuable one with her true self.

Yesenia claimed that prior to her first heartbreak, she had not experienced a lot of pain. Through her sharing, it became clear that she had been through quite a lot. Immigrating at a young age had an enormous impact on her family. Her birth was the reason her parents chose to leave their home country in order to provide the possibility of a better future. This put a lot of pressure on her, especially since she was an only child. It is traumatizing for any child to witness domestic violence, and even if the physical violence is not directed at them, seeing someone you love being hurt is unbearable. Her dad's temper made it difficult for her to develop a bond with him. My argument is the pain she felt during heartbreak was due, in part, to all of the unexpressed grief in her past.

Yesenia's story also illustrates the difficulty adolescents face when dealing with the social forces in high school. Not only did she have to see her ex, the source of her pain, and his new girlfriend everyday, but another girl bullied her at the same time. As adults we usually have the ability to put distance between those that hurt us, but many adolescents do not have the same ability to control their environment. With all of these challenges and the descent she experienced after heartbreak, it gave her time to know

herself and to evaluate whom she let into her life. She also made significant steps towards renegotiating her relationship with her father and healing the wounds of the past.

Interview #3: Christine

Christine was a newlywed, in her late 20s, working on the completion of her bachelor's degree. Six years ago she emigrated from South America on her own and lived now in Northern California. Her parents were young when she was born, and they had her little brother 8 years later. Although they got married because of the pregnancy, she said her parents have a very good relationship and get along well. In the military, her father was very calm and practical, whereas her mother was very passionate and fiery— she believed they balance each other well. Her dad was very protective of her mother, and she felt that although many parents put children at the center of their lives, her parents were the opposite:

> C: For example my dad would be to me, you do the dishes, why does your mom have to get her nails bad, you can't have prettier nails than your mom. My dad he never liked that, my mom was always a great mom but my dad was always very protective of her. Oh you know what, your mom just has too much on her plate, you start cooking your own meals. My mom's like, no you're wrong, she would almost get mad but it was always about themselves first. 'Cause you can see many parents put their whole life for the kids, my parents were not like that. Not that they were bad to us, they were not bad to us. They were just like, we'll figure out our stuff, then we're going to figure out your stuff. It was always like that and for education my father always gave me everything and even nowadays, any money I ask him for education he'll help and of course for health. But anything else, it was no. For clothes, I always had to beg them to buy me, I would have the basics, then I had to work for anything extra. They would not do it, they had all their things figured out, then it would be us, but they're fine. I don't know, I think it's a little extreme, but I think it can be both extreme, not like the kids first, or the couple first. You have to think about it, you know those parents that have the kids sleep in their bed until the kid's 10 years old.

Relationship.

After transferring in her senior year of high school, she was presenting a science fair project when a classmate began asking questions about her research. On her way home, the same boy began speaking to her. She felt there was no way that this handsome boy was interested in her romantically; in her social circle, she was known as the funny one:

> C: I was like oh my gosh, he's so good looking. What happened is he had a friend and I was going out with his friend, but no one knew because his friend had a girlfriend. I would sneak out with him sometimes. He was like what are you doing with this guy and he would not understand why I was doing it. In Argentina we don't date, it's [a] weird thing. We don't have this dating thing where you come and take them out. We just kind of start a relationship. We started right away. After two weeks I met his parents, he met my mom. My dad never talked to him, because my dad never talked to any of my boyfriends, but then that was pretty much it. We got very serious after a month, we dated for a little over two years actually. It's a very cute thing because for both of us it was very new, we would do things like write little letters for each other. I remember for our anniversary every month we would have to write each other letters and at the year we could put everything together.

He was interested, and they quickly began a relationship, as dating was not common in Argentina. He was the first boyfriend she brought home and after about a month, she said the relationship became serious and lasted for over two years. Because of transferring to a new school, she knew almost no one. He was popular with girls but had difficulty maintaining male friendships. It was hard for her to see him receive so much female attention:

> C: What happened is, so he was always very pretty guy. So guys would not like him. So he never had friends at school, he never had guy friends and he was this super nice guy, very nice. He had a lot of insecurity issues because he felt he could not fit in, it's because all of the girls are very into him. I was blindly in love with him, I thought he was the best. I thought if we were ever to break up I would never find someone else.

This was a difficult time for her because she was young and was not comfortable with

herself. She worried about losing him:

> C: I was insecure, I was very young, I wasn't comfortable with myself. I was
> always very skinny, which in Argentina is not very good, it was very bad. . . . We
> got along really well but I was a little older and I was one grade ahead of him. I
> would help him with his homework and it made him feel a little insecure about it
> because I was smarter than he was. He was very popular with the girls, he had
> girls calling him 24 hours a day, I'm not kidding. We'd go out and girls [would
> proposition him] in front of me, I almost cried I didn't know what to do. 'Cause
> now I'd be like get the fuck out of here, I would get mad at the girl at the time I
> didn't know what to do, I was so afraid of losing him.

She had her own insecurities about her physical appearance and when other girls

propositioned him in her presence, it caused her a lot of distress.

> They began a sexual relationship about four months into the relationship, and it

was a positive experience for both of them. Sex increased their intimacy, and she found

herself become more attached as they were constantly together:

> C: I was a virgin I started to experiment. We were both young living with our
> parents so you'd try and find any place to have sex we would. His mom caught us
> one day, I cried so much, I was so embarrassed, so embarrassed! Oh my gosh it
> was so bad, and she lectured us for hours she said I should call your parents and I
> was like please don't. . . .
> 	It [the relationship] got closer [after they had sex], definitely got closer,
> more attached for both of us. We were together 24 hours a day, all the time. At
> this point it was bad I wouldn't hang out with my girlfriends anymore, because I
> was with him all of the time. It's very hard, nowadays I know how to do it. What
> I learned, you have to have your own life, you have to be your own whole, then
> this person complements it, it doesn't make it. With my husband what I really
> like is that, I didn't need a boyfriend, it just happened because I wanted him, not
> because I needed somebody. I think that's the difference, to me many
> relationships don't work well because of that. I think that's very important in a
> relationship that you're with someone because you want to, not because you are
> desperate or need to.

As an unfortunate consequence of the relationship, she socialized with her friends less, a

common mistake made by people in relationships of all ages. Making the other person

the center of one's existence puts great strain on the relationship; placing all of one's

sense of purpose and meaning on one person is not sustainable. Christine said this

realization was one of the lessons she learned: the importance of having one's own life, to

be one's own whole, and to have a partner that complements you, not one who defines

who you are.

Looking back at who she was in that relationship, she saw that she was very

insecure and was often jealous or doubting his fidelity:

> C: I was a crazy jealous girl, it was a very painful relationship for me. I really
> learned from it, you have to find something that goes smooth. At the same time I
> loved him, I loved being with him, all the other time was painful. When we
> weren't together it was so hard, 'cause all these things I would think, oh my gosh
> maybe a girl got to him, maybe he's with someone now, what if she was calling
> him and got his attention. That was the hard part.

From this relationship and the subsequent ones, she learned that she wants "smooth

love," a relationship without constant agony when the two are apart. Her doubts led her

to snoop into his email accounts. She found evidence that he had corresponded with

someone else and was having an emotional relationship, even though it was not acted

upon physically. Her insecurities grew as time went on, and she said that she constantly

felt bad about herself. It affected all areas of her life:

> C: I was a freak. I would always figure out his passwords for everything. For his
> emails and actually I found one day. He went to visit his dad, so I could see he
> didn't do anything with the girl but they [were] about to hook up. But he didn't,
> but she was talking about maybe next time, I'm still in love with you.
>
> E: So he was still having little relationships though?
>
> C: Yeah, totally he was open. He met this girl staying in the house of a family
> friend and he didn't get to hook up but he had this sparkling something that was
> kind of towards the end of our relationship. I was like, what the hell, what is that
> about? The whole thing is that he was always so honest it's crazy. He was like,
> yeah that happened, but I didn't do anything, so it was always like that.

She often described the relationship as painful, partly because of her own insecurities and

worries, and partly because of his actions. He would pick at her insecurities throughout

the relationship, but doing so increased as time passed:

> C: He didn't make me feel good either, that's the whole thing. I really feel that
> many girls the way they feel about themselves, has a lot to do with the man
> they're with, because he never made me feel good about myself. It was always,
> your hair is horrible I don't like that, he'd say things like that. I don't like the
> way you're dressed, I hate those clothes, let's try something else, your hair the
> other way is better. I was always so self-conscious of my hair because I have
> very curly hair and I always hated it. And so I was always straightening and
> always such a big maintenance for me and I could never go straight from the
> shower. I never wanted him to see me like that, I was very self-conscious about
> everything and he did not help at all. Another thing, he wanted me to be blonde at
> one point, so I totally went blonde, it was horrible. I was like, why are you dating
> me? And he dated, almost a year after me, a girl that was just like that. He
> wanted a girl with very straight long hair and he was trying to get me to be that,
> but my hair, it's not easy to do it. It made me so insecure and all these little
> things he wanted from me, ah it was horrible.
>
> E: Did you dress different as well?
>
> C: Yeah I would do anything he wanted. I'd go home and change because he
> wanted me to, isn't that so bad? This is why I learned so much I never let that
> happen again. Every relationship I've had, every ex-boyfriend I've had all of
> them helped me so much with a different thing. All of them I think it's because I
> could say he was making me feel bad, he was the one that had the problem. If it's
> too painful to be with someone then I'm not going to be with them. I was
> thinking that even if he cheats on me, I can forgive him it's ok. I would even
> have this mentality, it's so painful, you don't want that for yourself, ever.

He criticized her insecurities and she responded by spending lots of time and energy

trying to please him, whether it was straightening her hair or dying it blonde. The

behavior continued to the point where she asked herself: if you want someone with long

straight, blonde hair, why are you dating me? In the beginning of the relationship, she

liked doing things for him; she finally realized that she did not want to change anymore.

The things he wanted made her uncomfortable, and she was constantly feeling bad about

herself. In many ways, her story is similar to Jennifer's. Being in the relationship caused

a disavowal of self, leading to mistrust and insecurity. Both felt they were neither

lovable nor acceptable while in the relationship; both suffered during the relationship as

well as during the break-up. Only by letting go of the relationship were they able to

connect with their true self.

Dissolving.

In the midst of her misgivings and insecurities she felt the first year of the

relationship was fulfilling; they were very committed to each other and excited about

being in their first serious relationship. Things began to change after she graduated and

went on to college. She described the college experience in Argentina as being different

than the one in the United States; everyone lives at home while they attend school. Her

boyfriend, being a year younger, was still in high school and transferred to a new school,

when a whole new social world opened up to him. He began insinuating how he felt held

back by their relationship:

> C: What happened then, after I finished high school it was his last year. He
> changed schools again because his family moved, his school was the one that I
> had been the year before. What happened when he moved there, he made a lot of
> friends. For some reason, he just started and he had a social life he'd never had
> before and he didn't want a girlfriend anymore. And now I think of course it's
> normal, he was 18 years old. The thing I always give him credit for he was very
> honest. He was like Christine, I love you, I wish maybe later we could get
> married, I would totally marry you, but now I just want to have my friends and I
> want to go out and I want to meet more people. I'd never had that before, it really
> broke my heart. But he was really honest about it, actually I came to it. I was
> like, do you think we should break up, because he was complaining a lot about
> being in a relationship, and I was like maybe we should break up and he was like
> yes, we should break up. He was relieved and I was heartbroken. It's really sad, I
> remember it took me forever to get over him, forever, maybe six months. So it
> was 3 months crying bad—it took me really a year to get over him.

To add insult to injury, when they broke up, she felt heartbroken and he seemed relieved.

Breaking up for him was less about girls and more about having male friendships. He

was honest about his intentions of wanting to socialize with guys and meet girls.

Although she understood his reasoning and would later become more understanding, she

was understandably devastated at the time.

The first 3 months after the break-up were extremely difficult; she isolated herself

and grieved:

> C: I surprised myself how strong I was after we broke up. For 3 months I was very bad and then I was like you know what? I have to get over it. I have to get up and I have to get over it and I decided I'm not going to see him again. I'm never going to go back to him. One day he came over to my house and he tried to make out and I stopped, that's not happening. Because before when I just kissed him again and he left, it was horrible. Then I was like that's not happening, I was so strong, I think it takes a lot of strength to do that—It's not happening don't come close to me and he left. After he started texting me again and I'm like it's over, cut it. I noticed that the more I think about him, the more I would think about him. Every time I thought about him, I would think about something else. It helped a lot to get over and changing my routine, little things otherwise I would be thinking about him all the time. I got much closer to my friends. Actually we had four girl friends, one of them was his sister, and we all broke up at the same time. So the four of us got really close, so we started partying hard every day. It got bad actually, my mom started freaking out because I started going out every day, even on Mondays, every single day, it was fun.
>
> E: So, you mentioned there was a time period where you were crying and sad?
>
> C: I was sad, it happened and I was out and I thought I was over him, but if I saw him I got so upset, so it took much longer than I thought. I was going out and having fun but if I saw him it would make me really upset. So, I would always try not to see him. It was this crazy thing, I remember one day we went to a party right after we broke up and he was with a girl and I stood behind them crying. I was with a friend and she was like stop doing that and I could not make myself move, I was watching it.
>
> E: Was he hooking up?
>
> C: Yeah. I was looking and crying, I could not make myself move, I stood there crying, I forgot about that. My friend was like, stop doing that. I couldn't make myself get out of there. It was horrible.
>
> E: But you still went out and stuff?

C: Yeah, I was like, Ok, if I'm going to be crying at least I'm going to be out and maybe something can happen. I can meet somebody or something fun can happen, cause being home crying is not going to help anything.

E: Did you do any of that? Did you stay home and cry at all in the beginning?

C: In the beginning I did, for the first 2 or 3 months I did. Then after, I was like if I'm going to be crying at least I'll be with my friends.

E: What do you think changed? You said that strength comes from somewhere.

C: I don't know, I think I just got sick of suffering. Especially because he was doing really well, he wanted to be single. He started working out. Actually I wanted to show him I was doing well too, I had to…. I think you just get used to it, all those times I would see him and be upset again and it got to a point, when I saw him and I was fine. That's when I knew it was over, it got to the point where I was talking to him and it was all good. I think I fell in love with someone else also, this other guy I was starting to see and we weren't committed. That was great, it was really good for me. We weren't in a relationship or anything but I was very into him. That helped a lot. It helps with your confidence. The other thing is before I was taking care of myself for him and when we broke up I was doing it for myself, it was a huge difference. I just did things that made me feel comfortable, I did my hair the way I wanted to do it, the way I liked it, or my make-up or anything or the clothes I was wearing, it was for me, not for him.

Christine decided after being isolated and upset, that it was time for her to move forward and that she would not continue to see him. The strength she showed by doing this surprised her. It helped her to get out and change her routine, and she got closer to her girlfriends. She made a concerted effort to get out of the house, for she did not feel that being alone was helping. It did not fix everything, but she slowly began to feel better. Although she did her best to avoid him, if they happened upon each other, it would be difficult. When they saw each other, she wanted to be close to him, causing further pain. However, her feelings were as follows: if she went out, then there was the potential for something new to happen, whereas if she stayed home crying, then nothing would change. When asked about what made her get up when she was so sad, she said partly it was knowing how well he was doing and partly it was being tired of suffering. She

began doing things for herself rather than for him, discovering what made her feel comfortable and confident again. Getting validation from others helped to boost her confidence, and she saw that the better she felt about herself, the more positive attention she received. It took almost a year to feel she was over the relationship and to feel she had moved on. She knew this for certain when she could see him and not get upset.

Meaning.

After the relationship she learned the importance of being confident in oneself. In fact she credited all of her past relationships with teaching her the value of making oneself important, that the life of the other cannot be more important than one's own. Although it is not always easy to listen to intuition, it is more difficult if there is too much dependence in the relationship; living someone else's life makes it difficult to listen to your own inner voice. Describing herself as being mostly a happy person, the situation of feeling miserable felt inauthentic, as you can only suffer so much, and staying in the relationship was no longer worth the price:

> C: Now I know that it's myself first. Of course I'll do anything for my husband, but it has to have that balance. I have to be most of the time happy, rather than most of the time sad. You have to, it doesn't matter if you're just happy when you're together. When you make it easy, you have to have that easy love. You know I don't have him calling 24 hours a day, I don't need that, I'm comfortable. We can just lay down next to each other and be just watching TV and you're fine, all these things easy. I had a guy right when I moved to the West, I didn't know anybody and I started dating him. He was Jewish, and he broke up with me because I wasn't. He started telling me, look it's not going to work, and then I felt insecure about it. So I could sit the whole day with my phone, oh my gosh did he call me? I had so much fun, I enjoyed so much being with him, but when I was not with him, especially because we were not in a relationship, after a month it was like, what am I doing? It's not worth it. You know, it's not, it's fun to be with him, but every time I'm not, I'm going crazy. That's the kind of thing that I really learned, this is not the kind of person you can have a relationship with ever—all I got from this relationship. Each relationship makes you more aware of things, which I think is very important. Unfortunately it's not with everybody

that it happens. I always have this philosophy, if you make the same mistake many times, then it's your choice. You are choosing to do something, it's not a mistake anymore, it's not an accident anymore, it's a choice of yours.

She acknowledged that there is opportunity for learning from one's mistakes, but it does not always happen, and if the pattern continues, one is responsible:

> C: It's what I keep saying to all my friends: you have to love yourself and respect yourself, otherwise they won't. If you don't like your things enough, don't expect that someone else is going to like them. I learned a lot from my past relationships that you have to give enough importance to yourself, don't expect anyone to give it if you don't.
>
> E: Exactly, so how did you get to there?
>
> C: I think it was another boyfriend that I had, it was the same thing. Well not the same thing, I learned a lot from him. His things were always more important than mine. I cut fast, I learned fast that oh my gosh I'm me and my life.
>
> E: You had that little voice, so what makes you listen to it?
>
> C: I don't know. Here's the thing, if you don't need somebody, it's easy for you to listen to yourself. If there's not an independent relationship it's really hard, when you create a dependence in a relationship, when you're living the other one's life and not your life, is what makes it really hard to listen to your inside. Because I always had this inside, but sometimes I was like no, but I love him, I want to be with him and it gets to the point where it's not worth it anymore. When the bad is bigger than the good, you just can't be happy. You try to fool yourself that you can be happy in the relationship, but you can't. You're just not going to be happy in it. I think it's all about being happy, what makes you happy.

She credited her first love and her subsequent relationships with teaching her the importance of valuing oneself and the danger of depending on someone else for fulfillment.

Christine's first relationship provided the opportunity for her to become intimately acquainted with her insecurities. Her story, as with Jennifer's, describes the effects of power imbalance in the relationship. Her boyfriend was popular and received a lot of attention from girls, which activated her inferiority complex.   As time went on, he

became more critical of her appearance, insisting she change in order to suit his idea of perfection. As she was too dependent on the relationship and was afraid of losing him, she lost her sense of self and tried to comply with his demands. It was not until she was out of the relationship and found value in feeling confident in herself that she recognized the importance of listening to her own intuition and realizing it is an indicator that something is wrong when there is more pain in the relationship than good.

Chapter 5
Part 2 of Results

We will continue in the same fashion as the previous chapter, presenting three new interviews: Alisha, Amy, and Kate.

Interview #4: Alisha

Along with her father, mother, and older sister, Alisha immigrated to the United States from a country that was part of the former Soviet Union when she was 11 years old. The family was fleeing a politically unstable situation after her father had nearly been killed in a terrorist attack. She remembered this as a difficult transition because of her lack of language ability, and other children ridiculed her for being different. A self-taught artist, she would draw during these difficult times, and it continues to be something she turns to for pleasure and solace. Her family settled in the Pacific Northwest into a small apartment in an area with a large immigrant population.

Immigration was hard on everyone in her family. They struggled to survive, and the pressures resulted in daily conflicts throughout the home. Alisha felt family pressure to put forth a mask of happiness and perfection to the world, yet doing so often felt incongruent with her internal struggles. Although her first home had political and economic strife, she loved her childhood and missed her family and community there. Moving to the United States left her feeling alienated, and she found it difficult to connect with her peers and American culture.

First love: Ryan.

Her first boyfriend was someone she had gone to school with since middle school, but they had never spoken until freshman year. He was a tall, good-looking athlete, and she saw him as the ideal boyfriend. The idea of being in a relationship together was highly improbable. Neither one knew much about the other, yet he asked her to be his girlfriend. After being constantly teased for not having a boyfriend by girls in her apartment building, she accepted:

> A: I met him in middle school, it was right when we came here. He was one of those football player boys that are super tall, blue eyes, perfect hair and half of the school was madly in love with him. And I was one of those girls, I was like oh he's so great, I'll never be with him. I had just moved so I didn't know English, so I couldn't talk with anyone. I knew a little bit of English, but I was always in the back and I remember I would wear this long braid because I was very shy and I wasn't used to anything at all yet. And so it was in high school that we started dating, it was around November or September. The way we started talking was really funny because I drew a lot and he loved eagles, and I drew an eagle and I gave it to one of my friends. He ended up giving it to him telling him I drew it for him, which wasn't true at all. And at that time, I still liked him; it wasn't anything too crazy. He came up to me during lunch and was like, hey I really like you and I've noticed you even in middle school, I don't even know your name but do you want to be with me and be my girlfriend? And I don't know why, but I said yes and so we started dating. I remember the second day of the relationship it was really funny, he was like, I don't remember your name, can you remind me? I don't know if you want me to analyze, because later I started analyzing myself, why did I do that? All my friends that are girls that lived in our apartments, they all had boyfriends and I remember they'd always pick on me for not having a boyfriend. So sometimes I think that's why I started, you know kind of peer pressured myself to having a boyfriend.

In the beginning, the relationship was innocent and consisted of handholding and walking around parks. After 3 months, he ended it with the excuse that he wanted someone who could tell him more about things, thereby taking a jab at her shyness and reluctance with English. To add insult to injury, he broke up with her over text message in the morning before school. She described her reaction as feeling her whole body go into shock:

A: I remember I was at home at that time and it was in the morning before I went to school. I just remember it was the worst feeling like, you can't hear anything. It was the weirdest feeling I have ever felt. I was shaking my hands and I just remember myself staring at the mirror and I'm like, oh my god, right before school in the morning. It was really funny because the power went out and I was like, ugh this is the end of the world.

Arriving at school that morning, she found him laughing, flirting with other girls, and she felt crushed. Back at home, she did not tell in her mother what happened, instead doing her best to push the pain aside and focus on her homework. The next day, he came to her crying with flowers and asked her to take him back. She forgave him and accepted him back:

E: Do you know why you took him back after that first time?

A: Honestly, that feeling you feel for the first time, you feel so empty, the emptiest feeling in the world. And when he asked me back out he was crying and he had roses. I didn't realize, no one had told me, once a cheater always a cheater. I took him back because I still had feelings. It was soon after the break-up, so it didn't take time to get reattached. We were young and the feelings were like whirling, I need to take him back, I like him, everyone makes mistakes. He was very good about crying and I'm like, ah he's crying, he loves me.

The emptiness she felt when he broke up with her was scary, and seeing him come to her with remorse and regret, she felt that he truly loved her, rather than seeing his gift as manipulation. Things did not continue as before. Even though they remained together for a while, the relationship was different:

A: The shift of it not being a good relationship happened after the first break-up. There was feelings of suspicion, thinking this might happen again, I started to be more cautious and notice things more and when I would talk about it we would fight.

E: Do you think his behavior was bad the whole time but you just didn't notice it?

A: Yeah, definitely. A lot of my friends were telling me things from the very beginning and I was blind, I didn't believe. But after the first break-up, people were actually coming up to tell me they saw him with this girl and I would get

upset and talk to him about it. He'd make up a story that her dad died and I just gave her a hug and people thought I was cheating on you. Then I would talk to her and she said nobody died. After that people started seeing more things and telling me more things, but I was trying to stay away from it I think. We have this expression in Russian, wearing pink glasses, faded you can't see anything.

E: But you were still suspicious and having fights too?

A: I was definitely checking his MySpace.

E: Did you ever get into his email or anything?

A: I did, I did. I remember I got mad at him because he was getting all these things for porn websites and I got super upset at him. But he made up this whole story that it was his dad's. He was very good at getting himself out of the lie, let's just say that, he was very good at that. And I didn't notice that before, now every time I look back, I see he was lying.

E: So it wasn't that the relationship was innocent, it was that you were more innocent in the beginning and didn't notice?

A: Yeah.

E: He must have had a reputation before?

A: Yes definitely, I've heard that he was with at least three girls before me in high school and he was always a cheater. When we just started dating, his exes would get my phone number from somebody and curse at me telling me to leave him.

Although they were back together and she loved him, the relationship was different. She

did not trust him and was suspicious of his behavior. Previously she would ignore

warnings from other people, and now she found it harder to do. Not only did she change

her behavior, but he changed his as well:

A: I think it's after we got very close, intimate, a month after that it started being more that I'm his property and if I don't do the things he wants me to do, controlling. If I didn't want to go somewhere he was going, he would get mad. If I didn't want to walk over to his house, he would get mad. There were fights over that. It was the little things, he started paying attention to other girls in front of me, he would point out what they were wearing and self-judgment started coming in more. When we finally ended I just felt so disgusted by him, I didn't tell him, but he tried to get me back in front of my class and teachers with roses

and I was no, I'm done, roses are not going to buy me anymore, no tears, that's done. And I told you the next day he got a girlfriend?

E: So the cheating rumors were always there?

A: Always.

E: I am wondering what your life was like during this time?

A: My life was without friends, because I gave all my attention to him and my best friend was upset. She would tell me but I closed my eyes, but what I love about her is that she would never judge me. She would never stop being my friend because of it. All my other friends, I thought they stopped hanging out with me, but it was really me, because I gave them less attention and I started hanging out with him more and my best friend got close with other people. I felt she was distancing, but she was always with girls, not a guy like I was. I was always with him, I noticed I didn't have as much contact with my friends as I should of and I felt really insecure about myself, because of all the rumors. I would compare myself to the other girls that I heard he was cheating on me with, I wouldn't say I was happy, I think it took a while [to realize] that I wasn't. I realized after a while that I was depressed, sitting in art classes like this, always a depressed look. It took a while how I was acting, but I did distance myself from everything else, I would do everything for him.

She gave her life over to the relationship and distanced herself from friendships and her family. Worst of all, she became distanced from herself; so distressed over the cheating rumors, she became insecure, feeling she was not as attractive as the other girls he would compare her to. Although she would try to push his betrayals aside, the acts were insidious and becoming harder to ignore. Whenever she confronted him about his unfaithfulness, he would blame her and end the relationship. The next day he would beg for forgiveness, and she would acquiesce. It was an endless cycle. Alisha describes the betrayal she experienced with Ryan during their relationship:

A: He cheated on me about 10 times with girls from school and I was really blind, I wasn't believing people when they would tell. Because we dated for a year and a half and during that year and a half he cheated on me many times. When he cheated I saw pictures so I would have proof and I'd be crying and he would dump me, telling me that it's my fault. The next day he's there again with flowers crying to me about everything, so I would take him back. I kept taking

him back, it was really bad. I was 15 when we first slept with each other, which was not something that I planned on doing, but it just happened. I felt like I'll be with him forever and I kept forgiving him. I don't think I realized that this is not the only boy that I'll ever meet, because at that time I thought that's how things are. This is how you meet people and I'll marry this guy eventually and that wasn't the case. There was a lot of stuff that he would do, like cheating and I don't know why I forgave him all those times. At the end of the sophomore year I started feeling every time he hugged me, I felt very disgusted and I started thinking ok, if I feel that, then obviously this is not for me and I've had it.

Alisha's experience describes a loss of innocence. Alisha clung to her denial of his infidelity even though she had considerable warnings and evidence, because if she were to believe the truth, it would mean that not only her ideas about the relationship were incorrect, but that some of her fundamental beliefs were as well. It does not matter whether betrayal is acted upon, suspected, or merely emotional; it is one of the most difficult aspects of heartbreak. What makes it so difficult is that by engaging with another person, we are intimately changed in the process, and if it becomes known that the situation is not as we thought, then the experience can be devastating.

At the time of the relationship, she assumed that he was the only boy she would ever meet. She believed they would be together forever. Although unplanned, they began having a sexual relationship at 15. Unfortunately it became one more outlet for him to mistreat her:

A: The way I always pictured it when I was growing up, is that I would be with this guy who loves me and it happens and you have a perfect relationship afterwards and we'd eventually get married. Meet each other's parents and things like that. I knew it'd happen, something inside told me I should wait 3 more years, but because I really cared for him, I thought maybe it needed to be done, we would get closer after it. I don't remember exactly what my brain was thinking, you see all these romantic movies, when it happened, it was not at all like I pictured it.

E: Was it planned? Did you set up a time? Was it in the moment?

A: We talked about it a while, after the first 3 months of our relationship. But I was always pushing it off, saying maybe we should wait until we're 18 or something. It was my birthday and it happened a week after, it was sort of planned that we would do it sometime that week. When we went over to his house and when it started happening, I wanted to stop but he didn't. He ignored me and I think that's part of the reason why I say it wasn't at all what I expected at all…. Now that we're talking about this, I felt bad that day. I didn't feel happy. His older sister was home at that time, but she was in the other room. When he told her, she was like, oh you guys lost your virginity, he was so happy, but I felt uncomfortable sitting there and he was satisfied with himself. He didn't ask how I felt, I was just sitting there quietly, and this is not at all what I pictured. Then he walked me a quarter of the way home and he said he had to be home and I walked home by myself after that.

E: And then you were bleeding for 3 days? Were you scared?

A: I was, but I thought that was supposed to happen. I didn't pay it much attention and I couldn't talk to my mom about it or my friends about it.

E: After that, did he expect to continue to have sex every time?

A: Yeah, he totally did. But I think we waited at least two weeks for the next time, I was like no, not yet. There was one of his girl friends and I asked her why I couldn't feel anything and she told me it would happen after the third time, it would be ok.

E: So you didn't feel anything the first time either?

A: Besides pain that's all, numbness.

E: After that did you continue to feel pain?

A: For the next five or six times it was still painful and numb, but after that it was just numb all the time. I have felt that every time it was not for myself, but for the guy. I didn't really care about me.

E: Did you and Ryan ever talk about the first time?

A: No, we never went back to it.

E: Did you ever feel comfortable telling him that you didn't want sex?

A: No, I felt scared to say no.

Through our discussions about her first sexual experience, it became clear that it was an act of sexual assault: she experienced physical trauma, and he ignored her pleadings to stop. Her subsequent sexual experiences were either painful or dissociative, an experience she described as numbness. Sex was something she did to make her partner happy, feeling she would lose the relationship if she refused. Here is one more example of disavowing the self: Alisha repressed her own discomfort with sexuality for the sake of relationship.

Endings.

Eventually something inside began changing about how she felt about him, and she described it as feeling disgusted when he would hug or touch her. It never occurred to her to end the relationship, but after a teacher's encouragement, she decided that although she would not break up with him, if he ended the relationship again, it would be final. Not long after, he did and she did not take him back:

> A: But at the end of sophomore year every time he hugged me or anything I was like oh my god what's going on? And there's still all these girls like, oh when you went to Hawaii he slept with this girl, he did this with this girl. I was crying and one of my teachers, I am so thankful to her, it was during one of the Math classes, she told me that you can't always feel bad for somebody, you need to start thinking about yourself and how bad you feel and she said to break up with him. I was like I can't break up with somebody, because I'm very committed, but if you break up with me one more time I won't come back to him. And that's exactly what happened. He broke up with me and then the next day he was with flowers and everything, trying to get me back. I was like, no, I've had enough.

The next day he was dating someone else, and a girl came up to her asking for permission to have sex with him. In high school, she felt that others saw her as the Depressing Girl because of her entanglement with him. The alienation she felt after the break-up led her

to join a program that allowed her to leave school and receive her diploma and receive college credits concurrently. She described her feelings after the break-up:

> A: What I remember I was really sad, I remember seeing him the next day with girls, obviously I was really sad, but a part of me was that it was a good thing. It will go away, even though I was really upset. I felt stronger that I broke it off this time, I felt I had the control now over him. This will be ok soon enough. When his friend came up and asked me if she could sleep with him and I said I didn't care, obviously I cared. I was really sad. I told her to do whatever you want. But inside I did care. I was really upset. I still had feelings that maybe we would get back and maybe he would change, but I was like ok, no don't think those thoughts, those are lies in your own head. Don't think about it, so I just left it.

> E: And then you went to Running Start?

> A: A lot of my friends told me not to go, that I would miss the high school experience, but I had enough. After we broke up he told a lot of rumors about me and I lost a lot of friends, a lot of people would take his side. I wouldn't talk bad about him; they would tell me that they were so glad he broke up with me, that I was a slut. I would just walk by and ignore it, I knew it was not true, so I don't need to deal with it. I wanted a fresh new start, to get out there and show them I'm not who they think I am, go and do what you want to do. It was such a good opportunity; in 2 years I would have my associate's degree and my high school diploma, so I just left. I'm really glad I did, I didn't have to be around those people anymore. I knew they were all young and the rumors and high school stuff, I'm glad I went and tried to grow up earlier. Half of my friends from high school are pregnant right now. It's so different.

Ending the cycle of abuse in the relationship was difficult, but it helped her find some of her own power and to choose something different. After the break-up, he disparaged her to other people and she was completely isolated. It would have been understandable if she fell back into the chaos with him, but instead she chose to leave high school and create a different life.

Relationships.

Originally the intention of the interview was focusing on the experience of her first heartbreak, but Alisha began sharing more of her difficulties with other relationships,

and including them is valuable. Five months later, she began dating a friend of hers from the same apartment building where she lived. They developed a bond following a murder of a mutual friend that summer. He was the opposite of Ryan: she felt supported and valued. They spent a lot of time together exploring and having fun, but they kept their relationship secret from the people around them. About a year and a half into the relationship, she began noticing changes in his behavior as he began hanging out with people in their building known for criminal activity:

> A: And we've been together for a year and a half and I started noticing that he started changing and hanging out with different people. Which I thought was kind of weird because I was like, weren't you telling me that you hate them and you don't want to be with them? He was like, oh I don't know what I want. And then I found out that he started doing drugs, he started smoking weed, and he started taking other serious drugs as well. I was trying to talk to him out of it, he started drinking and he started doing badly in school. And so his mom called me one time, she's like do you have any idea of what's going on with him? I was like, I don't know, I'm trying to find out; he's not calling me, he's ignoring me. And so I asked him a question, did you ever love me then or what? He's like no, I don't love you anymore and I never did. . . . I didn't want to be involved with any of the drugs or anything like that, I'm a student right now, I'm trying to get into college. I was like, I don't really want to be involved in all of this, so you either choose me right now or you choose your friends and drugs. He said, he chose friends and drugs, I was like OK, we're done. A week later I found out that he cheated on me during our relationship with one of my, used to be friends, Marina, who lived in the same apartment as we did. She brought me pictures, I have no idea why people take pictures of everything, it is so weird. I didn't believe anybody, but I guess I needed proof in some way. It was New Year's and my parents and I left to celebrate it there with my family friends. I was dating him at the time and he wanted to celebrate it somewhere else besides his house so I told him, hey it's ok you can go to my house, here's my keys, don't bring more than three or four people and make sure you clean up after yourself. And I probably should've asked my mom before doing that, but I assumed he would clean up. Two days later when we came back with my parents, we open the door and it smells like weed, there's bottles around the couch, and pizza boxes and I was just like, oh my god—I got it from my parents, they were so mad at me. I felt really bad, I felt it was my fault. He apologized and I forgave him, but when I found out during that night he actually cheated on me with my friend in my own house, I was like ugh, we're done! I found it really surprising, I don't know what happened with me but after we broke up, I felt so bad for some reason. Inside, I felt really terrible and he lived right across, so I always saw him pulling up in the

morning in a car with girls. I don't know why I started being really sad. I walked over to his house a lot, and I would cry to him take me back, like I realize now this is something I should have never done, because it's kind of disrespecting myself in front of him. Because I was literally on my knees crying, I don't know why, still I'm trying to figure it out, but it was very devastating, it was really bad. I remember I laid in bed. It was spring break at that time and my parents left for 5 days, and I was just at home laying on the couch and I didn't eat anything for those 5 days. I was just laying there drinking water because I felt so bad, I couldn't even explain what I was feeling, I had no one to talk to, laying there, and crying. I would just turn on the TV and it was playing but honestly my mind was not even there, this was after all the crying I had done in front of him and everything, and I was just laying in bed and I'm like, Oh god, what am I doing to myself?

After finding out about his drug use, she gave him an ultimatum. He chose his new life and the relationship ended. The loss left her distraught, and she describes incidents of being on her knees, crying, and begging him to reconcile. She was left raw and broken after his refusal. Her focus returned to the goal of attending a 4-year university and receiving admittance into a prestigious design program, and she abstained from serious relationships for a time.

Once in the program, a classmate named Ivan became interested in her. At first she resisted, but he was persistent and she eventually acquiesced, only later to find out that he had a girlfriend. Although she did not want an open relationship, she continued seeing him. They would be together, and then he would ignore her for weeks after. This cycle continued and came to a climax after he left her stranded one night; she realized he was treating her with a lack of respect:

> A: I started hanging out with him and then things started getting serious. My friend was dating his roommate and they were telling me how he has this girlfriend that comes over there almost every single night and so I'm not the only girl he has. So seeing him everyday in studio after that was really tough and he would be really weird—I don't know if I should talk about these things, because I never talk about them with anyone. But one of the nights, it really hurt me because I believed him. We would go on a date, things would happen, then he won't text me for 2 weeks. I would see him in studio and he'll come into studio

and it's like I'm not even there, he won't even say hi in front of everybody. So, I was always like, ok I'm going to be strong, and then 2 weeks later we would go on a date again and then he'd be an asshole. And one of the nights I really wanted to stay with him in studio. We were both working on our final projects and things happened. He went home and I really needed a place to sleep, so I thought that he would ask me to go to his place because he lives two blocks away from campus. He was like, oh no I can't, because I don't want them to see you and I don't want them to think that anything is going on between us. So you would rather leave me alone in studio overnight when it's cold and it's raining? He was like, yeah and he just left. I was crying a lot that night, I was really devastated and that's when I had it. . . .

[When asked about his treatment of her] I would say aggressive more than violent, very manipulative. I think he was similar to Ryan but he would be worse because he knew the vulnerable spots and he could just yell back at you and you feel, oh yeah he's right. Somehow he would turn it around very smooth. He scared me. . . .

E: How soon after you guys got together did you hear he was with someone else?

A: Almost immediately, every day. I would ask him about it and he would talk his way out of it, but I think it was true. At first I believed him, but after a while I felt stupid, I had already done this before, it was enough that he doesn't want to date me, obviously there's something he's hiding, from her or me, or both of us. So that was it.

Alisha's relationships with Ivan and Ryan show a reoccurring tendency to have unconsciousness around her choices and to sacrifice self for the sake of the relationship. In telling her story, she would reflect on her motivation or her actions, using the same phrases such as "I'm not sure why," "I don't know why," or "it just happened." This is reminiscent of Tolman's (1994, 2002) warnings about the dangers of the romance narrative and how disconnection from our bodies and our desires as women is detrimental to psychological health.

She rarely opened up to others about her struggles and felt her experiences have made her insecure and lacking confidence:

A: I really appreciate your research because it was kind of a step for me to actually open up to somebody, because I've never talked with anyone about it and I feel I've gotten very insecure over the years, I don't think I'm pretty and I don't

know why guys think they can do this to me. What I want is for me to be with a guy and not to think of any other girl when he's with me. For me to be the only one, because I want to commit to a relationship, but I don't think guys my age want any of that, I haven't met one. I know I don't want to be in an open relationship and I do not want to be hurt and I do not want guys to treat me like this and that's why I'm trying to figure out if it's my fault. I honestly feel like I don't trust men right now, I'm scared. I want to feel loved by a man, I want to trust him and know that he is not going to break that trust. I was thinking the other day, I want to be single from now on and hopefully I'll find that someday and if I don't find it, then I think it'll be better for me to be single, 'cause I really don't want to be hurt anymore, [tearful] I don't want to be hurt at all, it sucks.

Although the accounts she shared were painful, she was able to find meaning in these relationships, through a clarification of her ideals; she now requires trust, safety, fidelity, and commitment from her future partner. After so many violations, she was now afraid and contemplated abstaining from future relationships until she was able to understand her role in these patterns. She felt there was something in herself that frightened men away, and hoped to remedy this so she would no longer be taken advantage of. This excerpt illustrates how raw and vulnerable one feels after heartbreak. Alisha is wounded and has unprocessed trauma to work through before she will be able to move forward. Looking to another relationship only will repeat the patterns of her previous relationships. It is encouraging that she is beginning to gain insight and is getting clearer about what she does not want; it is a mistake to search externally for what is ultimately an interior process.

Ambivalence.

Alisha felt ambivalence around sexuality, understandably because of the traumatic nature of her first sexual experience:

A: I don't know, I think it's also something that has to do with religion in a way. With my mom, my dad was her only guy. So I thought she would always be that example for me, only one man and you're with him the whole time. Even my

sister, she only had two guys, she's 24 and she still lives with us. I look at myself and I'm like oh god, I'm even younger than her. I feel like it's all my fault and I don't know why I was seeing those guys. I don't know what was pushing me to do it, I want to know what it was so I can fix it and not do it again, if the guy is not going to be committed to me, then I don't need him.

E: You said with Ryan you were 15 and it wasn't what you thought was going to happen, having sex, but you thought it was going to be forever, so is it almost like you feel like you have to have sex in order to keep the person?

A: I would say that probably my subconscious is telling me that, but I think that it's also the fact that I don't feel anything.

E: During sex?

A: Yeah, I told every single guy I was with before things happened. I told them that hey I don't feel anything. Because what happened with Ryan is that I didn't tell him anything until like halfway through our relationship and when he found out he hit me —

E: He hit you?

A: Yeah he didn't beat me, but he hit me, it's not good obviously—

E: He hit you because you don't feel anything during sex?

A: Yeah, I was devastated. Then I thought about it and I'm like ok, if I'm going to be with a guy from now on I'm going to tell them that beforehand so that they know what they're putting themselves into. Because obviously it's not fun for a guy and I felt like only a man who would love me, would be willing to still be with me. I don't see sex as the biggest part of a relationship. But I felt like for guys it always is, so I feel like if I tell a man then he has a choice. I feel like I told them that because I wanted to see if this guy wanted to be with me or not, for me to know that the person actually likes me or not. But now I'm starting to think that it's just easier for them to be with me and leave me afterwards.

E: If you don't feel anything, first of all I'm wondering why and then why are you doing it?

A: That's one of the questions I want to find out and answer for myself, why am I doing it, because I don't know [gets tearful]. Honestly, I was very scared to tell people. But in a way I want to because if I see them getting scared then I know it's not for me. It's very hard to think of why I do it, or why I say it, or why I still do it when I'm with a guy. I feel like I just want to feel loved for who I am. That's part of the reason why I do it, if it makes the guy feel good then I'm happy for him, because I'm with him. I feel very safe in his arms, it's also the safety. I

think part of why I don't feel anything is because Ryan hurt me my first time when it happened because, not to say I didn't want it, we knew it would happen that day. But when it started hurting me, I told him to stop and he didn't stop. I was trying to push him off of myself and it was really painful. I walked home alone that day afterwards, I walked home all by myself and nobody knew anything. I was in a lot of pain and I think I bled for 3 days straight and I didn't go to a doctor. So I think that's why, I just didn't know what to do, I was 15.

E: Some girls find that having sex makes them more attached?

A: Yeah, exactly, I grow very attached. I get attached very easily to people. I think that's also where one of my problems is, that I want a good relationship, that grows, but I want it now. And I'm ok with taking it slow and letting it go, as long as I know that it's not an open relationship. I'm actually your girlfriend and we're going to work through all of this throughout the years. I'll know that you're my boyfriend and I'm your girlfriend, I need that. But when it doesn't happen, and when apparently it's an open relationship, it's like whoa I can't believe it.

Alisha had guilt for being intimate with more than one person, and she credited the religious standards held up by her mother as one of the sources for these feelings. Her relationship with her sexuality is further complicated by the admission that she did not feel sensation during sexual intercourse. In all of her relationships, she disclosed this fact to her potential partners, in order to see if they would be scared off or were truly interested in her. Sex was not an important part of the relationship for her, but she felt it was important for men, to them it was paramount, and it made her happy giving pleasure to her partner. As the discussion around sexuality deepened, she disclosed details and began describing her first sexual experience as traumatic and abusive; from the beginning, sex was never pleasurable. Later in the relationship, when she shared with Ryan that she did not experience pleasure during intercourse, he reacted with physical violence.

In the follow-up interview, I inquired more into the incident of his violent reaction, and she shared the following:

A: No, he hit me and left, he was really mad. I remember I got dressed and I started to leave and he's like, where do you think you're going, yelling at me, and I just left. But we never talked about it. I was mad at him obviously, I was like don't do that again and he said, ok. After I told him he was laughing at me, looking down at me, like you can't feel anything? Laughing at me in a way and I know he talked to some of his friends about it too, because they would laugh and point, ha ha!

E: When you decided to tell him about how you felt during sex, was it your intention to get him to stop, and what were you hoping would happen?

A: I think it was more anger, I don't think it was being tired; I think it was anger at everything, after all that. I had constant thoughts about the girls he cheated with and I think a part of me wanted that relationship to end sooner.

Her disgust with his treatment of her reached its limit, so she finally disclosed to him that she did not feel anything during sex.

Cultural trauma.

Because her family's adjustment to the United States had been riddled with strife, Alisha felt that her problems were subordinate and instead chose to keep her struggles to herself. She witnessed her parents remain committed to each other, and to their family throughout periods of great conflict and stress, and she wanted the same:

E: There was one thing you mentioned, that you had peer-pressured yourself into relationship and you also said something about your mom pressuring your sister because she's not married yet and I was wondering is there cultural pressure to be in relationship?

A: There is, honestly there is, even right now. Every time I come home and if I was hanging out with somebody, my mom would be, oh who're you with and every single day she mentions she wants grandchildren. I think the fact why it's hard for me to be with guys, I understand relationships don't work out sometimes, but it makes me sad that people don't even try. I'm not thinking about marriage, but I think there's a point where you just have to try, because obviously people separate and things don't work out, but from the beginning if you're like ok this is going to be open, what's the point at all? But to me in my culture, a relationship is an important thing, I want to be with a guy that walks in with me and this is my girl, maybe not a wife in the future, but for right now, I'm his and no one else's.

When you go places together you see if you can become a family and if you can't, you separate.

E: It's almost the opposite here [Western culture]; you have to do all of that other stuff and decide.

A: Yeah, definitely. There is a lot of pressure in my family and my friend is already married with a kid. It's funny because in high school she always said I would get married before her and my mom points to her that she already has a child. And this other girl in my apartment [building] is 18 and she's already walking around with a belly, I see it everyday. My mom's like, you're 21 now you need to find a guy. My mom got married when she was 23, so she's putting a lot of pressure on my sister because she's going to be 25. I hear it everyday and my sister gets mad and yells and tells her there are no good guys out here. I don't think my mom understands that it's not the same anymore when she was growing up back there and the values are completely different, the cultural difference. So it's a lot harder for us to find people that we are even comfortable talking to just because of the cultural difference and you can't find the same things to talk about. It's definitely hard, and there's a lot of pressure from parents.

E: And that's another difference, a lot of parents here almost don't want their children to be involved.

A: For a while I felt a bit self-conscious and uncomfortable that I didn't know bands, but now I'm starting to be proud of it. A lot of people don't even know where I'm from or where it's located, and that's just dumb, you should be open or ask questions. It's ok that I'm a little bit different; I didn't grow up here.

Being an immigrant is extremely difficult; one often feels torn between two cultures. Not only had immigrating caused a lot of hardship for her parents, but also it caused Alisha to emerge into adulthood in a culture very different from that of her parents. She had her own internal pressure to find a partner now, coupled with the external pressure from her mother to get married and to settle down. She found that the way young people in the West approach relationships was very casual and temporary, and she found it difficult to assimilate.

In Alisha's account of her experience with heartbreak, there are several themes that are similar to those found in the prior interviews. A particular one is the imbalance

of power seen in the stories of Jennifer (Interview #1) and Christine (Interview #3); in Alisha's story, it is manifested in the ways her relationships began. There is a clear designation between the pursuer and the pursued, giving her sense she was chosen rather than choosing. Her first relationship quickly deteriorated into one of emotional and physical abuse. Some of the effects of the abuse are evident in lingering symptoms of dissociation and in her troubled relationship with sexuality. Here is one more example of how being in a relationship causes more heartbreak than the loss itself.

Alisha was older when she immigrated to the United States; therefore the loss of language, culture, and community was severe. Fortunately one of the gifts from this time was her discovery of art, which has been a resource for her ever since. Her current situation living in a small apartment with three family members and significant economic stress was compounded by the misunderstandings and conflicting expectations that are often placed upon immigrants. One gift from her heartbreaks and hardships is that she has begun discovering a sense of agency and developing a clear idea of what she wants for self and future relationships.

Interview #5: Amy

Amy was in her 30s, married with a small child. She grew up on an island in the Pacific Northwest with her family. She was the first child for her parents and was the only one, until the arrival of her sister 10 years later. Although there was a lot of conflict between her parents and she did not maintain a close relationship with her father, she really enjoyed her childhood and where she grew up, spending a lot of time riding horses and being outdoors. She had what she describes as minor relationships, until she met Kevin through friends at a rock concert her junior year of high school. They did not

attend the same school, so they made time for each other mostly on the weekends. She

described the relationship as romantic by telling the story of how he would drive his

small boat to her house, and they would spend weekends at each other's houses having

adventures:

> A: We saw each other on the weekends and it was very romantic, he lived close to the water and they had a boat, they had a little Boston Whaler and I remember he would take his Boston Whaler over to see me—isn't that the most romantic thing? And, he would pick me up and we would go over to his house or he would come over and dock his boat, his junky little Boston Whaler at my house and then spend the weekend. And we both had very liberal parents, so we would stay over at each other's houses and that was not a big deal at all. I was a total prude anyway so, we were not messing around sexually more than kissing and my parents really trusted me—I probably could have been a pregnant teenager if I wanted to be, but I wasn't. But, they really trusted us, and so we spent the night at each other's houses all the time.

> E: So, it sounds like a sweet relationship—

> A: It was really sweet, I would say he was super innocent, he was more innocent than I was, I would say, he was really innocent.

> E: Can you give me an example?

> A: I probably think I was his first person he kissed; I was his first real relationship. I was just way more advanced socially than he was there wasn't anything wrong with him, he was just really a little naïve I would say—super innocent. He hadn't had a lot of girlfriends, I think maybe he had gone to a dance with one girl, I mean how old were we, like 17 or something. I was his first serious girlfriend for sure, and he was not my first serious boyfriend.

> E: He wasn't.

> A: Mm, mm. I was a prude, so when I said serious, it wasn't like I was having sex, but I had long boyfriends before, 8-10 month relationships, and that's forever when you're that age. And so he was my third and I was his first.

Although it was romantic, it was innocent. Kevin had never kissed a girl nor had a

girlfriend before her, and although she she had more relationship experience than he did,

she had never been in love before. Kevin was different from the boys before. They could

talk endlessly and had many adventures together experiencing new things:

> A: We could talk forever; we couldn't even listen to the radio in the car, because
> we were talking so much to each other. We did a lot of things together and we
> always were doing new things together. We would see shows, we went camping,
> we were really active together, it was really fun. And the other ones were just
> going to parties or studying, you're just living your life with someone on the
> sidelines. With him, we were doing really fun, interesting and new things
> together all the time. We would take the boat out together and drop the crab pot
> together. . . fun activities. We were really paired, we really liked to do new things
> together and we suggested new things to each other, and we were both open and
> so it was fun and exciting. He has a really strong: like let's go do it, come on let's
> go! And he was super energetic and I would even call him ADD in some ways.
> My parents thought he was so—my dad didn't really love him very much,
> everyone else in my family loved him. My grandmother, my boyfriend after
> Kevin, my family met him and my grandmother I remember her saying to me, we
> liked Kevin.

Even at the time however, there were parts of him she knew were not a good match for

her and she knew the relationship would not endure. For example, her mother was

overweight, and he made unfavorable remarks about her body. Although at the time she

did not say anything, it was proof that the relationship had a time and a place; whereas

she does not feel he had the same perspective:

> A: Even at the time. There were things that he said, my mom's overweight and
> he would say things about my mom and, I wouldn't get mad at him, but it wasn't
> someone I wanted to be with forever. But my family didn't know that he was
> saying these things, they just loved him. I always knew that I didn't want to be
> with him forever, because there were these parts of him that that I didn't really
> like. . . . But I think as much as I loved him at the time, I also understood that it
> was a point in time and it wasn't forever, I don't think he realized that when we
> broke up.

Endings.

Amy was applying to colleges and encouraged Kevin to do the same. He wanted

them to both attend the same school and became upset when she also applied to out-of-

state schools. When it came time to decide, Amy agonized over the decision, as she did

not want to disappoint him and so put it off as long as she could, eventually deciding to

attend a different school than he:

> A: I applied to colleges and he was really upset that I applied to non-state schools. I convinced him to go to college, it was not even on his radar when we first met. I was going through all these applications process and I think encouraged him to apply. He was going to this one school, which I had applied to, but I also applied to seven other schools and I was away doing a study-abroad in Indonesia for 2 months and I had a 10-minute conversation with my mom one month in. She told me all the schools I had gotten in to and I told her to accept to two schools because I couldn't make up my mind in that 10-minute phone call and I had this pressure from him to go to the same one. I remember when I got back, I told him that I had accepted at both of these schools and he was really upset with me. I have these great letters, I didn't pull them out for you, 'cause I didn't know if you'd want to see them, but I have these great letters from my aunt, trying to convince me that I should go to the other one because I shouldn't follow a boy to college. I ended up picking the other one and he was super heartbroken. We stayed together—I sound like such a terrible person when I do all this, but we stayed together and then when I got to school, I was probably there for two weeks and I met someone else and I started dating him.

Though he was upset, they went to different schools with the unspoken idea that they

would remain together. As soon as she arrived at college she had a wonderful time,

experiencing new things and meeting new people. A couple of weeks after her arrival,

she met someone new and decided to end their relationship. Kevin was devastated.

Looking back, she feels that even though they had planned to stay together, intuitively

she knew the relationship would end soon after her new life began:

> A: I think that's part of my personality, looking back at accepting at more than one school, I just didn't want to make the decision. I just wanted to prolong making that decision, just keeping the door open for as long as possible. I didn't want to disappoint him, I mean it was really hard to disappoint him. . . I don't think I ever wanted to go to the same school.
>
> E: But it was hard to tell him.
>
> A: Yeah, super hard, yeah, I dreaded telling him. So, I think I had to accept at both schools and then when I came home I was going to deal with it. I guess I

could have just accepted at the other one and just not told him, probably would have been easier. . . .

E: When you went to school, did you guys have a plan? Were you going to try and make it work or was it an open?

A: We were going to stay together; we didn't have a plan. I think I knew, I think I knew when I left that I wasn't going to stay with him. I didn't tell him that.

Delaying the inevitable decision, not wanting to disappoint him, she gradually broke

away from the relationship. Her decision hurt him and she immediately began dating

someone new named Steve, and they were together for almost two years. It was a

horrible relationship for her, full of chaos and emotional manipulation:

A: Oh, he was so terrible. To this day I don't even know what was wrong with him. He was really awful. He was really emotionally manipulative; he was a really scary guy. We had a really long break-up, and we were together for 2 years and we were probably breaking up for a year, where we would fight, break up, and get back together. It was back in the day when you have physical tapes for your answering machine and so my friends made me save the tapes, so that I would listen to it and not get back together with him again, 'cause they were so nasty, the messages that he would leave for me. Oh, he was terrible. . . . He was a mess, I don't even remember what he used to say, but he was just really terrible, he was so bad my mom flew me home one weekend, because I was such a mess, she's like I bought you a plane ticket, you're coming home at 6 o'clock tonight, you can go back home Sunday night, this is why you go to school on the west coast, so you can come home for the weekend! He was really terrible, he was super manipulative.

E: And when did you notice that, or is it just in looking back?

A: No, I knew at the time. He wanted to stay together, so we went to counseling at the school. I can't believe that kids do that, it's so silly. I'm like let's break up, I remember, I wanted to break up; he wanted to stay together. He cheated on me with this girl, who now I'm really good friends with, but I hated at the time. I can't even remember, to this day I was so confused about the whole thing. I don't even know how he did it, but it was a total mind fuck, it was terrible, he was a mess. We were driving back to school at the beginning of sophomore year, and he told me on the way down that he wasn't registered for classes and he was just going to live down there, he wasn't going to school. And I was like, what the hell? I think we were probably together, he was maybe down there for six months or something, four or five, and then he just left one day. He just left, he got in his car and drove away and I never saw him again. It was so weird….

E: One thing I notice when you share, is how clear you are about what was them and what was you, does that make sense? A lot of girls take it on themselves and you're very clear about that it was something wrong with him, were you like that at the time, or is that just because you've had more time?

A: Hmmmm, I don't think I had perspective when I was in it, but I think my friends—well… that's not true, I think my friends, knew that there was something wrong with him and they were telling me that. But it was actually something I had to overcome after he left and we weren't together anymore. Everyone thought I was nuts, because I was with this crazy guy and everyone that weren't my close friends at the school, thought I was this crazy girl and it took several months for them to realize I wasn't, it was him.

E: I'm not following, why would they think it was you?

A: Because our relationship was so explosive, it was so bad. I was in a sorority and sorority girls are crazy. I remember this one night, we were walking around campus and serenading at other fraternities, at some point, some girls took off their shirts and we were walking around, totally drunk, covered in booze 'cause before we left our house we were like, shaking up champagne and pouring it on each other, I mean it was just nuts. . . . And I was a part of that group, I didn't take off my shirt, but I was part of that group and I think I left halfway through it. I went home, back to the house and he came over and flipped out that I would be walking around campus without my shirt on, or that I would be out there at all and that wasn't proper. He would bang on our door, and it scared other people in the house and we would go to mixers with other fraternities and he was there, getting into a fight with some other guy and I was like trying to pull him away and he was just like, it's not your battle! It's not your battle! So dramatic! I think it took the other students realizing I had a sense of humor about it, to realize I wasn't the crazy one.

He was unfaithful, and although her desire was to go their separate ways, she gave into his request to attend counseling to repair the relationship. During their second year, although he was not enrolled in school, he still lived in a fraternity. There were many incidents in which she described him as being aggressive. One day, without word, he got in his car, drove away, and she never heard from him again. It took her a while after the relationship ended to gain perspective over what happened, and soon after, she tried to rekindle her relationship with Kevin:

A: I remember I wanted to get back together with him in the summer. He would not have me, and that was probably the heartbreak for me, he didn't want to be with me again, it was heartbreaking for me, but I think I probably broke his heart first. . . .
[Discussing why he turned her down] I think that he was having so much fun, I think he probably was hooking up with girls and was like, no way, this is awesome! That innocence that he had with me, was totally gone. He was like no way am I going to get back together with someone I've already been with, no way, probably.

After their break-up, it became apparent that he had experimented socially and the innocence he had was now gone. The roles had reversed and he rejected her, and Amy was disappointed and heartbroken. She took a break from relationships for a while, focusing instead on building friendships and enjoying her school experience. She did not truly make close friends until her relationship ended, because Steve took up so much energy. It took time for others who did not know her, but who knew of her relationship, to realize she was worth knowing. She had a series of fun and intense relationships until she met her husband David, and in looking back, she felt that Kevin and David were the only two she loved.

Parental relationships.

Amy was too busy enjoying her childhood to think about relationships as she grew up. However she did witness difficulties in her parents' relationship—her mom worked hard to support the family while her father never worked:

A: I don't understand how my mom could be married to my dad [laughs]. My dad is really checked out, he never worked. My mom works so incredibly hard, and I never felt he contributed that much to our household. So you'd think that he'd run the house if he's not working outside the home, but he didn't really do such a great job. We would have spaghetti every single night because it's easy to make. He would complain about picking me up from school so I had to find my own way home, or my mom's diabetic and he didn't cook food she could eat. He built our house and took care of the house, but I just feel like he did not contribute that much. This idea about having a productive life? Not my dad at all. He is

not a productive person at all.   He'd just disappear in his man-cave or drink tea, he thinks a lot. He sits, which is a yoga thing, but he doesn't ever come out of sitting it seems. We'll be in the middle of my daughter's birthday or something and he'll just walk out on the porch and you're like, dad come back inside and join the people. For example, my mom works so hard and my dad would go to Europe for 10 weeks in the middle of the summer. My mom doesn't want to go with him anymore, because of the way he travels is just not comfortable for anyone, much less my mom. But he just goes away for these really long stretches of time and I just feel like it's so selfish, I just feel he's very self-absorbed. I tolerate him now, I make an effort to talk to him on the phone and tell him about things and have a relationship with him, but I had to make a very conscious decision to be like, Ok, this is going to be our relationship and I didn't really have a dad I would say growing up, he was kind of there and did the bare minimum.

E: And when did you make that choice, you said you made a conscious decision?

A: Probably after college I stopped trying to make it something that it wasn't or stopped caring about it I guess. . .

E: Did you ever talk to him about it?

A: I think one time we had a fight and I told him how I really felt and he said, I know, and that was the end of it. So, when my sister was born, I was 10 and I told him when I was in college that I lost my dad when I was 10 and he's like I know. That was the end, that was the last time we talked about it.

E: Did it get worse when she was born?

A: I feel like before 10, I didn't even notice. I don't think my dad likes me very much either, this is totally turning into a different conversation than heartbreak, but I don't know if my dad doesn't like me or feel like he messed up with me and felt like he had another chance with my sister. Because he and my sister are tight, they are very close. But my sister knows, my sister would probably say the exact same thing about my dad that I would, but she has probably a softer spot in her heart for him, because they're buddies. They would go traveling to Europe together, I never got invited to go to Europe with him when he went away. I just think he likes her personality more or I don't know what it is, but it's not worth it for me to try and change it. I think our relationship is better now, but I still don't feel like he's a dad you're supposed to have. My idea of what a dad should be, he is not it.

Her father built and maintained the house, but outside of that, she felt that he did not

contribute much else, nor did he look out for her mother's medical concerns. She

described him as selfish and self-absorbed, often removing himself from the family and

taking long vacations alone; she felt as if she never had a real dad, he just did the bare minimum. She witnessed him have a different relationship with her younger sister and is unsure of the reason, but clearly they shared a bond that she and her father did not. At the time of the interview, she acknowledged that although the relationship was still lacking, her father's weaknesses were still present, and he was no longer a priority in her life, she was beginning to feel more acceptance for the way things were.

Growing up, she did not witness her parents spend a lot of time together; they were never affectionate, and her mom was often angry because of his lack of participation. She was particularly attracted to her husband David, because of his ability to be a great father and partner:

> A: I have a better way of being with him now, but it's probably because I don't have to live with him. I know that there's still things that my mom and dad do together that they have fun doing together but I feel like that's a recent development. It's great, but I didn't see that growing up at all, they took a few trips together, but I never saw them holding hands, no way! No way.
>
> E: It sounds like your mom was working so hard she was probably exhausted.
>
> A: Yeah, and I think she was angry at him a lot, because he wasn't doing anything, they fought for sure, I guess what parents don't, I would say they fought, but my dad just leaves, nobody is very confrontational in my family. So my dad would just leave if my mom started yelling at him. I certainly didn't want a father like my dad for my kids; that sounds terrible. I get along fine with my dad now, I just wouldn't want him to be a father to my kids. I don't think my mom is very happy with it either, but it is what it is, she can't change it.

Although Amy experienced pain and heartbreak in her love relationships, her story is a good example of how one's relationship with a parent can be the most heartbreaking. The distance she felt from her father, having witnessed the difficulties in her parents' marriage, along with the difference in the way he related to her younger sister, all left their mark and led to her having a pragmatic approach to relationships. For even as she

struggled with indecision and reluctance to disappoint others, when it came to it, she

chose herself. Even when she was involved and devoted to Kevin, she knew that he was

not the person she would spend the rest of her life with; she had observed unkindness in

him and knew she did not want that in a husband. Perhaps witnessing her mother deal

with a selfish partner gave her some insight or at least a model for what she did not want

in her own marriage.

When asked if she felt there was anything she would do different looking back

now, she replied:

> A: I think going through those relationships—I don't know, I would probably act
> the same way, so maybe I haven't learned anything from it. I wouldn't change
> anything, I still feel I'm kind of chicken about breaking up with people. I haven't
> had to do it in a while, I don't think I ever broke up with anyone.
>
> E: Did you just realize it and wait until it got terrible enough and they would do
> it?
>
> A: Yeah that's what I did! I honestly don't think I would do it differently
> because I don't have the guts to do it. . . I just let it get progressively worse and
> worse, until finally there's nothing there; oh, that's what I did. I still have a hard
> time confronting people about bad news. So I guess I learned that about myself,
> I'm sort of a passive aggressive person I don't know what else. . . I don't think
> that's unusual for girls.

Although pragmatic about her relationships, she feels she was too passive. She often

stayed in situations too long, as she did not want to be the one to end the relationship,

preferring to let it deteriorate to a point where the other person ended things instead.

Amy's heartbreak in her relationship was definitely less dramatic and subtle; in

fact she was the person who broke the heart of her first boyfriend, Kevin. After having a

complex and troubling relationship with someone else, she went back to Kevin hoping

they could rekindle their relationship, and he refused. It seems in her case the heartbreak

is not having the father figure she really yearned for in her life. Her father was not a

good partner to her mother, and it would be fair to say, he often neglected Amy, especially when he seemed to clearly prefer her younger sister. In her approach to relationships, she proceeded deliberately, and she neither threw herself in, nor gave up her identity. Even if passive at times, she chose her own life and did not fully give of her self until she knew she had found the right person.

Interview #6: Kate

Kate was in her early 30s, a wife and a mother to a young child, living and working in an urban area on the West Coast. She grew up in the northeast with her mom, stepdad, and older sister. Her parents divorced when she was young and her contact with her biological father was inconsistent, until he died when she was 12 years old. She met her first boyfriend, Josh, the summer before high school began. Their older sisters were friends, so they knew of each other before they met. Kate's father had died 2 years earlier, and a year later, Josh lost his mother. When high school started, Kate became friends with a group of girls that had gone to middle school with Josh, and so the two began spending time together as friends. Their friendship slowly became romantic later that fall.

   First love.

Kate emphasized the fact that she always felt the core of the relationship was a sincere friendship and an unspoken bond over experiencing tremendous loss at a young age:

> K: We dated all of freshman year and sophomore year; it progressed in a normal high school kind of way. We were definitely boyfriend and girlfriend and people knew it and we had a group of friends, his group of guy friends and my group of girl friends and there was a bunch of overlap. The girl friends were dating the

guy friends; we just had one big group of friends. Also, it's the time in your life when you start to try things, drinking and drugs. So that happened at the same time, but always at the core of it, was this really sincere friendship. I think that was anchored by the fact that we had both lost parents. We talked about it to some extent; we also didn't really need to talk about it. We knew that the other person knew what you were going through. His dad eventually started dating other women and he wasn't really around that much. So, our typical weekend was Josh would come to my house on Friday nights and we would watch a movie, hang out, my parents would be home. Then on Saturday nights his dad would see his girlfriend, so we would hang out at his house with a group of friends and drank heavily or do too many drugs. It's just really funny, because at that time of your life things are happening, they were all happening simultaneously and for me when I think back, he's very much a part of that discovery of all these new things.

Although they rarely discussed their shared experience of loss, it was important for Kate to have someone that understood. Their grief occurred during a time of life when developmentally, one is discovering new things and trying on new identities. He is still strongly associated with this time of her life, with who she was in her adolescence, as he supplied her with a support system and friendship. They shared a friend group and spent weekends together, experimenting with alcohol and drugs. She described the excitement of the first time she realized she loved him during one of their ritual evening phone conversations:

> K: The main dynamic is that we were really close friends, a really great support system for each other. I don't know if you'd say that now, but there was a time that I realized, oh my gosh that I love this person and I hadn't ever loved somebody that wasn't my family member before. . . .
> I remember being on the phone with him and just being like, I love you, I totally remember the first time we told each other we loved each other. So I guess when I think about our dynamic there were some things that as our relationship progressed, over the ages of 14 to 16, the dynamic went from friendship to romantic, then romantic and friendship then to sort of this realization, oh you're really important to me.

Their relationship progressed slowly from friendship to love; they meant a lot to each other, and they gradually became more serious and intimate.

Heartbreak.

Both virgins, they would frequently discuss and plan their first sexual encounter.

Kate noticed Josh begin to behave strangely when the familiar topic would arise, and

when she finally inquired, he admitted that he had lost his virginity to her best friend,

Anna. She was understandably devastated and felt betrayed by the two closest people to

her. Kate's account of her distress when her boyfriend disclosed that he had been

unfaithful, aligns with how the other participants related to their experiences of betrayal.

She described the incident when her friends began discussing the possibility that her best

friend and boyfriend may have had intercourse:

> K: She was my best friend and he was my best friend and I was like, of course
> nothing happened between them. Josh and I love each other and we're planning
> to have sex with each other. It came out eventually because he got super weird,
> he didn't want to talk about our plans for having sex anymore and he's like,
> because I've had sex and I'm like, what? He's said I'm really sorry, but I had sex
> with Anna and I was completely devastated. I just remember I went downstairs
> and my poor parents were probably like what the hell? I got off the phone with
> him and went downstairs and talking to my parents. I told them that Josh and
> Anna had sex with each other, totally devastated.
>
> E: Well, who were you going to tell? It was both of your best friends.
>
> K: I know, exactly and they were awful to me. They said if you tell anybody
> we're not going to be friends with you anymore, total immature, high school kid
> thing. I just didn't know who to tell, but I was so devastated. First of all,
> obviously I totally trusted him and I was like, it would never happen and then it
> did. Immediately thereafter we stayed together as a couple, but I was really hurt
> and it totally, just fucked up our relationship. But I felt like he was my best friend
> and we had this shared experience of losing our parents, but there was no one else
> that could understand me how he did. Basically we tried to stick it out and I tried
> to get over it and it obviously really harmed my relationship with Anna. Josh and
> I stayed together; he stopped hanging out with her as much.

Kate conveyed the devastation she felt when she discovered that two people she trusted

had betrayed her. As with other participants, it destroyed any pretense and certainties she

held and she did not know what to do with these overwhelming feelings. Not only hurt,

she was angry and disgusted. A relationship that was once an innocent love full of mostly positive experiences, now felt different.

The devastation compounded when Kate, Josh, and Anna eventually had a conversation. They told her that if she told their friends about the incident, it would be the end of their friendship. She had the suspicion that although they said they were intoxicated and claimed it was an accident, she believed there was premeditation, especially on Anna's part. Anna had participated in this type of behavior many times before:

> E: What was their story around why it happened?
>
> K: They said they were super drunk, again Josh's dad was gone because he was staying over at his girlfriend's house. I was really close to a cousin of mine, I think I had gone to her house for Saturday night and Anna had gone to Josh's. No one else was hanging it was just the two of them and his dad wasn't home and she stayed over there and they got really drunk and they had sex.
>
> E: What did they expect to happen, if she went there by herself?
>
> K: I definitely feel it was premeditated. Maybe not for him, but definitely for her. She always had been and continued to be a person who sought validation from male attention. She wasn't particularly attractive and she didn't have many redeeming qualities, except for [the fact] that her mom was permissive and they had the party house. Her mom smoked cigarettes and I totally started smoking in 7th grade because sleeping over at Anna's house, we could smoke cigarettes in her bedroom. As we got older, her mother was also an alcoholic and we could basically drink openly and her mom was, how was your drink? It was super-dysfunctional. Basically she was the school guy's girl, she never had a boyfriend. She did when she was younger, but never throughout high school. She just had the party house and was totally promiscuous and would basically hook up with everybody else's boyfriends. The guys found her so appealing because she was cool. She did a lot of drugs and she was easy to hook up with. You could go to her house and do whatever you wanted and she sort of had that reputation. I feel like there's one of those girls in every high school.

Anna had always craved male attention and had difficulty maintaining female friendships. Her mother was an alcoholic and very permissive, so her house was a place

for all the friends to gather. At first she tried to maintain a friendship with Anna but eventually began realizing she had never benefitted from the relationship, and she began investing time in other friendships:

> K: I also tried to maintain a friendship with her to a certain degree, but eventually that broke down too and I stopped hanging out with her and gravitated towards some other friends that I had made. She and I had gone to middle school together and we were friends. Basically all the trouble that I ever got into was with her. After that happened, we were civil. She also had always been a terrible friend in a very middle school sort of way. We had this triad with this other girl Mandy and Anna was always a fucking jerk. I remember this distinctly, the three of us would always hang out together and there's always this imbalance with three people, two people are always closer. Basically she and Mandy were better friends. People used to make posters for each other that would have a bunch of inside jokes and cut out things from magazines. Anna made a poster for Mandy and there was this thing on it that said, "the cat sucks." Mandy had these cats at her house and they always were like, oh we're talking about Mandy's stupid cat that sucks, it's such an awful cat [laughs]. They attributed the cat sucks to this cat that lived at Mandy's house. But really what it was, is they had made up a code name that I was the cat, so they could talk about me in front of my face. So it was this inside joke that the cat sucks, I was the cat. I remember Mandy telling me this the summer between 7th and 8th grade and she said, I have to tell you something, I'm so sorry. Basically Anna was a toxic friend and eventually people always realized that but she had this allure that she could captivate or suck anybody in and she seemed to bring out the worst in every person.   So Mandy got sucked into this friendship with her and I thought all three of us were friends and at a certain point she realized this person is a jerk, and I'm really sorry. I've been a terrible friend to you, you're the cat. Even at my most immature state, I would never do something like that, because it's so mean. I was never bullied or picked on, I had no idea until it was over, and I thought they were my friends. It was a mean girl typical thing that happens, it illustrates the point that she was just a jerk and a horrible person.

There were many instances in the past when Anna was not a good friend and it took some time for Kate to see that the friendship was not worth maintaining. The betrayal with Josh led to the friendship's eventual end.

The fact that Josh was more than her boyfriend, he was her best friend, and the one she looked to for support, made the relationship particularly difficult. Ultimately she decided she still loved him and they tried to work through the consequences of his

betrayal. A few months later, they began a sexual relationship despite the circumstances

surrounding them. Losing her virginity to him was a special and positive experience, and

she felt it elevated the relationship to a higher level of intimacy:

> K: Eventually after enough time had passed, I had already decided I still really love him and I want to move forward with our plans. So I decided I still wanted to have sex with him and this is only important because I lost my virginity to him. So it was months later and we then started to have sex with each other, which was a new level of relationship. Even though we still just had a phone relationship, what you have in high school, but I would say about making that decision and having sex, even though we now had this baggage where he had violated my trust, it still was a special happening. I still feel really positive about choosing to do that and that I lost my virginity to him. It was very important and special and I still have positive feelings even though I was so young, I think it was right before I turned 16.

Later on in the interview, I asked about the length of time between the betrayal and the

beginning of their sexual relationship, and she responded with more of her feelings about

the issue:

> K: I would say it was a matter of a couple of months or less, not a lot of time. Maybe in my mind, I don't remember what I was thinking at the time, but it wouldn't surprise me if I thought, I was planning to do this anyway, this is what I want to do, let's just go ahead and do it. And it wasn't this big formal thing, I remember we were over at his house and we snuck in to the liquor cabinet and I think I had a couple of whiskey shots, which were so disgusting, still to this day I cannot drink whiskey. Not because I got super drunk, but it made me feel ok everything is fine. We were in his room making out and I was ok, I want to do it. He was cautious, are you sure? I definitely wasn't drunk and making a drunken decision. I was loosened up by alcohol I wasn't incapacitated or not coherent. I made a conscious decision that this is what I wanted to do. I think it was a moment of wanting to feel important and close to him, that never went away, even though I was really hurt. He was the most important person to me ever. I don't have any regrets, but it was a very brief period of time, because we never really broke up. We still stayed together and just went on as if everything was normal. We'd have these moments where it would come up for me and I would feel upset about it, but it wasn't like we broke up immediately and got back together a year later, we never broke up. We were on this path anyway.

The relationship progressed sexually even though she was still working through her

anger. Throughout the aftermath of the betrayal, her desire for physical and emotional

intimacy never faded. At the same time, she was confiding and rehashing her feelings

about her pain to the person that was the source of her suffering. No matter what they

did, the relationship was corrupted and although she was afraid to lose him, she could not

move past her anger:

> K: I was super conflicted, because I still had all these hurt feelings and still was trying to figure out does he have feelings for this other person. But I felt I was closest to him out of anybody, he really was my closest friend and confidant. . . .
>
> Eventually over the next year it was all so confusing and still so hurtful to me, it totally corrupted our relationship. I think we remained really close friends and I really needed him, I was going through this grief process of losing my dad. I didn't really have anybody else, maybe I was dependent on him. . . but I also was really angry at him. That continued through my sophomore year of high school and then we officially broke up because I started to like this other guy. I think because I was super mad at Josh for violating my trust and I think it was really hard for him and I know because of the aftermath, I decided I was going to move on and to say I need to take a break from you, you really hurt me.

Finding herself attracted to someone new and not being able to process her feelings of

anger and sadness, she broke up with Josh and this broke his heart. While they were

apart, he was able to recover. In the fall, she began having a difficult time and realized

she missed Josh and wanted to fix their relationship. When she asked for his friendship,

he refused:

> K: I started having a difficult time early in my junior year of high school and I realized I miss Josh and I need to try and make this right. I went to him and I said I just really need your friendship and I made a mistake and I love you and he said it was too late. That he had just got to a point where I cannot think about you and it's just over. I remember, thinking beyond the point of being boyfriend and girlfriend, just feeling I need you to be my friend right now, because I'm having a hard time. I understand now that he was just, I can't do it. But, it was devastating and it totally fucking broke my heart. I mean he had already broken my heart, but I think that rejection was harder than the original trust violation.

It was harder for her to hear him say he could not be her friend, than say he had slept with

Anna. She continued later:

K: I do feel when he said he couldn't be my friend the way I needed him to be, I think that was the impetus to really start to process my grief about losing my dad. Even though that would have happened anyway it really was the start of a really low point.

By going to Josh and asking for another chance, Kate made herself vulnerable. The

rejection was painful, but it became the catalyst for her to begin moving through her grief

over the death of her father. It was the beginning of a difficult journey:

K: I just felt so alone. Then I decided my first half of my junior year that I had enough credits that I could double up my junior and senior year and graduate from high school early and move on. My parents were super strict and oppressive in a way and I needed to get out of their house, and I was broken-hearted. So, I was like, I'm going to graduate from high school early. The rest of my junior year I was despondent and heart-broken, that's really the only way I can describe it. We still hung out with all of the same friends, we'd still see each other and every once in a while we would hang out with each other alone. We would talk about how we had been together and how it would have turned out if the thing with Anna had never happened; just romanticize how great our relationship could have been. Because I think he also felt it was also this important thing, but because he really rejected me I spent the rest of that year trying to win his affection back, which was totally fucked up and humiliating. I didn't feel humiliated at the time, but when I look back I'm just like, oh my god I'm so pathetic. There was a party at his house this one time I basically thought that if we sleep with each other again, he'll realize he totally loves me still. I went to great lengths to orchestrate this happening and he literally said to me this is not love sex, this is not because we love each other. If this is something you want to do that's fine, but it means nothing. I'm like, ok no problem. In my 16 year-old mind I thought when it happens, he's going to realize he really loves me [laughs]. He didn't have that realization, maybe he did but never said that to me. . . .

Basically I spent the rest of the year trying anything possible to gain his forgiveness, even though I didn't really have anything to be forgiven for, he had totally fucked me over. I didn't know how to deal with it and so I really pushed him away and then I was ready to be close to him again, he didn't want that.

Kate felt despondent for the rest of her junior year and she made the decision to

compound her last 2 years of high school and graduate early. Meanwhile, she shared the

same friend group with Josh. Every once in a while, they would spend time together

alone and commiserate how things could have been different. She spent the rest of that

year back trying to win back his affection, and she described several instances of humiliating herself with the hopes of making him realize his mistake and how much they meant to each other, but her attempts were unsuccessful. The relationship was important to her, and the need to feel supported in trying to process grief from the loss of her father, intensified its importance. She felt really awful for trying to manipulate him to love her again, but her desire for a particular outcome was so strong. It felt as if she was begging for his forgiveness, even though he had betrayed her. Her response to not being able to process the pain was pushing him away.

Due to the immense grief she felt from the betrayal and the rejection, she chose to graduate early, just as Alisha (Interview #4) had done. Kate went to college heartbroken and missing him. In order to prove to herself she was moving on, she made the decision to date the first person that pursued her. The relationship lasted the next year and a half, and he neither showed much interest in her as a person, nor did they have much in common; it was mostly to prove to others and her own self that she was over Josh.

> K: So, I graduated early and went off to college and he still is having his senior year and I got to school and I was so heartbroken. I can't describe the feeling of missing someone like that, it wasn't just about a boyfriend, it was the friendship. I decided whoever pursues me first I'll just go with that person. This guy asked me out, we had nothing in common, I didn't like him, I didn't really like anything about him. So I started dating this guy my freshman year and I dated him for a year and a half, he was such a jerk. He was so awful to me, but I just tolerated it, because I didn't really care. At the time it was hurtful, I like you or I'm trying to be your girlfriend, whatever my idea of girlfriend was at 17 years old, but he didn't know anything about me, he didn't really care. . . . When I'd go home for breaks I'd see Josh or hear about him through our other friends and still feel that terrible heartbroken feeling and I just kept going. In the meantime, this is important, after I went to college Josh and Anna, I don't exactly remember the timing, but I think it was that year I went to school, Josh and Anna totally got together and were a couple. That added insult to injury, now you're with this other person, my fucking arch nemesis, who ruined my life, not really, but it was horrible.

Although she was in a new relationship and trying to start a new life in college, she had

not recovered from the heartbreak over losing Josh. When she went home for breaks, she

would occasionally see Josh or hear about him through friends, and it still made her feel

terrible, the worst part was now, Josh and Anna were in a relationship.

Moving forward.

Over her summer break, she saw Josh at a party and they joked about what it

would be like if they were physically intimate again, since so much time had passed and

they had moved on. When she woke up the next morning, she felt a shift had occurred.

The heartbroken feeling was not as present, and she felt she had made a major step

towards moving on:

> K: I think we had hung out a couple of times earlier that week and had some
> conversations. We were at this party and were like, can you imagine what it
> would be like if we got back together, not date each other, but slept together?
> Because now we were both doing our own things and we had left all of this past
> stuff behind, so he's like yeah I think about that. It happened to be that both of
> our parents were out of town that night and we decided whose house to go back to
> and we went to his house and we slept together. I woke up the next morning and
> it was the greatest closer ever. It was like ok, now I'm not heart broken over this
> anymore. It's sort of weird, it's true and it wasn't. It was actually really good
> closure. It was like I've moved on, he's moved on obviously and I realized this
> other guy I'm dating doesn't know anything about me, he doesn't even like me.
> Now I've slept with someone else, so either I have to tell him that I've done this
> or I just have to break up with him. It's not cool if you think you're in a
> monogamous relationship. That's the one and only time I've ever cheated on
> anyone, which I felt really horrible about, but at the same time, I didn't feel that
> bad because this guy didn't even like me. . . . Basically the long and short of it
> was I didn't feel that bad because he was a jerk and I never was that into him. It
> was basically however I could convince myself that I was over this other person,
> but I definitely did feel it was this moral code that it was not cool to sleep with
> two people at the same time. I didn't tell him, but I never slept with him again.

This brief reunification put her new relationship into perspective, having never been

unfaithful to anyone before or since, she saw that this relationship was based on an idea

of trying to convince herself that she was over someone else, and she ended it. She

would still see Josh on breaks when she returned home:

> K: Then that summer I was back home, Josh and I would see each other time and again. It turned out he was still dating Anna and I heard from other friends she was sleeping with a lot of other people while they were seeing each other. I had this weird experience of having to tell him, it wasn't to be hurtful. I was telling him as a friend, I think you should probably know this and I think it was pretty devastating to him, but it was also vindication for me. I'm so glad I got to crush you right now [laughs]. No, I'm just kidding. Then we just drifted apart and we didn't keep in touch. We still have friends in common and we would see each other here and there throughout college, when we would go home for breaks. But nothing ever happened, that summer fling after the party was the last time we hooked up with each other. I think it was the last time we really hung out with each other too. Maybe there was one other break the following year, we were at a party and I ended up going back to his house, but I ended up sleeping in his sister's bedroom. So we still in this weird way, whenever we would get back together, we would still have this intense bond with each other. Of course I say, it's great closure and I'm totally over it; in the time I spent with him after, even though nothing was ever going to happen, there was still a part of me that was super heartbroken about it. Thinking back on it now, using my adult perspective, what I feel for my husband is a totally different thing. I do feel that first love experience is so formative; it's so important and so real. I've never stopped thinking about that intensity of feeling I had for another person. Even though I feel very different, it's a different feeling and a different level of maturity and falling in love with my husband and my marriage. But it still feels like a huge shaper for relationship for me.

Kate found out that Anna was being unfaithful and told Josh. Although there was a part

of her that got some satisfaction about the way things turned out, mostly she cared about

him and did not want him to be hurt. Over time, their contact became less frequent, and

it eventually stopped altogether, but the hurt from the loss took a much longer time to

recover. Although she had moved on, she still held this relationship as an important one

in her life.

Kate experienced a delayed response to the loss of her father and felt her

relationship with Josh made the loss more manageable, making it possible for her to have

some normalcy in her adolescence:

K: I think that again going back to the parent thing it was so intensified by needing someone to support you through that grief, which is indescribable. My dad died when I was 12 years old and I definitely had a delayed response to that loss. I think part of what made it manageable to keep going and have a semblance of a teenage life, was because of this relationship. I had something to focus on that was really special and important and meaningful. Again when I look back at it now, I wouldn't change anything that I did, he was really important. I don't feel regretful at all. I wish I had been a little more mature and really valued the friendship and been able to overcome my feelings of hurt and jealousy about him having sex with Anna. But otherwise I wouldn't have done anything different or I would have just done more to preserve the friendship part of our relationship.

The relationship held a lot of significance and was an important part of her development; her only regret was that she had not done more to preserve the friendship and put that above all else. His rejection was the impetus to begin processing her grief and was the start of a low point of her life. The losses compounded each other and left her feeling isolated:

E: Do you think part of the heartbreak could have been part of you processing the heartbreaks over your dad's death at the same time?

K: Yeah, possibly, I'm sure they're intertwined. This relationship or friendship, or both having something to focus on, having something feel really good and positive, oh my god somebody loves me. My parents, my mom and my step dad, were really great parents, they weren't super involved, and I felt pretty isolated. Having this love and friendship put off something with that experience and yeah I'm sure the heartbreak was totally entwined. It was like I lost my dad, I've lost my best friend, I've lost my first lover, it was a really big deal. I still think about it all the time, I still think about Josh all the time, not in a romantic way, I would love to see him again. I hear from other people what he does, I'll talk to other girlfriends who know him also and were friends during that period of time and I will say, oh my god total heartbreak and they are like, I think you broke his heart too. We sort of broke each other's hearts in different ways, at different times. It happened for him first when I was just, I need to get a way from you, you've done something really fucked up and I have to deal with it. He had a chance to process that loss and then I did it on my own and I'm like everything's great now and he's like absolutely not. So, yeah I think they are intertwined. My grief process happened over a long period of time, all during the time I was in college and I would say the first three years I was in college was when it was really happening. That's what led me to my interest in photography and the project I did documenting my family. I think the experience of being at school and making that workbook was very therapeutic and had nothing to do with Josh, but yes I

think the loss of the relationship with him was a total launching pad for me to confront the loss of my dad. Not that I thought of him in any other way than just a boyfriend, yeah I think they were totally intertwined.

In college her grief led to an interest in photography and coalesced into a senior thesis project, in which she mixed photos of her childhood with portraits of her family. While she was in college, her sister became a young mother and had three daughters with an abusive husband, all during her time there. It was extremely painful for her to witness.

> K: In my mind she was reliving the experience that my mom had, having kids really young and married to a really abusive man. My father was abusive in an emotional way, he was neglectful and not there, sort of a deadbeat type. My sister's first husband was really abusive in all kinds of ways. . . .

> I had really strong feelings about my sister's relationship and the fact that she was having these kids and bringing these children into a really dysfunctional situation. I had the feeling it was similar to the situation that we were born in to.

While dealing with her misgivings about her sister's relationship, she was still dealing with the grief over the loss of her father, so she integrated this into her project. All she had left from her father was a set of photographs from her early childhood. Through the images, she illustrated her struggles with her issues around identity that were magnified because her father was missing, and she was deprived of having an adult relationship with him:

> K: All I had left of my dad was a set of photographs from when I was a little kid. He disappeared from our family photographs because my parents got divorced when I was so young. I was really grappling with trying to figure out, who my dad was, who I was, which is very normal for that time in life. But I think when it's amplified by the fact that one of your parents is missing and you can't ask them, you don't have an adult relationship with them, it's even more fucked up and confusing.

Family photographs were physical evidence that her father had existed, the memories although constructed were real, and her family history was replaying itself in a painful way.

Parental loss is a central theme of Kate's story and was the bond she shared with her first love. She credited the relationship with supporting her enough so she could have somewhat of a normal high school life, however betrayal and rejection from the loss of this relationship led her to leave high school early and move away for college. Trying to escape this heartbreak, she quickly fell into a new relationship. Eventually she discovered this new relationship was only a superficial attempt to recover from the sting of Josh's' betrayal. On her own, she finally was able to start processing the grief around the loss of her father and move forward with her own life.

Chapter 6
Findings and Conclusion

From the outset of this study, my aim was to give attention to adolescence as a stage of life in its own right, rather than a recapitulation of childhood. I chose to focus on first love and heartbreak, as these experiences activate our complexes and provide an opportunity to become acquainted with our shadow, thereby creating the possibility to know ourselves more fully. The question that guided my research was: how does the loss of first love, leading to a journey of descent, transform an adolescent girl's identity? Now that the data is collected and analyzed, I realize there was an unacknowledged assumption in my question. From the beginning I have been interested in the descent, the loss, those times when the ego is defeated and the persona is shed. This led to the assumption that the descent and loss were facilitated by the end of the relationship, that heartbreak occurred when we lost the object of our affection. When I analyzed my data, I saw that it was sometimes true, but not always. More than half of my sample experienced heartbreak while still in the relationship, and their descent began long before the loss of the relationship occurred. For some, by just being in the relationship, they incurred a loss of self and a loss of power. I found a correlation that those who experienced betrayal and rejection in the relationship also found their relationships difficult. Although I do not find this surprising, it just shows that the concept of descent and heartbreak is not easily demarcated.

Pathos in Love: Love's Shadows

Truly experiencing love requires surrendering control to an initiation process, and any transformation involves a degree of suffering. Research shows that when heartbreak

is experienced during this stage of life, the suffering is often most difficult (LaGrand, 1986, 1989; Robak & Weitzman, 1998; Monroe, et. al, 1999). This section gives an overview of how the shadow side of life was experienced by my participants.

Power Imbalance

Interested in the relationship between love and power, Nelson (2012) expands on the myth of Eros and Psyche. She maintains that "Psyche's story teaches us about the artful use of power and the development of feminine potency within the context of what we love and what loves us" (pp. 8-9). Psyche makes the choice to defy Eros, with a lamp in one hand and a knife in the other, this choice changes her life forever. Nelson writes, "to know who we are and where we stand is akin to using Psyche's Knife. Its sharp blade helps us to separate the worthwhile from the trivial, but we must first be willing to take it up" (p. 18). Once this happens, one can never turn back. Heading towards an unknown future can be terrifying.

Holding Nelson's (2012) work around love and power gives some understanding why relationships can be hard for young women. It requires a claiming of power and sense of self that many do not have yet:

> A union of something unclarified, unfinished in which one partner is subordinate to the other would not be genuine. The alchemists refer to such an unstable union as the lesser *coniunctio*, an attempt to combine elements that have not yet been perfectly separated. A lesser *coniunctio*, like the first so-called marriage of Psyche and Eros, must dissolve because each lover is not separate enough, not distinct enough. (p. 94)

Some of my participants had relationships where they felt unworthy of the affection of the other, and this led to painful experiences. One in particular, disavowal of the self, means avoiding any choice that would result in loss of the relationship; anything that

creates conflict must be repressed. Although it may work for a time, the solution is short-lived because it creates an inauthentic relationship, for "if the relationship is false, then the self, which depends on the relationship for sustenance, also suffers" (Stern, 1991, p. 113). Relationships are important to our sense of self; however, if we are in a false relationship, it is not sustaining. Jennifer's (Interview #1) relationship is an example: before the relationship, she was precocious and powerful, and once in it, she found herself holding back in order to keep conflict at bay and the relationship intact. The moment when she found her voice again, signaled the beginning of the relationship's end. Although it was not what she wanted, her own growth as a person, going through the loss and moving away from the relationship, was beneficial for her in the end.

The same participants who struggled with disavowal of self tried to be the Perfect Girl. The Perfect Girl has a long history in our culture, expressed recently and historically in the purity campaigns. Lyn Brown (1991) expands the concept beyond that of being sexually pure to

> the girl who has no bad thoughts or feelings, the kind of person everyone wants to be with; the girl who in her perfection, is worthy of real praise and attention, worthy of inclusion and love. . . . She is the girl who speaks quietly, calmly, who is always nice and kind, never mean or bossy. (p. 78)

The Perfect Girl has similar consequences for a relationship as disavowing the self, and striving to be the perfect girl is physically and emotionally exhausting. Christine's (Interview #3) taking of all the things she was insecure about physically and changing them to please her boyfriend, finally led her to ask: if what you want is the exact opposite of what I am (blonde and straight hair), then why are you dating me? She had to break from the relationship to realize the toll it took and to learn how to accept herself. After

the break-up, she decided that anything she did going forward would be for her and not someone else.

The power imbalance in these relationships led the girls to not feel accepted and supported by their partner, which led to feelings of jealousy and suspicion. As Carotenuto (1989) shows, love relationships provide an opportunity to show our shadow side, what some might call our lower aspects. Often in love this manifests as jealousy and suspicion, he says "suspicion of our mate brings our shadow out in full force" (p. 72). Jennifer (Interview #1) referred to this as the "crazy detective," a part of herself she spoke of with a mixture of bemusement and embarrassment. She found ways to access his email, social media, and phone accounts to keep track of his whereabouts; she also had people follow him or wait for him at his house to see if he returned with someone else. She was right not to trust him. This "crazy" part of self did not believe his lies and would not let her accept them. Her shadow was where her strength lied, it would no longer allow her to take things at face value, nor would it let her ignore the nagging sense that things were not as they seemed.

The worst manifestation of power imbalance in a relationship is abuse. Alisha (Interview #4) was the only participant who had encountered abuse—physical, emotional, and sexual—in her relationship. Leonard (2001) gives valuable insight into abusive relationships, and her work bridges the archetypal world with the different ways that our psyche is activated in relationships and the challenges we can experience as a result. The Demon Lover, as imagined in *Dracula*, in particular gives insight to this case. The Demon Lover is someone

> who halts our progress by possessing us. The state of possession can be experienced in many different ways—for example, through obsessive jealousy,

any form of addiction, the state of being a perpetual willing victim, feeding off the blood of others, or offering up one's own lifeblood or creativity to another. Whenever we come under the power of the Demon Lover, we experience a loss of soul. (p. 77)

Especially in her first relationship with Ryan, Alisha encountered the Demon Lover. Her growth as an individual was stilted, as she gave everything she had to the relationship. He expected her to behave as he wanted and to tolerate his mistreatment. Alisha lost her soul in this relationship and slowly had to reclaim it in order to free herself. Unfortunately, some of the same patterns emerged in her subsequent relationships; fortunately she is better at realizing when she is being mistreated and not allowing it to continue.

All of the participants that struggled in their relationships with the byproducts of power imbalance—disavowal of self, the Perfect Girl, suspicion, and jealousy, among others; all had insecurities and partners who manipulated and dismissed their feelings. In order to individuate, separation from the relationship was needed. The relationships had to die so they could undergo the transformation required for a new way of being to be born. A valuable tool for transformation is our emotions, which we will discuss next.

Emotions

In a culture that prizes security and control, we have a deeply ingrained mistrust for the unpredictable nature of emotions. However Nelson (2012) shows that emotions should not be feared, they are a valuable tool of intelligence:

Long, close experience with the lunar tide of emotion can teach us that emotion has its own intelligence and that we would be wise to pay attention to it. Emotion is the *via regia* between unconsciousness and consciousness. . . .
Yet even today our culture fears deep feeling and emotional expression, one form that repression of archetypal femininity takes. We're encouraged to manage our emotions intelligently rather than acknowledge emotion's native

intelligence. Moreover, we prize control in nearly every aspect of life—resisting the idea that the heat of unruly emotion creates consciousness, willed or no, welcome or not—until we learn to trust our felt sense of things. (p. 89)

Emotions have their own intelligence and are a bridge between unconsciousness and consciousness, but our culture's relationship to them is one of fear and repression. Emotions are seen as something to be managed rather than listened to.

Similarly, Hollis (1996) refers to the times when emotions seem to take over as the swampland states. When we find ourselves in these states, he advises that we ask our self what is required,

so we have to ask what task is implicit in each of these dismal places. In every case it is some variant of gaining permission, leaving a dependency or finding the courage to stand vulnerably and responsibly before the universe. In every case we are challenged to grow up, to take on the journey with greater consciousness. While such enlargement is often terrifying, it is also freeing and brings dignity and meaning to our lives. (p. 54)

The task of the swampland state requires us to grow up and to take responsibility for our own journey by becoming conscious. After experiencing heartbreak, some participants began questioning themselves and feeling unsure about how to engage in future relationships. Yesenia (Interview #2) illustrates how hard this can be. The heartbreak she experienced after a short relationship in high school shook her sense of self to such a degree that she has not been in one since, over eight years later. Being vulnerable to another changed her, and she was afraid to experience this again. It is normal to feel doubt after such an experience. Doubt is a necessary part of growth, for

our beliefs must suffer doubt in order to grow, or our certainties about ourselves that must be shattered, doubt is the agency of change and renewal. . . . The task for each of us then, remains to risk the increased anxiety of ambiguity which doubt brings, in order to receive the blessing of growth. (Hollis, 1992, p. 58)

In order to grow, some certainties and beliefs need to be questioned, whereas others need to be shattered. Doubt offers the gift of growth. The participants who experienced ambivalence regarding future relationships were the youngest ones I interviewed, and each one of them had also experienced betrayal in the relationship.

After the loss of a relationship, all participants experienced loneliness at some point—it is an unavoidable aspect of the human condition. As Carotenuto (1989) reminds us, "our only recourse is to work through our isolation. One was alone in the realm of love; one is even more alone now, in tortured silence" (p. 82). We are always alone, even in a relationship, but it is in heartbreak when the feeling is most acute. Intimate relationships change us and "we must acknowledge that the old relationship is still present within us, in what it made of us" (p. 83). In our loneliness, we are to acknowledge how we have been changed by the relationship we have lost. In acknowledgement, we are granted the opportunity to become acquainted with our inadequacies, and "it [makes] us aware of the impossibility of being fulfilled" (p. 82). Hollis (1996) maintains our task in loneliness is "to bear the unbearable" (p. 64):

> The paradox of relationship, which we in the Western world seem to hold as the cure for all ills, is that the more one can embrace one's separateness, the more one can live with oneself, the better relationship will be. (p. 65)

The more we separate from and lessen the dependency in our relationships, the better they will be. A common response to loss is trying to win back the relationship, as the interviews show. For example, after her ex-boyfriend Josh refused to let her back into his life, Kate (Interview #6) spent almost a year trying to win back his affection. Only after considerable time did she make the decision to graduate early and leave for college, in order to escape her heartbreak.

Heartbreak cannot be compartmentalized; losses cannot be separated. As the opening quote from David Whyte states, heartbreak is the very essence of being human. Found in the stories of my interviewees, grief from the past often went unacknowledged. It is as if having one's heart broken opens the way for past losses to be expressed. Heartbreak shapes the way all relationships are approached, not just sexual ones. Falling in love for the first time can be seen especially as breaking from the parental bond.

Amy (Interview #5) saw her mother work hard to support the family while her dad took advantage of the situation, never working and becoming isolated. She witnessed the impact of this on her mother and began to resent her father. They had a cold and distant relationship, and she feels he does not like her personality, instead preferring her younger sister. In response, Amy developed a pragmatic and cautious approach to relationships; understandably she was more reserved. She was reluctant to give herself over fully, and when looking for someone to build a life and to start a family with, the early image of her father served as a model for what she did not want.

In a similar way, Yesenia's (Interview #2) family experienced great stress adjusting to immigrating, where basic survival was always a concern. The impact on her parents' relationship was catastrophic, and Yesenia witnessed domestic violence for much of her early childhood, ending only when her parents divorced. When she described the events of her childhood, she referred to the abuse as her mom's heartbreak, but the emotional impact on Yesenia cannot be understated. The relationship with her father was always strained, yet through age and experience, she was learning to find her voice and set boundaries with him. Knowing her childhood story, it is easy to understand why she would feel doubt or ambivalence about love relationships.

The loss of a parent is difficult for any child. Kate (Interview #6) lost her father soon after she entered adolescence. Being an inherently frenzied time, incurring any loss during this period makes it even more challenging. In Kate's case, it is as if she deferred her grief so she could maintain a sense of normalcy, and the shared bond with her boyfriend supported her doing so. When she lost him, not only was she grieving the loss of her first love, she was grieving the loss of her father, a man who had been on the periphery of her life since her childhood.

Two emotions that are especially despised in our culture, depression and anxiety, are an inevitable aspect of living and can be our greatest teachers. These "shadow encounters bring richness to a reality which otherwise would remain superficial" (Hollis, 1996, p. 68). These encounters can deepen our lives and expand our consciousness in new ways:

> Perhaps the most functional definition of shadow is *that with which I am uncomfortable in my culture or myself*. Thus the experience of depression may seem like a moral failure, a flaw in the cosmos or an unwelcome visitor to be treated with disdain and diversion. Knowing that fluctuation of mood are normal, inevitable and part of the meaning of our journey, is essential if one is to live without estrangement from self and world. (p. 68)

Depression takes us to where we are most uncomfortable. We often blame ourselves when we become depressed, as if it could be avoided if we were somehow stronger. This view serves only to divorce us from our true nature; descents are not only normal, they are an essential part of finding meaning in our lives. Lifting a depression requires facing our greatest fears and

> thus we are forced into a difficult choice—anxiety or depression. If we move forward, as our soul insists, we may be flooded with anxiety. If we do not move forward, we will suffer the depression, the pressing down of the soul's purpose. In such a difficult choice one must choose anxiety, for anxiety at least is a path of potential growth; depression is a stagnation and defeat of life. (p. 72)

The choice between depression and anxiety is difficult. Living our life fully guarantees we will be confronted with anxiety. It asks that we face our fears daily and move forward to our soul's purpose, and it takes great courage.

All participants in the study found some aspect of their heartbreak experience meaningful. For some, being in the relationship required suppressing their intuitive nature, a loss that came with a great cost. Although they found the results of heartbreak and grief meaningful, it was still common for them to describe depression as a bad time or a bad thing that happened. For all of the participants, having support systems was necessary, and many looked to their friendships to fulfill this need, and some looked to their mothers as well. Alisha and Kate found their respective artistic voices as providing great comfort during difficult times, and they continued serving a meaningful purpose in their lives since.

Culture

Feminist scholars such as Tolman (2002) and Thompson (1994) speak against the romance narrative that is perpetuated within our culture. In the case of young women, it suggests suppressing desire, submitting to men in a heterosexual relationship, and making sexuality performative rather than personal. Depth psychologists Johnson (1985) and Hollis (1998) track the myth of romance. Although romance and love are different, they have become entwined therefore leaving many disappointed and confused. The romance narrative particularly affected Alisha (Interview #4); more than once, she mentioned longing for a love story as depicted in the movie, *The Notebook* (Leven et al., 2005). Building on the idea of the romance narrative in our culture, Leonard's (2001) work

explores some of the major archetypal obstacles in our psyche as well as those activated

when challenges occur in relationship. She names one Ghostly Lover, reminiscent of

Hollis's Magical Other (1996; 1998), as illustrated in the romantic ballet *La Sylphide*:

> this idealized image of an imaginary lover, with its haunting hints of the divine, has a fascination which can make mere mortal lovers seem dull and ordinary. . . . But until this figure can be understood and experienced as part of ourselves, it can keep us in the realm of "impossible possibility." (Leonard, 2001, p. 39)

A lot of Alisha's experience in intimate relationships had been abusive, which was

compounded with the stress and trauma from her childhood, so it is easy to imagine the

reasons why she would find fantasy so appealing. However, it is impossible for a real

love relationship to meet the requirements of what she imagined; she will be disappointed

continually until she finds a way to engage with the archetype in her own psyche.

Sexuality

Feminist scholars (Brumberg, 1997; Tolman, 2002; Douglas, 1995; Irvine, 1994;

Durham, 2008) trace how historically girls' sexuality has been repressed and moralized.

Although significant strides have been made, looking through the cultural lens it becomes

clear that media exploits the myth of freedom and expression, tying sense of worth with

desirability to the opposite sex. Many girls and women are left feeling confused about

their sexuality. For some of the participants, the topic of sexuality was not an important

focus (Jennifer #1; Yesenia #2). Amy (Interview #5) mentioned it briefly because for

her, it was not a serious factor in the relationship; he was inexperienced and she was a

"prude." Christine (Interview #3) was the first participant to bring up the topic, as she

found her first sexual experiences a joyful and exciting part of her first relationship.

Alisha's (Interview #4) sexual history became an important focus of our discussion

because of the traumatic nature of her sexual history and her resulting difficulties. Similar to Christine's experience, Kate (Interview #6) found sex to be natural and comfortable with her boyfriend, and she viewed it as an important part of her growing up, and it established greater intimacy in the relationship.

Media

The influence of media on girls as a form of scholarship is increasing (Douglas, 1995; Durham, 2008; Redlich & Newsom, 2011; Pozner, 2010). There is an organization, *The Representation Project,* whose sole focus is improving the value of media content that represents women and girls. The influence of media came up minimally in my results. Social media for the younger participants was mentioned: Yesenia (Interview #2) was bullied through social media; Jennifer (Interview #1) spied on her boyfriend through his facebook account; and several girls spied on their boyfriends through email and text messages (Jennifer #1, Christine #3, Alisha #4). Alisha, Kate, and Jennifer all brought up how different their experiences were from the happily-ever-after ending so often portrayed by Hollywood. Although there are exceptions, the fairy tale ending continues to be the general rule in Hollywood. It would be beneficial to see different sides of heartbreak, grief, and loss where more emphasis is placed on the development of identity rather than reunification with the beloved.

Limitations of Study

The study utilizes the methodology of interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA); this approach is used when one is concerned with how individuals make meaning of particular experiences or events in their lives. IPA is interested in personal accounts,

while it also "emphasizes that the research exercise is a dynamic process with an active role for the researcher" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 53). Therefore it becomes a two stage interpretation process, or a double hermeneutic as "the participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (p. 53). IPA aligns with mainstream psychology, showing concern with cognition and mental process; however, mainstream psychology is committed to using quantitative methods, whereas IPA uses in-depth qualitative methods (p. 54).

In qualitative research there is no singular definitive approach. This makes it a flexible approach applicable to a wide variety of topics; however, the findings can be difficult to replicate by other researchers. In this methodology, the analysis of the transcripts takes a great deal of time because the aim is making detailed interpretations rather than general claims, a process requiring lots of time for the analysis of each transcript. There is some debate over sample size: some advocate for a single case and others, for using no more than three, because the detailed analysis process can overwhelm researchers (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 55). For my study, I did not follow this advice and chose to work from a larger sample size of six. I can attest to the fact that the analysis indeed is time-consuming, but I found it rewarding.

Researchers using the IPA approach try to enter the social and psychological world of the participants, and this requires a flexible data collection instrument. The best way to collect information is the semi-structured interview; it allows the participant and researcher to have a dialogue about the topic, which is difficult or unlikely if a prescribed set of questions is used. However this again brings up reliability issues, as the interview

changes based on the responses of the participant. Because the method emphasizes focusing on a small, select group, with the researcher using a dynamic approach in the analysis of the data, these kinds of studies are hard to standardize and to replicate.

Implications of Research and Suggestions for Further Study

Culturally, we have an ambivalent relationship with grief and heartbreak, which leaves many feeling unacknowledged and voiceless, as if these dark times need to be kept secret and hidden from view. Many studies are purely conceptual or academic, and it is beneficial to have the voices of real people give them depth and life. The more these stories of grief and loss are shared, the less stigmatizing and isolating these times of descent become.

Feminist researchers have done a lot of helpful studies regarding media and culture, and it would be helpful to study young women's experience with media and culture and how it affects their sense of self as they negotiate their relationships. A weakness of my study is all of the participants were in heterosexual relationships; it would be beneficial to include the stories of bisexuals, transsexuals, and lesbians.

Conclusion

Falling in love sparks imagination and allows our best self to be brought forth. It is a time full of creative potential. Although we hold falling in love in high regard, the shadow side is often ignored and avoided. Romantic expectations perpetuated by culture often leave us disappointed. Perhaps if we begin to view our woundings as initiations and as the source of our uniqueness, we can begin to see the value in the times of our life when we inevitably encounter periods of descent. Culture emphasizes achievement and

progression, placing unreasonable expectations on self and others. Trying to protect adolescents from the pain of dark times leads to the unintended consequence of many not being initiated into adulthood.

Breaking down is a necessary part of growth, as the darkness dissolves old structures that may promise security, but inhibit growth of the soul. As the rites of passage have disappeared from culture, the impulse to initiate has become part of our interior worlds and is now experienced in stages of psychic transformation. In a time of not being productive, often referred to as the chrysalis phase, it is important to know oneself and find one's personal truth, without which one becomes vulnerable to outside influences and messages of conformity.

There is a lot of research focusing on depression in the adolescent population, because it is the time when most people who suffer depression experience their first episode. In the adolescent and emerging adulthood population, researchers have shown a link between depression and heartbreak. Grieving is understood only if there is a death, outside of that it is otherwise disenfranchised, despite grief being experienced in all forms of separation. Disenfranchising grief makes it worse. Ascribing love to happiness diminishes us, for love is initiatory. Depression is an important part of the initiatory process, for it is a necessary encounter if we are to raise consciousness and make space for a new way of being. Descent is a natural part of life, and any form of transformation requires undergoing this dark phase.

Just because something is difficult does not mean it should be avoided, and often staying in place or being stuck in the past is more painful. The rituals of initiation are meant to transform. It is often the event of a women's first love that begins the end of

childhood. Viewing heartbreak as an invitation to wisdom has the potential to change how we view these dark times. Jungians argue for our dark times and depression, for they must be seen as valuable. We need time when we can slow down and listen to what, in our chronic busyness, is so often ignored. For when we are satisfied and happy, we are less likely to evolve. Our obsessive quest for happiness is futile because it is ephemeral. Finding meaning in our life is the goal.

By giving ego sole control, the ego's longing for security and control comes at the expense of the rest of the psyche. The goal of individuation in fact requires a loss of control, for the quest of individuation is wholeness, not happiness. The study shows how the loss of heartbreak affected a group of women in different ways, but with the common goal of becoming whole and better for having gone through these experiences. In the film, *Celeste and Jesse Forever* (Krieger et al., 2013) there is a moment when two women—one young and one older, find themselves together grieving their individual heartbreaks. Riley, the younger one speaks:

> Riley: Do you miss him?
> Celeste: Yeah, I do.
> Riley: They all fucking suck.
> Celeste: Kind of.
> Riley: It really never gets better? Like, not even when you're old?
> Celeste: No. But you do.

This is it. There is no fairy-tale ending that we are taught to expect. The film ends shortly after, with little more than a subtle change in the main character's way of being. Previously closed and guarded, the loss of her marriage leaves Celeste open, raw, and vulnerable. A clearing is made for individuation. She begins seeing herself more fully. I am attracted to the film for one simple reason: it is my hope that in whatever or wherever we find ourselves, we are better somehow.

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Appendix A: Dissertation Forms

Informed Consent Form

Title of the Study: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis of Adolescent Heartbreak and Love's Initiations.

1. I agree to have Erica Smith ask me a series of questions on the topic of my first experience of heartbreak in adolescence.

2. Following the completion of a brief information form, I will participate in one 90 minute recorded interview at a mutually agreed upon location. After the interviews are transcribed I will receive a copy and complete an additional telephone interview for additional comment and reflection. I understand that all interview materials will remain confidential.

3. The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of relationship loss in adolescence.

4. I understand that some of the questions may cause stress or psychological discomfort. I may take a break or discontinue the interview at any time. If necessary, Erica Smith will provide me with referrals for psychotherapy, the cost of which will be my own responsibility. I understand that a pseudonym will be provided to insure my confidentiality and that my answers will only be used by the researcher for her data analysis.

5. I realize that this study is of a research nature and may offer no direct benefit to me. The interview material will be used to further the understanding of adolescent heartbreak and its effects.

6. Information about this study, the time and location of the interviews, and my contribution to the study was discussed with me by Erica Smith. I am aware that I may contact her by calling (xxx) xxx-xxxx (9 a.m.- 4 p.m., Mon.-Fri.).

7. Participation in this study is voluntary. I may decide not to enter the study or to refuse to answer any questions. I may also withdraw at any time without adverse consequence to myself. I also acknowledge that the researcher may drop me from the study at any point.

8. I am not receiving any monetary compensation for participating in this study.

Signature _____   Date _____

Participant Instructions

The term "Intellectual Property" refers to all ideas, information, creation, and knowledge that are protected by law. Intellectual Property concerns everything that human minds have created as opposed to physical property. For example, the Microsoft butterfly is not a physical object, but it is a fixed form protected by Intellectual Property Rights.

The 90-minute interview will take place in a mutually agreed upon location and time.

The interview will be taped then transcribed into a written format. Your confidentiality will be respected at all times.

You will be asked to answer a series of questions about your loss of relationship, its associated difficulties, and relevant experiences. Although I will initiate discussion with these questions, the dialogue will be open, and you are free to comment on anything, which seems significant to you. If you have any journals or keepsakes from this time that seem relevant to the interview, please bring them.

During the course of the interview, strong emotions and memories may surface. You may feel some psychological discomfort. You are free to take a break from the interview or discontinue the interview at any point. If following the interview you feel the need for psychological counseling referrals will be provided.

Following the transcription of the interviews you will be sent a copy of the transcript. After reviewing the document you will be contacted by phone and asked to add comment and/or clarification. Added comments will then be included in the final draft of the dissertation.