BECOMING VETERINARIANS: A RELATIONAL ACCOUNT OF THE EXPERIENCES OF TEN WOMEN

by

Kathryn Ann Douglas

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Kathryn Ann Douglas, Ed.D., 1999
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of women who were becoming veterinarians during an era of female dominant student enrollment. Ten women in the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.) degree program at Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.), University of Guelph, between 1989-1997 participated in this qualitative study. Through life history interviews, the women expressed themes related to four social contexts: the family, adolescent school and work, undergraduate university, and professional school. The relational metaphor linking the contexts explored the role of empathy from selfobjects in the developmental process. Themes in the family involved parental influence, mother-daughter career similarity, and early relationships with companion animals. Themes in the adolescent years involved gaining strength and competence academically and physically with animals, learning through encounters with practising veterinarians, and developing an image of veterinary medicine as ideal for women. During undergraduate university, the themes were managing developmental issues and transition, managing competition in science culture, and preparing to conform to the cultural and learning demands of the profession. Both unique and familiar gendered trends were evident in the professional college experience. Strengthening experiences occurred in the context of belonging to a community, mentoring relationships, and personal validation. Demotivating experiences related to passive learning, competitive peer relationships, lack of freedom to express
competence, lack of voice, and cultural messages that were at odds with combining career and family. This research affirmed previous work that has argued that women prefer connected, relationally-oriented education (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986) and that science education is competitive and non-rewarding (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). This research failed to report a loss of voice during the adolescent years (Brown & Gilligan, 1992); however, loss of voice became increasingly apparent during undergraduate and professional education. Some reports of homophobia, gender discrimination and harassment underscore previous findings (Betz, 1994; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987) that such experiences are part of women’s career development. Veterinary medicine offers a unique example of a profession in which many talented women are moving. Nevertheless, the women in this study were still experiencing contradictions in integrating their worlds of work and family.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

What a strange time it is! We’ve been here for six years, made really good friends. Of course we’re all from different areas. We’ve come together with common interests and now we’re all leaving - going all over the place. Some people don’t know what they want to do, and some people are in serious relationships. They are trying to decide where they should go and how that should doctor their journey.

Graduating student participant, Large Animal Practice

We haven’t heard our own voices yet. We haven’t heard ourselves saying, “I would like this test, that test.” And when they say, “You’re in practice, what would you do?” We go, “uh, uh.” We’re not used to giving that command yet and it’s an odd, odd feeling. If somebody looks to you and says, “Well, what do you want to give him?” That’s my decision? Okay. That’s very odd.

Graduating student participant, Small Animal Practice

The process of becoming a veterinarian is the enactment of a wish. The journey drew the women into a common experience as learners, uncertain of their own competence, accustomed to the oversight of others, and largely unaware of the sound of their own voice in the process. This research is dedicated to the student participants who shared their journeys with me. I hope that your own voices will ring clearly as others learn about the experience of becoming a veterinarian from you.

I would like to thank the following members of the Ontario Veterinary College community who so generously shared their time and support with me: Dean Alan Meek, Mary Earl, two anonymous male administrators, three women students who advised me, and ten women student participants who shared their life experiences. Those student participants taught me about the process, and told me that they had rarely paused to think about themselves in the way my research demanded. Several anonymous informants were also instrumental in contributing to my
understanding.

I acknowledge the previous research of Margaret Patterson (1991) with this population. She gave me an incentive to become immersed in a complex and challenging student lifeworld. I also thank Brian Sullivan, Associate Vice President, Student Affairs, University of Guelph for his financial support to purchase The Ethnograph qualitative software for Student Affairs staff and Andre Auger, Director of Counselling and Student Resource Centre, University of Guelph, for his assistance in defraying costs of postage and photocopying.

I especially thank my dissertation supervisor, Dr. Mary Alice Guttman at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, for her patience while I found just the right perspective I wanted for this inquiry. She gave me response that helped me to clarify and write about my research. Also, thanks are due to my committee members: Dr. Niva Piran and Dr. Susan Padro for their interest. supportive validation, and suggestions at the final stage of writing.

Finally, I express gratitude to my husband Barry and sons, Matthew and Benjamin, for adjusting their lives in a way that made it possible for me to undertake my journey. Like it or not, it was your journey too!
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INTRODUCTION

I did not always know that I wanted to become a psychologist. Only through many life and educational experiences did I realize it as a good choice. I knew at an early age that everyday stories of people's lives fascinated me and I sought explanations for life crises and emotional distress. I used to spend time sitting with my mother and our next-door neighbour or other visitors who entered our home. I listened enthralled to their accounts of family events, both difficulties and happy occasions. I also listened with wonder to my mother's accounts of her work experience in a psychiatric hospital before she married my dad. I was unprepared to deal with our family's defensiveness and silence when my father developed a terminal illness and eventually died. We had our own family event without a space to tell our story (White, 1988; Sedney, Baker, & Gross, 1994).

I did not have a name for my career choice until I entered university and did not have relationships with psychologists as mentors or guides to inspire me. My traditional professional engineer father had been curiously uncomfortable involving me in his work. My parents had been unable to suggest direction or to help me to find enriching experiences. Perhaps in part because of our grief-stricken circumstances, we did not talk much about my career; nevertheless, my mother was concerned that I be capable of supporting myself. Her concern reflected the generational pattern in our family of women losing their husbands to an early death and having to support their children successfully. I found my own way. Gradually, as one university course led to the next, I experienced mounting excitement and motivation. I also began to perceive a fit
between my passions and those of a discipline. My academic achievement in psychology reflected my enjoyment of what I learned.

This research began with my own struggle to make sense of the impact of my professional education upon my own experience and career expression. As a student of professional psychology, my voluntary departure at the A.B.D. stage was puzzling, particularly after having received formal recognition. I knew that the departure was more than a matter of convenience. Some career theorists might suggest that I was balancing my life roles and turning to family in favour of career. I felt an ambivalent connection between myself and my discipline as it was socially constructed at the time. I was not certain that I belonged.

After a hiatus of roughly ten years, I returned to doctoral study with an agenda to address my own deeply-felt issues by focusing on experiences I sensed were significant to explore. I think the process of working on this dissertation has been as much about my own understanding and growth as it has been about the study of other women who recently engaged in professional education.

I was fortunate to find an academic program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto where I was inspired by the teaching and learning experiences. I had found an academic program whose culture and values were more compatible with my own perspective. With respect to psychology in Canada, I think changes in the profession that occurred during my absence made it much more hospitable, while in other ways more complex and challenging. One profound difference, this second time around, has been the presence of mentors in my “relational world” who have modelled care and sensitivity simultaneously with competence. A subtle difference perhaps, but it has meant the world to me. I
have felt able to commit to the profession fully. I have experienced a profound feeling of satisfaction that these individuals, in particular, Brenda, Mary and Steve, were prepared to have me stand alongside them. I now appreciate the importance of relationship during career development, professional education, and within the practice of psychology.

My work experience in career counselling motivated me to examine the experiences of other women students in a professional field outside psychology. As I reflected on my work at the University of Guelph, I chose the group of women I wished to study. The University of Guelph had its origins as an agricultural college and is the site of one of four veterinary colleges in Canada. Veterinary medicine is as competitive as professional psychology and human medicine programs. Many aspiring veterinarians enrol in undergraduate sciences hoping to gain admission to Ontario Veterinary College. Not everyone is successful in doing so. In my role as a counsellor, I have often met students who have failed the admission hurdle and are faced with either trying again or finding an alternative career path. In recent years, Ontario Veterinary College has witnessed a rapid and dramatic shift in the gender composition in its entering year class of one hundred students. The program, once traditionally male, is now predominantly female. This trend is occurring elsewhere in North America as well. Taken together, these factors connected my personal interests with contemporary events.

Study of this population of women was therefore significant for many reasons. It has allowed me to reflect upon and appreciate important aspects of female career development, professional education, and socialization. It also allowed me to contribute to the literature at a time where there has been much interest in women's career development. Yet within the veterinary student literature, few studies reveal the qualitative nature of female student
experience. By adopting a life history approach to explore the experience of becoming a veterinarian, I encouraged student participants to tell their stories. In so doing, I obtained data that I had not anticipated. I discovered, for example, that the journey began in childhood, not at university. As I understood the relational and interpersonal processes in their lives, I could reinterpret my own. I consider the participants of this research as my teachers as I have learned immensely from them.

This study explores the subjective experiences of ten women becoming veterinarians at Ontario Veterinary College during the period 1989-1997. Through qualitative analysis of in-depth interview material I explore themes related to the origins of interest in veterinary medicine, the roles of families and educational environments in career development, the women’s perspectives on work and care, and barriers related to combining work and family. The literature review that follows provides the points of intersection between this research and several areas of inquiry. Subsequent chapters present the data as a linear journey and phenomenological perspective of what it was like to become a veterinarian.
II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's career development reflects a contemporary challenge to the knowledge and
skills of counselling psychologists as shown by publication on this topic (e.g., Angrist & Almquist,
1975; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994; Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992; Gallos,
1989; Gutek & Larwood, 1989; Jones, Marsden & Tepperman, 1990; Marshall, 1989; Phillips &
Imhoff, 1997; Walsh & Osipow, 1994). Trends in women's increased labour force participation
are partly responsible for the importance of this topic (Beck, 1998; Guttman, 1991). The other
impetus comes from studies that report negative career-related outcomes for women (Betz,
1994a; Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Women, along with other minority groups, are expected to
make up a much larger proportion of the previously white, able-bodied male Canadian labour
force. Because of widespread concern that Canada's future prosperity is dependent upon the
development and use of a skilled work force, concentrating on causes of women's underutilization
is vital (Jarvis, 1991).

Counselling psychologists, whose disciplinary roots lie in vocational guidance, have
important roles to play in designing interventions. Counselling, consultation, and program models
that foster women's career development must be developed for individual psychology practices,
elementary, secondary and postsecondary educational environments, workplaces, and professional
groups. Fundamental to the practice of psychology is that interventions are based upon research.
Therefore, this dissertation reflects research with a sample of career-oriented gifted Canadian
women as a prelude to intervention design. This literature review summarizes and integrates
theory and research about the career development process of high achieving Canadian women in veterinary medicine.

Contemporary Issues in Women's Career Development

Nowadays, most women expect to have a lifelong career instead of a temporary job until children are born. More women are delaying or abandoning marriage and childbearing altogether, and non heterosexual women in lesbian relationships can expect diverse life patterns as well. Yet traditional notions of career and development within organizations are at odds with what is now known about female development and women's experiences in industrialized society (Marshall, 1989). In Canada, a recent sociological study (Jones et al., 1990) showed that despite their greater labour force participation, most women in Canada retain the bulk of responsibility for children and home. Consequently, women are continuing to show work and career choice patterns influenced by other life statuses such as sexual orientation, marriage and child bearing. For example, dual role responsibilities have meant working long hours in two contexts, home and work. This trend has many implications for women's psychological adjustment and adaptation.

Women's career involvement in the past was concentrated in female-dominant service and care-giving occupations such as teaching, nursing, social work or secretarial work since these occupations were consistent with socially prescribed gender role behaviour (Gallos, 1989; Guttman, 1991). Contemporary labour force trends suggest that workers will be needed in scientific, technical and information fields, that are male-dominated professions. Yet many women appear to select themselves out of educational or occupational directions that could give them more opportunity. This last comment suggests that women somehow are co-creators of
their adverse outcomes. Still, recent research reports that attrition of women in non-traditional fields (science, the blue-collar trades, and other nontraditional areas) may be more related to a non hospitable environment than to individual factors (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Male dominated educational or work environments have been described as "hostile to more female ways of being" (Bartol, 1978 cited by Marshall, 1989, p. 276) "where women are routinely 'driven-out'" (Fitzgerald, 1993 cited in Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994, p. 110). These phenomena raise the need to redefine the roles of women and the meaning of achievement and work in our society (Marshall, 1989).

Despite a trend toward women's greater career involvement, researchers have noted that women have tended to adapt to a male work norm. As a result, theorists have identified internal-psychological and external-environmental barriers to women's career development that have played no role in men's career development. These barriers are rooted in the traditional ways in which women, women-in-work and career development have been defined in the past (Marshall, 1989; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) summarized some current evidence linking barriers with career behaviour of minority groups. These researchers grouped barriers into structural factors and cultural factors. For clarity, their definitions are quoted below.

**Structural factors** are characteristics of the society or organization, including its members, that limit access to or opportunities in the occupational and/or organizational environment. Discrimination and poverty are examples. **Cultural factors** are beliefs and attitudes commonly found among group members - often these are socialized by society (i.e., occupational gender stereotypes, internalized homophobia), but after internalization they serve as self-perpetuating barriers to the individual. (Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994, p. 107;
Attitudinal barriers are reflected not only in the social environments where women develop, study, and work, but also in women's thoughts about themselves. Structural factors are embedded in practices within the environment such as: discrimination, gender bias in educational method, null environment\(^1\), lack of role models, and myths and stereotypes related to women's roles. Cultural factors affecting women's career development are: gender-role socialization, internalized homophobia, motherhood mandate, and occupational sex stereotypes (Betz, 1994a; Fitzgerald & Betz, 1994).

Adverse career outcomes reported for women include: low self esteem, low expectancies for success, lowered aspirations despite ability; underutilisation of women's abilities; restricted range of interests; avoidance of math, science and high status career fields; occupational segregation, family-career conflict, and lower earnings than men (Bielby, 1991; Betz, 1994a; Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992; Jones, et al., 1990; Kerr & Maresh, 1994). Adverse personal outcomes for women are just beginning to be researched and may relate to the increasing trend for career research to focus upon the interrelation between career and mental health (Herr & Cramer, 1996, pp. 84-88). In the quotation below are excerpts from a 1990 international conference on work and well-being.

---

\(^1\)The concept of the "null educational environment" was proposed by Jo Freeman (1989, cited in Betz, 1994a, p. 17) to account for an environment "that neither encourages nor discourages individuals - it simply ignores them." This type of educational environment was argued to be differentially harmful to women students because of the host of other barriers they face. In Freeman's words, "an academic situation that neither encourages nor discourages students of either sex is inherently discriminatory against women because it fails to take into account the differentiating external environments from which women and men students come." (Freeman, 1989, p. 221)
The stimulus for the conference topic was the international recognition that “psychological strain is quickly becoming one of the most prevalent, costly and debilitating forms of occupational ill-health” (p. viii). . . . The content of this interdisciplinary conference . . . suggested that there were many problems deserving special consideration. One of these is the special burden of stress placed on minorities, women and older workers in the workplace and in society in general. (Herr & Cramer, 1996, p. 85)

Related to the previous structural barriers discussed, Herr and Cramer have only this to say:

Work problems that are environmental in origin include exposure to a management or supervisory style that is negative for that person and creates a pathological work environment, a work setting that provides no opportunity for advancement . . . or a work context that is racially or sexually biased and stifles individual mobility or security. (Herr & Cramer, 1996, p. 87)

These comments show that research has not even begun to grapple with the less obvious, insidious, and subtle socially embedded factors reported by Fitzgerald and Betz (1994). Yet some researchers are well aware of the implications of the research trends for women. According to Kerr and Maresh (1994),

It appears that developmental metaphor, with its implications of blossoming and unfolding, may not be appropriate to describe the vocational behavior of gifted girls and women. What happens to gifted girls and women hardly seems to be career “development,” but rather a sort of gently downward spiral as gifted young women adjust their interests, aspirations, and achievements to fit their own perceived limitations. (Kerr & Maresh, 1994, p. 207)
Emerging from the shadows of negative findings, researchers have identified both individual and environmental factors that facilitate women's achievement and career development. Betz (1994a) summarized individual and contextual factors. Socialized individual factors that facilitate women's career development are: late marriage or being single, no or few children, high self-esteem, strong academic self-concept, instrumentality, androgyny, and profeminist attitudes. Structural or contextual factors that facilitate career development for women are: working mother, supportive father, highly educated parents, girls' schools and women's colleges, female models, proactive encouragement, androgynous upbringing and work experience. (Betz, 1994a, p. 12).

If young women are raised in liberal, educated families, with access to successful role models and educational advantage, they may develop the attitudes and skills needed to overcome the weight of structural barriers in the outside world. Many of these facilitative factors may be confounded with socio economic advantage and apply to very few women. Nevertheless it seems evident from the review that an early facilitative family context is important in setting the stage for a girl's career choice and development. Contexts outside positive family environments appear to present obstacles to development that presumably may be better managed if an early foundation has been established. A recent review article has summarized the literature that points to individual and organizational strategies that facilitate women's career success during adulthood (Russell & Burgess, 1998).

Because of the complexity in women's career choice and work adjustment, most researchers now agree that although career development theories can be constructed to account for the behaviour of
both sexes . . . the gendered social context of women’s lives is sufficiently strong and sufficiently different from men’s experience to justify a specific focus on women. (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996, p. 261)

To begin to “re-vision” career theory to be applicable to women’s lives, questioning traditional concepts is important (Marshall, 1989). One key concept in career theory is identity or self (Blustein, Devenis & Kidney, 1989; Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996; Vondracek, 1992). As I show below, research related to women’s psychological development has led to reinterpretation of traditional meanings of self.

In the next sections of this review, I examine recent literature related to women’s development of self and ideas about work, parental roles in daughters’ development, the experiences of women in science, and veterinary medicine educational environments.

**The Role of Self in Career Development**

The subjective concept of “self” is increasingly recognized for the role it contributes in predicting achievement in disadvantaged groups (Taylor, 1997). The argument made by Taylor, similar to that raised by specialists in women’s development, is that self concept helps us to understand the way social inequalities rooted in group membership operate. Because sense of self is socially constructed, study of self offers a way to understand the integration of structural and individual factors discussed in the last section.

Taylor (1997) argues that a person’s collective or group identity is the foundation upon which other facets of self (personal identity, self esteem) are built. His argument may find support in the gender research literature. It has been well established that one first aspect of identity or
"self" to be learned by children is their own gender followed by expectations for appropriate sex-typed behaviour (Kaschak, 1992; McMahon & Patton, 1997). Parents still apparently treat infant girls differently than they treat infant boys. Anatomy is still destiny. According to Kaschak, gender achieved through social interaction brings with it implications for life role choices and behavioural response. Women's lives and expressions of choice and instrumentality unfold within environments of social expectations and sanctions internalized by young girls themselves. As I later show, other group memberships such as race, age, socio economic class and sexual orientation may be at least as powerful as gender for some individuals. To which group then, do we look in defining a person's group identity? Leading edge research is suggesting that multiple social categories contribute to a fluid identity that is dependent upon social context. Instead of objective group assignment, it is likely most important to examine the meanings individuals attach to each of their social categories (Frable, 1997).

Without adequate attention to the fluid identities emerging from multiplistic social category reference groups, many career researchers continue to focus upon an abstract concept of self in career development,

Along with other factors, such as intelligence, interest and social status, how a person sees himself or herself is ... empirically established as an important determinant of career development. (Brown, Brooks and Associates, 1991, p. 229)

Phillips and Imhoff (1997) praised the originality of Forrest and Mikolaitis (1986) who challenged researchers to think through the career development implications of a relational self that emphasizes attachment rather than separateness in career expression. The central role of self concept in many theories of career development is predicated on the notion of separateness therefore does not attend to attachment experiences. "Re-visioning" theories for women that include different assumptions about the concept of self provide different understandings of concepts and their causal relationships. Given the variable definitions of self that exist, researchers need to clarify the particular metaphor of the self being used when conducting a study (Hoskins & Leseho, 1996). In the next section, to provide a starting point for understanding this research, I review current literature related to women's development of self - a self created within a socio-cultural context.

Current Thoughts About the Relational Self

Until the last decade, women's developmental attainments were evaluated from a male lens. Not surprisingly, given deep-rooted structural gender inequalities in societal institutions, women typically fell short. They did not attain the same high levels of moral development, individual achievement, career success or autonomy and struggled to conform with male-defined hallmarks of excellence. One champion of a movement to challenge these developmental assumptions was Jean Baker Miller. In a quotation from her classic Toward a New Psychology of Women, she stated,

Since man is the measure of all things - man, literally, rather than human beings - we have all tended to measure ourselves by men. (Miller, 1976, p. 69)
The revolution inspired by Miller, followed by Carol Gilligan's (1982) *In A Different Voice* and *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986) set out a formidable challenge to conventional thinking. Women were not "inferior men." They were different yet equal. Many of these differences were socially constructed because of women's historical subordinate roles in society. This revolution had profound implications for the conceptualization of a woman's self.

Miller (1976) argued that many of women's characteristics were typical of oppressed groups. To survive in a male-dominated society, she argued, women become skillful at relating and being attuned to dominant group members to predict their responses.

Chodorow (1978) wrote an incisive argument about how women's personalities were "reproduced" through interpersonal dynamics with their mothers. Because daughters and mothers shared gender similarity, daughters did not need to separate to develop. Daughters remained connected and developed skills in empathy and nurturing through a continuous relationship with a similar other. Mothers experienced their sons as dissimilar, thus limiting empathic continuity. Boys, therefore, had to distance and individuate from mother to articulate their gender identity difference. Accordingly, boys began a developmental trajectory of autonomy and girls, a trajectory of connection. The phenomenon of differing personality patterns in boys and girls was a product of the interaction with parents' gender that, because of gender roles, happened to be a woman. Chodorow argued that girls

emerge from this period with a basis for "empathy" built into their primary definition of self in a way that boys do not. Girls emerge with a stronger basis for experiencing another's needs or feelings as one's own (or of thinking that one is so experiencing
another’s needs and feelings)... girls come to experience themselves as less differentiated than boys, as more continuous with and related to the external object-world, and as differently oriented to their inner object-world as well. (Chodorow, 1978, p. 167)

Gilligan (1982) receives much credit for first describing a different self in women through her study of moral dilemmas. She argued that traditional notions of identity and moral development were based upon a separate male identity and did not reflect women’s propensity to define themselves through relationships and intimacy. She stated,

Women not only define themselves in a context of human relationship but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care. Women’s place in man’s life cycle has been that of nurturer, caretaker, and helpmate, the weaver of those networks of relationships on which she in turn relies. But while women have thus taken care of men, men have, in their theories of psychological development, as in their economic arrangements, tended to assume or devalue that care. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17)

Thus women began to be perceived as oriented toward relationships, interdependent and as using context-based judgment and moral reasoning. At once contradictions emerged in understanding women’s lives. To strive to be successful in male terms, meant violating fundamental definitions of self. To express oneself, to use one’s own voice in a relativistic male-biased world, meant being judged as inferior, incapable, or immature. Gilligan argued that such contradictions suggest a splitting of love and work that relegates expressive capacities to women while placing instrumental abilities in the masculine domain. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 17)

This splitting of love and work mirrored the traditional patterning of gender roles in society. Through Gilligan’s work, women’s apparent propensity toward an “ethic of care” has been
popularized.

Belenky et al. (1986) followed closely behind to articulate different ways of knowing informed by the assumption of women's fundamentally connected self. Such knowing, they argued, was at odds with separate knowing characteristic of male scholarship and pedagogy. They stated that the way women know affects and is affected by women's self concepts. Knowledge for women emerges out of relationships. These researchers identified five perspectives with implications for women's experience of *having a voice* - synonymous with having self authority,

*silence* (women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority); *received knowledge* (women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own); *subjective knowledge* (truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited); *procedural knowledge* (women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge); and *constructed knowledge* (women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing).

(Belenky, et al., 1986, p. 15; italics in original; parentheses added)

Within the last category of *constructed knowledge*, two modes labelled as *connected* and *separate* were identified, based upon emphasis on knowledge from relationships or knowledge from impersonal procedures (Crawford, 1989, p. 130).

Researchers began to take a critical look at educational practices and institutions as flawed
and as alienating for women students. Belenky et al. stated.

In spite of the increase in the number of women students in higher education and professional schools, faculties, usually predominantly male, argue against a special focus on women students and resist open debate on whether women's educational needs are different from men's . . . Even when the content of course work includes issues of concern to women, strategies of teaching and methods of evaluation are rarely examined by faculty to see if they are compatible with women's preferred styles of learning. Usually faculty assume that pedagogical techniques appropriate for men are suitable for women. . . .

Drawing on their own perspectives and visions, men have constructed the prevailing theories, written history, and set values that have become the guiding principles for men and women alike. Our major educational institutions - particularly our secondary and postsecondary schools - were originally founded by men for the education of men. (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 5)

Some implications from Belenky et al.'s (1986) work relate to the educational needs of women as “connected learners” who thrive when they are validated, encouraged, and involved. Teaching approaches that validate women include: drawing on students’ experiences in learning, communicating confidence in students’ ability to know, establishing student participation in community rather than hierarchy, avoiding the domination of students by “authorities” as sole sources of “truth”, providing opportunity to experience trust, validation, praise and respect for their ability to know and to learn. Women students benefit when they can learn through first-hand observation not “out-of-context learning,” learn “practical” information, develop through competency-based learning where the teacher is “coach,” be treated as having some knowledge,
experience support for the development of sophisticated reasoning through dialogue and critical reflection, learn in climates that allow expression of uncertainty, learn respect for differing perspectives of classmates, and experience mutuality in teacher-learner relationships (Summarized from Belenky et al., 1986, pp. 190-229).

Since those turning points related to the psychology of women, scholars have been both critical and supportive. Some criticisms highlight the inappropriateness of generalizing from these studies to all women. What these researchers failed to consider, in their zeal to champion women, were the multiple confounds in their research designs. Whether one takes an empiricist or a qualitative perspective, generalizing across age, ethnicity, socio economic status and contexts is unwarranted. Crawford (1989) published an evaluation of these studies that highlights methodological strengths and weaknesses from several research perspectives.

Furth (1995), another critic, pointed to the vagueness in defining how self-in-relation has relevance for society, e.g., Furth, 1995,

Is the nature of any society adequately described by a web of interpersonal caring? ... how does all this lead to active and constructive participation in societal institutions, such as political activities, responsible roles in work and play ... and many other kinds of social involvement that could be cited are only tangentially related to what goes by the name of caring and interpersonal relation? (Furth, 1995, p. 176).

What Furth (1995) did not examine in his argument, were the historical ways in which work and care have been expressed as contradictions in women's lives. Indeed, much work defined from a "separate" perspective does not include, allow or value qualities of the self-in-relation.

Supportive extensions of the previous works can be found in Brown and Gilligan (1992),
Gilligan, Lyons and Hanmer (1990), Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy and Belenky (1996), Jack and Jack (1989), Jordan (1997), Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver and Surrey (1991), Markus and Oyserman (1989), and Rayman and Brett (1993). Brown and Gilligan (1992) in their book *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, argued that girls lose their voice or sense of self sometime in adolescence due to negative cultural forces in a patriarchal society. Girls give up on themselves and their needs and feelings in deference to the needs of others. Their evidence for a thesis of "lost voice" is provided through a series of case studies derived from a "listening" methodology that they describe as a "voice-sensitive" method. As with their earlier, hermeneutic methodology called "reading for self and moral voice" (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Argyris, 1989), their research is interpretive and "universalizes" without consideration of variability in stories of individual lives or across contexts. For these researchers, gender continues to take prominence over other social categories in determining self-concept.

Quite apart from feminist perspectives, several psychoanalytic schools are moving toward increased emphasis on relational self in human development. Recent developments within psychoanalytic theories have gone far beyond Freud's original conceptions and place much more emphasis on relationship and attachment (for example, Benjamin, 1988; Eagle, 1984; Jordan, 1997; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991; Mitchell, 1988; Mitchell & Black, 1995; Stolorow, Atwood & Brandchaft, 1994).

Mitchell (1988) is one leading proponent who argued that human life can be understood within a matrix of relationships. Increasingly, he states, it is relevant to think of people not as separate but as continuously in interaction with others present or in mental representations,

Humans are inherently structured in relational terms . . . human beings manifest themselves
not in the same identical performance; the performance varies according to the situation, the audience, the other performers... a personality is not something one has, but something one does. Consistent patterns develop, but the patterning is not reflective of something "inside." Rather the patterns reflect learned modes of dealing with situations and are therefore always in some sense responsive to and shaped by the situations themselves... in short, the individual is understandable only in the context of the interpersonal field... we are actually composed of these relationships - "precipitates"... of our earliest attachments. (Mitchell, 1988, pp.20, 25)

Proponents of self-psychology assume that healthy self development requires empathic mirroring and response from others, "selfobjects," for the development of self (Tuch, 1997). Without empathic mirroring, individuals fail to achieve stable internal selves and over-rely on external selfobjects continuously to provide validation. In this theory of development, empathy plays a critical role, presumably for both males and females. Tuch stated,

Empathy operates in three very specific ways. First, empathy provides the understanding that enables caregivers to best provide for the child's selfobject needs. Second, empathy informs the caregiver about how best to interact... Finally, empathy facilitates comprehension of the child's affective state so that caregivers can put into words or otherwise demonstrate their appreciation of "where the child is at." (Tuch, 1997, p. 260)

There is evidence that people continue to need selfobjects for self development throughout the lifespan, and especially in the development of work-related professional identities (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995; Czander, 1993).

Another group of theorists argues for enduring cognitive structures for these
"precipitates" or internalized objects. In a review of divergent perspectives of self, Markus and Oyserman (1989) evaluated the evidence in support of the "connected" self. Arguing from the perspectives of "person as constructor of external reality" and "person as constructed by external reality," Markus and Oyserman emphasized the importance of self-concept in perception of reality, by mediating thoughts, feelings and actions. Similar to Mitchell (1988), they argued that structure and function of self-concepts vary according to the social environment. They conceptualized self-concept as a cognitive schemata, defined as

an affective/cognitive structure that is created to lend meaning and coherence to one's experience. . . We assume that . . . self-schemas influence thinking, not just about the self but about all objects, events, and situations. . . The self/nonself distinction is made repeatedly and in a variety of ways in the course of development. . . [it] will provide a model for the representation of all objects, events, and situations. . . self-schemata deriving from a sense of self as connected have a different structure and determine different patterns of perception and thought than those deriving from a sense of self as separate. (Markus & Oyserman, 1989, p. 101, italics in original)

These authors claim support for the active involvement of self schema in everyday life from the psychoanalytic schools of attachment theory and object relations theory. They also find support for a "connected" self concept in examination of cross-cultural research, in non-Western societies. They find evidence for a "separate" self in Western culture. Thus, while acknowledging the merit of the connected-separate poles, Markus and Oyserman do not link them necessarily to gender. They argue that people can develop separate self-schemata besides connected self-schemata; however, the primary schemata will take precedence.
Because schema are thought to influence a wide range of perceptions and thoughts, researchers can sample self-expressions for evidence of underlying cognitive schema. This would seem to constitute the methodology used in a procedure of reading interview text for moral voice (Brown, Tappen, Gilligan, Miller, & Argyris, 1989). Markus and Oyserman (1989) suggested sampling self-expression in the context of immediate experience. This general approach categorizes qualitatively different self-expressions and makes inferences about underlying structures whose validity may be impossible to refute. A less interpretive and less generalizable methodology might focus instead on context-based self-expressions of individuals without implying the existence of stable underlying structures.

To summarize, the socially constructed “relational self” is clearly supported from diverse theoretical perspectives; however, gendered assumptions that link relational self with women exclusively are likely to be distortions. Taken together, the literature points to exploration of career self development in context. Such contexts might involve historical relational attachments, interpersonal influences on development of career self, the role of empathy in development of professional self, and mirroring experiences in key socializing institutions of the family and education. For women, we might explore the roles of mothers and fathers in daughters’ development. Gather data about women’s experiences in educational and work environments, listen for expressions of “voice” or self-authority, and attend to the ways in which relational attachments figure into life stories. We must avoid assumptions of causality and generalizability. A contextual, experienced-based methodology produces highly specific findings that cannot be generalized yet can provide working hypotheses to guide future research.

In the next section I emphasize why context is critical in women’s development.
The Socio-Cultural Context: Changing Constructions of Women’s Work

From the historical literature on women’s career behaviour, the significant moderating effect of the socio-historical context in valuing appropriate role behaviour and discouraging inappropriate gender role expression is evident. Women have always worked; however, the character, circumstances, and perceptions of women’s efforts have been influenced by the social context. Jones, et al., (1990) identified three main periods in Canadian women’s lives. First was a period from approximately 1871 to 1914 when society was primarily agricultural. During this time, the family was the unit of production. Home and work were continuous. Women were not segregated, nor were they considered economically less important than men. The second period from 1914 to 1968 was characterized by a pronounced division of labour between women and men. With the Industrial Revolution and the separation of work from family life, the men went off to work in the public domain for wages, while women remained in the home, responsible for household work and child rearing. It was through that segregation of family life from working life that some theorists (e.g., Chodorow, 1978; Jones, et al., 1990) have argued that roles such as mothering and child rearing became associated with women, while careers were associated with men. Simultaneously, these roles implied that women were less important economically because the work in the home was unpaid.

Gender role prescriptions were so strong that women who deviated from expected homemaking behaviour were considered deviant or unusual (Angrist & Almquist, 1975; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). These sex-role stereotypic attitudes were deeply embedded in all domains of society, including the mental health system. Even traditional psychoanalytic views of female development were highly influential in instilling two forms of social control, internal beliefs and
external prohibitions, related to women’s inferiority and proper place within the home.

Yet, during the two World Wars, when women were needed to work in the factories, attitudes changed and many women entered the workforce. It was to be a temporary entrance, since when the wars ended, women were expected to return to their homes and children. Apparently, during the Great Depression both women and men worked at whatever they could find (Jones et al., 1990).

The third period, approximately since 1968, has witnessed more permanent entrance of increasing numbers of women into the workforce and has continued without decline. Factors thought to be responsible for this trend include: legalization of birth control in the late 1960s, increased access to education, the feminist movement, and financial necessity (Jones, et al., 1990; Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996). Although perhaps not recognized at the time, the 1960s were important years in changing the patterns of women’s lives. Greater freedom, increasing cost of living, and demand for workers have resulted in a stronger career commitment among women (Jones et al., 1990, p. 7).

Early career researchers such as Donald Super (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) described different career patterns that portrayed various combinations of work and family roles for women in the past. Most women now expect to follow a “double track” career pattern. They expect to have careers and families. As Jones et al., (1990) have illustrated, much of Canadian women’s work has occurred in less secure, less career-facilitating employment sectors. Dual-role responsibilities for career and family have been the focus of much research and discussion since they represent a reality for most women, and experiences have not always conformed to individual aspirations,
The real worlds of marriage, parenting and career are not what you may have thought, even wished, they might be. (Jones et al., 1990, p.4)

There may be few normative patterns to suggest a model for individual lives. Jones et al., (1990) suggested that women’s lives are becoming more complex and less predictable by a process they call individualization. This process is defined in the quotation below.

Each generation of women is now involving itself in work and education in ways unlike those of earlier generations. Increasingly, women’s lives will be quite different not only from the lives women lived in earlier generations, but from the lives other women are living in their own generation. . . . There is little evidence that husbands are giving their wives the support and co-operation they need at home to make the dual-career family work effectively, especially where children are present. (Jones et al., 1990, pp. 4, 11)

Despite these tensions, most researchers agree that women’s lives have been improved psychologically and economically through their greater access to employment and broadened roles. Nevertheless, there remain ongoing contradictions in women’s career development that continue to affect life adjustment.

Cultural definitions of work, career success, nurturing, and family are still dominated by patriarchal perspectives. Up against these standards, women experience conflict and contradiction in trying to make sense of and gain acceptance for their multiple roles. Russell and Burgess (1998) have reviewed recent research that suggests talented women are leaving organizations because they feel they don’t belong. The cultures still value a male model of career, characterized by independence, competitiveness, and upward advancement. In the past, being a good woman was defined as one who lacked independent striving and ambition. A good woman
was willing to take care of, or to take on the cares of others, and to sacrifice herself for others in the hope that if she cared for others, she would be loved and cared for by them (Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990). This convoluted formula for selfhood was deeply rooted in cultural norms and institutions that shaped women’s lives at the turn of the century. Apparently it is still detectable. The historical separation between types of activities carried out by women created a contradiction that presumably has been mirrored in women’s self concepts. Labour in the public domain has been perceived as work. Effort in the emotional and nurturant realm of the family has been less visible as care and has been the exclusive domain of women. In work, one has agency. In care, one supports the agency of another.

In the past, occupational outcomes for women were often secondary to their achievements as mother and caretaker of the family, resulting in lower vocational attainment and unstable career patterns (Fitzgerald & Weitzman, 1992). Childless or unmarried women whose lives emphasized career were anomalies (Angrist & Almquist, 1975; Jung, 1928, cited in Lerner, 1988). For women, familial care and work outside the family have often been perceived and experienced as conflicting responsibilities, as role conflict, role overload, or as spillover from one role to the other. Care expressed in the work domain was devalued. Such was not the depiction of men’s lives, where work was primary and not affected by family status.

In 1975, Jessie Bernard commented in her Foreword to the book Careers and Contingencies: How College Women Juggle With Gender, by Shirley S. Angrist and Elizabeth M. Almquist, that it was about time that researchers viewed occupational choices and family roles as “integrally related” instead of treating them as separate and independent constructs. The stage was set for subsequent researchers to acknowledge societal views and the way men’s lives were
patterned. The two domains were not mutually exclusive in the lives of women. This emphasis on integration, giving voice to hidden or invisible aspects of women’s lives, has been an important contribution of several decades of feminist psychology (Kaschak, 1992). Significant work by feminist scholars has led to reinterpretation and redefinition of many concepts used to describe and understand women’s experiences. This has led to a shift from viewing women as aberrant if they behave in “nontraditional” ways to more careful scrutiny of environments and reported experience within the context of those settings. One implication for counselling practice is in helping women to identify and deconstruct the many self definitions created by specific contexts. Patterns of individuality in women’s lives emphasize the futility of assuming that women fit universal theories.

**The Role of Parents in the Career Development of Females**

A prominent career theorist, Anne Roe (Osipow, 1983), devoted most of her life to attempt to illustrate a sort of early relational theory between parents and the nature of their children’s interests. She thought specific types of parenting practices caused people-oriented or non people-oriented object choices for career. Despite her clinical intuition that something in early life powerfully influenced career direction, she was never able to show strong support for her theory. Her negative findings may have been due to weaknesses in her measurement or in definitions of her constructs. Now, it may be possible to recast Roe’s suspicions within more explicitly contextual research paradigms and to draw on theories of relational attachment.

In a recent study of the vocational aspirations of 949 elementary school children (kindergarten to grade four) in the U.S., Trice, Hughes, Odom, Woods and McClellan (1995)
reviewed research related to parental influence on career. Within the family context, children have been found to aspire to the careers of their parents at rates significantly above chance, moderated by children’s perception of parents’ job satisfaction. It was previously thought that the father’s occupation was a significant factor in influencing career choice. Trice et al., (1995) cited a number of recent studies showing that finding to be an historical artifact with both boys’ and girls’ aspirations showing similarity to maternal occupations. Earlier theories were constructed at a time when mothers tended not to have career involvement during the childbearing and child rearing period. If mothers previously “reproduced” skill in empathy, perhaps they are now influencing career object choice.

Other career researchers are also suggesting that the family context warrants further study (e.g., Penick & Jepsen, 1992; Young, 1993; Young & Friesen, 1992; Young, Friesen & Dillabough, 1991; Young, Paseluikho & Valach, 1997). Mechanisms underlying parental influences are unclear; however, processes such as verbal imitation, identification, or empathy might be considered. Trice et al. (1995) argued that evidence appears to point to a “profound psychological process.” They also found, in an attempt to test hypotheses based on Anne Roe’s theory, a higher rate of “no career choice” in children with disturbed familial attachments (one parent, living with non-parent relatives, or foster parents). Presumably attachment disturbances interfere with career object choice by failing to provide adequate developmental opportunities with selfobjects.

McMahon and Patton (1997) emphasized the importance of context in female adolescent career development. These researchers interviewed 55 students from a coeducational school in Australia. They found differences in the themes of girls’ and boys’ perceptions of influences on
their career development. From their sample, girls expressed fewer stereotypical ideas of appropriate careers for women than did boys; however, they engaged in less career exploration overall than boys. Some girls perceived disadvantages with being female and having to compete with boys. Boys claimed to have found school career programs helpful and to have relied on the media for career ideas. Some boys wished to have the same job as their father. Family considerations appeared more salient in girls’ themes showing evidence that they were wrestling with thoughts about combining family life and career. Boys expected to make more money and had been more actively involved in seeking out information. While the findings are not generalizable to other countries, the researchers point to the continued effect of stereotypic thinking in their Australian sample.

O’Brien (1996) reported results from a quantitative study with American high school girls. She administered a test battery of measures of attachment, separation, several career constructs, and academic achievement to 282 predominantly Caucasian final year females, attending an all-female private high-school. She reported that high school women who experienced a moderate degree of attachment to their mothers, relied on their mothers to assist in managing their personal affairs, felt emotionally close to their mothers, and shared similar beliefs and attitudes with their mothers and fathers evidenced very strong career self-efficacy beliefs and moderately strong levels of both career orientation and realism. (O’Brien, 1996, p. 269)

O’Brien interpreted her findings as consistent with previous research that linked attachment to others with engagement in career exploration and selection. Evidence of attachment would seem to be related to healthy self-development; however, the manner in which attachment operates in
career development is open to speculation.

In addition to familial relationships, the educational and social attainments of women’s families play a role in career choice. For example, Hannah and Kahn (1989) found that grade 12 females of high socio economic standing (SES) were more likely than low SES females to choose male-dominated occupations.

Taken together this literature provides evidence of similarity of interest between children and parents and positive career development related to the family of origin social and relational status. The role of mothers and fathers in daughters’ career development is an emerging area of research interest. What seems evident is that relational attachment to parents rather than a relational self is an important factor for women. These research findings highlight processes of identification, attachment and early experience within the family in understanding the contextual basis for later self-concept and career choice.

In a study of the career choice process of veterinarians, we must ask if relationships with animals might also exert influence because of the unique focus of this profession.

**Early Attachments to Animals as Precursor to Veterinary Medicine?**

To provide a context to study the career development of women entering veterinary medicine, the literature concerned with human-animal relationships is relevant. Exploration of the relational attachment of humans and animals using the concept of the human-animal bond has only begun. Previously, before challenges to objectivist views of nature, there was a tendency to emphasize our distinctness from other species. Perhaps with shifting epistemological paradigms, increasing awareness of environmental concerns and animal rights activism, many people have
come to regard our lives as interdependent with other species. Now it is legitimate to research animal-human connection (e.g., Stutts, 1994).

A recent popular author and clinical psychologist (Pipher, 1994), in her book *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls* wrote about crises in contemporary girls’ psychological development. She suggested a relational link to animals may be part of girls’ experiences due to shared powerlessness,

Many girls become vegetarians. They love animals and actively work for animal rights. I think this cause is popular with girls because they so easily identify with the lack of speech and powerlessness of animals. One girl I know wore a button that said “If animals are to talk, we must be their voices.” Girls identify with gentle, defenseless creatures. And they will work with great idealism and energy to save them. (Pipher, 1994, p. 72)

Unfortunately, her quotation illustrates universalizing about all girls that perpetuates stereotypes.

An alternate interpretation of girls’ affinity for animals may be due to relational selfobject needs in girls and responsiveness in animal companions. From the counselling literature, a recent study by Brown, Richards, and Wilson (1996) supported this hypothesis. These researchers examined the relationship between pet bonding and pet bereavement among adolescents. Grief following pet loss has only recently been recognized and is suggested as an indicator of the intensity of a covert human-animal bond. Brown et al. found that in their sample of 55 adolescents aged 12 to 17, self reported bonding and intensity of grief was significantly greater for girls than for boys. Brown et al. suggested the data provide evidence that girls may form deeper bonds with pets than do boys. They also cited other recent research studies that show pets may function in some ways as selfobjects,
Pets offer affection, intimacy, and unconditional love - all qualities essential for the emotional health and sense of well-being of children. Pets serve as silent counselors, best friends, and even surrogate siblings. Many counselors now recognize the prominent role played by animals in the emotional lives of young people. Evidence is accumulating that children develop strong emotional attachments to their pets. Such attachments can be as intense as the emotional bonds between people. Bonding provides an anchor during the tumultuous years of puberty - a steady, reliable source of affection in a life filled with insecurity and rapid change. (Brown et al., 1996, p. 505)

A survey study of pet attachment and loneliness in women students was reported by Zasloff and Kidd (1994). In a sample of 211 survey packets from students attending Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania, these researchers identified subgroups for comparison. There were insufficient males for gender comparisons to be made. Therefore, the results concentrated on the women's data. They found women who were living alone were more lonely than women who lived with a cat or dog. They argued that dogs, in particular, may compensate for the absence of human companionship.

With respect to the attachment history of young women who aspire to veterinary medicine, it would be of interest to distinguish the relative contributions of identification with parental work activity and attachment to pets. Trice et al., (1995) reported that veterinarian was among the top three first occupational choices named by contemporary girls but not by boys in their American sample. This finding mirrors a similar North American trend in popularity of the career choice by university women (Hart & Melese-d'Hospital, 1989) but it does not distinguish between girls who proceed into veterinary medicine and those who do not. How has the recent
popularity of veterinary medicine as a career choice for girls come about? The attachment
literature points to a relational connection either with parents or with pets; however, this
hypothesis has not been tested. Despite the voluminous literature that now exists with respect to
women’s career development (Osipow & Fitzgerald, 1996), there is a dearth of research and
theory concerning the origin of girls’ career aspirations (Trice et al., 1995).

**Women’s Performance in Science Education**

Beyond childhood and the family, the educational context is critical in shaping women’s
career development and traditional career achievement (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987). Women who
are interested in pursuing veterinary medicine first need to do well in undergraduate science to
gain admission to competitive professional schools. Many feminist researchers have concentrated
on the experiences and processes within the sciences and professions as areas important to
women’s career advancement. Until recently, many gifted young women avoided career paths
that involved continued study of mathematics or science since they subordinated their academic
achievement to achievement in social spheres.

The trend toward social achievement is still apparent in some contexts as shown in a
recently completed ethnographic study entitled *Educated in Romance* (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990
cited in Kerr & Maresh, 1994). In a longitudinal study at two universities in the U.S., two-thirds
of the women studied abandoned their career plans or subordinated them to those of their
husbands due to what the authors called a “culture of romance.” Holland and Eisenhart (1990)
defined the culture as

A system of intense peer pressure that focuses women’s interests almost entirely on their
attractiveness to men rather than on achievement in college. (p.204)

Given recent evidence from Holland and Eisenhart, some women are still teetering in a precarious balance between the two spheres of achievement and social relations as mutually exclusive domains.

The achievement literature related to women in science is too extensive to capture adequately in this review. It includes many bibliographies (e.g., Searing & Weisbard, 1995), articles (e.g., Wolffensperger, 1993) and books (e.g., Abir-am & Outram, 1987; Carter & Kirkup, 1990; Harding, 1991; Harding & O’Barr, 1987; Kahle, 1985; Stolte-Heiskanen, Acar, Ananieva, Gaudart & Fürst-Dilić, 1991; Zuckerman, Cole & Bruer, 1991), policy statements (National Research Council, 1991) and international conferences such as the International Gender and Science and Technology Conference (GASAT). Presentations from the GASAT conference held in 1993 in Waterloo, Ontario included a wide range of topics related to the objectives of facilitating gender-inclusive science.

The extensive literature on women in science (e.g., Zuckerman et al., 1991) has highlighted the trends of women’s participation in science and researchers (e.g., Bielby, 1991) have studied structural and individual factors hypothesized to account for career outcomes. Typical outcomes for women have been: lower participation in scientific fields, segregation in lower status positions, lower publication and productivity rates. Feminist scholars have argued that there are systemic biases against women and gender stereotypes that discourage the pursuit of scientific subjects and mathematics (Betz, 1994b). Also, they argue that science itself is a socially constructed cultural version of nature modelled after maleness (Keller, 1991).

One aspect of girls’ involvement in science has examined the role of animals in science.
Several presentations at the GASAT conference (e.g., Dagg, 1993) mentioned girls not wanting to harm animals as a factor in science continuation. Apparently, traditional learning requirements in science labs such as killing and dissection of frogs have been distasteful to some girls. Previously, such lab work was considered just part of a value-neutral science. Now such practices are thought to reflect a socially constructed view of science, nature, and living things. Literature has shown that women are more likely to hold animal rights sentiments. According to research reported by Herzog, Betchart, and Pittman, (1991),

feminine sex role orientation as measured by the BSRI [Bem Sex Role Inventory] was positively correlated with concern for the well-being of other species . . . in all cases, feminine and masculine sex role orientation measures were related to animal attitude scales in opposite directions . . . Our results suggest that the nurturance-expressive dimension of personality is more highly related to concern for animal welfare than is the dominance-instrumental dimension . . . higher femininity is related to increased concern about other species, whereas increased masculinity is related, though to a lesser degree, with lower sensitivity to the ethical treatment of other creatures. (Herzog, Betchart, & Pittman, 1991, pp. 189-190)

An interesting observation by Herzog et al. (1991) was that women were disproportionately involved in animal rights and animal welfare political movements and that in one sample, themes of nurturance and care predominated in the women’s interview comments. Herzog et al. cautioned that the variance accounted for by sex role orientation was quite small.

Roughly 90% of the individual variation in the various attitude measures was not accounted for by gender or sex role orientation. This finding suggests that researchers
seeking to explicate factors predicting sensitivity, cruelty, and kindness toward other creatures will have enough work to remain busy for the foreseeable future. (Herzog, et al., 1991, p. 190)

Possibly individual attachment histories provide the missing link. An article by Katcher and Beck (1987) suggested that in our industrialized society, with the absence of connection and nurturance, humans are seeking relational connection through pets, gardens, and farm animals. They argued that caring for a pet is similar to nurturing humans based on their earlier research of “touch-talk dialogue” with animals. They also argued for reform of science education toward observation and away from experimentation. This is consistent with the notion of a relational self seeking selfobjects to sustain an interdependent place in the world.

Attention to the inevitability of a human-animal bond is heightening our sensitivity to attachment with animals. That awareness makes it more difficult to objectify, manipulate, and harm in the interests of a neutral, objective science. For example, among animal technicians, it is now well recognized that animal death, whether through natural or induced means, has emotional implications for humans (Arluke, 1990; Bekoff, 1993; Owens, Davis, & Smith, 1981; Taylor & Davis, 1993).

Arluke (1990) documented the feelings and attitudes of animal care technicians who were faced with developing attachments with research animals and then later euthanizing them at the end of experiments.

Every technician I interviewed for this study had experienced some form of attachment to a laboratory animal at least once in his or her career. The depth of these attachments varied from interest and fondness for a particular animal to intense bonding . . . The sense
of conflict seemed to intensify when staff grew attached to an animal that suffered or died. Newcomers to the laboratory . . . had not yet learned to monitor and curtail the depth of their involvements with animals . . . Most technicians learn to “dissociate” themselves from the animals they deal with to control feelings and attachments. (Arluke, 1990, pp. 23-24)

Apart from animal welfare issues in science, researchers including Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), Caplan (1993), Dagg and Thompson (1988), Kaplan and Klein (1991), Kerr and Maresh (1994), have pointed out the risks to women arising from the postsecondary educational system. For example, some researchers emphasized discrimination and anti-woman stereotypes in universities.

The educational system has practised and perpetuated stereotypes and biases that have made educational progress and success in many ways more problematic for females than for males . . . females have lower educational aspirations than do males of comparable ability . . . attrition rates are higher . . . even though females perform better academically. (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 55)

Caplan (1993) concluded that women may believe that the failure they experience is their fault. Yet, she argued it is more likely due to barriers within higher education based on traditional male values and practices. For example, she suggested that for academic careers, a patriarchal model of work in academic environments results in sexual harassment of women and the perception that professional and family responsibilities are in conflict. Often unrecognized as systemic barriers, Caplan argued that individual women may interpret these experiences as evidence of their own inadequacy thus affecting their continued aspiration and achievement.
Researchers from a self-in-relation perspective emphasized the loss of voice for relational learners when impersonal teaching methods are used.

The academic setting may create conditions that lessen the student’s capacity to grow intellectually through mutually supportive and validating relational connections. To the extent that schools emphasize grades and competitive endeavors, students come to feel that learning is a private matter . . . and even that sharing their academic status with friends may disrupt feelings of trust and support. This can have several results . . . it increases students’ isolation . . . for another . . . [it segments] students’ experiences into the “personal” topics versus the “academic” topics. (Kaplan & Klein, 1991, p. 129)

Kaplan and Klein (1991) suggested that relational learners feel uncomfortable in competitive environments and fare better when they can form relationships with faculty members and experience validation.

Since the early 1990’s, male and female attrition from undergraduate science has been a source of national concern in the U.S. due to implications for a skilled workforce. Elaine Seymour and Nancy Hewitt (1997) in their book, *Talking about Leaving: Why Undergraduates Leave the Sciences* described their ethnographic study of attrition based on 460 American students attending seven different types of postsecondary institution between 1990 and 1993. Using interviews with the students, these researchers focused on the nature of students’ decisions to enter, continue in, or leave their science major. They found the experiences of persisters and leavers to be quite consistent and suggested that,

what distinguished the survivors from those who left was the development of particular attitudes or coping strategies - both legitimate and illegitimate. Serendipity also played a
part in persistence, often in the form of intervention by faculty at a critical point in the student’s academic or personal life. (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997, p.30)

They described student reports of: poor teaching, feeling overwhelmed by the pace and load of curriculum demands, inadequate advising or counselling about academic, career, or personal concerns, inadequate high school preparation or study skills, low grades, competitive culture, and lack of peer study support. Characteristic of some science programs is the use of bell curves in grading in introductory classes to “weed” out students early. Contextual factors with this cohort also related to the state of uncertainty with the economy and jobs. Students expressed considerable anxiety about being able to get good jobs, about the types of jobs open to science graduates, and about being able to find satisfying work. These anxieties were emerging at a time when the costs of education are rising.

While anti-female remarks have been cited by other researchers in undergraduate science environments, Seymour and Hewitt (1997) reported an anomalous finding regarding abuse. The women in their study acknowledged it but discounted it as a factor contributing to their persistence or attrition. The researchers speculated,

we have only recently come to understand the role played by the normalization of abuse in preserving the stability of patriarchal systems. In order for one half of the population to accept dominance by the other, many of the techniques by which that dominance is reinforced have to be treated as “normal.” Part of the traditional socialization of women has, therefore, been the development of a high degree of tolerance for behavior which is increasingly being redefined as “abusive.”(Seymour & Hewitt, 1997, p.315)

Their participants described themselves as being assertive with faculty and peers. Alternatively,
Seymour and Hewitt suggested that games theory provides an alternative to a theory of women's denial of abuse. Rather, if women seek to be members of the game, they need to play by the rules imposed by the dominant group even if that means loss of voice or distancing from oneself in the process.

This very recent study provided support for both a misogynist discriminatory view and a relational view of factors influencing women's proportionally greater attrition from undergraduate science. The widely reported problem of undergraduate attrition from science provides a context for the proportionally greater attrition of women from science generally. In other programs, despite negativity in the environment, women do not necessarily leave, but they may change their plans.

A recently published review by Sandra Pyke (1997) examined “Education and the ‘Woman Question’” by summarizing Canadian statistics and her own research related to graduate study outcomes. In a series of quantitative and qualitative studies, she reported that male and female students did not differ on objective variables such as rates of withdrawal and time to complete degree. In follow-up surveys, she found considerable evidence for the chilly climate construct. Summarizing current data on Canadian women students, she stated,

Just at a time when women now outnumber men in the academy, at least at the undergraduate level, there has been a concomitant reduction in the value of university degrees. We are familiar with the phenomenon that frequently when women have attained a numerical majority in a field or discipline, the prestige of the occupation or field and the associated income declines . . . We have clear and consistent support for the operation and negative impact of at least some components of the chilly climate. This evidence was not
to be found in the archives, in the official academic performance records . . . Not until we examined the lived experience of graduate students was the full impact of the chilly climate revealed. What is particularly astonishing . . . [is] women do not abandon their academic studies nor do they allow these barriers to retard their progress in terms of the time taken to complete degree requirements. These women are not victims. They are, in fact, impressive survivors of an inequitable system. (Pyke, 1997, pp. 159-161)

Among the qualitative features negatively affecting women were absence of female role models, mentoring, concomitant family responsibilities, and relationship difficulties with supervisor or committee members. Thus, women can perform, but report dissatisfaction and distress regarding the educational context.

Other researchers have shown changes in women’s plans following exposure to undergraduate sciences. Cole and Fiorentine (1991) reported results of several surveys of female science students aspiring to enter medicine. Attempting to explain women’s lower rate of application to medical school despite strong academic ability, Cole and Fiorentine distinguished self-selection factors from discriminating factors in the environment. First, they looked at historical data on applications of women to U.S. medical schools since 1929. Their analysis showed small numbers of applicants but no objective evidence that women were discriminated against in the process of selection.

In a 1984 survey of 250,000 male and female American first year students, Fiorentine (cited in Cole & Fiorentine, 1991), found women were just as likely to aspire to be doctors. By their final year, only one-third of the women actually applied to medical school. Academic achievement between the males and females was not significantly different.
In a subsequent study of pre-med students at the State University of New York at Stony Brook between 1981-1983, Cole and Fiorentine offered an explanation. They argued that it appeared the drop in women’s aspirations occurred during undergraduate education and was unlikely to be due to overt discrimination by faculty since, the pre-med courses at Stony Brook are generally very large classes in which most students are unlikely to be known personally by their instructors. (Cole & Fiorentine, 1991, p.221)

The researchers attributed the likely cause that women tend to give up easily and that women are socialized to have lower levels of self-confidence therefore react differently to “failures” and reduce their aspirations. Their data showed lower levels of self-confidence in women pre-med students.

An alternative interpretation of the Cole and Fiorentine data might stress the absence of support for women in “null” environments. If women prefer to learn in ways that allow them to connect their learning to their own experience and voice (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, Tarule, 1986; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy, & Belenky, 1996), normal undergraduate science education may be the antithesis of where they thrive.

Apparently due to intensive educational reform and other interventions, more women are pursuing scientific study, predominantly in health or biological sciences (Parsons, 1993). One result of this trend has been a startling shift in the gender composition in students in veterinary medicine (Elkins & Kearney, 1992; Hart & Melese-d’Hospital, 1989). Veterinary medicine combines a rigorous science background with helping activity and is a popular aspiration of many young women and girls (Trice, et al., 1995). From a career research perspective, veterinary
medicine offers a context to explore the interrelationship of themes of achievement, relationship, and care. Veterinary medicine may offer women a domain in which they can achieve and nurture thereby integrating previously separate emotional domains of work and care. Might this field represent an area where talented women are blossoming rather than “spiraling downward?” How are women in veterinary medicine making sense of themselves, their educational experiences, and their future life roles? How are they resolving the work and care contradiction?

**Professional Education: A Specific Socialization Context**

Researchers interested in women’s entry into a range of professional fields have studied ways in which women affect and are affected by their profession. One central construct of historical significance has been that of professional identity, a central and valued component of self and suggestive of a reference group identity (Taylor, 1997). From the perspective of a relational self created through attachments, how does professional socialization relate to women’s sense of themselves? The literature on professional careers describes highly controlled contexts for career development. Perhaps more potent than socialization factors in educational environments previously discussed are the effects of intensive professional training. More so than other forms of education, professional socialization refers to formal and informal shaping processes that modify individual behaviour, attitudes, and skills to conform to those valued and promoted by a profession. It has been defined as,

A social learning process by which a person acquires specific knowledge and skills that are required in a professional role, and it includes the development of new values, attitudes, and self-identity components. (Hall, 1987 cited in McGowen & Hart, 1990 p.118)
In a comprehensive review of careers and socialization, Hall (1987) stressed the importance of taking an interactional perspective on individual development since it is merged with organizational forces. A comprehensive research design would involve correlating individual experience and contextual events which are interdependent. Thus, professional socialization shifts the focus to study of person-in-context and away from individual or trait-based causes of behaviour. Such a formulation is consistent with a contextually responsive relational self. The evidence from studies of professional socialization (Bucher & Stelling, 1977; Light, 1980) also suggests that organizational influences are more powerful than individual predispositions.

Two salient areas of professional socialization involve the process of assimilating the values of the profession as part of the self and the means by which that learning is facilitated. In their book, Moral Vision and Professional Decisions: The Changing Values of Women and Men Lawyers, Jack and Jack (1989) interviewed male and female lawyers using Gilligan's (1982) suggestion that women may be oriented toward a values perspective of relationship and care. Law, known for its justice and rights orientation, was regarded as traditionally more typical of male voices. In a series of interviews with 36 male and female lawyers matched on length and type of practice, Jack and Jack explored how the values of the profession related to the personal values and psychological adaptation of practitioners. They were specifically interested in understanding what was happening to the many women entering a system designed by and for men, not unlike the broader question of women in science. Jack and Jack described the impact of the institution on people,

Social expectations and institutional structures define the conduct and affectations of the roles one assumes. In a very real sense people merge with the roles they play. What
begins as a role becomes a part of a person's identity . . . many people become their professional identity and thus give up some of their power for self-definition and some of their obligation for personal responsibility . . . professional conduct is a type of role-determined behavior in which defining attributes of the role specify how a professional relates to other people. (Jack & Jack, 1989, pp. 28-34)

Jack and Jack referred to a "moral distance" occurring when role identification separates lawyers from their own morality. Their book explored how lawyers with marginal positions dealt with the gap that threatened the integrity of their individual personalities. Their hypothesis was that moral value discrepancy places individuals at risk for adjustment or for unethical behaviour. They hypothesized that individuals who merge their own moral voice with that of the profession while adapted were nonetheless limited to the profession's achieved conventional level of moral development. Full identification of self with professional role thus abdicated professional lawyers from achieving high levels of personal responsibility. For some of the women Jack and Jack interviewed, the transformation of self in the service of professional socialization was not easy or valued,

They're turning me into someone else . . . they're making me different . . . it's someone I don't want to be . . . you're being indoctrinated . . . you're not the same person when you leave. (Jack & Jack, 1989, p.46)

Some lawyers experienced education as limiting them, as harming them by forcing them to substitute a way of thinking and morality that was not their own. Instead of empathic mirroring of their development from selfobjects, a sequence of indoctrination occurred.

The research of Jack and Jack may be relevant to the question of women's experiences in
non-traditional careers particularly where the profession’s ethics and moral decision-making have not yet incorporated perspectives of care and connection. A mismatch of personal value orientation with that of a profession might lead to a felt experience of alienation or not belonging.

A recent chapter by Menkel-Meadow (1996), reviewed the ways in which the legal profession has begun to accommodate women, include empathy, and alternatives to purely rational thought. She suggested that students who are most likely to feel alienated were those who were different from the dominant group in some way, too different to be assimilated by the culture,

Students who feel themselves to be “different” - whether more emotional, angry, older, poorer - from the assumed norm of law student and lawyer report a “loss of voice” or fear of taking on either teachers or fellow students. (Menkel-Meadow, 1996, p. 64)

From studies of male assimilation into existing cultures, the process of mentoring has been underscored as a potent interpersonal medium for the transmission of values. Studies have indicated that for women, mentoring is often absent and may partially account for women’s continued marginalization (Noe, 1988). As Noe indicated,

Without a mentor, women often are unable to understand the reality of the male-dominated business culture and they fail to obtain the sponsorship needed to identify them as highly talented and to direct them in their career advancement. (Noe, 1988, p. 65)

Because organizations operate as powerful resistant systems, enculturation operates largely independent of individual determination. For that reason, presumably accommodation of professions to women’s values will be less likely than pressures on women to accommodate to the culture. As Olesen (1994) said, the practice of “add women and stir” is ineffective in attempting
to “redress issues of access or inequity, which lay in deeper interactional and structural problems”
(p. 159).

**Women in Veterinary Medicine**

Despite extensive research of women in sciences and in pre-med programs, there has been limited research of women’s experiences in veterinary medicine. As I show, women’s participation in veterinary medicine has grown to such an extent to warrant specific attention to this subgroup of the profession. In the sections below, I review studies related to trends of women’s participation in veterinary medicine as students and as professionals. I review research regarding veterinary students’ experiences and identify the themes that differentiate women from men. Next, I review the emergent literature that emphasizes the relational component of this profession, namely, the animal-human bond and show how the literature on values and moral development emerges from the social construction of animals. Finally, I draw attention to two major forces currently shaping the veterinary profession: changing veterinary ethics regarding animals and women’s career patterns. While these clusters of research activity are clearly identifiable, no study has taken a broad perspective of the experiences of women. In my recent search of the Dissertation Abstracts database, I found few dissertations dealing with veterinary medicine and not one focused exclusively on women’s experiences in the career socialization process.

**Overview of Women’s Involvement in Veterinary Medicine**

In 1997, the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) celebrated the 50th
anniversary of the Association for Women Veterinarians (AWV). In a press release available on the AVMA web site, historical markers were listed. These markers included the date of 1910 as the occasion of the first two women graduating with veterinary degrees. The scope of women's entry into the profession was reported as 30% of 59,000 veterinarians in 1997. The prediction was for gender parity in fewer than ten years (AVMA, 1997). Quotations from speakers at the anniversary event provide insight into women's struggles and victories within the profession.

"Women veterinarians certainly have made great strides, especially in the past 30 years, and at no other time in our history have women been more influential than today," said Phyllis Larsen, D.V.M., MPVM, and chair of the history committee for the AWV. "We have just had the first woman to serve as AVMA president in 1996. And now for the first time ever, three women will be serving on the AVMA Executive Board. It looks as if 1997 will be a new peak for women veterinarians. However, there's still a long way to go." (AVMA, 1997, p. 1)

Studies that examined trends in women's participation in veterinary medicine have documented the unique and dramatic gender shift (e.g., Bird, 1992; Calhoun & Houpt, 1976; Hart & Melese-d'Hospital, 1989; Houpt & Calhoun, 1977; Stogdale, 1985). The gender shift that occurred between 1971 to 1987, was more dramatic than women's increases in any other profession such as law, medicine or dentistry, and coincided with expansion of the veterinary field (Hart & Melese-d'Hospital, 1989). By 1989, women comprised the majority of new admissions in veterinary schools (Hart & Melese-d'Hospital, 1989). A dissertation by Chloe Bird (1992) compared women's participation in dentistry, medicine and veterinary medicine. She stated

Although human and veterinary medicine had similar levels of sex segregation across
specialities, average specialty earnings was a strong predictor of the distribution of women physicians, but not of women veterinarians. In the case of veterinary medicine, women were overrepresented in the growing area of companion-animal care. Across the three professions, women's gains came when the supply of male applicants failed to meet demand. (Bird, 1992, Abstract).

Presently at Ontario Veterinary College\(^2\) of the University of Guelph enrollment patterns have proved to be consistent with predictions. The new admissions have consisted of approximately 70% female students in each class over consecutive years of 1989-1992.

The impact of this shift for the profession of veterinary medicine is thought to be profound due to the overall size of the profession. It has been predicted that if the trend continues, veterinary medicine will become a female dominant profession (Hart & Melese-d'Hospital, 1989). Reported response by some members of the profession to this shift have included negative attitudes toward women and discrimination in employment practices.

Early responses revealed stereotypic thinking that women were unsuitable for the profession. Early perceptions of women were quite negative. Women were perceived as physically weak, unfair to taxpayers because they deprived men of training, and wasted educational resources that might be used by men who would “diligently practice veterinary medicine” as a life long devotion (Calhoun & Houpt, 1976). Historically the profession was

\(^2\) Ontario Veterinary College, Guelph, Ontario graduated its first female veterinarian in 1928 (Calhoun & Houpt, 1976), ranked 2nd in North America with 11 female faculty (Houpt & Calhoun, 1977), reported graduating 30-40 women students per year in 1978 and ranked 3rd in North America by 1976 with 185 total women graduated (Calhoun & Houpt, 1976). For a review of the history and current focus of Veterinary Medicine in Canada and at Ontario Veterinary College, see Appendix I.
viewed as a man's place with arduous work of "long, irregular hours demand[ing] a maximum of physical energy" (Calhoun & Houpt, 1976, p.456). Women were perceived as seeking the profession for untenable reasons such as the glamour, proximity to large numbers of men, or their affection for pets as children. Honourable motives for the aspiring veterinarian were liking medicine and surgery. Women who entered veterinary medicine shattered these myths. They showed the endurance and dedication that won respect. With the advent of chemical and mechanical means of restraining large animals, strength has been eliminated as the barrier it once was. The AVMA president, Dr. Mary Beth Leininger put the trend into context.

The shift in gender division in our profession parallels the increasing emphasis of veterinary medicine to improve human health and well-being, as well as that of animals . . . That women now have greater visibility opens a perceptual door -- things are different than they used to be in veterinary medicine. No longer is it necessary to have great physical strength or come from a farm background to be an important, contributing member of our profession. Veterinary medicine requires knowledge, skill, commitment and dedication, and welcomes all who possess those characteristics. (AVMA, 1997, pp. 1-2)

The AVMA anniversary event also marked the publication of Our History of Women in Veterinary Medicine (AWV, 1997) and a video that marks the progress of women in the profession.

Despite the promising words expressed in 1997, women have had difficult experiences with discrimination and prejudice as they attempted to break into the field. For example, Elkins and Kearney (1992) recently noted the decision for a woman to enter a "man's profession," such
as veterinary medicine has only recently become socially acceptable. There are continued reports of gender discrimination, occupational segregation, and heated debate in the profession’s journals. Occupational studies have examined practice trends and have reported male-female differences as well as evidence of workplace discrimination.

A dissertation by Judy Oshinsky (1980) examined the prevalence of experiences of sexual harassment by women students in a variety of higher education programs. She compared students in traditional programs with those in non-traditional programs (dentistry, law, medicine, and veterinary medicine). She reported that

a greater percentage of women in non-traditional areas of study, when compared to those in traditional areas, experienced subtle forms of sexual harassment. (Oshinsky, 1980, Abstract)

Some researchers have noted trends for women in veterinary medicine to choose small companion practices over other specialities (Houpt & Calhoun, 1977) leading to a fear that a shortage of veterinarians will occur between now and 2020 (Haynes, 1974 cited in Houpt & Calhoun, 1977). Yet, paradoxically, reports have indicated that women were having difficulty finding large animal jobs (Blissitt, 1986) and were also less represented in academic and leadership roles (Lipton, 1993).

Concerns were expressed regarding women’s career patterns of withdrawing from practice temporarily to care for their own children. Houpt and Calhoun (1977) outlined the tension between veterinary practice and marriage in the recent past. Apparently, women in the past tended to opt for their profession over marriage and up to the 1950s tended to remain single in greater proportions than men. They suggested that “women medical students feel that celibacy
will be the price of their admission to medical school.” (Houpt & Calhoun, 1977, p. 9). This pattern of choice between career or family, has been changing and increasingly women are either married as they enter veterinary school or have committed relationships by the time they graduate. In an amusing look at whom the women tended to marry, Houpt and Calhoun (1977) reported that in 1975, 51% of American women veterinarians were married to veterinarians.

Although we often joke that only another veterinarian could stand the fumes of rumen fluid, anal sac secretions and holothane emanating from us, there are, one would hope, other sociological reasons. During their most nubile years women veterinary students are under great academic pressure and must restrict their social life. They are most apt to socialize and have common interests with those who share the pressure - other veterinary students and their professors. (Houpt & Calhoun, 1977, p. 10)

Women in veterinary medicine faced conflicts as they attempted to conform to conventional sex-roles in their marriages and still maintain their professional roles. For a dual-career couple, the odds of finding employment in the same geographical area were challenging and provided further strain. Setting up a practice together was thought to be ideal.

Having children posed another enormous challenge. Apparently in the past some women or their spouses sought surgical sterilization to prove that they would not waste their training. Houpt and Calhoun (1977) maintained that even in less discriminatory times, “the conflicts between a career and child raising are serious” (p. 12). Previously it was common for married graduates to withdraw from practice for 5 to 20 years. Since the 1970s it was more common for married veterinarians with children to continue working full time leading to heavy burdens and stress. Work schedules of mothers working full-time were thought to interfere with being able to
breast feed their infants.

Practice compromises have resulted in women with children choosing practice domains that offer less demanding schedules, part-time work, and flexibility. Career outcomes with such compromises involved disadvantages of being segregated in mundane activity with limited skill advancement. Over a decade later, studies continued to show negative stereotypes regarding female veterinarians and continued occupational segregation and discrimination. One study contained a thinly veiled bias regarding women's psychological inability. Elkins and Kearney (1992), while surveying burnout among American female veterinarians, hypothesized that

A girl [sic] who is interested in medicine . . . from a conventionally structured . . . family may face conflict between her identification with her mother and her interests in a different pattern of life. If her relationship with her mother is close and relatively unconflicted, she may have difficulty because she may see herself as betraying her mother and competing with her to achieve more. [On the other hand, a girl with a conflicted maternal relationship] may become uncomfortable in seeking a demanding career because this interest may seem connected with the problems in the relationship as opposed to being a true career interest. A girl's identification with her father's professional role may promise an easier pathway for the development of her own serious career interests, but it may interfere with her relationship with her mother and with the resolution of identity issues.

(Elkins & Kearney, 1992, p.606)

Clearly the above interpretation suggests that a female veterinarian, whatever her early developmental resolution, is at risk for psychological maladjustment. Although the authors claimed that it would be very difficult for women to combine multiple life roles of veterinarian,
mother, and wife, they ignored the substantial literature that suggests that women benefit psychologically from doing so in other fields. More appropriate is a critique of the profession itself.

Elkins and Kearney (1992) surveyed 613 female veterinarians in the U.S. using a self-diagnosis measure of burnout and compared responses with those of a sample that was 95% male gathered some ten years earlier in 1981. Their measure of burnout had no reported reliability or validity. In spite of the obvious weaknesses in the research design, the measure, and even the construct of burnout itself (Herr & Cramer, 1996, p. 560), they reported some qualitative findings relevant to this research. First, there was a resounding cry from the participants that women were not treated equally to men in this profession, echoing results from an earlier study. The earlier study by Beaver (1990, cited by Elkins & Kearney, 1992) reported that most of a sample of female veterinarians in Texas believed they were not treated equally to men in the profession. Cited was a starting salary that averaged $4,433 less than that of the men. Second, and related to occupational segregation, women in the Elkins and Kearney study were less likely to be practice owners and more likely to be employees without participation in business decisions. Third, and potentially important for adjustment, they reported that women scoring highest on “burnout” were also those women who worked more than 40 hours per week, were not involved in the ownership of the practice, had no input into the business, and little control over the future.

Therefore, their own data ran counter to their psychodynamic interpretation of cause of distress and, in fact, provided strong evidence for an environmental one. The presence and impact of discrimination and external barriers in the profession would account for psychological distress without invoking a personal pathology reason or blaming the victim. The most reasonable
conclusion to be drawn from this study would acknowledge the authors’ speculation that individual performance factors interact with external factors to create distress. That is, good professionals who are hardworking and conscientious suffer in work environments that demand too much without providing the opportunity for control. It is correct to see women at risk for stress if they experience heavy work demands, role overload, and inadequate decisional control. Concluding that women, because of their psychological adjustment, should not become veterinarians would be incorrect. The authors suggested the likelihood that professional expectations about the way in which veterinarians must practice are still rooted in traditional views of the profession and work. They linked their findings to role conflict for women in human medicine, where research has shown evidence of gender-related negative responses to the conflicting responsibilities of family and profession.

Other studies report similar findings. In a comparison of dentistry, medicine and veterinary medicine, Bird (1992) found in each profession, women earned significantly less than men controlling for sex differences in human capital, sex segregation across specialties, types of employment, and hours worked annually.

In a study of practising veterinarians, Dianne Wimberley (1991) found that married male and female veterinarians did not differ in work satisfaction or in effect of work stress on their career. She found gender differences, that she described as follows,

Women reported greater effect of marital/family stress on career and less spousal support for career than did their male counterparts. Possible ways in which female veterinarians may be coping with marital/family stress, based on demographic findings for this sample, include working approximately six hours less per week than male veterinarians, taking
more and longer career breaks in order to have families, being less likely to engage in
independent practice, and having fewer children. (Wimberley, 1991, DAI Abstract,
9220590)

Taken together, these findings suggest that women in veterinary medicine are still experiencing
subtle invalidation and may find difficulty integrating work and family into their lives.

Examining factors other than gender that create professional strain, Susan Kerr (1995)
concluded from her qualitative study of twelve veterinarians who left the profession,

Subjects recommended better business preparation for veterinary students, more practical
education, earlier and more realistic education about veterinary careers, the development
of a more supportive educational environment, and education about how to continually
challenge oneself. Additionally, a formal induction or socialization program may ease new
graduates' transition from school to employment; mentoring could likewise be of great
value. Novice veterinarians should also be warned about some of the hazards of a
stressful profession, such as burnout and substance abuse. Finally, thorough study of
attrition from the veterinary profession should be conducted to establish the prevalence of
this problem and identify additional factors contributing to veterinarians' decisions to leave
the profession. (Kerr, 1995, Abstract)

It is clear from this review that veterinary medicine is an intense demanding profession where
women have successfully gained access. In the sections below, I examine studies that highlight
some of the issues that are coinciding with women's growth in the profession, followed by typical
aspects of their intense professional training.
The Recognition of the Human-Animal Bond

Perhaps no area of the veterinary profession is more intriguing to psychologists interested in relational attachment than study of the human-animal bond. The nature of the relational connection between humans and animals is undergoing redefinition in society generally with important implications and tensions for veterinarians. In a dissertation focused on the context of animals in society, Susan Jones (1997) examined veterinarians' roles in the changing social construction of human relationship to animals. Veterinarians themselves are speaking about the relational bond. Highlighting the relational attachment implications of the profession, Dr. Leininger said at the AWV anniversary (AVMA, 1997),

Because of the animal connection, veterinary medicine is set apart from other health professions. Our connection with the creatures of this world goes back to the earliest recorded times, when man [sic] and animals lived in an intertwined dependency, for the very survival of the species . . . Whether it is because animals present a constant manifestation of man's [sic] interconnectedness with the natural world, or because of animals' inherent acceptance of the cycle of life, people who are drawn to the veterinary profession seem to be more empathetic, more altruistic, more in touch with our "humane-ness" than most people. That seems to translate into a core understanding of the importance of the people/animal link and a recognition that regardless of the practice field we fill, we are always serving people. (AVMA, 1997, p.2)

Clearly veterinarians are openly acknowledging their relational embeddedness bridging animals and humans. There appear to be diverse opinions on how veterinarians acknowledge and construct their personal and professional positions on the human-animal bond. On the one hand
are studies that report consistent gender differences in attitudes toward animals with female veterinarians showing more relational attitudes. For example, Hart and Melese-d’Hospital (1989) summarized research showing attitudes favored by women: oriented toward working with people, improving society, increased affection for individual animals, more anti-hunting and anti-trapping sentiments. They said research with female veterinary students has shown less tolerance for practices that hurt animals such as leghold traps, ear cropping, or hunting. Hart and Melese-d’Hospital hypothesized they would find similar attitudes among female veterinary students at the University of California. In their study, women rated the opportunity to learn about human-animal interactions higher than men; however, the differences were small. Hart and Melese-d’Hospital speculated that veterinary students’ attitudes may be converging and may be more homogeneous than the general public.

On the other hand, the professional responsibilities of veterinarians afford a unique perspective to view a wide array of human-animal connections and require a perspective that transcends their own relational connection. In an article examining implications of the human-animal bond for veterinary practice, Glickman (1992) emphasized perspectives outside the companionship role that animals play in people’s lives. For example, research is now showing positive outcomes of animal attachments with respect to human emotional and physical health. The attachment studies show that some people derive feelings of love and security from their pets and may relate to them psychologically as if they were human children. In addition, companion animals also present risks to human health and act as “sentinels” by providing early warning of environmental hazards to humans. Therefore veterinarians need to understand and recognize not only the important psychological issues but also the public health implications of animal diseases.
for humans. Glickman cited several legal actions against veterinarians who had failed to act to protect human health. In the quotation below, Glickman (1992), summarized the veterinarian’s position,

People and animals share feelings of dependence and love. Only now are we beginning to appreciate the biologic and psychologic bases and consequences of these relationships. At a time of increasing sensitivity to the issues of animal welfare and the value of animals in research, the humane use of pets as environmental sentinels provides an important new alternative for biomedical researchers, one that will benefit both mankind and the animals themselves. (p. 850)

Houpt, Honig, and Reisner (1996) further emphasized the unique role a veterinarian can play in helping humans and animals to remain in relationship since both benefit from the attachment. Humans often have unrealistic expectations of the roles animals are capable of playing perhaps because qualities of animals easily elicit projections of human-likeness. Fowler (1991) described the eliciting qualities in animals,

Certain pet animals, such as dogs, cats and horses, have remarkable characteristics which stimulate the human to bond to them. They can express emotion, they can detect and reflect human emotions, show attentiveness and affection, respond to touch and words, produce responses and stimulate caring in people. The bond is strengthened because animals are child-like, they never learn to talk, always require care and respond to training. (Fowler, 1991, p. 37)

Problems with companion animals are often the result of limited human understanding or tolerance of normal behaviour for the species. The veterinarian’s role is one of helping to
educate, interpret and normalize expectations. With several examples, Houpt et al., (1996) showed how easily animal behaviour is anthropomorphized and interpreted as if it were a human response. Unfortunately, because animals are not fully capable of responding in the ways some owners may wish, there has been a serious and growing problem of unwanted animals being surrendered to animal shelters. The authors estimated as many as 17 million dogs and 10 million cats were taken to shelters in 1988, with approximately 10 million dogs and 7 million cats having to be euthanized. It is this broader perspective on the animal-human bond that often troubles veterinarians who are concerned about the lives of animals. The clients of veterinarians are humans who make requests that create moral dilemmas.

Herzog, Vore, and New (1989) interviewed a group of 24 graduating veterinary students (8 male, 16 female) at the University of Tennessee to explore their perceptions of ethical issues, their personal response to euthanizing animals, changes in their attitudes toward animals over their four year program, and their accounts of the most distressing experiences. Herzog et al. conducted short 20-30 minute focused individual interviews with randomly selected students. While it might be argued that the interviews were too short to establish relationship or to explore student experiences in depth, the researchers found important descriptive themes.

Of the ethical issues facing them, students perceived having to euthanize a healthy animal for a client as foremost, followed by whether to treat an animal when the owner could not pay for care. Other dilemmas identified were pressures from owners to use steroids or analgesics with show and racing animals, and whether or not to take action to protect an animal if they suspected animal-abuse by owners. They also expressed concern about certain animal-husbandry practices on “factory farms.”
The discussion about euthanasia showed evidence of the psychological difficulties for both owner and veterinarian. In a sense, veterinarians have the power to end suffering; however, it raised “strong but divided emotions” among the students. While some students claimed they had never experienced distress or guilt, others continued to be upset by the procedure. In the quotation below are the words of two of Herzog et al.’s participants,

I cried the first and fifteenth time. It hasn’t gotten any easier over time but I have learned to mask my feelings in front of the client to be strong for them. (Herzog, et al., 1989, p. 186)

Another participant said,

I really had a sense of there being a life force or soul in the animal. One minute there was a dog lying there alive and the next minute it looked the same but there was something gone. And I really had the feeling of a life stopping, and I guess that’s an eerie feeling. (Herzog, et al., 1989, p. 186).

Some students’ first experience with euthanasia occurred during their student surgery class during second or third year of the program. Students found this experience challenging because it was one of their first contacts with animals in veterinary training and also involved the development of attachments where the students sensed the animals’ trust in them. Of the 24 students, Herzog, et al. speculated that by graduation, approximately half had “come to grips with the issue” possibly using denial or rationalization. Clinically significant was their conclusion,

We were impressed with the number of instances where it seemed that the students were still struggling with the responsibility of being active participants in the death of animals. (p. 186)
Distressing experiences reported by the student sample were either "morally troublesome" or "viscerally upsetting." Examples of the morally troublesome experiences included: prolonging animal suffering due to human needs to keep them alive or conducting unnecessary cosmetic surgery such as ear cropping and tail docking. Examples of the viscerally upsetting experiences all involved pain and included: surgical procedures on food animals without anesthesia, bone-marrow biopsies, the smell of dog blood, assessment of neurological state by infliction of deep pain, orthopedic examinations, necropsies of animals the students had worked with, transtracheal washes, and enucleations (removal of a diseased eye) (Herzog et al., 1989, p. 184).

Most of the participants did not believe their orientation to animals had changed through the process of veterinary education; however it is difficult to know if their own self-report was a valid index. Assuming students have a propensity toward animal attachment prior to professional training, it is relevant to consider some of the psychological-emotional data emerging from studies of companion animal death.

Recent research of the human response to death of a pet clearly points to the similarity with loss of a significant human relationship. In a recent study Gerwolls and Labott (1994) used a repeated measures design with standardized self-report of the clinical multidimensional aspects of bereavement following pet loss. They compared responses of pet owners to persons who had experienced the death of a spouse, parent, or child and reported no significant differences between the two types of loss across the clinical measures. They found the results supportive of Parkes' definition of the emotional aspects of attachment, namely "the strength of a tie is its resistance to severance" (Parkes 1972, p. 55 cited in Gerwolls & Labott, 1994, p. 183).

While the above study demonstrated the similarity of response between animal and human
bereavement patterns, some clinicians have argued that some forms of pet attachment may function as a displacement of a human attachment. For example, Stern (1988) described a case of pathological mourning in a Holocaust survivor who demonstrated intense and compulsive attachment to animals displacing the loss of her mother when both were taken to Auschwitz. Stern cited another study by Keddie (1977) that suggested links between mourning and pet owning.

Veterinarians in small companion animal practice may be more likely to encounter both their own feelings about animal death as well as the varied responses of their human clients for whom they also must care. For veterinarians who may be oriented to, sensitive, and capable of attaching to animals as well as to people, the repeated rupture of attachments creates a unique type of emotional stress (Fowler, 1991). Euthanasia is a regular event in small animal practice and may create stress related to emotional conflict as well as due to its uncontrollable nature (Fogle & Abrahamson, 1990). Over time this sort of stress may pose risks to the psychological health of veterinarians. A few studies suggest that mood disturbances and suicide rates among veterinarians exceed the general public rates (Klinin, 1983, cited in Fogle & Abrahamson, 1990).

If women tend to be more relationally oriented than men, it might be argued that women in veterinary medicine might experience more emotional distress related to animal attachment than might be typical of men. Research comparing the responses of male and female veterinarians is unclear. One study by Fogle and Abrahamson (1990) reported a survey of practicing veterinarians' feelings about pet loss. Of the sample of 167 respondents, 28% were women. Some very interesting responses reflecting attitudes toward animals were revealed.

In response to the question, "Do you believe that nonhuman animals are sentient -
conscious of their own identity?" 74% answered yes . . . Nineteen percent believed that nonhuman animals have souls . . . Twice as many females (30%) as males (15%) answered in the affirmative . . . Similar numbers believed in an afterlife for nonhuman animals . . .

One hundred and fifty-eight of the 167 respondents remembered the death of a pet of their own, and 91% (96% female, 88% male) said that it resulted in “short-term emotional effects.” Twenty-two percent reported that such a death lead to long-term emotional effects (38% female, 15% male), and 13% said that the death of a pet had been a factor in their selection of veterinary medicine as a career (16% female, 12% male). (Fogle & Abrahamson, 1990, p. 144).

To summarize the rest of the survey, Fogle and Abrahamson reported that euthanizing clients’ pets resulted in veterinary emotional distress, with higher reports of guilt among veterinarians in private practice compared to teaching clinicians. Although the responses were not analyzed statistically, the trends in the data suggested that women were more likely to acknowledge distress across a range of the survey questions. Several verbatim comments shared by the veterinarian respondents reveal how sensitivity remained even after professional training,

Every animal I destroy leaves a little bit of me dying and I always feel a sense of failure, even though I know it is the right thing to do. (First respondent)

Answering the question about death of my own pet is bringing tears to my eyes. I’ve never totally recovered from the loss. (Second respondent)

Fogle and Abrahamson suggested that the increasing numbers of women entering veterinary medicine are leading to more of an emotional context for companion-animal practice. In the past, a utilitarian-mechanistic view of animals characterized veterinary medicine and, from their survey
results, still reflected the dominant attitudes. These findings suggest two attitudinal orientations of veterinarians which might be similar to Gilligan's voice of justice and voice of care.

**Moral Orientation in Veterinarians**

A few studies have begun to examine moral development in veterinarians. Self, Safford, and Shelton (1988) administered the Defining Issues Test developed by James Rest as a measure of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning with a sample of the Texas Veterinary Medical Association. They tested the hypothesis that veterinarians in small animal practice would show higher levels of moral reasoning than veterinarians in large animal practice. The hypothesis was not supported. Self et al., did report gender differences with women showing significantly higher levels of moral reasoning.

In a subsequent study Self, Schrader, Baldwin, Root, Wolinsky and Shadduck (1991) used a pre and posttest of an oral moral judgment interview derived from Kohlberg’s work with veterinary students and found low levels of moral development yet no reported differences between males and females in the sample. The researchers noted that a measure of Gilligan’s orientations of justice and care would be relevant for further study. Subsequently, they used a Gilligan-derived methodology (Brown, Tappen, Gilligan, Miller & Argyris, 1989) to interpret narratives of real-life moral conflict and choice for self and moral voice in 20 graduating veterinary students (Self, Jecker, Baldwin, & Shadduck, 1991). They reported confusing results that were difficult to interpret. Using the 30-40 minute Gilligan Real-Life Conflict and Choice Interview with standard probe questions, they elicited verbal text that provided the basis for determining moral orientation. While this coding of a verbal sample may reveal particular usage
of concepts of justice or care, it is not clear that such a sample reveals a typical subjective attitude or is necessarily applicable to actual behaviour with animals. Furthermore, there was only one reader of the texts. From the categorizations, the researchers reported discrepant patterns with no significant correlations between gender and moral orientation, with some reasoning that did not fit into either category. They offered the following conclusion,

There may be moral aspects other than justice and care that form the structure of moral reasoning in veterinarians. (Self, Jecker, Baldwin, & Shadduck. 1991. p.572)

The earlier research on moral voice in law by Jack and Jack (1989), might lead to the hypothesis that veterinarians abdicate their own moral voice in order to adopt the perspective of their profession. Given the competing perspectives regarding animals currently confronting the veterinary profession, it might be predicted that veterinarians are challenged by traditional voices and by voices representing animal welfare (Tannenbaum, 1993).

From another perspective are studies that do not support an orientation of care in female veterinary students. Otis and Quenk (1989) and Moody (1989) suggested that identification of preferences for thinking or feeling as measured by the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, may more accurately and in a less gendered way, identify orientations of justice and care respectively. Several recent surveys of veterinary faculty and students using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, MBTI (Dimuzio, 1993; Mangum, 1989; Robinson, 1990) have been reported. MBTI results of 290 veterinary faculty who participated with the Center for Creative Leadership (Robinson, 1990) showed a predominance of preference for introversion (I), intuition (N), thinking (T), and judging (J). The most marked tendencies were thinking and judging both preferred by 80% of the predominantly male sample. Without discussing the psychometric problems with this instrument
or Jungian theory, these results appear to suggest that in one faculty sample, a justice-like orientation with an evaluative style characterized by logic, objectivity, analysis, organization and control was preferred. A characterization of these preferences suggested a faculty sample who, value competency, ability and knowledge . . . may be unaware of others' feelings, may exhibit impatience and disdain for persons whom they consider incompetent, may set unrealistically high expectations for themselves and others. (Robinson, 1990, p.24)

If these results are typical for veterinary faculty, they suggest a particular interpersonal culture in veterinary medicine education that entering women might encounter. Robinson's suggestion that greater numbers of women will automatically contribute a dimension that values caring seems misguided. It is true that large scale samples of MBTI show a gender difference on the T/F preference, with approximately 65% females (in U.S. samples) preferring feeling. As previously discussed, people are strongly affected by the cultures of the organizations they enter. Adding more women would not necessarily dilute a “justice” climate if the sources of power and control in the profession remain traditional. Robinson assumes a gender equality that is not supported by data.

Also, in contradiction to Robinson's suggestion, Mangum (1989) reported more thinking and judging (ISTJ, ESTJ, INTJ, ENTJ) females in a sample of 398 students admitted to the College of Veterinary Medicine at Mississippi State University over the period 1977-1988. Among males in the same sample, feeling, judging types were significantly over represented (ISFJ, ESFJ, INFJ, ENFJ).

These findings raise some interesting hypotheses for research. It is possible that women who enter veterinary medicine tend to be more justice-oriented, more tough-minded, objective,
and logical, and that this style becomes intensified over time through interaction with faculty having similar preferences. Alternatively, it may reflect an adaptation or coping practice through loss of voice to survive in an environment that clearly values justice as the research of Jack and Jack (1989) has implied. Unfortunately, Mangum does not detail the methodology underlying his sampling. The MBTI is a self-report instrument that is susceptible to social desirability and is incapable of distinguishing between stable personality traits versus more transient coping strategies.

Taken together, studies of moral orientation, ethical reasoning and relational orientation yield confusing and mixed results related to the core beliefs of women who practice veterinary medicine. As Tannenbaum (1993) stressed in his review of the ethical conflicts confronting veterinarians,

as servants of both animal and human interests, veterinarians have long been faced with difficult ethical questions. However, it has not been until recently that the profession as a whole has devoted any significant portion of its resources to a consideration of ethics... it should be noted that the proportion of female veterinary students has been rising steadily... If (as some veterinary educators believe) female students have a greater interest in animal welfare than their male counterparts, that the profession is becoming predominantly female may affect substantially the kinds of issues it finds important and the answers it proposes to these issues. (Tannenbaum, 1993, p. 152)

As of 1991, Tannenbaum suggested that the profession had not yet uniformly adopted ethics as an important component of professional education with roughly one-half of the 31 veterinary colleges in the United States and Canada offering formal instruction. An important transition has
been the shift to include more emphasis on the interests of clients and patients in the latest ethical code of the American Veterinary Medicine Association, *Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics* (AVMA, 1989). The balance of interests of human and animal appear to be weighted in favour of humans. For example, recently, the AVMA rejected a proposal from the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights that suggested advocacy for nonhuman animals for their own sake be a component of the Veterinarian’s Oath (AVAR, 1993). This issue alone provides evidence of value conflict within the profession and likely in the contexts that students are trained.

**Veterinary Medicine Education**

Houpt and Calhoun (1977) provided a descriptive account of women’s experiences in veterinary school several decades ago. Overt discrimination had subsided, but a new more insidious form of invalidation was evident,

The discrimination no longer interferes directly with education, but it is often much more personal. The obscene remark, the slide of a naked human (female, of course) among the others, the contemptuous attitude toward women clients are offensive to the women students . . . Entertainment which some of the more sensitive male veterinarians find crude and demeaning can hardly be anything but insulting to nearly any woman. We would hesitate to bring up the above subject had it not been called to our attention over a period of many years, at various veterinary colleges, by young women who were not unduly prudish, merely hurt. (pp. 5-6).

In addition to anti-female attitudes, Houpt and Calhoun (1977) claimed that the tension women felt between work and family produced conflict that was resolved using one of four mechanisms
(citing Hilberman, Konac, Perez-Reyes, Hunter, Scagnelli, & Sanders, 1975),

1) she becomes "one of the boys," avoiding femininity and even joining in derogatory statements about women; 2) she becomes the caricature of the female role, seductive, helpless and dependent; 3) she becomes a superwoman, the perfect student and perfect girl-friend or wife; or 4) she reacts bitterly to the unfairness of her situation, becomes angry and hostile. (p.6)

Houpt and Calhoun (1977) emphasized that there is reported evidence for external events that shape women's responses. These are gender discrimination by faculty members, discouragement in entering specialty areas, discrimination by other women in the environment, and practitioners especially those in large animal practice.

More recent research of veterinary students' experience has focused on the intensity and stress in the process itself. Mary Melbo (1981) explored self-reported stress in a sample of 288 veterinary medicine students at the University of Minnesota. She reported the following findings that are pertinent to inquiry of women's experience,

Overall level of stress for a majority of veterinary students was in the moderate range . . .

Two of the stress factors, Academic/Evaluation Stress and Lack of Time Stress, produced the most significant levels of stress in veterinary students. Of the demographic, situational, and psychological variables investigated, several appeared to be potentially important in determining which students will experience stress . . . (1) sex, (2) marital status, if female, (3) level of emotional support perceived by the individual student, (4) perceived sense of control over the environment, and (5) perceived sense of comfort with evaluations and tests . . . Female students were significantly more likely to focus on
problems in the environment as being problematic for women veterinarians whereas male students were more apt to focus on inherent traits of women. (Melbo, 1981, Abstract)

Another study by Kelman (1978) examined stressors typical for veterinary students and types of students reporting most stress. Most stressful were academic factors such as time pressure, testing, and an impersonal environment.

Too frequent, uncoordinated, poorly written and undiscussed tests seemed to be the most serious academic concern . . . Releasing time for a few faculty who are good listeners and who could provide a “someone to talk to” for students with academic, vocational, or personal problems might tend to “humanize” the academic environment . . . students who suffer from intense strain cannot be stereotyped as either low achievers or overly competitive (p. 150)

Cawunder and Hugh-Jones (1982) administered a questionnaire to first and third year veterinary students at Louisiana State University. They suggested that the “average student may be experiencing unhealthy amounts of stress” with most stress reported by married females, followed by single males and females. Married males reported least stress. Third year women reported considerable stress which the researchers related to gender discrimination in gaining access to hands-on experience, crude and sexist humor demeaning women, and concern about combining a career with marriage and parenting.

Hugh-Jones and Kearney (1983) conducted the same survey with all four years of Louisiana State University veterinary students. Unfortunately few of the final year women returned the survey, therefore the results have limited applicability to this study; however, they suggested that female students were more stressed than males and that they found interpersonal
relations more stressful. Generally the peak stress time was third year in the program and second year for single and separated students.

Another study by Mosier, McFarland, Johnson, Elmore and Oyler (1992) examined career indecision in veterinary students. They reported peak indecision coinciding with the same years reported by Hugh-Jones and Kearney (1993) as most stressful, namely the second and third years in the program. They also reported that while women were more certain about choosing veterinary medicine than men throughout the program, they became less certain as they approached graduation. Presumably this also coincided with the time of concerns about combining career with marriage and parenting.

Another study by Shane and Talbot (1989) shed light on attrition from American veterinary schools. These researchers used institutional data for their analysis and did not speak with students. They concluded that

differences between students’ perception of veterinary medicine and the actual experiences gained in the preclinical curriculum may create demotivation, and is probably the underlying cause of attrition. (p. 14)

The attrition patterns appeared to follow the work-load induced patterns of stress and career indecision reported above.

Susan Kent-Arce (1991) developed an inventory to assess the relationships between personality traits and stressors among veterinary medicine students at the College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She identified stressors unique to that program and student population and encouraged further research to inform mental health interventions with veterinary students.
A recent dissertation by Marilyn Berney (1996) studied veterinary medicine students' styles of coping with stress at Washington State University. While she reported no gender differences in personal hardiness, she emphasized,

Further areas of research remain in determining the efficacy of programs to assist students in developing healthy responses to stress and in making policy changes that promote a greater sense of control over the process of becoming a veterinarian. (Berney, 1996, Abstract)

Taking another psychological variable, moral development, a series of studies have revealed stunting of student cognitive development during the process of veterinary education. Presumably this has been an outcome related to the stressful, intensive process. Self, Schrader, Baldwin, Root, Wolinsky and Shadduck (1991) hypothesized that they would observe expectable increments in moral development over a four year period in students of veterinary medicine consistent with students in other disciplines. Using a pre and posttest of an oral moral judgment interview derived from Kohlberg's work, Self et al. reported a surprising result. They reported that,

normally expected increases in moral reasoning did not occur over the four years . . . suggesting that students' veterinary medical experience somehow inhibited their moral reasoning ability rather than facilitated it. (Self et al., 1991, p.782)

The information intensity of the veterinary medicine curriculum has become widely recognized and schools are currently engaged in redesigns of their programs to emphasize critical thinking and problem solving instead of rote memorization (e.g., Hubbell & Shaffer, 1998; O'Neil, 1991). Essentially, the pedagogical model for training veterinarians had remained unchanged
despite the information explosion in recent years.

Although the research cited begins to paint a picture of the veterinary education experience, there has been no intensive research to examine the professional socialization of female veterinarians. In a very recent article, Arluke (1997) called for qualitative study,

Why are students entering veterinary medicine at the close of the twentieth century? What is it that draws them to this profession and does their training resonate with their hopes for future practice? Why is there a rapid increase in the numbers of women entering veterinary school and how is this demographic affecting professional training? . . . To what extent, if at all, has the animal rights movement and a heightened awareness about animal welfare issues caused a change in . . . attitudes? (Arluke, 1997, p. 4)

Arluke suggested that qualitative study of professional socialization in veterinary medicine might focus on four questions:

1. What childhood and adolescent factors influence the career choice process in veterinary medicine?

2. What is the veterinary student pre-clinical experience?

3. How do students experience clinical training and manage uncomfortable emotions in third year surgery?

4. How do graduating students perceive their experience and their future?

In-depth exploration of the subjective experiences of women who are currently becoming veterinarians provides a snapshot of the contours of this historical shift in a profession. Qualitative research exploring the areas suggested by Arluke would certainly contribute to a void in the literature. From the perspective of women's lives, we might also ask how the contradiction
of work and care is being resolved by the profession and by the women in it.

**Summary of Research Questions**

This literature review has highlighted many current questions relevant to the career-related experiences of women entering the field of veterinary medicine. While the questions are not framed as hypotheses to be tested, the areas of interest involve: origins of an interest in veterinary medicine, the roles of families and educational environments as facilitating or discouraging career development, women's perspectives on their own work and care, women's perceptions of barriers and facilitators in contexts such as the workplace and education, and the phenomenology of the lived experience of becoming veterinarians. It is the intent of this dissertation to explore the experiences of contemporary female veterinary students.
METHODOLOGY

The goal of this dissertation was to explore the experiences of ten women who were becoming veterinarians. Specifically, this dissertation had two purposes, which were personal and knowledge-seeking. The first purpose was to enrich my understanding of the experiences of young women entering a previously non-traditional field. The second purpose was to explore dialogically the relationship between professional education, early professional experience, and the subjective meaning of career. What did contact with the profession mean for the life career stories of these women?

At least four bodies of literature framed the methodology I used in this dissertation. The literatures were methodologies for the study of career phenomena, feminist perspectives in the study of women's lives, perspectives on qualitative paradigms, and literature concerning life history methodologies specifically. Arguments favouring the life history method emerged from each literature for varying and overlapping reasons.

Re-visioning Career Theories Requires New Methods

Judi Marshall (1989) argued that for career theory to be applicable for women requires “re-visioning” of career concepts and assumptions about what is meant by career development. Career research is complex and multidisciplinary with contributions emerging from economics, psychology, and sociology in particular. The field of vocational psychology has been described by Donald Super as a psychology of occupations and as a psychology of careers. Each descriptor suggests different objects of study and relevant methodologies depending on the purpose of the
study (Herr, 1990). Within psychology, the field has traditionally been based on differential psychology and positivist, empiricist inquiry. The literature is rich with constructs and theories. Increasingly, there are signs of an emergent paradigm shift as the limits of knowing from a positivist paradigm have become increasingly apparent. Criticisms are: lack of external validity, insufficient attention to contextual factors, imprecise and redundant terminology, limited returns from increases in research design complexity, and the concern that theories designed during more stable times have limited relevance in a chaotic world (Collin & Young, 1986; Herr, 1990; Young & Borgen, 1990). Prediction and control, the goals of a positivistically based science, have continued to elude researchers especially as contexts continually change. Theories that lack external validity have limited relevance for applied practitioners and career counselling specialists.

Aware of the limitations of a positivist paradigm, Herr (1990) has argued that career researchers might best understand the impact of influences on lives retrospectively and through ipsative rather than through normative research. A historical, ipsative approach is particularly relevant for the developmental study of the lives of women for whom the literature has shown contextual influences to be significant. Other career researchers (Collin & Young, 1986; Young & Borgen, 1990; Young & Collin, 1992; Young, Valach & Collin, 1996), have expressed a resurgence of interest in subjectivity as the locus of study. People's thoughts, plans, aspirations and meanings mediate their actions and provide the data upon which context-based local theories of human agency and subjective career are built. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) suggested that movement toward more localized accounts is characteristic of current trends in qualitative research generally. Inquiry based on a positivist paradigm is useful for specific hypothesis testing; however, such a method is not able to tap experience of the subjective career. To understand the
experiences of women who are becoming veterinarians, we can choose to objectively measure some aspects of their behaviour, or we can ask them to tell us their stories (Cohler, 1991; McAdams, 1988; 1993; Ochberg, 1988; Stewart, Franz & Layton, 1988). Only the latter method would yield the type of data being sought. Objective data would yield a perspective on career from outsiders’ point of view but we would still be at a loss to explain individual choices and actions. We would be faced with theorizing and likely misrepresenting the subjectivity of others.

Herr (1990) emphasized that careers are inseparable from persons and distinguished subjective careers from objective entities,

Careers do not simply exist, they are forged in what persons do and what they avoid doing, in the decisions made or not made . . . Careers . . . are created as persons sort among and convert potentialities into actualities . . . In this sense, individual careers are better understood after the fact than before, in ipsative rather than normative terms, and in qualitative rather than quantitative terms. In such a premise, biographical and case study methodologies have a potential richness and explanatory power that many quantitative processes do not. (Herr, 1990, p. 4)

Coinciding with recent developments in other areas of psychology, career researchers have argued that an appropriate methodology for understanding career is the story or narrative,

If we represent life in story, then telling stories to ourselves and others is part of life as lived. Part of a career, for instance, is telling stories of the career we have had so far, have now, and want in the future. To represent a career, then, would partially involve representing the stories people construct about themselves and their life projects. (Cochran, 1990, p. 73)
Cohler (1991) has advocated that life stories are well suited to capture the ways in which people deal with developmental phenomena, change and adversity. Therefore, this method was well suited to capture the dynamic experience implied in becoming a veterinarian.

Many researchers have already published qualitative studies that explore subjective career-related experiences, for example, of women’s career choice (Eisenhart, 1985), of women artists (Brooks & Daniluk, 1998), of women in law (Jack & Jack, 1989), of reentry mid-life women (Wiersma, 1988), and of women of colour (Turner, 1997). Qualitative study of medical careers has also appeared, for example in studies of the socialization of physicians (Addison, 1989; Becker, Geer, Hughes & Strauss, 1961), and of psychiatrists (Light, 1980). Suitability of the method for the goals of the research is one important criterion and it would appear that within some schools of thought, qualitative approach to career is already acceptable.

Another criterion in method selection is raised by feminist researchers. These researchers draw particular attention to the need to consider the political consequences of choice of method in conducting career research. For example, Gaskell (1990) suggested that we must ask ourselves what the methodology will illuminate and what it will conceal. In attempting to counteract silencing of women’s voices and experiences, feminism raises important accountabilities for the qualitative career researcher to choose a method that will focus on voice and experience (Marshall, 1989).

**Feminist Epistemology and Method**

Proponents of feminist thought have drawn distinctions between a feminist epistemology (theory of knowledge), a feminist methodology (theory and analysis behind method), and a
feminist method (set of techniques for inquiry). To clarify the values and assumptions that guide this dissertation, I review the strengths and weaknesses in the competing feminist perspectives. 

Feminism itself is clearly not a unitary position (Marshall, 1989; Olesen, 1994) and many scholars have attempted to make distinctions. The main thrust of feminist thought and action is one of reducing women’s historical oppression. Riger (1992) defines feminist as “a system of values that challenges male dominance and advocates social, political, and economic equity of women and men in society” (p. 731). Three dominant schools of thought are feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint, and postmodern feminism.

Early feminist empiricist researchers using positivist perspectives, sought to discount, through rigorous objective research methods, the notion of gender differences in order to emphasize women’s capabilities and similarities to men. Empiricism has been a worthwhile perspective, and has been most acceptable within traditional psychology itself. Still, some feminist researchers have claimed that the empiricist school perpetuates the status quo because the basic paradigm of the scientific method, based upon masculinist values such as neutrality and objectivity of the researcher, is never questioned (Crawford, 1989; Riger, 1992). Objective research may also obscure aspects of women’s experiences and development that differ from those of men.

A second perspective, called “feminist standpoint” theories, attempts to identify uniquely feminine characteristics and to elevate them as valuable to humanity to counteract historical devaluation of feminine traits. Proponents of this perspective include Gilligan (1982), Jordan et al. (1991), and Belenky et al. (1986). Recently, concerns have been expressed (e.g., Bohan, 1993; Crawford, 1989; Riger, 1992) regarding the unintended result of emphasis on differentness. A few of those concerns are as follows: findings of gender differences are often rapidly
transmitted to the public domain where the careful qualifying statements of the researcher are lost; instead a finding becomes universalized to all women. Critics (e.g., Crawford, 1989) have uncovered methodological flaws in high profile studies (e.g., Belenky et al., 1986; Gilligan, 1982) despite the good intentions of the researchers. Common flaws included: failing to account for sampling effects, making inferences about development when data were not longitudinal, failing to control for effects of education and social class, and lack of comparability between groups.

The third perspective of postmodern feminism emphasizes the importance of context in determining individual behaviour. Some proponents of this perspective (e.g., Bohan, 1993; Crawford, 1989; Riger, 1992) suggested that gender is best viewed as socially constructed through interaction rather than being an inherent, trait-like quality of the individual. This newer position is compatible with the notion of a fluid, contextually-defined self consistent with the career literature, the literature related to women's development, and the literature related to life history methodology (Bloom & Munro, 1995).

Another important position taken by postmodern feminism is related to within group variance. The argument is that women are diverse and cannot be legitimately treated as a homogenous group despite sharing gender as a social category (Bohan, 1993). Some feminist scholars have suggested the tension psychologists face,

As a clinician, I am aware of the dangers of generalization. In a very real sense, each woman’s story is her own. As a feminist, I am equally aware that no woman’s story is just her own. . . . Each woman leads a particular life determined by her own talents and proclivities, her abilities and experiences, her ethnic and class membership. Yet all these experiences are organized by gender, so that each woman’s story is also every woman’s
story. (Kaschak, 1992, p. 8)

One can overemphasize women's similarities or obscure the effects of cultural domination depending on perspective. Finding an appropriate balance in inquiry is challenging for feminist researchers if we are to continue to strive for social change (Bohan, 1993). Constructivism (which views behaviour as a product of social transaction) has been suggested as an alternative to essentialism (the standpoint view in which qualities are seen as trait-like or aspects of the individual). From a constructivist perspective, we investigate specific cultures to capture unique and diverse perspectives on phenomena. These perspectives include points of view emerging from the social environment (gender, social class, age, race and so forth). Constructivism brings a responsible approach to the study of women's lives into close alignment with the assumptions and aims of qualitative research.

This dissertation openly acknowledges a constructivist position and while intentionally focusing on the lives of women, makes no comparative claims with respect to men. In also acknowledging that an acceptance of feminist epistemology informs this dissertation, I am acknowledging the lack of political neutrality in my choice of topic and method. I openly acknowledge that as a counsellor-therapist and researcher I am concerned about and committed to issues reflecting women's oppression and emancipation. My stance means that on a practical level, I am intent upon hearing about women's experiences in their own words, not those of a survey instrument, and without my hypotheses or a priori assumptions shaping the data that emerge. A further implication of adopting a feminist methodology involves taking responsibility for transformative action (Parsons, 1993) and paying particular attention to the research relationship (Roberts, 1981).
In completing this dissertation, I wrestled with ways to be ethically responsible in using the data constructively to influence a change process in the veterinary college site where the participants were students. Sharing the data with the women and the college led to personally useful experiences for some of them and may have helped to shape thinking about curriculum redesign that might affect students who follow. I discuss these actions in a later section of this chapter.

I collected much of the data through unstructured interviews. Therefore, I paid close attention to the feminist literature on the subject of interviewing women (Anderson & Jack, 1991; Minister, 1981; Oakley, 1981) and current literature on qualitative interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Seidman, 1991). I found considerable convergence in the two literatures. Important aspects that informed my research relationship with participants were: emphasis on collaboration and self-disclosure as means to attempt to reduce the power imbalance in researcher-researched relationships, emphasis on participant roles as knowledge experts on the phenomenon being studied, emphasis on my role as a data collector, technician and student in another professional school, emphasis on trust, sharing, and dialogue. This type of relationship provided a hospitable space for the women's voices to emerge. This format also produced some understandings that were intersubjective, co-produced by myself and the participant.

**Inside the Qualitative Paradigm: Assumptions and Issues**

Committing to a qualitative method of inquiry raises some key assumptions that are important to articulate. First, there is a wide array of qualitative methods - not one (Jacob, 1987; 1989). Therefore articulating the particular qualitative tradition being used with its associated
assumptions and methodology is important. Although qualitative researchers have argued that conceptual distinctions among methods are unclear, aligning one's work with a tradition is preferable (Jacob, 1989).

The life history method has been linked to the tradition of symbolic interactionism or the Chicago school of sociology (Denzin, 1978; Jacob, 1987). A core assumption of this tradition is that people behave toward objects and events according to the meaning for them - that meanings evolve through social interaction and thus are socially constructed within specific groups. Where this tradition deviates from others is in its assumption that culture or context effects are mediated by individuals' interpretations. The data considered appropriate include interviews, autobiographies, letters and the researcher's own subjective experiences. Sampling is based on the assumption that a group of persons occupying similar positions and circumstances within an institution would have similar interpretations of events (Jacob, 1987).

The personal process of becoming a veterinarian intersects with an institutional process of professional education to produce specific effects on developing persons. Allport and Becker emphasized the usefulness of life history in understanding phenomenal experience (Watson, 1985). Becker argued that life history is important in studying the subjective side of institutional processes,

The perspective differs from that of some other social scientists in assigning major importance to the interpretations people place on their experience as an explanation for behavior. To understand why someone behaves as [she] does you must understand how it looked to [her], what [she] thought [she] had to contend with, what alternatives [she] saw open to [her]. (Becker, 1966, p. vi cited in Watson, 1985, p. 30; female pronouns have
been substituted for male pronouns in the original)

To some extent this dissertation assumed the character of an ethnography of professional veterinary medicine education; however, it fell short of doing so because I did not design the study with that purpose in mind. I did not fully inhabit the context to engage in participant observation. Both latter methods are normally used besides obtaining subjective reports to provide triangulation of the data and an understanding of the symbolic meaning of behaviour within a culture.

Life history is also claimed within phenomenology (Van Manen, 1990) as an ideal way to appreciate lived experience of human phenomena. Here, the life history is used as a description from which thematic aspects of the phenomenon can be uncovered through reflective reading and writing. This method places most emphasis on the phenomenon, in this instance the experience of becoming a veterinarian, and de-emphasizes the context and the individuals upon whose lives the descriptions are based. Accumulation of studies of experience showing repetitive structures or themes may in the future provide greater insight into career development processes as lived experiences of career phenomena.

A second feature of many qualitative traditions is the lack of a pre-designed research plan. Researchers commonly use an emergent design during the study since knowing in advance what one will discover about a culture and its inhabitants is impossible. Through immersion, familiarity, and time, the researcher comes to understandings that refine the focus of the inquiry.

Third, some traditions share an approach to knowing that challenges commonly accepted assumptions of a value neutral objective science. In the traditions most aligned with life history, the notion of objectivity with respect to the subject-matter and researcher bias must be replaced
with the expectation of personal bias on my part and of intersubjective influence between researcher and researched. Watson (1985) describes the phenomenon as a double autobiography in life history research particularly because of the blending of the consciousness of the investigator and the subject. At the conclusion of a study, distinguishing between them may be impossible. Intersubjective knowledge is co-created knowledge.

Accordingly, the data are not considered as approximations to an objective truth but themes of emotional-psychological subjective realities or narratives. That such narratives are retrospective and subjective in nature clearly casts doubt on any assumptions of causality, or that certain cognitive and emotional experiences produced actions or decisions historically. The narratives reflect the current time constructions or meaning-making of participants. We cannot draw conclusions about the generalizability of these accounts; however, we can develop working hypotheses. Additionally, the particular features of qualitative research, and life history in particular, that are so appealing are richness and depth of understanding not possible with quantitative work.

Life History: Specific Features of the Methodology

The desirability of a life history method for this dissertation has been supported by many perspectives. The method offers richness in understanding career, the ability to emphasize a woman’s voice, emphasis on subjective truths that are socially constructed and the ability to illuminate larger human and social phenomena (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p.113). Despite its desirability, the life history method also raises many difficult issues that I discuss below.

First, this method has a long history and has been described by various confusing terms
including: narrative, life history, oral history, oral narratives and so forth. In a text on feminist research, Gluck and Patai (1991) proposed,

"oral narratives" [refer to] the material gathered in the oral history process typically utilizing a tape recorder. These narratives take a variety of forms, including life history, topical interviews, and testimonies. "Oral history," in contrast, refers to the whole enterprise: recording, transcribing, editing, and making public the resulting product - usually but not necessarily a written text. (Gluck & Patai, 1991, p. 4)

The great variety of terms and practices within many disciplines, makes the definition of a clear, defensible method extraordinarily difficult. In a recent edited text, Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) with their contributors raised some salient issues. Given my own beginning work as a qualitative researcher, let alone a life history practitioner, I can only confess my naive underestimation of the complexity inherent in this work. Through the conduct of my dissertation, I believe, I have begun to grapple with some important issues. Undoubtedly there were other issues for which I was unprepared and poorly informed. Nevertheless, I would like to clarify what I mean by life history method, drawing on some important works of others. Watson (1985) defines the life history as follows,

The life history is one distinctive type of personal document. Personal documents as a generic category include any expressive production of the individual that can be used to throw light on [her] view of [herself], [her] life situation, or the state of the world as [she] understands it, at some particular point in time or over the passage of time (see Allport 1942). The following productions are definable subspecies of personal documents: life histories, autobiographies, dream reports, diaries, letters, various kinds of test
performance, and forms of artistic expression such as written fiction and painting. . . . the "life history" is any retrospective account by the individual of [her] life in whole or part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited or prompted by another person. (Watson, 1985, p. 2; emphasis in the original; female pronouns have been substituted for male pronouns in the original)

Respondents to a survey by Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) situated life history within the broader category of narrative. According to those respondents, life history is a form of narrative; however, a narrative is not necessarily a life history. Life history is a history of an individual life and makes meaning of that life as a narrative connecting life events to social events (Lincoln, Schempp and others cited by Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p.115). In applying this method to the study of women who are becoming veterinarians, ideally we would examine individual stories to appreciate their unique and overlapping themes. Unfortunately, only I have access to the individual stories due to the preferences and potential vulnerabilities of participants. The overlapping themes informed by my knowledge of the individual stories are presented for the reader.

More so than any other qualitative method, the life history is highly personal (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995), brings the researcher closer to the personal lived experience of an individual, and in doing so raises inherent risks. Once touted as an ideal method for feminist research, criticisms such as the complexity of language and the interview process, and dangers to research participants, have led to more cautious application (Stacey, 199; Gluck & Patai, 1991). Ardra Cole (cited in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 117) has suggested that participant influence through involvement in the design, conduct, and analysis of the data is used by some researchers.
Opportunity for involvement reflects a type of safeguard and control to avoid manipulation and victimization by the researcher. As I note later in this chapter, involvement can take many forms and may even be declined.

Another feature of life history method that I had not recognized but find consistent with my goals is that of practicality. Hatch and Wisniewski's respondents considered findings from life history research to be more practical than other forms of qualitative research. With its emphasis on situated subjectivity, life history "explicitly acknowledges the existence of multiple, and possibly conflicting, personal realities and perspectives" (Sikes cited by Hatch and Wisniewski, p. 122). Life history is particularly consistent with a feminist poststructuralist perspective on identity where "self" is conceived of as "complex, situational, fragmented, nonunitary, nonlinear, noncoherent, and constantly in flux" (Hatch and Wisniewski, 1995, p.122). Thus we are not obliged to fit the idea of a bounded self onto the data, but can acknowledge the multiple and competing positions more consistent with a contextually embedded relational self.

Two challenges confront the life history researcher. First are ethical and methodological issues concerned with researcher-participant relationships, voice, and representation. Second are issues concerning criteria for evaluating life history research. While aspects of ethical concerns with participants have already been raised in the earlier discussion of feminist perspectives on interviewing women, there are additional concerns. Researchers must be aware of the vulnerability faced by participants in agreeing to participate in life history projects. Some risks include: exposure or betrayal of confidences in ways participants had not anticipated, misrepresentation of experience, and relationship boundary issues created through intimate involvement in another’s life. Some researchers have unwittingly hurt participants whom they had
aimed to help. Even the use of reflection as an interview tool is potentially risky,

Reflection is a powerful tool; the researcher, simply by being there causes a form of “knowing” an event differently. Many people survive or, indeed, endure by deliberately not being aware of all the complexities and dangers - the slings and arrows of discontent.

... The reflective act does make clear the nature of the problem, but existential reality - what we really do and really know - is often not comforting... Therefore, what is the researcher’s obligation? (Linda Tillman Rogers cited by Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p.119; italics in original)

I considered participant vulnerability through an elaborate consent form with options to withdraw interview material and to withdraw from the study at any time. By choosing women who were committed to the process of professional socialization, I hoped to avoid interference with their motivation caused by reflection. I presented options for further relationship and involvement to several participants; however, I learned that students had limited time available to them. Later, options for further relationship and involvement were presented to me by several participants. I chose to limit further involvement with them to be consistent with the others. My initiated contact involved “member checking” - an opportunity to comment or change my written account.

Merriam (1988) recommended member checks to ensure internal validity,

taking data and interpretations back to the people from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest doing this continuously throughout the study. (Merriam, 1988, p.169)

Had I been funded or been afforded more time for immersion, I might have made different decisions. In negotiating the research contract, I offered participants a choice up front regarding
how the data would be shared with public audiences. All the women preferred a grouped or merged account rather than a series of single life histories that might make them identifiable in a small community. This decision, based on a goal to prevent harm, obviously distorted the method. I chose to limit my opportunity to inadvertently exploit participants. While I will obviously benefit through my dissertation, I have promised to split any royalties from publication for profit should that occur in the future.

For this dissertation, clarifying an appropriate stance in relation to the data and participants is important, to define what the data constitute and how I have interacted so appropriate interpretations and conclusions may be drawn. The issues of voice and the impact of my own subjectivity emerge with respect to this process. Despite my invitation for collaborative work, the personal priorities of my participants left the data analysis and writing predominantly in my hands. While I built in several safeguards, such as clarifying my understanding in second interviews, seeking validation in a written narrative report, I may have misrepresented some understandings inadvertently. While engaged in analysis and writing, I have had opportunities to informally test general ideas with other women students (within the D.V.M. program or among women who had applied for admission to veterinary medicine). These options were less than ideal; however, the participants were geographically remote at the time.

Analyzing the data and putting them into a format for the audience of my dissertation committee has itself been a formidable challenge. I have learned a great deal from this research; however, capturing my understanding in writing involves translation and distortion. Despite the work that follows, I believe it falls short of capturing the totality of my knowing. I do believe that the data authentically reflect the subjective interview themes. Yet, if the data reflect subjective,
contextual truths, which are neither exhaustive nor objectively "true," what then do they constitute? Grumet (1989) explored the use of biographical text in the illumination of teachers' lives, contrasting the perspectives of phenomenology with that of a feminist lens. Grumet suggested that the I of autobiographical consciousness is a form of fluid subjectivity not of "genuine, authentic, real, deep-down selves. . . [the] dialectical interplay of our experience in the world and our ways of thinking about it" (Grumet, 1989, pp. 92-93). With this representation in mind, I render an account of the themes that emerged in the stories of becoming veterinarians as I understood them from my own situated position.

The final feature of life history I explore is consensus regarding criteria for judging acceptability. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) among others have noted that traditional positivist criteria such as validity and reliability are inconsistent with the goals and assumptions of this method. Many practitioners have suggested a range of criteria: adequacy, aesthetic finality, accessibility, authenticity, believability, closure, credibility, compellingness, continuity, explanatory power, fidelity, moral persuasiveness, plausibility, resonance, sense of conviction, trustworthiness and verisimilitude (Hatch & Wisniewski, p. 129). I found the argument for criteria of authenticity, believability and fidelity advanced by Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) compelling for me, and used these criteria for the member check. In the quotation below of Blumenfeld-Jones' position, I found resonance between my felt responsibility for faithful stewardship of the data, the respectful obligation of the researcher to participants, and of the researcher to the method itself,

"Fidelity" is presented as a criterion for practicing and evaluating narrative inquiry. . . .

"Fidelity" is contrasted with "truth" and characterized as moral in character. "Fidelity" is
further characterized as a "betweenness," construed as both intersubjective (obligations between teller and receiver) and as a resonance between the story told and the social and cultural context of a story. Storytelling is an arena of purposeful reconstruction of events . . . [linking] narrative inquiry to art making. Using Ricoeur's work on emplotment and Langer's work in aesthetic philosophy, a criterion of "believability" is established. The narrative is believable when it can be credited with conveying, convincingly, that the events occurred and were felt in ways the narrator is asserting. . . . "Yes, you seem to have captured what I see in it". . . .[is a] notion of reproduction [which] is both faithful to the object (the narrative and its objects) as it stands and adds to our understanding in that the maker of the image reveals and enables a "subjectivity that is always open to new possibilities of expression and realization" (citing Grumet, 1988, p. 67). Thus, truth for fidelity is simultaneously factual (that is, reasonably accurate) and a function of perspective (meaningful). (Blumenfeld-Jones, 1995, pp.25-27)

My decision to provide a detailed account of my method, subjective responses and methodological decisions enables the reader to judge the extent to which I met my obligations (Watson, 1985).

The Research Process

Because this qualitative research unfolded as an exploratory design, the process spanned roughly four years from September 1993 to the present. Beginning with the emergence of a research question, the phenomenon went through many iterative shifts to reach the form of this text. I understand differently now than when I began. I have the felt sense of having traversed a
great expanse of personal and professional learning. I can now identify the importance of areas for research that I had not perceived initially. Personally, I have accomplished what exploratory study typically achieves. The richness of the data has allowed me better to understand, hypothesize, and find intriguing the interplay of complex events and responses in the professional education of veterinary students. I am left with a sense of awe and excitement.

The Research Question and Its Origins in My History

On September 22, 1993, I sat in the chair of my dental hygienist, “Trish.” We were discussing local news that a second year veterinary student had been found. His body was found near Niagara Falls, where he had driven his car and ended his life. Unable to converse too freely myself with her fingers in my mouth, Trish continued with a casual remark that the students are under such pressure - “the suicides!” I had heard of one just a few years prior - a young woman whom I had known briefly. Her comment awakened my feelings of shock and disbelief upon hearing. Trish shared with me that she had toyed with the idea of becoming a veterinarian herself and had even worked as a research assistant at the veterinary college in anticipation of doing so. She shared with me her feelings of disgust upon witnessing a student’s inducing pneumonia in foals to test a drug. Trish had to watch them die. Trish contextualized her observation by sharing her opinion that the student was “so desperate” to do acceptable research and was driven to “this extreme.” She stated that the female students, in particular, “can really put things in perspective.” In justifying her own career choice, Trish complained about the long hours, and years required to become a veterinarian and for what, she emphasized? Low pay and lack of recognition in society! She believed that becoming a veterinarian was more difficult than to become a human medical
doctor. In veterinary medicine, she said, many animal systems must be learned in contrast to only one system in human medicine. She was happy with her choice of dental hygiene.

I further appreciated the emotional distress experienced by animal care technicians like Trish had been when I attended a workshop in March 1994 on “Coping with Animal Mortality,” through the Animal Care Facility at the University of Guelph. According to the coordinator, (a veterinarian) learning about the topic of coping with animal mortality is avoided by most veterinary students.

While formulating my research proposal, I had many other conversations. I read some literature about veterinary medicine education and veterinary students in particular. This literature was not extensive and was therefore not terribly informative. I spent time at Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.), primarily in the veterinary library. While I did not engage in systematic observation of students, I gained an informal appreciation of the environment that was a familiar setting for them.

As I immersed myself in veterinary medicine, I wondered about base rates for suicides in academic programs. Was the veterinary program typical of other stressful professional programs? What might it be about a program, its participants and their interaction, that creates risks to mental health? During my practicum at the local Community Mental Health Clinic, I learned there were veterinary students among the clientele; however, I had no comparative data. My training in psychotherapy research led me to view careers and academic programs as “treatments” which exert particular intended and unintended effects on student “clients,” being much more pervasive and intensive than our limited psychotherapeutic enterprises.

I went to sources of academic institutional data only to learn that epidemiological statistics
of the sort I sought were not kept. Possibly I was raising questions that are not typically raised. Perhaps the response represented institutional denial or perhaps a barring me as not entitled to them given my rank in the hierarchy. Disappointed at the lack of data and the seeming impossibility of creating them, I figured I would have to change my research topic. Yet my curiosity was tenacious. I began to hypothesize that I could identify a sample of self-selected dropouts from the veterinary program. I figured that dropping-out might represent on a continuum, a less extreme form of the outcome category to which suicide belonged. Perhaps I could explore the felt sense of program-person incongruence to understand better. Still, I was foiled again. In an interview with one of the veterinary college administrators, I was told that "nobody drops out" and that the rare instance might be estimated at a rate of .5% per year. I was initially disappointed, then became even more curious since an outcome of no attrition signalled something. I wondered how the low attrition compared with other academic programs. I had only recently learned how extraordinarily high the drop out rates from doctoral programs were.

I reframed the dissertation again. I would start by exploring what the experience of becoming a veterinarian was like with actual students. I would strive to put myself in their shoes, to appreciate the lived experience about which I had previously speculated. From their vantage point, I could begin to evaluate the reasonableness and validity of some of my theorizing. Was it reasonable to hypothesize that an academic culture permits no dropping out? If that were so, might suicide emerge as the only alternative for someone who wanted to get away? What was the process of becoming a veterinarian? As it happened, some of my sample of participants were classmates of the male student who died and they spoke about his suicide as part of their experience. This indirect experience gave me an answer to my hypotheses.
In choosing, for my inquiry, to focus upon the experience of students about to graduate from professional education in veterinary medicine, I at once recalled my own professional education a number of years ago, and yet with the same breath I acknowledge that their experience differs from my own through the contextual features which shape the contours of today's young adults' lives. Hearing the stories evoked both the familiar and known and the unfamiliar and strange. This inquiry has interwoven for me a process of remembering and reworking my own experience in becoming a professional. (Research Log)

The researcher necessarily brings bias to the inquiry. My own background is relevant. Originally, and drawn initially from my own and counselling experiences, I was attempting to "listen for" stories of connected selves and disjunction in the women's experience (Brown & Gilligan, 1982; Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Argyris, 1989; Caplan, 1993; Dagg & Thompson, 1988; Gilligan, Lyons & Hanmer, 1990). I found the essentialist literature to be very affirming of women, myself included. My own earlier experience in professional psychology was biologically and medically oriented and highly positivistic. Thus, the stories revived and led to reinterpretation of memories of my own tacit experience.

About the same time, I counselled a woman who had withdrawn from medical school in her third year. Our work together involved trying to make sense of her emotional distress in her professional program despite her high ability. We concluded it was partly due to a clash between her own gentleness and caring values and her perception of the callous attitudes in the profession.
I had also heard of women withdrawing from programs such as engineering because “it was turning me into somebody else.” I spoke with women majoring in physics who struggled with whether they wanted to be, as minorities, “trail blazers” or opt for an “easier” life.

These diverse fragments of stories were perplexing and they raised professional issues for me for the competent practice of career counselling. I began to search for a conceptual frame, uncertain as I began my inquiry of how to *name* this phenomenon. How well do congruence models (such as the work of John Holland that is used in many post secondary counselling centres) account for such experiences? The work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), Brown and Gilligan (1992), Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller, and Argyris (1989), Gilligan (1982), and Jack and Jack (1989) provided alternate ways of understanding congruence. Despite domain interest, the values of minority persons might clash with the majority values of a socially constructed profession. This alternative hypothesis of distinctive values constituting professional education environments locates incongruence in the interpersonal domain. Persons whose values are similar to the profession may experience a sense of “fit” or belonging. Persons from minority or marginal perspectives may experience the opposite - a sense of disconnection. Through subtle shaping of values and beliefs in social contexts, a basis for perpetuation of the status quo exists. The profession resists change. Processes that act as barriers to persons with minority or marginal perspectives are created.

Previous theorists such as Betz and Fitzgerald (1987), Caplan (1993), Dagg and Thompson (1988), and Fitzgerald and Betz (1994) have provided other ways to frame forces that act to silence women’s voices and thus affect women’s career development process and psychological development. Concepts such as the “chilly climate,” or the “maleness of the
environment” have been introduced to explain features of the environment that differentially discriminate against women. These phenomena lead to distinct psychological processes within individuals depending upon the interpretation of events.

While compelling, I was not certain which framework would adequately capture the phenomenon. I was also reminded by Ardra Cole who taught our graduate course in qualitative research to refrain from premature conceptualization and to “let them tell their stories.” Therefore, my focus needed to be broad enough to capture a full range of experience and I believe that I became more open to consideration of a variety of ways to tell this story. In retrospect, having cast a broad rather than narrow and specific net of inquiry has benefitted me immeasurably. I now have a map of the terrain that provides a clear foundation for research in the future.

**Entering the Research Site: Preparatory Steps and Actions**

The research site for this dissertation was Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C) of the University of Guelph, Ontario, Canada. A brief overview of veterinary medicine and the college is available to readers in Appendix I. I began my formal approach and entry into the veterinary college context carefully and with the consultation and guidance of four informants: Dr. Margaret Patterson, who had recently completed her doctoral thesis with the same population and led me to believe that the women were at risk for experiences of gender discrimination (Patterson, 1991), “Sharon” an acquaintance, former graduate and faculty member of Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.), and two male administrators whose permission I needed to gain access to students. These informants shared their opinions and local theories about women students in veterinary medicine. The administrators gave me the permission needed to invite a few students to be
One Woman's Story: An Earlier Perspective

I created a historical backdrop in December 1993 by interviewing a woman from an earlier cohort of veterinary students. Sharon, a previous acquaintance, had graduated fifteen years earlier. My research struck a chord for her. She revealed, to my surprise, experiences with gender discrimination that I am not at liberty to report. She and I were both startled, I at her revelation and its connection to my research, and she that I had not known about an event that felt so public for her.

She had been one of forty females in a class of one hundred and twenty D.V.M. students. Sharon had been a member of an all female group of veterinary students. She remembers a male faculty referring to them and their talkativeness in class. The image conveyed was one of differentiation from the rest of the class and one that emphasized undesirable activity, e.g., talkativeness. There was little in the extracurricular life of veterinary students besides intramural hockey. She guessed that the veterinary fraternity, "the Frat" was now mixed in gender. I reacted to the male descriptor. Isn't that still a contradiction?

Now obviously committed to her profession, Sharon sensitized me to some issues for women: gender perception, discrimination, child care and relational orientation to animals. She suggested perspectives that the students might have and reminded me of biases that might be counter to my own.

I had previously favoured a feminist essentialist position in framing this dissertation. She thought that students would deny gender differences, having thought so herself before having
children. In the veterinary medicine culture, she said “feminine” means “maternal” and “feminist” is “a bad word.” Either identifier was negative since she linked her discriminatory experience with her being a mother and she identified herself as feminist only after she experienced the discrimination. She speculated that competitive women in the D.V.M. program may be more comfortable distancing themselves from what is female, raising a hypothesis that women reject their own female sex-typed attributes. She and the administrators spoke of women students as having male attitudes, lack of affiliation or empathy with women with children. She spoke of encounters with childless women with “I'm a man attitude” (she used the term several times) who said to her,

why should we help you? We shouldn't be catering to women with children ... it was your choice to do this (have children). Being up with a sick child all night is not the same as being sick yourself.

Sharon and the administrators proposed local theories about women students that focused on women’s inherent attributes rather than on attitudes and practices in the socializing context of the college.

Sharon’s own powerful experience gave me an appreciation of some attitudes toward women that may have been present in the veterinary culture in the recent past. When I shared some themes from the literature on women in science and its apparent similarity to her own experience, she replied "That's just what vet medicine is - hard science.” With emotion she said, "Believe me when I tell you that there are experiences of sexism!"

Her own discriminatory experiences involved being told that women do not become veterinarians, and having been denied a job. She said that she now remembers differently, an
example of story revision. Until she experienced discrimination herself, she thought it unlikely that she would have recognized instances of it. She alerted me to be open to a variety of interpretations of lived experiences in students.

Sharon gave me examples of difficulties that some women were currently facing in the workplace. One common characteristic of the work is long, irregular hours sometimes during the middle of the night. She perceives that women with children are challenged to find child care and mentioned, “They expect you to have a husband at home to stay with kids.” Lacking access to daycare, for example, one veterinarian had to put her baby on a hay bale while she worked in a barn. Single parents lacking a partner might find their ability to practice an issue.

As in other occupations, women appear to have lower salaries. With less capital available to them, she thinks few women can afford to have their own practices. To have a practice involves being able to afford to set up a hospital or a clinic that includes expensive equipment. In the past, an equine veterinarian could operate from his or her car. Now the College of Veterinarians of Ontario has strict rules on practice requirements and the minimum standards to define a hospital. In human medicine, doctors can get hospital privileges without having to start a business. Most veterinarians in practice, according to Sharon, are in "multi-man" [sic] businesses. They hire young veterinarians, often women, who are usually not offered a chance to buy into the partnership. She has a friend who moves from practice to practice because she has not had the opportunity to become a partner. When she leaves a practice, she loses the right to draw upon her relationships, the client list, and addresses. Therefore she cannot build up a client base because she is prohibited from notifying clients when she moves. In Sharon’s opinion, the College also contributes to this problem, as there are restrictions on advertising.
Sharon said that she had heard men complain that women should not be allowed into the profession because of their willingness to accept lower salaries. The recent influx of women into the profession is driving salaries down because women accept lower salaries. Thus from Sharon’s account, women are being blamed for an apparent overall salary suppression occurring throughout the profession. No mention was made that members of the profession may be colluding in the creation of a phenomenon.

The final issue that I found very interesting involved Sharon’s perceptions of developmental transformation of her relational orientation to animals. We spoke about her personal orientation to animals and she expressed the opinion that "animals can be important friends," underscoring their relational qualities. Sharon told me that early in her career, she had not been particularly bothered by the idea of euthanasia, killing animals for humane reasons. With the birth of her children, she found herself becoming increasingly less comfortable with involvement with euthanasia. She drew a linkage between her mothering of her children and her nurturing of animals as a veterinarian. In her mind, her own early nurturing of animals represented displaced maternal behaviour that she later recognized in herself with her children. As she recognized something within herself that she previously expressed with animals and now with her own children, she appeared to redefine how she felt about her own actions with animals. Killing, even if for humane reasons, was now not comfortable.

Spontaneously, Sharon advanced her own theory about why so many women are now seeking and gaining entry to veterinary medicine education. She was interested in the phenomenon and wondered if veterinary medicine is a nurturing, “parenting” occupation. Her interpretations suggested that “mothering” (animals) is an integral part of the female veterinary
experience. She speculated, “Is it both intelligence and nurturing?” Her comments mirrored my own hypothesis that veterinary medicine offered an occupation where both achievement in science and expression of care can co-exist.

Sharon told me about “hangers on” in veterinary clinics. These are unwanted companion animals whose owners asked for them to be euthanized. The veterinarian who wishes not to kill a healthy animal takes the animal but fails to euthanize it. Instead, the veterinarian tries to find a new home. While most veterinary students are compassionate with animals, Sharon warned me not to think that they all would be. She believed that the veterinary college admissions committee screened applicants on sensitivities to animal rights, such as “anti-vivisectionists and vegetarians.” This comment suggested that a limit might be set on the degree of expressed care for animals within the college culture and the profession itself. She shared an example of a veterinary student view of animals from an animal behaviour course she had taken. While discussing dog behaviour, the professor had commented, "Dogs do not think." Sharon remembered a male student being outraged and affronted because he believed otherwise. An interesting question emerged intersubjectively. How does the profession construct or view animals? The socialization of a veterinary student might be expected to include adoption of the profession’s or science’s normative view of animals with rules governing the range of acceptable responses toward animals. A profession that views animals as objects might be expected to collide with student attitudes reflecting animals as subjects or relational others.

Finally, and without my exploring it further, she spontaneously mentioned suicides among students. She guessed there had been one suicide per year then second-guessed, “Maybe that's too many.”
I learned important things from Sharon. First, I gained insight into the nature of the unfolding of a feminist-informed qualitative research interview. Amid the voices of our children playing, in my home, in stark contrast to my earlier professional image of an office-based interview, I quickly learned how to relinquish some control to establish a base of equality in the relationship. Rather than a formal interview, it was a conversation because for many reasons, we both revealed information and were fully engaged with one another. She asked me questions about myself and my research in an effort, I think to establish a sense of trust with me since we had never really talked about these sorts of issues before.

Second, Sharon’s awareness of gender discrimination within veterinary culture, and her sense of transformed relationship with animals suggested developmental shifts in self, in memory, and the reconstruction of events. Her experience as a mother was consistent with the idea that lived experiences coincide with shifts in the fluid, contextual subjectivity that I was earlier proposing. There were examples of revisions to her own story. Sharon’s account of her experiences pointed out the dynamic quality of the interpretation of experience and the value of adopting a constructivist position.

Third, Sharon’s comments about women students unfortunately appeared to place problem attitudes within them rather than within the context or culture of the profession. Adopting a constructivist position on this issue was important. Symbolic interactionism would argue that the behaviours of members of a culture are governed by shared interpretations of events. Negative interpretations about women might reflect an insidious feature of professional socialization and have serious consequences for the women in the culture including continuing gender discrimination. Learning about current women student interpretations would be one step
toward understanding the embedded messages.

**Advice from Administrators**

Because of my own prior relationships, I was easily able to obtain interviews with two male administrators of the veterinary college who expressed polite interest in my research. Neither administrator objected to my project. One administrator facilitated my getting access to students. This man told me he “gave one woman student a hard time” because her thinking was “emotional and not logical.” She later dropped out of the program.

The other administrator told me that I would be treated as a leper had I suggested doing research on women several years earlier. This comment coupled with Sharon’s experiences sensitized me to the likelihood that even in 1993, “feminist was a dirty word” - not that I had used it. Expression of interest in women’s experience was sufficient to elicit devaluation. He also failed to respond when I followed-up his offer of further contact. Perhaps he was waiting to see how my dissertation would unfold before giving any potentially more public indication of support. In addition, he failed to offer an unpublished yet publicly shared paper that I believe he had written only two years earlier directly about veterinary student experience. The paper was given to me by a friend and colleague and I later drew upon it for one perspective on the phenomenon.

Like Sharon, both male administrators expressed opinions about women students displaying “male” attributes. They suggested certain categories of women students who appear to have trouble: women with children and women in lesbian relationships. Both categories of student draw attention to female attributes.

My preparatory activities had led me to some tentative ideas about the status of the
profession and expectations about students. While women fought to find a place in the past in veterinary medicine, the enrollment at Ontario Veterinary College was stable with roughly three-fourths women in the 100 student cohorts in each of the five D.V.M. years\(^3\). Therefore, women were clearly now predominant and the program was becoming feminized (despite an estimate from Sharon that roughly 19% of the faculty was female in 1993). This trend appeared consistent with trends at other veterinary colleges in North America. Therefore, considering veterinary medicine a non-traditional field for women would be incorrect. Nevertheless, from the hints I obtained about gender-related issues, remnants of the past remained.

The focal hypotheses that guided my subsequent data collection included:

1. The D.V.M. program culture still contains both overt and covert barriers for women, for example by discouraging expression of traditionally-feminine attitudes or behaviours.

2. Women students suppress obviously female attributes or behaviours as part of their adaptation, for example by failing to maintain connections and provide support to one another.

3. The D.V.M. is a highly stressful academic program with extraordinary demands on students’ lives.

4. Attrition is limited; however, some students drop to part-time study for personal reasons.

5. Women students are using strategies to manage their participation in the culture

\(^3\) It is important to explain a confusing aspect of the program for outsiders. First year is entitled the “pre-veterinary” or “pre-vet” year. It is not counted as one of the formal years, but has been used as a catch-up time to homogenize the students’ academic background. The second year is what is called “First year.” The program involves three additional years, concluding with “Fourth year” which is in effect the fifth year of the program.
since they are increasing in numbers.

6. Declaration of research interest related to women students will be considered controversial.

7. Gender-based discrimination is still evident outside the college and in the workplace.

8. Objectivist views of animals are supported by the culture.

Unfortunately I had not framed the hypotheses as clearly in 1993 and 1994 as I do at the conclusion of this dissertation.

**Obtaining Participation from Students: Gaining Approval**

The second hurdle was to find and interest students to volunteer their time. Much of my confidence evaporated since I knew my competition would be great. The life of a student of veterinary medicine is not unlike that of medical students generally. Program demands were so intense that taken for granted aspects of life like socializing, watching tv, keeping up with current events, having romantic relationships, exploring the city, and even sleeping are forgone to attend classes, study for exams, work at related jobs, and, in final year, participate in clinical rotations.

Originally, I had wanted to interview women who had decided to withdraw from the professional program. Hearing from the administrator that dropouts did not exist, I had to modify my approach to focus on the experiences of women attending the D.V.M. program. Toward the end of my participant recruitment process, I was referred by a current student to a woman who had withdrawn (coincidentally, the woman who had been given “a hard time”). She agreed to participate. I therefore obtained some triangulation with the comments of the administrator. I also heard of another graduating student who was likely to drop out of the profession. She was
nominated by several students with the caution that she may not be up to participating. While she did not reply to several invitations, I have gathered enough indirect data from others to formulate a hypothesis related to some factors underlying her departure.

I tried to sample women in their graduating or final years so that participation in a reflective interview would not undermine their motivation. The nomination process resulted in three participants from the middle of the D.V.M. (one in second year, two in third year), six in final year, and one who had dropped out after first year. Spradley (1979) recommended that participants have at least one year of involvement in the culture as a minimum to ensure enculturation or knowledge of the setting. All of the participants satisfied this requirement.

**Recruitment for Pilot Study**

I began recruitment in the fall of 1993 with the initial assistance of one administrator. Because my role as researcher was not as an extension of the college administration and I wanted to invite collaborative involvement from students, I chose not to involve the college administration in recruitment. I could not obtain access to student names without assistance from the administration. Once I had student involvement, the participants helped me with recruitment. The administrator and I agreed that I would obtain six or seven female student names and post office box numbers from Mary Earl, an administrative secretary “who is like a mother to many of them” and knew them well.

My contact shifted to Mary as my informant. I composed a letter that I pretested with Mary (see Appendix II). I sent the letter to three students, inviting their contact before Christmas 1993. After one month, at the end of the academic semester and as Christmas was approaching, I
had no response. I sent out letters to three additional students, still without a result. Then I learned from Mary that December is a peak stress month. Graduating students usually write their National Examining Board Examinations (Boards) which give them a Certificate of Qualification, a prerequisite for licensure in some Canadian provinces. The exams are offered in December and again in April of each year. Most students write in December to reserve April for retesting if they failed.

For the pilot study before submission of my proposal, I needed only one participant to conduct a series of three 90 minute pilot interviews based on Seidman’s (1991) guide for phenomenologically oriented interviews. Spradley (1979) suggested that six or seven one-hour interviews should be the absolute minimum for thorough interviewing. Therefore, my proposal was clearly less intensive.

**Pilot Response**

On December 20, 1993, I was contacted with apologies, by one eager student, Fran (pseudonym), who expressed an interest in my research and a willingness to meet in the new year. I was later contacted by two additional students making the response rate 50%. Eventually another one of the original six contacts became a participant through a peer nomination process, making a response rate of 67%. Two of the original six women became participants and one acted as a research collaborator in 1995 by recruiting participants.

I began the pilot project with Fran early in 1994. Fran and I first spoke informally on the telephone about my research interests and then arranged to meet over lunch at O.V.C. I was to wait for her at the front of the main building just inside the entrance, near the Dean’s Office. She
arrived promptly, escorted me along corridors, down stairwells, through doorways and into the modern cafeteria in the new wing of the college. As we walked, she spoke briefly to students who passed us. We sat at a six-seat table and within moments, four of her friends had joined us. I realized that Fran was well-situated and had many connections in this context. At that moment, I felt like an inexperienced ethnographer who was trying to fit into the setting and gain acceptance. I had, incorrectly, assumed that I would have a one-to-one meeting with Fran where I could describe her participation without interruption. When she introduced me to her friends, I followed her lead, modified my plan, and spoke more generally to all of them to test out their perception of the project’s relevance. The group raised issues unique to female veterinary medicine students: having children, timing of childbirth, child care, finding time to spend with your children, concern about years invested in becoming veterinarians, not wanting to give up their career, perceiving that demands of the profession do not stop with graduation, feeling torn, how to manage a marriage, and having to cook your husband’s meal.

The students enthusiastically suggested that I should follow veterinary students longitudinally through the five-year program and then out into the first year of practice. I had an immediate image (and anxiety, which I did not share) of taking ten years to complete my dissertation. In response to the suggestion, I politely expressed a wish to do so but also a need to complete a dissertation in a timely fashion. As a group, they were unanimous that research with women in veterinary medicine was a good idea. They stated, “Men don’t need to think about these kinds of things, and just knowing about women’s experiences would be good because these issues don’t come up much for discussion.” I felt validated by the students and failed to find evidence among them for a lack of interest or hostility toward women.
The encounter was exciting and brought to life fragments from my reading of the qualitative research literature. One remarkable statement, also echoed in Gilligan's work (Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990, p.2, Prologue) was their amazement that I could learn anything by listening to them. Fran later said, "I was thinking I will never be able to fill an hour and a half of talking," and hoped that she would not feel the need to make up stories. Taken together their comments foreshadowed inattention to their own subjectivity as part of their lived experience of becoming veterinarians. Despite her doubts about herself as an informant, Fran agreed to meet me again for an interview and had no concerns about the Consent and Demographic Data forms (Appendix III and Appendix IV) that I showed to her. I surmised that I had "passed" the group screening which also turned out to be an unstructured focus group for me.

Life History Interview Format

I had read many interview guides (Oakley, 1981; Siedman, 1991; Sommer & Sommer, 1980; Spradley, 1979) and had determined that I wanted an unstructured interview focused on a life-history account of the experience of becoming a veterinarian. This phenomenologically-oriented goal was described by Siedman who recommended a three-part process, with three separate interviews. I designed an interview plan that I modified for the subsequent nine participants. My experience with Fran taught me that trying to separate meaning from experience, as Siedman had suggested, was artificial. My modified protocol (Appendix V) provided a space for women to tell the story of what it has been like to become a veterinarian, to highlight the epiphanies, as Denzin (1989) described them, "moments that leave marks on people’s lives" (p. 15). I also described epiphanies to participants as "high points and low points", "particular
struggles" and so forth. My intent was to hear about their journey, their obstacles as they had encountered them, responsiveness of others in their interpersonal world, and transformative learning experiences.

In the pilot with Fran (February 1994), while rapport was present throughout, I took too passive a role as an interviewer. In giving her freedom, I did not provide enough direction. I could draw on my training and experience in client-centred counselling and clinical psychotherapy yet I experienced some ethical discomfort with respect to the appropriate use of my skills in a research context. Here the women were speaking for my purposes not theirs. How would I use my ability to access intimate material? The interview with Sharon had been different because she was an acquaintance, an experienced professional, a mature woman who had no difficulty being assertive with me. The students had less experience and had not yet experienced themselves as competent professionals.

I believe that with subsequent participants I established a climate with an appropriate amount of warmth, support, and control in the interview. This climate also allowed interviewees to experience a sense of freedom, clarity, and relationship with me. When I read a recent source on qualitative interviewing (Fontana & Frey, 1994), I realized that I had adapted my process to closely approximate important features of an unstructured, in-depth interview.

I aimed to have two 90 minute interviews with each participant, a first interview to capture the story, the second to elaborate, clarify, or validate the first. Because of the necessity of adapting the data collection to fit the schedule of the students, having a uniform and standard process across cases was not possible. The reality differed from the plan, as outlined in Table 1 below. Average interview time for the sample was 146 minutes or 2.4 hours. The participants
chose the location for interviews. Two of the women had their pets with them at the time of the interview. In one instance, in particular, I spent time interacting with a pet under the watchful, admiring gaze of the woman. I sensed that she appreciated my taking the time to attend to her pet.

Table 1

Interview Frequency, Location, and Duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Number of Interviews</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Total Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ann</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>University Centre</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>University Centre</td>
<td>90 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C.</td>
<td>120 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doreen</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C./telephone</td>
<td>110 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyn</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C.</td>
<td>180 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fran</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C.</td>
<td>210 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C.</td>
<td>180 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hilary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>O.V.C.</td>
<td>150 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingrid</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>OISE</td>
<td>180 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>her apartment</td>
<td>150 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Participant names are pseudonyms. Nonstandard formats occurred due to power failure in the O.V.C. building requiring relocation, student illness, student scheduling problems. In one instance an electrical interference obliterated the first one-quarter of the audio taped interview.

At the end of the interviews, participants could express close approximations to my stated research purpose. Many of the women stated that they had never been interviewed before but had found it to be an enjoyable experience with myself providing support, good questions, and interest
in them. The following quotation is typical,

Before the interview last week, I wasn’t sure what to expect. I wasn’t sure how to prepare, so I just ended up going to it and about ten minutes into it, I found I was pretty comfortable. Three to four hours later . . . you’ve reflected a lot . . . I think it was a worthwhile experience . . . it made you think about things you haven’t thought about for a while and right now tends to be a reflective time anyway because we’re going through the old photo albums. It’s an appropriate time to do this sort of thing.

My own experience of the interviews is best captured in the following note from my Research Log:

I felt privileged to be admitted, as a relative stranger, to the accounts of lived experience, which seemed vivid and alive. As they spoke about interactions with others, in an attempt to make their own position and response clear, many women remarkably, engaged in a re-enactment playing both their own role and that of the other, with what seemed like verbatim memory for the interpersonal exchange. So he said, “Why don’t you do this?”, but I didn’t want to. So I said, “No, I have to go.” At times they changed their tone of voice and expression in playing the other that created a realism for me, as if I had been an observer of the original interaction. This experiential or concrete rendering of their experience made it much easier for me to grasp what it meant, responding empathically myself, automatically, to what it was like to have been in their shoes. They said that they had thought about the issues individually before but never together, at the same time, as the structure of the interview evoked. (Research Log)
Sampling and Participant Background

Recruitment of participants took on a serious tone in 1994-1995 following the conduct of the pilot study, approval of my research proposal, and approval from ethical reviews at both OISE and the University of Guelph. My original plan was to again obtain a few names from Mary in the Office of the Dean, mail similar introductory letters (Appendix VI) and await telephone replies. I began this process in the fall of 1994. Unlike the previous year, the introductory letter yielded limited response. Recognizing that the students would be graduating and it would be frustrating to delay data collection for the following year, I contacted Melissa, who had volunteered the previous year during my pilot project. She and I had several lengthy telephone conversations in winter of 1994 and she was interested in my research. I felt we had already established a friendship. When I contacted her in 1995, I asked for her assistance in helping to recruit and gave her an option to participate herself. She promptly solicited participants from her class but declined to participate herself. Simultaneously, I printed and with the assistance of the Dean’s Office, distributed recruitment posters (Appendix VII) to college bulletin boards. One participant identified through Melissa said to me that she had also seen my poster and had tried once, unsuccessfully, to reach me by telephone. Other strategies that were used included obtaining several additional names from Mary for contact by letter and using the “snowball” technique at the conclusion of interviews with participants. This latter technique involved asking for names of peers from each participant. Those named were then mailed modified introductory letters. Two women’s names surfaced more than once through more than one method as ideal participants. Those two women chose not to reply. The woman who had dropped out of the program, who had been “given a hard time” by the administrator, was nominated by a classmate and I located
In all, ten participants were interviewed, with several others identified but not contacted. Ten participants were likely more than I needed for the execution of this research; however, it was a strength. Because the eventual interview format had to be modified to fit the schedules of participants, I had only half of the contact time recommended by Spradley (1980). Intuitively I discovered redundancies emerging in the thick descriptions provided about their experience and I learned that I could use the participants’ interviews in tandem. I could extend and clarify common topics not covered thoroughly in the earliest interviews with women who were interviewed later in the sequence. In turn, I could dispense with coverage of the thicker, redundant topics to focus on more individual issues. Spradley has recommended such a strategy to compensate for inadequate available time.

Having ten participants also allowed me to have a diverse sample; however, I had to accept that any systematic sampling lay outside my control. Three women, Fran, Melissa, and Grace helped me with an understanding of the sampling categories or broad perspectives represented in the student body. Fran, the pilot participant, acted as a research collaborator by suggesting the types of diverse perspectives she noticed in her classmates. She identified the following perspectives: single, engaged, married, married with children, members of the Frat, nonmembers of the Frat, traditional versus alternative surgery preference, and traditional age student versus older than average student. Melissa, who recruited participants for me, discussed the same categories in choosing student participants. I later asked Grace, a participant, about her perception of student diversity and she provided essentially the same categories.

Fran also gave me a typed class list for the graduating class of 1994 and wrote in gender,
age category, marital and parental status, surgery preference, and Frat affiliation for each student.

Fran herself did not identify categories related to ethnicity or sexual orientation.

In Table 2, below, I show a breakdown of actual final year D.V.M. class composition for 1993-4, Fran's graduating year. Women made up 70 of the 107-member class. Of students attending part-time, both were women.

Table 2

Final Year D.V.M. Class Composition for 1993-4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Load</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In this class, all three of the students who elected to take the alternative surgery program (discussed later), were women.

Fran identified the following categories among the women in the 1993-4 graduating class: younger (traditional age student) versus older (over 40), Frat member versus non member, traditional versus alternative surgery preference, married versus single, and parent versus childless. I had to ask about students with visible minority background. The numbers of women falling into each category are shown in Table 3 below. Frat members were clearly young single
women. Most of the students are not members of the Frat. The two identified visible minority students were not members of the Frat. Seven of the 70 women students were mothers. Twenty-three of the 70 women students were married. We also differentiated between students who had written their Board examinations in December and those who had not.

Table 3

**Categories of Women Students in the 1993-4 Graduating Class**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Frat Members</th>
<th>Non-Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Younger (traditional age 20s-30s)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older (over 40)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Age range and category membership was determined by Fran and is approximate. Traditional age refers to the typical age for veterinary students who proceed into professional school without many delays or barriers. *Two of the thirteen women who were married, non members and childless had not written their Boards in December; one of the same group of thirteen was a visible minority. **Three of the thirty-five women who were single, nonmembers and childless had not written their Boards in December. One of the thirty-five was a visible minority. One of the thirty-five had chosen the alternative surgery program. ***Two of the three women who were married, nonmembers and childless were married to male veterinary medicine students.

I have made the assumption that class composition did not change substantially for the other graduating classes (95, 96 and 97) based on data for all years of D.V.M. registrants for fall
1993 provided by The Student Environment Study Group at the University of Guelph. In Table 4 below, I show the data for the four cohorts reflected by participants in this dissertation. There is little variation in the proportions of women and men students in all cohorts except the most recent intake. The class of 1997 rose to three-fourths women.

Table 4

**Gender Composition of Four Cohorts of D.V.M. Registrants, Fall 1993**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 (1994 Grads)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (1995 Grads)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 (1996 Grads)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (1997 Grads)</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** The above table shows considerable stability in gender proportion from year to year, with an increase in women among the 1997 grads. The table does not provide the more particular data on marital status, children, membership in the veterinary fraternity, choice of traditional or alternative surgery, or ethnic background. Data from the Student Environment Study Group.

The convenience sampling has resulted in data gathering (interview with follow-up contact) with mostly one cohort (five 1995 graduates). The additional participants from other cohorts (one 1994 graduate, one 1996 graduate cohort drop out, two 1996 graduates, one 1997 graduate) within the D.V.M. program provided perspectives of other class cohorts as well.


**Participant Characteristics**

I obtained background on participants from their data forms and through the interviews. I believe that the data might provide clues to a woman's identity given the size of their community. Below, I report general characteristics and descriptive statistics for the public. In Table 5 I report more detailed background for my dissertation committee only.

All but one participant were Caucasian. The mean age of the ten participants was 27.2 \( (SD = 3.46) \). Eight participants were single and two were married. Two of the single participants were engaged to be married. One participant had a child. Occupational choices of the partners of the women were not consistently known. Three partners were students in other professions, one was a veterinary medicine student, and another was self-employed. Mean number of attempts to gain admission to O.V.C. was 2.1 \( (SD = .99) \). The year of entry to the D.V.M. program ranged from 1989 to 1992. The graduation year ranged from 1994 to 1997.

Surgery preference type reflects a value position but is influenced by peer pressure and degree of value awareness. Students can learn surgical technique using live animals (traditional) or using cadavers (alternative). With the alternative program students can avoid the active role of killing a healthy animal. Two of the participants had chosen the alternative surgery. The proportion of alternative participants is higher in my sample than is represented in each class. Four participants preferred small animal practice, one mixed (large and small animal), two large animal, one emergency care, and one research.
Table 5  Detailed Participant Background Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Partner Occupation</th>
<th>Parental Status</th>
<th>Admission Attempts</th>
<th>Year of Entry</th>
<th>Graduation Year</th>
<th>Surgery Type</th>
<th>Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants alphabetically. Letters have been substituted for pseudonyms in the table. Age was at time of interview. Some data on partners is incomplete. Ethnicity was predominantly Caucasian. One participant was a visible minority. Three participants listed a specific ethnic group. Surgery type reflects a value position. Students can learn surgical technique using live animals (traditional) or using cadavers (alternative). With the alternative choice they can avoid the active role of killing a healthy animal.
I discussed the desirability of obtaining ethnic diversity with Melanie who selected most participants. There was only one visible minority female among the participants, consistent with the D.V.M. program that is predominantly Caucasian. Given many uncontrollable factors, the sample reflected considerable diversity in age, academic aptitude, practice choice type, surgery preference, and relationship status. The parental occupational and educational background data were also relevant. As I show in Table 6 below, the parents of most of participants were clearly highly educated.

Table 6

Educational Background of Participants' Mothers and Fathers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>1 some high school</td>
<td>1 some high school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xx</td>
<td>2 high school graduate</td>
<td>2 high school graduate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x</td>
<td>3 college diploma</td>
<td>3 college diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4 some university</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>4 some university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>5 bachelor's degree</td>
<td>xx</td>
<td>5 bachelor's degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xxx</td>
<td>6 graduate or professional</td>
<td>xxxxxx</td>
<td>6 graduate or professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>other</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>7 other - grade 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Responses from items on Confidential Data Form.

This Table shows clearly from the pictorial frequency distribution that the parents of most of the women were well educated on average, with the fathers being more educated than the group of mothers. Six of the women had parents where both mother and father had university and/or graduate/professional degrees. One woman had a father surrogate with only grade two, making
her background quite distinct from the others. Overall, the women came from well-educated families with considerable academic achievement. With their D.V.M. degrees, the daughters were surpassing the level of their mother’s achievement but may have been equivalent to their father’s achievement.

Parental occupational patterns were also of interest. I learned that there was, primarily in the cases of the mothers, a discrepancy between what was reported as occupation and that of the mothers’ wishes or current activity. Nine of the 22 parental occupation entries involve occupations in science or medicine. One woman’s case was complicated because she was raised by grandparents; her mother had died and her father had disappeared. I have included the data from what I knew about the parents and her grandparents.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Achieved</strong></td>
<td><strong>Current</strong></td>
<td><strong>Achieved</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artist</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Air Force Pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood Bank Mgr</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Chem. Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Ec. Teach</td>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEG Tech/Nurse</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Factory Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Homemaker</td>
<td>Indus. Engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Sales</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Medical Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Sales</td>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>Psychiatrist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principal</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>Univ. Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Deceased</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** Data were obtained from Confidential Data Form and clarified through the interview.
It is clear from Table 7 that the fathers had higher levels of occupational achievement and stability. Only among the mothers for example, do we see a lawyer who works as a secretary and a professional dietician who is not working. I learned from four women that their parents were frustrated with their career or had unachieved career aspirations. One engineer father regretted that he had not become a medical doctor. One EEG technician regretted her decision not to follow through on her medical school admission when it was offered. One dietician had wished she had been a veterinarian. There were no veterinarians among the parents of this sample. There are veterinarian parents among other students in the D.V.M. program.

I asked about the current family status to learn whether the family was intact, whether parents had separated or divorced, or had died. In Table 8 are four categories or cells where I placed participants based upon reported family status of parents. Only one cell - Married by Living - reflects an intact family. The other three cells reflect ruptured relationships between family members due to conflict, death, or a combination of conflict and death (Separated/Divorced by Deceased). The data are merely descriptive and not precise measurements; however, they do suggest a range of attachment patterns in the participants’ families.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Status of Participants’ Parents</th>
<th>Living</th>
<th>Deceased</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separated/Divorced</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half the sample or five women reported an intact family. The cell Separated/Divorced by
Deceased suggests both loss and conflict in the histories of two women. Two other women experienced loss, while one woman experienced rupture of the parental relationship. As part of my preliminary data analysis, I prepared a case summary sheet for each woman that included sketches of genograms. That analytic activity was useful in helping me to identify relational patterns or themes in individual lives.

**Member Checks and Follow-Up Survey**

I struggled with a methodology to support the trustworthiness of my data given that the data are subjective accounts of individual experience. I had hoped to gather written material from the women about their reflections outside the interview process. I tried during the pilot with Fran to give her a diary for writing reflective thoughts. She did not use it and said that students did not have time to think. I gave her a copy of the transcripts when they were available but she found it difficult to find the time to read them and when she did made no changes. Then I decided to create an oral summary of the first interview that I reviewed in the second interview. Oral summary was a better way of ensuring the women had a realistic opportunity to correct me.

I invited submissions of their own pertinent written materials that might shed some additional perspective on their experience. The women could not keep diaries; however several women had previously written material, which they shared with me. The documents related to aspects of their individual stories. Caroline gave me four different versions of the autobiographical statement she used with her application for admission. Ingrid brought along her ethics exam that she felt reflected her moral position and an opportunity that she felt she had to use her "voice" and failed. Both Fran and Ann wrote lengthy follow-up letters that continued
their stories.

To test my construction of a general narrative account of one portion of the story, the experience within the D.V.M. program, I wrote a preliminary report (Douglas, 1996a) using quotations from interviews. The report was no one woman's story but was a merged account where I attempted to link common themes. I distributed the report to the participants, to three new administrators at O.V.C., including the Dean (May 23, 1996), to Sharon my original advisor, and to my committee members at OISE for their information. Using the criterion of fidelity ("yes, you seem to have captured what I see in it") suggested by Blumenfeld-Jones (1995) as an appropriate way to evaluate life-history, I asked for response from readers (see Appendix VIII). I included a follow-up questionnaire for the participants (Appendix IX). This contact elicited some written expressive material from the participants related both to the D.V.M. account and an elaboration of their process since we spoke. Comments have been quite positive from readers, with most readers taking the time to add to my narrative report. I had to follow-up by telephone to obtain response from five of the women. See Appendix X for results from the follow-up survey.

Spontaneously, after revision and redistribution of the report (Douglas, 1996b) to the Dean of O.V.C., a newspaper article appeared in December (Wilkinson, 1996). This article provided information to the public about the experience of being a veterinary student and issues involved in gaining admission to O.V.C. Although my work was never acknowledged in the article, the shared experiences of those interviewed for the article provided validation for some but not all of the themes of this thesis. At the time, I interpreted the act as a follow-up by the college to suggestions raised in my report. A copy of the newspaper article is reproduced in
Appendix XI.

Data Management Procedures and Analysis

The data I obtained for this dissertation were diverse. They included public documents (related to veterinary medicine, Ontario Veterinary College, the University of Guelph and student enrollment), my written notes from a research log (based upon interviews with informants, attendance at workshops, conversations, and my own research hunches), written documents shared by participants (confidential data forms, autobiographical statements of intent for application to veterinary medicine, final assignment for an ethics course), audio taped life history interviews with participants (transcribed verbatim), written responses from readers of the narrative report, participant responses to the follow-up questionnaire, popular and scholarly literature related to veterinary medicine.

This section describes my treatment of data that the participants produced (transcriptions of life history interviews, written autobiographical statements of intent, final assignment for an ethics course, written responses to the follow-up questionnaire supplemented by lengthy letters from two women). The expressive productions by participants comprise my understanding of the data normally used for life history research (Watson, 1985). The data that I obtained from other sources served to sensitize me to the context and perspectives in this discipline.

Transcription and Data Manipulation

I could hire a transcriber for only the pilot project. The interviews were so long, Fran’s talking so fast-paced and prolific, that it cost more than $300 for rough copies that I then had to
correct myself. Economic necessity decided for me. I transcribed the rest of the interviews becoming more proficient over time. I prepared the transcripts to be readable by the qualitative software program, The Ethnograph (Seidel, Friese, & Leonard, 1995). Little did I realize that doing my own transcription would be so wonderfully rich and thought provoking. I was writing myself memos continually as I began to spot pattern after pattern. I think I benefitted from contact with every step as a beginning qualitative researcher.

While transcribing a document, Ingrid’s ethics exam, I had an unusual experience that I labelled for myself as “recovery of affect from text.” In contrast to transcription of an audio taped interview, Ingrid’s exam contained the written interplay of two people, herself and her course instructor. For some reason, perhaps my relationship to the text shifted as I also became involved through the kinesthetic movements of my fingers on the keys of my keyboard. I was, through my activity, matching the original movements of another. I think the process allowed me to develop an attunement with Ingrid’s instructor that had not been possible when my relationship to the text was as reader. Apparently Ingrid herself had not noticed it either when she had shared the context and the document. Essentially, besides her expression of an extreme animal rights position, Ingrid used the word “humyn” repeatedly, twenty-three times to be exact. I did not clarify the meaning of the spelling with her. In addition to other notations that he wrote on her paper, the instructor corrected the spelling of “humyn” by crossing out with a slash the “y” and substituting an “a.” What struck me profoundly during the transcription, since each time he made

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4 This interpretation is due to Dr. Ron Silvers of OISE with whom I had an informal conversation about the experience. The work of Daniel Stern in the area of empathic attunement concerning gestures or modalities which “match” the contours of an expression provides some support for my argument.
the correction I had to type "examiner corrects "y" to "a"," was the repetitive nature of the act. While he might have made the notation once, her instructor corrected it twenty-three times, each time it appeared! By retracing the repetitive motions that he made as he had marked her assignment, I began to experience, as if I were an archeologist reconstructing a lived event, an empathic connection with his intense focus on the word and quite possibly his anger toward her expression. In the end, he chose to use his power to fail her. She told me that had been "the last straw" for her leading to her withdrawal. He had previously told me that he “gave her a hard time” because she was “too emotional and not logical.” The interaction as a transcriber with the scripted text of two interacting individuals provided a deeper perspective on the meaning of the event. I made the following memo to myself immediately after the transcription:

Comment: she errs perhaps by being too protective of animal rights and repeatedly offends her examiner with her spelling of "humyn" - 23 corrections made to this word but not to other "spelling errors." Not aligned with traditional, objective science enough?

Research Log

When the transcription, proofreading, and back up disks were finished, I eagerly turned to The Ethnograph. Described as a computer program to simplify the “cutting and pasting” of qualitative data analysis, I began to read the interviews looking for and coding interesting segments. I found many things interesting and produced more than 100 codes for each participant. I became familiar with The Ethnograph’s facility for creating new files from existing codes. Data files became prolific. I began to feel overwhelmed with this foray into qualitative analysis and began to doubt that anything but more data files would “emerge” from this process. I made a pivotal decision. I abandoned technology.
Working from printed transcripts, I began the coding process anew. This time, labelling and cutting segments of text that I then dropped into similarly labelled file folders. This physical experience of doing the cutting and pasting was necessary for me this first time with data analysis to trust myself and gain confidence. Eventually with coding complete, I realized that I had selected and coded most of the same segments as before, providing evidence of the consistency in my coding. Simultaneously, I experienced the data as finite, as bounded through my own subjectivity to only limited interpretations. Previously I had suspected a never ending creative process without boundaries.

I collapsed categories that were highly related or essentially synonymous. That led to a reduction in the numbers of categories to thirteen broad areas as shown in Table 9.
Table 9

**Broad Categories of Coded Segments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R/A</td>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>personal process regarding animals and their relationship with humans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>The Wish</td>
<td>origin of the desire to become a veterinarian and personal perspectives on the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>family influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A/S</td>
<td>Application/Selection</td>
<td>experience and comments related to admission to formal veterinary medicine education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.V.C</td>
<td>Ontario Veterinary College</td>
<td>comments about the O.V.C. environment or culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Formal Education</td>
<td>reflection on the formal education experience year by year (pre-vet, first year, second year, third year, fourth year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>personal views of effective and ineffective learning experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C/R</td>
<td>Career Reassessment</td>
<td>reassessment of the career choice at present stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P/T</td>
<td>Practice Type</td>
<td>type of practice chosen, e.g., large animal, small animal, mixed practice; comments about practice type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Transition</td>
<td>transition to work issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>Self Development</td>
<td>personal struggles that included resolution of ethical conflicts concerning euthanasia or animal death and moral position taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/C</td>
<td>Professional self confidence</td>
<td>expressions related to professional competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O/P</td>
<td>Other Persons</td>
<td>role of other people in development, e.g., peers, mentors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was during this second coding process that an overarching theme emerged for me and resonated with its emotional profundity. The themes converged around love and care, reverence for life, devotion of oneself to taking a role that maintained an early connection with animal lives.
Admittedly, only one of my participants had used a sort of cosmic language. Nevertheless, this overarching theme helped to explain the distress felt when care or appropriate respect was breached somehow in practice, in language, or in demands of them by the profession. I had a strong sense that the stories were about a bond with animals, powerful and passionate caretaking bonds. The bond reproduced childhood relationships and provided a relational metaphor for this study.

**Analytic Check with Participants and Context**

I had believed during the interviews and as I was reading the texts, that there were many worthwhile suggestions advanced by the women. Originally wanting my research to be of some benefit to others, I contacted the Dean of the college to explore the usefulness of feeding student suggestions to him at this time. Because the data collection had coincided with the beginning of a curriculum review process, he expressed interest. This step initiated phase one of my analytic processes. Returning to my data, I soon realized that I could not simply list student ideas out of context and expect that they would be understood by others. I decided to write a preliminary narrative report that wove a structure around the suggestions. By focusing on the domains most connected to the formal education process, I began to search for logical relationships.

Taking a linear descriptive approach, I wrote an account of the process through the D.V.M. degree (Douglas, 1996a), using some direct quotations from the interviews. I did not provide identifying data related to the women so they would be experienced by readers as an anonymous group rather than as potentially recognizable individuals. As previously mentioned, this narrative also served one of my purposes as well, namely a form of member checking of the
Although it added a year to my work, I was pleased with the outcome of the review of the narrative report. I received responses from almost everyone with validating remarks, small suggestions for clarification and a few contrary opinions. I incorporated the responses into a revised report that I redistributed.

I was pleased to hear how it contributed to some women's processes particularly since I knew that they were isolated in sharing experiences. I suspect that their interest reflected their ability to find their own stories within the report.

From Caroline, "good report Kathy. Interesting to see it all put together, especially with your comments for improvements."

From Hilary, "great job Kathy. It was wonderful to read. I feel this is an important document. I hope you achieve your goals with it. I do hope the "powers" that be can be persuaded of its validity. Thanks for the chance to participate."

From Ingrid, "I have finished reading through this and have made only a few comments - in chapters that reflect points in O.V.C. where I was involved or with my own comments. It was very interesting to read this, especially the comments from other vet students. It also re-affirms my decision to leave that program."

From the point of view of college administrators, I was delighted with the response from the Dean,

thank you very much for sending me a copy of the document . . . I very much enjoyed reading it. I gather from your note that you are agreeable to my copying it and making it available to chairs and others involved in our curriculum revision. This is very timely as
we are at a key point in the DVM 2000 project. Your report will be very useful input and mandatory reading for members of our several curriculum review/revision committees.

(Personal communication, Dean Alan Meek)

Later, I met with the college’s selection committee to facilitate the involvement of an industrial/organizational psychologist and faculty member at the University of Guelph. He helped them in correcting some problems with their selection procedure. The methodology I used for life history research as I discovered also serves some of the goals of qualitative program evaluation.

I believe this research has satisfied a goal of feminist research by contributing toward transformative action but will leave that to the reader to decide. It was ethically challenging to balance the needs of the women and the college.

**Thematic Analysis**

To begin phase two of the analytic process, in preparation for writing this dissertation, I took an excursion to the qualitative literature and was validated (and made less anxious) by a comment made by Alan Bryman and Robert G. Burgess in the Preface to their book, *Analyzing qualitative data* (1994). Their comments helped me to appreciate some of my difficulties in data analysis,

While much has been written about the collection of data, the books are often silent about the processes and procedures associated with data analysis . . . much mystery surrounds the way in which researchers engage in data analysis. [Their book is about] demystification, of making implicit procedures more explicit. (Bryman & Burgess, 1994, p. xiii)
Psychological themes had already emerged as I had worked with the data previously. As I began to write about the women's childhood and adolescence, I paused to read about Gilligan et al.'s (1990) work with the girls at Emma Willard School. I found my themes echoing in their work and knew that I had made a connection around themes of voice/self, mind, morality, attachment, and responsibility characteristic of a relational self. I intentionally began to read the interviews again to "listen for voice" (Brown, Tappan, Gilligan, Miller & Argyris, 1989).

Unfortunately, this analysis proved to be highly unsatisfactory for a number of reasons. First, I could find evidence for both "separate" and "connected" voices in all but one story making categorization of "position" difficult and arbitrary. Second, I did not have access to another reader who could provide a measure of inter-rater reliability. Third, the interviews had not been designed with categorization of voice in mind thus some texts provided richer examples than others. Fourth, I was not certain that the categorization of my interview material into a "position" would have any generalizability either to other accounts that the same women might provide under different circumstances or to their own behaviour. Thus, the themes that emerged from the data bear some similarity to the essentialist literature, but I make no claims about the women's enduring epistemological position or category of self.

By rereading identically coded segments of text, the themes emerged more clearly for these participants. Sometimes, they contradicted and challenged my earlier beliefs. I deepened my understanding. Using a process similar to the constant comparison method, I moved back and forth from conceptualization to data until I felt I had adjusted the idea to fit the data. Themes expressed reveal my interpretation of the meaning of the data about the past lifeworlds as constructed in the present. Theme analysis closely resembles the definition proposed by Van
Manen (1990) in,

the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work. [Themes are understood as] structures of experience . . . [rather than] conceptual formulations or categorical statements. (Van Manen, 1990, pp. 78-79)

The themes that emerged contain many relational concepts: early relationships, animal relationships, destructive relationships, facilitative relationships, and personal relationships. Major and subordinate themes are presented in the next chapters with illustrative quotations.

In my reporting of the women's words, I have made only minor revisions to their original interview text. For example, I eliminated repetitions, redundant phrases, non meaningful utterances (uh, so, you know) which occurred as part of conversational speech. Minor omissions are indicated by three ellipsis points (...). Four ellipsis points (....) indicate omission between two or more sentences where I have brought together comments about identical topics when they occurred at different points in the interview. I have attempted to make their words readable without losing their emphasis and did not change their grammar, contractions, or colloquial expressions.

**Limits to Participant Collaboration in Analysis**

I had learned with my pilot participant, Fran, when I asked her to review the transcript of her interviews that I was creating an unreasonable demand. Being a naturally helpful individual, she complied, yet it proved not to be thorough or useful for either of us. The transcripts after all were raw, unanalysed data with no evidence of themes or my telling of her story. Becoming more
informed about the hectic schedules of the students, I wrestled with finding a succinct way for them to evaluate my telling. In this context I simultaneously realized that the college might benefit from the many useful observations and suggestions that the women had made and might incorporate the women's ideas into their curriculum review. By integrating the two processes I believe I made the member check not only personally worthwhile but also an important effort expended for the academic program. Most readers took the time to examine the narrative report carefully.

One limitation to my approach to member-checking is that I did not have an opportunity to revisit the women with the more defined psychological themes I use in this dissertation. I am of two minds. On the one hand, I do not know that psychological themes are easily verifiable given our own tendencies toward self-deception. On the other hand, the women have moved away, the data and my thesis being unimportant in their lives presently. No doubt, some of the women would take the time to read it. I have had to omit the process, since it would undoubtedly extend my thesis by at least six months. I am having to rely on the fact that my earlier positions in the narrative report went unchallenged and to argue that I have essentially deepened and enriched original positions rather than striking off in totally new directions. I remain open, in future, to hearing about other interpretations from others.

The three chapters that follow reflect presentation of the experiential themes separately by each context traversed by the women in their journeys to become veterinarians.
IV

ANALYSIS AND DATA PRESENTATION

PART I - THE DESIRE TO BE A VET EMERGED FROM EARLY LIFE

Despite their differences, the women of this study expressed many similar experiential themes in their life career stories. All but one of them said their stories began in childhood. Some participants expressed the choice of veterinary medicine as a mysterious passion, others as a logical link to their parents’ careers and their liking animals. This first data chapter presents salient themes in childhood, family of origin, and adolescence.

Until the pilot study, I did not realize that taking a broad life perspective on this career choice was important. The participant’s beginning of her life history ceased to be surprising when I heard it in the other stories as well. She told me about her first awareness of a possible career choice thought.

_I guess I might as well start at the beginning. As a child, I guess I was around ten years old or so when I first felt “I think I’d like to be a veterinarian.” . . . I would call it a dream._

By appreciating the early lives of the women, later experiences make more sense. A context was created for the stories. Subthemes in early lives involved experiences with parents, pets, feelings of competence, and work. In the section that follows, I introduce the issues related to parent-child relationships, animal-child relationships, and work environments. The presence of school was barely evident in the stories told.
4.1 Inside the Family - the Roots of Desire

4.1.1 Mothers and Daughters - A Loving Connection

Seven women described a positive emotional bond with their mother. Two stories involved exceptions to loving connections and are presented as contrasts. During most of the interviews and in my immersion with the data, I imagined the care with which the women’s mothers mothered and supported their interests. Because the women’s responses varied, sometimes I did not appreciate the strength of the bond until a comment was made about a recent life experience. Several women specifically noted the responses and parts their mothers played in early life. Several women spoke of mothers’ support during university. Another woman told me of the tangible support her mother will provide in present time to enable her to do her veterinary externship by looking after her son. Another woman believed her mother would be supportive to her as a working professional and mother.

In childhood, one participant described her mother as the “reteller” of the career story. Her mother told her about her expression of a wish to be a veterinarian when she had no memory of doing so,

*I was unusual in that I knew what I wanted to do since I’ve been four... I don’t know why [laugher]. My mom told me. She said that’s what I told her.*

Another participant described her father as the one to “retell” or reflect back her own desire.

A related role played by mothers was supporting an interest in animals. This role involved recognizing the daughter’s interest and helping her to obtain pets. One participant distinguished herself from the other children in the family by her interest in animals, and mother bought the pets,

*I was always the one in the family, of the kids, that liked, loved animals. We had a dog. I
really liked the dog. . . For some reason my mother got me a guinea pig when I was eight years old.

Another role was that of liaison between the daughter and the outer world. One participant said that her mother made public the link between her daughter’s interest and the activity of a local veterinarian. Her mother also modelled that the way to care for animals was to take them to a veterinarian when they were sick. This communication required not only a specific attitude toward animals but also the economic resources to pay for the services of a veterinarian. The quotation below illustrates the mother’s influence.

*When I was about fourteen, my rabbit got sick. We brought him to the clinic. My mom just mentioned to the vet, “Jill wants to be a vet one day.” He said, “Well, you should be in here volunteering every weekend. Just come in every Saturday morning and see what goes on. See if you like it.”*

For another participant, her mother provided clerical assistance at a much later critical time when she had failed to plan ahead for her application to veterinary medicine. Implied in her quotation is the presence of support throughout her life,

*I had good support right from the beginning from my parents too. My mom was very helpful. I didn’t know how to type very well at the time but I do now. She helped me type out my applications. Having supportive parents helps a lot...willing to put up with “oh I have to apply and it’s due the next day!”*

Especially poignant, was one woman’s description of her mother’s empathy when she received a rejection letter from the veterinary college. The established bond between them gave her the emotional strength to read on when she was facing disappointment. The event occurred within
their relationship that contained an established ritual for handling bad news.

When I got my letter saying, "You haven’t been accepted"... my mother and I have a ritual when we have bad news. We drag each other down to the river and have ice cream together. So mother and I were down at the river. Mom's hiding something behind her back and pulls out this flower. [She] says, "This is for you because I love you and, well, maybe you got in and maybe you didn’t." I didn’t get in. She said, "Read it, just in case." I read the letter. "Sorry you haven’t been accepted..." Then I realized that I’d only missed by a very, very small margin.

Another participant’s mother intercepted and moderated dad’s criticism of her career choice.

In contrast to the loving stories, two women described conflictual relationships with their mothers. One woman’s wish to be a veterinarian did not emerge early like the others. In early life, she compensated for severe family tension by becoming quite intellectual and proficient academically. About her mother, she told me the following,

My mom’s been dead for four years. I have a lot of serious family pathology. I've lived with my father since I was fourteen. My mother committed suicide when I was twenty-two or twenty-one. I don't know how old I was. She also had a personality disorder with alcoholic and manic-depression. It was very chaotic [growing up] and there was a lot of things that you learned to survive with because you had to. Then you had all these survival mechanisms and then they no longer were needed after she died, but I still was using them. My mother, whom I did not get along with, was always saying, "Ann, why don’t you do veterinary medicine?"

“Ann” eventually selected veterinary medicine much later, while in university, as a rational
alternative to human medicine.

The other woman revealed some roots of vulnerability in a childhood where both parents abandoned her. She was raised by uneducated grandparents and was frequently abused sexually by one of her grandfather’s cousins. I sensed control in her description of her grandmother, her surrogate mother, who was 69 years old at the time of our interview,

*I got to be where I am with not a lot of family history of education and higher education.

*I wasn’t raised with my parents. I was raised with my grandparents mostly. I think my mother finished grade twelve - high school as far as I know. My father, maybe he finished high school. My mother is dead and my father disappeared for eight years and reappeared. I’ve pretty much not been in contact with him except for recently because I need money. My grandfather, none [education], grade two or something. My grandmother, she’s from England so I think it’s a bit different. [She is] more educated than my grandfather. My grandmother worked in the home. . . . I wasn’t independent there. My grandmother had a lot of say in my life. . . . When I was in public school, my grandfather’s cousin who lived two doors down with his wife, if I went over there, he would take me downstairs and stick his hand down my pants or whatever and sexually abuse me. So I had a great fear around him because I always had to pass by the house to go to school and to come back from school. He’d often be outside and want me to come in. And unless I had thought up some excuse as to why I couldn’t, I didn’t feel I could just say “no.” I thought I had to have some reason. That was pretty awful for me. . .

*I’ve always cared about animals. I guess I was anti-human at that time.

I can only speculate about some oppressive forces that were active in this woman’s life. The
destructive impact of the abandonment and the sexual abuse on her own sense of safety, secure base, and agency is evident. She suggested difficulty with human attachment, “I was pretty anti-human,” yet she described relational attachment to animals, “I’ve always cared about animals.” Given the age, occupational attainment, and educational level of her grandparents, she was distinguished from the other women by socioeconomic status as well. Thus, the supportive mothering, opportunities, and role modelling that occurred for other women within their families were not accessible to her. She turned to animals for refuge.

4.1.2 Mothers’ Own Life Stories - Daughters’ Lives

For at least four of the women, there was a continuation between the mother’s wishes and desires and the daughter’s. I was not sure about how this link evolved and did not pursue more detail. In the first story, is an example of one mother who worked outside the home only until her children were born. She followed a traditional career pattern by curtailing her career pursuits to raise her children. Yet the daughter was aware that her mother had a stimulating experience at university and wanted to be a veterinarian,

*She went to the University of Davis in California where there was a vet school. She used to date a lot of the veterinary students there and so she used to think [veterinary medicine] was neat. She had always wanted to be a vet. They were always doing so many interesting things. But none, no one, not my grandparents or anyone [in the family] is even in the field. They are all engineers. So it is very weird.*

Is it really so weird that she has chosen veterinary medicine given her mother’s prior stated interest? In the participant’s mind, something like family convention, held her mother in place but
did not hold her. Much later, mother, not her fiancé was invested in hearing about her experiences in great detail.

*He is [fiancé] not keenly interested, like my mother would be. She wants to hear every story I have.*

Another participant was much more explicit in drawing a connection between her mother’s life and her own. Despite earlier support, she encountered resistance from her mother when she expressed frustration with veterinary medicine and wanted to quit.

*My mother’s been more than supportive of it . . . explains mother’s regret in not entering medical school]. I think me getting into vet school has been a real push for her and there have been times when I have thought, “I want out. I don’t want anything to do with this.” She has been the one who said, “You have to stick this through,” almost as if my completing it is somehow finishing her circle.*

The two stories suggest vicarious satisfaction that some mothers may have been seeking through their daughters’ lives.

*In another case, the mother’s story had a different twist. The mother was using her daughter’s life as a means to avoid taking a stand with her husband and changing her life. She maintained that she could not honour her husband’s request to move until the youngest and chronically ill one of their children had graduated from veterinary college. Thus, the participant’s completion of school was bringing the potential of change in her mother’s story as well.*

*I don’t know what is going to happen to my parents. They always talk of moving out west. Well my dad does. He’s a hunter and a fisherman. But my mom doesn’t want, she used me as the excuse. “We can’t move out of [city in Ontario] until Jill’s done school because
we don't want to just abandon her. She's the one who needs us the most. She's still in school." But now that I'm graduating, I don't know what they'll do. If my mom chooses to use me as an excuse, if she doesn't want to move out west, that's fine.

Several participants drew upon their mothers' career pattern in thinking through their own options. I was surprised in the 1990s and after so much education, when one woman shared with me the idea that once having children she might not return to her profession. Yet her mother's career pattern followed that sequence. Another participant has selected her mother as her role model for ideas about how to successfully combine a profession with a family.

Finally, one woman's story connected her life to her ancestors. Because I had not recognized the similarities with mothers' lives at the time of this interview, I did not explore the familial relationships as fully then.

_A lot of my fate was here in Guelph; a lot of what I was destined to do and become was waiting for me here. It just took for me to gather up the courage to leave everything behind me and come here. Maybe they were waiting for me when I was here at eighteen. I think there's a lot of me in Guelph somehow historically [she discovered that her ancestors had lived in Guelph/. . . and in this life to come back here and fulfill part of that._

The sense-making that she and I made at the time was how well her decision to return to school, to enter veterinary medicine, brought coherence to her life as a whole, like a pattern or template fitting into place. It was a connection that brought a felt sense of psychic harmony to her.
4.1.3 Fathers Who Provide Opportunities - Whose Life Is it Anyway?

Not as many fathers were prominently featured in the stories, yet five women highlighted the father. Two accounts were negative. Fathers do play important roles in the psychological development of their daughters, by providing witness to her developing self. Often father’s role is understood as one of helping the daughter to develop a heterosexual relation to men. In these stories, fathers helped to develop the daughter’s strength and direction. In the quotation below, one participant describes the various experiences with her father that led her to become a veterinarian. Her father’s instrumental contributions were very important in her story. He also provided a sensitive mirror by reflecting her experience to her afterwards. She described many experiences, for example,

*Going to the veterinarian with my parents and my dog [and] thinking this would be a neat job. We used to farm sit on a beef farm, just our family did, for two weeks every summer while the owners went away. My dad would let me let the cows out and I was only about ten years old. These big cows! I felt very special because I could control them. When I was about thirteen years old, my dad arranged for me to get a tour of the veterinary college. My dad really thought I would probably be turned right off. He didn’t want to turn me off, but he wanted to make sure that I knew what I was getting into. I just thought it was great. My dad was telling me I was just wide eyed, bushy tailed and thought it was just amazing. [I] got even more excited about becoming a veterinarian.*

As she entered adolescence, this woman’s father continued to support her career goal even when she herself wavered. He began to guide her quite explicitly when other parents with different
When I was fifteen or sixteen, starting to look for jobs, just a part time job to start earning money for college, my dad said to me, “You should be getting a job in veterinary, or in with animals so that you can start getting some experience.” He knew right from the start that I was going to have to have experience. I guess I knew too but thought, “Well I don’t know if I want to start pursuing all these extra jobs when I have a job here. I can just take waitressing.” So he pushed me to find a job with some type of animals so that I could start building up my experience which was important because I really hadn’t had very much.

I was unclear whether it was her agency or her father’s that prompted her to ignore waitressing. Yet later, in her story was a theme of parental influence or control. Looking backward, she believed she was duped by her parents’ advice. She thought she worked harder in high school than was necessary. She reinterpreted her parents’ advice as having focused too much on work, and as costing her freedom in adolescence. She had developed, with her parents’ collusion, a workaholic style that she eventually shed. This participant, whom I grew to appreciate as a conscientious, naive, rule-follower, had several experiences that shattered her unquestioning acceptance of adult authority.

One of the things my parents always used to use in high school, they’d always say to me, “If you want to get into university and be a vet, you have to study, and you have to get A’s.” That’s not true. It’s certainly good encouragement because I always said, “I want to be a vet. I have to study.” But people at that time, friends of mine, got into university with a 50 average. You didn’t have to have good marks to get into this university. I
ended up having a 92 average cause I worked so hard.

She continued to work excessively when she entered university because marks did matter to gain admission to veterinary school.

/To apply to veterinary college/ I knew I had to have very high marks and so I just studied every weekend and all the time. I ended up working so hard and never having fun, never going out, and just working myself to the ground that I ended up getting sick. I had mono and tonsillitis and got put in hospital for a week. My mom got mad at me and said, "Don't you ever do that again! Nothing's that important! You shouldn't be studying that much."

From then on, the actions she took were her own decisions with the continuing presence of parental support.

Several other participants described a similar shift from paternal authority to their own when they left home for university. One woman's only reference to her father was with respect to a controlling role.

My first year at university was tough, it being the first year that I was no longer under lock and key and dad's rule. I let loose and didn't knuckle down to studying as I should have. But it was the first time you didn't have a teacher standing over your shoulder.

That's pretty well what I always needed was someone to swat me on the behind to get me working. Otherwise I really am a procrastinator.

Another woman's father openly attempted to control her career choice especially since she was so obviously gifted. He wanted her to enter human medicine, a field that he had regretted not entering himself. Her father was openly critical of her admission to veterinary medicine and tried
to pressure her into entering human medicine instead. He indicated that her desire was crazy.

When I got accepted to veterinary school, my dad said, “That’s crazy! Why don’t you go to medical school? Who would be crazy enough to go to veterinary school?”

The stories of control are interesting because they do not describe limit-setting of female achievement. On the contrary, they suggest familial values and high expectations for achievement, expectations interpreted unrealistically and excessively by several women. They also point to experiences of invalidation for some of the women by their fathers.

One woman described how she modelled herself after her father’s workaholic style and commented on how like her father she was in the quotation below.

I was always an overachiever. I’m the eldest. I’m very much like my father, very much. He’s a psychiatrist. He is, was very career-oriented and really enjoys his work and very driven and very ambitious. I’ve always been like that. I was very competitive at all kinds of sports. I was a driven individual in high school. Our entire family is in university. When I was a kid, they’d ask me what I was going to do and I’d say, “Well I’m going to go to university” when I was three years of age. It was the one thing in our family that was very important. If you did well in school, you could pretty well get away with murder.

Her father was not overtly controlling and was financially and emotionally supportive. He reassured her when she expressed a lack of confidence as she was about to graduate from professional school,

You have got some training. You know more than they [the public] do.

Another participant, who returned to university in her thirties, said she had deliberately
flunked out of university at age seventeen to be released from parental expectations. She believed her voice was not heard so powerful were,

*other people's expectations of me, which I didn't live up to. I didn't fulfill any of my promise or potential. I was very focused and was a very good student, was very directed, coming to university at the ripe old age of seventeen [which] was far too young to be here. So I lasted one semester and left. I wasn't successful my first semester. I had a very supportive family. They still are and certainly were then. When I finished high school, I thought that maybe I'd take a year off. They did not think that was a good idea because they were afraid I wouldn't go back. So for me, I almost had to go for the one semester and just perform abysmally for them to realize that I shouldn't be there at that time. For me to realize it too! It was a waste of money and it was a confusing time. But I don't think they ever would have believed me if I had just performed okay. They would probably have still encouraged me to go and I myself too. I would have gone, "Oh I guess it's okay. I'll stay here.""

Another participant commented on a similarity between herself and her father's pattern of community participation. Once inside the veterinary college, she became highly involved. Apparently this was typical of her parents' level of community participation, echoing the similarity in career patterns between mothers and daughters previously discussed.

*My dad's so hyper. My parents are both involved in the community heavily so some of it must have rubbed off. Besides that, I think a lot of it is cause I want to be here. I want to have a good time while I'm here and I want to get involved.*

As the quotations show, some fathers were invested in their daughter's career
development. The women absorbed messages from both mothers and fathers about career choice direction, about approaches to work, about acceptable behaviour in integrating life roles, and about expectations for high achievement and involvement. While they were not carbon copies of parents, the roots of the women’s career stories emerged clearly out of this early context.

In the quotation below, one participant said while she respected both of her parents’ investments in human medicine, she could not place herself there. She had felt uncomfortable watching the pain in her grandfather’s eyes when he had a stroke, and recognized that unlike human doctors, veterinarians are permitted to end a life humanely. Perhaps she also felt helplessness at the time, which she later corroborated by describing herself as a “control freak.”

*My dad’s a doctor. My mom’s a nurse. So this kind of science is good. I could not disagree with them. But I think it is just maybe past experience. I can’t see myself doing human medicine. I think I could be good at it if I could say that. But I can’t see myself doing it because I don’t like to see people suffer. I don’t like the look of pain in eyes.*

*You can see that in animals too. But it’s different in a way because at least you can, I think euthanasia is really a humane thing. That goes back a ways because my grandfather got pretty sick there. He had a stroke when I was in high school.*

Her story emphasizes her sensitivity to others’ feelings and how hard it can be for an adolescent to manage overwhelming negative emotions. This participant, like other daughters of doctors in the group, was also quite critical of and cynical about the health care system in Ontario now. This position was no doubt derived from parental attitude.

Another participant’s story revealed how gently parental expectations were conveyed and received. This very reflective woman empathized with the hardship and difficulties her parents
had faced when they emigrated to Canada and had to redo professional training to meet Canadian standards. She also told about her own needs for structure and suggested that a profession provides clear self definition.

*Given that both my parents have professional degrees, it was always implied that I would go to university. Nowadays, graduating with a B.Sc., I mean a lot of people have one and it’s too vague for the type of person I am. I need more direction. So I wanted something that I could do that I have a marketable skill. What appeals to me most [about veterinary medicine] is gaining the trust of clients and being the neighbourhood vet.*

*Whether I would have gotten that as a medical doctor or as a lawyer or as something else I don’t know. I wanted to be self-employed. My parents first and foremost have been very supportive. Their hope is that I would be self-employed and self-reliant, not dependent on somebody for my job that could say, “You’re not needed anymore.” Their preference is a professional career. It was a long road for especially my dad. I think it’s a desire for me not to have to go through what they went through. I’ve had a pretty easy life.*

Some source of support and encouragement was mentioned in almost every story. For example, besides her father, one participant emphasized encouragement from her grandparents, teachers, and friends,

*Everyone seems very excited [about my becoming a veterinarian] and my grandparents are just thrilled. They have supported me. Well, everyone supported me all the way. But they are just so excited that I guess they really think it’s a neat career. I’ve always been excited about the career and what I was doing. But it’s as if it’s just great. I don’t know
why they think it's so magical. It's just really weird. It's just thinking, "Oh wow! This person I taught and this person I'm a friend with . . . is going to be able to do surgery, fix animals, do miracle type treatments, and cure animals."

She perceives that significant others in her lifeworld think she is special due to her career choice.

4.1.4 Early Encounters With Animals - Early Bonds

Of course, the early family context would be incomplete without exploration of the types of animal contact the women had in childhood. While not all veterinary students choose the profession based on a love of animals, the women in this study showed early attachments to pets. As well, I appreciated the important presence of animals in current time through my interview contact with the women. I learned for example, of the ten women interviewed, at least six of them had pets as veterinary students. Animals were present at two of the interviews. In one case, where the interview took place at the apartment of the student, we spent considerable time interacting with and discussing her cats. I was complimented on my ability to interact with an exclusive and temperamental female cat. In describing her own feelings about them, the woman said wistfully about her cat, probably having her professional voice thinking otherwise,

*Whoever feeds her within a week or so she loves them just as much. But I think after eight years, I have been the only constant in her life. So I think there is a special bond there. I like to think there is anyway, more than just the one who fills her food bowl.*

Another participant, who described herself as most pet-oriented in her family, showed one position on animals. Her anthropomorphic view of animals as family members was not expressed by the other women. Her animals were her appendages in childhood and her companions in her
present life. The continuity in pet breed choice that she describes suggests a phenomenon like imprinting.

I thought that was really special having my own pet [a guinea pig] and being able to take care of it. After five years it died and I got another one. After five years I got another one and now I've got a hamster. My sister [had a guinea pig eventually] but hers sat in the cage all day. I had mine out all the time and watched T.V. with mine. We have pictures of this guinea pig in the sail boat we made. We'd put it in electronic cars. Even in the family pictures, I realize I was always holding something. [I] thought the animal should be in the picture as well because she was part of the family. [The dog] her name was Tina. She was a beagle and, of course, my parents have another beagle now and now I have a beagle. Once you get one breed, you stick to it. My parents had gotten her a couple of years before I was born. She grew up with the kids and was always there. [She] was always fun to take on walks and certainly enjoyed life. Everyone had their duties to clean up after her out in the yard. So we realized how to care for her.

Another woman said she had anthropomorphized her pets and related to them as her children, until she gave birth to her own son.

My relationship to animals has changed a lot since I got here (veterinary college). I expect it will change a lot more. Interestingly enough, it changed dramatically when I had a baby. I think that women, in particular, put a lot of maternal behaviour into their animals. I had a cat that was “my baby.” After the baby was born, I could have cared less whether I saw that cat again, which my classmates can’t understand. You laugh [I understood what she meant and shared my own and Sharon’s similar experiences]. My
classmates cannot laugh at that. I looked after it to feed it but I didn’t care for it like I used to. I don’t anthropomorphize as much as I used to. “Oh baby, baby, baby, hugs and kisses.” I don’t respond to animals in that respect any more. I like them. I’m going to enjoy working with them but I don’t want to lavish them with my affection like I used to.

Also, as I know more, I realize that’s really an inappropriate way of dealing with animals. They don’t particularly want you to do that either.

The shift she described involved differentiating her response to her child from her response to her pet. Her nurturing (which she describes as “maternal behaviour”) became more selective and sophisticated as a result.

Most of the women described contact with pets in childhood. One participant, from an affluent family, engaged in competitive horse riding and had opportunities to view veterinary care of horses through a friend of the family. Several other women had companion animals, dogs or cats, who were important to them, but not necessarily to their parents.

*We had a lot of pets. We had a collie, our first dog, from six until I was fourteen.*

*Lassie was fun. She was a good pet and I did a lot with her I guess. She got old toward the end and I don’t think my dad was too patient about incontinence.*

Another participant and her older brother incorporated domestic, toy, and wild animals into their play as children.

*We lived outside of the city . . . lake on one side and woods on the other so there was a lot of wildlife around and many orphaned little animals that we were able to rescue and release. My brother always wanted to be a veterinarian. He is twelve years older than I am and he [followed a different career]. But it’s probably his influence and just the*
exposure to all the different animals we had as children. We used to pretend that we were vets and would tear apart our sister's stuffed animals. Even when pet attraction was not modelled by family members, some of the women initiated their own contact. For example, one woman's liking for animals was so powerful that despite her parents' refusal to have family pets, she got contact by offering to walk a neighbour's dog.

My parents never allowed us pets. They didn't think it was something, so I was always the one going for walks with the neighbours' dog. It was always, maybe because it was not allowed that . . . I found them so /attractive/ . . . I just liked animals.

Thus for most women, animals had certain qualities that made them appealing and attractive to them as children. The childhood attachment patterns formed such positive attitudes toward animals to motivate devotion of their life work to them. No story was more eloquent in this regard than the participant who had lacked positive human relationships.

I've always cared about animals. From the time of high school I started working in a boarding kennel (dogs and cats). I guess because I liked animals and working with them, I came to believe that working with animals as a life long commitment would be something that would appeal to me. It just came out of my caring for animals. I was frustrated with the way that animals were and are treated by humans. I didn't have a lot of faith or respect for people . . . I thought that perhaps if I was a veterinarian, at least I would be giving back something to animals by humans that is being taken away. At least I would be healing them . . . I was always brought up with dogs and cats and other beings but I'm allergic to both dogs and cats.
4.1.5 Animal Losses - Experiences with Death

At least six of the ten women experienced a loss through death rupturing a close human relationship. Many of them were also sensitive to grief with animal loss. How the two are related is not evident. The most pronounced example was one participant who had lost her dog five months before I interviewed her. Our interview was shortened because reflection on her experiences painfully touched upon the constant companion who had ushered her into and through veterinary school. I asked enough to understand the context of her experience and I conducted a truncated interview in her case. In the quotation below is her expression of loss of an animal companion.

_I really miss her /begins to cry/. I had her all through school. I used to take the dog for a run. Every day, I'd get up in the morning. A friend of mine, we'd go, we'd take our dogs and go running. You'd finish classes say at five and we'd go running for an hour. I had her five years /voice strained with emotion/. She'd never been sick a day in her life. There was nothing we could do, so I euthanized her. Well, someone else did for me . . . She looked horrible . . . I'll be bad. I won't be able to talk to anyone without crying when they have to put down their pet. It's yucky /starts to cry again/._

Although she had lost her father through death when she was six, grief of this intensity was new for her.

Another participant told me how she felt betrayed by her parents when they euthanized the family dog, without involving her or her emotions in the process, or in allowing her the space to say goodbye. Her brother also died the same year.

_I felt bad because they didn't tell me but then when I got home from school they said,
"We felt that she just was suffering, so we took her and had her euthanized." I guess I felt bad that they didn’t tell me ahead of time. But maybe I would have tried to fight it or maybe I would have said, “Oh no, don’t take her” or I would have wanted to go. So it was probably handled in the best way.

The stories of early animal attachment and animal loss were quite consistent with the literature and suggested that the bond for some women and their pets was as powerful as a human attachment. Yet they were not validated for feelings of loss when pets died.

Given the point made earlier that childbirth altered one woman’s relationships with animals, there may have been an overlapping of the subjective meanings of children and animals for these women. For some childless women, their internalized image of animals elicited a bond that was human-like.

### 4.2 Encounters with Animal Work, Vets and Values

Most of the women recognized the necessity or naturally drifted into adolescent activity with animals as volunteers or through paid employment. These experiences coincided with a developing sense of personal competence with animals, a sense of being capable and strong, the material that “good vets” are made of. They encountered role models and some women experienced intimidation through negative attitudes or acts of some men in the workplace. The presence of an influential other or observing self who recognized the inner potentiality was important in fuelling their already powerful desire.
4.2.1 Gaining Confidence With Animals and People

The examples that follow show experiences and interactions that fostered confidence and self-efficacy in this group of women. Taken together, they provide material that might inform intentionally designed interventions. Preparation for veterinary medicine requires that students gain experience both with companion animals and with large animals for varied appreciation of animals in society. In the past, stereotypic attitudes about women led to the perception that they lacked the physical size and strength to manage large animals. This perception was used as an argument to exclude women from veterinary medicine historically.

Most of the women were buoyed by their optimism as they entered work environments. A certain degree of initiative was required to find and enter these environments. One woman, who took initiative in a high school career program, set up her own experience. In the quotation below, she described her self comparison with the images of those she watched. She concluded that she could do what the veterinarians did, and that the veterinary role was attainable for her,

*I took it upon myself. I advised our volunteering in grade twelve at a vet clinic. I did that for three years. [grade nine to eleven]. None of my teachers were that interested. I don’t even remember them even asking us what we wanted to do. I’d go on Saturdays [to the vet clinic]. I saw what these people were doing and I thought, “I could do that.” It didn’t seem out of my reach. It seemed attainable and “this isn’t bad” from what I saw. [I was exposed to] regular appointments, surgery, spays, neuters, just whatever was happening at the time. I got to do a lot of the bathing and all that stuff. It was good. I got a little bit of everything.*

Another participant described a job at a horse ranch that developed her ability and self-confidence
with large animals. From this experience she learned that she could manage "skiddish" horses.

*It certainly gave me more confidence around large animals because horses are very skiddish and they can kick you... They had one hundred and twenty-five horses... We would have to bring them in/from the fields/ in the morning, saddle them up, and keep them from fighting, /be/ cause they'd all come in from the field in one big bunch and go into this big area and they'd fight and kick each other. You'd have to walk in between them and so I certainly felt I did gain a lot of confidence working with the large animals.  
... I became a manager two years later.*

Another participant, who had dropped out of university following failure in first year, still found herself engaging in self-comparison with veterinarians when she took her pets for examination. Her self-evaluation included mixed messages to herself. One set of messages related to her desire and sense of competence while the other set of messages related to her traumatic experience in first year university that created self doubt. From this woman's story, unresolved failure experiences undermined the self-efficacy she needed for persistent career commitment.

*Every time I took one of my animals to a vet, I had a little stab in my heart thinking that could have been me, that young woman standing there in her mid twenties serving me so effectively. I could have done that. Or probably I thought, "I couldn't have done that." There was associated a sense of failure as well, having always been successful in high school and [then] coming here [university] and performing so poorly.*

Successful experiences validated the woman's original desire. In one case, a participant described her own desire being mirrored back to her in a way that was particularly validating because it was
expressed by a veterinarian who was a positive role model.

"I listen to it [encouragement] more from people I respect. There’s one gentleman in the Toronto area that runs six or seven clinics. He takes summer students. You basically live at the clinic. You are there from Monday morning to Saturday morning and you are their emergency service. You screen all the calls. It’s really a “dive in” thing. You’re doing it for four months. So that’s what I did. The practitioner saw something in me and said, “I think you’re going to be a really good veterinarian someday.”

I was told of veterinarians who had taken the time, in their busy practices, to nurture, and teach their aspiring proteges.

Another participant worked on a dairy farm where she boarded with a family with young women her own age. She described her experience as overwhelmingly positive despite it being her first time away from home. She learned to milk cows, drive a tractor, and plough the fields. She felt she fit right in.

4.2.2 First Encounters With Hostile Workplaces - Threats to Confidence

In other cases, the adolescent experience brought mixed messages. In contrast to the confidence-enhancing stories presented, some job experiences were demoralizing and destructive. For the vulnerable participant already mentioned, her kennel job satisfied her animal interests yet it also brought unwanted attention from the owner, as sexual harassment.

"I worked for a woman who had a second husband, and she had three grown women, and he harassed them. He harassed the people who worked there - wanting hugs and wanting kisses and just touching you when you don’t want it. It’s hard too because it’s the
husband of the boss. How do you tell the boss that her husband is harassing you? I had a friend relationship with my employer. It wasn’t that I came and left. It was more like a family thing. I worked there for four years.

She described another experience of harassment on a farm a number of years later.

I went to work on a dairy farm, which was against my ethical beliefs (vegan) but I knew that to get in (to veterinary medicine) to get experience. It was tough. I was feeling suicidal, still depressed and I had some problems with the farmer. I was uncomfortable around him. I just felt he was imposing himself physically on me too much. I never confronted him. I thought maybe I’m just projecting my past experiences. Maybe he really just honestly wants to give me a hug or whatever . . . I think if I was more secure, had more confidence in that area, then I could have said, “No, I don’t want to hug you.” That doesn’t make it my responsibility . . . that I have to put up with it because I can’t say, “No.”

She sensed that her earlier experiences might have affected the way she was perceiving the present; yet she wrestled with what was appropriate behaviour for the farmer. Eventually she concluded that she should be free from unwanted physical attention. The feelings of lack of agency with respect to her body that she had felt as a small child continued when she was a young woman and led to vulnerability as she was attempting to gain large animal experience. Her attention on the dairy farm experience was divided between learning about animals and managing the unwanted actions of the farmer.

Two other women described how they encountered intimidating or unhappy, discouraged male veterinarians in experiences in clinics. One participant who volunteered at a veterinary
clinic, developed fearlessness in the presence of an intimidating male veterinarian who routinely upset his staff members. Her desire to learn from him and see him as expert complemented his opinion about his knowledge and intelligence.

One vet, the one who got me started - I still use the one diagram he drew me of the heart - a lot of the things he said really, really stuck with me. It's rather odd . . . because he's a difficult man to work for. He would have some staff members in tears. He's very impatient, very demanding. But he's also very intelligent. I looked to him as the person who knew the answer to everything. He was so good at what he did. I was intimidated by him but oddly enough probably because of my age and how naive I was, I was not fearful of him. He treated me very well. I think he knew that this was someone who genuinely wanted to learn and that was what turned him on . . . being able to teach me. He enjoyed that.

Another participant said she could balance a negative image conveyed by a male veterinarian by having a female veterinarian role model available to her. Her job experience in a veterinary clinic almost dissuaded her from veterinary medicine. The cynical male veterinarian focused on the negative side of the profession. His job dissatisfaction related to the lack of status and salary experienced by practicing veterinarians relative to their effort and years of education. This type of dissatisfaction is common in veterinary medicine since the academic standards and years of training seem equivalent to human medicine yet average salaries are quite discrepant. The fortunate balance provided by a young female veterinarian connected with her own view.

I'd gotten a part-time job in a veterinary clinic . . . the first place that I'd gone with my pet dog when I was ten. . . . I worked there as a kennel person. [I] cleaned cages and
helped hold an animal if they needed me to and swept the floor and answered the phone.

. . . [The veterinarian] he's very gruff and very "bah humbug" and he told me he would never go back into veterinary medicine if he had a chance to go back and do a different degree. He said, "I don't know why you want to be a vet. Garbage men make more than vets." I just brushed it off cause I knew exactly what I wanted to do. I'm glad I stood up.

. . . I would have easily been scared away . . . He was the owner at the time but one female veterinarian really took me under her wing. She had just graduated and she taught me all kinds of things. She loved vet medicine and . . . I learned the nice, good way to practice vet medicine and learned what it can be like. He really hates it but she loves it.

4.2.3 Traditional versus Animal Rights Values

Very few of the women told about experiences of reflexivity during adolescence, where they began to critically examine themselves and their moral position regarding animal lives. Most of the participants had not defined moral orientations regarding animals. They thought animals were interesting and enjoyable to be around but appeared not to have engaged in soul searching regarding the implications and responsibility of their own actions. In the quotation below is an example more typical of the majority position that emphasizes the accepting nature of animals.

[Animals] never give you any flack. They never tell you, "You're late. Where's my dinner?" or "I hate you mom." They just give you a look on their face even if they eat your plant or crap on your floor [laughs]. For the most part, if you get a good pet, they're pretty nice to live with.
That participant expressed a much more intense awareness of her feelings for animals after she graduated from veterinary college, following the death of her dog, suggesting that loss transforms interpretation of relationships.

*I was devastated. I could not believe how much I grieved for that dog.* I still do.

The traditional position seemed most compatible with objectivist views of animals as things, as subjects of human control. The women's reflective thought regarding moral responsibility for animals shifted with life experiences in their stories.

Two women had engaged in reflection about their own responsibilities toward animals earlier in their lives than the others. Both women developed animal rights values when they were in adolescence and young adulthood. For one participant, an emotionally powerful relationship she had with a male provided the stimulus for moral reflection. He challenged some of her taken-for-granted beliefs. She later rejected meat, much to her mother's distress and for a time became an idealistic vegetarian. Much later, in veterinary school, she was still a vegetarian but not nearly so idealistic.

*I've been a vegetarian now for ten years and strongly animal welfare probably bordering on animal rights... I was sixteen. I worked in an amusement park and met an existentialist whom I loved dearly and just lapped up arguments and philosophies.* [1] I read *Being and Nothingness* by Sartre that summer. He caught me off guard one day and said, "You're eating meat. Why do you do it?" I said, "I don't know, because you need it." [But he argued she didn't need it for nutrition]. I thought, "Well because I like it." He said, "Well I like to beat my wife." and he wasn't married. But it was just the analogy of "oh my god, you can't do anything because you like it. That's such a poor
argument." So that day, I just thought of visions of killing and the mass industry of killing and me buying into that... and yet we all wear leather shoes and we all drink milk.

The other participant developed a vegan philosophy later at university. This position is a more extreme form of animal rights, defined by the participant as follows:

A vee-gan or vay-gan whichever you want to say it, is no dairy products or anything, no animal products. Technically you don't even wear leather or use anything, body products that have animal stuff in it. Whereas vegetarian is broad. You can be eating eggs and dairy. Some people eat fish and call themselves vegetarian, chicken even. It doesn't really make sense.

She was the woman for whom human relationships had failed in early life.

4.2.4 Good Veterinarians are Women - A Gendered Reference Point

Along with developing views with respect to animals, the participants developed attitudes about what constituted a good veterinarian. The deep convictions I heard in the stories of the women expressed much more than an interest in a particular occupation. I sensed an expression or vehicle for their own original love for animals, converted into a scientific and professional role. What was uniquely theirs was the original bond that formed an attachment to a life with animals. The vulnerable participant with the extreme animal rights philosophy on the other hand, perceived the veterinarian as an advocate for animals.

In contrast to their deep valuing of the role of the veterinarian, the women heard some messages devaluing veterinary medicine compared to the social status of human medicine. They
did not seem to pay attention to the status issue then. Later when issues of salary and workplace treatment emerged, they expressed a sense of unfairness. Perhaps this status differential reflects systemic valuing in our culture that places lesser value on animal lives.

From their responses to their experiences with role models, they sorted the images of veterinarians into good and bad. Depending upon their role models, some women realized that the female veterinarians seemed closer to the ideals they wished to emulate. They valued qualities of nurturance, gentleness, and sensitivity to animal pain and owners’ reactions.

In the quotation below, the woman stressed the interpersonal skills required of veterinarians.

*A good veterinarian has to have good observation skills, good listening skills, good history taking . . . The key is how you relate to people who are bringing their pets in. . . . Are you able to relate? I think that means it's more people-oriented than animal. I mean you have to have a good feel for animals. You have to know them.*

Another participant drew from her experiences to provide me an example of a “bad vet” who was male. She contrasted his behaviour with that of a female veterinarian in the same clinic. While explaining the difference to me, the participant advanced her theory that women might be better suited for veterinary medicine.

*A bad vet/ he's rough with the cats especially. He doesn't like cats so he's very rough with them if they don't behave. He's just not as dedicated as she is. Women seem to be more caring for the most part if you see them dealing with animals. That's maybe why more women are in vet medicine. They handle them for the most part, handle them better. They are more patient. I guess, just more caring and compassionate is the main*
thing. A lot of times I think people forget that these animals are sick. They're in pain. So they just pick them up and plop them on the table like they're no problem. You handle them gently because if I was feeling that way, I wouldn't want to be just hauled around like that. Some of the restraining of them [is] overkill... or getting impatient because the animal is struggling and doesn't want an injection... I've heard some horror stories of vets that literally beat... an animal. I don't know how true they are but horror stories can get bad.

Echoing the others, another participant said,

I think you have to care and you have to be very patient. You really have to love it I think, otherwise you are going to be miserable. You won't be doing your patient any good. You have to have a knack for realizing how much the client is understanding. You have to feel the client out, know what type of person they are. Do they want a hug? Do they not want a hug? Some people live through their pet and could not bear the loss.

Therefore, stereotypic female attributes such as nurturance and interpersonal sensitivity were presented as normative and desirable for good veterinarians by these women as they imagined themselves as practitioners. Most of the women suggested that veterinary medicine was a good profession for women to enter because they believed women inherently possess qualities of sensitivity, relational, and nurturing ability. From the stories of their own lives, the women never identified veterinary medicine as a traditionally male occupation. These women were defining the field as quite complementary to themselves and their interests. The women did not see themselves as revolutionary feminists trying to enter a traditionally male field. One participant said the pioneers had gone ahead of them.
I have never personally felt limited by the fact that I am female. It was never an issue. Maybe that's naive, maybe that's ignorant, I don't know. I think that the women that had to deal with that issue have long been and gone. I think it was at the times that women were one or two out of the eighty or one hundred [students] that they would have had the brunt of that issue. A lot of the practitioners that I have worked with have been female. I think the profession lends itself quite easily to females.

Being challenged as female was a non issue. Instead, the women focused on their primary interests with animals, hard work, and success with science course work. Their nurturant attitudes toward animals naturally led them to veterinary medicine. They did not rule out other traditionally female occupations. For example, one participant said that if she had not been accepted to veterinary medicine, she would have more easily been a nurse than a doctor. Another daughter of a doctor said that she did not wish the responsibility associated with human medical practice.

Combined with prior comments by Sharon and the administrators, I suggest the students were not feminist in their orientation. In attempting to excel as women in a male-dominated field they de-emphasized their gendered self. As a result, I learned that there were unexamined issues related to womanhood, gender discrimination, and societal roles in their stories later on.

4.2.5 Peer Relationships - Not One of the Crowd

Although the interviews did not extensively explore the full range of adolescent life, I caught glimpses of those years. The women gave me the impression of being socially adjusted, yet their own career goals kept them focused on a life different from their peers. Several
participants said that they were lucky because they had decided, had a career goal, and knew what they were going to do. I sensed that in late adolescence in particular, uncertainty about life direction can be a very unsettling and anxiety-provoking experience. Below is a quotation from one participant reflecting on this issue.

It's a hard world. I wouldn't want to be coming out of high school again now. My sister says, "How do you pick? What do you do? How do you know?" and I just say, "I don't know Margaret, just pick something. If you decide, just do it as long as there's a few basic things. If you want to work outside, work with people, you don't become an accountant." I have a few friends who still don't know where they're going and they've been at university for ten to twelve years.

Very few of the women described their peer or dating relationships in high school. Some participants were preoccupied and focused on their extracurricular experiences with animals. Consequently, they did not have a great deal of available social time. For another participant, this lifestyle was a deliberate choice. She avoided dating relationships for fear that the goal of veterinary medicine would be sabotaged. It was a time to stay unconnected from boyfriends.

I did go out with my friends but I never dated anybody up until I got here [now twenty-eight] because I was afraid it would distract me from my goal. There was one point where I had so many kinds of interests but at that point I was afraid it would demotivate me.

4.2.6 School - The Absent Player

Very little data emerged in the stories to suggest the women perceived significant
influence by school experiences in their career choice process. One participant did recall being asked in grade six to write about her future, what she would be doing 20 years in the future. She predicted exactly what she was now doing.

In grade six we had to write “what I'm going to be doing in twenty years.” I had written down that I was going to be graduating from Guelph. I'd be a veterinarian. So it's really funny how it panned out to be that way. I've kept that little project I did.

Another participant reported having an encouraging male teacher who thought highly of her, but he wanted her to become a lawyer. She said he continually “harassed” her about her choice of veterinary medicine.

One /teacher/ harassed me, was convinced that I'd make a great lawyer, and harassed me until I left high school, and still harasses me to this day, that I should have gone into law.

Most other participants said little about what their schools had done to foster career awareness and development. One woman said that her guidance counsellors had either been insufficiently informed or were unavailable to help her plan appropriately for veterinary college admission. Although she did not say so below, I had the impression from our interviews that she felt she had wasted about two to four years of post secondary study because of not understanding admission requirements.

If I told somebody to do this, I would say in OAC, in grade 13 or grade 12, whatever you want to call it now, you'd better know what those requirements are. My sister's applying to university now. We went through this on the weekend. She's applying for a scholarship. But she's, you'd better know what you're applying. You'd better know how to do it yourself. You'd better take personal responsibility because the counsellors at
high school only help you so much. The counsellors here can suggest but they can only help you so much. You'd better take personal responsibility right from the beginning.

She said that high school students needed to know how to search out accurate and up to date application information for themselves without relying on school counsellors to help them.

REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The stories about early and pre-university life experiences, taken together, show how intricately and inextricably related psychological development and career development are bound.

Parent leave marks on the lives of their daughters in so many ways. The provision of loving, and secure early environments fosters a sense of competence, of a focused goal, and of the motivation to persist in the face of challenge.

It has been suggested by theorists that mothering roles and nurturing skills are developed in daughters through their primary relationships with their mothers. In the stories I presented, nurturing was "reproduced." A broad life role perspective was also conveyed, a perspective that they were expected to be professionals and to be mothers. Instead of rehearsing their nurturant roles as little mothers with dolls, they played with animal pets. This early role-playing may have provided a transitional experience that took the young women beyond traditional female roles yet legitimized their expression of nurturance and care.

Some women had early experiences with death of a human or an animal companion. The women's affectionate bonds with animals were noticed for the most part, but the depth of their grief and sense of loss seemed not adequately understood or processed. Since acknowledgement of human-animal bonds is recent, it is likely their parents reflected the dominant societal position
that has objectified nonhuman companions. The women who experienced loss carried with them a tacit understanding of the pain associated with the rupture of an important relational bond. From Sharon and the one participant who was also a mother, there were hints that the animal relational bond carried some meaning related to mothering and that only when they became mothers did the meaning of the animal bond shift. Differentiation of animals from children clarified and refined the meaning and expression of their nurturance.

Some fathers in the women’s lives encouraged strength and competence and modelled professional achievement for their daughters. No where in the stories, apart from the blatant sexual abuse of one participant, did I hear family messages that were limiting to females. Two fathers appeared to try to control and direct their daughters’ lives. Many mothers were portrayed as especially invested in their daughters’ success. Some fathers were perceived as providing very helpful facilitation. The women’s voices were not suppressed in adolescence. Their voices were guided by parent control and expectations for academic achievement.

I appreciated how privileged many women were when I contrasted their stories with those of disadvantage with psychologically unstable parents or with abandonment and abuse. The stories began to show how pervasive the damage from deprived and destructive environments can be and drew my attention to contextual forces outside the individual that affect agency and achievement.

The first task in parental support of career development, might be raising an emotionally healthy child through listening, validation, and supportive encouragement. The second task might involve helping the child to access stimulating opportunities for experience and the growth of competence. Parents might also try to guard against imposing their own unfinished careers onto
the lives of their daughters in order to validate who they are becoming.

As the women shifted to contexts outside the family in their adolescent work experiences in kennels, clinics, and farms, they encountered helpful and hurtful relationships. In cases where the women were welcomed by positive, encouraging role models, they felt validated and strengthened in their career commitment. In cases where they met with negativity, intimidation or harassment, they were challenged by mixed messages about themselves and their career goals.

Experiences of mastery of difficult work tasks especially with large animals brought increased self-confidence; whereas failure, even if due to unrelated factors, brought ambivalence and self-doubt. Despite the wide range of experiences, all of the women retained their sense of focus and desire as they began to navigate the world outside the family context. They were less easily swayed than their peers by social temptations or peer choices. They perceived veterinary medicine to be a career that was compatible with who they were as women with unique sensitivity to animals. They saw themselves as socially skilled and able to participate with others, yet also able to extricate themselves to pursue their own career interests. Such a single-minded focus would prove necessary in the more challenging context of university. It also began a practice of putting professionalism first and the rest of life in the margins.

Surprisingly, the influence from the school context was presented as negligible or bordering on unhelpful. Given the important mandate for our educational systems to prepare students for their future roles in society, neglect of students' career development needs in these stories signals a serious omission.
V

ANALYSIS AND DATA PRESENTATION

PART II: UNIVERSITY LIFE AND COMPETITION IN SCIENCE

Formal education in veterinary medicine, at the time this study was conducted, involved a minimum of one year of undergraduate science followed by five years in veterinary medicine. Following veterinary study, graduates were awarded a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.) degree and had to write a licensing exam to practice. Most veterinary students completed more than one year of undergraduate science because of the competitiveness of veterinary school admission. Therefore, the path into veterinary medicine first took the women into undergraduate science programs.

All of the women in this study applied directly from high school to university. Seven women left their hometown or city in order specifically to attend the University of Guelph where one of the four veterinary programs in Canada is found. One participant came to Ontario from out of the province specifically to study veterinary medicine. Two women initially attended institutions close to home in Ontario then transferred to the University of Guelph. While all of the other women were residents of Ontario, none of them was a resident of Guelph. Despite their previous statements of career choice, several women showed evidence of external control and incomplete commitment to the profession. For example, one participant thought that the proximity of the veterinary college to her home had some special meaning for her. The coincidence suggested her destiny was determined by fate,

*I felt lucky because I found out of four vet schools in Canada, one's in Guelph which was half an hour from my hometown. So I felt quite lucky it was one of the closest*
Another participant, the woman who decided later than the others that she would pursue veterinary medicine, chose a local university because of her boyfriend and other external factors despite her preference to have gone elsewhere. She was also lured by the promise of residence space and a scholarship.

*When I went to go to [university] I was going to go to medical school. I went to [another Ontario university] because my boyfriend went and because I got into that residence and I got a scholarship. That’s why I went to [the Ontario university]. I wanted to go to McGill and go to McGill medical school or at least a medical school.*

Another participant, who attended the same Ontario university, regretted the round about path she took. She now believes she could have been more strategic as it took her a very long time and two degrees before she was finally admitted to veterinary college.

*I would do this all over again. I might not have done it the same way, but I would have applied again . . . I didn’t really actively think about applying until second year . . . I had it in the back of my mind for a long time growing up.*

Nevertheless, attending a different university was viewed positively by another woman. She knew that she wanted to attend veterinary college and completed some of her undergraduate science at another university specifically so she would not have to stay so long at one institution,

*I ended up [at the University of Guelph]. I did my first two years of university at [a different Ontario university] and I didn’t even apply to Guelph. I think at the time . . . it was always in the back of my mind . . . I knew veterinary medicine was a five-year program and I didn’t want to spend seven or eight years here. You can’t apply to*
veterinary medicine from grade thirteen so you have to start somewhere. I enrolled in honours biology at [the different university]. That's physiology, the way things work. It's so logical. It's always appealed to me so that's where I went with the belief that I knew I was going to go on in something. When I really, really decided that vets was it, I transferred to Guelph and finished my B.Sc. here.

In the last two cases, the women were tentative about the commitment to plunge into a direct path to veterinary medicine initially. Veterinary medicine was described as "in the back of my mind" as a steady, but not prominent presence, whose time has not yet come.

5.1 University Life

5.1.1 First Year Transition Experience

Much is already known by counselling psychologists about the significant adjustment demands that first year university students must make with respect to academic, social, and emotional functioning (e.g., Russell & Petrie, 1992). Being away from home for the first time, leaving supportive friends and family behind, facing large class sizes in sciences, and encountering a rapid pace of instruction with much tougher academic requirements are the predominant stressors.

One participant described her first year of residence living as unpleasant. First year university dramatically changed her social role relationships, from being highly involved in high school to being a pariah in university residence,

*I hated my first year . . . I had a weird roommate. It was my first year of university . . . my first time away from home. You get stuck in a double room with someone you don't
even know and she was strange. She just was different and she was very unstable. She was always crying about something . . . so of course the other girls on my floor wouldn't associate with us much because they didn't like her. So I was in the same room; so they didn't talk to me much. I just went home every weekend. I'd go to school Monday to Friday, and my mom would come and pick me up, and I'd go home on the weekends, and I would study all weekend, and then I would come back and never did any social things. Maybe I played on one volleyball team, but I never, hardly did anything at all, and I wasn't involved compared to high school where I . . . played on every single sports team and . . . was on all the executive committees.

5.1.2 Science Culture - Classes and Competition

Participants were quite consistent in portraying an image of undergraduate science. For some of them, it was just intensive work of the sort for which they were already good. One participant describes her proficiency in grade-getting,

So I was in my first year. I did quite well . . . I found that I was, I had very good study habits and very dedicated. I did quite well in my courses and found it easier than I thought it would. I went away in the summer to take organic chemistry because organic chemistry at [my university] is 50% fail. So I went away, and I met a bunch of people that were also interested in going to medical school . . . I did really well in the course, surprisingly well. I also enjoyed myself. Then I went back to school. I realized I didn't want to be a doctor.

Other women found the grade-getting not quite so natural or easy. The next two
participants described their experiences in undergraduate sciences.

For me, marks never meant much so that was a real eye-opener. When I write a test and I feel I've done well in it and when I get the mark back, it doesn't really matter what it is because I felt I really knew the material. Sometimes you get a test back and you get a really good mark. You're like, "How did I do that? I don't know anything." So I never put much weight on marks, but then it really hit me. Okay these marks really mean something. Someone's looking at them and that's all they're looking at... I worked hard... I really worked hard, and the marks were fine. They were just not good enough to get in [to veterinary college]. There were lots of people around that were much more intense than I was. A lot of people who were wanting to get into vets would go over all of their exams and make sure that nothing had been missed. I'd never do that. I'd look to see if I had passed, had done okay.

Another participant gave a closer view of the intense grade getting focus of science peers,

Most of the people that come to Guelph want to be a vet so the students are very competitive... In your science classes almost everybody, 80% of those students want to be vets. You maybe know three. None of them would say, "Oh I want to be a vet" because it's so competitive. If you know that they want to be a vet, then you know that you're in competition with them. Maybe if you've got an old exam you wouldn't give it to them. It's just terrible - the most stressful years of my life. You have all these people running up to the prof saying, "I only got ninety-eight on this exam. I should have had ninety-nine," and I mean the prof's just sick of it. I refused to do that, to go up to them and try and get marks. All these people would do that. It happens all the time. First,
second and third year people just constantly begging the profs for marks and cheating this way and that way to get marks. It's just really a battle. It's everyone for themselves. I just didn't think I could handle any more of it, just competing and constantly never being able, never studying enough, always having to do more, always the possibility of doing more and more.

At least three of the participants told me they pushed themselves to the breaking point. Two women broke down physically and developed illness, one chronic. The third woman had an emotional breakdown, but she got into veterinary college on her first attempt. In her quotation below, she describes her mechanical approach to grade-getting.

*I just structured everything so that I would use all my time toward studying, so I would get good marks [for] the veterinary program. I did a very good job. I had all my hours, I had every hour written down, study in this block, eat lunch, study, go to class, study, eat /laughs/, and then I would go to sleep [Kathy: a programmed life?]

Yeah it was completely, even my Friday nights. My Saturday nights were just that and as far as marks go, it worked. I got 90's and my body and my mind were getting to the point where I was paying for this. I had a nervous breakdown. I felt suicidal. I went into a depression, and then I woke up one night. I was living on the ninth floor of residence and I just thought if I'd left my room I was going to go out into the lounge, open a window, and jump out of it. I was just in tears. I had to look in my mirror and talk to myself, and tell myself that I was a good person, and would be hurting people if I did this and somehow try to rationalize my irrationality. So I got through that, and then I stayed with friends for a couple of days after that, and I got to see a counsellor at the university
which got me through to the end of the semester.

The decision point that led to intense grade-getting was caused by the participants’ recognition that they would not be successful in an admission application. This understanding was realized either through applying and being rejected or simply through judging their own performance and knowing about the requirements. Often, it took a deliberate leap of faith and commitment to ignore all else.

In the story that follows is the exchange one participant said she had with herself. She recognized a lack of readiness initially, that she called “psychological.” Given her poor physical health at the time, she had an appropriate awareness that she did not have the resources to take on the gruelling workload that veterinary medicine would entail. Later, when her health had stabilized, she confronted herself with the need to commit or to abandon her goal.

I applied twice, the first time after second year. I didn’t really prepare for my interview. I just laid back and said, “Well this will be a trial run. This will be what the interview is.” It was a psychological thing. I just wasn’t ready yet. That’s when I got sick the next year, and then I got engaged. My focus in life wasn’t on that any more. I guess I got a little disillusioned and a little bitter and a little lost in between. Then in my final year, [I said to myself] “Okay Jill, this is do or die. This is the year you are getting into vets or not. You know that what it is that turns that light on inside you is the medical field so you’ve got to start, no matter what. You’ve got to pull through this year, pull your bootstraps up and really do well.” I did, and it was a hell of a year!
5.1.3 Developmental Challenges

Often the research focus on university students is on academic life and performance; however, students also experience many personal challenges as they sort through developmental and identity issues. For one participant, identity was a major part of the story she told to me. At university, she began to question her sexual orientation and began to identify herself as lesbian.

A lot of my story does not revolve around the [veterinary] college . . . It's a lot bigger than that . . . First year at Guelph, I didn't work very hard. It was a new experience. A lot was beginning to happen in my life just before starting second year. I was at the beginning of undergoing what I call my, I guess before that point was my "other life" and now I'm in my "this life" and there's . . . people I wanted as a peer group . . . and to lose connections with some people and try to gain connections in a different social realm. At some point in there, later in the year, I started questioning my sexuality, from heterosexuality to lesbianism . . . At that point I had a couple of lesbian friends.

Someone else from my public school, who was also at Guelph, started taking me out and introducing me to that group. At that point I was still figuring things out.

The woman who returned in her thirties to veterinary school, recalled the first year as challenging most students' ability to maintain a clear focus. She had not done so herself.

I admire [my peers] because they are so focused out of high school at that very turbulent and confusing time

She left after her first semester, having entered at only seventeen and does not regret the academic study and work experiences she had afterwards. For example, she attended an arts program in English and drama at another university and worked at many different jobs. Nevertheless, she also
described feeling not being ready until much later to settle down and concentrate on study.

*I loved it [the arts program] . . . I kicked around for six or seven years following that with no direction. I tried many different professions. I was in publishing for a while. I tried professional acting . . . but decided I had a lack of ambition. Through all of this, I supported myself bartending so was in the hospitality industry for twenty years. [When] I turned thirty, and I could see that where I possibly might want to end up was not, I was not travelling down the road that would get me there - meaning I wanted eventually to have enough money to have a house, preferably a rural existence. I always wanted to own a horse, and here I was living in downtown Toronto! Turning thirty really changed things for me because I felt a great sense of release. I had applied to teachers' college a few times and been accepted but didn't go either time because at the last moment I thought I really didn't want to do that. . . . so I went back . . . to U of T to do some upgrading skills for one year . . . took . . . a math course, a biology course and a chemistry course . . . retook my high school courses through correspondence and then moved to Guelph to enrol in first year science . . . It was extremely positive - the best thing that ever happened to me . . . Everything just really fell into place . . . I had a very good time in my twenties, did a lot of things and was not an unhappy person, but there certainly was something in me that held me back from ever committing myself.

For several other participants, the period before admission involved improving their academic standing and also engaging in personally useful experiences. One woman went on an exchange to Paris, France. Another woman volunteered her time at the veterinary college and developed connections with a dog and a female veterinarian who became a mentor,
I guess two years before I got in, I used to volunteer dog walk. One day, a veterinarian came up to me. I guess she had seen me coming in there and she said, "I've noticed that you come in every day . . . Do you mind walking one of my research dogs for me?" And I just thought, "Wow, this is great. Someone noticed that I've been in here."

This beginning relationship formed connections that appeared to sustain her through the entire veterinary program. For her, it was an epiphanic event, a high point in her life story where she was touched in a powerful way. The dog she walked became her five-year companion as the veterinarian permitted her to adopt it. The veterinarian became her friend and mentor.

An academically successful participant spent time gaining more experience with veterinarians after she was rejected on her first application attempt. She said she had felt "very crushed" since she had always "gotten in" before.

5.2 Competition for Entry to Vet Medicine

5.2.1 Experiences with Application to Veterinary Medicine

Until they gained admission, the participants who attended the University of Guelph had to view Ontario Veterinary College from a distance, across the street from the rest of the campus. They noticed with envy the veterinary students who strolled across campus with their navy leather jackets and the words "Veterinary Medicine" written across the back as signifiers of their status and achievement. Applicants to the veterinary medicine program needed science averages greater than 80%. Some applicants with very high averages were admitted without an interview. Applicants with mid-range averages were invited for interviews in June. All of the participants in this study had to attend an interview. Later, I learned that the interview held some psychological
significance, as an opportunity to explain to "insiders" why they wanted to enter veterinary medicine.

The psychological issues aroused during application involved risk-taking and holding oneself out to be judged and either validated or rejected as undesirable. The interview was an ego-threatening event as a personalized, internal goal was tested against the harsh reality of competitive selection, where the power to decide individual fate resided. The importance of this moment in the journey is clear considering the duration of the goal in awareness, the activities chosen and forgone in preparation, and the intense academic effort to "make the grade." The symbolic crucible in which women's selves-as-veterinarians was tested was the face-to-face interview. It was an encounter between insiders and outsiders. The interview teams functioned as gatekeepers and the women approached the interview with that realization and considerable anxiety. In the quotation below, one participant revealed her anxiety and self-criticism regarding the interview.

I left the interview crying. I thought it went so horribly. I didn't get in which was no surprise because not only had I gotten a parking ticket that morning but I just blew the interview . . . This one fellow [interviewer] just harassed me . . . [and] I just thought, look I'm going to argue for what I feel and what I believe. I have no use for people like you! I simply couldn't answer their questions on stable management because that's not what I did . . . So it just went down from there and by the time it was time to go, I just got up and said, "Thanks for the interview," and turned around. The tears just started flowing by the time I reached the door.

Several women experienced their interviews as oral examinations of their knowledge or
assessments of their values. Several women told me they prepared for their interviews by studying veterinary facts. Whether or not factual knowledge was required, memorization bolstered their confidence. Where anxious preoccupation with the interview was less pronounced, the interview was described as a pleasant experience as the following quotation shows.

_I walked out of it with a good feeling. It's funny, I studied things because I thought they were going to ask me [technical questions] but it wasn't that at all. Between high school and university, I was on [a national sports team] and they asked me a lot about that and my musical talents. It was, wait a minute! This is fun! I'm having a good time! They just asked me one ethical question. The interview was about a half hour long and it was a good time after the first five minutes of "oh man, what am I doing here?" [anxiety]. I walked out with a good feeling._

In the life history, the interview appears to have functioned as an epiphany or critical moment of encounter between self and other where power clearly resided with the other. One woman distorted who she was, psychologically and physically for the selection interview. She felt she had to borrow someone else's clothing to be able to present herself conventionally.

_Just going to the interview, I wore a dress that belonged to another woman in my class. It was her mother's and she wore it to her interview and she loaned it to me. I wore borrowed shoes. I was not myself. I did not feel comfortable and externally, I did not say what I believed in. I was very nervous. I did not find that the interviewers were very friendly. I felt quite intimidated and now that I compare it to the interview I had for [another professional school], it's a completely different experience. They were so_
friendly and just very warm: even the environment was brighter. At the veterinary college it seemed very dark and very gray.

Some women were admitted despite what they perceived as a poor interview perhaps because their grade point averages were so high. Some applicants with high GPA's have been admitted to the D.V.M. without interviews; however, they were not among the participants of this study. Some women were rejected following that first interview and interpreted the event as a judgement of personal worthlessness, as the quotation below illustrates.

*If you get a big envelope, it means you're in, and if you get a little envelope, it means you are not in and, of course, I got a little one. I opened it and I was so mad [that] I just crunched it up and threw it out. I was so mad because I really thought I had a good chance. I had put a note in saying I was hospitalized with mono in my first semester.*

They seemed to ignore that... I gave up at that point because I really wanted to get in and suddenly, I tried so hard and didn't get in. Forget it! Saying, "Sorry, you're not good." [Later] I didn't drop it. I think on the outside I just thought, I don't want to tell people I still wanted to be in because it would look like I was a failure I guess. Not many people across the campus run around saying, "I want to get into vet school but I didn't. I'm trying again." It looks like you are a failure or something... So in second year, I said, "I don't know if I want to get in." I was so mad. I started [working less at academics] having more fun, and still got the same marks. I met my present fiancé.

It took this participant two years to rebound or return to her pre-application level of confidence to intelligently problem-solve and be strategic about her application. The application she submitted halfheartedly the year after her rejection was essentially identical with her first one. She did not
rewrite her biographical statement because, she said, she was still “mad.”

5.2.2 Playing the Game - Compromising Personal Values

Two participants specifically described their experience of getting in as “playing the game” as if what they were doing did not have much meaning or value yet involved considerable risk taking. One participant had consistently failed to gain admission despite hard work. She became aware of strategies that other students were using to gain admission, but they did not seem fair to her. First, she confronted an administrator at the veterinary college asking how the college could condone such behaviour. When she learned that the college supported the status quo, she eventually weakened and compromised on her own values. She dropped a course and took what students call a “bird” course for an easy A. She had revealed what I heard from other students as well, an existential fear related to the gamble needed to surpass the competition. It was a fear of lost time and money. It was also a fear that she might find herself left with a collection of unrelated courses and no meaningful degree if she failed.

I refused to play the game of dropping down . . . to drop down to three or four courses and take courses that are just really easy and get your marks really high. That’s how you get in. I didn’t want to do that because I thought if I don’t get in, it’s going to be such a waste of time. What I wanted to do was work on my zoology degree and . . . if I got in [to vet school] great. That’s what I wanted to do. But I didn’t want to waste time cause I really thought maybe I won’t get in. Then I would have nothing, four years of nothing. So, it was very frustrating because a lot of people that I knew wanted to get into vets, were dropping down and taking level one spanish and bee keeping . . . and I was
struggling with five, with statistics and biology. I came to the head of the vet program and said, "I don't believe you run it like this. How can you?" how can they let people in that have three courses, obviously can't even handle a full course load to vet school [where] you're working nine to five with nine courses. "You let in people that have taken three courses all their lives. They're going to die when they get into vet school. It's so stupid." I still can't believe they do that. I went to him and I said, "I refuse to play this game. I can't believe you do this." He said, "It's out of my hands... It's the way the university runs it." I guess it was because I just didn't want to waste time and I didn't want to pay all this money for university when I probably, really at this point thought I may not get in, ever.

5.2.3 Getting In - The Moment of Victory

Waiting for notification from the veterinary college was an excruciating experience. One participant who had completed her B.Sc. said that she felt very uneasy graduating without a definite plan ahead. She was considering medicine as a back up plan if she did not get accepted to veterinary medicine. When she heard of her acceptance, she felt ecstatic and her life fell into place with her desire.

After graduation... that was a really scary time... having my science degree and not knowing. Thinking... what will I be doing? In another ten years what will I be doing? Just not knowing your future is very frightening. It's a strange feeling... I had prepared to write the MCATs, the entrance exams for medicine. So I had plan B all lined up but still, what if plan B falls through?... We heard in July or end of June... [I was]
ecstatic . . . I don't think I ever lost that desire. It was always there.

One participant who struggled with dropping down, described her victory in the quotation below.

So, it was the second semester of my third year and one girl that lived in my residence, was also trying to get in to vet school. I was still struggling with five courses. She came to my room this one night and she said, "I can't understand why you're still taking five courses." And this was the end of January. I said, "Well I just, I refuse to drop down and play the game here and drop down to three courses. I just don't want to do that. I really want to get a degree cause if I don't get in and I don't know if I will get in, then I just want to make sure that I have something." She says, "Why don't you just drop down to four cause that's still considered full time. Four or five is considered full time and you do need a full time semester with high marks, and why don't you switch out of this really hard histology and switch into this basic spanish." I said, "It's too late now anyways. It's the end of January and I won't be able to do it". She said, "Well at least try. Go talk to the counsellor." So, I had a big turn around and went to the counsellor the next day and said, "Look I really made a mistake. I really want to do this." So he managed to allow me to do a late drop, late add . . . and I got a ninety in the Spanish. Having only four courses allowed me to get my other marks up a bit higher and that is what got me in. Plus I had an interview and did better on it as well. And this girl also got in and she's in my class. We're not terrific friends or anything. But I do realize, every time I look at her, I think she's the one that convinced me to drop the course, pick up an easy one, get my marks up, and that's what got me in.
For other participants, acceptance was welcome relief. In conversation with one participant about the hurdles involved in gaining acceptance, I commented that the admission process sounded like a test of her persistence. She agreed and offered her discouraged opinion.

Yeah and I don’t think it should be [a test of persistence]... Maybe this is because I did take three tries [years] to get in. But it almost seems that there should be a more sensitive screen... It just seems that a lot of good people don’t get in. That’s sad to me because others get in, and they don’t appreciate it, or they don’t seem to care, like it was a toss up between this and dentistry.

From the student’s perspective, admission should be based on character, commitment, and care. One woman who got in on her first attempt yet eventually dropped out said,

I think then I was really questioning if I really wanted to be a veterinarian... but I had gone that far. I had sacrificed... eight months anyway of my life to get in and I did not want to question it too much... That would be incredibly devastating... At that point it was partly the challenge because I had done so much... So when I got in, I remember getting the envelope. I was on the farm... I guess I was happy... but I think subsequently after that I’m pretty sure I had mixed emotions.

She was aware of the ambivalence she had at the time but chose to ignore it.

**REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

University presented a daunting challenge for most of the participants. Several women, despite their cognitive ability, had trouble coping with the diverse academic and social pressures. An entirely new context replete with sources of challenge, university demanded their adjustment.
They had not yet experienced a competitive academic climate, and many participants said that they did not like it. Science pitted people against one another and did not foster collaborative learning experiences or relationship building. The women were geographically removed from achieved statuses and familiar supports in their lives such as family, mentors, and friends. There were signs that the women began over time to establish new relationships. In two cases the women found boyfriends with one woman becoming engaged. In another case, the woman found herself feeling comfortable within a context of lesbian friends. One woman, who had been part of the elite medical school culture, decided that was not for her and she parted from that peer group.

At least five women mentioned tacit awareness of their own “readiness” to mobilize their resources for the challenge of veterinary medicine. Readiness was a subjective self-assessment linked to career commitment. Lack of readiness was conveyed by being “laid back”, having the career goal in the “back of my mind,” or in postponing intense grade-getting. One woman who felt unable to convince her family of her lack of readiness to begin university, believed she sabotaged her first year to protect herself. Self-assessment of readiness was present in the moments of commitment when participants said they took the risk and decided to work as hard as they were able. Faced with psychological adjustment typical of transition to university, the women had demands which needed to be managed first before they could concentrate on their goals.

The phenomenon of not getting in was a significant event for the women who failed on their first attempt. Some women had never encountered failure until this point in their lives. Processing failure was difficult and rejection impaired self-esteem temporarily. Two or three women described themselves as “lost.” Rejection appeared to trigger a loss of a possible self -
veterinarian, which had been a guiding self-referent up to this point in time. In at least one case, the woman's motivation suffered for several years. For each woman who was rejected there was a choice point of giving up on the dream or plunging into it more deeply. The women realized that getting into veterinary college was not going to be easy. In many stories, there was a critical moment when the woman felt ready to go for broke, to take larger chances, and to put her ego on the line. Most stories contain a period of intense grade-getting where nothing else mattered. There was even an instance of giving up part of self by sacrificing values in order to be successful with admission. Some women drew on additional strategies and connected themselves to the veterinary college through volunteer or paid employment. The women in this study had the resources to persist until they were successful. Getting accepted to veterinary college was a memorable life experience for all but one woman who began to question the appropriateness of her career choice.
VI

ANALYSIS AND DATA PRESENTATION:

PART III: VETERINARY COLLEGE - THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE

Entry to Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.) marked a dramatic shift in the women’s stories. One woman signalled a shift in self-experience when she said that admission brought the experience of “getting used to the idea that you are going to be a veterinarian.” Instead of striving and hoping for something that may not happen, they were now on a route and part of a process where their goal attainment was inevitable. They could give up on intrinsic sources of motivation and yield themselves to the programmatic features of the experience as determinants of their behaviour. Life became relaxed as they anticipated the fall entry in what was called the “pre-veterinary year” (pre-vet). Pre-vet is a year when students upgrade in courses lacking and participate in several organized activities: animal husbandry courses, an orientation and barbecue, and initiation rites for the co-ed fraternity if they wish to join. The formal work of becoming a veterinarian and getting the D.V.M. degree, did not begin until the following year - “year one.”

Students were excited to begin work toward their D.V.M. degrees. The lived experiences in pre-vet year were predominantly interpersonal and concerned with self-assessment of belonging. Experiences of feeling disconnection and searching to establish connection with others in the new context came first. Later, perceptions of value similarity or dissimilarity and concern about fit emerged. As the dust settled, for some women, a new concern arose that might be called “what have I done?” as reality began to sink in. Identifying with animals and the content of the discipline was a very different matter from identifying with the people inside the profession. I will discuss each theme showing how the stress of the previous year became
transformed into a focused readiness to learn how to be a veterinarian.

6.1 Entering Pre-vet Year

6.1.1 Connections and Disconnections

Pre-vet year was described in very similar terms by most of the participants. One participant explained the pre-vet year to me as follows,

*Our pre-vet year . . . that's a different year because they spend the first half of that year catching everyone up and I had, having done my degree, about four out of the five courses that we were supposed to take. You don't really know who is in your class yet because you haven't been together as a class yet. But you're meeting people . . . It's not until after Christmas that you are a class. That was a good year . . . That was fun. You're still not part of O.V.C. yet . . . You don't have many classes that are in the O.V.C. buildings. A lot of the ones you have are on this side still [the university side]. It's a catch up year where they are trying to give . . . everyone the same base so that we can just build on that. We have husbandry courses. A lot of them are not at O.V.C. So the pre-vets aren't really a part of O.V.C. yet.*

As excited as they were to be part of a larger whole, the veterinary college, an apparently awkward program design kept them apart and disconnected from one another and the college itself for one semester. One participant took the fall semester off because she had previously completed the required courses. She worked in a lab in Toronto and returned to campus in high spirits, motivated, and ready to begin. She described her entry,

*I was looking forward to it and I was pretty gung ho . . . and was pretty relaxed. So to*
start with, it was a pretty good experience. The actual pre-vet four months itself was one of the biggest disappointments I've had in a long time.

For her, the disappointment came when she encountered and began to experience some attitudes among her peers in the class of about 100 students. As sure as she had been about becoming a veterinarian herself, she found she did not resonate to the values and attitudes of her classmates. She thought she had made a mistake in applying to veterinary college,

I've been a vegetarian now for 10 years and so at the time 6, and strongly animal welfare, . . . probably bordering on animal rights and appalled at the lack of knowledge and the number of people in my class who were uninformed as to . . . any type of welfare rights issue . . . and just appalled at some of the jokes that went on, some innuendos said and some things that people found humorous in the class. I just thought, "I have made a big mistake!"

Attitudes and values toward animal lives were the domains where she noticed the discrepancy between herself and others. I asked her for a specific example so that I would understand her experience better. In the quotation below, she described a classroom example of her peers' humour.

A lot of the pre-vet year was visiting farms and . . . one of the videos we watched was what happens on layer farms . . . chickens who lay[eggs] . . . It's like the veal industry, . . . where any males who are born are pretty much useless. So the males get tossed down this conveyor belt and then into a garbage disposal at the bottom. They get ground into shreds. The music in the video is pretty humorous, Vivaldi . . . and it made the end of the film really humorous. The people in my class thought it was hilarious, and they were just
killing themselves laughing. I was appalled. This is not funny! I felt pretty alienated.

Thus within the dominant group of new veterinary students, a dominant discourse was already evident. To the participant above, certain views were privileged, and forms of humour were endorsed. For a student whose value perspective held a different interpretation, a different, more horrific reality was apprehended, a reality that confronted her self-image as a veterinarian. She understood that the discourse did not intend to portray “we are killing chickens:” however to her it did.

From her perspective, pre-vet students appeared obnoxious in other ways.

Pre-vets are big on themselves. “I’m in vet school now!” buying themselves a big leather jacket . . . also an ego to just knock you over. The doorways had to be bigger to bring their egos in. And I just had no patience for that. You’re at the bottom of a totem pole now. Somehow there is some glamour in recalling cows all afternoon? Well no. I don’t see it. It’s not especially glamorous, so wake up and smell the coffee. I think that really stomped me and knocked the wind out of my sails. It lasted for the first four months in pre-vets . . . and then it petered out. People realized that vet school wasn’t, you couldn’t just have a big ego. You had to work to stay in, and by the end of first year people had really calmed down, and they were just good fun. They were not obnoxious anymore. I enjoyed their company.

What I found interesting was the woman’s observation that her classmates had changed. What she labelled as “obnoxious” behaviour was “pride” from another woman’s perspective.

In the quotation below, is an experience that is directly opposite. This woman was one participant who felt thrilled to be admitted, bought a leather jacket, and identified with the
dominant discourse.

I was just so excited. I couldn't wait to get my vet jacket and be able to walk around the campus with my vet jacket. I just felt so special that I was finally in... just so relieved as well. I was just so keen. I just wanted to be in on everything... even those courses in pre-vet which we look back and think "what a waste!". They are not a total waste... They take you to different farms and they show you a horse farm and a pig farm cause a lot of people haven't seen that stuff... I'd go to every one... I was very keen on getting everyone going and organizing the class.

The women clearly had varying reactions to their first encounter with the culture of students and faculty of the veterinary college.

6.1.2 Inside the Frat - Gender Equality or Traditional Values?

According to one college administrator, the traditional veterinary fraternity known as the Frat, had once been a major component of veterinary student socialization and may have functioned as an "old boys' network" or elitist group following graduation. Female veterinary medicine students do not have a comparable sorority. Two participants expressed disappointment that the Frat, while co-ed, was divided into male and female sections. Now it attracted few of the students and none of the faculty. Nevertheless, old traditions die hard, and for new students seeking a sense of connection and community, the Frat provided one of the only outlets in the first semester of pre-vet at the time of this study. One participant told me the Frat had given her an advantage in social integration,

I joined the Frat. In the first semester you're not really with your class very much. So
there's a veterinary fraternity and they have a barbecue every year in September to welcome the pre-vets... It was great. I got to meet people in my class. So I joined the Frat in that first semester. I got to know the other students in my class that joined. There were about twenty of us. So then in January when our whole class came together... there was this group of twenty of us that already knew each other and were talking and having fun and sitting together. All these other people didn't have a clue who anyone was cause they were new.

About half the participants I spoke with said that they had initially been interested in joining the Frat and had attended the initiation ceremony. The ceremony was enough to turn some of them off. Of the few who joined, the Frat did not provide an ongoing sense of important relationship over time for many of them although it had initially been helpful. One woman who joined the Frat and belonged for several years told me it had failed to meet her needs as a senior student,

I was in the Frat... You met people from other years... You meet them in the hall. You talk to them. You go out and you get their points of view. They tell you what third year's like, what fourth year's like, and it's a good perspective... what this prof was like and what that prof was like and that course and so forth... There's a lot of social things and community events that they do... I left the Frat. I don't remember when it was, second year or third year... Maybe that was selfish but... when you enter in pre-vet, everybody else is older than you, and you're learning from them. That's fun, and when you tilt toward the other half, the majority are younger than you. I think my tolerance for high jinks and... the stereotypical Frat antics... waned quite a lot.
For another participant, her tolerance for “Frat antics” waned on the night of the initiation.

A lot of food. Let’s put it that way. I’ve never seen more pickles and relish and corn cobs and gunk all over the place. They cover your eyes. They use a maxi pad or something.

It’s not like the initiation that they [O.V.C.] do here for the pre-vets. We do that. Every year pre-vet year gets initiated. First years get initiated, but it’s mild. It’s water balloon games or you slide through this. It’s mild right? But this was just food all around. I mean, I threw my clothes out afterwards . . . They throw, well they pour it on you. I did that for a music initiation but I don’t think it was this bad, cause we were just coated.

After that we went to the barns. Somehow we got into some U-Haul truck, and it wasn’t the kind you could sit in the chairs. It was just a U-Haul truck and they closed the doors.

It was so stuffy and it was completely filled. They drove you to this farm, and there was manure all over the place. It was just eww. I was not impressed. I was not impressed at all! . . . Well I think . . . the whole idea [is] to bring you down and then bring you back up again. I mean the end of it was that they drove you into a parking lot, and you had to run all the way to the Frat and have a shower, coated in this stuff. I mean I don’t know. It’s a bit juvenile. I’m surprised they still do that. I just wasn’t terribly impressed. It might work with some people. It didn’t work with me. The men’s was worse apparently.

From what I heard, they weren’t wearing much for some parts of it. I don’t know. I’m just not too impressed.

Our discussion had taken place roughly when one regiment within the Canadian Armed Forces had been publicized on the news for holding crude team bonding rituals. We speculated that while the need was for community building, the methods might be less than ideal. Besides the
potential legal liability inherent in the above practices. Methods that involve shaming or degradation run the risk of creating trauma for certain individuals and excluding them from a group in which they might otherwise benefit. Another participant, who was a Frat insider expressed the following rationale for exclusionary practices.

*It’s good to have that [initiation] because otherwise you’d have everybody join and we just want the people joining that are going to be fun and would come out to the meetings. They’re going to participate and stuff. Whereas if you get everyone joining, half the people sit at home and study and won’t come to the meetings and won’t participate. So the initiation helps get the type of people that we want that are going to help, have fun, and participate . . . I think there’s about eighty members . . . [of] five hundred people.*

Another participant saw it as a party house,

*The Frat, in my opinion . . . it’s just a big drinking, boozing buddies thing. I’m not really into that type of thing. It’s very groupy to me.*

Most of the participants elected to develop their own connections to the college in other ways, through a formal mentoring program (The Mentor-Buddy Program), through part-time jobs in the veterinary college, and through relationships and work with faculty members. Nevertheless, a minority of students clung to belief in the traditional fraternity that had functioned as an “old-boys network.” Unfortunately, the “old-boy” career advantage did not work as well for a graduate as she had anticipated (see section 6.4.3 Gendered Views of Female Veterinarians - Lesser Equals).
6.1.3 College-based Connections - Programmed and Individual

As previously indicated by one participant, all new students in the pre-vet year were “initiated” by the college itself in a day of harmless fun. They were also assigned to a mentor-buddy program that has been active throughout the years reflected in this study sample. Students from each of the five D.V.M. years were combined in small groups with a faculty member. Groups met at regular intervals to exchange information and experiences. All of the women belonged to a mentor-buddy group; however, not everyone mentioned it as part of their experience. I learned a probable reason for the omission. Some groups provided more positive experiences than others. Factors that created a positive experience revolved around the faculty member’s behaviour and attitudes. For example, whether he or she was deeply invested in a mentoring role and scheduled more than the minimum number of contacts required were mentioned as important. Faculty members, who were committed mentors, appeared to approach the role with enthusiasm. The participant quoted below told me she had a good experience with the program,

*We have mentor-buddy groups, and each student as we come into the school is assigned to a faculty member . . . In that group, you have a pre-vet or two. You have a first year, second year. You have a third year and a fourth year, at least one of each. It’s a great idea. It helps you. It’s a good method of relaying experiences . . . I think they should expand it . . . Dr. [the faculty member] would always go out of his way to come up to us in the hall when he saw us, even when we were in first year, not knowing where we were going and say, “Hi, how are you? How are you doing? How’s your semester? What’s coming up?” He would always send us notes. “We would like to go bowling. Is this*
night good for you?" So at least once a semester we would do something and at least
twice or three times we would have some communication. It's nice to meet people of
other years to give you perspective on what's coming up because at the time it seems so
overwhelming, what you are doing, that you can't imagine. You can't put it in
perspective. So it's nice to have somebody else saying, "Don't worry about it"

Several women were less intent on joining organized activity but instead sought out work
experiences within the college. Part-time work at the college was a valuable way for them to feel
connected but also served to help with finances,

Working at that large animal /hospital/ desk, it's amazing how it works around here. If
you know people, it really helps you. Working at that desk, you're always calling profs,
and you're working with them all the time . . . To tell you the truth, it's been the most
valuable thing here in terms of working with other people just because that way you feel
more part of things too.

Finally, student government offered another way for students to feel connected. Each class had a
representative,

I wasn't a Frat person. I was the president of my class for one year. That really got me
to know quite a bit about class members and how people work together. Working with
the Central Veterinary Student Association, the student government here, . . . [it was] 
scary to see how people worked together sometimes . . . under stress. It's amazing to see
how different people try to get their way. Some people don't compromise at all.

So each type of experience had its own merits depending upon the individual and her perspective.

Cutting through all of the accounts was the need to feel connected and the varied solutions for
doing so through interpersonal contact. All but one or two of the participants succeeded in becoming well connected.

6.1.4 From the Margins - Uncommon Experiences

While it is likely that most of the participants identified with values common to the veterinary college student culture, three women explicitly identified themselves as different. Those three women used the term “mainstream” to call what they perceived the dominant culture. The participants said “mainstream,” meant traditional values regarding animals, gender roles, heterosexual orientation, and Caucasian racial characteristics. The three participants were opposed to the use of live animals for student learning. One of the three women expressed a position of extreme caring for animals. Being distinguished from the dominant student group led to experiences that felt alienating.

In the first instance, a woman who was lesbian and vegan described her position and experience within the student culture:

I was not somebody who wanted to be part of the mainstream gang, something that is supposed to be, to make one look cool... At that point in defining myself as a lesbian, I wasn’t wearing leather... I was very negative with the people in my class... I [was] trying to do the least amount of harm in life in general... to the earth and to other humans, to other nonhuman animals and to myself... I see most of the people there [at O.V.C.] as very mainstream. That’s I mean a blanket term for a lot of things... I guess I see most people in North America as not questioning, just accepting things as they are...
That's not something that I've come to do... That's important to me and I don't ever want to not question things. It's frustrating to be in an environment with people who aren't like oneself I guess... It's not easy to not be mainstream /at the college/... It's pretty white /Caucasian/... It's not easy to not be straight and not be conservative... I knew two other lesbians in my class. One was extremely, extremely closeted...

She told me about one experience with homophobia with violent imagery that had bothered her, A girlfriend I had... during the open house, College Royal (in March annually)... we had walked through O.V.C. looking at the different displays... At some point we were holding hands... I do specifically remember this one guy in my class walking by... and then I heard from a woman in my class... We were talking about something and then got on the topic of homosexuality, and she said "Yeah, there's this one guy in our class." She heard him say, "There's lesbians in this class, and we should shoot them" to some other guy. Well that's probably me he's talking about because it had just been before. In a way, it's harder to be out when you're with the same people all the time.

As this woman's experience shows, entering the college meant joining a small community of students and faculty where eventually everyone becomes known. Being known as lesbian was not acceptable. Holding values and a sexual orientation that differ from what is perceived as dominant and acceptable raises questions within a student's mind. Does she closet her values and perspective or does she risk coming out and expressing who she is? The participant told me that she perceived homophobia in the college culture.

Despite the felt lack of acceptance, she could identify her position of care with a small culture of women within the veterinary community oriented toward animal rights. That small
group fought for change within the veterinary curriculum at the college several years earlier.

Their advocacy had led to the reluctant availability of the "alternative program" through which students could learn their surgical technique in third year,

_They were the ones to fight to have the alternative surgery implemented, and they were the first class to do it. I don't know either of them well. But I have a lot of respect for them . . . I guess I knew them through another community . . . They advertise in the gay and lesbian paper as veterinarians so I guess it's not that big a deal [to reveal to me] . . . I spoke with both of them initially when I was in pre-vets . . . one of them was definitely attacked . . . four years of hell . . . I thought the one was saying it's a very . . . What did she call it? "Old Boys school," as far as the structure, the faculty, everything . . . I think what she means by that is that . . . there is a . . . patriarchal structure . . . Things have been structured for some time and it's hard to change . . . I guess a lot of resistance around changing that surgery program._

Another participant said she had in her past felt weird, as if she did not fit in, despite the fact she was regarded as outstanding by several teachers and professors,

_I'd be damned if I was going to quit for the sake of somebody else and also . . . I enjoyed what we were doing. I loved the courses. I really enjoyed it. It was the people who were in it that I thought were pathetic. It's not the first time that I've struggled against feeling like a freak . . . I opted to go to this french high school which seemed to attract freak types . . . They all tend to be weirdos and unique in their own way . . . individual type of people . . . So as much as I felt like a freak there I knew that I fit in really well because everybody else was a freak . . . I can't remember a time where I ever felt that I wanted to_
The first participant dropped out within the following year while the second participant continued in the program. Both women had to wrestle with coming face to face with a dominant culture of values and attitudes that differed from their own. The second participant shared her ambivalence between wanting versus not wanting to fit it. She did not want to "be like everybody else," yet she labelled her individuality as "weird."

A third participant who also chose the alternate surgery program, nevertheless felt accepted, even able to influence her student peers because of her age and experience.

There is a certain credibility that people give to you just by being older that has caused me to reevaluate the ways I would approach something... I'm learning to respect differences in individuals more than I used to. That has to do with a lot. I realize that people, my younger peers, pay attention to me. I think, "Wow, I don't have anything more important to say than they do or more worthwhile or any words of wisdom but that is associated with me." So it causes me to be more careful about the kinds of things I do say, the kinds of comments I make, or the kinds of behaviours I display.

Thus, within the student culture several diverse perspectives were cited in the stories. Extreme animal rights values, lesbian identification, and feelings of difference were associated with discomfort. Difference due to age, for the last participant was interpreted positively as influential.

6.2 Getting Down to Serious Work - the Program Begins

First year in the D.V.M. program brought the course work that participants had anticipated. The curriculum at the time of this study required intensive memorization of
information that students obtained in lecture format classes. Students were exposed to a range of impressive faculty members, each very knowledgeable in their own domain. As they experienced themselves as learners over time, some women reported a mismatch. Most often cited were issues of practicality, contextual learning and implicit values regarding animals. While the women adjusted to the learning environment, some of them reported more success than others. Yet despite objective success, something was missing which apparently did not make learning a positive experience. There was no time to reflect, or to get personal feedback from professors. There was no contact with animals except as cadavers. They began to settle into routines of living and working, punctuated with little life and little time for self care. In retrospect, several women said that they had been cut off from the rest of the world during the program as it became increasingly intense, year by year.

6.2.1 Adapting to a Way of Learning

The college’s implicit theory about the way to become a veterinarian was embedded in the requirements made of students, in knowledge and skill they were expected to master and in the ways of showing that knowledge. In first year, participants said they were eager to learn, and looking forward to the academic courses. Students expected and received a heavy dose of lecture-based instruction,

*In your first year they start you with just a few [courses] . . . You end up with six and then in the next semester you get seven and then third year or by second year you're into nine classes so you are weaned into it. You really don't realize it's happening and you just accept that at the first year . . . It's like a job. You're here nine to five. You have*
an hour off for lunch and the odd day you get to go earlier . . . But it is busy. It's certainly not very difficult. It's just a lot and not really tedious. It's very basic . . . it's not very basic, but it makes sense what you learn and it's not, most of it's not difficult to understand. I mean some concepts of anaesthesia . . . cardiology . . . working with the heart and maybe drugs . . . most people don't feel it's difficult. It's just a lot of work. You have to go home. You've got to read on . . . You've got to decide, "What am I going to work on tonight?" and really want to prepare a bit for each course. There are so many notes that they give you lecture notes. You just go to classes and follow along with the lecture notes and fill in places . . .

One particularly motivated student spoke about one class and professor she had particularly enjoyed,

In first year, one high point was taking an anatomy course with [name of instructor] . . . He is an anatomist who I got on really well with and absolutely adore his sense of humour. He is just a really neat, neat individual. That was a big highlight really, just being in a course with him. He is from [another country] and has an accent but not strong enough to turn people off . . . But mind you, he probably did turn a lot of people off, because people used to complain about him.

A third participant recalled how she found learning in first year easy and was recognized for her achievement,

The first year I did really well. I was like third or fourth in our class and won an award . . . I didn't find school too hard in first year. I found it really disappointing. This isn't that difficult. I'm not finding it that hard. In first year, you're presented with a whole
bunch of new concepts, and I found it ridiculous that we had to spend this much time . . .
It was a little unreasonable.  I thought some things they had us do were completely
unreasonable, and I guess I was overachieving too much.  I was glad I did well in my first
year because then I didn’t have to do well in all the other years!  [Laughter]

6.2.2 Personal Process in Learning

Most participants described subtle impacts to their sense of self as they moved through the
learning process. They described how they responded to the learning environment and what it felt
like to relate to their peers. One participant explained the basis for student dissatisfaction with
learning in an impersonal context and the self-doubt experienced by herself and others,

The actual course work and doing the exams . . . is not difficult.  It’s what you find out
about yourself and who you are that is the hard part . . . I know for other people . . .
it’s not what they ask us to do.  It’s how we feel about it that’s the most difficult part . . .
Most people, when they make comments about school, it’s not that it’s so hard . . . What
they say is, “It’s so hard.”  But it’s because they’re afraid they’re going to fail . . . It’s
not like they find it a challenge and that they feel a sense of accomplishment . . . It’s not
like after you write an exam and afterwards . . . go, “I really knew that stuff.  I feel
good.”  It’s always the negative part . . . “Oh God, I just hope I don’t fail.  I just hope I
don’t fail . . . I hope they think I’m going to be a good veterinarian.”  There are no
positive little reinforcements . . . because they don’t even . . . know you as an individual
so you don’t get any . . . It’s very impersonal.

One participant who was oriented toward care with her animal rights perspective found her
encounter with the dominant discourse in lectures and texts unbearable. She viewed animals as subjects, as relational others, yet everywhere she looked they were discussed as objects to be controlled,

In first year . . . I'd go into a physiology class, and they'd lecture, or I'd read the physiology text book. I would just wonder at each sentence when it says, "This is the way this is physiologically." I'd wonder how many animals are tortured and killed to get that sentence, to get that little piece of information or . . . in genetics class say, how the animals and their individuality, their being is so, is so removed and so nonexistent. The way that they are discussed, they are discussed as a product. They are discussed as something to alter and enhance for profitability and . . . pigs or beef or dairy and how genetically you can use genetics to manipulate productivity . . . /to get better/ yields . . .

I found it gross. I couldn't accept it. I was very, because at that point I was very anti. That was where I was at with that. I wasn't going to accept any of this. I wasn't even going to try to overlook it or to just listen to it with half an ear and take what I had to take. I couldn't do that. Everything meant something else to me and I analysed everything and that made it very difficult for me to be there . . . I was very angry.

Lectures from the faculty, readings in texts, and conversations among students echoed a traditional objectivist value position with respect to animals. Animals were objects to be studied scientifically, to be manipulated and to be treated by an unbiased, logical veterinarian. To this woman, the discourse had reflected the profession's stance. Her own position was incongruent, and she struggled unsuccessfully to find a way to take it in. Yet the discourse did reflect the perspective often held by farmers who are the clients of veterinarians. Students are challenged
without much reflexive discussion to identify and work within diverse perspectives on animals. When she attempted to use her own subjective voice on her ethics paper, she was failed in the course. She interpreted it as failure because of her position of care. Her instructor had told me he had “given her a hard time” because she was “too emotional and not logical.” That experience was her “last straw” and she withdrew from the program.

6.2.3 Adapting to a Way of Life

Students developed routinized life patterns to fit into the demands of the professional program. Many women lived with other veterinary students who provided both a source of support and the motivation for continued working. I found the work schedules consistent. Students readily admitted that they were in “a sleep deficit” most of the time and paid little attention to nutrition. Women with pets typically went running once or twice daily. Others played hockey on some evenings. One participant described her life and house mates to me,

*Our house, the three of us live in my house, and we’re all from the same class. We would rarely be in bed before one, usually two, on average one or one-thirty . . . [and up at] six usually or six-thirty because we’d have to be at school by eight. But our house, it was funny cause if our house lights, all the lights in our townhouse were always on until about two in the morning. People in the townhouse complex must have thought we were nuts cause we were always up that late at night, always because there was always something to study . . .*

Participants who lived with other vet students spoke about how they edged each other on in excessive working. The woman quoted above was not sure whether or not she would
recommend living with other vet students. Most participants described their classmates as "competitive." In the next quotation, the woman described the contagious process of frantic work,

I wanted to do well, but people are egging you on too for sure. When you see all your other classmates rushing from class to their car so they can go home and study, I mean those are people you sit with every day, you'd better darn well do it too . . . You live with other vet students who are always pushing you . . . TV is forget it . . . even eating . . . We'd eat for 15 minutes and quickly run up to our rooms and do work . . . I think a lot of people here have a competitive edge . . . You have to be a little bit competitive [to gain admission] . . . I know I'm that way. You always want to strive to do better and better. Sometimes you wonder, "Am I going to explode or what?"

This participant told me that her contact with the outside world events simply receded as her reference points became her peers and her courses. She lost a sense of her place in historical time.

I really feel if there was a presidential campaign or something in second year, I have no idea because I never watch TV. I don't get a newspaper. You don't have time to read it.
I don't think that's very healthy. I really don't . . . Why should they [the professional school] care? They're going to get their one hundred students every year. It's just too bad. There's not very well rounded people coming out.

Another participant with a similar living situation, spoke of the growing tension among her house mates as the year progressed,

I had no boyfriend . . . I was living with my roommate . . . and another girl in our class.

We had problems which were very, very stressful by the end of first year because we were
all very good friends . . . [One housemate said], “You guys are ganging up on me.”

We're, “No” . . . We just had a lot of difficulties . . . She was making me feel

defensive/ . . . which doesn't make me react in the best manner . . . Our relationship

with her just disintegrated . . . So we had a lot of more social tensions I found than

academic tensions . . . I found it true of the entire vet school.

Thus despite their access to peers, the women had few opportunities to be relational in the

positive sense of the word. It was difficult to support one another given the stress and limited
time available. It was a culture that shaped everyone to look out for themselves.

6.2.4 Searching for Connection with Animals

Given their early bonds with animals, the women were eager to have contact with animals
early in their veterinary student roles. Some women had found individual ways to have animal
contact; however, I learned that connection to animals in the first two years is with dead animals
in anatomy. This is frustrating for most veterinary students and participants unanimously
recommended earlier contact with animals among their suggestions to the college. One
participant told me about a group of first year students who attempted to gain contact with the
spirits of the animal cadavers in their anatomy lab,

I heard the first years this year [1992 entry; 1997 grads] had a seance in the anatomy

lab. They had a funeral for all the animals that had died. These animals come in.

They're already . . . humane society animals or cases that have come in . . . a cow that

would have been shipped for milk that has come into anatomy instead of it going for meat

. . . So they're already dead when they get them. They don't see the killing, them getting
killed or . . . euthanized . . . One night, they all came into the anatomy lab and they all sat in a big circle. They had a funeral and a seance for all the animals. One lady could hear what [the animals] were saying and she was writing stuff down.

Unfortunately, I did not have contact with anyone from the seance group to understand the meaning of their activity better. Participants emphasized that more animal contact early in the program would improve motivation.

6.3 The Middle Years - the Great Marathon

The toughest period for the women was the middle two years of the veterinary program. The excitement of entry had dissipated for all but one woman. Lecture-based learning was exhausting, overwhelming and unrewarding. It felt like force-feeding and "puking" facts for exams. The process led to indigestion. Some women felt they could not see the connection between what they were learning and eventual practice. Many participants doubted that they could remember it all. The women craved practical experiences, contact with animals, and opportunities for feedback matched to their level of competence. Sometimes they found positive personal experiences through involvement on projects with the faculty. They were removed from the rest of society, sensitive to messages about ideals in the profession, and very much on a treadmill. The repetitive quality to their experience was punctuated by occasional positive events and several very negative events that rippled through the community. Two lives were lost from the community through a student suicide and a faculty member’s sudden death. In a community that did not appear to tolerate affective release, there were several occasions of profound sadness.
The women's energy returned in third year when they engaged in role behaviour resembling that of a veterinarian. They learned to do animal surgery. This experience brought intense emotional distress for some individuals as they wrestled with their moral positions regarding taking animal lives. Some women who took a non-traditional stand by choosing the alternative surgery were harassed by the community for their position.

By the following summer, the students went on externships with practising veterinarians. Women who had good experiences on externship said they had opportunities to try out their skills. They returned to school with enhanced confidence. Some women were prevented from doing surgery or other similar complex tasks. These students returned with a sense of frustration and shame. They hid their failure to use skills as if it were a personal shortcoming, as if they perceived the college environment as critical, unsupportive and unforgiving. Weaknesses or concerns were not easily revealed. From their contact with the outside world of work, the influence of practitioners on the women's sense of self cannot be underestimated.

6.3.1 Force Feeding Learning - Puking Facts

One administrator (Anonymous, 1991) wrote about an approach to learning within the local implicit theory of how to teach a student to be a veterinarian. A metaphor cited was one of binging and puking facts where "little of nutritional value is retained" (p. 3). The participants described it consistently.

*It seems as though they spend a lot of time overwhelming you with stacks of papers to digest and read. So it damps out a lot of the little sparks that you hit along the way.*
*There was a professor we had in first year. He had a real spark for teaching. It was*
infectious. It made you want to learn. He had a way of presenting things that wasn’t dry, but he has since left. You have to memorize the life cycle of a thousand and one parasites. Somebody counted once. I think they came up with three hundred and some that we had to memorize. Who they infected, how they infected, how they passed it on, was it transmitted across the placenta for five species. You had to know in one semester and regurgitate it all in the exam. I don’t like that dry method of teaching. It’s really overwhelming and not satisfying. Even if you did well, it doesn’t feel good. I mean, who cares? You remember the pertinent information, and what you don’t remember, you know where to look up and that’s fine with me. . . . Just the stress of having seven exams in six days. It’s just reams and reams of stuff.

The participants said they wished their courses were placed in context, involved more hands on experience with animals especially, and involved them personally as learners. They reacted to a learning environment out of sync with their needs in individual ways. One woman reported her classmates’ reactions,

Some people are just so glum and, “Why am I here? This is too much work and I don’t know if I want to do this.”

Another participant added,

Well, I’ve heard people say that particularly around the time that we have eight midterms in two weeks, something like, "I had no idea it was going to be like this." Well, I didn’t either, but roll with the punches I guess. What are you going to do?

They wished more animal contact had been available earlier in the program. One course, clinical medicine, in the second half of second year brought them their wish. Here they learned to
do physical exams with animals, to palpate and identify organs. In contrast to their previous learning, this experience was real, involving, and experiential. Given their inexperience, confidence was shaky and in this context they have practical examinations. One woman described an experience where she had felt disempowered but hid her tears from the male examiner. In the quotation below, she described how she felt so discouraged that she tuned out of the interaction and tried to dissociate from her painful experience.

_We had a clinical medicine exam, and we went through the large animal examinations of a horse and a cow and pigs and a small ruminant, a sheep. So we got tested on that, supposedly tested. What they do is they have several different clinicians on [as examiners]. You draw their name out of a hat and . . . well I got one who was supposedly the most ornery fellow around right? Excuse me, but he's normally in horses. He got a cow that day. So I got him and a cow. So I thought, "Cow? Oh not so bad." But him, "Okay, that's all right." I'd been telling people before, "Don't worry if you get him, just psyche yourself out." Just giving out all this advice freely. What happens? I get him! Do I follow my own advice? No! He just unnerved me completely . . . I think the reason, I thought about this, maybe the reason why it did not go so well is because first I had half an hour to sit around and wait for this guy. I normally never do that for any exam. I just get there, don't talk about it, and then go. But everybody was sitting around with was talking about it before. I didn't like that. Secondly was that I suppose his reputation precedes him. So many things, we were talking about the test, the so-called . . . were things we had never covered. When we are taught to do the examination thus far, it's on animals that are normal, that are healthy. So you just go through. You palpate
everything. You feel everything. But you just locate things. You don't have to exactly assess what disease they've got. Well he started going on and on about this one cow that we had seen. She had a displaced . . . compartment of the stomach . . . He was going on and on about how you could percuss this and tell this part. I'm sorry. We didn't learn that yet! I would gladly acknowledge it if we had learned it. But I didn't! So I tried to be positive afterwards. He went on and on hearing himself talk. I said, "Okay so this is what I learned from this. I learned that I have to do this. I have to do that." I was trying to be positive . . . But I don't know, he just kept talking. I just didn't listen anymore. I didn't quite go away. I suppose he got me a little bit. I had a catch in my throat. But I tried not to show that to him right? So I left and had a nice talk with the pigs in the gray barn for a while afterwards . . . very frustrating . . . I knew something. I knew I didn't know, I never expect to know everything. But that's alright. I couldn't demonstrate so that was frustrating.

This account highlights the anxiety felt in an examination where the participant felt overwhelmed by the knowledge base of an expert practising clinician contrasted with her own limited knowledge base. She felt she knew something but could not show him. She felt overpowered by what he knew and incompetent in his presence. The examination did not allow her to experience herself as knowing. From her description he might have thought he was sharing knowledge and may not have been trying to demean her intentionally. Without any prior relationship, neither spoke about intentions nor feelings.
6.3.2 What's A Life Worth? - Losses Within the Community

While perhaps not part of the usual experience of becoming a veterinarian, death emerged for these students in several ways. In second year for some participants and in third year for most others, two lives were lost from the community. A second year male student ended his life by jumping over Niagara Falls, and a favorite faculty member died suddenly in his office from heart failure. Two years earlier a female intern had suicided in the small animal clinic. In some stories, it was as if suicide was presented as a normative part of the veterinary experience.

While discussing stress in the program and the prevalence of emotional distress in the profession, one participant said,

*I wouldn't be surprised in ten years to read . . . that such and such /name of a veterinarian/ has committed suicide. There is that too every year . . . There was a fellow here . . . in a year below us . . . He jumped over Niagara Falls . . . I don't know. I guess he was going through, he just broke up with his girlfriend. They were in the midst of their second year . . . But in my first year, a veterinarian committed suicide down in the small animal clinic . . . She was an intern . . . So it's not uncommon. Pretty scary, but we've had talks . . . About once a year or twice a year, we have people come in and say, “Okay guys if you need any help . . . if you need anything . . .”*

A classmate who was close to the male student provided a perspective on her connected, affectionate bond with the student. She described his death as “the biggest pit” in her experience. Her attempt to find a reason for the suicide highlighted the male student’s strong relational orientation.

*I loved [him]. He was a great teddy bear, a really good friend. We used to hug and
wrestle in the halls. That [suicide] just hit me like a brick wall . . . completely unexpectedly . . . really blew the wind out of my sails . . . I'm not really sure if that's gone just yet [over one year later] . . . That semester was probably my poorest . . . A lot of people in our class did miss a lot of class . . . One woman in our class who split up with him. He "needed her, needed her" . . . Retrospectively . . . he had attempted suicide on a couple of occasions prior to that . . . There was definitely something there.

She engaged in some very constructive acts to work through and make meaning of the event for herself and in retrospect thought that he had been quite dependent on his girlfriend. She told me that she rejects people who are dependent upon her and how she had been hurt at fourteen by a friend who had attempted suicide.

All I could say to her was, "How could you do that to me?". . . I felt angry and it destroyed our relationship . . . Now we see each other at a distance . . . So I was torn over [his suicide] . . . I was not as close to him . . . But why he did it, you wonder. He had the world at his feet. You can almost write your ticket when you're done [veterinary college] . . . So I mean, I've probably come up with 1001 different reasons why he did it and none of them will have anything to do with it . . . I can see . . . in this vet school, I'm sure loads of people have thought about it . . . But whether I'd think that suicide would be an option . . . Since [he] has done it, it's become my last . . . differential option which until that time had never been an option . . . had never crossed my mind. Since him it does, and if only for that, I'm bitter.

She traced her feelings about what happened through her experience in relationships and came to a position where she felt the event had transformed her. Now in her own experience, suicide had
emerged as an option. She thinks it has likely transformed the experiences of others in the class as well.

When the faculty member died suddenly, it was similarly unsettling for the community. One student provided a perspective on his death in the quotation below.

*He was the head of our Biochemical/Biomedical Department and he was an extremely nice man, very friendly, and I really liked him. When he died, it was very, very, very emotional and really horrible . . . Everyone in our class knew him quite well and the whole school was very upset. It was a very emotionally charged time. His memorial service was really emotional. Everybody was crying. You could tell that he was a very well liked man and that people really cared about him.*

Several other women mentioned his death in their interviews. One of them told me he had been a mentor whose opinion and encouragement had meant a lot to her. There was broad community participation at memorial events with considerable expression of emotion.

6.3.3 Taking a Stand in Surgery Class - What's An Animal's Life Worth?

A focal point for much of the data I gathered about experiences in veterinary college was the year long surgery class in third year. It was the lightening rod for many issues, most notably personal moral position with respect to animal lives. Traditional veterinary training treated animals as objects to be used for human purposes (medical research, food production, companionship, or the training of veterinary students). Unwanted or discarded animals were used for student learning of surgical procedure. Animals were obtained from the Humane Society or were research animals no longer “untreated” and therefore useless for group experimental designs.
Over the year, each small group of three students would typically use fifteen animals, usually dogs and sheep. Each year, for a class of one hundred students, roughly four hundred and ninety-five animals would be used. Using the animals involved caring for them (feeding and exercising) for the weeks before surgery, anaesthetizing and conducting surgery, providing postoperative aftercare, euthanizing, and dissecting.

Recently, as mentioned earlier, some students with strong value positions concerning animal rights lobbied to learn their techniques in an “alternative” way, using cadavers, animal models and so forth so that animals’ lives be spared. Proponents of the alternative position have argued for the relativism of beliefs that only live animals could be used, for example, that live animals are not used in the training of veterinary students in the UK. While alternative supporters won the right to learn in a different way, the response from the dominant perspective has been intense. Resistance has been evident in verbal criticism by both faculty and students, in demands upon students who choose the alternative that seem ambiguous, more extensive, and yet never quite attainable. Students were not encouraged to choose the alternative approach, and each year during this study, out of roughly one hundred students only two or three percent appeared to do so. Courage was needed to hold a minority value position in the presence of so much cultural pressure.

Students declared their surgery preference by the end of second year and I suspect that not everyone was clear on their own value position by then. Recall that of the sample, only two women mentioned thinking about their orientation to animals in adolescence. From what I could tell, it was the curriculum demand to declare a surgery preference that stimulated some reflexivity. The culture told them how they should feel and limited opportunity for discussion. Showing
evidence of a moral and ethical dilemma, one woman, a fourth year student said,

*Who are we to gauge what an animal's life is worth? Our class is the first one that brought up that issue. It raises a lot of feelings when your friends or you really question yourself. "Am I doing something wrong here by doing what I've wanted to do?"

*Another participant found herself swayed by the dominant position. She later wished she had chosen the alternative position just as surgery course began, but did not want to abandon the other two members of her surgical group. Her allegiance to her group won out over her animal values. In the quotation below she described her decision. Unlike the other women in the study, she had not yet taken the surgery course.

*I had chosen to do the traditional technique, mostly because I thought I needed to get a feel for the real thing, make the real mistakes, before I get out there [in practice]. But now that I think about it, now that I've heard about it, I would have easily gone the other alternative surgery pattern as well. It's just I committed myself to a group. I couldn't do that to them. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter which way I do it. I understand completely why the option is available because some people feel very strongly about

"why should I hurt something else for the sake of my betterment?" What's better? The other advantage of doing the alternative is that you can separate the two things. You can separate anaesthesia from surgery and concentrate purely on surgery. Whereas doing the two combined together is very stressful, apparently, but you get a feel for the whole thing. Eventually [students in] the alternative program get to do a real live surgery but on humane shelter animals. So it's not like they never get to do it, but my family background is such that animals were pets - not members of the family in the sense that
they were . . . like a sixth or seventh child. As much as I love them, they were never thought of that way. So I understand the need for use of animals in research and learning. So I don’t have a problem with that.

She drew upon her experience in her family, the family position with respect to animals, to inform her choice.

Another participant, who had chosen the traditional program, told me of the defensive strategies she used to avoid feeling attachment for surgery animals. Choosing unattractive animals was one strategy. Sheep, she felt were harder to get attached to than were dogs. In the end, she adopted one surgery dog that closely resembled the family pet and it was a baby.

A lot of them are beagles cause they’re laboratory animals . . . They are bred for research. They’ve been through some type of research . . . and on the last time they cut their hair for one final surgery . . . The dog I adopted was a puppy when we got it and I thought, “A puppy, poor thing.” We had a whole batch of puppies come in and usually we’ve had five year old dogs . . . They all had their baby teeth. I thought, “Oh, this is too sad” . . . So we did a splenectomy and removed her spleen and so she can live without a spleen. That’s not a problem. So I really considered it and I, my parents have always had beagles. I wanted to get a dog when I graduated and I thought, “Well, I’ll get one now.” So I ended up adopting her and I’ve had her just for under a year now. So they do give you the option if you do want to adopt them and if they think they’re a suitable pet and you’re a suitable owner . . . So I’m very happy with her. She’s great.

A woman who had chosen the alternative program watched her classmates with great interest. She gave me her impressions of the emotional challenge for students within the
traditional program. I had challenged her to be specific about her observations and she responded with rich detail. She perceived emotional strain and defensiveness among some classmates who chose the traditional surgery route, but led me to believe that the topic is difficult to bring up.

*It’s a cause of a great deal of emotional stress for third year students whether they admit it or not, and it becomes very apparent as the year goes on. At the beginning of the year, everyone is all fired up because it’s pretty exciting to learn how to do surgery. But then the reality of having to kill an animal that you’ve looked after and nurtured for three weeks becomes apparent. I think it’s pretty difficult. Almost every conversation I had with any one of my classmates, the subject of their surgery animals came up out of the blue. They’d start talking about what wonderful surgery it was and how much they’re learning from it. It sounded so much to me like they were trying so hard to justify this in themselves. It just seemed, “Gee, you’re trying to convince yourself pretty hard,” is what it seemed to me. This year, you witness it. There’s tears. There’s depression. One animal accidentally died during surgery due to a complication of the anaesthetic. The girl in whose group the animal was, was so upset. I would have been that upset if my pet of fourteen years had died, but she was devastated by this. There is a great deal of guilt that’s associated with that as I perceive it. There will be affection and attention lavished on these animals, and they’re going to be killed in three weeks. It’s not addressed at all (within the O.V.C. program) and I think there’s a great perception that there is a certain amount of mental toughness and this is part of it. Get used to it! If I had cared for this animal - they’re fed and watered and walked for three weeks - that’s a long time and then they have to kill them and then they have to cut them up. Maybe you can perceive that*
there are inconsistencies. It's not appropriate for an animal for which you've developed an emotional attachment, I think anyway. So that's the data, just conversations and just seeing how upset and depressed people get when that becomes due. It's very, it's very touchy.

The alternative surgery route involved initial skill development with cadavers and models. Only later during final year rotations, do these students engage in live surgery under the supervision of clinicians. The risk perceived by some antagonists is that these alternative surgery students are operating on the animals of clients, not discarded pound animals. An error with a costly racehorse, for example, was perceived to be a possible consequence. In reality, I did not hear of any "error" made by an alternatively trained student.

Until recently, taking the alternative position did not ensure freedom from emotional distress. While the inner conflict of killing an animal was avoided, the dominant discourse of the school culture created a form of harassment. One woman watched her friend in the alternative program endure the barrage of criticism and the lack of systemic support. Continually she heard opinions in the college that students trained in the alternative route were inferior, inadequate, and less skilled than others. Having ambiguous or hard to attain program requirements created enormous psychological strain.

My roommate⁵ last year used to come home crying at night. She was trying to organize things, trying to get cases done, and the cases - two of them have to be cows and cows never get euthanized. To be part of it . . . you have to be struck by lightning . . . She

⁵ I suspect this is one participant who was nominated for this research yet did not volunteer. Some of her classmates said she doubts she will ever practice veterinary medicine.
used to come home crying... not just once but on numerous occasions because of harassments not only from her classmates who thought that she was ill-prepared and incompetent but from faculty and staff as well... she'd done something wrong, or they had expected more of her... Then again, it was never outlined to her what it was she was to know and what it was she was supposed to do... When you're in second year, they strongly discourage going into the alternative program.

Another participant who supported the traditional program described how she coped in the quotation below.

*Surgery was amazing. I hope they never change that. A lot of people want to. I'm sure you've heard of the alternate surgery program and I don't know. I have mixed feelings about that. I can totally understand how it seems futile to go into veterinary medicine and serve animals, and yet you're using them for your own purposes and euthanizing them. But I think those purposes are pretty valuable... You get attached to them... That goes without saying. I have pictures of every surgery dog we had. We always tried to take pictures of them with us, and aw, it's. But we got a lot of them they say were going to be euthanized anyway. They were pound dogs. I don't know if that makes it right... One semester we did sheep. It was a lot easier to euthanize a sheep. It was just a large animal thing, a large animal attitude... [Large animals are] part of someone's wellbeing, part of life, in terms of making money.*

This woman drew a distinction between small and large animals, mentioned her own cat and dog at home and the emotions involved in those animal-human relationships. She thought the emotions of owners would be hard to deal with.
In our conversations, I explored the women’s perspectives on animal lives, positions of animals within families, the lengths and expense that one might go to save an animal. Questions such as these raised ethical issues. One participant said of my questions,

*These are tough ones. Around here it’s not something that you talk about... Well I mean, you talk about it, but in order to give your full view. That’s why I end up mmmmm [sitting on the fence], because I don’t know. I can see other people’s points too.*

Thus the women knew that the culture did not allow them the space to talk about certain types of thoughts or feelings. Certain types of responses appeared desirable and other types of responses were punished by the community. Thus powerful social forces were active to shape the thoughts and feelings of all but a very few of the women. The resisters had to endure incredible pressure.

### 6.3.4 Learning from Practitioners - You Trust Me, I Begin to Trust Myself

By the summer of third year, the women had completed considerable course work including their clinical medicine and surgery. They were ready for some supervised practice outside the college through a ten-week externship that has been previously studied by Patterson (1991). Finding a practice site was simple for some participants and difficult for others. One woman expected externship site selection to be competitive like other aspects of the program.

*I like competition but I don’t like animosity. Healthy competition is good, but when people aren’t there to help you strive for your goals... I don’t like that too much.*

*Right now, what’s going on in our class is people are starting to go through the*
externship applications . . . when you have to find somebody to go out and work with for ten weeks. There are only so many practices. There are people who went way ahead of time and picked out whatever practice they wanted. [They] are not back stabbing, but the potential for it [is there]. . . I don’t like that at all . . . since we’re all going to go out there doing the same thing. Maybe that’s just a very naive, altruistic view of things.

Another perspective on the same issue from a woman who arranged her externship early did not suggest competitive intent. She had to have some accommodation because of her personal circumstances.

I’m going to practice in a large animal practice, a rural practice . . . for probably eight weeks and then I’ll go to a small animal practice for three or four . . . It was very easy [to set up] . . . I set it up in the town where I’m from . . . I just went out with the person. I liked them. They liked me enough that we were able to . . . It could have been a bind because of arrangements I had to make, but no, it worked out very well. It’s the kind of practice I want to be involved with. I’m really looking forward to it.

Most participants valued the externship because they were exposed to veterinary practice. They could observe and participate in a wide range of experiences, including the handling of animal death with a client. One participant described her experience with a veterinarian who recognized the importance of a human-animal bond in the life of an elderly woman,

At the clinic I was at this summer, they send out sympathy cards when they have an animal die . . . The veterinarian cares and takes time to write on the card . . . taking the time to be with, spending the time out of a busy schedule. The vet this summer, had one lady that was just obsessed with her dog. The dog had a carcinoma, which is cancer, on
it's tongue. He must have done surgery on this dog about seven times. He'd taken as much . . . out and then it would grow back. Then he would take more . . . and finally, this dog didn't have a tongue. She had to feed it with, and this woman couldn't let go. I just visited the clinic two weeks ago and she finally had decided to euthanize the dog and he [the vet] spent so much time with her. He drove to her house and he picked her and the dog up. He brought them to the clinic, and they sat in a room. She's very weird. She lit all the candles, and they sat on the floor on this mat. They ate cheesies . . . I think far beyond the duty of vet medicine, but they sat there. They talked about the dog and he listened to her. . . . Just that care and compassion that goes far beyond what he needed to do or what he was required to do . . . They just euthanized the dog the other day. They opened the freezer to show me the dog because, the dogs get put in the freezer when they're dead before they go to the humane society, they had to wrap the dog in a blanket. They had taken such care and compassion for this particular dog. Most of the time, they're put into a plastic bag and into the freezer they go and then off to the humane society, to be incinerated at the humane society when they pick them up. But this dog, they put it in a nice big quilt and it was in the freezer and it was all curled up. It looked so nice and they didn't even have it in a bag . . . She said, "Put it in the quilt cause I want it to keep warm." . . . They just went right along with it. They didn't laugh at her. They didn't say, "Well that's ridiculous," or they didn't refuse to do anything. They did everything for her. She's not married. She doesn't have a family.

Revealed in her account of the experience is a juxta positioning of objective treatment of an animal and empathic consideration of a suffering human. The participant admired the
veterinarian’s sensitive handling of a human response that she perceived as out of the ordinary.

She could understand the relational role that the companion animal had played in the woman client’s life and so the corresponding difficulty with the loss of the animal. The veterinarian showed, through his actions, far more than the science of veterinary medicine. What was conveyed was perhaps the art and moral position of a practitioner in individual lives and relationships. “Art” is not taught in the veterinary program but must be absorbed by students through apprenticeship roles. Ethics are discussed before the students have practical experiences in the veterinarian’s role and possibly before they have had a chance to wrestle with real life issues.

Modelling of care by practitioners, leaves its mark, an impression, which may later guide practice. One participant had quite a bit to say about the important and influential roles played by externship practitioners. In the quotation below, she described how several of her friends encountered gender-based discrimination and felt too ashamed to “write it up” on their evaluation forms,

_You’re working one-on-one with a practitioner. . . They can totally turn you off, or they can put you on. They have a lot of power those externship people. The school should choose them wisely, but whether they do I don’t know. . . It just seems like such a formative time. . . the first real exposure to practical and how you’re going to be and how you’re going to practice and what drugs you’re going to use and everything. . . After you’re done [the externship]. . . you’re supposed to fill out a form saying what you’ve liked and what you haven’t. . . [Some women] weren’t allowed to do as much because the vet didn’t think they’d be strong enough. . . Some people left their externships_
because they weren't having a good time... and they weren't writing it up. There's
people here at our school that haven't done basic procedures yet because the practice...
... wouldn't let them... They've already had their surgery course... but they may have
been the anaesthetist that day.

What she described were variable externship experiences that disadvantaged some of her
classmates. They would be graduating without ever having had the opportunity to test their skill
with basic procedures, yet they were also too ashamed to report it.

Another report of gender discrimination occurred in a practice where a woman had
worked without incident for several summers. In fact, the owners were quite pleased with her and
suggested that she work for them when she graduated. Later, when she followed up, and
happened to mention that she would be getting married, the original offer was withdrawn.

They said, "You should really think about coming back here when you graduate. There's
always room and we want to expand." Then last summer, when I got engaged... and I
told them, it was sure different. They said, "Oh well, you're getting married... I don't
know if we're going to have anything for you to do... When are you going to be having
kids?". I don't know. I felt like saying, "I thought we had this understanding," but
everything worked out. It was just an adjustment period.

Apart from the experiences in veterinary practices, one participant reported behaviour she
perceived as gender discrimination in the college itself. Unfortunately, my tape recording had
ended when she revealed her experience and I had to rely on notes rather than direct quotes. She
told me that she believed that she had been offered assistance with tasks that she had felt capable
of performing. She thought that others perceived her physical size as an indication that she was
less strong or capable. Another woman of larger build denied any experience of gender-based discrimination at the college. Thus, the nature of the discrimination mentioned related to perceived physical weakness, marital, and parental status. Those three domains influenced perception that the women would be unable to carry out certain tasks.

On externship, provided they could use their skills and not just observe, most women felt increased sense of confidence and self-efficacy in veterinarian work. Presumably in the one-to-one context, practitioners provided some type of feedback related to the students’ performance, answered questions, and discussed issues. When practitioners gave them responsibility for tasks, the women experienced responsibility as trust in their competence and verification of their skills. As they experienced the trust that another invested in them, they began to trust themselves. They returned to the college for their final year and felt quickly placed back into roles of incompetents by the non affirming context.

6.4 Final Year - Transition to Life

In the last year of the D.V.M. everything changed. It was an entirely different experience. Lectures were over and students took their places in the hierarchy of clinical workers, doing rotations within the small or large animal hospitals. They studied and wrote their board licensing exam in December and if they passed, as everyone in final year in this study did, they were deemed competent halfway through the year to practice veterinary medicine. Conferring of the D.V.M. degree did not occur until graduation in May, so they could not introduce themselves as “doctors.” This apparent contradiction was mirrored in the college context. Despite their board certification, the context did not allow them the responsibility to act within the scope of their
competence.

Beyond their incomplete status within the profession, the impersonal climate of the college had created a felt sense of limited competence. Despite their academic achievements and clinical skill training over the past four years, some women felt that the college as an entity did not trust them. An unintegrated and developmentally mismatched learning and evaluation design had provided no image of their increasing skill. Hadn’t their instructors followed and noted everything they had learned and accomplished? The women felt frustrated, hampered, and filled with self-doubt about the extent of their ability. With a new transition looming ahead, the women began to feel anxious. Although, they could stop worrying about test performance when they left school, suddenly a new fear emerged. Did they know anything? What would clients think of them? Did they have the interpersonal credibility to present themselves as veterinarians?

The women reflected on the messages they had heard about how to practice veterinary medicine and juggle marriage and family. They defined the balancing of family and work for themselves. Clearly the profession did not have a formula for combining career and family. Work and care remained as contradictory domains, consistent with a traditional male model. As they would attempt to integrate those life roles, gender discrimination would occur for some women in the workplace ahead. They had heard stories about it from friends.

In casting their gaze backward to reflect on the professional education process, the women told me about their high points and low points. I encouraged them to speak their minds and give me suggestions for the college. They valued many experiences they had, especially the opportunities to work with mentors who cared about and respected them. Being recognized and affirmed for the self they wanted to be was prized. Low points were the interpersonal opposites
namely, being battered rather than supported, being poorly understood, and having to contend continually with a climate of competitiveness with peers vying for attention from faculty-clinicians.

Conventional reality in all its everyday forms began to seep into the lifeworld as they prepared for their exit. Participants could go to bed at ten if they wished. They could watch popular T.V. shows. They could pick up a journal article and read it only if they were interested in it. They could begin to look outward and think about their complex lives that had been on hold for so long. Some women were getting married. Others wanted to travel. Some students did not know what they wanted to do. Faced with freedom to choose, they felt strangely immobilized by the transition ahead. The external determinants that had been guiding their every move were falling away. It was time to search for and locate their own voices once again.

6.4.1 Lost Confidence, Immobility, and Hierarchy

Whereas most of the women, through experiencing themselves as active agents during the externship, felt a surge of confidence about their own competence as veterinarians, when they returned to school in the fall, they were students again. The final year women spoke of losing confidence in the transition from the externship to the full year of clinical rotations. During final year, they engaged in clinical rotations in the veterinary college teaching hospitals with a new set of faculty who did not know them. One participant described the experience quite clearly,

*The externship . . . where we go off into a practice . . . depending on what they allow you to do, you're doing surgeries, you're neutering animals, running tests. You're almost there . . . You're suddenly let loose and you finally get a chance to test your wings. It's
the first time that you’ve ever had to try to put things together and to see how much you know. You really surprise yourself, “Gosh I’m better at that than I thought I was . . . I remembered more than I thought I would . . . Isn’t that neat. I figured that case out.” Then you get back [to the college] and suddenly they close the doors on you again. [On] our surgery rotation, we don’t even have a scalpel blade in our hand . . . We’re watching or we’re doing patient care and records and there’s nothing more frustrating knowing that we have some ability and yet they don’t trust us with it yet. I think to myself, “You are proposing to send us out into the world to do this, and yet you won’t allow us to try . . . Do you not think we’re capable? If you don’t think we’re capable, what do you think it’s going to be like when we’re out in the real world?” That’s the message that they send to us.

Participants spot the contradictions, on the one hand feeling capable, yet not provided with responsible roles. Getting praise for tasks beneath their skill level brought out frustration in one woman. In the quotation below she described how out of sync the evaluation process in final year was with students’ experience and competence.

I knew how to keep them happy. You just write your reports. You have everything written down. You have everything done on time. You be really organized. They are, “Oh you are doing so well!” We were talking. It’s like being back in kindergarten. I expect to get a little gold star on my report, my records, or something. [laughter] Can we have nap time now? You really feel after a while “this is crazy” and especially now because you think, “I’m going to be a veterinarian in two weeks. You’re still judging me on how well I write my records up.” It’s like it doesn’t really matter how well I write them up as
Another woman thought some expectations on clinical rotations were well beyond reasonable in other ways.

_There's a few rotations here where they really push you . . . When you get an evaluation at the end . . . they say, "You didn't put enough time into this," when you're there from 7:00 in the morning until 10:00 at night. I don't know what else they want. It's crazy._

_There's some parts that are really insane._

The limitations of the student role were clear. Every graduating woman described experiences that reinforced a self image of not knowing and of questionable competence. Few participants recognized that the restrictions were related to contextual factors: the college was liable for medical practice; the hierarchy related to roles of interns and residents within a teaching hospital; and the faculty-clinicians were new to them. The rotations varied in the extent to which students felt restricted. The women stated that the small animal rotations were most controlled.

Structurally, the women experienced being at the bottom in a hierarchy. In the quotation below, the participant explained the nature of the hierarchy. Here is a response, which is more charitable than many others, where the woman described how she was not even deemed able to trim the nails and vaccinate a companion animal. She was about to graduate with her D.V.M. in less than one week, had a job waiting, and was already board certified,

_/Having responsibility/ . . . it's a good way of illuminating what you individually have to develop, what, where your weaknesses are, where your strengths are . . . Through fourth year, you're very detached from any case responsibility aside from getting the blood sample down to the lab. . . . There is such a hierarchy here . . . The interns want more_
responsibility. The residents want more responsibility . . . The interns are graduated veterinarians . . . The residents have completed that year of internship . . . I'm not trying to belittle us, but I can empathize with their side of it, in the sense that they are responsible for that level of care . . . But it would be nice if we could have it . . . It's funny. It's my last week [in school] and . . . local clients . . . coming in for a nail trim and a vaccination and we couldn't do that. We'd have to have the intern come in and examine the animal. I'm going out into practice Monday and it will be 180 degrees from what was expected here.

Only one woman who acknowledged the hierarchy said it did not bother her. She had a close friendship with a female faculty member. All the other graduating women acknowledged the hierarchy.

The clinical hierarchy was composed of the clinician-faculty members, the residents, the interns, technicians and D.V.M. students in descending order. As lowest members in the hierarchy, students on rotations were not permitted decisional responsibility even with respect to innocuous interventions. They were expected to follow a chain of command, to seek direction from people more senior than themselves, even when they knew how to act. One woman felt she was so used to not thinking for herself and feeling disempowered that when she found herself with an animal's life in her hands, she did not act to save it. Instead, she felt immobilized by indecision, accustomed to passivity, and uncertain regarding the appropriate course of action. She was glad that she had a job waiting for her because she doubted she could present herself competently in an interview.

I am very thankful . . . I did not have to go to a [job] interview and try to sell myself and
say, "Look I'm worth this much money. I can't hit a vein yet, but I'm worth . . ."

They've done a real good job of damaging our egos, humbling us, making us realize that we don't know anything at all, that most of us have reached the point where we don't even try. This year while working in ICU, there was an animal that had this problem of air bubbling up in its chest. It would have to be drained off with a chest drain. She was improving, and she was the sweetest, most wonderful dog. They took her chest drain out because they felt . . . she was going to be okay. A class mate, technician, and I were on late night ICU duty and . . . I knew something was wrong. Her tongue was turning blue and then . . . she started retching and gasping over a period of about 45 minutes. She got worse . . . went into cardiac arrest and died. We called the surgeon in. . . . We started CPR . . . I believe we took all the necessary steps . . . But I still will always look back and think to myself, "I knew at that time . . . It could have been as simple as me sticking a little needle in its chest." But /I/ didn't do it . . . We didn't know as students what responsibility we do have . . . This is the first time that I've ever felt personally responsible, that I could have changed the outcome . . . and I felt it to the deep pit of my toes.

She said that was one of her worst experiences in the whole D.V.M. program. She believed that the first three years of passive learning in lectures plus constant criticism and the hierarchy structure in clinical work left her with little decision-making freedom. As a result, she thought she had failed to act when she had known what to do. She felt overwhelming guilt that the dog had died on account of her immobility.

All of the graduating women reported concerns about self-confidence as veterinarians.
Their self-doubt related to having had a professional educational experience that emphasized knowing "correct" information but neglected their needs as learners. For example, they had not had enough graded exposures to skill development, feedback that was encouraging rather than critical, or involvements with less developed students to see how far they had come. They were surrounded only by highly competent experts. As a result, the women lacked reference points through which to experience their own technical competency.

Themes related to lack of confidence are found in expressions of lost voice and inactive mind typical of students who were in final year. They said they had given up trying to problem solve. One woman revealed the unfamiliarity of her own decision-making and lost voice,

_We haven't heard that [own voice] yet . . . We haven't heard ourselves [saying], "I would like this test, that test." . . . When they say, "Well you're in practice, what would you do?" We go, "Uh, uh." We're not used to giving that command yet and it's an odd, odd feeling. If somebody looks to you and says, "Well, what do you want to give him?"

"Uh, that's my decision? Okay, uh" . . . That's very odd._

Another participant told me how she did not bother to think anymore, when faced with questions on rotation. She knew the faculty-clinician had already figured out "the answer" and she could passively wait to hear the result. During the interview, we saw it as a type of mental laziness or inactive mind.

_This morning, I'm on one of our busy rotations . . . I was in this morning checking my animal and the clinician comes in and asks me all these questions. They're so focused. My mind never seems to be quite with them and so I bring up a few major points. They go, "What else, what else?" I don't know what you're asking me! . . . It is going to be_
good to go out and do your own thing instead . . . You let your mind go where it goes
and figure things out instead of. I find with so many people, all the time, that you have to
check with and everything . . . The clinician . . . They have their plans . . . They nail you
on what they think you should do that they've already thought of. So you never get to.
It's always, it's almost you get to the point where you're lackadaisical . . . You figure,
"Well, there's no point in really thinking about this because . . . they're going to think of
all these . . . It's really bad because you're not forced to figure anything out for
yourself. . . . A lot of people work better - you need some stress . . . There are good
stresses. You need the stress of a client saying, "What's going on?" "Well I can't tell
you any ways. I'm not allowed to say anything. So I have to go and ask the clinician."
So there's no point in even thinking about it.

She contrasted her immediate experience with being out in practice on the externship over the
summer where
they let you use your own mind and figure things out for yourself and tell clients that . . .
That's why I think in the summers you're more confident.

Thus, the women could see it, the relationship between using their own voice, mind, having
responsibility or trust and their felt sense of confidence and competence. Being given
responsibility functioned as validation of competence in the women's minds that they used to infer
their own sense of themselves.

6.4.2 Images of Veterinarians - Combining Work and Care

Despite their frustrations, as they were preparing to leave the college and head out into
practice, I sensed that all of the women were satisfied to have become veterinarians. Overall, they felt it was a good occupation for many reasons. Here is one summary where a participant stressed the versatility of the career,

*I wanted to work with people and animals in a dynamic way to make a difference...*

*They really do encourage that you get agricultural experience... because there is a shortage of large animal veterinarians right now... I want to do large animals predominantly... Veterinary medicine is good. You can really do whatever you want. If you never want to go outside, you don’t have to. If you never want to go inside, you don’t have to. If you don’t want to do anything but crunch numbers, you don’t have to.*

Most of the women thought it was an especially good occupation for women because women fit the image of the “good vet.” Nevertheless, they were struggling with the challenge of wanting to be good and wanting to be mothers. The messages they had heard portrayed an image that one could be good only if veterinary medicine was top priority.

*I have never personally felt limited by the fact that I am female... I think the profession lends itself quite easily to females... Maybe this is relying on stereotypy, but it requires a lot of nurturing, a lot of patience, a lot of empathy. I haven’t figured out quite yet how I’m going to have three kids and still have a career to come back to and be good... I think that’s going to be tough, but there are a lot of people who now practice part-time and a lot of practices have four or five part-time women. That’s the way the issue is dealt with.*

As the participant in the last quotation said, nurturance at work fits, but juggling marriage and family is still an open question. Traditional discourse about the ideal veterinarian conflicts with
having a family orientation.

All the women said that they got the impression from the college and even some women classmates, that "you should devote your life to this" as life role of priority and that everything else should be secondary.

*There is all this talk about women becoming more advanced and more professional...*

That’s fine if they want to do that. I want to be a good vet as well as anyone else but for me, I think the family is really important. Sometimes I feel it’s not really right to feel that way... So many women are terribly aggressive. They want to own their own practice... That’s fine, but I have always wanted to get married and have kids. I would really like to work part-time when my kids are growing up so I can see them. Around here that’s frowned upon... even among women colleagues... I changed my last name and did I ever get flack for that... It’s amazing the feathers that go up when you talk about this... Even some of my good friends [say], "I can’t understand how you would want to be a traditional woman." I want to work too, but I want to have kids. I want them to think that they had a life with their mom... I know it’s going to be difficult... It just really seems that women don’t do that anymore. ... You should take your kids to daycare. You should strive to be all you can be. I don’t know what’s wrong with being a good veterinarian and a good mother, not an excellent veterinarian and who are my kids?

Traditional discourse about the profession suggested that partners and family take second place in the life of a successful professional. In the quotation below, the participant cited an apparently well-known characteristic about the profession, relationship difficulty.
There's a lot of jokes around here that being married and being a vet don't go hand in hand. There's such a high divorce rate . . . We had some equine, horse vets come in and talk to us and they said, "I don't know what it is about new grads. They think that they should have time off to spend with their family and they should have weekends off and all this . . . Who do you guys think you are? I know when I first graduated, we . . . " Anyway, he said, "Mind you, I have gone through three marriages, but vet medicine is my top priority" . . . Why does it have to be that way? . . . Now there's emergency clinics so there's not so much on call . . . But if you're in a rural clinic, there is no such thing. The last couple of years here, I have really found that they, not brainwash, but they really push you to think that your time should be spent totally on this.

The women clearly expected to sort out their own individual solutions related to their future life plans. The struggle for individuals is between satisfying desires for family and challenging beliefs that one is incompetent for doing so. I was fortunate to live through a real time drama, in one participant's case, where she appeared to do just that. When I first met her, she had just received two job offers and had to decide between them. At our second interview, she had decided and gave her reasons why she opted, despite messages to push herself further, to take a job in a neighbourhood practice.

I am at the point of deciding which way I'd like to go. They are quite diametrically opposed practices . . . One is a very successful practitioner and her focus is predominantly orthopaedic . . . She has lots of toys, surgical and endoscopy . . . It would be great experience but it would be very consuming . . . It would make for a 12-13 hour day. The other place, . . . the hours are not as long. . . . I'm sure they practice
good medicine but they tend to refer more of their surgeries. They don't do a lot of the
more difficult ones . . . I would have a life outside of it . . . I almost think it's the easy
way out and I don't know. I'm struggling with that . . . [Interview 2] . . . I decided . . . I
went and spent Saturday morning there and felt very comfortable and felt that I could
easily approach them and say, "I don't have a clue. What is this? Can you help me
out?" . . . Initially this one was, I thought, the easy way out but I mean there's more to
life than work and I don't think it would be fair when [fiancé] got back [from professional
school] and to be away for 12-13 hours a day. It is not fair and I want to enjoy life too .
. . I don't think I've compromised my standards at all . . . I am very comfortable with it.

6.4.3 Gendered Views of Female Veterinarians - Lesser Equals

The participants sensed that women's experiences within the profession may be different
from traditional male experiences and I learned of some public discussion primarily related to
strategies for planning pregnancies and work schedules. Pregnancy and family life were "adverse
events" for which the professional veterinarian required strategies. For example,

I have not noticed it until this year . . . We've had a lot of dinners being sponsored by the
drug companies . . . as advertising for them and they've had speakers and very often
they're women . . . It's just personal experience . . . They give you advice on how to be a
woman practitioner . . . which is pretty strange [they do not give males advice].

Heroes in the culture were several women who managed to have babies and return to
school within a couple of weeks. This emphasis clearly placed the maternal-infant bond in a
secondary position.
Despite some participants' perception that women were not limited in any way, other women had begun to have encounters with gender discrimination as previously mentioned. It had surfaced primarily in workplace settings and the women's awareness was growing. Administrators of the veterinary college have known that some women have encountered workplace discrimination and apparently they try to sensitize students and encourage reporting on externship. One woman said she first became aware of discrimination in the profession when she was interviewed for admission to the college. Her interview team apparently sought to explore her awareness and strategies for managing discrimination,

_in my [admission] interview they said, "How would you deal with it if a male farmer wasn't used to woman veterinarians being there?"... That was my first exposure [to discriminatory attitudes] and over and over again you see it. There's two of my friends... while looking for jobs... have already had experiences of being discriminated against. 

. . . It's pretty scary. I've had encounters with farmers, but I can't really blame them. They've never had any exposure... But even the vets themselves. I just couldn't believe it that veterinarians were discriminating... I thought these people were professionals...

. We've all been treated as equals here... encouraged to do whatever you want... My one friend was... just shocked. It was her first exposure to discrimination. Her words were, "Why didn't someone prepare me for this?"

I could sense this participant struggling with the best way to prepare oneself for experiences of discrimination. There were no easy answers because to prepare might have eroded self-confidence and yet not to prepare also undermines self-confidence.

_/In managing gender discrimination in the workplace/... I mean they haven't_/prepared
I don't know how they do either. Maybe it's like me, coming into vet school and not knowing that you should be intimidated. Maybe it should be that way... that you just go for it and you just try. People can't hold your hand through everything.

The veterinary college has awareness of gender discrimination; however, it was unclear what steps were being taken to support students. From the quotation above, it would appear to rest primarily on students' shoulders and be another instance of "mental toughness." The woman described potential support as "hand holding" which has a negative connotation. The women are prepared to turn to one another for support and strategy; however, echoing Sharon's observations, one woman commented that women mentors in work settings may not have powerful roles,

*There's one woman [in the practice where I'm going] but she doesn't have, she doesn't own part of the clinic. She is just a hired employee.*

Unexpectedly, given the duration of this research, I obtained a spontaneous report of gender discrimination from my pilot participant who had graduated in 1994. She responded to my follow-up and member-check, two years after our original interview. She had believed in the "old boys" Frat network and was hired at graduation in a "Frat buddy" mixed practice (combination of large and small animal). Two years later, she had just taken a new job in a small animal practice. She outlined her experience in a written note to me,

*I was being taken advantage of... the thing that REALLY makes me MAD is the discrimination that goes on in this profession! They hired a classmate of mine to replace me. They are paying him $15,000 MORE than what I was getting! He has NO more experience than me... I was better qualified... they bought him his OWN NEW van...*
meanwhile the past two years I have had to suffer . . . and had to wait for them to bring
the van back so I could go home for the nite! . . . I am very bitter . . . I feel that if I were a
guy this would NEVER have happened to me (Emphasis in original).

This was the participant, whose grade six project predicted her future, whom I considered the
most positive and enthusiastic by far, and who never, as an O.V.C. student complained or
expressed concerns about discrimination. She is bitter and angry. In her view, she had gone out
of her way to do extra tasks to make the clinic a welcoming environment, yet her efforts
apparently went unnoticed. Practice shifts such as she has done merely reinforce a view that
women are not inclined to work with large animals where future veterinarians are needed.

6.4.4 Looking Backward - Highs and Lows

For the participants who were on their way out of the college program, I wanted to
provide an opportunity to look back and appraise the experience. I wanted them to have the
opportunity to speak out, to identify the highs and lows. I wanted to look for patterns. This
section sketches two broad themes in the overall D.V.M. experience by clustering the positive,
memorable high points and the negative, discouraging low points.

The high points involved: practical experiences in veterinary medicine, mentoring by
caring faculty, involvement in the college, flexibility and prestige of the school. The low points
involved: the marathon in a negative learning culture, critical impersonal faculty, and competitive
peers. I expand on each of these subthemes in the sections that follow. All of the themes involve
the interactional or relational aspects of the experience.

Of the high points, and given their interest in animals, gaining practical experience with
animals was important. The women valued the practical experiences offered at the college and in veterinary practices,

That summer between second and third years made a heck of a difference. I’d recommend that to anyone. Instead of going and getting a factory job and getting paid $10 an hour, go to the vet clinic and work for free. It makes such a difference . . . it makes everything a lot more fun and just so much more practical . . . That was a lesson for me. I needed to get out of my desk and wanted to see it [veterinary medicine in action].

One woman said she was surprised that the program was not practical.

I thought . . . it would be more practical than it was. It was very “in class,” very lectures . . . all the time . . . Now I understand why they were doing it because now we’ve had the practical experience to apply to . . . But at the time, I had no idea what a lot of the stuff was related to . . . Anaesthesia . . . was the worst. I just totally did not understand . . . You have to understand the major concept . . . So I think they should have more practical things . . . “Let’s go down and watch [clinicians] put a dog under anaesthesia,” so you understand what these machines are.

Practical experiences also involved project work with faculty members. This was also valued.

The year before or I guess two years before I got in, I used to volunteer . . . and one day a veterinarian came up to me, I guess she had seen me coming in there. She asked, she said, "I have noticed that you come in every day." She said, "Do you mind walking one of my research dogs for me?" And I just thought, "Wow. This is great. Someone noticed that I’ve been in here." That was nice.
As the quotation above shows, practical involvement often brought interpersonal attention and recognition which was validating for the woman.

Two other women emphasized the importance of recognition from their faculty mentors, who also provided sources of involvement. In the quotation below, the woman explained how being treated with respect by a mentor contributed to her sense of self-worth as a veterinarian,

*A man . . . who has been a good friend but extremely influential for me . . . the only faculty member that I have been close to . . . He certainly not only encouraged me but has given me a great sense of self-worth . . . He's quite brilliant and his praise means a lot to me . . . He's been very good to me in a lot of ways. I have worked for him. He's written recommendations. But it seems mutual because he respects my opinion . . . includes me in things that mean something to him professionally.*

Noteworthy in this last account is the sense that there is exchange of ideas in the relationship. The mentor is listening and speaking. He appears to take her seriously and notices her opinions.

Noting the similarity between the early roles played by parents in supporting the women's development and the mentors described in present lifeworlds, I probed for more understanding. What phenomenon made the mentoring so valuable as a high point in their journey? This next quotation from one woman, contains her response to my question. As she struggled to define what had been important about her mentor, she focused first on behavioural similarities (bike riding); however, that activity was not the essence. Ultimately, his empathic recognition and validation of the self she was trying to emulate had touched her deeply. Her reflexive nature allowed her to get close to this important experience. Being recognized for what was inside her, being noticed and validated was so powerful for this woman.
Okay... why I respect this individual? I'm not really sure. He is outstanding at what he does - does great research. As a lecturer and as a prof, he is boring. He is not fun to listen to at all but to speak to him, his past experience... He used to race bicycles... It's because I ride a bike too and ride in with him sometimes. Maybe that's why. I had him write a reference letter for me... and said, "Sorry I'm late. I desperately need this, please, please, please. Could you write this?"... I popped around on Friday morning to pick this up and he was, "Oh, that was done Wednesday night. You could have been here long ago." I just thought, "Ah, for me to mean that much to you that you could do it at such short notice,"... and the content of the evaluation was, even to the reference of me being an organized individual, which at that instance, at other times yes I seem to appear quite well organized. But at that particular instant, I wasn't. For him to overlook that and say well most of the time... and just to have made an assessment of me of somebody that I would like to be. I actively try to be like the individual he wrote the reference about. Whether that's what he sees I am or whether he knew that's what I wanted to hear. But he hit me bang on, just what I... am attempting to be. Not that I am acting it, but just that I feel it. You feel you want to be a good person... I mean a lot of people can write reference letters. They're not a big deal but being able to come out and pick up on those things. To say them... is something that... I mean nobody ever tells you that you are nice, or that they like you, you know. For him to come right out and say... I mean I cried when I read it. I was touched when I read it. He was just, "Well, what else could I put?" So that's just an instance of that individual.

Like the previous participant, this woman was recognized for what was inside her too, her desire
to become part of the community and to belong as a veterinarian. The two accounts suggest that empathic understanding by a mentor of students' needs to belong and to be validated may be a powerful way that mentoring relationships operate intersubjectively. Providing a "good enough" environment, which is attuned to the individual may facilitate the developmental process of becoming. In contrast, an administrator who was described by one woman as "the most sympathetic person you could ever want to listen to you" was nevertheless unable to empathize or connect with the participant with extreme animal rights views. Obviously there needed to be a match between mentor and mentee perspectives sufficient for empathic understanding to occur.

The notion of empathic response was also apparent in qualities of the responsive social environment. Most participants spoke highly of the college, the accommodating nature of administrators, the opportunities for learning, and the professional expertise,

*They are very accommodating here [re going part-time due to stress or other issues]*

One woman said there was more contact and support from administrators in the beginning than in the end of the D.V.M. process.

*Those guys [administrators responsible for student advising] seem to be there more when we were in first and second year and as the years go by, I don't even know when the last time I saw [an academic counsellor]. In the first and second year, he used to come into our class often. In fourth year, it's really hard to get everybody together so you're just more on your own. But over the years, they just drifted out . . . There's always students that just won't [go and confide]. I still think that if a student were to go, to fall between the cracks here, they just would. There's nothing.*

Two women mentioned their regard for the opportunities they had experienced at the
college. In the first quotation below, the woman made a summary statement about her experience,

_As a last note, all in all, the program was pretty good and I have no regrets having spent the last few years here. The friendships, the contacts and the good stuff we learned and saw, . . . Really, I'm glad I was privileged to be a part of it._

The other woman, still in second year at the time, educated me about different veterinary colleges in North America, stressing some positive aspects of O.V.C. She radiated pride regarding her school.

_Here they have very good specialty departments like ophthalmology, neurology so specialties wise, they're really good here at O.V.C. . . . I had a chance to go to Atlantic Veterinary College (A.V.C.) in January for student conference which is good fun . . . Their facilities are very beautiful there because they've only been built since 1987-88 but their client caseload is much smaller. You realize what a luxury it is here, to be here with that. It's a real privilege to be able to see that much . . . It's just the clientele isn't as, they're on the island. They have to ship by ferry or by freight. They're just a little more confined that the caseload is not as large. Whereas here, you're fine. You have to drive a lot but centralized with a large population. I had a chance to go to Cornell last summer too and to see what kinds of things that they have there. They're huge, just huge. I mean caseloads, the research facilities are phenomenal compared to here. I mean here is good but there is A-I right? But you still see what we have at O.V.C. and I'm still very proud of what we've got._

Another woman was more critical of the college but placed her comments and experiences
in a historical context of where the college was.

The program itself . . . I have some very profound criticisms of it. Although overall . . . if we were drawing it on a graph, has been all the way up for me. It doesn't mean to say that I've been always happy and contented in the program all the time I've been here. I think that O.V.C. at the moment, and this is just the way I think, is between a rock and a hard place. They are trying to abandon the more traditional pedagogical forms of education and moving towards a new . . . philosophy of education . . . the idea of problem-based learning. The idea of moving away from factual learning to teaching us to be critical thinkers and being able to access information without having to store that information in our short-term memory and regurgitate it and not addressing our problem-solving skills or ability to evaluate critically . . . The school does not want, certain members of the school do not want, it's trying to move in that direction. But it's a lot of baggage that comes with 100 years of teaching one way. I think that particularly my classmates the four five years that I've been here were between a rock and a hard place.

Not all of the students perceived the broader historical social context. They focused primarily on their own experience. One woman told me, “A lot of it is a blur.” She felt certain that she would recover some memories eventually and that they would mostly be positive, that she would forget the negative. Although I heard second hand of a casualty or two, over half of participants felt all right about their marathon.

The lows, on the other hand, were empathic failures in the college environment. The first subtheme involved the marathon experience in a negative learning culture. Two women said they
would not do it again if they understood in retrospect what they now know. One woman was particularly adamant that she could never do it again if fate somehow made it necessary. It was such an ordeal that she could never see herself repeating it.

*Not after everything I went through. I don't think it would be any different if I went to medical school though. I'd never ever redo it again. I'd never go back. If somebody told me that, "Tomorrow you have to go back to first year." I wouldn't. I'd be a plumber. I'd do something else.*

As a group the women were critical of certain aspects of the lived experience, extreme requirements, and a negative interpersonal climate that offered little support or encouragement and failed to consider their experience as learners.

*A lot of the things they do here are dumb. They don't really make a whole lot of sense but you have to do it in order to become a veterinarian. You have to get used to not getting any sleep and not eating properly because that's how it's going to be . . . I know I was in sleep deficit for four years but not as bad as other people.*

Another participant said,

*I believe the institution, its focus should be more on students . . . We are what makes up the walls and the cement. They should put more pride in us. They should make us shine. They should build us to be representatives of that institution in the fact that we will be leaving them and we should be clearly representatives of their university and be a product of what they've created rather than what we all feel right now which is resentment, wanting to get away. Well I shouldn't say all of us. You look back and you enjoyed your years there, but I don't feel a connection. I don't feel an alma mater.*
don't feel like I went to O.V.C. which is the best vet school in Canada. I don't feel that. I
don't know if I'm alone in that. I was quite proud to say that I went to the University of
Guelph when I did my Bachelor of Science. "I go to Guelph and it's a really great
university. It's wonderful." I don't feel that same way coming out of O.V.C. because I
feel like they've battered on us too much. They've made us feel the bottom of the totem
pole for so long that that's just the way that you feel. You just want to get away from
there.

Learning as battering was one metaphor that emerged in the stories that is on par with the “puking
facts” image described by the administrator. This metaphor is more interpersonal and speaks
more of trauma to the spirit, than vomiting imagery suggests. Yet for many participants the
volume demanded was excessive, material for which they still could not see the relevance by
graduation time.

A lot of the things we learned, I don't know when I'm ever going to look at those notes
again. I know there's a reason for telling us what every enzyme is but . . . it would be
better if it were more practical . . . But I'm a more practical person. There's people in
my class that want to do research . . . There's so much now that we have to learn
compared to what they learned 25 years ago that I don't know how they can expect to
cram it into four years . . . I'm glad I went through how it was . . . It worked out well for
me.

The battering described to me also sounded socially based as empathic failure.

Intimidation was one word frequently used. The woman quoted below described the critical
nature of the interpersonal environment and how intimidation was experienced.
Looking back on it now and knowing what I know now, I probably wouldn't have done it because this place is intimidating. You get intimidated by exams, by profs. Before I came here, when I was in high school, I just thought, "I'm just going to go to Guelph. I'm going to apply and I'm going to get in. I'm going to do vet school"... I got accepted. So really, it was simple. But then you hear of people who applied seven times. I'm glad I didn't know that before because it would have discouraged me... They push you hard here... They probably need to. There's a lot we need to learn.

From relationships with faculty, I argue that students were seeking connection and validation to meet developmental needs for empathic response. Although some faculty members were undoubtedly trying to encourage students, validation based on marks alone was experienced as alienating for most of the class. Competition also was fuelled by faculty inadvertently when individual attention was limited in other ways, by emphasis on marks as often the only source of response,

But they always, every time we get an exam back, "Oh somebody got this [mark]! Way to go! Good job! Five people got over 80, isn't that just amazing!" It's just. They very much reward you for that sort of thing, very much. As long as there are exams, there's marks, there's a scale. You are either on the scale somewhere and the program tends to choose people that are academically stimulated somehow so you're obviously going for that sort of thing. My partner [not in veterinary medicine] just thinks it's hilarious because he's never really been into that thing. I say to him, "Look what I got on this rotation!" and he says, "Oh, what does that mean?". It's [he doesn't buy into the same values]. It's good. [He disconnects her from it].
Virtually everyone complained about the competitive peer culture in which they had spent their daily lives. While informants and the women themselves viewed competitiveness as a trait of the individual students, these stories suggest that competitiveness was socially constructed by students’ developmental needs for validation and the absence of mirroring responses in the learning environment. Several women and I discussed their perceptions of what was at the core of the extremely competitive environment in which they lived. We reviewed their experiences with competitive class mates. My understanding of the experience pointed to a dynamic relationship between needs for recognition from selfobjects for normal development of self, absence of sources of recognition for everyone, and craving for the meagre opportunities to be noticed within the impersonal group culture.

One participant who was less competitive than others and spoke of how distressing it was to be among competitive peers. This woman herself wondered if competitive peers were not trying to be “known” by the clinicians. She suggested the interpretation to me while giving specific examples,

Certain things like where only a few people can be on it, like class council is one. People get competitive about that. “I’ve done this. I’ve done that. What have you done?” I guess the big thing is “how much studying do you do? How much studying have you done? How long did you study last night? How much did you study for this exam?”. There’s some very direct people in our class too. I’ve never been with a group of people like I have in vet school . . . They all sit together and nitter natter at each other about what they’ve done and what they’re going to do this summer. The clinicians know them too. Then it’s “clinician suck up.” “Dr. such and such said to me.” “Oh yeah, well he
said this to me.” You hear it a lot. It’s pretty funny. I think if you didn’t go to school here, it would be quite funny. People are competitive with their experience, “I’ve done this, have you?” . . . I don’t know how many times I’ve heard this year “I’m going on this rotation next week.” Then I would say, “Oh great, that’s really good.” “Yeah, well you only think that because you’re interested in cows so the clinicians treat you better!” I’ve always wondered about what do they want? We’re all going to leave here and we’re all going to have our D.V.M., so I don’t know what it is to tell you the truth. Maybe it is not fame, but just to be known by them, by clinicians. It’s always there, always, always, “your records aren’t long enough. Look how long mine are!” always, “you left the exam 20 minutes before I did. How long did you study?” Leave me alone, ah!

I began to link phenomena of craving attention, longing to be noticed, being unnoticed, and seeing classmates receiving attention as underlying and intensifying competitive behaviour.

Unfortunately, I did not develop the hunches until data collection was finished. Therefore, I suggest there may be an interrelationship among developmental needs for validation, personal processes of sensitivity to perceived inequity, vigilance to spot inequity, and competitive behaviour aimed at gaining recognition from the faculty.

The women believed that many veterinary students would leave the D.V.M. program with a competitive style, as a way of relating to others. As something they learned along with veterinary medicine, they viewed it as a negative feature of professional behaviour. It was another instance of relational difficulty.

We were talking about how sad it is that veterinarians can’t get together even for food safety. We can’t. We’re always trying to beat each other, and trying to have an in.
Competitiveness is opposite to the interpersonal skills required of vets in the future. We talked about global shifts in most fields toward collaboration and working in teams or groups. Fostering the skills within the D.V.M. is crucial to interpersonal success in the working world; however, such skills would only seem possible to cultivate within a community that supports students and offers them adequate opportunity for contact and inclusion. It is likely unreasonable to expect that students will develop such skills unless they are also modelled with them throughout professional education. One participant included these ideas in the following quotation.

The way the profession is going, I don't think you can work as an island any more. It's impossible because of overhead and it's impossible because you don't have all the experience. So you'd better know how to use your resources, or how to use the people that are available. That's the group again.

One woman explained how cooperation was possible, when niches are separately defined,

My roommate and I get along exceptionally well. We each have our own little niche. Marks wise I don't even bother competing because she leaves me in the dust. So I don't think there is any need for competing because we will both do our different things. We're both trying to get through. We share books and things like that. But between myself and some other people - you can make friends and you can make acquaintances. There are some people that I consider acquaintances just because the way we deal with each other is competition, "I won't give you this if..."

Thus the highs and lows of their D.V.M. experience were opposite sides of the same interpersonal coin. Being validated and encouraged mirrored the women's developmental needs.

Failing to receive feedback, receiving criticism, or fighting for opportunities with competitive
classmates left the women frustrated and dissatisfied.

6.4.5 Getting My Life Back - Reality Hits

Some features in the transitional experiences of participants who were leaving were different from the preceding years. One feature involved returning to normalcy. All of the exiting women noticed they had their lives back.

After boards /licencing exams/ it all hung out . . . You watch Seinfeld, ER and make supper, sleep, go to bed at eleven. We were talking about that last night. How funny it’s been. Since January, it’s been totally, totally different. It’s been like a normal university student . . . wow. It’s been good. You just read up for what you have to do the next day.

. . . No one’s really getting uptight . . . We all have jobs. We passed our boards. It’s over really.

Coincident with the recognition that life was becoming normal was the awareness that the structure of the program was receding as a container for their experiences. Transition from school generated anxiety and, for some women, a loss of sense of direction. One woman who seemed to have clear plans for herself ahead said about the school-to-work transition,

Even the most confident person in our class is stepping into something new and inherently that’s got to give everybody a few butterflies. I think that if you don’t have butterflies then you’re probably not too well grounded.

Regardless of preparation, a major transition brings anxiety along with demands for adjustment just as it had when they started university.

Another woman described the same phenomenon,
I think everyone's felt this way this semester ending. They feel like "oh my gosh" because everyone, especially the people in this program, they usually know what they're going to be doing all the time. So whereas now, it's "whoa" /the opposite/ . . . It's just been bizarre that it's just ending and everyone is "oh what am I doing?" You just feel uneasy.

Despite the women's criticisms, the old structure of school was familiar and predictable. With the falling away of the structure around them, three women told me they were feeling fearful about the expectations their clients would have of them. In the past, professors judged their worth. Now it would be people in the real world. While the structure had prevented them from acting and been frustrating, it also protected them from feeling overwhelmed by responsibility,

It's scary. It's frightening. It's scary in the sense that I mean I've been in university for 10 years now and now finally I don't have someone testing me in that sense. Now it's a test of the person I'm standing in front of that's going to test my integrity or my knowledge or my skill. That's scarier than any professor there is. Mrs. Jones standing there with her cat wondering if you can do the job. That to me is truly more frightening and there is no way we're going to have all the answers and that the first time out is like starting kindergarten all over again. It's exciting at the same time because you're finally out there in the real world. But not being able to say, "Well I'll go ask the doctor" because you are now /laughter/. There's no one to ask. Well there is. I mean you have your resources and your text books and your people around you all the time, but ultimately now you're supposed to have the answers. So that's scary.

The women had been students for so many years. It was such a familiar role. Leaving school meant stepping with a sense of finality into adulthood and neglected psychosocial issues.
Their goals of becoming veterinarians had been attained. Now what? So as they stood alone, they confronted themselves with “what do I really know?”

Shaking up of the lifeworld is characteristic of psychological transitions. Together we cast our gaze to the future, to new lifeworlds both known and unknown. I probed for the women to think of sources of support during this next period of uncertainty. Several women mentioned their mothers. The quotation below was one woman’s idea of how her mother would help her.

My mom will be a big help . . . Mom and I are very close. She understands where I’m going and she’s a professional too and she’s managed to do it.

Half the women had serious relationships and thought that their partners would be supportive. Four women had jobs already. Two women were not sure of plans and thought a temporary position would be good.

One woman described a few classmates who might not practice after achieving their D.V.M. degree.

There’s a couple of people in my class. Now that they’re done, they say, “I don’t want to be a vet” . . . They think they might go into research or something.

At the end of a very long journey was a breath of air, some celebrations, and goodbyes to friends. A significant segment of the story had ended but it also signalled the beginning of another chapter, another story symbolized by spreading their wings and soaring out into the world. One woman spoke of her new lifeworld,

I know the place. I know the people. I know the city. So I’m very comfortable but I don’t want to settle there. It’s not a bad city but I don’t want to live and die in the same city I was born in. There’s just too much world out there. So he [vet employer] knows
that. I was quite thrilled that he would take on a new graduate knowing that I'm only
going to be there for less than a year. It's a big job to train a new grad and all of that
work is for someone else basically. But I think it's always been personal both for me and
for him. He's always said, "Hurry up and graduate. We need you!". So it's just
completing that top of the ladder.

Another woman believed there would be no surprises since she had understood the
occupation well all along,

I've known what the lifestyle was like. It's just very exciting. I'm really looking forward
to starting work. I'm not looking forward to the first month or first week because I think
that will be scary but once I get out there and get established, I think it will be a lot of
fun. I'll really enjoy it.

Another woman thought her life would still be busy and structured yet contain room for
other things as well,

I keep saying to myself, "I think I'll have more time" and maybe not have more time.

But it's more structured time once you're out, more set hours as opposed to coming home
and having all this extra stuff to do.

Despite the opening and freedom, three or four women were having difficulty recognizing
what they had done as an achievement, as a marker in their lives. Some of these academically
talented young women did not recognize the extent of their own accomplishment. In the
quotation below, one woman gives the impression that anyone could have done what they did,

You feel a bit better once you get away from O.V.C. You don't always have to worry and
then you get a few positive reinforcements, because we don't get a lot of positive
reinforcement. You feel it was expected of you and almost anyone can do it. It's hard.

They say, "You did a good job" and then a lot of the time we don't take the compliment.

It's, "Oh yeah." You don't personally feel that you accomplished anything so you're not going to take the credit. I'm, "It's no big deal."

Such was the impact of a cloistered life within a high talent culture, their voices of adolescent strength strangely missing.

REFLECTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This final data chapter, more lengthy and complex than the previous two, reflected the most immediate experience of the women. Taken together, the themes reflect the process of entering, participating in, and leaving a professional education community. Thus, the process captures two transitions, the first being entry to a competitive professional program, and the second being entry into adult life. The second transition was much more complex since it involved not only a shift to another context, but more importantly, to new life roles from the singular life role of a student. Discerning the relationship between external structure and motivation is possible. For example, before entry to professional school, the women needed to find extraordinary motivation from within to master the competitive application process. Once accepted, they allowed themselves to be motivated by the demands of the program and the influence of their peers. They had become voluntarily receptive to the socializing effect of the context because it provided the path to their desired goal. They had little time to think and in the end, gave up thinking because they had limited options for independent action. On the transition out of school, they became aware of the lessening impact of the structure and their own newly
gained role. Their earlier stories had not included a plot for the life beyond. Thus, in some cases, the women felt uncertain about the future. Now the power of self-definition again rested with them.

The data were presented within four broad themes, each depicting one phase of the professional education process. The first theme dealt with newcomer issues of becoming oriented to a new context, finding connections through relationships or involvements, and drawing comparisons between oneself and peers. Two women with animal rights values or lesbian orientation reported experiences of not belonging. One woman dropped out and the other adjusted to the culture. A third older than average woman felt different yet respected by her peers. The college did not seem to recognize diverse needs for integration within the culture through the types of interventions which were reported.

The second broad theme portrayed the day-to-day experience as students settling into the information intense, lecture-based curriculum. The information overload portrayed is a well-known problem with which North American veterinary medicine programs are grappling. Old style teaching methods have become outdated as knowledge within the discipline has proliferated. Lecture-based learning and memorization simply cannot keep pace with knowledge production. Veterinary medicine schools are seeking new paradigms for teaching and learning as was illustrated. The data illustrate the difficulties experienced by students when old paradigms persist.

As the women experienced themselves as learners, they craved things that were missing: feedback, validation, concrete experiences with animals, contextual learning, opportunities for personal reflection and discussion about their feelings about animals and professional issues. The structure of the experience demanded self-neglect, whether manifested through sleep deprivation,
nutritional neglect, or lack of enough social interaction and personal relationships. Lengthy time devoted to learning and study did not seem to produce enough intrinsic satisfaction. Instead, studying was extrinsically motivated defensive behaviour to ward off painful feelings like failing.

The third broad theme was depicted as a marathon since it captured a time when the women were no longer excited about what they were doing. Like exhausted runners, they still had miles to go with the endpoint not clearly visible against the horizon. Fortunately, just as some of them felt they could go no further, they received an injection of motivation through involvements with animals. Courses such as clinical medicine, junior surgery and the ten-week externship with practising veterinarians appeared to rejuvenate them and reminded them of the purpose behind their efforts. With action came perceptions of moral concern. A minority of students identified with animal rights and chose to learn surgery in an alternative format. This format had only recently been created through the efforts of activist students. Participants in this study had many opportunities to experience loss through death in their lab animals, pets, and through two human losses. They lived through some emotionally intense times and had developed an appreciation of their own reactions. Through externship experiences, they had opportunities to put their knowledge into action. They discovered that they were competent and that they had learned some professional skill after all. The externship developed confidence, similar to their experiences as adolescents. Trust expressed through the granting of professional responsibility was the medium through which the women began to trust themselves. Two women and their friends encountered gender discrimination in the workplace. They felt shocked, disempowered, and ashamed. With the perception of limited opportunities for supportive discussion in the college, discrimination appeared to be an issue that the women would need to
address amongst themselves.

The fourth broad theme dealt with the final year experience that was unique. Not only did the women return to school with enhanced confidence, but they had finished with lecture-based learning. Final year involved rotations in large and small animal practice through teaching hospitals, punctuated in December by the writing of their board certification exam. All of the graduating women had passed the exam. Their perspective on the final year was mixed. Many expressed frustration about losing their confidence when they began the college rotations. Because of a hierarchy of decision-making responsibility, the women were relegated to a level well below their actual competence. They found the hierarchy frustrating and sensed their confidence disappearing. Anxieties related to the major transition ahead likely also undermined confidence, so as they approached graduation, most women reported feeling uneasy and uncertain.

In looking back over their experience, the women mentioned high points such as excellent facilities, learning opportunities, and affirmation by mentors. Low points identified included feeling battered by too much work and constant criticism, feeling seldom supported and poorly understood in a climate of competitive peers constantly vying for attention. Both high and low points reflected empathic successes or failures in the social environment. The women heard clearly some traditional views about the profession, namely that successful vets make work their top priority. None of the women said they did not want a partner or family, and four women expressed a desire for equal emphasis on work and family. Since combining work and family was not yet normative for the profession, the women thought they would sort out their own individual solutions. I learned of emergency clinics that now offer opportunities for shorter working hours.
These practices are only available in heavily populated cities, not in rural locations. They told me of hiring practices that appeared to discriminate against women by relegating them to lower status roles.

In this study, competitiveness had its roots in the educational practices both in undergraduate sciences and in the veterinary program rather than in the personality traits of students. Fostering more collaborative relationships that the woman said they wanted, might be contingent upon redesign of the educational experience to include the developmental needs of learners along with skill development.

For the women graduating, it was a strange feeling to be released from the structure of professional education. To be able to watch TV, or read only what you wanted was like feeling “normal” again. So much of life had been on hold. How would they structure their time? Despite the uncertainty, the graduating women looked forward to being free from expectations. They now had time to reclaim their voices as narrators of their own lives.
This dissertation explored the experiences of ten women becoming veterinarians at Ontario Veterinary College. The career stories spanned five contexts of family, adolescent work, university, professional school, and work experiences with veterinarians. By adopting a perspective of relational self, attention was placed on key attachment experiences and interpersonal influences in the career development process. Common to each context was a repetitive relationship between validation from self-objects and growth versus invalidation and lost voice. The metaphor of the relational self highlights the role of empathy and the presence of others in the career development process. In the sections below, I discuss and integrate the themes that emerged in each context. This concluding chapter summarizes the women's journeys and connects them with divergent strands of relevant literature. From several vantage points I raise implications and hypotheses for future research and theory building. On a practical level, I draw upon the emergent knowledge to inform systemic and individual interventions within the contexts of family, school, and workplace. Next, I draw upon reflection of my own learning in the context of my own profession. A final section describes limitations of this study and connects themes to my own personal learning.

7.1 The Role of Family and Childhood Experiences

7.1.1 Parents

For most women in this study, the journey began in childhood with key involvements from their mothers and companion animal pets. Their choice was an outgrowth of an affectionate bond
with animals, supported by mothers and later fathers in a variety of ways. Their choice was also influenced by the women’s appreciation of parents’ careers and frustrated aspirations. This study provides some evidence of identification with parental work activities but also fails to support a direct imitation or social learning perspective. Some of the women lacked exposure to veterinarians. Therefore their career expression was in some ways similar to parents, yet also creatively unique, combining their interests in animals with parental investment in science or medicine. It appeared to be a creative autonomous resolution of affection for animals and valuing of parental science or medical achievement. In two anomalous cases, only parental academic achievement or the child-animal bond was primary.

In the stories told by the women I found many examples of empathic response from selfobjects. Some parents mirrored or “retold” the career choice story, while others acted on the child’s perceived interests and obtained pets. Other parents provided access to relevant experiences or firmly directed the daughter’s actions into experiences that would support attainment of the career goal. In the stories, most parents provided the type of support needed at critical times, whether emotional or instrumental.

In contrast, there were instances in the stories of empathic failures by selfobjects. In several stories, parents failed to perceive the daughter’s wishes and attempted to impose their own. Yet the women conveyed images of their own strength in resisting influence while simultaneously maintaining relationship with their parents. I found examples of the continuing desire for relationship and involvement with parents as selfobjects. The women spoke about their future life roles as mothers and wives as well as professionals using mother as reference point. The continuity between mothers’ lives and daughters’ lives played out in a variety of ways,
through career patterning, through career choice, through ongoing validation, or through completion of mother's unfinished achievement.

Some women said their fathers had played important roles in their journeys. These fathers seemed to convey a belief of their daughter's ability and strength. They provided instrumental opportunities for their daughters to develop confidence and they provided encouragement and emotional support when their daughters expressed doubt. Fathers who were featured less prominently in the stories were described as controlling or invalidating.

The information shared by the women also pointed to the high level of educational attainment and possibly affluence of the parents. Only a few of the women seemed to have emerged from backgrounds of poverty and deprivation. The stories suggested that not only had the women experienced support directly from their parents, they had also benefited from their parents' knowledge of higher education, professional fields, and competitive practices. Parents had the knowledge from their own experience to provide buffers for their daughters.

Exceptions to the advantaged family theme in one case involved parental abandonment, low educational and career attainment by surrogates, and experiences of sexual abuse. These experiences seemed to create vulnerabilities related to absence of what was provided for the other women. Her story did not include parental protection from harm, modelling by parents, understanding and validation about higher education experiences. From a relational attachment perspective, the lack of secure home base from which to explore herself and the world seemed to be linked to learned helplessness and passivity in the presence of abuse later on. This lack of early response from selfobjects seemed to affect her agency or competence in meeting life challenges.
Connection to the literature.

Themes from the context of the family find support in the structural factors reported by Betz (1994a) as facilitative of women's career development. Some working mothers, supportive fathers, highly educated parents, proactive encouragement and androgynous upbringing were evident in these stories. They were also young women of socioeconomic advantage choosing a "non-traditional" career consistent with results from Hannah and Kahn (1989). It is impossible to differentiate, in this study, the relative importance of parental empathy as selfobjects from the instrumental support available from well-to-do and knowledgeable parents. Possibly both contributions to daughters' career development might be subsumed under a broader construct such as parental emotional adjustment. Well-functioning, intelligent, successful parents might be most capable of providing a range of developmentally powerful selfobject responses.

The majority of the women said they had ongoing positive relationship with at least one of their parents which suggests that they experienced their own development as relationally embedded. I perceived that they emphasized their relationships with their mothers more than with their fathers, consistent with O'Brien's findings (1996) and expressed positive valuing for traditionally feminine qualities such as care, nurturing, empathy, sensitivity to others, marriage and family. These themes were generally consistent with the literature on female development (Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver & Surrey, 1991) as well as with the more general emphasis on the importance of relational context and empathy for self development (Mitchell, 1988; Tuch, 1997). Both nurturing and achievement appear to have been "reproduced" in these lives suggesting that the family of origin provided expectations for both expressive and instrumental behaviour. This research has supported the few studies which have begun to look at
the mother-daughter relationship in terms of influence on career choice and development. Is it typical to find unfinished stories reflected in the next generation? If so, does it reflect inadequate individuation or might it provide a type of continuity that extends the mother-daughter relationship?

Also while it seemed that fathers may have played a role in helping to strengthen the girls’ sense of agency, how is only suggested by the stories. Perhaps fathers modelled their own work role competence, or through provision of opportunity and communication of expectations they created strong daughters. Future research needs to explore the role of fathers with daughter’s career development. More research on parental involvement is needed to better identify facilitative behaviours in order to provide better information to parents so they can respond to early interests in ways that support vocational growth. The stories generally supported good parenting skills.

In a study of advantaged women, it is easy to overlook those whose lives are not so supported. The inclusion of one voice allows me to speculate about the career development of girls disadvantaged through inadequate parenting, abuse, educational or economic misfortune of parents. More research is needed to clarify the multiple types of disadvantage, whether parental knowledge, access to resources for opportunities, lack of modelling, or lack of expectancies of success. Are there generational transferences of these mothers’ "careers" as well? As the world becomes increasingly competitive and requires continued education, it is important for research to help to break cycles of poverty and to identify the developmental supports necessary throughout the school years to overcome structural barriers.

These women’s stories do not support an identification or social learning mechanism for
career object choice. Their parents were not veterinarians and most said they had not had contact with veterinarians when the object choice first appeared. Trice et al. (1995) suggested some "profound psychological process" at work; however, it would seem to be more complex than identification with parental work role alone. A recently published article (Baranowsky, Young, Johnson-Douglas, Williams-Keeler, & McCarrey, 1998) raises the hypothesis of intergenerational trauma transmission in Holocaust survivor families that may bear some similarity to the interpersonal phenomenon described here. To the career choice literature, I would add my voice to other researchers advocating increased attention to parent-child attachment (Blustein et al., 1993; Trice et al., 1995; Young, 1993) and I would argue that increased attention be placed on the selfobject function of parents in career development. It seems obvious that a first step in intentional career development of girls is fostering a sense of their strength and capability in a context of love and support.

7.1.2 Attachments to Animals

At an early age, the women claimed to have a special affinity for animals that set them apart from other family members. All of these women had early experiences of bonds with animals, mostly companion rather than large animals. They noticed a strong liking to be with animals which seemed always present and in several cases, reflected a turning away from human relationships.

From the stories it appeared that the child-animal bond was recognized by the family; however, there were reports of empathic failures in understanding the depth of the bond in several cases of animal death or desire for animal contact. The different perspective between the parents
and daughters with respect to animals may also have reflected changing social images of the roles of animals in society. The stories failed to elaborate on how each woman adjusted to family member or animal losses since that was not the immediate focus of this research.

The stories provided images of the many roles that animals played in their relational lives in childhood. Some women treated animal pets as friends or members of the family. Other women said they “mothered” or nurtured pets or used them as they played the role of veterinarian or caretaker. From the women’s accounts, the animals adapted to the roles expected of them and provided the women with relationships to further elaborate their sense of self in relation to animals. Later in the life story of one woman, I was told of a further clarification of both self-as-nurturer and animal-as-baby. Informed by her professional education, the woman recognized the distinction between babies and animals and between her own mothering and more differentiated nurturing of animals.

In another story of experience of surgery training, one woman showed how she could not distinguish between her early family image of animal-as-family-member or child and the surgical animals who were to be euthanized. She resolved the cognitive tension by saving a surgery dog’s life and adopting it as her pet.

In two other cases, the women experienced pet loss while they were veterinary students or early graduates. Their expression of loss provided strong support for acknowledgement of the emotional intensity of these women’s relational connections to animals.

**Connection to the literature.**

The affinity for animals reported in these stories is consistent with the findings of Brown,
Richards and Wilson (1996), yet does not distinguish them from girls in general. Certainly Brown et al.'s hypothesis that pets might provide an attachment necessary for the emotional health of children was consistent with the theme in one woman's story. Feeling betrayed by parental figures, she said she was able to turn to animals to experience emotional connection and perhaps a selfobject response. Contrary to Pipher's (1994) contention that girls identify with animals out of shared helplessness, these women reported increasing strength emerging out of their relationships with animals. Only the woman who had turned away from humans due to sexual abuse and betrayal, perceived animals as abused and needing to be saved. Pipher's work as a clinical psychologist has likely brought her into contact with a restricted sample of girls who are experiencing difficulty.

Exploration of the significance of the companion animal-child bond is just surfacing as an area of research. One new journal, Anthrozoos, has emerged for discourse related to the interaction of humans, animals and the environment. Given the increasing studies suggesting roles of animals in child development, in mental health treatment, and with the elderly, this area of attachment research should further elaborate the relational significance of animals in human lives in future.

From my research, it would seem that the enduring images of animals portrayed by the women provide evidence of a cognitive schemata consistent with the work of Markus and Oyserman (1989). Instead of hypothesizing some mediating variable such as "relational self" or "voice of care", it would seem to be more specific to study the animal schemata itself. Given the shifts in the meanings associated with animals and with nurturing described by some of the women, it would be valuable to trace these schema in future research with veterinary students.
For example, better understanding the conditions under which the animal is perceived as “friend”, or “baby” might illuminate the features of veterinary practice that place students at risk for emotional distress. Evidence of change in the images of animals in society due to movements such as animal rights suggests tensions and change in the values held by veterinarians and in their perceptions of their work with animals (Arluke, 1997). For some individuals, the shifting unstable images may create considerable psychological tension. Further study of the relationship between animal schema and psychological distress in veterinary students and veterinarians would be relevant to provide mental health interventions.

7.2 Adolescent Work, Peer and School Experiences

Much of the emphasis in the adolescent phase of the women’s journeys involved their extracurricular experiences in work with animals. Peer and school experiences emerged only peripherally as themes. It is impossible to discern whether or not the emphasis reflected time spent or simply the significance of the experience.

7.2.1 Animal Work

Because the women had already identified a career choice by adolescence they said they or a parent recognized the importance of gaining experience in animal work. Some women or their parents knew experience would help them to be competitive to enter professional school. Through these experiences working in veterinary clinics, on farms, on horse ranches, and boarding kennels, the women discovered a number of things about themselves and about work with animals. One important theme was a sense of competence in work with animals. Those women
who worked with large animals, learned what to do to control them and calm them. Other women experienced validation from practicing veterinarians about their potential or made that observation for themselves while observing others.

Again in this context, elements in the environment provided the type of response that seemed developmentally necessary to support their sense of selves as veterinarians much in the way the empathic responses from their parents and pets had done. In this context, the women experienced a wider range of responses. Presented with diverse images of dissatisfied veterinarians and satisfied veterinarians, male and female role models, and different ways of treating animals they selected the images they valued. Most of the women mentioned both negative and positive experiences and selected images of female, caring, fulfilling veterinary practice as their ideal.

Two women reported additional themes that set them apart from the others at this stage of their journey. One woman reported sexual harassment in the workplace which evoked discomfort rather than strength and repeated the helplessness she had felt as a child being sexually abused. For her, the pursuit of competence and strength was complicated by opposite feelings of helplessness and passivity.

The other woman was challenged early on to consider her responsibility to animals. While the adolescent selves of the other women seemed content with traditional views of animals in society, this woman thought deeply about animal lives and began to examine the implications of her day-to-day actions. She adopted an animal rights - animal welfare moral position in adolescence and declared herself vegetarian, much to her mother's concern. Her mother was worried about the implications for her nutrition by not eating meat, yet later followed her
daughter's example. At later points developmentally, two other women in this sample declared similar moral positions.

Adolescent workplace experiences with positive role models who functioned as selfobjects seemed to contribute to a sense of competence and realism in the women's career choice. Negative or intimidating experiences may have created uncertainty related to persistence; however, the women had early foundations and supportive parents as buffers. The availability of validating and nurturant adult figures began to help the women forge an image of an ideal possible "professional self."

**Connection to the literature.**

Given the paucity of literature on female adolescent veterinary career development, it is difficult to relate these specific themes to any reported literature. Generally the themes suggest that increased attention to work-based experiential learning may contribute importantly to female adolescent career self development. From the work of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986), this sort of experiential learning fits a number of the features of women's needs as "connected learners."

In contrast to the suggestions of researchers on adolescent female development, these women described gaining competence and sense of voice in adolescence. The women's work involvement may not be typical for adolescent girls and that aspect may account for my failure to support Brown and Gilligan's (1992) contention that adolescence necessarily represents a time for loss of voice. It is possible among my sample, that the women were less attentive to gender stereotyping messages since they were focused and occupied with work-related activity. Only
the participant who encountered workplace harassment expressed a sense of passivity which appeared to interfere with her "voice." Her perspective alone may have been more typical of the "silent" women of Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) who were also victims of abuse.

Evidence of several women in this sample holding animal rights or animal welfare perspectives is consistent with Arluke’s report (1997) of increasing numbers of predominantly women with this perspective. Such perspectives are also generally consistent with an ethic of care thought typical of women’s moral development (Gilligan, 1982).

Practitioner-mentors have potential to play influential and inspirational roles in the lives of young people. Construing their roles as selfobjects emphasizes the importance of empathy and non-destructive action needed for optimal career development. More research is clearly needed about the interpersonal processes involved in mentoring adolescent females. The adolescents seem eager to absorb a host of messages. Consequently, it would seem to be important for the practitioner to engage in self-reflection and possibly training to ensure that they play the role without using the adolescent destructively as their own selfobject. The psychosocial rewards are considerable for practitioners who value "making a difference" or "giving something to the next generation." These non-tangibles have the potential to advance the practitioner’s own personal growth in mid-life as well as that of the profession. Mentoring helps to instil in new professionals the values and ideals of the future, and to provide stewardship of the profession itself. Research to support this area might be funded by professional associations.

The emergence of a sense of veterinarian that was consistent with a sense of self as female, and nurturant and gentle with animals created a sort of ideal self or "possible self" (Cross &
This ideal may have enabled the women to continue to visualize themselves moving toward a goal in the distant future, consistent with the elaboration of a career-self schema (Hill & Spokane, 1995).

7.2.2 Peer Relationships

Only a few of the stories mentioned peers in the course of the journey, and few themes emerged. Some of the women described themselves to me as more goal-oriented, focused or decided about career choice than their peers. They reported expressions of jealousy from others who felt confused about career choice and perceived them as focused. One participant resisted social pressure to engage in dating until she was twenty-eight and in veterinary college. She saw her social life with a romantic partner as potentially unsettling her career goal as veterinarian.

Despite their focus, their adolescent stories presented images of involvement and social acceptance among their peer group. Consistent with their image as strong women, they maintained a steady course toward veterinary practice.

7.2.3 School

A second inadequately explored and elaborated theme in adolescence involved contributions to the women’s career development by school experiences. The only two school-based career experiences reported were: a grade six project to predict what she would be doing in twenty years and an extra-curricular high-school career volunteer program which the woman herself conducted. One other woman told me about a mixed message of support from a teacher who admired her but disagreed vehemently with her plan to become a veterinarian. Another
woman expressed frustration about the lack of accurate information provided by guidance counsellors in planning her steps to enter veterinary medicine.

**Connection to the literature.**

The absence of strong themes from peers and school in the stories of these women raises several hypotheses. It is possible that the women did not perceive either source to be influential in the career journey to become a veterinarian. Alternatively, while there may have been few veterinary-related memorable events, their overall educational and peer experiences may have contributed indirectly. I would recommend further research examining peer and school influences in light of the review by Guttman (1991) and the report of powerful peer effects claimed by Holland and Eisenhart (1990) with college women. I concur with the suggestions by Guttman (1991) and McMahon and Patton (1997) that increased research attention be given to contextual influences and interventions in the career development of adolescent females. Also, given the increasing importance of schools’ roles in producing a competitive workforce, it is critical to strengthen intentional career development through program design and evaluation research.

**7.3 University Life and Competition in Science**

An intermediate context between high school and professional school was the period of time the women spent in undergraduate science. Most of the women left home to attend university and most reported some temporary adjustment period. The transitional period of time was variable due to the women’s time to obtain a competitive academic standing or due to time-out to resolve psychosocial developmental issues.
7.2.1 University

The major themes involved in the transition to university involved adapting to a new environment, making new friends, coping without the close support of parents and learning to study hard without external directives. The women had to rely on themselves as they navigated a new context that provided them with tremendous freedom. One woman who was only 17 experienced it as overwhelming and claimed to have sabotaged her academic performance in order to leave temporarily. She needed a dramatic event in order to exit because she believed her supportive parents would have encouraged her to remain otherwise.

Another woman reported social isolation which was in marked contrast to her central role in high school. She had moved from being a “big fish in a small pond” to being unrecognizable in an ocean. New relationships had to be established and eventually for the women they found new peer groups. For one woman, she found herself in an entirely new reference group of lesbian peers, that had transformative implications for her sense of self. Several women who ignored their adjustment needs (or whose families ignored their adjustment needs) experienced set-backs, illness or failure. In the stories, it was common to hear of a hiatus of a year or two of university before resuming their journeys and applying themselves. In one exception, the hiatus lasted roughly twelve years.

Undergraduate science at the University of Guelph was described in fairly consistent ways by the women who attended that university. They experienced large invalidating classes, challenging courses and competitive peers. Until university, pursuit of veterinary medicine had seemed to be a comfortable goal. Now they recognized that many peers shared their career goal. They realized they would have to compete as well if they were to gain admission to veterinary
school. They also began to experience an anxiety related to the void that would be created in their lifeworld if they did not gain admission to veterinary medicine. Veterinary medicine provided a defined or boundary career self that was familiar. Loss of the idea of self as veterinarian created the potential for a loss of part of oneself.

For many women, their stories revealed a dislike of the competitive environment and a disappointment at the breakdown of cooperative relationships with peers. For some women, the experience in undergraduate science led to diffusion of the goal and experiencing themselves as “lost.” Coincidentally in their stories, several women described themselves entering romantic relationships at that time. Eventually, they learned to modulate their voices, to be selective about disclosing their career goals, and to retreat into hours of solitary study. Their journeys now relegated relationships to the margins.

**Connection to the literature.**

The themes involved with the transition to university are consistent with those in the literature and generally do not set these women apart from other students (e.g., Russell & Petrie, 1992). Merely emphasized are the adaptive demands which students must make as they enter university environments and perform successfully. Similarly, this research identified a type of postsecondary environment characteristic of undergraduate science that has been reported by many researchers (e.g., Seymour & Hewitt, 1997) and that has been perceived as problematic for women generally (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986; Clinchy, Belenky, Goldberger & Tarule, 1985; Goldberger, 1996; Kaplan & Klein, 1991). I would argue that the competitive science culture appeared to provide the women with few opportunities to maintain relationships
reviewed the women’s comments about their learning experiences, I found comments that echoed
the work of Belenky et al. (1986). The themes identified in this study involved competition with
peers instead of collaborative relationships, having to worry about “grade-getting” rather than
satisfying learning, anxiety related to having an education that was worth “nothing” if it didn’t
lead to professional school, and in one case, discomfort with the language of science itself, as
objectifying the subject of study.

A theme that I had not adequately understood at first was emphasized strongly by
Seymour and Hewitt (1997). This was the generalized anxiety about career and lifestyle
prospects at a time of economic uncertainty. Unlike students in earlier times, students now
appear to have absorbed culturally based anxiety about their future. They perceived limited
options available to science graduates and felt distress about anticipated job satisfaction. They
were living at a historical time of uncertainty, where job qualifications appeared to be escalating
and at a time when the costs of education were rising. This was a historical meaning related to
the social context in which career development was taking place. It was reflected by my
participants’ expressed concerns of what they would do if they were not accepted into vet
medicine.

My participants did not mention anti-female remarks cited by other researchers in
undergraduate science environments (Seymour & Hewitt, 1997). Seymour and Hewitt
hypothesized that some women may deny anti-female messages if they seek to be members of the
game. They need to play by the rules imposed by the dominant group. There was evidence from
several women’s stories of distorting personal preferences in order to “play the game” to get
grades. It is not possible to infer that they were denying anti-female messages in the environment.
Consistent with themes of "playing the game", was the notion of loss of voice or distancing from oneself. Although I did not carefully assess the construct, it seemed as if the women's stories began to lose a sense of voice with entry into the postsecondary arena rather than in adolescence as has been suggested by other researchers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Hancock, 1989). The presence of themes of confidence during the adolescent years, suggested that the women were experiencing a sense of agency. Belenky et al. (1986) and Goldberger (1996) have suggested that agency is a sort of by-product of voice.

It is possible that my mostly privileged sample of women had fairly supportive beginnings sufficient to carry them beyond hurdles and invalidating experiences. Higher education was an entirely different matter. With the transition to postsecondary education, I sensed a marked shift in the women's confidence and the first signs of weakening of their previously strong voices. They encountered a non-responsive, non-collaborative environment which not only failed to validate them, it threatened to narrow their own experiences of learning and their worth as potential veterinarians to the value of their grades. I found this to be uncomfortably recent evidence of the continuing null environment for women (Betz, 1994a). Alternatively, without invoking gender, it is possible to view these women as practical, relationally-oriented learners in an environment that was not responsive to their development.

The stories also provided a subjective view of persisters in pre-med, to draw alongside the data from Cole and Fiorentine (1991) where they speculated that the decline in women's medical school aspiration over the undergraduate years might be due to women tending to give up more easily than men when encountering barriers. Persistance in my data has seemed like swimming upstream in a less-than-perfect learning environment.
Researchers continue to call for revisions to the way in which undergraduate science is taught if only to encourage persistence of talented students. Seymour and Hewitt (1997) point to serious national concerns about falling behind in science and technology. Given the recent rise in costs of postsecondary education and students’ clear concern about career relevance, more study is needed of practical ways to transform science pedagogy and culture to be responsive to diversity, student learning, persistence and career alternatives which are consistent with labour market requirements. Ontario universities will soon begin to experience a competitive marketplace more typical of American colleges and universities. Student satisfaction will begin to have some profound fiscal implications.

7.3.2 Admission to Veterinary School

A key event for the women in university was mobilizing themselves to apply to veterinary school. First they had to ensure that their science averages were high. Then they had to participate in the application process. Several women who were very able academically maintained high averages and were able to be admitted on first attempt. Four women failed on first attempt but were able to analyze and improve their applications by second attempt. Three women endured a rougher process having to apply three or more times.

What seemed significant for the purposes of this research was the way in which the application attempt figured in the women’s stories about their journey. They provided poignant descriptions about their experiences being interviewed for admission. They were anxiously preoccupied with being validated and judged acceptable. Some women experienced invalidation during the interview or later when they received a letter of rejection. One woman’s personalized
interpretation of the rejection revealed that she experienced it as a declaration from the college about her lack of worth as a future veterinarian. It appeared from her story to take two years for her to adjust and risk her "self" again.

One woman described how she had not been her "self" outwardly or inwardly during the interview and yet was accepted. It was her "false" self that had been accepted, and later on, it was her "true" but invalidated self who withdrew from veterinary medicine altogether.

What I found intriguing in this part of the journey was the women's relationship to their career goal and their perceptions of readiness. Although they had told me of a first awareness of wanting to be a veterinarian in an earlier context, it was as if they had not firmly seized it and committed to it as a core self component. While at university, several women said their goal was "in the back of my mind", not up front and foremost in importance. It was like an ambivalent connection to a possible self as veterinarian. At the same time, while wrestling with other psychosocial issues, they described their academic effort as less intense. One woman called it being "laid back." Concomitant with these themes were themes of being out of focus, "lost," and not on track. When the connection was made later on, they were re-engaged, re-energized, or as one woman described it - an experience of psychic harmony of her whole life fitting into place. Together, these themes convey a sense of self-awareness and self-observation with suspended action - like hovering, poised psychic energy waiting to be invested, like an engine running in neutral, waiting to be put in gear.

At least three of the women clearly described a recognition that "it is now time to apply." I viewed this as a self-observation of their own psychological readiness to handle the physical and emotional demands of professional education. At those moments in the stories, there seemed to
be more bravery, confidence, and willingness to hold themselves out and risk rejection as they sought acceptance. To be convincing to others, they had to feel the confidence inside. In the context of invalidating education, they had to draw upon validation from within. Perhaps coincidentally, despite previous failures, those were the mental attitudes that corresponded with admission to veterinary school.

Almost a side issue of this research was the observation of potential weakness in the selection process used by the veterinary college. Consultation and collaboration with the college led to the involvement of an industrial/organizational psychologist with expertise in selection. Subsequently, the college announced revisions to the selection process described by this research.

**Connection to the literature.**

The admission process to most professional schools is competitive. For students who are averse to competition, it forces them to behave in ways that are not preferred and may be uncomfortable. While there is no literature to which the themes of subjective risk taking can be compared, Cole and Fiorentine’s (1991) analysis of women’s persistence with medical school aspiration may be related. They speculated that the decline in women’s medical school aspiration over the undergraduate years might be due to women tending to give up more easily than men when encountering barriers. While these women encountered barriers due to a wide range of personal and environmental factors, they eventually had successful applications. The themes of readiness and risk described by the women may have reflected the enormity of the effort they believed they had to mobilize in order to succeed. Further research related to the process and experience of application to veterinary college would undoubtedly lead to knowledge of
refinements in selection and strategy for applicants.

The unplanned discovery of weakness in the college’s selection methodology underscored the value of qualitative method in program evaluation as well as individual process research.

7.4 Professional Education in Veterinary Medicine

Many themes in this research reflected the women’s experiences within the culture of professional veterinary medicine education. While unique to the local setting of Ontario Veterinary College, the experiential themes can be considered working hypotheses to be assessed in other settings, other veterinary schools as well as other programs of professional education. Also unique is the location of the findings within historical time, given that the gender composition of the profession is undergoing change. Common to any organizational entry are process issues with respect to culture, climate, discourse, and group membership.

7.4.1 Newcomer Issues

As the women entered veterinary college, they felt excited and successful in their previous years of striving. Now they simply had to fit into the culture and cooperate with the educational agenda in order to graduate with their D.V.M. degrees. The first pre-vet semester was not academically taxing and represented a time to become acquainted with the veterinary community, its students, and faculty. For students from marginal perspectives this first encounter prompted experiences of not belonging, of finding the dominant student values intolerable and offensive. Women who reported such experiences had also identified themselves either as sympathetic to animal rights or as having lesbian identities. Students who held more conventional attitudes did
not report feeling marginalized.

The women’s stories revealed wishes to connect with other students; initially there were few options available. The veterinary fraternity offered one option to those willing to endure a degrading initiation process and participate in processes tinged with sex-role divisions. A majority of these women believed the Frat to be a less than ideal match for their relational needs. Some women perceived it as an “immature, drinking party.” A minority of participants claimed to have derived some benefit from their association with more senior students.

All students were assigned to a mentoring program composed of a faculty member and students from all of the five D.V.M. years. Some women reported positive experiences from that program. Other women failed to mention it as a significant experience. Eventually, over the course of the year, the women found individually meaningful connections through part-time work at the college, in student government, or through their veterinary student housemates. Some of the woman already had pets who provided companionship and regular opportunities for exercise.

Connection to the literature.

Because there is little literature on female veterinary student socialization, there is no direct basis for comparison. Generally, the literature on organizational culture offers a parallel. Because the veterinary college existed as a closed system with hierarchical roles and a culture of beliefs, values and practices certain similarities are evident. First, one can raise questions about how newcomers are oriented to the culture and how they learn about the range of acceptable attitudes and behaviours. Although this study did not gather sufficient data to clearly define such processes, certain themes emerged from the stories. For newcomers, it seemed possible that the
college did not fully recognize the significant entry needs of newcomers. Students appeared to be somewhat on their own to sort through some of the complexities of the new environment. In their striving for connection, some of the women felt traumatized by the Frat initiation or the attitudes of peers who didn’t appreciate animal welfare values. As Arluke (1997) suggested, documenting the ways in which new attitudes toward animals filter into a conventional professional culture represents an important area of research for this profession.

7.4.2 Learning Requirements

With entry into the formal D.V.M. program, the women encountered a style of teaching and learning that reflected the veterinary profession’s implicit theory of how to become veterinarians. Much to the women’s surprise, there was little contact with animals for several years. Instead, learning became routinized as they attended lectures on separate subjects, passively listened, and engaged in rote memorization for exams. The volume of information expanded rapidly and all of the women remarked that the experience was unrewarding. They had little sense of their own competence regardless of performance on examinations and had limited sense of how their learning connected to veterinary practice. Their interpersonal contacts were with their class of 100 peers. Their faculty members did not know them personally. Praise was still tied to grades. Evaluation did not always seem to be based on what they knew.

As their lifeworlds narrowed to exclude everything but this culture, the influence of their peers increased. Some women found themselves unable to resist pressure induced by watching their peers’ intense work styles. They had voluntarily submitted themselves to the influence of professional education and now they felt driven by it. Students related to one another
competitively, watching one another, trying to beat one another or gain an advantage with faculty. At the same time, one woman reported receiving a negative message regarding her sexual orientation and began to believe that it was not safe to be “out” in this community. Later on, she felt invalidated when she expressed her animal rights orientation and was failed in her ethics class.

Themes of the women’s experience in the culture led to my hypotheses that the culture was critical, emotionally unsupportive, traditional in its view of animals as objects and science as value-free. This may not be an accurate reflection. Significant for this culture were two unpredictable losses experienced while these women were members of the community. One loss was the suicide of a second year male student. The other loss was the sudden heart failure of a well-loved faculty member while in his office. Both events elicited profound feelings of confusion and loss as well as community expression of grief. How the presence of these events altered the typical experience for students is not known, except in the words of one woman who knew the male student well. Now that someone she knew had opted for suicide when feeling unable to cope, that had created the option for her as well, “only for that I’m bitter.”

**Connection to the literature.**

The style of pedagogy used in this veterinary college was apparently similar to other colleges in North America and has been open to critical analysis by the college itself (e.g., Anonymous, 1991). Memorization of ‘facts’ represented the bulk of the learning experiences, where using the metaphor of bulimia, involved binging and puking facts, where “little of nutritional value is retained” (p.3). From a developmental perspective, this learning approach is reminiscent of Belenky et al.’s (1986) epistemological position of “received knowing.” This is
characterized by a voiceless, mindless learner who relies on experts for knowledge. Inadvertently, it would appear that information explosion, complexity of the veterinary medicine field has created a pedagogy which may actually obstruct feelings of competence and intellectual development. This speculation on my part would find support in the research suggesting lack of expected moral development in veterinary medicine students in other schools (Self et al., 1991a, 1991b). In the stories, themes of loss of confidence and lack of familiarity with using their own minds, suggest a lack of opportunity for students to engage in developmentally enhancing learning. The continued competitive culture presumably worked against experiences for connected learning continuing the mismatch for practical, relational learners. Veterinary schools are currently turning to curricular changes such as case-based or problem-oriented learning to enhance critical thinking and collaborative skill. Schools are still in transition with new educational designs creating difficulty for students and likely for faculty as well.

7.4.3 Hands On Learning

Only in third year, did the women’s journeys include significant animal contact. Two important experiences were described by all of the women: a surgery course and an externship experience for ten weeks during the summer. Both experiences provided opportunities for practical, experiential, connected learning and were valued highly, yet they also introduced emotional issues for some of the women. With respect to the surgery, just several years previously, a small animal-rights oriented group of women had lobbied for the right to learn surgical skill alternatively. This meant use of cadavers instead of live animals. I inferred that the alternative program was the target of open and covert hostility from traditionally oriented faculty.
members and students. The small minority of students whose animal rights sensitivities led them to seek the alternative program, were also repeatedly traumatized by others' behaviour. By the time the students of this study entered surgical training, the hostility had lessened and there seemed to be less stress on the minority choosing it. Three of the ten women in this study expressed animal rights perspectives and two opted for the alternative program.

The majority of women in this study had followed the traditional program and seemed to have followed the advice of the culture regarding how best to become a veterinarian. It became evident, as I spoke with some of the women, that they had not taken the time to reflect on their perspective with animals. Of those who engaged in the traditional program, with its required killing of 15 surgical animals per student group, I learned of instances of emotional distress and failed attempts at distancing. One woman said she thought the act of killing animals in surgery training was a rite of passage to create mental toughness in future veterinarians.

The themes that emerged from experiences with the summer externship were generally positive. While working with practitioners, the women had much more varied opportunities for experiential learning, for trying out their skills, and for receiving personalized feedback. Again, this learning medium was preferred. Underscoring the interpersonal components of the externship, the women internalized not only skill, but also a range of attitudes and sensitivities characteristic of practitioner work with clients. As they were provided with freedom to test their new competencies, they began to experience inner confidence which had been lacking at the college. Again the role of the selfobject surfaces in their development. By providing appropriately matched experiences, feedback and encouragement, the women gained a sense of strength. Their sense of trust in themselves seemed to depend upon trust expressed to them.
In a few stories there were examples of practitioners who did not trust students and who did not permit them to try basic procedures in the practice. The restrictions described appeared to be gender discriminatory. The basic procedures are routine surgical and medical interventions that graduating vet students are expected to know. Students who failed to experience the trust of practitioners, did not experience enhancement of confidence. They internalized the lack of trust and reported feeling ashamed. Their shame prevented them from disclosing the experience to the college representatives. It is possible that non-empathic or critical features of the college environment led to student uncertainty that they would be validated.

**Connection to the literature.**

Once again, the themes in this research are consistent with the needs of connected learners (Belenky et al., 1986; Kaplan & Klein, 1991). There seemed to be a relationship between a way of learning and experience of competence. The strength and voice once noticed in the adolescent stories, seemed to resurface under conditions of selfobject involvement and experiential activity.

Most relevant to the development of animal schemas were the value perspectives assumed by the women in their surgical class. From the themes provided by the women who chose the alternative program or animal rights perspective, I heard strong care values possibly consistent with Gilligan’s (1982) ethic of care. There were reports of harassment by the community of previous students who had chosen this route. I know of no literature that reports a similar finding. Arluke (1997) posed the question about how third year surgery class in North American veterinary colleges is experienced by students of varying perspectives on animals. The alternative and traditional programs are not unique to Ontario Veterinary College. The stories of these
women provide a beginning albeit incomplete exploration of the phenomenon.

Several instances were reported of women choosing the traditional surgery method and being unable to avoid distress under certain conditions of animal death. In one case, the death was accidental. In the other case, where the animal was a "baby" and belonged to the same breed as the family dog, an adoption occurred.

Clearly it would be relevant to conduct more intensive research related to students' animal value perspectives, their surgery choice, and their emotional response to planned euthanasia. The distress reported is consistent with literature on distress in animal care technicians and veterinarians (Fogle & Abrahamson, 1990; Herzog, Vore, & New, 1989). For women whose primary orientation to the profession related to care for animals, euthanasia of teaching animals appears to pose a conflict.

The externship experience provided another relevant learning opportunity for most of the women. For others, it was a first encounter with gender discrimination in the profession. The experience of practitioner trust enhanced confidence. The experience of discrimination was also internalized as shame. The evidence of gender discrimination in the veterinary workplace is consistent with Elkins and Kearney (1992) and Patterson (1991). Clearly young women entering the veterinary profession require support and measures to combat discriminatory treatment. Discrimination experienced as an individual rather than systemic problem runs the risk of severely limiting the confidence and career achievement of capable women.

**7.4.4 Final Year Transition to Work**

The themes in the final year of the journey provided a distinct shift. With their successful
passing of board certification exams and their D.V.M. degree on the horizon, the women began their clinical rotations. Their newly discovered confidence from the externship was silenced by the controlling atmosphere of the teaching hospital. Although the freedom from classroom learning allowed the broader lifeworld to enter, the hierarchy of faculty-clinicians, residents, and interns above them restricted their actions in the hospital. The women’s stories were punctuated by contradiction and discontinuity in their experience. They wished the college structure had provided a graduated process of increasing responsibility. Instead, they faced graduation questioning their competence, feeling anxious about the outside world, and unsure about their voice. Two women provided very clear examples of lost voice and inactive mind typical of the “received knowledge” perspective. Their stories provided strong evidence for the relationship between responsibility, trust, voice, mind and sense of confidence. These expressions highlight the selfobject needs in the developmental process of career self.

Connection to the literature.

The transition needs of graduating veterinary students are not well understood. It was clear that the women had to prepare for a shift in their experience. Their lives had been dictated by a program structure for five years, a structure that had offered little freedom for life outside. These stories suggest that curricular revisions offering a graded increase in responsibility might help to enhance the confidence gained during the externship and prepare for the transition-to-work.

The portrayal of the clinical rotation from a “received knowledge” perspective raises the hypothesis that Belenky et al.’s (1986) paradigm of knowing has a direct relation to teaching
approach. Clearly more specific research might clarify whether this is the case. It is doubtful that veterinary medicine educators would wish to continue to use a developmentally restricted model of teaching. Professions such as veterinary medicine do not intend to produce graduates who are only capable of reproducing others’ knowledge. They seek critical thinkers capable of constructing knowledge as well.

7.4.5 Women in Veterinary Medicine

This research began with a review of the literature related to women’s career development and sought to explore the experiences of women within the veterinary medicine profession. On a positive note, it would seem that numerous talented women are entering and completing professional training without many reports of overt gender discrimination or barriers specific to women. A brief foray into the workplace revealed that gender discrimination is still evident; however, the prevalence and types of discrimination are not well documented in Ontario veterinary practice.

As the women approached graduation, they expressed intentions to continue in veterinary medicine and perceived a wide range of options for work. They also shared a theme related to combining career and family that was unresolved. Different types of messages they heard throughout the program did not encourage them to spend much time as mothers of their own children, or to divide their time between career and family. Still evident from some sources were expectations that good veterinarians devote themselves to their careers. Several women openly struggled with me as they tried to reconcile their wishes to be good veterinarians and good mothers. While they expect to sort out life plans as they go along, it is clear that systemic
discrimination may place them at disadvantage as they attempt to work part-time, devote time to their children, or move into large animal practice.

Given the duration of this study, I was involved long enough with the women to hear one report of gender discrimination related to salary in a mixed animal practice. It saddened me to hear my most enthusiastic participant later say, “I feel that if I were a guy, this would never have happened to me.”

**Connection to the literature.**

The stories of the women’s experiences in the veterinary profession provide continued evidence of gender discrimination in the workplace (Betz, 1994a; Patterson, 1991) as potentially part of these women’s career experiences. Further research is needed with veterinarians in Ontario to clarify the nature and extent of gender discrimination in order to rapidly address issues facing the large numbers of women exiting from professional education. The women in this profession apparently still live the contradiction of work and care as they are expected to integrate their life roles independent of the workplace. For women struggling to spend time with children and maintain their competency, access to continuing education will prove to be critical. Workplace solutions involving part-time salaried employment without opportunity for partnership place women who choose to have families at risk for second-class status in this profession. Further research is needed to clarify the range of work-family combinations which provide realistic options for women’s advancement in this profession.
7.4.6 Absence of Relationship as A Basis for Competition

Throughout this discussion I have illustrated the role of empathy and response from selfobjects in the environmental context. In the families and in the workplace with practitioners, the women’s stories provided corresponding themes of confidence and growth. In the interpersonally invalidating undergraduate science and competitive climate of veterinary medicine, there seemed to be an absence of selfobjects to provide validation and correct response. By focusing on central high and low points in the journeys, I learned that both themes were interpersonal. That observation helped to support the relational metaphor in this thesis from the perspective of selfobjects.

Unanimous high points described by the women were positive experiences learning through mentors. In different ways, the women in this study had found mentoring relationships, most of whom were male faculty. Their accounts of the meaning of the experience suggested that the mentor had served a selfobject function for them, by providing empathy, conveying respect, and recognizing positive qualities in the women.

Low points in their journeys included competitive, impersonal and nonvalidating interpersonal exchange as well as intense learning demands in the program. Detailed discussion of the experience of being surrounded by competitive peers, led to an hypothesis that the basis for competition was striving to be recognized, noticed and validated by a faculty selfobject. Because the opportunities for recognition were few, it appeared that competitive behaviour was correspondingly intensified and therefore socially constructed.

Understood from a self-developmental perspective, it seems hardly remarkable that the women cited contact as valuable and engaging for them. It was tragic to hear the comment of the
lack of connection felt upon graduation and the feeling they had been "battered on" for too long. Given the unique and complex relationship skill required of veterinarians who must mediate the human-animal bond, their own socialization process with minimal relational opportunities suggests a striking contradiction.

**Connection to the literature.**

The themes related to interpersonal responsiveness and support in the socializing of veterinary students have no apparent links to the literature, apart from extension of concepts from self psychology into the career development of relational selves. These hypotheses remain to be tested in future research, yet they represent a response to the challenges by Blustein, Prezioso and Schultheiss (1995) and Forrest and Mikolaitis (1986) regarding the role of attachment and the way relational self might be expressed in career development theory.

One very interesting line of research would involve determining the basis for competitiveness among veterinary students. These stories provide a contextual account for how competitiveness might be socially constructed by the absence of response from the environment. Alternatively students might enter the environment with pre-existing stable competitive personality traits. Future longitudinal research designs with assessment of individual and contextual features might help to clarify the origins. Competitiveness appears to represent a distressing feature of veterinary education as well as veterinary practice. Provision of support to the veterinary community with respect to this interpersonal style might help to alleviate one type of distress among practitioners and students.
7.4.7 Trauma as a Normalized Experience of Veterinarians

Throughout the many themes I identified as part of the experience of becoming a veterinarian, there were repeated instances of challenge to the women’s personalities. Themes familiar to the literature on women’s career development and women in science were identified. Unique to veterinary medicine were the challenges related to animal death and the veterinarian’s role in the human-animal bond. I have already identified the tensions and potential conflicts that veterinarians face depending upon their own resolution of their relationship to animals. From a psychological adjustment perspective, it is also relevant to inquire about the utility of construing veterinary education and practice as the normalized exposure to chronic trauma. Because this research did not systematically evaluate psychological symptomatology or the precise character, timing and frequency of traumatic events, I can only point to the potential of future research to provide some answers. Are veterinarians, by virtue of their training and accepted conventions within the profession subjected to repeated trauma experiences? The veterinary literature previously cited and the women in this study have hinted at the need for dissociative defenses to manage their experiences. Some women hinted at “horror stories” in veterinary practice that I left unexplored. A better understanding of the psychological demands on people becoming veterinarians would also inform clinical interventions.

Connection to literature.

A growing literature has already begun to form around the topic of medical student abuse (Rosenberg & Silver, 1984; Sheehan, Sheehan, White, Leibowitz, & Baldwin, 1990; Silver & Glicken, 1990); however, it has not yet generalized to veterinary medicine. Research informed
by what we now know about exposure to traumatic events (Herman, 1997) might begin to
document the presence of symptomatology in veterinary students and practicing veterinarians. If
evidence accumulates that is suggestive of chronic post-traumatic stress disorder, then naming
some experiences as trauma might alter educational designs and might facilitate the treatment and
recovery of veterinarians who suffer from it. As this research indicates, part of becoming a
veterinarian involves “toughening up” to emotional stress as a normalized event in the culture.
Evidence of psychological harm created within the profession would argue for modification of
both training and practice for the good of practitioners.

7.5 Implications for Ontario Veterinary College

Although this research was not designed as a program evaluation of the D.V.M. program,
the themes that emerged from the women’s experiences raise questions about the nature of that
experience. To maintain an ethical stance in relation to the women, the college and the data, I
shared my early findings as a narrative report. That report included some recommendations,
suggestions, and an invitation to the members of the college community to think further about the
issues that I raised. I was not able to make firm recommendations based on clear, objective data.
I included the following caveats,

These data should be viewed as the experiential accounts of learners in the D.V.M.
program with suggestions about the learning context and culture. To the extent that the
learning environment operated through them and shaped their language and experience
then the research may function as a mirror held up to the learning environment. To the
extent that responses reflect the subjectivity of the students more than reflections of the
environment, then the implications may be more limited. (Douglas, 1996b, p.2)

I encouraged readers to reflect upon and discuss the issues raised,

Some of my recommendations may not make sense to those more immersed in the O.V.C. environment than I, however, they have been reviewed and approved by participants. At this point, it is important to view the data sharing as an iterative process, where the purpose of this report is to stimulate reflection and to make meaning of experiences from diverse perspectives. (Douglas, 1996b, p. 7)

I stated the following recommendations in the final narrative report (Douglas, 1996b) organized by stage in the educational process. Comments in italics reflect the participants’ elaboration. The first set of recommendations related to the college’s role in application and admission to the D.V.M.

1.1 It would appear to be very useful for professional associations as well as for Ontario Veterinary College to engage in public education related to careers in veterinary medicine, in order to ensure that high school students obtain realistic and accurate information to assist them in career planning.

1.2 Professional associations might encourage their members to offer a range of experiential learning opportunities to enhance the vocational commitment of high school students.

1.3 Ontario Veterinary College should continue to offer a range of opportunities for potential students to learn about and participate in veterinary activity (e.g., tours, paid and volunteer positions, public lectures, etc.)

1.4 Consideration might be given to the current selection process if it has been
unsatisfactory. Can the qualities of successful candidates and the skill requirements for the veterinary student function be articulated fully? Can measurement methods be improved and made more objective? Campus expertise on selection exists.

1.5 Consider longitudinal research with selected candidates to ascertain the proportion of high achieving students who are at risk for psychological distress. Consider whether to implement methods to screen out vulnerable candidates or to introduce sufficient supports to ensure their success.

1.6 Consider offering university programming related to “rejection shock” which might address multiple types of rejection which students might face at this developmental stage. (Douglas, 1996b, pp.11-12)

The second set of recommendations related to the pre-veterinary year:

2.1 Students are “ready” to begin learning in pre-vet year. The current curriculum may be felt as a “false start” without too much substance. Students apparently wish to “connect” to the college and profession in several ways, through learning and experience. It might be reasonable to think through curricular offerings at this stage and to provide opportunities for involvement. Experiential roles within the college will quickly help to connect students with faculty and staff who may be able to provide mentoring.

2.2 Students are simultaneously feeling “special” related to achievement of admission and they are comparing themselves to others who have also been admitted. Messages and sensitivities related to diversity might help to prevent the alienation experienced by some students.

2.3 Address problems with the mentor-buddy program, so that faculty (and students)
treat it as more than a perfunctory assignment. Perhaps by excusing faculty who are unable to commit to the relationships and by providing incentives for those concerned individuals who do, the quality might be more consistent. (Douglas, 1996b, p. 14)

The third set of recommendations related to the first year of the D.V.M.:

3.1 The perceived workload in first year might be made less intense if part of the curriculum were shifted to pre-vet year as previously suggested.

3.2 Students appear to appreciate diverse teaching methods with alternative means of learning including some “hands on” experiences such as learning to conduct well animal physical exams in pre-vet or 1st year, going into the clinics, more interaction with later years /students in upper years/.

3.3 A systemic intervention to combat competitiveness arising both characterologically and through the application process might help to reverse destructive trends. Cooperative and noncompetitive learning approaches might be useful. For example, for mastery of factual material some sort of interactive computer mastery modules might be substituted for lectures with exams and marks. In this context a student competes only with herself to attain mastery of required material over as many trials as are necessary. Problem-based learning was also favoured by most of the students interviewed, popular with the women in the class, not the men.

3.4 It is important to recognize that students are dealing with a range of personal, interpersonal, and transitional issues. (Douglas, 1996b, pp. 16-17; italics reflect actual quotations from the women)

The fourth set of recommendations related to second year of the D.V.M.:
4.1 Be alert to factors which may be demotivating for students such as: excessive workload, lack of contact with animals, mismatch of teaching approach with learners who may have applied learning preferences, that is needs to appreciate context and application.

4.2 What are the learning objectives of the D.V.M. program? Do the outcomes require deep learning with understanding or surface learning of memorized facts? Reevaluate teaching objectives and match interventions with objectives.

4.3 Review the process currently in place for externship assignments. Explore whether or not the need exists for more structured assistance to decrease competition. (Douglas, 1996b, p. 20)

Third year of the D.V.M. related to the next set of recommendations:

5.1 The junior surgery course appears to be pivotal in training and in personal development as a veterinarian. The college should be commended for having two paths, the traditional and the alternative. Likely some individuals have been spared intense personal conflict by having the option of engaging in a practice which does not place them in direct contradiction to their personal value position. Improvements have occurred over the past few years, however, the college should be alert to practices or messages which do not make it a viable alternative such as: harassment or aggression towards those choosing the alternative route, equalization of workload for both alternatives, clear administrative positions that both are worthy alternatives, clear expectations for students taking the alternative route. Otherwise, the alternative is not really a neutral alternative in practice.

5.2 Because values are at the core of personal and professional identities and adjustment, it may be beneficial to include values clarification in the curriculum
particularly for students who may enter O.V.C. without clear positions.

5.3 Some attention to student adjustment pre-post being an active agent in euthanizing animals would seem warranted. Are particular students at risk? Is supportive processing of emotion important within the context of the course itself? Should students participate in preventative discussion of attachment behaviours in which they themselves might engage?

5.4 The workload as it existed at the time of data collection did not appear to allow any time for personal reflection and emotional processing which could be a process in healthy professional socialization. Would it make sense to build reflective review into the curriculum?

5.5 Consider the extent to which the pattern of distress in previous students matches the critical points and issues highlighted in this report. (Douglas, 1996b, p. 25).

With respect to the final fourth year of the D.V.M., I made the following recommendations:

6.1 Consider introducing transitional programming to assist students with career- and life-decision-making tasks and to anticipate the need to develop strategies related to intrinsic motivation and lifestyle factors.

6.2 Consider introducing a systemic response through the curriculum to give students graded exposure to increased responsibility. Explore the meaningfulness of rotations where students do little more than act as “go-fors.”
6.3 Involve senior students in teaching roles with incoming students for credit. This might accomplish several objectives simultaneously:

a. It would provide increased responsibility for senior students and help them to apply their knowledge in active rather than passive ways.

b. It would provide important modelling and contact for incoming students; effective models are often "coping" models (those who are not so much expert than oneself) as opposed to "mastery" models (who demonstrate perfectly without flaws - clinicians). Learners can sometimes more readily identify with "coping" models.

6.4 Consider whether or not it is an issue to better understand reasons for attrition (temporary and permanent). Longitudinal study might suggest factors which could lessen drop outs from the D.V.M. and the profession if this is perceived to be a problem. There might possibly be some implications for the selection process from this sort of research.

6.5 Explore the availability of "new professional" resources available from the professional associations. Some women are still experiencing discrimination in the workplace and supports might be important related to this and issues of combining practice and family.

6 Clinical Medicine I and II in the Small Animal section uses senior students who "act" as the owner bringing in a pet to O.V.C. Second and third years take a history, physical exam and try to diagnose [the] problem.

7 Excellent I did! I would have loved it as a 4th year. It also would have validated how much I had learned and changed in the past 4 years and provide some comfort to the new students.

8 Interns + 4 + 3, 2, 1 year. Why not have all 6 levels represented, on one case? I think they do this at McMaster.
6.6  How about some training for those people (residents, interns) that are supervising us? (Douglas, 1996b, pp. 33-34; italics reflect comments made by readers of the first version of the narrative report).

In the section below, I listed overall recommendations for the D.V.M. program. Note that one participant disagreed with the use of computerized mastery modules because it would further limit relational connection:

1. Rethink the purpose and design of the first (or Pre-vet) year. It would seem to make sense for motivational reasons alone, to introduce one or two core courses immediately. At least one course should involve hands-on contact with animals, perhaps learning the rudiments of a well-animal physical exam.

2. Examine ways of helping diverse students integrate within the community, for example, through expanded groups (Mentor-Buddy program and other interest groups) as well as through experiential-learning opportunities (working as assistants to faculty or a range of jobs in the college, teaching hospitals).

3. Expand the role of students helping students by involving senior students in teaching roles with faculty supervision. Not only does that contribute to “deep” rather than “surface” learning for senior students, but it provides greater contact for junior members.

4. Consider moving away from lectures as much as possible. Computerized mastery modules could be used individually, freeing faculty for other more creative forms of teaching and mentorship. [I don’t agree], I think this depersonalizes more, not less.

5. Integrate experience throughout the curriculum in order to enhance learning as
6. Examine the total demands being made of students holistically, year-by-year as well as specific to individual courses and rotations. Make attempts to equalize the load, eliminating unnecessary demands.

7. Ensure that tests adequately sample the domain of content which has been taught. Provide feedback that is not only numerical. Targeted, diagnostic feedback helps a student recognize where they have mastery and where they have yet to develop it.

8. Match evaluation with sophistication of student. Demonstrate to students through a range of communications the college’s appreciation of their growing skill base. Evaluation which might be appropriate for first year, might be interpreted as demeaning in fourth year.

9. Be alert to methods being used to access externship and rotation spots. Some students apparently feel that methods may disadvantage students who are last to choose in the process.

10. Increase the involvement of senior students in activities which help to convey the college’s belief in them as competent.

11. Offer opportunities for faculty to learn about developmental supervision, mentoring and skill evaluation.

12. Suggestions that would make the program and facility more hospitable to women included: create a clear policy regarding maternity leaves, semester starts and fourth year rotations (some students were given conflicting and confusing information when they sought it), establish a more semester-based system to allow greater flexibility, have some
place within the college that could serve as a baby change station, consider a child-care space where women could volunteer to help people in fourth year, more flexibility for people (male or female) who have children. Less urgent but still desirable suggestions included: coveralls and scrubs that are designed for women and fit, remove the urinals from the women’s washrooms, improve changing and washroom facilities including sanitary napkin dispenser. Are women comfortable getting counselling from men in administration? No. Have more female faculty.

13. Assess and design ways to improve the Mentor-Buddy program or some similar type of intervention.

14. Inform faculty about the benefits of mentoring students and perhaps hold a workshop for those interested in facilitating student involvement and connection.

15. Assess and design a strategy by administration to maintain regular contact/communication with upper as well as lower year students. E-mail has been used in the past, however, it has certain limitations that prevent true dialogue, relationship or recognition of non-verbal indicators of distress.

16. Be alert to continued discrimination of students on externship; treatment of students might be quite variable. Consider open discussion or post-externship supportive interviews as a supplement to written evaluation.

17. Continue to impress upon professional associations the important roles that members play in shaping the futures of adolescents. Articles in newsletters or workshops for interested practitioners might be considered.

18. Integrate values clarification as part of the professional curriculum to enable
students to understand their own positions on emotional issues. Help students to relate their own positions to the continuum of positions and the dominant (albeit relativistic) view in the profession.

19. Conduct some training in assessment of type of human-animal relationship to equip the vet with a cognitive framework for intervention.

20. Teach a grief process model and human relations skills training appropriate to such circumstances. Discuss a coping model for veterinarians who must deal frequently with animal death or who feel vulnerable themselves due to recent loss. (Douglas, 1996b, pp. 36-38)

**Connections to recent events.**

Without involvement in the process of the college, following response to the recommendations was difficult. Beyond the initial consultation and help-seeking related to student selection, the college has hired an “educationalist” with background from OISE/UT. They have eliminated the pre-vet year and they published newspaper articles related to the experience of being a veterinary student. In a chance discussion with a veterinary student in October 1998, I learned of a few additional changes one which may disadvantage women. There is no longer an option for students to attend part-time. Although the woman who gave me the information could understand the administrative dilemmas in trying to coordinate a demanding curriculum, she stated that it is a “single person’s program.” Maintaining family or outside relationships is virtually impossible. Elimination of the part-time option will likely introduce a barrier for women with children and for students who, for other reasons, may be unable to carry a
full course load. Gathering data related to the shifting demographics of students following program design change would be valuable.

7.6 Connection to Career Development Research

Career development theories appear to offer little to explain the origins of desires or wishes to devote a life to some interest or object which is evidently what these women chose to do. In attempting to find a connection, I had the opportunity to review a very old account by Roe and Siegelman (1964) of the origin of interests. Of some possible connection to my data, was Roe's original notion of the importance of the family context in the object choice for career (people-oriented or not-people oriented). More recent theorists do not appear to concern themselves with the question of how interests arise but rather with how to measure and predict career choice from them.

An observation which I wish to emphasize from the first context, is the obvious importance of familial support as a contributor to the women's persistence. I have previously referenced Betz' (1994a) synthesis of factors which facilitate women's career development. My findings support in some of the cases: working mother, supportive father, highly educated parents, female role models, work experiences as adolescent, androgynous upbringing as likely contributing variables. My data strongly underscore the interpersonal responsiveness of parents as selfobjects. Descriptively, I was impressed by the efforts of a father helping to locate experiences and work with animals, by a mother who seemed willing to drop everything to type an application which was due the next day, of a mother's empathy and expression of love upon rejection from veterinary college, and of a father's reassurance that it is acceptable not to know
everything upon graduating from professional school, that inner feelings of competence would come in time. In many cases, these were parents who were present throughout the entire journey as emotional and instrumental supports. I strongly support the emerging literature (Penick & Jepsen, 1992; Young, 1993; Young & Friesen, 1992; Young, Frieson & Dillabough, 1991) which emphasizes the role of parents in career development. Unfortunately, this research may be applicable to historically advantaged white, middle-class, educated persons but may underscore further the many structural aspects of disadvantage characteristic of other groups which cannot draw upon intact, supportive families.

The rest of the journey extended the women’s interaction in other social contexts where I have noted a marked decline in responsiveness within the educational context yet occasional validation by professional mentors. Their accounts of watching and learning from vets in practice rang loudly of Belenky et al.’s (1986) description of the epistemological position of “received knowing” where experts are seen as sources of knowledge. At this stage, I also found evidence for the empathy which characterizes connected knowing, where the women described really knowing the animals, or imagining what an animal’s pain might feel like by projecting self into the other (Clinchy, 1996). Judgements about what constituted “good vet medicine” seemed to be made according to evidence of nurturance in how the animal was treated.

That previous research has clearly indicated the important role of mentors in women’s career development (Noe, 1988) makes my own findings rather obvious. Nevertheless, I would argue that it permits my extending the interpersonal development model beyond the family and early life. Given that empathy was an important quality in the women’s involvement with animals, we might suspect it was also important to them. Also noteworthy in these data, is the absence of
indication of loss of voice which Brown and Gilligan (1992) and Hancock (1989) have argued occurs within the adolescent years.

The themes provide incentive for further use of the concept of self and animal schema (Markus & Oyserman, 1989) in tracing the development of self and orientation to Markus' term of "possible self" and the refinement of clinical assessment tools.

Taken together the themes of this thesis relate to the women's development of self-confidence in the role of veterinarian. Striking is the finding that reports of strength and confidence emerged at different points in the life story, typically at moments where the woman was active, attempting to master a difficult task, or felt the trust from another through being given responsibility. Confidence emerged at a very early age in some stories, in adolescent work environments, in active steps to meet the criteria for admission, in junior surgery, in the externship practices. Confidence was inhibited by role constraining messages such as continual criticism, behavioural restrictions due to gender discrimination or the clinical rotation hierarchy. Given that women's career behaviour is informed by an inner sense of self competence, self-efficacy, the importance of opportunity in development becomes clear. In the past, models of femininity sometimes precluded young girls' participation in exploration, rough activity, or challenging tasks yet those domains were quite appropriate for normative male development. Provision of opportunities to be challenged seem to be prerequisites of the developing sense of competence for girls. Mirroring of a father's perception of her as capable seems important in the family of origin. Later on, encouragement from respected role models provides the same developmental ingredient. Like an elastic stretching forward, mirroring encouragement draws her forward; yet also like an elastic, a prick or lack of trust can cause her to spring backwards. This model of competence
development occurs within the context of relationships and takes into account the response of the social context.

If, as some theorists suggest, women have more externally responsive relational selves, it would suggest a heightened openness, responsivity and readiness to adapt to the outer interpersonal world. Although the emphasis in this dissertation has been on the subjectively experienced external socializing environment in accounting for the experiences of the women, more sophisticated models of human behaviour emphasize intensive study of both person and context. Future research that capitalizes on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies might attempt to replicate and extend this study.

7.6 Implications for Counselling Psychology Practice

My study of a process of professional socialization stimulated my own reflection about my own experience which I discuss in this section. Counselling psychology as defined by its curriculum generally places emphasis on normal development of persons and on life adjustment issues. While some authors have argued that counselling psychology is blurred with clinical psychology, the practice of career counselling represents an important unique specialization which has often failed to be seen as prestigious despite its complexity (Krumboltz, 1994). Currently there is considerable national interest in Canada in defining the competencies for career counselling practice, yet unfortunately, Canadian Psychology has not taken a leadership role in that movement. This research has illustrated the multiple life points in a single profession, veterinary medicine, which would benefit from increased research, practice, and theory building by psychologists.
In my opinion, the curriculum of counselling psychology with coursework in individual assessment and psychotherapy places insufficient emphasis on methodologies to assess the nature of the contexts in which individuals live, study, and work. Counselling Psychologists who specialize in process-oriented, subjective research would benefit from collaborative work with psychologists who specialize in objective measurement of persons and environments, such as Industrial-Organizational practitioners. The complexity of work-related issues with which people are faced demand the integrated and collaborative teamwork of psychologists alert to clinical, developmental, and workplace research and practice. Psychology is not unlike veterinary medicine, in the complexity of the discipline or in the information intense knowledge demands. As the world is moving toward models of collaborative working groups, we are still training individual practitioners. In the course of conducting this study, for example, it was surprising for me to realize how separate the literatures are for each speciality area despite the obvious similarity and overlap. I suspect that within some academic psychology departments, there are factors that interfere with collaboration. Cultures of interpersonal arrogance, competition, disdain for others, and critical distance in relationships are present in psychology as well. Thus, I have developed an opinion on the shape and future of my own profession in this process as well. These substantive questions might be developed in future for research and growth in the profession of psychology.

Like Guttman (1991) and O’Brien (1996) I would concur that implications exist for high school and counseling interventions with women and their parents. Both should be educated about the importance of both connection and supportive others and movement toward independence while navigating the career decision-making process . . .

career counseling could assist high school women in addressing the issues that limit their
development as independent, autonomous women who maintain connections with significant others. Parents could be encouraged to examine their influence on the career decision-making process of their daughters and their feelings about their daughters movement toward independence. Perhaps the most effective intervention would occur with parents and children long before high school. Programs designed for families might encourage parents to provide . . . educational and life experiences in both traditional and nontraditional areas for women with the hope of influencing their efficacy, broadening their range of career options, and enabling them to select congruent and realistic careers (O’Brien, 1996, p. 271).

Finally, I would argue that Counselling Psychologists have potentially valuable roles to play within postsecondary education as well as within professions and the workplace in conducting research necessary to provide guidance for systemic intervention and change aimed to improve the wellbeing of individuals and groups. My own study was a small example of how some of my recommendations were taken seriously by the Veterinary College. The publication of a student experience article (Appendix X) was one response. Below is an excerpt from a Senate Report in At Guelph, the University of Guelph institutional paper, October 22, 1997 that echoed observations in my 1996 narrative report, O.V.C. Will Eliminate Pre-Veterinary Year . . . seen by students as a “false start”. . . also to use the Medical College Admissions Test as a selection instrument. . . female student senator “lauded this move, saying it will put all applicants to the D.V.M. program on a level playing field.”

Only further research will discover whether such programmatic changes indeed influence student
experience for the better.

7.7 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

This study was my first attempt to research from within a qualitative paradigm. Because I had been previously well-trained in a positivist paradigm, I found it occasionally difficult to make the perceptual shifts. Ultimately, I believe that I was successful and in so doing, gained a much deeper appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm and the research questions that are best served by one or the other. Given my extensive previous discussion of the methodology literature, I will not, at this point, defend the paradigm I used. My intent was to understand subjective experience and the method was appropriate for the research focus. Some features of my study might be critiqued from the perspective of meeting or not meeting qualitative research criteria.

The first criticism emerges from the nature of the specific method, life history. While I found this to be a very open and broad approach to use to explore the subjective experience of becoming a veterinarian, my work was both too broad and also lacking in depth. The psychological structure of a life history emerges from the life of an individual and typically requires extensive data collection. I had several constraints which prevented me from conducting exemplary life histories. Respect for the wishes of my participants to remain anonymous required that I depart from presenting the data as individual life histories. From an ethical perspective, I hope that I have avoided harm and researched with care. My interviews would have been deeper had more time been allocated to them. I had to compromise due to the time that was realistically available from the students as well as myself. A longitudinal design with repeated interviews in
different years, combined with participant observation would have provided a more extensive relationship with participants and the opportunity for them to speak from the experiences in which they were currently immersed. Observations would have provided triangulation of the data.

Instead of life history, a less broad, more focused research question such as the study of the externship experience by Patterson (1991), would have constrained and limited what we spoke about. Instead, I have many detailed yet insufficiently explored themes. As a strength, I gained a broad perspective on the entire experience and it has generated some interesting hypotheses to be followed up with future research. Moreover, the findings appeared to be validated both by participants and the educational context and are not inconsistent with the literature. Therefore, despite weaknesses in data gathering, the findings “make sense.” This I would argue is the qualitative criterion of credibility.

The second area of criticism relates to myself as a researcher. My inexperience with qualitative methodology made it a very labourious process. My uncertainty has perhaps led me to use caution, for example, in coding all of the data twice. It has seemed to be the best way to learn to be a qualitative researcher, so from my own perspective I have gained much skill and understanding. One important understanding has been the way in which my own bias interacted with the study. I understood at the outset that I was interested in emphasizing relationships; however, my overemphasis became increasingly evident to me as I worked through the analysis of the data. Unlike data from an extensive life history which I had elicited as a reflective listener, I intentionally probed for relational experiences throughout the telling of the story. Would the women have emphasized their relationships as much as I did? That is an unanswerable question and it reveals how the consciousness of the researcher can become intermingled with that of the
participant in ways that are impossible to untangle. While the women provided me with rich examples and illustrations of relational themes, it is possible that we did not speak about other experiential themes given our limited time. Experiences were likely left out of the stories. For example, if I led the women to overemphasize attachment, perhaps we didn’t explore the other pole of separateness. The issue of how much weight or attention to devote to topics was not clearly established. If I were to repeat the study, I would attempt to provide adequate space for both poles.

Finally, a more compelling argument for the interpersonal thesis I advance in this research would have been possible had I supplemented the interview material with objective measures and subjected my findings to rigorous hypothesis-testing. If the college were interested, for example, it might be possible to administer attitudinal, orientation, and symptomatology questionnaires to students in diverse years of the D.V.M. and possibly to faculty members as well. Carefully chosen, validated measures of particular constructs might support or clarify the speculations made in this thesis. In my opinion, that represents my research future.


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Appendix I: Veterinary Medicine and Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.)

According to the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association’s background information about the career (CVMA Homepage, August 1996), “veterinarians are far more than people with a fondness for animals [but are] . . . doctor[s] of animal health . . . licensed to provide medical and surgical care for animals.” Of the approximately 7,500 veterinarians in Canada, the CVMA estimates that “one third . . . work with food producing animals and in mixed practice . . . [others] practice in small animal and pet clinics.” Broken down by employer, the CVMA suggests the following:

- Private Practice 75%
- Government 10%
- Teaching and Research 5%
- Industry 5%

“The average income of Canadian veterinarians is between $32,000 and $57,000 a year . . . The initial yearly income for a new veterinarian in private practice is usually between $32,000 and $37,000. The starting salary offered to new graduates by the federal government is $36,783 a year (as of February 1989).”

Ontario Veterinary College (O.V.C.) was established in Toronto in 1862 and was not in Guelph until 1922 (Source for dates: document entitled “Campus Histories”, dated December, 1982, obtained from executive office of the University of Guelph). O.V.C. “has been in continuous operation longer than any other veterinary college in the Americas” (Data from Ontario Veterinary College NEWS SHEET, The Ontario Veterinary College is... 1992 fundraising release) and it was one of the first North American veterinary colleges to graduate a woman in
1928. Several years earlier the stately, red brick main building was built. In time, a long, three-story brick extension, the medical surgical building was added in 1959. A pathology wing was completed in 1976.

It was not until 1964, that the University of Guelph was formed by an act of the provincial legislature (The University of Guelph Act, 1964), the act to incorporate the university, and intended to unite seven colleges, one of which was Ontario Veterinary College. To this day, O.V.C. operates somewhat independently of the central university administration, as do most other colleges, retaining a distinctive culture and atmosphere.

By 1976, O.V.C. ranked third in North America in the absolute numbers of women graduated, with a total of 185 female graduates from 1903-1976. Michigan and Pennsylvania were ranked 1 and 2 according to the statistics compiled by Calhoun and Houpt (1976). Today, roughly 75% of the student body is female; however, a minority of the faculty is female.

According to the NEWS SHEET, there are “140 graduate students, 120 faculty members and about 250 staff”. A listing from a recent academic calendar showed 158 faculty, approximately 30 or 19% of whom were female. This count could be verified through the O.V.C. Dean’s Office. It is unclear from the above data how many of the women currently have teaching roles or formal contact with students.

There are five departments: Biomedical Sciences, Clinical Studies, Population Medicine, Pathology, Veterinary Microbiology and Immunology and the Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

Programs offered are: Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (D.V.M.), Master of Science (M.Sc.), Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Doctor of Veterinary Science (D.V.Sc.), and a Graduate Diploma. Indications of change within the profession suggest that the traditional role of animal treatment is
evolving into other roles. These roles are related to disease control and preventive medicine for herds, roles within food production teams, “advising on management, nutrition, growth rate, fertility, breeding soundness, embryo transfer, milk production” and behaviour problems. “Non-traditional” subjects now taught include, “economics, epidemiology, computing, business management and, because of the present emphasis on animal welfare, professional ethics” (NEWS SHEET). Actively engaged in both research and teaching, O.V.C. boasts “the latest in surgical techniques and instrumentation . . . on par with the best hospitals of human medicine” within its Veterinary Teaching Hospital. Areas of strength in treatment include: orthopaedics, cardiology, neurology, cancer treatment, and respiratory function analysis. Continuing education courses are grouped into the two major divisions in practice: small or companion animals and large animals.
Appendix II: Recruitment Letter for Pilot Project

November 19, 1993

Student name
O.V.C. Box number

Dear (first name),

I am a doctoral student in the Counselling Psychology program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (connected to the University of Toronto), live in Guelph and have worked in Student Affairs at the University of Guelph. Several weeks ago, I met with Dr. (administrator) of Ontario Veterinary College, in order to explore the possibility of conducting my dissertation research with students in the program.

I indicated to [administrator] that my interest is one of exploring the experience of professional education in the O.V.C. program with women students. I am not conducting the research on behalf of O.V.C. or the University of Guelph; however, it may be of use in future. My primary interest is research related to students’ experiences – what is it like to be a veterinary medicine student? I intend to frame my research in a way which would be useful to and, in part, influenced by the kinds of issues students would like to see addressed. For that reason, I would like to involve students as co-researchers - as partners with me to further refine the research questions as well as to think through some of the uses of the data.

At this stage, I have not finished writing my proposal, but felt a need to talk to students who might be able to voice an opinion about the worthiness of the research, the types of issues which should be addressed, and the possible applications to the OVC program and professional practice. I mentioned to [administrator] that it would be helpful to chat with several women students (individually or in a group) and he suggested that I might informally approach students through Mary in the Dean’s Office. When I telephoned Mary this week, she suggested that you might be interested in discussing my research. She encouraged me to send you a letter and gave me your P.O. box number.

I can imagine that your schedule is hectic and I am quite willing to work within your constraints. Basically, an hour or two before the middle of December would be fine. We could arrange to meet somewhere convenient when you have some space to talk. We can chat on the phone first if you would like, or if time is problematic. Your input is crucial to the design and content of my research. If you can find time to speak with me, I’d really appreciate it.

You can reach me by phone after 4:00 p.m. most days at (I have an answering machine which works...most of the time..). Please give me a call and let me know either way, if interested in meeting or not interested in meeting.

Thanks very much,

Kathy Douglas
Appendix III: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Title of Study: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF SELF IN RELATION TO THE PROCESS OF BECOMING VETERINARIANS

Researcher: Kathryn A. Douglas

PURPOSE: You are being invited to participate in an exploration of the experiences of women in veterinary medicine education and practice. Of considerable importance will be discussion of the ways in which you have experienced yourself as a veterinary medicine student and the profession itself. The objective of this research is to better understand the experiences that women have as they move into non-traditional careers and professions. In that context, it will shed light on in-depth experiences and be useful to educators and students in future.

PROCEDURES: The method to be used in learning about your experiences will be negotiated by us both; however, usually some type of in-depth interviewing has proven to be the best approach. If we agree to follow that approach, the minimum expectation will be 3 separate interviews, each of 90 minutes, scheduled no further than one week apart. In the interviews, which will be tape recorded, I will ask you to reflect on and share your knowledge and insights of your experience in veterinary medicine. I will ask you questions pertaining to your experience of your work in order to clarify my own understanding. I will make every effort I can to protect the confidentiality of the interview material. Either I or a reputable and discreet individual will transcribe the interviews in such a way that neither your name or the names of persons mentioned by you are in print. The tapes will be kept in my locked files and will not be made available to others. You are welcome to listen to them if you wish. Following each transcription, I will give you a copy of the interview data to look over and catch inaccuracies. Later on, when I have had a chance to organize your comments, I would like to recontact you and have you read and respond to my organizing, perhaps reflecting further on ideas that come to you at that time. I will then organize your comments into themes and prepare to write up the results. There are two ways to do this: one involves writing an extensive profile of your experience using mostly your own words. The other involves grouping your comments into thematic categories. I would like you to have the option at that stage to indicate to me which reporting method you prefer, since profiles, even when pseudonyms are used, can be recognizable by people who know you. The thematic approach would allow me to intersperse your comments with those of other students. You will be better able to make this decision when the interviews are over and you have had a chance to read the transcripts. Then you will know what the material looks like. I would like to invite you to work with me in analyzing the themes, and helping to organize and present the results. One possibility would be to have a group meeting with other students who have worked with me so that we can identify and explore common themes in experiences. This might be of some personal use for you. I would like to raise this with you after the interviews so that you can decide whether you have the time or interest to be more involved. The results from this research will be
written up as my dissertation. I may also use the material later on for presentation at conferences and/or a book.

RISKS & BENEFITS: I hope you find participation in the interviews to be helpful in enhancing awareness of your own thoughts and feelings related to your professional experience in veterinary medicine. Talking about the issues will possibly help you to reconceptualize them and consider important choices for your future. It is possible, because in-depth interviews can arouse personal material, that thinking about your experiences will arouse feelings of sadness, anger or anxiety which you haven't had time to experience. In that event, I can talk to you about those feelings following our interview, or I could suggest to you some alternatives to deal with them. As indicated previously, later on, I may be interested in doing a conference presentation or in writing a book based on our work. You may be interested in being a contributor. In either case, I would like permission to keep your permanent address on file so that I can contact you. We would need to have an equitable arrangement regarding any royalties related to such work. I would be prepared to divide half of the royalties equally among all participants.

CONFIDENTIALITY: All of the data I collect will be carefully filed to protect confidentiality. Audiotapes will be destroyed after my dissertation has been accepted. As already indicated, I will use your words as much as possible in the writing of the results, and will discuss with you at the time of writing your preference for either profile or thematic presentation. No identifying information related to person, place or events will be included. I will use a pseudonym in place of your actual name.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW: You may refuse to participate. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the study has started. You also have the right to withdraw any part of the interview data you choose if it seems uncomfortable for you to include it. You do not have to participate in data analysis or presentation; however it is your right to consider doing so, your schedule permitting.

REMUNERATION: Participation in this study will be voluntary; however there may be a possibility of some royalties should the work be published.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions, please feel free to ask. If you have any additional questions or concerns after we meet, you can reach me at (you may need to leave a message on my answering machine, but I will call you as soon as I can).

Date ___________________________ Signature of participant

Date ___________________________ Signature of researcher
Appendix IV: Demographic Data Form

CONFIDENTIAL DATA FORM

NAME

DATE

ACADEMIC RECORD

Year Started O.V.C. ___________ Current Semester ___________

GPA ___________

INTERVIEW DATES:

Interview #1 ______________________ Confirmation call ___

Interview #2 ______________________ Confirmation call ___

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

Birth date (day/month/year) ___/___/___ Nationality _________________

Where born (City/Country) _____________ Ethnic Group ________________

Language Preferred ________________ Length of time in Canada _______

Are you currently involved in a serious relationship? (Circle) yes no

Will your plans after graduation include those of a partner? yes no

Education level of father (circle appropriate level):

1 some high school
2 high school graduate
3 college diploma
4 some university
5 bachelor's degree
6 graduate or professional degree
7 other (please describe) ________________________________

Education level of mother (circle appropriate level):

1 some high school
2 high school graduate
3 college diploma
4 some university
5 bachelor's degree
6 graduate or professional degree
7 other (please describe) ________________________________

Occupation of father: ________________________________
   Is your father currently employed? (circle) yes no
   Has your father recently (within the past 12 months):
       1 retired
       2 been fired
       3 quit his job
       4 been transferred

Occupation of mother: ________________________________
   Is your mother currently employed? (circle) yes no
   Has your mother recently (within the past 12 months):
       1 retired
       2 been fired
       3 quit her job
       4 been transferred

Are your parents currently:
   1 both living
   2 both deceased
   3 one deceased (which parent?) ________________
       1 separated
       2 divorced

Following graduation, where, and with whom do you intend to live?
   ____________________________________________________

What are your professional plans following graduation? What do you intend to do?
   ____________________________________________________

Permanent address where you might be reached over the next few years for follow-up or my need to contact you regarding uses of the data.

Telephone (area code): (____)_________________________
Appendix V: Life History Interview Protocol

Two unstructured, phenomenologically oriented interviews, each lasting 60-90 minutes were planned. All interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Face to face contact was planned after at least one extended telephone conversation that elaborated upon the nature of the research and established a mutually convenient time and place to meet. In all cases, women were sent a personalized letter with a Consent form and a Confidential Data form to read beforehand and bring to the interview.

I. **Greeting and informal rapport building** - friendly discussion to continue relationship development. Sometimes I bought or brought along refreshments such as tea, cookies or offered to buy some refreshments on our way to an interview location.

II. **Restatement of or further introduction to the interview process** - solicitation and response to questions. Query of response to the Consent form and Confidential Data form, which had frequently been left at home. I was prepared with extra other copies.

III. **Most interviews began** - in conversation with the woman as she completed the Confidential Data form that provided considerable opportunity for history gathering related to family of origin status, career behaviour and facilitation of the woman’s career. I freely answered questions directed to me and permitted some self-disclosure so they would come to know me to some extent as I was coming to know them.

IV. **Narrative** - I then indicated that I was interested in her journey on the path of becoming a veterinarian - how she had experienced that journey, high points and low points. I emphasized that she was the expert on that experience. I introduced the notion of a future audience as others (other students, future students, faculty, O.V.C. administrators, veterinarians) who likely would be interested in her account. Some women wondered whether I would be asking questions and I indicated that I could if they wanted me to; however, I suggested that perhaps we could start at the beginning, “when you first realized you wanted to be a veterinarian.” Everyone found that a comfortable starting point and after about ten minutes, we were deep in conversation.

I noted several types of verbal behaviour on my part:

1. Minimal encouragers such as: “really, mmhumm, of course”

2. Empathic statements: “that must have been difficult for you when that happened” or sharing a similar or related experience of mine to compare our mutual experiences.

3. Clarifying questions: “Now was that in second year when you felt that way? Was that before or after you had the experience in the clinic? I’m not sure I understand the difference between vegetarian and vegan. Could you explain it for me? Could you give me
a specific example of the kind of experience that made you feel weird?"

4. Summary/Validation statements: “So what I understand is that during those four years, you felt that you were drifting, not anchored to any particular goal, but not especially concerned about that?”

5. Probes: if not spontaneously mentioned, I tried to ask about position with respect to animals, own experiences with animals, impact of significant other people, mentors, learning experiences, strategies for getting into veterinary medicine, high points and low points, career commitment at this point, type of practice, views on euthanasia and learning surgery, perceptions of peers, the learning environment, and the profession which they were entering, sources of stress, ways they would like to change the D.V.M. program to better suit their or other women’s needs, and view of themselves at the current stage of development.

6. Questions about the interview experience:

1. “What do you understand to be the purpose of this research?”
2. “What has it been like for you to be interviewed in this way?”
3. “How have you experienced me?”
4. “Have you felt free to express yourself?” “Did you feel there were right or wrong answers implied by my questions?”
5. “Do you think we missed anything important in your experience?”

V. Closing: further plans to meet as with second interviews or plans for me to be in contact by mail or telephone. I also invited nomination of peers who might have interest in participating in the research.
Appendix VI: Participant Recruitment Letter

Dear

Over the past year and a half, I have met with (administrator) and (administrator) to explore the possibility of conducting my dissertation research with O.V.C. students. I am pleased to say that both have been encouraging and supportive. Specifically I am interested in learning more about career processes such as professional identification and professional socialization from the perspective of insiders to that process - the students themselves. I will be concentrating on studying the experiences of women students only, since there is much about the career development of women that is not well understood.

I am a doctoral student at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and for a number of years have been a counsellor in Student Affairs here at the University of Guelph. I am not conducting the research on behalf of O.V.C. or the University of Guelph; however, it may be of use to both. Primary is my interest in doing research related to students’ experiences in a way which would be useful to and in part, influenced by the kinds of issues students would like to see addressed. For that reason, I would like to involve students as co-researchers - as partners with me to further refine the research questions as well as to think through some of the uses of the data.

(Administrator) gave me a few names of final year students so that I could approach students directly. This letter is your invitation to consider being involved in the research with an understanding that your participation will be kept confidential and the terms of the research will be fully explained before you commit yourself. In total it should take about 3 hours of your time before graduation in April - arranged at a time that is convenient for you.

Before you decide whether or not you want to participate, I would suggest that you give me a call (evenings are best). We can chat on the phone so that you can get a better idea of my interests. I see your input as really crucial in helping to shape the direction of my research, so if you can fit me in I’d really appreciate it.

You can reach me by phone after 4:00 p.m. most days at (I have an answering machine which works...most of the time...). So give me a call and let me know either way, if interested in meeting or not interested in meeting.

Thanks very much,
Kathy Douglas
Appendix VII: Participant Recruitment Poster

FINAL YEAR STUDENTS NEEDED

I would like to talk with 8-10 final year female students about the experience of becoming a veterinarian - specifically, the final year experience. I am conducting a qualitative study for my dissertation research at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. If you are interested in sharing your personal experiences please contact me at and ask for Kathy (evenings preferred).

Participation in this research will involve:

* 2 meetings with me
* no more than 3 hours of your time
* follow-up contact after graduation
* confidentiality
* an opportunity to educate others about the experience
* an opportunity for personal reflection
* a contribution to a void in the career development literature

I would be happy to discuss the research project further with you over the telephone before you decide whether or not to participate.

Posted: January 26 1995
Appendix VIII: Request for Feedback on Narrative Report

May 1996

Dear,

I hope that things are going reasonably well for you at the moment. I’m sorry that it has taken me so long to get through the data I collected. Transcribing took much longer than I figured it would and sorting and clustering the interview texts was a challenge. Out of it all, I feel satisfied that I have learned a lot about this type of research. I just hope you remember having been a participant!

I have reached a stage prior to actually writing my dissertation where I need to seek some validation from participants. I realized that having you read your interview transcript wouldn’t show you how I was linking your comments to those of others. So I’ve taken a big gamble in hoping that you would be comfortable seeing your comments in a text with others (I’ve highlighted yours). It seemed that everyone was interested in knowing what others said as well, so this is one way of accomplishing that.

I have taken precautions to mask, distort and minimize any information that could identify anyone so what we have is more of a program evaluation of the D.V.M. My dissertation will be a little richer I’m sure. I also wanted to accomplish an objective of feeding back everyone’s good ideas to the O.V.C. administration so I am simultaneously releasing this report to the Dean, who I think will have [administrator] and [administrator] read it. I am asking everyone to refrain from further distribution at this time. We are entering a validation process where everyone has an opportunity to read the report and ask themselves, “Is this pretty much the way I see it?” You then need to forward your comments back to me. I will then issue everybody a supplementary memo indicating points of agreement and points of disagreement.

For my ease in interpreting your comments, please use the following method while reading the report:

Agree with section [Leave margin blank]

Strongly agree with section [Make a check ✓ in margin]

Disagree with section [Mark the section you disagree with and write out your perspective]

Please mail the report back to me with the completed Follow-up Questionnaire. Please feel free to call if you have any questions.

Take care,

Kathy Douglas
Appendix IX: Follow-up Questionnaire

Since we last spoke, it is likely that you have had a number of experiences which might relate to the purpose of my research. For example, you might have had experiences which might lead you to have expanded or different ideas about the topics we discussed. This follow-up questionnaire is an opportunity for you to clarify, add to, or correct ideas which you previously expressed. It also provides me a way to ask a few additional questions about your life since the time of our interview. Please telephone me if you would like any question clarified. Thank you very much for taking time from your busy schedule.

1. Current activity (check all that apply):
   - still attending O.V.C.
   - attending another educational program (please specify ________________________)
   - employed full-time (specify type of practice ________________________)
   - employed part-time (specify type of practice ________________________)
   - not working or studying (specify reason ________________________)

   Additional comments:

2. If you are working presently, are you satisfied with (check all that apply):
   - your working conditions
   - your salary
   - your working relationships
   - your personal life
   
   Please comment on areas of satisfaction or dissatisfaction:

3. Since we last spoke, do you have any further ideas about changes you would like to have had in (please comment where relevant; leave blank if you have nothing further to add; use extra sheets if needed):
   - the O.V.C. curriculum
   - the O.V.C. community
practical experience

school to work transition

post-graduation support or networks

unique issues facing women in veterinary medicine

4. Please rate yourself as you see yourself currently on the following dimensions:

Confident not at all somewhat fairly very much
Satisfied not at all somewhat fairly very much
Enthusiastic not at all somewhat fairly very much
Prepared not at all somewhat fairly very much

5. Please note any changes in your permanent address for further contact.

Name ______________________________
Street, City ______________________________
Province/Country ______________________________
Postal Code ______________________________
Telephone ______________________________

Return this with your comments on the report in the self-addressed, stamped envelope provided
Appendix X: Postscript - Results from Follow-up Survey

I had little contact with the women after they graduated. Some wrote letters and most responded to the first version of the D.V.M. Program Report mailed roughly one year after the original interviews. I followed up a couple of women by phone. Of the two women who wrote extensive updates, the accounts were less positive than they had hoped for. One woman was having difficulty finding stable employment and had lost her dog; it was hit by a car. The other woman had her first ever encounter with gender discrimination in the workplace.

The results from the follow-up questionnaire are reproduced from the final report (Douglas, 1996b) below. Eight of the ten participants responded to the questionnaire. By fall 1996 participant status was as follows:

Table 10

Follow-up Survey Results: Participant Status as of Fall 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Number of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Still attending O.V.C.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending another institution</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking for employment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Work satisfaction was mixed among those who were employed. The data are summarized in the table below.
Table 11

Work Satisfaction Among Four Employed Grads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Satisfaction Domain</th>
<th>Number Indicating Satisfied</th>
<th>Number Indicating Not satisfied</th>
<th>Verbatim Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working conditions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Too much on call. I work over 100 hours a week. There are 5 other people in the practice but I do most of the on call. I work at two clinics; one runs well and the other doesn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have not received a raise since I started... I am working more hours than I started with! Too little money!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working relationships</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Working more than 100 hours/week I have very little time for myself or my husband. [Satisfied] but we were working too hard. Pleasantly surprised. You do not need as many of all those things you worried about in O.V.C. There is a whole set of unknown challenges to deal with. People relationships are SO important especially in the workplace. Also, you have to learn to reward yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal life</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Data based on four participants, one of whom had stopped working to intern. One participant checked both satisfied and not satisfied with respect to working conditions.

Some participants took the opportunity to have a “last word” about O.V.C. and I will try to respect that in this postscript. Responses are outlined in Table 12 below. There are no surprises, as comments echo the themes that have already been presented.
Table 12

Further Suggestions for O.V.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Problem-based learning, problem-solving skills, longer/continue externship, more spots in electives. Make ophthalmology core. Start clinical work much sooner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Training to increase awareness and acceptance of diversity (racism, sexism, homophobia). Maintain good staff. More support/openness from clinicians; we need our confidence built up, not crushed. O.V.C. needs to develop a policy on pregnancy (flexibility in semester attendance, exam writing) and to realize and accommodate family schedules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Experience</td>
<td>We need more as we leave feeling unprepared and without confidence. Don’t put limits on the number of people in rotations or increase frequency so everyone can get what they need (e.g. ophtho, cardio). Externship is vital to learning; make sure practices chosen will let students do lots.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School to Work Transition</td>
<td>More courses in business, communication, euthanasia. Not enough practical work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-graduation Support/Networks</td>
<td>Get us together in 4-6 months to talk about experiences would be the best therapy. Form an Internet group to swap stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues Facing Women</td>
<td>How do we juggle family and work? How can you work when you are pregnant? More women role models. How to combine family/work/self... the eternal (and unanswerable) question!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I had asked the women to rate themselves on several emotional dimensions which reflect their perceptions of themselves at this later point (up to two years after the original interviews).
Most said they were faring well. The self ratings are presented in the table below and taken together, the women seem vibrant and very much alive in their lifeworlds.

Table 13

**Participant Self-Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Number rating “not at all”</th>
<th>Number rating “somewhat”</th>
<th>Number rating “fairly”</th>
<th>Number rating “very much”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confident</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Based on six respondents.

As I departed from my researcher role, I could see that this study had created a type of dialogue between the women and the college as evidenced by the follow-up comments they made. The comments were not directed at me but at the college administrators who are trying to redesign the curriculum. I was pleased to see some of the women suggest ongoing contact related to the post-graduation experience to “swap stories.” I believe that through their intelligence and connection they will gradually transform the world “out there.” Within the college, the report was distributed, discussed and likely debated.

I have lost contact as a part of the process but heard casually from a vet student acquaintance (May 15, 1998) that the alternative program seems now to be presented as a valid option among her classmates. She’s in second year and her class was encouraged to think about it. She has to decide for herself, but she understands that ten people enrolled this past year. She said they were discussing it just recently in her ethics class.
In a more recent conversation with another vet student (October 25, 1998), I learned that along with some of the positive changes being made, the college had eliminated the option for part-time study. This program change will undoubtedly create a barrier to women with children as well as students with special needs.
You want to be a veterinarian.

The testing times of being a vet student.

Appendix: Newspaper article initiated by OVC

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