

Risky performances:

A feminist, dramaturgical exploration of the female diarist as resistant

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Author's declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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Abstract

Setting the stage

Risky performances:

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This study seeks to explore the meaning of diary-keeping for women. In particular, this research is focused on the relationships between the diary and leisure, the diary and performance, and the diary and dominant gender discourse. This study is guided by a feminist, dramaturgical, qualitative, interpretive framework. Unstructured “active” interviews with seven women in a rural, Nova Scotian community were used to create a collaborative process driven by the participants’ experiences as diarists. The phenomenological method was used to analyze the resulting transcripts. By incorporating interviews with diarists into the analysis, and by framing the research within leisure studies, this research addresses two gaps in the existing literature on diaries: the lack of women’s voices in the interpretation of their diaries and the absence of the diary in leisure studies.

This study found that the social experience of diary-keeping can reproduce dominant gender discourses; however, findings also demonstrated that women use their diaries to resist the ethic of care, disrupt oppressive dichotomies and take control of the direction of their lives. Furthermore, diaries are meaningful insofar as they allow the diarist to take control of her personal space, time, and life story. Through this space the diarist can perform the story of her life in whatever way she sees fit; she takes her performance to the public, despite the risk of doing so. Therefore, though the diary can act to reproduce traditional notions of femininity, this research found that it can also be a space for women to resist dominant gender discourses.

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AN EMERGENT THEMES PRODUCTION

"Dear Diary:
A thrilling, romantic
roller coaster ride!"

★★★★

"The Diarist is
seriously playful in
the lead role!"

★★★

"Carefully-crafted
with flawless vision -
The Diarist tells it
like it is!"

★★★★

"The Diarist hogs the
spotlight!"

★★★★

"A risky
performance - The
Diarist flirts with
disaster!"

★★★★ ½



STARRING THE DIARIST AS HERSELF!
WITH THE DIARIST AS THE PLAYWRIGHT!
THE DIARIST AS THE DIRECTOR!
AND THE DIARIST AS THE AUDIENCE!

1.0 **Based on a true story...**
Introduction

"If you were a nice girl, with a nice clean mind, you wouldn't keep a diary."
– Governess to her young ward (Shirley Temple) in "Kathleen"

November 4th, 2001

Dear Diary,

Today I found my grandmother's diary. It was encased within the frame of one of Granddad's paintings, stowed away at the back of Mum's closet all of these years. Even she hadn't known it was there. She did wonder, however, why I had been in her closet, and I said I was looking for shoes though really I was looking for left-over Halloween candy. It was a fruitless search, as it turns out.

But the treasure I did stumble upon turned out to be far more meaningful. Mum read aloud the passages in her mother's diary, telling the story of a young woman, a Chemist in England during World War II, who met and married a young Canadian soldier with whom she traveled to a new land. This woman was brave and scared, love struck and confused. Some diary entries were cheery and optimistic and some were frustrated and depressed. Most painted the picture of a well-educated woman struggling with her new role as wife and mother feeling displaced as a new Canadian. The entries tapered off, and stopped in 1967, the year that she died.

Mum said that she had never really known her mother until today. At first this struck me as sad, but when I thought about it, it really just means that after all of these years my grandmother is telling Mum her story. She's sharing herself, even though it's a fragmented, disjointed, often contradictory self, she's sharing herself with the world. And right now, somehow, somewhere, I might be doing the very same thing.

From Anne Frank to Bridget Jones, we are a culture fascinated with the diary. Mallon (1984) contends that an audience for a novel, movie, play, or television show is guaranteed if the word "diary" is included in the title. Indeed, there is a large market for both published diaries of actual people (from Virginia Woolf to Stevie Nicks) and fictional people (as in *Dracula* and *The Princess Diaries*). As Miller (2002) maintains, we are enthralled by the notion of reading about the lives of other people. The allure of the "other" lies in being privy to the innermost thoughts of

the diarist. Yet, through the diary we are not only party to the secret passions of the diarist, we are also party to her public world as well. The diary invites the reader to explore the social and cultural context of the world within which the diarist lives. Thus, through the diary we can gain insight into the prevailing behaviours, customs, and norms that guide the diarist's experiences.

The word 'diary' comes from the Latin "daily allowance" and has been understood to be the most private and personal of texts, illuminating and revealing the hidden thoughts of those around us (Bunkers & Huff, 1996, p. 5). However, it was only near the turn of the 20th century that the diary became a means of dealing with emotions and intimacies. Until this point, Rainer (1978) explains, diaries were present in the form of Japanese pillow books and the notes of travelers. Later, English Puritans used their diaries to explore their concerns with authorities, which continued after their travels to the new continent. Early diaries also existed in the form of so-called "commonplace books" used by artists, writers, and musicians to record and ponder their inspirations for particular creations (Mallon, 1984, p. 120). Evident in the diaries of writers, particular female writers, is the intermingling of work-related commentary with commentary about everyday life. Mallon points to the commonplace books of Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, and Sylvia Plath as examples. In these commonplace books, which were intended for reflection upon their work, the women would often record their emotions, feelings, and perceptions about other aspects of life as well. As the diary expanded to become a site for emotional release, 'ordinary' women began to take part in recording the everyday intimacies of their lives as well (Mallon, 1984).

Studies that have focused on the diary have explored it in several different ways. First, the diary has been explored for its therapeutic benefits. In this sense, the diary is used as a coping strategy for patients in poor health to examine the possible benefits of diary-writing to healthcare (cf Milligan, Bingley, & Gatrell, 2005; Sharp, Laurell, Tiblom, Andersson, & Birksjo, 2004). Second, the diary has been explored by researchers intending to observe and document a particular experience, such as the journal of a physician, or the travelogue of a traveler. In this case, the participant's diaries are used as the main source of data (cf Miksanek, 2005; Schlich & Axhausen, 2003). Third, the diary has been utilized by feminist researchers seeking to interpret

the meaning of diary-writing for women. Such research has demonstrated that women write in diaries in an effort to explore selfhood while simultaneously exploring and resisting dominant gender discourses in their lives (cf Simons, 1990; Weisser, 1996; Jokinen, 2004). Schwandt (2007) defines 'discourse' as referring to "systems of thought that construct subjects and their worlds... practices (composed of ideas, ideologies, attitudes, courses of action, terms of reference) that systematically constitute the subject and objects of which they speak" (p. 73). Dominant gender discourses are systems that work to inform behaviour surrounding appropriate feminine and masculine ways of acting.

All three types of diary research have informed the current study, yet this research is distinct in several key ways. The diary will not be explored in order to determine possible health benefits for diarists. The diary text will not be analyzed as a primary source of data, nor will the diary be analyzed in order to document a particular experience. Instead, the purpose of this research is to utilize interview transcripts with diarists to explore the meaning of diary-keeping as a leisure pursuit for women. When women put pen to paper to record their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions, they are participating in what can be conceptualized as a leisure activity: an intrinsically motivated act undertaken with a perceived sense of freedom (Neulinger, 1981). Kelly and Godbey (1992) argue that leisure scholars often neglect to explore those leisure pursuits, choices, or experiences that are more ordinary or everyday acts. This research will argue that diary-writing can be conceptualized as ordinary, everyday leisure, often done in private, but no less meaningful than more visible forms of leisure.

My goal in framing the research in this manner was to address two gaps in the literature. First, although many scholars argue that women write in their diaries during their free time (cf Miller, 1988; Gilmore, 1994), scant research has explored the diary from a leisure studies perspective. It is somewhat surprising that diary-writing has not received greater attention in the leisure literature because aspects of women's leisure have a long tradition of important research (cf Freysinger and Flannery, 1992; Shaw, 1994; Sky, 1994; Wearing, 1998; Henderson, Hodges, & Kivel, 2004; Parry, 2005). In short, the meaning of the everyday act of diary-writing as a leisure pursuit for women has been neglected – a gap addressed by the current research.

Second, this research will expand on the existing diary-related literature by interviewing diarists. In a departure from the existing literature, I have not analyzed the text of women's diaries, but rather focused on interview data with seven diarists. In other words, this research has not analyzed the content of the diary, but rather the meaning of the act of diary-keeping for female diarists. In this way, this research addresses a second gap in the literature- the absence of the diarist's interpretation of her journaling in the understanding of diary-writing. Women's interpretations of their own diary-writing have been left out of scholarly writing on the subject of the diary (cf Weisser, 1996; Jokinen, 2004), and this research speaks to that absence.

The current research was informed by a pilot study conducted in 2005 entitled, "Performing identities: The meaning of journaling as a leisure pursuit in the lives of women". Two women were interviewed for the pilot study with the intent of developing concepts and meanings related to the act of diary-keeping. The participants were white, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual students in their twenties. Both were residents of Ontario and writing in diaries at the time of the interviews. The data included two unstructured "active" interviews lasting approximately an hour in length. The questions were kept open and broad, for example, "Tell me about your history with journaling..." "Tell me the story of any of your journals. How did they come to you?" "Describe to me what prompts you to write when you do..." The interviews were transcribed and analyzed then sent to the participants for their review and comment. The findings of the pilot study indicated that diary-writing was meaningful to women because it allowed them to cultivate and assert their own unique identity, to give that identity permanence, and to resist the fixed roles assigned to them in life. However, unexpected findings also revealed the diary could be constraining to women insofar as the diarists felt that certain aspects of their lives were not suitable for their diaries. The diarists discussed omitting thoughts, emotions, or events that they could not bring themselves to put on paper. This included thoughts that might harm themselves or others, feelings that were strong or inappropriate, and events that were too painful or wonderful to properly record. Thus I concluded that the diary could be both liberating and constraining, and that future research should address this notion. Overall, the pilot study provided the current

research with a starting point and allowed me an invaluable “rehearsal” for the interviews, analysis, and discussion to come.

2.0 ***Inspired by...*** Literature review

2.1 Conceptualizing the diary

The existing literature on private writing, autobiography, authorship and resistance has inspired and informed the current research. However, it has been difficult to find research that deals specifically with the diary. Historically, studying the meaning behind “dear diary” has not been a priority among scholars. The Personal Narratives Group (1989), a group of feminist scholars and the editors of *Interpreting Women’s Lives*, suggests that “Traditionally, knowledge, truth, and reality have been constructed as if men’s experiences were normative, as if being human meant being male” (p. 3). Within such a context, it was difficult to bring any legitimacy to the study of women’s personal narratives, including diaries. Diaries and similar types of writing were evident in literature only insofar as they could reveal more about the lives of the privileged in society including explorers, political figures, and monarchs, among others. Not by coincidence, these figures were all men. However, in time scholars in both the social sciences and the humanities began to question the dominance of these writings by men (cf Ellmann, 1968; Moers, 1976; Showalter, 1977). Moreover, this line of questioning simultaneously asked about other forms of cultural expression absent from academic analysis, such as film, performance art, and the diary (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

In the literature that would follow this huge shift in analysis from formal canon to ordinary text, private writings became the subject of academic study. Scholars theorized about “self-narrative” (cf Neisser, 1994), “confessional text” (cf Felski, 1989), “autobiographical memory” (cf Neimeyer & Metzler, 1994), and “personal narratives” (cf Personal Narratives Group, 1989). However, none of these terms directly associate themselves with the diary. Though the diary is a form of personal writing, it is important to note that the diary should be studied as a cultural artefact in its own right. The diary contains characteristics of narrative, confession, autobiography and memory. However, diary-keeping is a unique social practice organized by particular rules, norms, and assumptions that guide the experience. Thus, though I will draw from theories surrounding self-narrative, confessional text, autobiographical memory and personal narrative, I

do not refer to the diary in these terms. Rather, I conceptualize the practice of keeping written volumes of one's thoughts, feelings and perceptions in a diary or journal simply as "diary-keeping" or "journaling". Upon reviewing the literature and the interview transcripts for this research, it has become apparent that using "diary" and "journal" interchangeably is acceptable even though the two terms suggest different meanings (cf Rainer, 1978; Mallon, 1984; Schiwy, 1996). Thus, the diary will be analyzed as relating to concepts such as narrative, confession, autobiography and memory, but it will be presented overall as a social experience separate from any one of these terms. Most diary researchers draw the strongest connections between journaling and authoring an autobiography.

2.2 Autogynography, authorship and performance

Autobiography is defined by Jackel (1987) as "the self-told story of an actual life, usually in prose; a form of narrative writing, it is now widely recognized as a literary genre" (p. 98). In *Autobiographics: A feminist theory of women's self-representation*, Gilmore (1994) uses the term "autobiographics" to describe:

...those elements of self-representation which are not bound by a philosophical definition of the self derived from Augustine, those elements that instead mark a location in a text where self-invention, self-discovery, and self-representation emerge within the technologies of autobiography. Autobiographics, as a description of self-representation and as a reading practice, is concerned with interruptions and eruptions, with resistance and contradiction as strategies of self-representation. (p. 42)

Gilmore has articulated my fascination with the diary, specifically in terms of negotiating identity. However, it is important to note that Gilmore does not apply the term autobiographics to the diary. This might be due to the fact that the diary has a history of being overlooked in academia.

Stanton (1984) suggests that the study of autobiography has largely left out the female subject whose diaries, memoirs and letters have remained absent from autobiographical theory. This genre of writing was deemed by many academics to be "too windy and unreliable" (Smith & Watson, 1998, p. 4). Women's autobiography, it was suggested, is far too personal a text to interpret academically. Instead, as I have indicated, much if not all of the research conducted on the diary revolved around the lives of great men who made historical marks on society (Personal

Narratives Group, 1989). For instance, though his interest was supposedly the inclusive-sounding, “living the human condition”, Olney’s (1972) work *Metaphors of Self* focuses only on the autobiographies of “extraordinary” men: Charles Darwin, George Fox, and John Henry Newman (p. 151). The everyday writings of ordinary people, particularly those relegated to the private sphere, were not considered reliable or relevant texts for academic interpretation. Such neglect resulted in minimal research on the female subject in autobiography (Smith & Watson, 1998).

Yet, as feminist historian Scott (1992) maintains, “Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation (original emphasis, p. 37). Women’s experiences, often articulated through the texts of their lives such as diaries, letters, and memoirs, are indeed interpretations, but that does not preclude their importance to academic research. In fact, many academics, like Scott, believe these personal narratives demand interpretation. For it is through the written documentation of their experience that women, at the same time, experience their subjectivity.

Since the 1970s feminist scholars have been investigating the neglected diary (Smith & Watson, 1998). The contributions were multidisciplinary, and the field of autobiographical studies grew into a complex site for the investigation of identity formation. Those contributions that are most relevant to the current research come from the realm of women’s studies. Feminist scholars have made huge contributions to our understanding of the personal narrative (cf Ellman, 1968; Heilbrun, 1988; Buss, 1993). In particular, feminist scholarship has advanced the ways in which the female subject is interpreted and created through the personal narrative. Consequently, Stanton (1984) suggested renaming the genre “autogynography”, the mapping of women’s personal narratives.

Many feminist theorists who study autogynography borrow from Chodorow’s (1978) theory of relationality. These researchers theorize that women’s subjectivity can be explored as negotiated within the constraints posed by dominant gender discourses in a patriarchal society. Patriarchy is defined by feminists as a system that privileges men over women, a hegemonic gender order imposed through individual, collective, and institutional behaviours that intersects

with other systems of oppression such as racism, classism, heterosexism, ageism, and the oppression of people with disabilities (Olesen, 1994). Theories of relationality suggest that because of the patriarchy, women form different identities than men, and they form them in different ways. Many feminist scholars hoping to glean some understanding of women's autobiography adopt this view because it allows for an exploration of women's experiences in contrast to men's, and an identification of those discourses that shape gender as well. For example, Mason (1980) discusses the usefulness of relationality in understanding women's textual self-representations that are contrasts of men's self-representations. Similarly, Friedman (1993) suggests that women define their autobiographical selves in relation to the larger community, specifically in this case, the larger female community, which men do not, illustrating the ideology that women are more community-focused than men.

Another feminist theoretical approach that deals with the construction of the self is the focus in autogynography on difference. Feminist scholars who converge around theorizing difference take Chodorow's relationality a step further by questioning whether there is in fact a universal woman's autobiography. In this sense, they interrogate the very notion of "woman" and they urge researchers to investigate cases of autogynography that might be alternative, or ignored. McKay (1995) maintains, for example, that Black women's autogynography must be read within an historical context with attention paid to the ways that race and gender intersect. In her study of Asian women writers, Lim (1994) notes the importance of multiple marginalities including not only gender and race, but nationality, language, and cultural status as well. Echoing the sentiments of marginalized women after the second wave of feminism, many scholars maintain that the very notion of a woman's autobiography is one that comes from privilege. These scholars note that autobiography infers education, literacy, and time, privileges that not all women share (Smith & Watson, 1998). In sum, this analysis of difference has added to the study of autogynography a critique of the dominant, often white, perspective on women's autobiography.

The analysis of relationality and difference in autogynography has led to a push for a different conceptualization of women's autobiography. Scholars are now looking to the everyday

to find a new analysis that includes aspects of relationality and also a critique of relationality through difference. These scholars are theorizing the everyday, exploring alternate forms of autobiography such as letters, memoirs, and the diary. These texts make room for an examination of different ways of writing our lives, and they do not privilege the extraordinary over the ordinary. Heilbrun (1988) emphasizes the impact that the diary has on the everyday. She suggests that the diary form avoids closure in the traditional sense, thus writing and critiquing diaries may enable women to envision their lives and life-stories differently. Hampsten (1982) maintains that exploring everyday autobiographies helps us to understand what is said about a woman's life, and also what is not said. Hampsten believes that by looking at the inclusions in a diary and exclusions we might see how a woman interprets her daily life, and what she feels is important. Theorizing the everyday autogynography allows feminist researchers to explore the daily-ness and the ritual nature of the development of the self, as well as the possibilities for resisting dominant gender discourses in everyday life.

The conclusion at which many feminist researchers arrive when studying autogynography is that the notion of "authorship" is powerful for women (cf Miller, 1988; Heilbrun, 1988; Smith & Watson, 1998). Miller (1988) describes everyday autogynography as a way to pen our own stories. She says: "To justify an unorthodox life by writing about it is to reinscribe the original violation, to reviolate masculine turf" (p. 12). She contends that in taking control of the telling of the story of their lives, autogynographers claim subject positions for themselves. Authoring her own story allows a woman to publicly announce her subjectivity and legitimate her interpretation of her life. Few feminist researchers specify that the diary is meaningful in terms of authorship for women (for an exception, see Schiwy, 1996), however, the concept of authorship is extremely useful to diary-related research. The study of everyday autogynography and authorship theorizes that ordinary text produced by women in private can be incredibly meaningful in their lives. These theories also posit that women's experiences with private writing can reveal much about the culture within which the activity is being pursued.

However, this concept of authorship begs the question: If I am writing the story of my life, who is playing the part of 'me'? In much of the literature surrounding the production of a woman's

story, the role of writer is stressed, but the idea of performing that story is often left unexplored. Thus the roles of actor, director, or audience are never fully developed in relation to diary-writing. The analysis does not extend to include creating characters, reading the text, rereading the text, editing the text, or presenting that text to an audience. As a conceptual framework, authorship neglects to highlight the 'performative' aspects of diary-keeping that many researchers have identified as meaningful (Hampsten, 1982; Lim, 1994; Bunkers & Huff, 1996). For instance, Culley (1985) describes diary-writing as a way to play a role, selecting details to construct a particular persona. This persona could change from day to day, from entry to entry, but the more we develop this character the more we negotiate our identity. Culley suggests that the pages of the diary become "a kind of mirror before which the diarist stands assuming this posture or that" (p. 219). The diarist can play with the way she postures herself, the way her story gets told and the way details are selected and elaborated upon. Despite the fact that researchers have theorized about performance and the diary, a thorough analysis of the elements comprising that performance is warranted. Rather than focussing solely on the notion of authorship, this research will expand upon that conceptual framework by exploring journaling as a performance with many parts to be played. I will argue that authorship is an important concept, but that 'author' is only one role played by the diarist in the performance of her life.

2.3 Dominant gender discourse and resistance

Diary-writing can be a risky performance. Female diarists are writing their own stories within a genre that has traditionally been male-dominated. These stories resist the traditional narrative form; they tend to be fragmented, disjointed, and disorderly (Jackel, 1987; Heilbrun, 1988; Felski, 1989). Thus in genre and form, women's diaries already run counter to the norm. But diaries are also risky in that they have the capacity to both document and resist what Buss (1993) describes as the "role anxiety" that women feel on a day-to-day basis. The dominant gender discourses that define what is appropriately feminine or masculine can be explored and negotiated within the pages of one's diary (Schiwy, 1996; Smith & Watson, 1998; Jokinen, 2004).

In this sense, the diary can be a space where women negotiate traditional gender roles, assumptions, and expectations. This research suggests that women can find this space in their leisure time. Though leisure studies scholars do not discuss resistance specifically in terms of the diary, many scholars have developed a rich discussion surrounding leisure, dominant gender discourse, and resistance (cf Henderson & Samdahl, 1995; Shaw, 2001; Parry, 2005).

Resistance is often discussed in leisure studies in relation to the constraints that men and women feel in social life. Shaw (1994) suggests that leisure is not a gender neutral aspect of social life, thus leisure can constrain women by “channelling” them into leisure activities that fit with traditional gender discourses (p. 11). For instance, boys and men tend to be channelled into leisure activities that emphasize masculinity (such as hunting, rough-housing, and aggressive sports) whereas girls and women tend to be channelled into leisure activities that emphasize femininity (such as craft-making, playing house, and dance). Shaw (1999) describes two categories of constraints when studying leisure: gender as a constraint on leisure and the gendered outcomes of leisure practice. When gender constrains leisure, dominant gender discourses (such as the ethic of care – more on this below) and gendered structural constraints (for instance, economic or familial) limit women’s leisure activities. When the outcome of leisure practice is gendered, the leisure activity can affect conceptualizations of masculinity and femininity. This can result in reproducing and maintaining dominant gender discourses. In this sense, Shaw suggests that women’s leisure can be constrained but also can work to constrain.

Henderson, Hodges and Kivel (2002) state that “when women make choices about how to engage in leisure, their choices are steeped in cultural ideologies about what types of behaviors are appropriate for women and men in society” (p. 259). While for men, masculinity means strength, power, and public life, women contend with discourses that position them within the personal, private sphere (Green, Hebron, & Woodward, 1990). The interaction between leisure and dominant gender discourse has been explored by many researchers. Discourses that have been identified by researchers as restricting women through leisure include the beauty myth (Zones, 2000), compulsory heterosexuality (Green, 1998), “female frailty” (Theberge, 2000), passivity (Wearing, Wearing, & Kelly, 1994), and vulnerability (Lafferty & McKay, 2004). Much

attention in leisure studies has been paid to the ways in which the 'ethic of care' impacts upon women's leisure. The ethic of care refers to Gilligan's (1982) suggestion that women are taught to always place the needs of others ahead of their own. Shaw (1994) draws attention to the connected ideology of familism, which positions women in central care-giving roles. The ethic of care and the ideology of familism often lead women to feel a lack of entitlement to leisure time, thus women tend to sacrifice personal time for time spent caring for others. Researchers have also explored the dominant gender discourses reproduced by the work/leisure dichotomy. This dichotomy infers that places of work are not typically considered places for leisure and vice versa. The public sphere then becomes defined as a place for work, and the private sphere as a place for leisure. Thus men's full-time employment in the public sphere legitimates their leisure time in the private sphere (Kay, 1998). However, we know that the private sphere is often not a place of leisure for women. Family leisure, for example, is not always very leisurely for the mother in charge of watching the children, intervening in conflicts and organizing the events (Shaw, 2001). Kay (1998) found that women defined leisure not as time spent in the private sphere, but as "time for themselves" (p. 444). Contrary to the traditional concept of leisure as "non-work", many of the women (mostly mothers and wives) in Kay's study maintained that their leisure time actually began when they arrived at work, away from familial obligations. Even then, many women described feeling guilty or preoccupied with thoughts of the work that lay ahead of them at home. For many women, leisure had become a "residual category", before which came the needs of others (p. 451). The ethic of care often makes it extremely difficult for women to have the lead role in their leisure time; to just be themselves by themselves.

For many women, the distinction between work and leisure is complex and the work/leisure dichotomy often does not describe their experiences. This has prompted Wearing (1998) to reconceptualize women's leisure as "personal space". In this post-structuralist, feminist perspective, the work/leisure dichotomy is deconstructed and new female subjectivities are imagined:

...leisure here does not signify non-work time, activity or experience or space – it is resignified to mean personal spaces, physical and metaphorical, where women can explore their own desires and pleasures and perform acts which allow them to become women in

their own right, to constitute diverse subjectivities and femininities which go beyond what women have been told they should be. (p. 149)

In this conceptualization, Wearing suggests that leisure can provide a context for self-actualization for women. Through leisure, Wearing argues, it is possible for women “to rewrite a sense of self-worth and subjectivity which honours, rather than devalues, their femininity” (p. 151). This research adopts Wearing’s reconceptualization of women’s leisure as ‘personal space’, and explores the ways in which diarists use their personal space to resist dominant gender discourses.

Shaw (1994) argues that leisure provides a unique space for the resistance of dominant gender discourse. In this conceptualization, leisure activities can challenge those dominant notions of masculinity and femininity. For instance, Wearing’s (1992) research suggests that through leisure, particularly sports activities, it is possible for women to construct identities that increase self-esteem and self-worth. Sports activities, traditionally a male pursuit associated with aggression and competition, create a space where women can construct new femininities that involve being powerful and physical (Wearing, 1992). Similarly, Parry’s (2005) findings indicate that women can use leisure as a context through which to resist ‘pronatalist ideology’, the belief that conceiving and bearing children is essential to a woman’s worth and value in society. The women in this study made leisure choices that emphasized agency, self-worth, and a social contribution beyond motherhood, allowing them to resist dominant gender discourses. Green’s (1998) research revealed that leisure contexts that involve interaction with other women, such as female friendships, can create a space for humour that subverts sexist discourse. Though these friendships can often function to reproduce discourses like the ethic of care or the feminine as dependent and vulnerable, they can also create a resistant space for counter-discourses (Green, 1988). Shaw (1994) suggests that leisure can provide a space for women to resist due to the relative freedom of choice that leisure offers. The self-determined nature of leisure creates a unique space that has the capacity to be liberating for women: “leisure behaviors, settings, and interactions can challenge the way in which power is exercised, making leisure a form of political practice” (Shaw, 2001, p. 186). In this conceptualization of leisure, the idea that we are all social actors is stressed, and personal agency is seen as vital to our ability to resist power structures.

As a social space complete with norms, assumptions, and expectations that guide our behaviour, leisure can be a powerful site for the reproduction of dominant gender discourses. Yet, as a self-determined, relatively free, personal space leisure can also be a powerful site for resisting dominant gender discourses. For women, leisure can create a space for reaffirming femininities and simultaneously recreating femininities. The existing literature on diaries and “autogynography” suggests that women have a long history of subverting gender norms by writing in diaries. This literature maintains that the meaning of diary-writing for women lies in taking control of their own stories. Diaries have allowed women their own space through which they can explore the roles they play and the stories they tell. Using this literature and the existing literature on leisure, dominant gender discourses, and resistance, this research will argue that women use their diaries as personal space in which they interact with dominant gender discourses. The diary offers the possibility of reproducing and resisting these discourses. By incorporating interviews with diarists into the analysis, and by framing the research within leisure studies, this research will address two gaps in the existing literature on diaries: the lack of women’s voices in the interpretation of their diaries and the absence of the diary in leisure studies. This research will also explore the diary as an opportunity to author one’s own story. However, this research will add to that approach by highlighting the performative aspects of this process. Finally, examining the everyday lives of women through their everyday texts will allow for an analysis of women’s individual agency while connecting the critique back to larger, dominant gender discourses. It is these discourses that the women in this study are reproducing and resisting on the pages of their diaries.

2.4 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was to understand the meaning of diary-writing for women. In doing so, this research was focused on the meaning of performance in the diary, and the potential for resisting dominant gender discourse through the diary. Thus this research will address gaps in both leisure studies literature and literature surrounding the diary. The meaning of diary-

keeping for women is explored through a feminist, dramaturgical, qualitative, interpretive framework (more on this to follow in the theoretical orientation section). I turn next to the research questions that guided the study.

2.5 Research questions

1. What is the meaning of diary-writing for women as a leisure pursuit?
2. How does performance relate to the act of diary-writing for women?
3. How does the resistance of dominant gender discourse relate to the act of diary-writing for women?

3.0 ***Made possible by...*** Theoretical orientation

3.1 Feminism

West (1998) once commented on the struggle to define feminism: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is. I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat" (cited in Elliot & Mandell, p. 2). In a slightly more specific manner, Olesen (1994) describes a feminist researcher as one who adheres to four basic principles: (1) feminists value women, their experiences, needs, and ideas (2) see phenomena from the perspective of women (3) recognize the existence of conditions that oppress women and (4) desire to change those conditions through research, leading to political action. Social change is a core tenet of feminist research, which can be achieved through research that benefits women or other oppressed groups. Feminists employ a variety of methods through which they achieve this social change, but the linking thread is that research is conducted within the context of women's lives, valuing women as legitimate knowers and experts of their experience, and empowering female participants through the research process rather than aiding in their oppression (Bunting & Campbell, 1994). At the heart of the feminist perspective in the social sciences is an exploration of the elements that organize the experience of being a woman in our society. Feminist theorists work to identify those elements organizing women's experiences and investigate the ways that they interact with the systems that organize our society (Harding, 1987; Young, 1994; Smith, 1999).

Feminist perspectives stress the idea that women suffer from inequalities stemming from an institutionalized patriarchy that is systemic and pervades social life (Saunders, 1988). However, despite the general agreement on this, feminists vary in terms of their explanations for the source of women's oppression and their solutions to it. Many feminists group these differing views under three main categories: liberal, socialist and radical feminists (Shaw & Lee, 2001). I will outline these three forms of feminism before articulating my own position as a post-modern feminist of the "third wave".

3.1.1 Liberal, socialist, radical, and post-modern feminisms

Liberal feminists posit women's inequality stems from the denial of equal rights, and they seek to rectify this inequality by extending to women the same rights and privileges of men (Elliot & Mandell, 1998). A liberal feminist sees the current system as viable and argues we can work within this system to achieve equality. The goal of liberal feminism is to remove obstacles from women's participation in such public arenas as education, law, and politics in order to create reform and address social inequalities (Shaw & Lee, 2001).

In contrast, socialist feminists view the source of women's oppression as economic in nature. These feminists point to capitalism as the relations that enforce dominance by men over women (Elliot & Mandell, 1998). Whereas liberal feminists suggest that equality with men be the goal of feminism, socialist feminists argue for transforming basic structural arrangements of society to create equal access to resources (Elliot & Mandell, 1998). Socialist feminism combines a class analysis with aspects of 'radical' feminism to explain women's oppression (Shaw & Lee, 2001).

Radical feminists argue that sexism is the deepest form of human oppression, and that through women's oppression we can understand all oppression. They claim that patriarchy is an autonomous social, historical, and political system of power that is solely responsible for the oppression of women (Elliot & Mandell, 1998). Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists argue that it is not enough to remove barriers for women in society, but rather we must transform social institutions entirely. They wish to reconstruct the system rather than work within it (Shaw & Lee, 2001).

The boundaries of these categories have blurred over the years, but many feminists still adhere to these types of distinction. Personally, however, I would not place myself in any of these camps. Rather, my work falls under a more post-modern approach. Post-modernism is a tradition that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s that has two main emphases: (1) Post-modernism focuses on socially produced and constructed discourses and (2) post-modernism critiques

modernism, and the notions of truth, scientific reasoning, and empirical investigation (Wallace & Wolf, 1999). Post-modernism and feminism come together under what many scholars deem to be the “third wave” of feminism. In this third wave, the focus is on sexuality and identity, and second wave notions of “sisterhood” are critiqued. As Butler (1992) probes: “through what exclusions has the feminist subject been constructed, and how do those excluded haunt the ‘integrity’ and ‘unity’ and the feminist ‘we’?” (p. 14). Thus, though I recognize patriarchy as a system of oppression, I also see the value in questioning the very notion of ‘woman’, gender identity, and feminism itself. I identify as a post-modern feminist in that I ask feminism to be more self-critical, to question those categories that we use in our political struggles, to consider who we include and who we exclude. This involves exploring those elements that organize the experience of being a woman while also recognizing that there is no one ‘woman’s experience’ (Young, 1994). In this sense, post-modern feminist critique has been accused of fragmenting the movement, but I believe that when approached carefully, post-modern critique can only make the feminist movement stronger (Elliot & Mandell, 1998).

3.2 Feminist methodologies and method

Conceptualizing ‘method’ can be a difficult task. Conceptualizing a feminist method can be even more arduous. Reinharz (1992) defines feminist methods as simply “methods used in research projects by people who identify themselves as feminist or as part of the women’s movement” (p. 6). I agree with C. Wright Mills (1959) when he suggests that method is not so much “the codification of procedures,” but rather “information about... actual ways of working” (p. 195). The actual ways that feminists work are diverse. Some feminists gather data through oral histories, some through participant observation, and some still through questionnaires and indexes. Some feminists argue that qualitative methods must be embraced because for years quantitative methods have been used to the exclusion of women from academia (Mies, 1983; Reinharz, 1983; Smith 1987, cited in Thompson 1992). Some feminists resent this assertion,

maintaining that if feminism is to be inclusive that must mean embracing all methods, quantitative included (Jayaratne, 1983; Kelly, 1978, Osmond 1984, cited in Thompson, 1992).

Thompson (1992) argues for a push “beyond a squabble about methods” in feminist research, and a turn towards examining our feminist research methodology instead (p. 3). She suggests that feminists grapple with two main ethical concerns, “whose interests are being served by the research, and how can the subjectivity and authority of research participants be preserved?” Likewise, Richardson (1997) asks us to question our role as researchers through a feminist interpretivist approach, which includes consideration of “reflexivity, authority, authorship, subjectivity, power, language, ethics, representation” (p. 2). These are all considerations that I struggle with in my research. Thus, I have attempted to work through and critique issues of authority, objectivity and representation through my methodology.

This research addresses a feminist method as “information about actual ways of working” with a feminist epistemology (Mills, 1959; p. 195). For what makes data collection specifically feminist in nature is the connection between a researcher’s theoretical orientation and her methodology. Harding (1991) makes an important distinction between method and methodology. She maintains that method refers to a technique for collecting evidence, and that methodology describes how the methods should be used. Therefore, my feminist theoretical orientation outlined in the previous section has necessarily informed my methodology, which has then shaped my methods as feminist researcher. More specifically, my research is guided by Thompson’s (1992) four tenets of feminist research:

- a. All inquiry is value-sustaining, and feminist work is politicized inquiry.
- b. Separation between researcher and researched does not ensure objectivity and a closer connection between the two may reconcile objectivity and subjectivity.
- c. Women’s experience can be considered a source and justification of knowledge.
- d. There may be no such thing as truth and objectivity. (p. 9)

3.2.1 Feminist methodology in leisure studies

My methodology is guided by Parry's (2003) proposal for a sixth phase of feminist leisure research, which has enabled me to attempt to work through Richardson's (1997) two ethical concerns surrounding who research is for, and how the participants will be heard. This sixth phase guided my methodology towards 'giving voice' through my research, yet it has also encouraged me to be critical about the very notion of 'giving voice'. Parry posits a sixth phase of feminist leisure research can be accomplished through three approaches: collaborative forms of inquiry, a feminist communitarian ethic, and creative analytic practice.

Adopting a *collaborative form of inquiry* requires valuing a woman's individual experience, yet simultaneously connecting it to the broader female standpoint. In this framework, "knowledge centers on a woman's experiences, meanings, understandings, stories, and interpretations of leisure and the roles it plays in her life" (Parry, 2003, p. 57). Such a feminist methodology emphasizes the experience of the individual, yet ties that experience to a larger critique of dominant gender ideologies. As Butler (2003) states: "my situation does not cease to be mine just because it is the situation of someone else, and my acts, individual as they are, nevertheless reproduce the situation of my gender, and do that in various ways" (p. 423). Thus, the feminist methodology used in this research is one that endeavours to describe women's individual experiences while building connections between them. This research has explored the meaning of diary-keeping for seven individual women while also examining the ways in which their experiences interact with dominant discourses about femininity.

'Giving voice' includes a *feminist communitarian ethic*, which emphasizes the role of the researcher as one who is "committed to relationships built on trust, respect, friendship, care, and concern" (Parry, 2003, p. 58). Underscored in this framework is an empathic, collaborative understanding for participants involved in the research. This framework stresses recognition of the uniqueness of the participant and the important role her emotions play in the way she experiences her world. This ethic points to a place where the researcher and the researched meet in the everyday. As noted in the methods section, this research was conducted with these concerns in mind. As you will read below, a feminist communitarian ethic influenced the style and structure of the recruitment, the interviews, and the data analysis of this study.

Lastly, Parry describes *alternative forms of representation* in research, now referred to as creative analytic practice, as a path to 'giving voice'. This approach requires that the researcher's perspective is not kept hidden in the research; we are in fact "always present" (p. 59). Some methods of achieving these alternative forms are through performance art, poetry, narrative, and fiction, all of which are means of displacing notions of "scientific neutrality, universal truths, and researcher dispassion" (p. 60). This research has utilized creative analytic practice by presenting the final product in the form of a 'conceit': an extended metaphor governing and organizing the entire piece of work (more on this to follow). Thus I have attempted to disrupt traditional notions of dry scientific neutrality by representing my research in alternative ways.

In this research I have struggled with Richardson's (1997) suggestion that we ask ourselves "for whom do we speak and to whom do we speak? With what voice do we speak and with what purpose do we speak?" (cited in Parry, 2003, p. 59) Richardson urges us to consider the very notion of representation and 'giving voice'. She wonders if it is even possible to achieve this goal. Upon completion of this research and deep contemplation about its meaning, I feel as though my commitment lies in striving rigorously to represent the experience of others. I also feel that my responsibility as a researcher in training is to rigorously represent my own experience. Thus, women's voices and interpretations are at the forefront of this research, yet the dominant woman's voice is my own. This research represents my interpretation of the multiple encounters between me (as researcher) and a woman (as researchee). This is not to suggest that it is a casual interpretation. My methodology encouraged me to strive to achieve collaboration of meaning and the meeting of minds. I also was rigorous in terms of representation, not of the participant's experience in some objective sense, rather representation of their subjective recollection of their experience, recalled in conversation and interaction with me. Through that interaction, and my rigorous reading and rereading of their transcripts, I developed a complex interpretation of the experience of diary-keeping. Thus this research does not consider 'giving voice' to be a simple task. 'Giving voice', instead, is about struggling with the concepts of representation, collaboration, and shared meaning. It is about my curiosity about something that these seven women shared and experienced. It is about the privilege I had to be privy to their

stories. And finally, it is about how our collaboration informed my representation of their interpretations. This representation, created as rigorously as possible, attempts to demonstrate the space where the participants' interpretations of the diary-keeping experience met my interpretations of the diary-keeping experience.

Parry's 'sixth phase' offers the feminist researcher a guide toward an empathetic, caring, and loving methodology that advocates 'giving voice' as an almost unachievable goal to strive towards. I employed this methodology because through such research it might be possible to "expose and change subtle as well as deep rooted causes of women's oppression" (Parry, 2003, p. 53). In the end, this methodology also resulted in exposing and changing subtle and deep rooted complications in my own assumptions about feminist methods.

3.3 Goffman's dramaturgical perspective and frame analysis

My feminist perspective explores the elements organizing the social experience of being a woman. In *Frame Analysis*, Goffman (1974) presents a framework for examining the elements that organize a social experience. Goffman's focus tends to be on micro-sociology, yet like feminist epistemologies, he connects behaviours back to overarching frameworks organizing social life. He proposes that we ask of a social experience, "What kind of performance is this? What elements organize this performance? How is it framed?" Goffman was fascinated with exploring the different contexts that produce different situations and behaviours in social life. He was unconvinced by James' proposed "varieties-of-worlds" perspective and Schutz's essay dealing with "multiple realities" because he felt they lacked any description of the "constitutive rules" of a particular "world" or "reality" (p. 6). Thus, Goffman set out to make clear those constitutive rules: aspects of experience that we can get "caught up in, engrossed in, carried away by" (p. 6). Goffman borrowed from Bateman's "theatre of the absurd", which defined frames as the varying ways that we organize our social experience (p. 7). In his conceptualization, Goffman uses a "frame" to refer to the basic elements (those constitutive rules) that define a social situation, organize our social experiences, and govern our subjective

involvement. Using “frame analysis”, Goffman explores the sets of rules that meaningful everyday experiences are dependent upon and organized around. These rules, taken together, comprise the “social framework” of the experience. He suggests studying the social framework of an experience because it is this framework that provides us background understanding for the social situations that we engage in. When we are aware of the basic elements of the situation, the rules governing the experience, and the shape of the social framework, our behaviour becomes a “guided doing” (p. 4). In other words, our behaviour gets caught up in, engrossed in, carried away by the particular frame. Thus, using frame analysis, I will explore the social experience of diary-keeping by asking “what is guiding this doing?”

Goffman often frames guided “doings” as “performances”. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) argues that:

The legitimate performances of everyday life are not “acted” or “put on” in the sense that the performer knows in advance just what he (sic) is going to do, and does this solely because of the effect it is likely to have... But the incapacity of the ordinary individual to formulate in advance the movements of his eyes and body does not mean that he will not express himself through these devices in a way that is dramatized and pre-formed in his repertoire of actions. In short, we all act better than we know. (p. 74)

In this sense, Goffman suggests that everyday social experiences that appear to be infused with little to no drama or spectacle can still very much be conceptualized as performances. Thus this research will assert that the everyday, seemingly private act of diary-keeping can be analyzed as a socially guided performance despite appearances.

The social performer consults the frame of the situation to shape her behaviour and to draw upon various techniques for managing the experience. Goffman suggests that there are seven elements that define social behaviour as a performance:

1. The performer will believe in the part she is playing.
2. Appearance, setting and behaviour will be in agreement to present a consistent front.
3. When a performer wishes to stress something of importance, she will let the audience know.
4. A performance will avoid misrepresentation by striving to be ‘ideal’.
5. The performer will stay in character.

6. Whether being genuine or not, the performer will work to convince the audience of her truthfulness.
7. The performer will conceal information that might be damaging to the performance.

Diary-keeping can be conceptualized as a social performance. In accordance with the seven attributes outlined above, the diarist as performer believes in the role she is playing within her diary and works to craft her role as well as the story she is telling. The audience can be sure that the diarist's inclusions and exclusions in her diary are of great importance. Even though she might not describe them as such, the diarist paused to record some moments and not others. The audience can assume that there are reasons for these acts, even though those reasons are not necessarily readily apparent. The performance that the diarist presents to the world is one that the diarist submits as genuine, and the diarist often withholds, edits, or censors information that might detract from the diarist's creative vision. An important addition to these seven elements is Hochschild's (1979) discussions on the sociology of emotion. Hochschild (1979) expands upon Goffman's dramaturgical perspective in her development of "deep acting". This concept allows us to explore not only the ways that people perform outwardly, but the ways people perform inwardly as well. Hochschild's analysis also provides Goffman's framework with a more gender-conscious perspective. She sets out to understand those performances, like diary-keeping, that are deeper, quieter, and more emotional.

It is important to note that Goffman did not theorize about the act of diary-keeping. He tended towards more openly public social performances occurring in such spaces as asylums (1961), restaurants (1959), and of course, the theatre (1974). But Goffman was also intrigued by private performances as well. He spoke of performances between doctor and patient (1961), party host and party guest (1959), and two strangers interacting at a bus stop or on an elevator (1967). Goffman's fascination with more private, one-on-one social performances is evident in his *Interaction Ritual*, within which he expands upon Mead's (1934) concept of a 'generalized other'. Mead's generalized other explains that social actors have a general idea of what is expected of their behaviour. When a social actor imagines what is expected of them, they take on the perspective of the generalized other and behave accordingly. Mead's theory is not

necessarily concerned with public, face-to-face interaction; rather he focuses on more private, abstract notions of social interaction and performance. Goffman was quite involved with developing his own concept of the generalized other, referred to as 'socialized performances' (1967). Goffman describes a socialized performance as one where the actor presents himself in a manner that exemplifies the norms, expectations and assumptions of the society. He states "...the very obligation and profitability of appearing always in a steady moral light, of being a socialized character, forces one to be the sort of person who is practiced in the ways of the stage" (p. 251). So although Goffman tended to study more public, physically interactive performances, he also theorized about those social performances that could be seen as private interactions with a generalized other. Therefore, though Goffman does not address the performance of diary-keeping in his research, he has given my research a strong framework to understand the organizing social elements of diary-keeping and the ways in which those elements guide our behaviour.

As noted above, Goffman's theories have limitations in terms of this research. The dramaturgical perspective lacks a gender-consciousness and neglects to explore those performances that are more private and emotional, and those performances that are interactions with a generalized other. But what Goffman's perspective gives this research is the ability to provide a thick description of a unique social performance that has been somewhat overlooked in the literature. Thus through Goffman's dramaturgical perspective (and Hochschild's developments upon his perspective) the diary will be explored within the framework of performance to investigate the organizing elements guiding this experience. The dramaturgical perspective allows us to frame diary-keeping as a social act complete with rules and assumptions about appropriate behaviours. The perspective also positions the diarist as a social actor performing at the intersection of personal agency and social expectations. Therefore by applying Goffman's theories to this research I was able to uncover the meaning of diary-writing for these individuals yet at the same time explore their interactions with the rules and discourses framing the experience.

3.4 Qualitative research

A feminist theoretical orientation framed by Goffman's theories of performance in everyday life emphasizes women's stories, experiences, and interactions in society, thus this theoretical orientation lends itself well to the qualitative tradition (Sky, 1994). According to Creswell (2003) qualitative research:

- Takes place in natural settings
- Employs multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic
- Is emergent rather than tightly prefigured
- Is fundamentally interpretive
- Involves a researcher who views social phenomena holistically
- Utilizes researcher reflexivity
- Uses complex reasoning that is multi-faceted, iterative, and simultaneous.
- Involves the possibility of adopting of one or more strategies of inquiry as a guide for the procedures in the study (p. 181-183)

Qualitative research posits that a comprehensive understanding of human behaviour is best reached not through objective data, but rather through a human-centred approach (Palys, 1997). This approach emphasizes verbal descriptions and explanations for human behaviour with carefully detailed descriptions of social practice in an attempt to understand how participants experience and make sense of their world (Jackson, 2003). Because I am interested in the meaning of human experience from a human-centred approach, because I practice research that is emotional and empathetic, and because I am interested in how people make sense of their lives, I position myself within the qualitative tradition. Palys (1997) describes qualitative researchers as those who "reject the idea that a statistical criterion can ever define explanation of understanding. Instead, they embrace Max Weber's concept of *verstehen*" (original emphasis, p. 18).

3.5 Interpretive research

"Verstehen" is Max Weber's description of an "intimate and empathetic understanding of human action in terms of its *interpretive* meaning to the subject" (original emphasis, p. 18). The interpretive approach is accredited to German scholar Weber and is defined by Jackson (2003)

as stressing “the importance of the interpretation *individuals* put on their actions and on the actions and reactions of others” (original emphasis, p. 8-9).

Though the interpretive approach questions the philosophies of positivist researchers, most interpretivists will not attempt to lay claim to a more truthful account of the phenomenon, for this would assume that there is one truth to be found (Samdahl, 1999). Rather, Weber was interested in the different kinds of information one could ascertain with this different approach (Jackson, 2003). This approach asks several kinds of questions: how does the individual feel? What are the individual's motivations? What meaning does the individual attach to a particular event? The interpretive researcher is interested in how people make sense of their lives, how they define their situation, and how their sense of self develops in interaction with others (Jackson, 2003).

The interpretive researcher places emphasis on the participant's experiences, thus creating an interview style in which the participant directs the discussion. Valued in this approach is the participant's reality, as interpretivists feel that reality exists within the person. Therefore, Samdahl (1999) maintains, the interpretive researcher “honours the participant's reality by using repeated interviews and asking the participants to verify the way that the researcher represents their stories” (126). Like the feminist, qualitative researcher, an interpretivist believes that the participant is the expert of her own experience. Thus my theoretical orientation – feminist, dramaturgical, qualitative, and interpretive – ultimately guides my methods towards processes that explore the meaning of a particular social experience for the social actors involved.

4.0 ***And developed by...*** Methods

4.1 The recruitment process

Participants were recruited from July 4, 2006 to July 9, 2006. Purposive sampling was used, as there were specific criteria for participants in this study. That is, women were sought who kept (or had previously kept) a diary. Neuman (2003) defines purposive sampling as used “less to generalize to a larger population than it is to gain a deeper understanding of types” (p. 213). Similarly, Patton (2002b) describes this type of sampling as studying “information-rich cases” for insight into a certain type of behaviour or population for an “in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (p. 230). Initially, I had planned to recruit women in my home town who I knew to write in diaries. However, doing research in “your own backyard” can create more complicated methods of recruitment, particularly if one’s hometown is in rural Nova Scotia (Sunstein & Chiseri-Strater, 2002, p. 9). ‘Word of mouth’ was the defining method of recruitment for this study, and often neither the words nor the mouth were my own. I began research for my pilot study in late 2005 and initiated interviews for this study in July 2006. In the roughly seven months between these dates, word about the project spread through my home town of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. With three family members actively working in the public school system, one in the local hospital, one at the local university, and one in community services, word quickly spread through the community about this project.

Shortly after arriving in Antigonish to begin recruitment, I was contacted by several women in the community who were interested in talking about their experiences with diary-keeping. Though I was initially taken aback by the reversal of roles, the enthusiasm with which these women sought me out reassured me that diary-keeping was indeed a meaningful practice in women’s lives. Thus four of the women interviewed for this study were selected due to the specific criteria they possessed. However, in a way these women recruited me for the specific criteria I possessed, rather than the other way around. I would like to take credit for this sense of collaboration and shared authority, but I am afraid the thanks go to living in a small Nova Scotian town where everybody’s involved in everybody else’s business. These women contacted me

between June 20, 2006 and July 1, 2006. I was contacted by these women through email. For instance, on June 23, 2006, a woman wrote:

“Hi Caitlin, how are you? I saw your father yesterday and he told me you were home and working on your studies. Are you still working on research relating to diaries? I’d love to hear more about it and even share some of my experiences if you’re interested.”

And on July 1, 2006, I received the following email in my inbox:

“Hi there! I hear you’re back in the ‘Nish (sic)! Welcome home! Mel told me about the project, sounds very cool. I am a big time journaler!! Are you looking for people to talk to for your thesis?”

Another woman contacted me the day I was leaving Nova Scotia, July 9, 2006:

“...your sister told me that you are looking for people to talk about their diaries. i would be interested if you are still looking...”

Unfortunately, due to time constraints, I had to send my regrets to two women who had emailed me to express interest in participating in the study. Had my flight not been booked, I would have attempted to speak to these women as well.

I actively and directly recruited the other three participants for this study. These participants were recruited between July 4, 2006 and July 5, 2006. I was referred to these women upon speaking to other members of the community about my project. For example, one email sent on June 23, 2006, read:

“Hey Cait, Dave said he met you at SuperStore – congratulations on the baby! I also heard about your project for your Master’s thesis which sounds very interesting. I thought about being involved but I can’t imagine sharing my diary with anyone! Anyway, I just thought I’d send along my cousin’s email address because I know she has kept diaries FOREVER...”

I was also referred to another participant after meeting her boyfriend at the Halifax airport on June 20, 2006. In order to ensure that these women were comfortable declining participation in the study, they were contacted by email. The following email was sent to potential participants upon receiving ethical clearance on July 4, 2006:

Hello, my name is Caitlin Mulcahy and I am a 1st year Master's student in the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies. I am currently working with Dr. Diana C. Parry and doing my thesis. I am studying the meaning of diary-keeping as a leisure pursuit for women. This research will hopefully contribute to a better understanding not only of the meaning of the diary in women's lives, but the meaning of leisure in women's lives as well.

If you volunteer as a participant in this study, we will arrange a time that is convenient for you to engage in an open-ended, audio-taped interview where we will discuss your history with diary-keeping and the meaning it has had for you. This interview will take approximately an hour of your time

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics. However, the final decision about participation is yours.

If you are interested in participating, please fill out the following information and I will be in touch with you. Alternatively, you can phone me (902-863-2910) or email me (cmmulcah@ahsmail.uwaterloo.ca) with any questions or comments. Thanks very much, I look forward to speaking with you!

Name:

Email:

Phone Number:

Best Days:

Best Times:

Following the initial email exchange with these women, I followed up through email and phone to schedule interviews.

4.2 Data collection

Data collection took place in Nova Scotia between July 4, 2006 and July 9, 2006. I conducted seven in-depth, face-to-face interviews with adult women. Each unstructured interview was audio-taped with the participant's informed consent (see Appendix A) and lasted somewhere between one hour and two and a half hours in length. The interviews took place wherever was convenient and comfortable for the participants. One interview was conducted in the participant's office, one at the participant's home, two at my parents' home, and two at my sisters' home. All participants were invited beforehand to bring their diaries to the interview, yet many forgot or were

uncomfortable with doing so. Thus only one participant, the only woman to be interviewed in her home, brought her diary to the interview. I suspect that her level of comfort (and the other participants' level of discomfort) was somewhat related to the space in which we conducted the interview. However, many women expressed their fears in showing or reading their diaries to anyone. For instance, in her interview Helen confessed her fears about allowing others to view her diaries: "I don't think I've ever shown it to anybody". And when asked if she would ever share her diary with anyone, Jenn very emphatically stated:

No!

C: Not even with some future husband?

J: No!

In fact, at some point during the interviews, six of the seven diarists expressed their wishes to destroy their diaries after their death. Four explicitly described wanting their diaries "burned". Though it might have been beneficial (both to me and to the participant) to have the participant's diary with her during the interview, it also might have resulted in making the participant more nervous or uncomfortable. Thus in terms of this aspect of data collection, I was glad that each woman did what was most comfortable to her.

4.3 The active interview

As the research design for this study comes from a qualitative, dramaturgical, interpretive, and feminist approach with a focus on exploring the meaning of diary-keeping for women, I relied on in-depth 'active' interviews for data collection. Active interviews were used in order to focus on shared meaning and collaboration between researcher and participant. The active interview is characterized by mutual disclosure, a conversational style, and co-created meaning. Dupuis (1999) describes the active interview as recognizing that "the interview is very much shaped by the interviewer and his or her research agenda and, therefore, the topic areas of interest to the researcher as well as the position of the researcher are made explicit to the participants" (p. 57). The active interview allowed the participants to guide the conversation to the

places where they found meaning, which reflected my feminist, interpretive methodology. For, as Patton (2002a) maintains, “the truly open ended question allows the person being interviewed to select from among that person’s full repertoire of possible responses those that are most salient” (p. 354).

I used an interview guide rather than a structured set of interview questions to ensure that this collaborative, conversational style was upheld, and to ensure that the flow of the interview was driven by the participant’s experiences and interpretations. As Dupuis (1999) suggests, “In active interviews the interview guide is just that, a guide” (p. 57). The interview guide was designed (see Appendix B) to explore themes of meaning, performance, reproduction and resistance in diary-keeping. As Patton (2002a) describes, the benefit to developing an interview guide is its ability to leave the interview free “to build a conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined” (p. 343). My goal in this research was to allow the participant to guide the conversation in order to glean some understanding of the participant’s own interpretation of her diary-keeping. A guide was used in my pilot study and thus I was able to receive feedback on the type of data I received from the interviews. I revised this guide to make the questions more open and easier to understand. I also reformed the questions after each interview I conducted to incorporate the lessons I learned from a particular conversation. For instance, after one woman discussed using her diary to trace cycles of abuse, I began asking participants if they were able to see patterns of behaviour in their diaries. During the interview I was flexible with the structure of the guide, allowing the interview to flow in a way that made sense to the participant. The questions changed and shifted in a conversational style and were largely driven by the participant’s individual experiences.

Following the interview, I utilized ‘member-checking’ in order to gain feedback and further insight from my participants during the analysis process. I sent typed transcripts of our interview to each participant and received feedback surrounding parts of the interview that the participant wished to alter for the final project. For instance, after reviewing her interview transcript Sarah wrote to inform me that I had misheard her age. Many of the women wrote regarding their

pseudonyms. For instance, 'Tootsie' was very specific about her name; she felt that her pseudonym reflected her fun and sassy personality. On the other hand, Kris wrote to let me know that I could choose whatever pseudonym I thought worked. A copy of my thesis was also forwarded to the participants and received varied responses. These sorts of exchanges have been exciting and invaluable to me as a researcher. Several women have not responded at all. However, many women have written with encouraging comments. One woman wrote:

"I found myself feeling quite connected to your work and to the other women you interviewed. It was actually a moving experience to read about my "personal" in such a public sphere. I also loved the way you framed it as drama. That is so true!!!!"

Another wrote:

"I'm fascinated by the stories of the other women, and turned a little redfaced when reading my own..."

And another simply responded by stating:

"Congrats!"

Another participant, however, felt that she was not represented as accurately as she could have been. She requested that several changes be made to protect her anonymity and changes were made immediately. This participant also disagreed with my interpretation of one of her quotations, and after much debate, I felt she was right and altered it to her approval. She also wrote:

"On the other hand, you really got it [in the section on persistent patterns]. That's exactly it. That is my main motivation for journalling. That paragraph is not the only example, either, where you put your finger right on it. Nice work!"

Because I am interested in whether or not my interpretation makes sense to those people whose behaviour is being explained, I used member-checking to negotiate the meanings of their experiences. Therefore the interpretation offered in the final draft of this research strives to be a collaborative one, consistent with my theoretical orientation and methodology.

4.4 The role of the researcher

Along with the “sharedness of meaning” of an active interview and the member-checking process is the development of reflexivity within this type of research (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 660). This process, described by Fontana and Frey as “soul cleansing”, is an attempt to negate the role of the researcher as “neutral, unbiased, and “invisible”” (p. 661). Reflexivity played a major part in shaping my role as a researcher insofar as it spoke to the complexity and tension of research, interviewing, and ‘giving voice’. It also helped to ground my research in credibility and veracity by forcing me to constantly balance my role as a researcher with my responsibility to the experiences of these seven participants. In the process, reflexivity often meant confronting myself in this research.

Without reflexivity in research we suppress those aspects of ourselves that have or might have influenced our findings. In neglecting to be reflexive in our research, we also assume that the researcher should not be a part of the research. Webb (1993) suggests that being explicit about the participation of the researcher in the generation of knowledge adds to the relevance and accuracy of the results. Webb claims that thinking critically about the interaction between the researcher and the data provides a full account of the research. I would suggest that reflexivity also makes for a more interesting read, as well as a more complex piece for the reader to analyze. Without it, the role of the researcher is that of a hidden authority. Thus I kept a journal of my own, a diary that allowed me to reflect upon my experiences throughout the research process on a regular basis. This involved reflecting upon my feelings, thoughts, and emotions, yet at the same time provided me a space for working through the intellectual, conceptual, and logistical struggles I was having with this research. The diary contributed greatly to my analysis as it allowed me space within this thesis to be messy, one-sided, selfish, and indulgent. Because of this space I was able to be whimsical and imaginative without judgment; yet at the same time it provided the opportunity to reflect back on some of those whimsical and indulgent ideas and refine them. Thus, the diary that I kept allowed me to imagine different ways of presenting this analysis that disrupt notions of objectivity and neutrality in research, and encourage creativity and alternate forms of representing research. My diary also allowed me to express my feelings (both

positive and negative) about the research process, pushing me to recognize recurring feelings about this thesis. This prompted me to examine the elements of this thesis that I was proud of and also those elements that required change. By providing me space to explore and interpret my experiences with this research, the diary made the process of writing this thesis *mine*. And like the majority of the diarists interviewed, I might never share this very personal space with anyone.

4.5 Ethical issues

This research was conducted with approval from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Originally, I did not foresee any harm or risk coming to my participants through this study. No deception was used, and I felt the women would be comfortable with the subject matter. However, on the suggestion of the Office of Research Ethics, I contacted a local counsellor for her advice. She allowed me to present her contact information to the participants during the interviews. The counsellor stressed the importance of sensitivity and suggested that I be aware of when the interview had gone to a place of emotional risk for the participants. With this advice in mind, I proceeded with the interviews.

The women interviewed were informed in order to give consent to participate. They were given the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time. During the transcription of the interviews and the analysis process their opinions were sought. They were given the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym, though some requested that I choose one for them. As well, any names or otherwise identifying details were changed to protect anonymity of the participant and those to whom she is associated. The participants were asked to share only their experiences with diary-writing, not the diary itself unless they chose to do so. As was mentioned, only one woman chose to share her diary and she did so by reading selected passages aloud. Sensitive subject matter was explored in many of the interviews (for instance, affairs, divorce, abuse, and substance misuse); however, with the advice from the Office of Research Ethics as well as the local counsellor, I felt that the participants were comfortable speaking about these sensitive

experiences in their lives. I also felt that the structure of this research (such as the process of informed consent, the active interview, and member-checking) allowed for a protective support system for the participants. It is my hope that the participants do not feel that this research exploited them or put them at risk. Rather, it my hope that these women feel that they have benefited from their participation in some small way. Their participation has certainly benefited me as well as my research, and I am very grateful to them for that.

4.6 Data analysis procedures

The audio-taped interviews were transcribed verbatim and, along with my own journal, the texts from this study were read and reread multiple times to code for emerging themes. The analysis process was on-going, beginning after each interview took place and continuing through to the member-checking phase of the research. The transcripts were analyzed individually and also collectively to compare and contrast the participants' experiences. I was guided by my research questions and my existing knowledge about the subject of diary-keeping, but I was also open to emergent themes that I had not previously considered. The literature I had reviewed previously helped guide my interpretation of the transcripts. For instance, I tended to pay particular interest in discussions surrounding leisure, performance, dominant gender discourse and resistance. However, my analysis of the transcripts also led me to revisit the literature and integrate perspectives that I had not previously considered. For example, it was only after analyzing the transcripts and identifying performance as a major theme that I explored Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. His perspective then reshaped my interpretation of the data once more.

Guiding this process was the phenomenological method for analyzing interview transcripts. There is tension, however, between feminism and phenomenology. Though some feminist scholars chose to work with a phenomenological method (cf Butler, 1992; Sullivan, 2000; Titchkosky, 2001), there has been much criticism of the phenomenological tradition by feminists. As Fisher (2000) states, "... the starting assumption is that feminism and phenomenology are

fundamentally incompatible” (p. 4). In contrast, however, is Alcoff’s (2000) assertion that “Phenomenology needs feminism” (p. 39). The critique of phenomenology by feminists revolves around the absence of a gender analysis in traditional phenomenological research (Fisher, 2000). Feminists have criticized phenomenology for being traditionally masculinist, with Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) foundational work often cited as an example of the masculine bias in phenomenological research (cf Young, 1985). As a feminist researcher, these critiques were of concern to me. However, I would argue that researchers can provide a methodological framework for feminists that might act to reconstruct the meaning of phenomenology to include an emphasis on women’s lived experiences. As Butler (2003) suggests, we can rework phenomenology in a way that can problematize the traditionally ‘gender-blind’ approach. This feminist phenomenology would emphasize the experience of the individual, yet tie that experience to a larger critique of dominant gender ideologies. For, as Butler states, “my situation does not cease to be mine just because it is the situation of someone else, and my acts, individual as they are, nevertheless reproduce the situation of my gender, and do that in various ways” (p. 423). Thus the feminist phenomenology used in this research is one that endeavours to describe women’s individual experiences while building connections between them. As both feminism and phenomenology are committed to descriptive and experiential analysis, they have the potential to support each other in understanding women’s lives (Levesque-Lopman, 2000).

Thus in this research Hycner’s (1985) outline of the phenomenological process for analyzing data was followed, as well as Halldorsdottir and Hamrin’s (1997) adaptation of Colaizzi’s phenomenological framework (see Appendix C). The analysis process also included ‘memoing’ my interpretations in my researcher’s diary, as well as journaling my thoughts, ideas and perceptions throughout the process. I approached the analysis process through the following nine steps:

1. After transcribing the interviews, I revisited each individual interview and examined every sentence closely. This allowed me to gain a better sense of the interview as a whole, and a deeper understanding of the meaning of diary-keeping for that particular diarist.

2. I then went back to the beginning of the transcript and broke the text down into sections that were placed in an excel file bearing the participant's name. Each section was a few lines long. I assigned a title for each section that I felt captured the essence of what the diarist was saying, in language close to what the participant used. For instance, the following passage became a separate section in the excel file "**Kris**", entitled "**Seeing that my experiences are cyclical**":

In your journal you could see that you're just going through this cycle. Like I was trying, I'd fallen in love with this person, it's really painful, he can't be a part of my life, he's not available to meet my needs, this really isn't working, so I should just extract myself. So I would then figure out that I had to put a stop to it.

3. The next step involved taking the participant's excel file and printing out all the titles of those smaller sections. The titles were then compared, merged, and renamed if possible. For example, in Kris' file the sections entitled "**Seeing that my experiences are cyclical**", "**Identifying important patterns**" and "**Noticing recurring themes in my life**" became "**Identifying patterns**". By the end of this process, each transcript was broken down into approximately 15-25 sections.
4. I then printed out the complete list of section titles in seven separate columns, one for each participant. I compared and contrasted the different titles occurring in different participants' transcripts. For instance, Kris's "**Identifying patterns**" held similar meaning to Helen's "**Documenting cycles**", Sarah's "**Seeing patterns**" and Tootsie's "**Recurring themes**". Thus each section was renamed "**Identifying patterns**". By the end of this process the original 15-25 sections were merged into approximately 10-12 sections.
5. I then wrote summaries for each section, revisiting each transcript and attempting to articulate the meaning shared by the participants. I also included experiences that differed slightly between the participants within the section. For example, "**Identifying patterns**" was described thusly:

This section centres around the ability to see recurring themes in the diarist's life. The diarist can read and reread her entries, analyzing the text in terms of persistent issues that occur cyclically in her life. The meaning lies in the ability to identify the patterns and grasp hold of them. When she does this, the diarist is no longer the victim of these events; rather she is now in control of the "bigger picture". Many women discussed the importance of bringing

clarity to their lives through this process, and the ability to redirect their lives as a result. Other women discussed the meaning of “backing themselves up” through these patterns. They could use their diaries as evidence of the cycles of someone else’s behaviour.

6. I began to notice similarities between several of the sections. “Control” featured heavily in sections like **“Identifying patterns”**, **“Creating a persona”**, **“Telling my own story”**, and **“Controlling my audience”**. Using these section summaries, I began to develop overarching themes. For instance, the aforementioned sections became subsections of the larger theme **“Taking control”**, which I described as follows:

Through the diary the diarist’s life becomes real, tangible, and legitimate. The meaning lies in the diarist’s ability to take ownership over the presentation of the story of her life. The diary allows the diarist to control the way she is presented and the way her story is told. She can then grasp hold of the overarching themes of her life and redirect her life as a result. Finally, the diarist is able to control how her story is heard. So to a certain extent, she also controls her audience. The meaning of the diary is in part the importance of gaining control over our lives. The diary makes us real, our stories legitimate, our hopes and dreams tangible and our responses from the public self-defined.

7. At this point, I also began to notice my persistent use of theatre metaphor in my researcher’s journal, and started to toy with the idea of presenting my themes in language of the theatre. For instance, under the larger theme **“Taking control”**, what was once **“Identifying Patterns”** became **“... The Diarist as the Director! The diarist takes control of the bigger picture”**.
8. The next step was to design an outline and begin to refine and define my major themes and sub-themes depending on how developed each theme could become. For instance, in the end, **“Taking control”** was too broad and needed to become three separate theatre-influenced themes: **“... With the Diarist as the Playwright! The diarist takes control of the script”**, **“...The Diarist as the Director! The diarist takes control of the bigger picture”**, **“... And the Diarist as the Audience! The diarist takes control of the response”**.
9. With a detailed outline and my major themes and sub-themes identified and described, I went back to each transcript and began to organize specific quotations under specific sub-themes. For instance, under the theme **“... The Diarist as the Director! The diarist takes control of the bigger picture”**, and the heading **“New directions”**, lies the following quote from Kris:

In your journal you could see that you're just going through this cycle. Like I was trying, I'd fallen in love with this person, it's really painful, he can't be a part of my life, he's not available to meet my needs, this really isn't working, so I should just extract myself. So I would then figure out that I had to put a stop to it.

Thus, I began the organization that would lead to reporting my findings.

4.7 Reporting the findings

As mentioned, after the initial stages of analysis I began to notice my persistent use of theatre metaphor in my journal. I playfully began jotting down theatre puns, metaphors, and plays-on-word to describe the meaning of particular themes. This process became more refined, moving from a method I used for my own understanding of the meaning of diary-keeping to the framework for this entire project. In keeping with Parry's (2005) "sixth phase of feminist leisure research", I decided to employ this theatre metaphor to present my thesis through creative analytic practice. Using a 'conceit', I designed this thesis as an alternative form of representing academic work that reflected first and foremost my interpretation of the experience of diary-keeping for the seven women interviewed. A conceit is defined by Preminger & Brogan (1993) as an extended metaphor: "by juxtaposing, usurping and manipulating images and ideas in surprising ways, a conceit invites the reader into a more sophisticated understanding of an object of comparison" (p. 23). This presentation of the analysis of my findings led me to Goffman's (1959; 1974) dramaturgical perspective and, incidentally, Goffman's dramaturgical perspective led me to parts of my analysis. Thus reporting my findings as an extended theatre metaphor reflected and influenced my theoretical orientation.

I designed a study that seeks to unearth the kinds of questions and answers about diary-writing that I wished to explore. Consistent with my theoretical orientation – feminist, dramaturgical, qualitative, and interpretive – my research design reflects my desire to understand and value the meaning that women give to their experiences with diary-keeping. Each step of the process has attempted to get at this meaning in a creative, collaborative, compassionate, reflexive way, a way that also critiques notions of neutrality and objectivity in research. My methods echo my methodology and epistemology and connect back to my desire to illuminate

those experiences that thus far have been left in the dark. And so the stage is set for this study;
let the show begin.

5.0 **An Emergent Themes Production...**
Findings

5.1 Cast

Jenn Diarist

Originally from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Jenn packed up her most recent diary and took it on the road with her when she embarked for Ottawa last year. She arrived at Carleton ready to begin her studies in aerospace engineering. Jenn has been journaling for four years during which time she has kept numerous diaries, including a frilly purple lock-and-key diary and an online journal. Jenn is 19 years old, white, upper-middle class, able-bodied, single, and heterosexual. Of her part in this production, Jenn muses:

“You want to feel like your life is different than anyone else’s...”

Lucy Diarist

Lucy, a 19 year old dance student currently attending York University in Toronto, came to diary-writing in late elementary school. She began writing as part of a nightly bedtime routine, but slowly progressed to more spontaneous, inspired entries. Her diary of choice is an attractive coiled notebook. Lucy is white, middle class, able-bodied, single, and heterosexual. She is originally from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Of her part in this production, Lucy remarks:

“...you can be all about yourself and not feel guilty about it.”

Helen Diarist

A long-time Nova Scotian teacher and mother of five, Helen had to keep her diaries from her sisters as a little girl. She used her diaries as a young woman to write about the death of her mother, the excitement of university, and the joys and perils of motherhood. Now, at 54 years of age, Helen is divorced and starting her life anew. She keeps many diaries throughout her house and each serves a different purpose in her emotional life. She is white, middle class, able-bodied, single, and heterosexual, from Antigonish. Of her part in this production, Helen notes:

“...it’s a journey of finding yourself...”

Tootsie Diarist

As a support worker and counsellor in the community of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, Tootsie knows the importance of introspection. She flirted with diary-writing as a young girl before becoming a more serious journaler as an adult. These days she writes in a feminist-themed, floral diary. Tootsie is 35 years old, white, middle class, able-bodied, partnered, and heterosexual. Of her part in this production, Tootsie wryly quotes:

“It’s the good girls who keep diaries. The bad girls never have time.”

Sarah Diarist

Sarah, a 32 year old mother of two from Antigonish, Nova Scotia, has kept diaries since she was girl. As a teenager she used her diary to express her teen angst; as a university student she used her diary to store her outpouring of ideas; as an adult she uses her diary to detail her

experiences with Shamanic journeys. She writes in non-descript scribblers. Sarah is a research assistant, white, lower-middle-class, able-bodied, partnered, and heterosexual. Of her part in this production, Sarah explains:

“It’s not about questioning. You’re not worried about other people critiquing. You can say whatever’s stupid or overly-emotional...”

Kris Diarist

As a young girl, Kris’s mother found and read her diary. Then her sister found and read her diary. Then, as an adult, her spouse found and read her diary. Kris now keeps her diary in a locked toolbox in her friend’s attic. Kris lives in a rural area outside of Antigonish, Nova Scotia. She is 48, white, able-bodied, married, and heterosexual. She works part-time and describes herself as straddling the line between working and middle class. Of her part in this production, Kris says:

“I think it’s a good emotional skill. Journaling builds emotional skill.”

Brenda Diarist

Brenda has journaled since elementary school, and now she teaches students of the same age. She began with a small lock-and-key diary and moved on to amass quite a collection of journals. Juggling multiple diaries at any given time, Brenda’s favourite diary is one in which she writes all of the things that she loves. Brenda is a 26 year old teacher in the small, rural town of Canso, Nova Scotia. She is white, middle-class, able-bodied, partnered, and heterosexual. Of her part in this production, Brenda comments:

“I think that through the days you forget a lot about who you are, but in that book it’s like I return to myself...”

Through my analysis of the interview data I identified five major themes. As noted in the methods chapter, these themes will be presented as interlocking parts of a theatrical performance. These interlocking parts will be used as metaphors for the roles the diarist plays in this production. The first section describes the genre of this particular production as a whole, and then the next sections discuss the diarist as lead actor, writer, director, and audience. The purpose of presenting the findings in such a way is to draw attention to journaling as a social performance complete with organizing norms, assumptions, and expectations, and to highlight the importance of context, space, and creative control in diary-writing. Framing the findings as a theatrical performance also exemplifies the complexities of dichotomizing experience; for instance, can a play be work, and vice versa?

The production of *“Dear Diary”* is most often presented as a romance, a story of adventure and intrigue for young girls. The first theme, **“Dear Diary”: A story of romance, adventure and intrigue!** describes the diarists’ attraction to the romantic genre of journaling and

explores the construction of the diary as feminine. At times, however, the diarists took this romantic, feminine space, and reshaped it to fit their needs. The second theme, **...Starring the Diarist as Herself! The diarist takes the lead role in this play at work**, describes how the diary allows girls and women to create a space where they can be in the spotlight. Despite disagreements over defining journaling as either leisure or work, the participants all noted that the diary carves out personal space in their busy lives. The diarist is the star of the show, yet complete creative control requires taking the role of the three other major players in this production. The third theme, **...With the Diarist as the Playwright! The diarist takes control of the script**, describes how the diarist selects the characters, details, and plot-lines to develop in constructing the story of her life. With control over the script, the diarist can then pore over the story of her life, looking for overarching themes and meanings. The fourth theme, **...The Diarist as the Director! The diarist takes control of the bigger picture**, describes how the diarist can imagine directing her life, and the way she lives it, differently. As the director of her own story, the diarist then gets to decide where, when, what, why, and to whom their story is presented. The fifth theme **...And the Diarist as the Audience! The diarist takes control of the response**, describes the way in which the diarist edits, interprets, and carefully presents her story to the world. Having exercised control over what is written about her, and how her story has taken shape, the diarist now has some control over who gets to hear her story. Thus, through the performance of *“Dear Diary”*, the diarist has become the lead actor, the playwright, the director, and the audience in the performance of her own story. She has then put her story out into the public world, validating and legitimizing her interpretation. The meaning of diary-writing for the seven women interviewed therefore lies in the process of taking control over the entire performance of their lives, and then bravely presenting that performance to the world.

5.2 *“Dear Diary”*: A story of romance, adventure and intrigue!

Every year thousands of girls receive the gift of a diary. These diaries range in appearance, but many if not most are small, pretty, and decidedly “girly”. Diaries marketed

toward girls have several defining characteristics; for example, most are 5" x 7" or smaller, with a date imprinted on each page, confining the diarist to one cramped sheet of paper per day. Many are decorated with traditionally feminine colours and designs. For example, Helen's diary was small and pink. Jenn's starter diary was purple with a fluffy cat on it. Brenda's first diary was representative of this genre as well; like many of the other diarists, her diary was small and adorned with a tiny (and truly useless) lock and key. Sometimes, as in Jenn's case, the diarist is lucky enough to have her diary come complete with a fancy pen. Thus the experience of diary-keeping is organized by elements of femininity and romance, and many girls and women are attracted to the genre for those very reasons. As evidenced in the diary's physical structure and writing style, diary-keeping has become an incredibly gendered activity. The diarists interviewed for this study suggested that they fell for the romance inherent in the diary's structure, and continued to write because of this romantic structure and style. However, many women found they quickly grew out of the traditional girl's diary and began to create new and innovative spaces for journaling that were more personalized and meaningful to their lives.

5.2.1 Falling for the romance

Each woman interviewed for this study fell in love with the romantic journaling genre. This romance was in part maintained through the structure of the diary-writing experience. Many of the women began writing in one of the aforementioned "girly" diaries: small, feminine and kept under lock and key.

Helen: I started when I was a little girl, you know, the little locked ones? The little pink ones?

Brenda: I had this little girl diary with the small, small, little lock.

And those who did not have the lock and key diary as a girl wished they had.

Lucy: I always wanted [a lock and key diary], but no, it was always one of those coiled ones that flipped over...

Like Lucy, Jenn yearned for the romance of the young woman's diary. Both women commented that their attraction to the diary came in part from the structure of the traditional girl's diary. The

meaning for Jenn lay in the physical structure of the diary, and the private, secretive activity the structure promoted:

Before grade nine, I had always kind of wanted a diary. It was kind of one of those things that you see in a book, the girl would be writing in her diary. I always kind of thought that it would be kind of neat to keep a diary, keep all my secrets in it... So I'd kind of find a little book and decided this is going to be my diary. And I'd write a page in it and then I'd leave it and never write in it again... I just liked the idea of having this secret journal where I could write all my private thoughts, though I'm not sure I had all that many private thoughts in grade three! (both laugh) Then in grade nine I got a diary for Christmas from my grandparents with the key and the little lock... It's about the same size as a chapter book, novel, it's purple, it has purple pages, pale purple, and it has a cat on the front because I like cats... It's a hardcover and it has a little lock, though you can open the lock with a bobby pin so it's not a big deal (both laugh). But the thought of the lock, that you're keeping the rest of the world out...

Jenn was intrigued by the traditional girl's diary and the femininity and romance infused in the experience of diary-keeping. She took inspiration to write from the structure of the diary; its small size and captivating lock and key roused her to write her most private, secretive thoughts. Like Helen, Brenda and Lucy, the physical structure promoted by the genre of the young woman's diary was a major part of her diary-keeping experience.

5.2.2 The flames still burn

For many of the women interviewed, the romantic structure of the diary is what tempted them to commit to diary-writing as a routine activity. However, it was not just the lock and key that kept them coming back. The diary is constructed as romantic not only in general appearance and structure, but in style as well. For instance, Lucy and Jenn described the excitement of writing in their diaries while burrowed under the covers of their beds late at night. Jenn even used a flashlight and a pen with feathers on the end. The romantic structure of the diary promotes this

secretive, mysterious, hidden style of writing. As well, several of the women interviewed discussed aspiring to write as beautifully as some of the famous diarists in literature. These women confessed to taking pleasure in channeling the stylized manner of writing used by diarists such as Anne Frank, and novels such as *The Princess Diaries*, *From the Files of Madison Finn*, and even *Bridget Jones' Diary*. In fact, many of the women interviewed described naming their diaries initially. Jenn even called hers "Kitty", taking a note directly from Anne Frank.

Brenda's first diary entry began dramatically. She described writing about her hero, a local woman in the community:

I remember I said her first name, and then I said her first name and her last name. "Eileen. Eileen Ryan is my hero" (both laugh)... I think in some books for younger people sometimes the format is diaries, and it'll start 'dear diary'... Especially for females. And I think that's probably it... I really don't think boys get that...But I remember (laughs) – this is a little embarrassing – but I would always put 'yours respectfully, Brenda MacDonald'!

Brenda professed that she was likely influenced by the novels for young women she was reading at the time. For Brenda, the style of the diary-writing genre was about drama and intrigue – beginning and ending her entries with a flourish.

Jenn was also influenced by the writing-style of the literature involving diaries:

J: I started calling it Kitty, but then I stopped calling it anything.

C: Whose diary is named Kitty?

J: I think it might be Anne Frank! Anne Frank was one of those diaries that everyone knows and it was one of those great journals that you would aspire to have! I always kind of pictured like, what if in 200 years someone found my diary hidden away, what would they think? ... I think I read a book one time when they discovered the journal of a young girl who lived 150 years before them in their house. And so I'm there going... what if someone read my journal? What would that book be like? I always wanted it to be romantic but I don't think it ever was quite! (both laugh) ... I was reading some book once and the girl in it was a poet and she'd write, I think, I don't know, she might have been a drug addict in the book, and she would always write poems about how dark her soul was and how she was

misunderstood. And so I decided one day when I was really upset I was going to write one of these dark poems! (both laugh) ...And so I wrote this poem about how twisted and angry I was, and half of it was just me trying to be melodramatic...

Like she yearned for the traditional girl's diary in structure, Jenn longed to write in the style of the traditional girl's diary as well. This meant a style of writing that was romantic, intimate, revealing and dramatic. Conscious of a potential audience, Jenn wanted to sound like a diarist should. However, just as Brenda became embarrassed when discussing her early attempts at channelling the romantic writing style of the journaling genre, Jenn recalled these entries as slightly disingenuous. Though both women desired to participate in the activity of traditional girl's diary-keeping in both structure and style, both expressed feeling that the experience was not quite representing them as young women.

5.2.3 The romance wanes and freedom reigns

This feeling of being slightly disingenuous in one's diary entries was described by several of the diarists. Attempts to reproduce the romantic form and style of the diary seen in literature often felt phoney. These diarists described falling in love with the femininity and romance of the lock and key diaries, yet as time passed they felt something was lacking. Eventually many of the women interviewed confessed to feeling less than fulfilled by aspects of the traditional girl's diary. Of the traditionally feminine diaries with tiny, allotted space, Lucy complains:

Anything that comes out of you has to be polite or something! ...That's all your thoughts! You can't have any more! ...You have all these tiny lines. And of course you'd never think to take up two of them or anything!

For Lucy, the once appealing structure of the diary was now confining. She felt stifled by the restrictions placed on the content of her entries. She was put off by the polite, feminine style of the traditional girl's diary. Lucy had begun to re-imagine the diary-keeping experience as more than what was being offered to her. The romance, it appeared, had waned. And as the romance waned, new forms of diary-keeping emerged.

Brenda also found the traditionally feminine diaries off-putting as time passed. She began to alter her diary-keeping practices to make the shift towards a more mature experience:

B: I remember, too, I really didn't like calling it a diary because of that. A diary seems too frilly, and it didn't seem as serious as a journal.

C: So you don't do the 'dear diary' thing?

B: No, I don't think I do do the 'dear diary' thing.

Rejecting the term 'diary' was a meaningful move for Brenda. She felt that the term was too heavily associated with the kind of flimsy, feminine immaturity that the structure of the traditional girl's diary represented. Like Lucy, Brenda expressed the desire to have her thoughts and feelings taken more seriously and given more space. In renaming her diary a 'journal', Brenda was reclaiming the space as her own.

Jenn too eventually grew tired of the romantic, feminine, traditional girl's diary. But for Jenn, leaving the romance of the traditional diary behind brought mixed feelings:

I miss the romance! It's nice to think back and think, I'm going to write a journal that in 100 years they'll find it and they'll sympathize with me and they'll love me... but I think it's a lot better for me just having a therapeutic little journal.

The romance of the traditional girl's diary still appealed to Jenn, but in ways that might not be very healthy for her. The structure and style of the young woman's diary made Jenn seek approval and love from her audience, whereas her new diary was more therapeutic than romantic. The desire to seek love and expression was still meaningful for Jenn, but the romantic and feminine structure and style of the traditional girl's diary had lost some of its appeal.

Thus many of the women interviewed described a maturing process through which they moved from the romance of the small, girly, structured and stylized diary to a new form of journaling. The romance of the genre had waned, resulting in the creation of new and more individualized forms of journaling combined with elements of romantic structure and style. Most women felt that this new form of diary-writing allowed them to define the structure of journaling, rather than the structure of journaling defining them. Helen, for instance, moved from a small lock

and key diary to a “funky journal” made of recycled paper in her university years to represent her politics and the culture of the time. Now she divides her time between four different diaries:

The odd part, Caitlin, is I've no idea, I'm not systematic. Like I have one in my door, I have one in my closet at the bottom, like, I just put them places – they're all over the place! In fact, the other day I was cleaning out the bottom of my closet, I was taking my shoes all out, and I was like, oh (both laugh)! ... and it's interesting, you know, one has a floral thing going on, and I'm not a floral person but someone gave it to me, I think Rose [my daughter], she liked it. So I go to that when I'm in certain moods and there's another one that's very clinical. Michael [my son] bought me one that's all different shades of browns and blacks on the cover. So I go to that when I'm in a very pensive mood, or nostalgic. ... The floral is kind of like a, when I think about something cute that someone's done, or something that someone said to me that's so touching and yet so much that they probably wouldn't even notice, I'll go to that one and I'll write about it.

Rather than being confined by the structure and style of the traditional girl's diary, Helen has become liberated by her innovative new diary-keeping experience. She has redefined and reshaped the space in which she journals, using multiple spaces for multiple experiences. Helen's journaling has retained elements of the traditional girl's diary, for example, the floral print and nostalgic, at times romantic, style; however she has personalized the experience and matured beyond the polite, restrictive, lock and key diary to better suit her needs.

Brenda, too, now uses multiple diaries for particular moments of writing, having moved away from the more traditional diaries for little girls:

[When looking back on an earlier diary] I mostly think, 'god, I was so shallow!' (laughs) But that one was structured for a while and I did, I still had that tendency to write in it at the end of every day. And then it felt to me, well, nothing's really happened, and that's when I just started to stick to the more significant things... I think the point that I'm at now... I probably have about ten and most of them are half written in. And maybe I don't like where I am at that point in my life and I close that journal ... I have one journal in particular and I write in it the things that I love... One I started with the things I want to do... places I want to travel. It

was a brand new journal, but then I would start writing in it just periodically. But then I'd write down, like, books I'd like to read. It was a place to collect those things that I wanted to do.

The strictly structured style of the traditional girl's diary was confining for Brenda. Like the other diarists, Brenda described feeling that she was disingenuous when writing in a daily, structured, girl's diary. Like Helen, when Brenda began to deviate from that traditional structure and style, she found it liberating. Rather than complying with the pre-determined dates and spaces allocated for her feelings, thoughts and perceptions, Brenda started to write only when she felt like writing, and in whatever space felt right. Her entries still had elements of femininity and romance, but those elements were inspired by her life experience, rather than just the structure and style of the genre.

Many women commented that they began to feel more liberated in their journaling as they moved away from the scheduled, formal style of diary-writing they did as girls. Lucy notes: *I think over time I've just sort of become more comfortable, I just sort of write more emotional stuff and more stuff that I'm embarrassed about. Because when I started I didn't want to say anything that was upsetting or... but I think I became more relaxed in writing in my diary.*

The romance did indeed wane for these diarists, and for many that was somewhat disappointing. Yet as Lucy articulates, without such heavily structured and stylized diaries, the diarist can be more comfortable expressing genuine life experiences, even when it means that those experiences deviate from what is traditionally refined, feminine behaviour. Thus, a diminished sense of romance and femininity has led to an increased sense of freedom, comfort and ease of expression.

The most striking example of a diarist's shift from the traditionally feminine, romantic girl's diary to a revamped, personalized space is Kris' experience. Possibly the only woman in the world who can claim to have purchased her diary from Canadian Tire, Kris found that the structure of the traditional journal simply did not suit her needs:

K: Well... I did it when I was very young and then it got found and read. And actually that happened to me a few times... I realized after the second time, which was devastating the second time this happened...

C: Who found it?

K: My ex-husband found it.

C: Oh no.

K: And I just thought, I can't do this. I can't write things down, it's gotten me into trouble at least a couple of times. I'd better not do that anymore.

Here Kris is articulating the impractical elements of the romantic diary-keeping ideal. The traditional girl's diary, a space for intimate secrets easily accessed by curious audiences, was no longer a realistic or fulfilling space for Kris's journaling. In fact, Kris exposes the dangerous elements of the traditional girl's diary; the diary is structured and styled in a way that shapes and restricts women's emotions, perceptions and thoughts and at the same time makes those feelings accessible to others. Kris did not want to be controlled by her diary's structure and style; rather, she wished to be in control. Her solution to the problem of the traditional lock and key diary was to buy one that could not be opened with the twist of a bobby pin. She purchased a tool box with a heavy duty lock. And then she found an even more secure avenue:

K: I discovered computers and passwords.

Despite initially falling for the romance, many of the diarists interviewed described feeling that something was lacking with their traditional girl's diary. The diarists expressed that they were restricted by the traditional girl's diary; there was too little space, not enough security, and even the word 'diary' felt too silly and immature. Thus many of the diarists described a maturing process during which they transferred elements of their romantic lock and key diaries into a more secure and personalized setting. These diarists described their new diaries as more comfortable, more liberating, more personal, and safe. This process did not mean that all romance was left behind. What was evident, however, was that this process allowed the diarists to grow and create new and exciting diary spaces.

5.2.4 Romance, adventure, and intrigue online

Apparently the pen is not necessarily mightier. Several of the women interviewed discussed shifting their diaries from pencil and paper to keyboard and word processor. The privacy appealed to these diarists, as did the accessibility, the speed, and the ability to easily edit entries. Kris comments:

K: Well, when I was writing on a notepad I would sit at the table or I would lay in bed propped up on pillows, so it's a little bit more comfy to do that, but it's hard on the neck. I made the switch to computers very easily and I'm used to typing. I can type almost as fast as I can think the words.

C: That makes a big difference.

K: Yeah it really does. And then I'm a perfectionist, so I go back and fix up all the typos.

C: Oh do you?

K: Oh yes, got to be proper! And then I read it. And this is the other part of journaling that I do a lot, I go through this flurry of typing out what's on my mind, trying to articulate, trying to get it down so I can get it clear in my own head and sort of get it out of my head. Because it's in there swimming around and preoccupying me...

In the traditional diaries offered to girls and women, the structure and style of the experience is defined by the genre. By seeking out space that better suited her needs, Kris is taking journaling to new and different places. On the computer, Kris can better define the structure and style of journaling that suits her needs. There are infinite fonts, sizes, colours, styles and resources. There is also infinite space. By individualizing her journaling, Kris has claimed ownership over the activity despite still existing within the genre of 'diary-keeping'. She is still writing, reading, rereading, and pondering her emotions, yet she is doing so within a space that is more self-defined.

Jenn, too, challenged the traditional construction of the diary through journaling on the computer and posting entries online, a process known as 'blogging':

J: Basically you just go on and you write your journal entry and then post it. And so, you can read other people's, and you can read what they've done each day and just little thoughts, and you can get an update of what your friends are doing in different places. And so if I go to my website I can see all the entries that I have done for the last year or so that I've had it. And so it's just a journal but it's on the internet, so I can access it wherever I go... When I signed up for it, I mean, I didn't put my last name, and I have kind of a non-descript nickname and didn't say much about myself. So I mean, you could find it, but unless you know it's mine then it's not going to be a big thing.

C: So do you feel that it's pretty private?

B: I do. The thing is that I would be really, really upset if someone I knew read it. But the thing is, I don't care if other people read it... As long as it's someone who doesn't know me. I don't care if you take my journal and you read it to the world as long as you don't know it's me.

Jenn has achieved the romantic notion of having her diary read by others in another space and time. She had yearned for this romance, yet felt unfulfilled by the traditional girl's diary that often accompanied the process. Thus she created a new space that retained some of the romantic elements of her girlhood diary; through her computer she can reveal private secrets to others, connect over space and time, seek sympathy and intimacy. However, Jenn is achieving this romance through a structure and style that is more her own. She controls her level of anonymity and her level of privacy is not dependent upon a flimsy lock and key.

The process was appealing to Jenn for many reasons:

... I can type faster than I can write. And so I can type closer to the speed that I talk – my thoughts are still a little bit faster (both laugh)! So it tends to be a little more stream of consciousness that you can then look at and see more candidly what you were thinking, whereas with a journal I do think more about what I'm writing at the time. And it's not that I'm changing what I'm writing, it's that you're kind of forming the sentences a little more and you're thinking about what you're going to say next. Whereas this you can just say all you want and go back and add a little thought in here and there. So it's the same thing, and I

use it the same way, just when I need to get everything out and when I'm emotional or something and I don't have my diary.

Like Kris, Jenn felt that the computer allowed her thoughts to flow faster, and she enjoyed the ability to quickly and cleanly edit previous entries. However, Jenn found that the new medium had its drawbacks, and it did not always feel the same as her pen and paper diary-writing:

Nobody knows about it... but again there's always the chance of when someone goes on your computer, first of all, if you call it 'my journal' or 'my diary', that's just asking someone to read it. And the other thing is, if you call it some random secret name you never know, are you going to lose it? It just depends where I am. I mean, when I'm in the mood to curl up in my bed and write under the blankets with my flashlight then yeah, I'm going to use my journal and it's nice and kind of familiar.

Like Helen and Brenda, Jenn used different journaling spaces for different experiences.

Dissatisfied with the traditional diary-keeping options, Jenn branched out and began to use multiple diaries for multiple moods. At times this meant relocating to her bed, hidden under the covers with a flashlight in one hand and a pen in the other.

Like Jenn, others felt that they might encounter challenges in relocating their journaling to cyberspace. Many said they would miss the form, the style, the process of writing in a diary.

Many said they would miss the romance. Lucy comments:

It seems very impersonal, the computer... The thing is that when I'm reading back, the way I write with different emotions or when I'm tired or when I'm really paying attention, when I want to look good and sound good, my writing is different. And the times when I would print or when I would write; it's really interesting to see all the different sort of fonts and everything that I get with my own handwriting. It's really neat.

Lucy felt it was meaningful to retain some of the individuality and warmth imbued in the traditional diary-writing experience, and that meant staying loyal to the paper and pen. Lucy had long since written in a coiled notebook without the traditional structure and style of a girl's diary, yet in that shift she was not willing to lose all of the romance that had drawn her to the process in the first place.

Tootsie enjoyed reviewing the different styles of penwomanship as well. She brought her diary to the interview and pointed out the meaning different writing-styles to me as she turned the pages of her journal:

My writing here is quite large and relaxed. This is a letter to my friend who died, and the writing gets more and more intense... Yeah, look, there's a great emotional intensity here too... Blogging is stuff other people are going to see. And I don't know that it is the same... but if I knew that someone else was going to read my diary I wouldn't write in it, I simply wouldn't. So I wonder what their motives are. You are putting something out there...

Tootsie was making the diary-writing process her own, and for this particular diarist that meant retaining the traditional paper and pen. Handwriting is meaningful to Tootsie and very much a part of the emotional process of journaling for her. Unlike Kris, Tootsie felt that she could better reflect upon her experiences when they were recorded by hand. And unlike Jenn, Tootsie found the public nature of online journaling contradictory to the meaning of diary-keeping.

Helen also had difficulty imagining a shift from the traditional pen and paper journaling to electronic journaling. For Helen, the computer was a source of frustration, while her diary was a source of companionship and calm:

I went back and got my Master's just recently and I do everything on the computer. And it makes me mad, the computer a lot of the time, like it aggravates me! ... I go out on the back porch now and I'll take my diary when I feel like talking to someone. I like that feeling of pen to paper.

Like Lucy, Tootsie, and even Jenn, Helen was willing to sacrifice some but not all of the romance of diary-keeping. For Helen, this meant retaining elements of nature, serenity, reflection, and calm, and the computer held the opposite meaning in Helen's experience.

As such, the diary has not lost all of its traditional, dreamy romance for these women. Jenn still writes in her old diary from time to time, flashlight in hand. Sarah records her experiences and dreams surrounding Shamanic journeys. Tootsie's diary is pretty and floral with beautiful flowers sketched on each page. However, that traditional romance is injected with Tootsie's feminist-flavoured wit: each page also has a sassy, women-centred quote at the bottom, including "it's the good girls who keep diaries. The bad girls never have time." And like each of

the women interviewed, Tootsie is not afraid to make that diary her own, despite the existing structure:

T: I don't feel any remorse about writing over the illustrations... I need the space.

In our culture the diary has been constructed as feminine. In literature, the diarist has typically been presented as dramatic, starry-eyed, and romantic. The diary as a product is marketed towards women and in particular girls; the very form and structure of the diary reproduces traditional discourses of femininity. The classic girl's diary strongly encourages the diarist to be organized, polite, controlled, and punctual. As the women interviewed have revealed, this structure can be extremely constraining to women and girls. Although this romantic ideal was often the inspiration to begin writing in a diary, each woman described outgrowing these traditional diaries and losing some of the disingenuous romance. In their own way these women began to question the traditional structure of the diary and rebel against some aspects of the practice, finding creativity and liberation in the process.

In this sense, these women are resisting the confining structure of the more traditional, feminine diary by playing with the encouraged rules and regulations of diary-writing. The structure of the diary had controlled them, yet now they are controlling the structure of their diaries. These diarists are also writing sporadically, openly, in various writing styles. They have explored and created new structures of diaries that fit their particular needs and worlds. The drama, the femininity, and the romance of diary-writing became tiresome and phoney for some of diarists. However, for most, the romance that attracted them to journaling still at times inspired them to write. Even through changes in structure and style, the romance often remained. They found that they could at times be dreamy, emotional, introspective, idealists without that experience being defined, structured, and controlled by others. The dreamy, whimsical, romantic ambience surrounding the practice of diary-writing is now not so much constraining as comforting to many of these women; a familiar backdrop, perhaps, to new adventures.

5.3 ...*Starring the Diarist as Herself!* The diarist takes the lead role in this play at work

The genre of diary-keeping is a gendered one, indeed, but these diarists have illustrated that there are ways to make the socially constructed space their own. Several elements make this space meaningful to women and exemplify the possibilities for resisting dominant gender discourse through the diary. One of these meaningful elements is the “personal space” (Wearing, 1998) experienced by women through the diary. Finding personal space can be very challenging and complicated for women; we rarely get the lead role when it comes to our leisure time, and we rarely get to play ‘ourselves’. Because of the complicated and often contradictory experience of leisure for women, it has proven difficult to define the very concept of ‘women’s leisure’.

5.3.1 The work/leisure divide

It became evident that the traditional definition of work and leisure as dichotomous was making it difficult for the women to define journaling as either one or the other. When asked if she felt that her journaling was a leisure activity, Sarah responded:

S: I wouldn't think of it as... I could see how you could view it that way, but I never looked at it that way.

C: ... So how would you look at it?

S: Um (laughs) mental therapy? You know, emotional need? So emotional health I guess... But I can see how it could fit with leisure; it just wouldn't necessarily pop into my head that way... But I do think that there's an element of leisure to it because I would guess that, depending on how much time a person has, free-time, they may choose to get more involved with it, or... Whereas people who do it as a sort of emotional health thing, they don't do it as a leisure thing. But maybe it's because they have such busy lives, they don't see it that way.

Sarah struggled with defining journaling as leisure or work, and part of that struggle was due to the complexity of the very concept of ‘leisure’ in Sarah’s life. She described feeling as though she did not have the time for leisure, and in order to incorporate journaling into her life, she needed to

define it in terms of productivity. Thus Sarah felt that journaling had aspects of both work and leisure, but in her life it was meaningful insofar as it provided her mental therapy.

Tootsie also had trouble defining her journaling because of the work/leisure dichotomy:

T: I feel no obligation to the journal.

C: So is it like leisure for you?

T: No it really isn't! It's hard work! Well, it is leisure in that I do it privately, alone, when no one else is around. No one told me to do it. And so it is leisurely, but it certainly happens in a furious state...

Similar to Sarah, Tootsie noticeably grappled with describing her journaling as either work or leisure. While maintaining that journaling is in fact a non-obligatory activity she then complicated the notion of leisure by asserting emphatically that journaling is “hard work”. Journaling was meaningful to Tootsie in spite of (or because of) these contradictions. And as she notes, journaling is also meaningful due to the elements of time and space; the space is private and personal, and the time is for Tootsie alone.

Helen explained that as a child journaling was a leisure activity, but that as she grew older the activity matured into a relationship to be maintained. Having recently separated from her husband, she felt that her journal had provided her a sense of companionship that needed to be worked at:

I wouldn't really say it's my leisure, not now. Um...you know how you have a companion? Well my journal is my companion now.

Rather than defining journaling as either work or leisure, Helen complicates the dichotomy by suggesting that for women, companionship is not necessarily leisurely; nor is companionship necessarily work either. For Helen, what is meaningful about this space is that it allows her to reconnect with herself and develop and maintain that relationship.

Like many of the others, Kris agreed that her journaling had leisurely characteristics. However, she defined her journaling as essentially “emotional work” – a term that seemed to articulate what the others had been describing:

So I was doing this work one day and these words were sort of drifting through my head. And I thought, I was feeling very heavy-hearted and I thought, I need to write this down. So I got out my book and I started writing out a stream of consciousness, just those words that were running through my head. And then I started trying to remember other words that were particular to this relationship. And I filled up an entire page and cried while I was writing all of these words. ... I was sort of casting things off somehow. It was very, very therapeutic. ...So I think that's why I think of journaling more as work. I think of journaling, I think I've used journaling as emotional work... for the purpose of dealing with the emotional problem that I'm confronted with, which is the main reason why I would ever journal.

Kris' description is similar to Tootsie's assertion that journaling is "hard work". And like Helen and Sarah, it was important for Kris to express that journaling is a serious activity that can be emotionally and physically demanding. These are typically characteristics of work, and yet these women are experiencing them in a genre that has tended to be characterized as passive leisure. Thus, these women are all stressing the fact that journaling defies the traditional dichotomization of work and leisure. And they are emphasizing the meaning of undertaking emotional work in their so called 'free time'. Their time, however, is not so much 'free' as it is time 'made'.

Those who defined their journaling as a leisure activity professed that this was not always the case. For many of the women, the activity originally felt obligatory. Lucy notes:

... I think when I started writing in my diary every day it just became something that I had to do, like I had to brush my teeth. And it wasn't like I disliked or liked it, it was just something that I did... the routine, yeah. When I was writing every day it was kind of more a routine thing, not really leisure and not really work. But I think now when I write in my diary it's definitely leisure.

Even though journaling originally felt obligatory, Lucy struggled with defining the activity as either work or leisure. Like Sarah, she used the word "maintenance" to describe her diary-keeping experience. However, after shifting from the more structured girl's diary to a more self-defined journaling space, Lucy asserted that the activity was "definitely leisure".

Brenda echoed this sentiment:

C: *Did you feel obligated to do it?*

B: *Yes, I did at first... at first I did. Years and years ago I did feel that. And it wasn't enjoyable at all. And the pages, the things that I wrote were contrived, and there was pressure to write. It wasn't really myself, or my soul pouring out on the page. It was just: 'this is what I did, the end' (both laugh). It wasn't therapeutic.*

Like Lucy, the pressure and obligation of the more structured girl's diary made the activity unpleasant and less meaningful to Brenda. When she eventually began restructuring her diary into a space that was self-defined and more personal, the pressure and obligation was replaced with a sense of liberation and healing.

Like the others, the obligation that Jenn initially felt about journaling matured into a sense of freedom:

When I first started I did it religiously every night and if I skipped a night I felt horrible. And then I think the first time I missed a month or something, came back and started to try to update it on everything that had happened... I apologized! I mean, it was leisurely, but in the beginning I wanted it to be a daily thing and I wanted to be regular. But I realized that that wasn't quite realistic... And it got to the point where I thought, I really don't have to write every little thing. Because it wasn't kind of a documentary of my life, it was feelings...

Even though the activity was undertaken during Jenn's free time, she felt obligated to write in her diary at first. And despite the guilt and debt she felt towards her diary, Jenn still defined the activity as "leisurely". After moving past the structured diaries of her girlhood and finding space that was self-defined (such as her online journal), Jenn stopped associating those horrible feelings with journaling and started to feel more at ease in her personal space.

The women interviewed had mixed feelings when it came to defining the diary in terms of the work/leisure divide. Some women defined their journaling as predominantly having characteristics of work, and others leisure. All of the women felt that there were characteristics of both. Although there was little consensus on which side of the work/leisure divide journaling fell, it was clear that the dichotomization of these terms did not reflect the women's experiences. What

was articulated by each woman, however, was the importance of having ownership over the time and space that journaling took place. As Lucy articulated,

It's definitely not work...but it's definitely not leisure... it's my time.

Whether it is mental therapy, emotional work, maintenance of a relationship, or non-obligatory free time, each woman described the significance of having their own “personal space” to explore what they chose to explore (Wearing, 1998). In this sense, there was no consensus upon whether journaling was work or leisure, but every woman agreed that personal, self-defined time and space was meaningful. And each woman emphasized the importance of recognizing journaling not only as leisure, but also as a serious, and often emotionally challenging, activity. In doing so, these women disrupted the oversimplification of the work/leisure divide.

5.3.2 Constraints to/of journaling

Thus, part of the importance of journaling for women is that the activity can be self-defined. Yet journaling is not always self-defined. Sometimes journaling is constrained by societal factors, and sometimes journaling constrains us. As the women involved in this study revealed, the ‘self-defined’ characteristic of journaling can often be threatened. In keeping with Shaw’s (1999) suggestion, detailed in the literature review, that leisure can be both constrained and constraining, these diarists illustrate that journaling can be both limited and limiting.

For many of the women, the ethic of care and the difficulties of a time-crunched household often constrained their journaling. Helen recalls:

It was constant compromise. You want to do this, I want to do this, the kids want to do this, and I still want to maintain my own individuality. But I also know that I have others depending on me. And I would write about that. Trying to figure it out in my own mind... how I felt, just in my own self. Was it resentment? ...So it did taper off because of my schedule, Caitlin, my busy schedule.

Although her responsibilities to her family at times constrained her journaling, Helen has few regrets:

H: [I had to be] strong for everybody else. Oh definitely, Caitlin, definitely (laughs)! And as a teacher, it adds it on. And sometimes you feel sorry for yourself, what about me, what about me? (both laugh) But, it's so... people bring such joy. Your own, your children, your spouse, if it's good, they bring such joy to you that I never even would have thought about that... To me everything, I loved it. I never felt put upon, or my role is this. I loved the busy-ness, I loved the multi-tasking, everything.

For Helen, her personal space for self-defined leisure time was constrained by familial obligations which often placed her needs last. However, though her journaling was constrained it felt to Helen a worthwhile trade for time spent with those she loved.

Like Helen, Sarah dealt with the difficulties of motherhood and a time-crunched household. However, Sarah was also dealing with poverty and the complexities of being a single mother. These factors constrained her leisure time considerably and she became isolated, and this lack of leisure time actually made Sarah need her diary that much more:

I didn't go out because I was living on social assistance and I had a little boy. I guess I wasn't driven to get out as much, and then that becomes a habit, and so in a lot of ways I was isolated. So I used journaling a lot. ...It is a dramatic change. And I remember none of my friends had kids, and I was really (pause) because I knew they couldn't understand what my day was really like, and I couldn't really relax and have a conversation the same way they could. Not that we weren't talking, but I was constantly having to make sure that the child was ok. But, so I was very aware of the fact that I had almost no time for myself. But I think poverty and being a single mother exacerbated that situation, whereas if you're in a healthy relationship you can take steps to say, we need some time... And I mean, I did that to the best of my ability at that point but because of the poverty it was very minimal. I couldn't justify going out shopping, or that kind of stuff that you could take for granted... I think I was just in a survival mode. I honestly didn't take a lot of time for myself... I tend to journal more when I'm less, for whatever reason, connected intimately with people. Like when I was a single mom I had my routines, I was close to my family, I went to Kid's First, but I didn't really have a rich emotional sort of relationship. So the journaling really came in

as a sort of... I had a few long distance friends, but... I think that's when it really became a tool for having the emotional outlet.

Sarah's experience once again complicates the work/leisure divide, and illustrates the ways in which leisure can be constrained by societal factors. As a low-income single mother, Sarah experienced the gendered nature of poverty and the isolation that comes with it. Because of these societal factors, her leisure time was constrained; and yet, because of these societal factors, Sarah journaled more frequently. For Sarah, journaling was not leisure in the traditional conceptualization of the term. Instead of being frivolous, fun, carefree time it was space that she depended on for emotional survival. Therefore, although her leisure time was constrained by societal factors, her journaling was not. Had she had more leisure time, Sarah might have in fact journaled less.

For both women it is important to note that although their journaling was limited by time and family, they still used journaling to seek out personal space when they had the chance. And they both found that journaling in some small way helped them to negotiate these constraints in their lives. Helen took the constraints in her life and wrote about them. Sarah used her journaling to cope with the isolating constraints of poverty and single motherhood. The constraints imposed upon these women through the ethic of care, poverty, and the difficulties of single motherhood limited their leisure time. Dominant gender discourses and gendered structural restrictions resulted in Helen having less personal space and fewer opportunities to write in her diary. On the other hand, dominant gender discourses and gendered structural restrictions resulted in Sarah having less personal space yet *more* incentive to write in her diary. In both cases, Helen and Sarah's gender was a constraint on their leisure. However, they were still able to negotiate these constraints through journaling despite the restrictions placed upon them.

For many women, it was the very act of journaling that placed constraints upon them. At times, explained Brenda, the diary did not provide the kind of space she needed:

Sometimes it was for documenting the special things. But at the same time, a lot of times I wouldn't go to my journal with a special time because I'd think, 'oh, this is special. I have to write about it and get it all perfect!' But then I didn't want to put constraints around that

special thing. I didn't want to have to find the perfect words to write it down, so I wouldn't. ... And I found that this year great things are happening to me and I'd think 'I really want to remember this, and this is something great!' and I'd write it down... And I stopped doing that... It's that pressure. It can be contrived.

Brenda felt constrained by her diary; she felt pressure to capture those special moments perfectly, and that pressure made the space more restrictive than liberating. Rather than creating self-defined, personal space, the diary at times made Brenda's experiences seem manufactured and unnatural. This means that the ostensibly leisurely activity of journaling can in fact constrain the journaler.

Several of the diarists interviewed concurred with Brenda and discussed feeling held back by the diary. For example, writing in a diary sometimes kept Jenn from reaching out and seeking comfort from others:

I got fairly depressed that year and things, I don't know, I kind of hit a new low that year... I needed a hug more than I needed to write in a journal.

Jenn described feeling that she needed to express herself openly to those around her to gain comfort. Yet, due to the concealed nature of the space it provides, the diary often provided Jenn an excuse to continue to be silent about her feelings.

Similarly, Helen describes needing to talk, but not knowing how to ask. Her diary often kept her from reaching out and talking to others, which she very much needed to do:

...After my mum passed when I was 15 it became a very, like, I needed to get it out. And I knew everybody else around me was sad. So to get it out publicly would just have caused a massive, real emotion out of everybody and it was just too much to handle... I just spoke to a young man I dated in grade 11 and 12 when this all happened. And he said to me, 'I didn't even know your mother had passed'... And I said, 'how could you not have known? I must have said something!' And he said, 'you never spoke about your family'... And in those days, Caitlin, also you didn't talk about what was going on in the house. Especially in a small rural, you kept everything... yes... I don't think it was good. When I look back now I don't think it was good at all! (laughs)

Helen's fear of burdening those around her with feelings of grief and sorrow kept her confined to her diary. Thus the diary played a role in repressing Helen's grief over the loss of her mother at a very young age. Like Jenn, the diary gave Helen a space to express those feelings. However, also like Jenn, Helen needed more than the diary could possibly offer. Their diaries supplied them an excuse for not speaking out and asking others for help.

Likewise, for Tootsie, turning to her diary was a way of avoiding feeling vulnerable with others or feeling as though she had failed in some way:

...When things do get worse and that lack of ability to sort through that skill deficit becomes overwhelming, then I do go eventually. But it is such a... frankly, for a counselor to admit that they need counseling is a real drag. You feel so incompetent. Physician heal thyself, right?

Like Jenn and Helen, Tootsie found that her diary held her back during times of emotional vulnerability. For many of these women, the diary actually constrained them. Although the diary could be an avenue for outpourings of feelings, for therapy, for emotional work, it did not always deliver. At times the diary did not live up to the diarist's expectations, and at times the diary restricted the diarist by putting constraints on her emotions. Despite needing to speak publicly about important issues in her life, the diarist sometimes kept her thoughts and feelings hidden and private by seeking out her journal. In this sense, the leisure activity was maintaining dominant gender discourses by keeping women quiet, controlling their emotions, and restricting them to the private sphere. However, as many of the women noted, the liberating aspects of the diary far outweighed the constraints. And at times, ironically, the constraints surrounding the diary were actually negotiated or resisted through the very act of journaling. Overall, Tootsie remarks:

I think it is constraining, I think I'm constrained. But I think that... it could be worse! (laughs)

5.3.3 Time for/by 'me'

Despite the fact that journaling is "very hard work", and despite the constraints to (and of) journaling, the women involved in this study still pursued this activity because it was meaningful

to them to create this personal space. All the participants spoke enthusiastically about several characteristics of journaling that made it meaningful in their lives. Each woman described journaling as a wonderful opportunity to make “me time”. As Lucy describes, in a diary it is all about ‘me’, and as a woman that opportunity does not come around very often:

You can be all about yourself and not feel guilty about it... Like, going back to that question that you were asking, why don't you call your friends and talk about it? Because in a way, if you're dumping, if you're telling everything to your friends, you're then sort of expected to ask your friend, 'well what's going on with you?' And in a way, a very, very selfish way, writing in your diary... you can just sort of talk about yourself the whole time! (laughs) Nothing about anybody else! ... If they listen to you for 45 minutes on the phone then you have to, like, take them out to lunch tomorrow or something! (both laugh) You can't just be like, 'bye now!' I mean, just in this interview I've felt like, 'well, what do you do? How do you feel? Have you written in your diary lately?' (both laugh)

In this statement Lucy concisely draws attention to how deeply dominant gender discourses are felt. Even in the supposed comfort of a one-on-one, collaborative, active, feminist interview, Lucy is conscious of how much and for how long she should speak about herself. In her diary, Lucy explains, the space is personal, and the time is for her alone.

Dominant discourses about femininity inform women that we are to be selfless, passive, and constantly caring for others. Each woman echoed Lucy's enthusiasm for just the opposite: a personal space for unbridled, at times aggressive, selfishness. Jenn declared that she sometimes needed a break from empathy. Sometimes she wanted to think that she was the only one in the world with her particular problem:

It would be so nice to be melodramatic and be the only one with the problem! Yeah, I think that's one of the other reasons that I journal, because you can journal and you can feel special that you're the only one who feels like this. Whereas you know, you tell a friend, and sometimes it's nice, you know, they're going through the same thing, but at the same time, you're like, 'no you don't! This is how I feel! It's not about how you felt, it's about how I felt!' And your journal can't say, 'I felt like that yesterday!'

Like Lucy, Jenn described feeling very conscious about how often she took the centre of the conversation when sharing with others. In her diary, however, Jenn could attend to herself only.

Kris suggests that we need the time to be absolutely self-centred and that the diary provides her with that space:

It's a freely chosen activity... It's for yourself... I think we're driven to do it, we need to do it. I think a lifestyle that I need to have involves time to journal, absolutely. ...Sorting out my feelings, thinking about things, making plans, decisions, and that's very self-focused activity... You just check in with yourself. This is what I think. Here's how I felt when he said that. And why did I feel that way? Why is it that I always feel that way when, whenever? You need to really do that in whatever way you do that.

Lucy, Jenn and Kris each stressed the importance of 'I' and 'me' over 'you' in the context of diary-writing. Over and over again, attention to the self was emphasized as extremely meaningful in diary-keeping.

Similarly, Brenda describes the diaries that she uses explicitly to explore the things that make her who she is:

...In this particular one I make lists of the things that I love. Like, really sensual things that I really, really love. In this particular one there's a conscious decision that this is going to be solely about the things that I love. And I'm a very big nature-lover, and a lot of it's about that. One I started with the things I want to do. So um, like, places I want to travel. It was a brand new journal, but then I would start writing in it just periodically. But then I'd write down, like, books I'd like to read. It was a place to collect those things that I wanted to do. Um, I was watching TV one day and Martha Stewart was making truffles and I thought, 'my god, I'd love to make homemade truffles!' (both laugh)

C: Mmm, homemade truffles.

B: So I wrote that down!

Again, like the other diarists Brenda's passage is peppered with 'I' rather than 'you'. This distinction is important, and as many of the women articulated, the distinction is meaningful because personal space and 'me time' are often rare things in a woman's life.

Brenda also explained the need to maintain a relationship with herself through the diary: *For me going to that journal is just kind of a re-embracing myself. That's sort of the best way I can describe it... it's a comfort now. And I still have that... it's like I understand that there's a relationship between me and my journal. And I remember saying, 'oh I've missed writing in this'. But it was more than that; it was almost like a 'you'. 'I've missed you'. ... I think it's me being in a relationship with myself. I think that through the days you forget a lot about who you are, but in that book it's like a return to myself. It's like taking away all those other layers and you're stripped down to who you are, you and your soul (laughs), you know?*

Even when the diarists refer to a 'you' in their diaries, it is a term used to signify a relationship with themselves rather than a separate other.

Many of the women interviewed described this need to rediscover themselves and to develop a relationship with that self. Helen notes that she tended to go to her diary when she felt in need of companionship:

Especially when I went through a stage where I felt kind of alone and I needed something, the inner self to come out. And that's usually when you've broken up with somebody or your friends have done something or there's a need for that soul-searching.

Like Brenda, Helen turned to her diary to nurture a relationship with herself. This relationship with oneself is obviously a meaningful one to these diarists, and yet the relationship is often neglected. As Helen noted, her relationship with herself tended to be overlooked during those times when she was focusing attention on others. And as Brenda described, the diarist can return to herself through the diary and realize that she had in fact missed herself very much.

Sarah's need is to nurture the adult inside, after a day of interacting only with a child: *...If you're home alone all day, or if you're with your kid all day, you're just in kid land for so much that you just, if you don't have a close other adult friend, you might just need to sort of be an adult, talk about your adult stuff. So it's like a friend, someone you can have a conversation with.* Sarah reiterates the sentiments of each of the diarists when she emphasizes the importance of returning to a space and time that is hers alone. In this space and time the diarist can put aside

the need to be selfless and to care for others. She can return to herself and nurture a relationship with herself. Thus the diary is most meaningful to these diarists when it is space and time that they have defined as 'mine'.

Wearing's (1998) concept of "personal space" fits well with the description of the diary given by these seven women. They each described seeking out personal space for "me time" through the diary. In this personal space they can be completely self-interested, self-centred and one-sided. They can reconnect with themselves and find companionship in that process. Unlike what often occurs in everyday life, in the diary women's needs, desires and pleasures come first. This allows women the possibility of resisting dominant discourses about femininity such as the ethic of care and the assertion that women be selfless and passive. They can resist objectification and take the lead role in their leisure lives. As Tootsie gleefully proclaims:

I don't have to give a shit about what their side of the story is!

5.4 ...*With the diarist as the writer!* The diarist takes control of the script

The women interviewed for this study have demonstrated just how meaningful it is to become the focus of their own personal space. Within this space these women can take the lead role in this particular play. The only actor, if you will, in a one-woman show. It is all about them, and they can tell it like it is. This role grants them agency to participate actively in the making of their own lives. The women involved in this study spoke about the importance of being the sole subject of their leisure lives. We saw these women take control of the lead actor's role in their leisure time, but now we'll see how for these women journaling is also about taking control of the entire performance.

Aside from the actor, a performance involves three major players: the playwright, the director, and the audience. The playwright controls the initial script. She chooses which details to include, which characters to present and develop, and which plot-lines to follow. She crafts the story. The director is in control of telling that story. She is responsible for interpreting and reinterpreting the script and looking for overarching themes and meanings. She presents this

performance to the audience. The audience participates in the performance by engaging in the presentation to some degree and responding. The degree to which the audience participates is in part determined by the other major players. The actor, the playwright, and the director can have some control over how the story is heard and who, what, when, where, and why the audience is in attendance. This means that between the actor, the playwright, and the director, the response to the performance can be somewhat controlled. Thus the diarist has nearly complete creative control, having taken control of the lead role, the script, the bigger picture, and in part, the response. As the women interviewed will illustrate, when we take control of each of these roles and make “Dear Diary” truly a one-woman show, we begin to become the primary visionaries of our lives.

For many women, it was extremely important to record those details, plots and characters that might have been overlooked by a different author. This involves recording the thoughts and feelings that the diarist wants to remember as part of her story, for better or for worse. Her diary then becomes not a documentary, but rather a narrative that she has shaped from pieces of her everyday life. Tootsie comments:

I wrote it. It's my words. I try not to lie to myself on a routine basis so, you know, at that moment it was true for me. ...It's pieces of a story that I'm not getting to put out in another form. But it's certainly not the whole story. It's mine. It's mine.

5.4.1 Selecting details

Lucy explains how the details she chooses to include in her story depend not on fact, but on mood:

... I love going back and just reading my everyday entries... you think back to, 'what did I do today?' And, 'I did enjoy that; that was really fun!' Whereas otherwise you might just go to bed and not think about it. You might not remember a little thing that happened. ...and when you're in different moods you probably document different things. Which I think is

sort of the way I wrote. Like if I was happy when I went to bed I wrote, 'everything was good today'... if I was really tired then 'I've just been exhausted all day' (both laugh)!

Lucy takes pleasure in crafting a story with details and events of her own choosing. Yet Lucy elaborates to explain that it was also important to leave out those details that she did not want as part of her story:

C: ...Do you ever censor yourself in any way?

L: Yeah, not in terms of curse words I don't think, but definitely in terms of things I've done. Or another thing is like, when I started drinking or smoking pot or something... that kind of stuff doesn't really come into my diaries at all. I don't know... It wasn't even that I thought, you know, that my parents would read it and I'd get caught or anything, I don't even know what it was. I just wouldn't want to write that down.

C: A couple of women said that after a dance or something they would write something slightly different than had happened because they were worried about how they would look, even to themselves. Do you ever do anything like that?

L: Um, not really. But I mean, I think I probably do the opposite and leave stuff out... it's the same thing... Like if I was embarrassed about something that had happened or I didn't like how I had acted in a certain situation, it didn't get down in my journal. And in a weird way you're kind of writing your own history. Because when I go back and read my own diary, that's really the only thing, you know? I have pictures from that time, and then I have my diary. And it's like when I read it, that's what was happening, that's what my life was, you know? So if I leave something out then it's never happened, right (both laugh)?! And no one ever knows...

The select inclusions and exclusions in Lucy's diary make her feel in control of the presentation of her story. For Lucy, the process of writing her own history was not necessarily about hiding experiences from her parents, afraid of getting caught. Rather, the process was meaningful insofar as it captured her life the way Lucy wished to remember it.

Jenn explains that she used her diary to keep a record of her wishes, to ensure that they were documented as an important part of her story:

I'd wish scenarios to happen. Like, 'I wish dad would come home one day and apologize to mum. And mum would stand up to him next time he does that'. But I never really wrote out scenarios. I'd just say what I wanted to have next. I think once or twice I wrote out what I wanted to tell my father. Like, if I was going to tell him off I would want him to know this. And I'd tell him this, and this, and this... it was just, 'he did this again' and 'I wish he would just stop yelling at her'...

Although the diary at times kept Jenn from saying these things aloud to her father, it also kept Jenn from being completely silent about important experiences in her life. Even though she could not confront her father directly, it was very important to Jenn to document the fact that she *wanted* to confront him, and the ways that she wished she could. For now, instead of a gap of silence surrounding her feelings about her father, those wishes are a permanent part of Jenn's story.

5.4.2 Developing characters

Many of the women discussed the need to record feelings to remember as vital parts of their lives. They documented these aspects of their stories from their perspective, choosing which narratives to develop and which to omit. Most of all, however, these women commented upon the development of their own character within the story. Tootsie suggests that in her diary she has written different sides of herself:

... [Diaries] reflect people, where they are at a particular moment in time, and different aspects of the self. It may be the rawest part of me, but only at a given time. I mean, it's human nature to be somewhat mercurial. So you wake up in the morning (I'm not a morning person), so if I wrote in my diary in the morning it would all be 'life sucks'!

What Tootsie emphasizes is that the diary does not represent an objective documentation of her life. Rather, her diary represents the flawed, fragmented, fluidity of Tootsie's identity.

Thus the diary is a deeply individual account of the diarist, according to the diarist. Jenn explains that she can trace the development of her character through her diaries. In particular, she analyzes two different sides of her personality that appear clearly in her diary:

I can actually tell. Before I came here I was just flipping through it again, and I can tell that one of them is going, 'I got this new lip gloss for Christmas and it's really great! And Ashley really wanted this and I'm going to go tell Ashley that I got it! Ha ha ha!' And it was just giddy like, 'I'm going to have a birthday party and all the girls are going to come round, and I'm so excited because I found this new cake recipe and it looks so good!' And so I was all happy and bubbly. And then the next one is like, 'I hate my parents, I wish my dad would leave, I don't know what I'm doing, I'm so lost.' And then it's like, 'my birthday party was so much fun!! It was so great!!'

At times, the more Jenn wrote, the further she got from discovering who she really was:

I made different lists in the back when I just kind of had nothing to write, then I'd sit down and write, 'ok, this is a list of how I see myself'. And it would just sort of be two different ends of the spectrum. I'd say, 'I'm great, I'm smart', and then I'd say, 'I'm a terrible person'. And then I'd say, 'I'm thin, but I should be a lot thinner'. And then I'd say, 'I'm nice, but I'm really mean'. And so it was just like, I couldn't figure out who I was because the two ways that I saw myself was this great, fantastic person that everyone should like and I was good at lots of stuff. But then there was this other person that was like, 'well I'm not really good at much'... I think I was hoping it would help, that I could be how I wrote about myself. But the more I made those lists then I would see how much I didn't know who I was. And I think that confused me even more.

Like Tootsie, Jenn recognized that the 'Jenn' depicted in her diary is not an objective documentation of herself, but rather a constantly developing character of her own creation. Even if she did not always recognize the 'Jenn' on the pages of her diary, she was aware that she alone had crafted this character.

Kris developed the different aspects of her character quite literally. She used the characters she had developed to try to come to a decision about the affair she was having, negotiating between each aspect of herself:

You know, people will say, 'well that's my playful side, or that's my work mode', or whatever? We all do really have these different pieces of ourselves. So I sat down one day when I was trying to make a decision about that guy, and I thought, part of the reason that I can't make a decision is that there are so many parts of me that all have a different agenda in this situation. And I'm not necessarily very clear about that. So I started to label them, I started to give the parts of me names. So I came up with Audrey the Auditor who does the cost-benefit analysis and is just very hard-nosed ...no bull-shit, but she has this one defect which is that she doesn't factor in feelings. ...And then there's this little me, the kid, who I call 'The Kid'. ...she just wants to be loved, and she's very needy and vulnerable, and she doesn't want to hear about consequences or rationalizations or anything like that. She just wants to play and wants to be loved, and that kind of thing, just like little kids do. So there were a number of parts of myself in there. There was some executive function there, too, there's some mature part of yourself that says, 'ok, calm down everybody, please' (both laugh). So I have this dialogue that went on then, I wrote in my journal, 'ok, we're going to have a meeting of all of you – we have to decide what to do about this guy because he's driving us all crazy!' So we had this discussion about what to do about this guy and The Kid says, 'I like him, I want him to stick around!' Audrey says, 'No, we're wasting too much time, he's a dead duck, we've got to cut and run.' And then the executive chairs the meeting. ... It was really fun! I only ever did it the once, and I was chuckling sometimes and crying some other times while I was doing it.

As Kris engaged in this process she was surprised to see different characters emerge, rather than one, objective documentation of 'Kris'. Like Tootsie and Jenn, Kris found aspects of this character development pleasurable as well as painful.

Often it came as a shock to the diarist to look back upon the character they had created. Lucy elaborates:

I'd say a lot of stuff I would have left out of my diary because in a way I didn't want to think about myself like that... [At times] I sound really pretentious, or I'm trying to sound cool (both laugh), definitely! I kind of take on this air when I'm writing...

Like the other diarists, Lucy expressed that the 'Lucy' on the pages of her diary was not a complete objective representation; rather, Lucy appeared in her diary as a flawed and fragmented character that she had shaped and crafted over time.

Many of the women interviewed also described having difficulty recognizing themselves when reading back on their diaries. Helen explains:

At times I find it scary that I was that low. In fact, sometimes I don't recognize myself. I'll read it and I'll say, 'I couldn't have written that, I couldn't have felt like that'. So sometimes it's kind of bizarre because you're this other person that you could become again depending on circumstances...

And yet, Helen finds the process of developing her character extremely meaningful:

I think the way I see it is, I want to know who I am. I want to discover who I am. Like, I'm the teacher, I'm the mother, but I want to really get the essence of who I am. And I think that's the purpose. And every once in a while, like a lot of it's just gibberish, but every once in a while I'll see something and say, 'I really truly believe that that's me'. ...it's a journey of finding yourself. Like, what do I like? Ok, I like this and I'm going to do this.

Helen is at the helm of this journey of finding herself through the diary. Like the other diarists, Helen described this process as difficult and not always fruitful. However, in those moments when Helen feels that she has reached a deeper level of her character, the whole process becomes incredibly meaningful. And that meaning lies in the fact that she alone created, discovered, and verified those deeper levels of self.

Likewise, Sarah describes how meaningful the diary was to her in terms of developing a character that illuminated who she felt she was:

I think internal self-reflection and development. It's that sort of... it's a physical process that identifies how you're individualizing yourself.

Not only did Sarah see the importance of this process to her own journaling, but she was also grateful for what the diary revealed about her mother's story:

...it tells a lot about the person on a certain level. I was helping my mum clean out her house and I found, like a birding journal. When she moved to Guysborough she started recording all these different birds. And it was really neat because this was an aspect of my mum that I wasn't really conscious of. And when we lived in the suburbs you just wouldn't know that, because we weren't living in an area where there would be, you know, obvious birds. But I think she was more struck by nature when they moved out to Guysborough. ...I think why you're journaling says a lot, says something about what you find meaningful.

For Sarah, her mother's diary was important because it provided a map of the meaningful moments in her life. Not only this, but Sarah's mother penned the diary herself, resisting being characterized by others or having her story told by someone who had not lived it. Sarah was struck by the knowledge that her mother had selected particular aspects of her self and her life to write about. For through this diary Sarah could now glimpse what was meaningful to her mother in her mother's own words.

As the writers of their own script, these diarists selected details and developed characters that constructed the story of their lives. They controlled the plot and shaped the narrative by recording those aspects of their lives that were meaningful to them at a particular time, over time. As Culley (1985) suggests, the women involved in this study used their diaries to try on different personas to see how they fit; whether consciously or subconsciously, each woman used their diary to negotiate their identity. For some women, this process was painful and confusing. For others it was frightening and shocking. For many, it was helpful and satisfying. For every woman, however, the process was important because it was self-defined, self-penned, and self-motivated. By writing these stories, each diarist became the playwright of her own life. And by putting that pen to paper, all of the women interviewed have put their stories out into the world.

5.5 *...The Diarist as the Director!* The diarist takes control of the bigger picture

Through the diary these women's stories have become tangible. The particular portrayal of each diarist's life has become – even in some small way – public by its mere existence underneath the mattress in her room. Now that her story is out in the world, the diarist can read it again and again. She can analyze the script for recurring concepts, examine the persistent issues, and reinterpret the story of her life. The diarist can take control of the bigger picture. Heilbrun (1988) suggests that the diary allows women to envision their lives differently. As the director, the diarist interprets the details, characters, and plots provided by the writer to make sense of the story as a whole. Through reading the written lines (and through reading between the lines), the diarist can then illuminate the overarching themes of her life and imagine new interpretations.

5.5.1 Persistent plotlines

Making their lives tangible through the diary allowed many of these women to grasp hold of the cyclical issues that had been eluding them. Kris comments:

Talking to a counselor is another way of doing that but journaling is better because you then have the material to go back and look at later, and that's extremely useful. So I would get it all out in this flurry of typing, and then I'd go back through it to correct things. And I would be reading it and sort of analyzing and processing, intellectually and emotionally processing it, as I read it and correct the typos so I can go back and think about it. ...And then so I'd start to construct it as I'm finishing the dishes or whatever, and then go and write, and then re-read, and then come back to it again when I go to write the next entry perhaps, I'd re-read the previous entry. Or several weeks or months later go back and re-read and read it all the way through, and watch the process that I went through. So that's where I picked up this cyclical thing with [the man she was having an affair with], right? I started to realize that, ok, this happens, I go from despair to hoping, back to despair, and then back to hoping...

Her diary allowed Kris to pin down the pattern of events that was consistently sending her into an emotional spiral. The process of taking her text, reading and rereading it, interpreting it and looking at the bigger picture, allowed her the possibility of controlling the cycle of events that was eluding her.

Sarah explains that the diary helped her to analyze certain cyclical issues in her life, and to identify the possible contributing causes. For instance, through her diary she could track her moods and explore the possible relationships to outside factors:

In that sense you can even see it and say, 'was I premenstrual? Is there any kind of pattern?' Or if you're always complaining about one person in particular (laughs) that could be a sign!

Likewise, Tootsie notes:

I've also found it really useful to read it from cover to cover when I have a new problem, because often it's an old problem in my relationship. Yeah, it's a funny experience to reread, which I do almost every time because it's not a huge diary. But I reread to, just to refresh myself about where I've been. Because sometimes you get, 'here I am again, same old crap'. ...we often revisit the same issue throughout our lives. ...It's a process of you writing and you close the book and you read it later and you say, you know, that sounds really baked. I have a problem here. If I go back and it's the same thing over and over again it's like, 'huh, ok, so really, who's got the issue now?'

Like Kris and Sarah, Tootsie uses her diary to look over the contents of her life, exploring the overarching themes and recurring concepts. This process was meaningful to Tootsie because she used it to keep herself and others 'in check'.

Identifying these issues was not necessarily the goal of journaling for these women, but nearly every woman noted this process as an extremely important outcome of keeping a diary. Jenn reread her diaries before our interview and found the process enlightening:

I realize that when I'm going through things there's so much about myself that has changed and so much that hasn't. And so that was one of the things that I was most curious about when I went back to read it... I went right back to the beginning and I started reading through. And I realized that I was so critical of myself and I was so angry at my parents.

And I didn't realize at the time just how critical I was of just kind of everything. And when I look back there's parts where I'm saying, you know, 'I don't know where I'm going, I don't know what I want to do with myself, I don't know who I am, I just... feel lost right now'. And I still feel like that sometimes, like, 'what really am I doing with myself' and all those great questions (both laugh). ...it felt so hard reading the parts when I'm saying, 'I'm upset with my parents and I wish they'd stop fighting', and I realize... it's exactly the same. I realize that so much has changed but it's exactly the same at the same time.

Yet, as Jenn also explained, rereading her diaries helped her to see how much she had achieved by looking at the bigger picture:

I'd make a list of what I wanted to do as I grow. And I'd say, 'I want to go to outer-space'. And the next one would be, 'I want to win a scholarship'. And 'I want to keep dancing through high school'. And so some of them were very achievable. Like, 'I want to keep dancing', and I have! And 'I want to win a scholarship', and I did! And 'I want to win an award for cadets' and I did! And another one was like, 'I want to find a great husband', and, you know, still looking (both laugh)! And so some of them were more long term goals but it was also fun going back now because I realized that... I did a lot of things I wanted to do.

Jenn used to diary to step back and explore her experiences as pieces of a larger whole. When reading and rereading her diary, she found that she could identify the cyclical themes and events in her life. Just as Kris, Sarah and Tootsie had discussed, this process allowed Jenn to grasp hold of the persistent plotlines in her life and to keep herself (and others) 'in check'.

5.5.2 New directions

Recognizing and pinpointing these persistent themes in their lives led many women to see their lives more clearly. By documenting their experiences then returning to interpret their meaning, these diarists were able to make sense of many complicated issues in their lives. For instance, Helen found she felt lost when going through her divorce, but when rereading and

interpreting her diary, she found clarity in the bigger picture. She now recommends journaling through difficult times to her students:

I'd say, it's coming from an old fart (both laugh), but one little girl, she was really down all the time, and she said, 'I'm always sad'. And I said, 'are you?' And she said, 'well what do you mean?' And I said, 'it's easy to dwell on the sadness, and you are sad. I'm not going to take that, I'm not going to say, oh no, you're young. Why don't you document it to see if it's cyclical? And if it does, you know when those waves come, ride them, don't fight'. And I tell them that I fought myself, 'what's wrong with me? Why do I feel this way? Why can't I smile? Look at that person over there, they're happy! What's wrong with me? Well maybe it's just your body, you know what I mean? Just ride out the sadness and know that there's going to be a brighter day. And I tell my children whenever they'd call me and say, I'm really upset about something, I'm really down, I feel like I'm not coming out of it. And I'd say, 'document it'.

By documenting these feelings of helplessness and vulnerability, Helen found that in time the process created self-reliance, control, and the knowledge that there were new and different days ahead.

Likewise, Brenda found this process gave her a sense of confidence and self-sufficiency when faced with defending difficult choices in her life. Brenda describes the journal entries she wrote during her marriage as reaffirming the choice that she eventually made to separate from her husband:

... It's interesting, because when I was married I did not write anything... I went back a few months ago and was looking at it and there was no positives in it, which is very unlike me. But there was nothing, all negative...I think that during that time it was just a very, very bad experience for me all around so I'd write very negative things... And you definitely can see the progression. You can see how your life was unfolding at the time. But I don't think it's very conscious at the time... And looking back it's very interesting for me – I talked to mum a lot about this – the date that I was married it was just, it was instant, it went from 'this' to 'this'.

C: Oohh...

B: Yes, yes! And it was very interesting. And it reaffirmed choices that I made in the future... it's comforting... And for me, I left, and people would come up and ask me, 'Brenda, why did you do that?' and I never questioned myself. Other people questioned me, but I never questioned me. And the journal really helped. And I was able to say, 'mum, look, look at this, this is where I was and this is why I had to leave'. ...It reaffirms your life choices. You can look back.

C: That's so true.

B: Journals are so important.

By looking back through her diaries and identifying the persistent themes of her life, Brenda was able to watch how her life was unfolding. Brenda analyzed her experiences through her diaries, which enabled her to feel confident in the decision that she had made to change the direction of her life.

During her affair with a married man, Kris felt she needed help to see the bigger picture: *Now that I look back on the journals there were all of these cycles that I went through where I'd get some kind of a reality check... In your journal you could see that you're just going through this cycle. Like I was trying, I'd fallen in love with this person, it's really painful, he can't be a part of my life, he's not available to meet my needs, this really isn't working, so I should just extract myself. So I would then figure out that I had to put a stop to it. And then the cycle would restart, because he would do something to restart the cycle. ... you wonder if you're going crazy. Because you said they said this, and they say, 'no I didn't'. ...I'd write down what he said to me on the phone or when he was visiting that made me think that his separation from his wife was imminent. And then I'd read the next one at the end of the next cycle and I'd go, 'ok, I'm getting sucked in by the same information here. And it turns out it's really shaky information... but I'm so emotionally involved and so hopeful that eventually he's going to be available to me, that I'm making much of nothing'. So that's where it really helps. Because every time I put the phone down I made a point of writing down what he said about his intentions to separate from his wife.*

So then I'd go back and look at it and say, 'you know what? He really didn't say a whole hell of a lot there'.

Keeping her life 'in check' through her journal was a very meaningful process to Kris. This process not only allowed her to identify and gain control over the cycles and patterns that had eluded her; the process also allowed her to redirect the course her life was taking.

Echoing Kris's concerns about falling in love with the wrong man, Tootsie used her diary to track her attraction to 'bad boys':

Oh, I date lots of bad boys. Although I hope I'm done with that, I hope this is the last bad boy! (both laugh) So, yeah my relationships have been somewhat tumultuous... and the other thing is I feel, being an adult child of an alcoholic, I have no idea what normal relationships are like because all I ever saw was this really dysfunctional relationship. So I really don't know what, you know, it's been a long process figuring out what's normal and healthy in relationships. And it can be particularly challenging because of course I date men who are like my father in many ways, you know? ...When I think about troubles with my Honey, I guess the big issue in our past is drug abuse and so, it was a place to reaffirm that what I was saying was actually true. Because I was saying that this is a problem, and writing out why it was a problem, and then he would say 'no, you're overreacting', of course. And then I would reread what I had written and I'd be like, 'no – you suck!' (both laugh) So in some ways it was an act of reaffirming the resistance I was starting to engage in. It was like having a friend have my back... when you write something it validates it and gives it realness.

Like Helen, Brenda, and Kris, Tootsie used her diary to gain control over cyclical experiences in her life that might have otherwise been controlling her. Her diary helped to reaffirm her decisions and behaviour and provided her with a sense of self-sufficiency. Now she sets out confident in the new directions she has chosen to take.

Sarah was involved with a man who was abusive. She found her journal vital to tracking his cycles of violence and defending herself against the abuse:

The other part that I'm going to add in – oh my god this is personal! But it's also good for keeping track of when you're in an abusive situation. Because your perception of reality gets skewed. In the sense that, you know what happened, you're not out of reality, but you normalize, it's normal. But that is handy. So just sort of writing things down, 'that's right, this happened today'. But it can be any kind of abusive scenario, and when you write it all down, it's like a track record, and you can't deny it. And if you don't write it down it's easier to downplay. 'Oh it didn't happen', or 'it wasn't that bad'. But then when you read your journal it's like, 'oh yes, that really messed me up'. ...And of course, once you're in an abusive situation you're really careful about who you talk to because you figure out, you know, who will just let you complain, who will take this seriously and force you to deal with it, who might rag at you and say, 'it's all your fault'. But again, the journal's there... Like I think journaling does give me strength when I'm going through that kind of stuff. ...and the thing is, you probably have already been silenced, and told to stop talking. But you're on the road to not being silenced.

The diary helped Sarah to gain control over the cycles of abuse that had been previously controlling her. While struggling through the isolating and demoralizing experience of domestic violence, Sarah was able to seek refuge in her diary. Not only did her diary provide her comfort and support, it also provided her space to reassess what was happening to her. Thus the diary had some part in providing Sarah the confidence to believe in her own experience of the abuse, and the power to leave the abusive relationship behind and redirect her life.

As the director of their own stories, these women have begun to imagine their lives differently. They have read and reread their diaries, searching for themes and patterns until the bigger picture becomes clearer. They have pinpointed recurring issues in their lives and used the diary as a way of protecting themselves during complicated and sometimes abusive circumstances. Having identified these cycles, they then took control of experiences that might have previously been controlling them. This process of identification makes the diarist's experiences tangible and legitimates her interpretation of them. And now, with control over the

bigger picture, she has control over telling the story of her life. She just has to decide who is worthy of hearing it.

5.6 ...*And the Diarist as The Audience!* The diarist takes control of the response

With control over the lead role, the script and the direction, the diarist then takes control over presenting her story to the world. The diarist has shaped the role of the audience in this production to some extent already. For instance, she might have asked herself: what parts of the production will I present? How will I present these parts? How many audience members will attend? To whom should I extend an invitation? To what degree will the audience participate? Should I serve drinks? The diarist takes control over the response to her story by editing and censoring, interpreting and reinterpreting, and carefully presenting these parts to the world. She does not have complete control over the response to her story, as others are now involved who will form their own interpretations and responses. However, she has ultimately exercised control over what is written about her, and how her story has taken shape. The diarist can then take her newly tangible and legitimate story and decide whether or not she now wants to share it.

5.6.1 Revise, rehash, rewrite...

Schiwy (1996) argues that within the pages of their diaries women can express themselves in a uniquely uninhibited manner. She maintains that diary-writing is free from self-consciousness, and that “It isn’t affected by thoughts of a projected audience” (p. 22). The women in this study illustrated otherwise; after some consideration, each woman discussed recognizing the subtle presence of a future audience. They felt this audience when writing and when rereading their diary entries. Lucy commented:

...if I'm upset I'm not really thinking about if someone's going to read this, I'm just thinking, I just want to write! Actually, I shouldn't say that. Because I think I write very stylized. Like I don't just write what comes into my head, I kind of think about what I was writing even if I'm

upset. So I guess, yeah, subconsciously I'm thinking that someone's going to read it, or I'm going to read it, or something... Which is kind of odd to think... it's only you!

For many of the diarists, being conscious of a future audience meant revising, rehashing, and rewriting entries to elicit a particular response.

Many women had similar reactions as Lucy to the idea that they would someday be the audience for their own diary entries. They discussed editing and censoring their diary to protect those they care about, including themselves. Helen notes:

Well, you know when you get so upset that your emotions are just going and people enter into it and they're people you just love to death? But your words are, that stream of consciousness, and you sit down and read them again when you're less emotional and you think, oh my god! How could I say that? Did I really feel that? And you wouldn't want them... And a couple I've torn up... and sometimes I've just scratched them out... when you read it you think, I don't ever want to read that again, for myself. ...And I think that's what's so upsetting about it. Circumstances change your personality. They change you, and you don't like how they change you

Like Lucy, Helen consciously edited her diary entries to protect her future audience. At times, the audience she wished to protect was a future self. Helen revised and even tore up pieces of her diary so that her future self would not ever have to relive particularly painful aspects of her life.

Tootsie also finds it difficult to read certain entries, and tries to shield herself from having particular responses:

...sometimes when I read the first ones I'm kind of embarrassed. I feel embarrassed about myself, having been so young and naïve in that phase...

And like Lucy and Helen, Tootsie would not want to share these entries with others for fear that they would not respond well to this version of her life:

...someone reading my diary, I don't think they would know me any better. I think that they would have a slightly skewed perspective, given that I only write in it in times of emotional turmoil, usually of the romantic nature. Or you know, loss, or rage or, you know. So

someone would have a really distorted perspective. I don't think I want that. I'd want people to have to talk to me to know me, to form their own perceptions.

Tootsie describes feeling conscious of how she would appear to others in her diary. She worries about a future audience misunderstanding her and wishes to protect their image of who 'Tootsie' really is. At the same time, Tootsie is attempting to control her own image of herself as well.

Jenn echoes this fear of an audience receiving a slanted version of the truth. She edited her diary so that she could prevent this from happening:

I wouldn't want my dad to read it just because (pause) yeah (both laugh) yeah. I mean, I don't think he knows exactly how much I don't like him. I think I wrote once, I just want him to die. I wrote that. I was quite serious at the time! But I don't want him to die, that's a little harsh for anybody! I crossed that out. That's the only thing I've ever crossed out of my diary.

Despite the fact that Jenn had written about her father negatively in the past, some statements were just too severe for future audiences, thus Jenn edited her entry.

Kris, too, is concerned about the response from the people around her; she struggles with the idea hurting others and with the possibility of appearing vulnerable:

I don't want my son, or my husband, or anybody to see a lot of the stuff that I've written. It's stuff that I wouldn't normally say to people because it would be hurtful or it would expose something, betray a confidence, or it would just show a really unkind or nasty side of myself. We all have our nasty parts and most of the time we set them aside to be social people, but sometimes we want to just write something really nasty because we're really angry. ...But I really don't want anyone to see it. It's pathetic. It's the most vulnerable parts of me written in those pages. There really aren't parts of myself that I'm horrified by and don't ever want to look at I don't think. So I think I could be comfortable going back and reading all that stuff, and I may end up sitting there and thinking, oh my god, I'm so pathetic. Fine, you know, sometimes we're pathetic, eh? We're people! ...We're fallible, imperfect little human beings, so sometimes we're pathetic. If that's the worst fault I have then I'm doing very well. Compare that to Charles Manson. He was a murderer – she was

pathetic. (both laugh) But I don't want to look like that. I don't want my friend to see me like that. I don't want to be torn down and exposed to her.

Like the other diarists, Kris wanted to protect her loved ones from painful and potentially hurtful diary entries. And like the other diarists, Kris worried about being at emotional risk.

Kris often worried about presenting herself in a way that would render her vulnerable to others. As she noted, journaling can be a way to release one's thoughts, feelings, and emotions without getting a critical response. During the affair she had with a married man, she turned to her diary as a way to release her emotions without judgment:

I had one friend who knew about it, a very close friend, but you can only talk so much before the person gets completely tired of hearing you go on about it, right? ...I eventually started telling close family members. And I think I actually told my mother about it. But you can't just really talk very much about it because people are really uncomfortable... people right away will usually get really judgmental about, you know, it's immoral, it's wrong to do that on a number of levels. You're causing pain to someone else who's eventually going to find out that her husband is making out with another woman. And if you have a religious belief that marriage is sacred and all that stuff then you're violating all of this, and you know, I totally appreciate that... I hope my friend never takes [the diary] out, she'd be totally grossed out by what an idiot I was.

By expressing herself through the privacy of the diary, Kris shaped the kind of response she will receive from others; she therefore protected herself from appearing to be, in her words, an 'idiot'.

Sarah similarly discussed feeling that she needed to talk for longer than a friend might tolerate. At times, she explains, she needs to seek out space free from judgment:

I think it is a form of censoring in that, like, I know [my friend and I] have talked about a situation as much as it's sort of going to get. And it's reached some form of resolution and understanding. But I still may not be done with it. ...No criticism. And I think that's exactly it. Because you're just sort of... when I'm writing my journal it's just sort of like, you're ok with yourself. It's not about questioning, you're not worried about other people critiquing.

You can say whatever's stupid or overly-emotional... where we can just be brutally honest and not have to worry.

Like Kris, Sarah uses her diary in order to shape the kind of response she will get from her audience. Both women are revising their traditional ways of communicating in order to elicit (or avoid) a particular response.

Jenn echoed this sentiment. She often turns to her diary when she wants to avoid a response from others:

...sometimes that's nice about a journal, that it can't talk back to you when you just want to talk about something and you don't want to see their faces, and you don't want judgment, and you just want to get it out of you without caring what other people think. Then it's easier. ...The only thing that makes me decide whether I want to journal or whether I want to talk to someone is whether or not I want the response or judgment. And sometimes I just feel, I don't want a judgment on this or I don't want to be, you know if I'm talking about, oh how terrible it is living with my parents I don't want their pity. I just want to talk about it. Or if I'm saying, 'oh I really like this guy, I wonder if he likes me?' I don't particularly want people asking all these questions or getting into it, I just want to keep it private, but I want to tell someone, just not have anyone know. And that's the journal.

Each diarist discussed, as Jenn did, the contradictory desire to tell somebody about their experiences but also have nobody know. In this sense, the diarists are expressing themselves while protecting themselves. They are revising their traditional methods of communication in order to control the response they will receive.

Jenn also uses her journal as a way to plan out what she wants to tell someone, without necessarily having to tell them. Then she has control over whether or not she would like to share her feelings:

I don't think I ever will get the nerve. And I think I kind of know that, even all these times when I think, man, next time he does that I'm going to tell him off and I'm going to fix him good (both laugh)! And so I think I know that it's never really going to happen. And so I think that getting it out on paper, it's not like I'm telling him off, but it's getting it out. And it's

not getting it out in the same way, but afterwards I have that same kind of relief and it's just like "Ha! That's right!" It's out of me now and I can just sort of move on and think about other stuff. ...it's like, I could do that if I wanted to. ...I know exactly what I would say and I would know how it would happen. I just choose not to (laughs)!

Jenn is exercising control over the response to her self-expression by revising traditional means of communication. She is essentially having the interaction with her father without confronting him in reality. She is telling someone, without anybody knowing.

Other women discussed writing letters in their journals that they did not necessarily plan to send. Like Jenn, Sarah describes needing to express herself to her father without having her father as the potential audience:

I know when my father was sick I did a lot, I wrote a couple of letters to him which I never sent. Because one of my brothers did, and it was devastating. Although I know it was all good, there are 12 kids in the family, he probably doesn't need to go through this. One, emotional, gut-wrenching, tear-jerking letter is enough (laughs)!

Whereas Jenn needed to communicate anger towards her father, Sarah wished to express the opposite. However, both women wanted to avoid the response their communications would elicit. The diary allowed them to express themselves to their fathers while protecting their fathers at the same time. The diary also allowed these diarists to protect themselves from an emotional breakdown.

Communicating without a response is an extremely meaningful activity. In her role as a counselor, Tootsie often suggests that women journal and write letters with no intended response as a way of moving towards speech:

Journaling is a very powerful thing. And I always tell women, women who have been victims of terrible, horrible things, who simply can't say anything out loud, what their experiences are, this can be your reason to write. You need to journal this stuff out. You need to journal it all out until you can speak it. Journaling can be an incredible tool to allow women to get to the point where they can communicate verbally.

Tootsie has used this technique in her own life:

I did write a letter to someone else. It was my professors at the Community College and I was reading 'The Feminist Pedagogy' by Anne-Louise Brooke. I was pissed off at some of the things that they had said – these people were not feminists! And I was like, (reading) 'This frustration is in part due to the mechanism of education being used!' But there was no point, they wouldn't get that, so there was no point saying it to them. So yes, I have used it to say things that I can't... to store things... When a young friend of mine died and I didn't get the opportunity to say goodbye, tell him off, that was an opportunity. I often wrote to him in my diary. Because I would never have another chance to say that.

Like the other diarists, Tootsie is compelled to write letters to people with whom she will never communicate. Each of these women is revising traditional modes of communication through the diary in order to meet their emotional needs. They are all telling somebody, without anybody knowing.

For these diarists, the diary-keeping experience involves a future audience. The idea of a future audience always shaped their writing to some degree. All of the women were concerned about responses to their diary entries, even if that response only came from them. As such, many women cited the need to control the response to their diaries. They edited or censored their diaries, and many concluded that the only audience they wished to present their stories to was a future self. Not only did many diarists make revisions in their diary entries in order to shape the response, but some diarists revised traditional modes of communication through their diaries as well. With the ever-present future audience in mind, these diarists revised the diary-keeping process to avoid criticism, judgment, and confrontation. In doing so, the diarists ensured that they shaped the response to their self-expression as much as possible.

5.6.2 Respond!

Many of the diarists interviewed, however, expressed a curiosity with letting down their guard at some point and sharing their diaries. But they each had specifications about where,

what, why and to whom parts of the diary would be shown. When asked if anyone has ever read her diary, Brenda describes:

No, I've read pieces of my diary to people though. To my friends or to my mother. If I had an experience that I really wanted someone to really understand then I would share it. ... My friend and I were having a conversation and I felt she was trying to express the kinds of things that I had felt in another time in my life, so then I would take [the diary] over and try to clarify.

When Brenda felt that she had expressed herself particularly well on a topic of interest to others, she would share her diary. However, in these instances Brenda is almost completely in control of the context; she chooses who has access to which parts of her diary and in what way. Because she has this control over the context, the response is largely shaped by Brenda's conditions.

Helen also shares specific pieces of her diaries to specific audiences. When she was a young, first-time mother, she shared her journals with other mothers and found that she was not alone in her insecurities about her new life:

When I had Mark I thought, oh my god my life is, it's all consuming! And you feel guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt, guilt (both laugh)! 'Oh my god what's wrong with me, I'm a horrible mother!' And so I'd write it down then I'd look at it and say, 'oh no, no one can ever read that. They'd take my child away from me!' (both laugh) Until I shared this with other mothers at the time and they felt exactly the same. So it validated me.

Now she will share select passages, in select ways, with her sons, musicians in a successful Canadian rock band (of which I am an obvious fan):

H: My sons used a lot of my lines as lyrics in their songs (laughs)!

C: Really??! Oh my gosh, really??

H: (laughing) Every once in a while I'll hear this lyric and I'll say, 'that's mine! Royalties, royalties!' ...It's funny because one day he asked me what I was writing because he writes all the time, he's got something by his bed all the time... But every once in a while he'd ask me, but he knew it was private, just as his is private. And he'd say, 'Mum do you mind me reading something?' And if it's not too emotional I'd read it to him. And then he'd say,

'Geez I like that line, can I have it?' (both laugh) ... I wouldn't show it, I'd read it. I don't think I've ever shown it to anybody.

Like Brenda, Helen shared her diary when she felt that it nicely represented an experience that she shared with others. And also like Brenda, Helen had some control over the context of the situation when sharing her diaries. This control gave each woman a sense of power and ownership over her diary and over the response to her diary as well. Both diarists shared very intimate parts of themselves, but in a self-defined, safe context.

Another aspect of diary-sharing that many women expressed curiosity about was the idea of sharing their diaries with future generations. Jenn balked at the idea initially, but then considered the benefits of sharing certain aspects of herself with children yet to come:

No! Well... my automatic response was 'no!' but I think, like maybe it would be nice to know that your mum went through what you went through. So if you're going through the same things you can say, 'wow, she was a teenager and she did go through these things'. Because, I mean, my mum doesn't tell me much about when she was growing up. ...I have a supermom. She did everything and was perfect at everything. Yeah so, you know, she was top of her class all the time, and she had lots of boyfriends and did everything right and she went around the world, and she had six million jobs, and she's done everything and knows how to do everything. ...And so I mean, all I've ever known of my mum was the supermom. She has a PhD in Chemistry and did her Master's at Harvard, you know, the list goes on. So that's all I know of my mum. But I mean I could never imagine sitting down with my mum and saying, 'Mum, were you ever depressed at any point?' Because she was supermom, that's just not what supermom does. And so, I mean, maybe it would be nice to think that my kids could do that and then we could have a relationship like that.

Though she adamantly rejected the idea of sharing her diaries in any sort of general sense, she paused and pondered sharing her diaries if it meant strengthening her relationships with future children. Like the others, Jenn felt uncomfortable with the idea of sharing her diaries unless she had some control over the context of the circumstances.

Sarah often thinks about controlling what parts of herself she would like to share with future generations, and in what way. She muses:

... Sometimes I think, well maybe I should start writing a journal with the intention of handing it over. Because I think I would destroy my previous journals (laughs) and I think I will. ...I know I've put some stuff in journals that I would be ashamed of. Or I would be like, 'how do I explain this?' Like sexuality, you know... there's lots of stuff that no matter how mature your children are it never seems like the right topic (both laugh)! ... if you write a journal specifically with your grandchildren in mind, then you think of it in a more historical context, like 'what would I want to capture?' ...My daughter's latest fascination with reading is the diaries of, like the pretend diaries, of like the Halifax Explosion, or a Chinese immigrant girl writing about living in BC with her father. ...And she has her own little diary that she keeps super locked up with a little note on it for Dylan, her brother... They're worse when it comes to revealing secrets... So that idea of those books made me think, well what would I possibly want to share with my grandchildren?

Echoing Jenn's feelings about passing diaries along to future children, Sarah reveals that she would like to share her diaries with her children, so long as certain conditions are met. In order to control her audience and the response to her writing, Sarah has even considered writing a diary with the express purpose of sharing the contents with her children. Regardless, Sarah concurs with the other diarists and professes that her diaries would need major revisions, rehashings, and rewrites before she would allow them to be received for response. However, as each of the diarists acknowledge and fear, their diaries come complete with a built-in audience.

When the diarist puts pen to paper and records her story, she is intentionally putting her life out into the world. When she reads back over what she has written, editing, interpreting, and looking for meaning in terms of the bigger picture, she is reflecting on how she wants her life to be presented. These processes inevitably invite an audience, and thus, a response. By shaping her narrative and presenting a particular performance of her life story, the diarist is attempting to control the response to her choices, thoughts, and feelings. The inclusions and exclusions in her diary serve to protect the diarist from unwanted responses – even from herself. In doing so, the

diarist can be somewhat free from judgment, mischaracterization, and exposure. She can practice what she wants to say, even if she decides not to say it in the end. She can share the parts of herself of which she feels comfortable and proud. She can take control of the entire production of her life story – one which can be passed on for generations to come, should she choose to do so.

This is not to suggest that the diarist is always conscious of this future audience. Many of the women interviewed initially reported feeling completely uninhibited and unaware of some sort of 'generalized other'. Like Shiwiy (1996) suggested, many of these women described being free from a projected audience. However, all of these women returned to this idea and reconsidered their position. Each diarist reflected upon the idea that they were aware of writing for or to a future confidante, and confessed that they thought they just might be. For most women, this future confidante was themselves.

Regardless of the nature of the future audience, these women illustrated that it is extremely important to have creative control over the performance of the story of their lives. The production of "*Dear Diary*" is one that is all about the diarist. In this space that belongs solely to the diarist, she organizes the entire production. She is the lead actor, playwright, director, and witness to her own performance. The meaning of diary-writing for these women ranges from an attraction to the romance of the genre, to the appeal of being totally selfish. Many of the diarists delighted in the thrill of saying the 'wrong' thing. Fundamentally, the meaning of diary-writing to these women lies in taking control of the story of their lives. They selected and developed the pieces of their everyday lives that they wanted as part of their story, taking control of the script. They analyzed their diaries for overarching themes and meanings, taking control of the bigger picture. They revised, rehashed, and rewrote their stories; they decided where, when, what, why, and to whom their story is presented, taking control of the response. Sometimes these women might regret the way they chose to present their stories, or to whom they chose to perform them. Fortunately, the diarist can engage in this process again and again. She can continue to write new scripts, interpret and reinterpret new themes, and present new stories. She can continue to legitimate and validate her everyday life. And she can continue to engage in this process of

taking control of the entire performance because it makes her story, her interpretation, and her meaningful moments, real.

6.0 ***The reviews...*** Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning of diary-keeping for women in terms of leisure, performance and the resistance of dominant gender discourse. The findings from this research suggest that diaries are meaningful insofar as they allow the diarist to take control of her personal space, time, and life story. Despite the fact that many women described the diary-keeping genre as constraining, the diarists each exhibited the desire and ability to resist these constraints within this space. Findings suggested that diarists at times resist the ethic of care, disrupt oppressive dichotomies, and take control of the direction of their lives. Through this space the diarist can perform the story of her life in whatever way she sees fit; she takes her performance to the public, despite the risk of doing so. Therefore, though the diary can act to reproduce traditional notions of femininity, it can also be a space for women to resist dominant gender discourses.

6.1 ***“Dear Diary”: A thrilling, romantic roller-coaster ride!*** Reproducing and resisting the diary’s gendered genre

As discussed in the literature review, the act of diary-keeping has often been neglected in academia, dismissed as too personal, too private a text to warrant sociological analysis (cf Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Smith & Watson, 1998). Even in those instances when diary-keeping has been mentioned it has been under larger umbrella terms such as personal narratives (cf Personal Narratives Group, 1989), confessional texts (cf Felski, 1989), and autogynography (cf Stanton, 1984). This research set out to recognize the diary as a cultural artefact unto itself and to establish diary-keeping as a social act worthy of unique sociological study. In a departure from the conceptualization of the diary as entirely private and asocial, this research has found that the contrary is closer to the truth. I will argue here that diary-keeping is in fact a social act and offer two elements that guide (and gender) this social behaviour. The diarists interviewed emphasized these elements so strongly that we can identify them as essential conventions in the journaling genre. I will also provide examples from popular culture of these diary-keeping

conventions, which illustrate just how unique and identifiable this social experience is in our culture. Finally, I argue that dominant gender discourses are reproduced through these journaling conventions, but as the diarists interviewed suggested, there is also room for resistance.

Weber (cited in Jackson, 2003) defines human behaviour as “social” when the subjective meanings attached to the action by individuals “takes account of the behaviour of others, and is thereby oriented in its course” (p. 19). Similarly, Mills (1959) describes ‘the social’ as an interaction between private troubles and public issues. Postmodernists such as Berger and Luckman (1966) define the social not as typically public and interactive but instead as relationships between the self and the other. Each of these descriptions is consistent with Goffman’s (1974) conceptualization of social behaviour as a guided doing that “subjects the doer to “standards”, to social appraisal of his (sic) action based on its honesty, efficiency, economy, safety, elegance, tactfulness, good taste, and so forth” (p. 22). Thus, behaviour is social insofar as it is a relationship between the self and other (including the ‘generalized other’), oriented in a way that guides the doer using socially accepted standards. When an individual behaves in a social way, she is reconciling her private world with her public world, negotiating between her self and the generalized other. Diary-keeping is a social act in that diarists are guided by social standards. The diarists interviewed for this study described feeling a sense of an audience in their diaries. They had an awareness of some future self or generalized other that in some small way oriented their behaviour, even within the privacy of a diary. As a result, many of the women interviewed described feeling as though they should be polite and refined, and conscious of the feelings of others. They edited and censored their diaries with these thoughts in mind. Consequently, despite the apparent privacy of the act, the diarists interviewed for this study expressed that at times diary-writing felt more public than it should. Even though the diarists worked tirelessly to conceal and hide their diaries, they could not always escape the social standards that shaped their behaviour or their relationship with the generalized other. Thus, as the diarists revealed, the “doing” of diary-keeping is guided by elements that socially structure our behaviour as diarists; diary-keeping is indeed a social act.

Specifically, the women interviewed for this study identified two conventions of the journaling genre that guide their behaviour as diarists. To use Goffman's language, these conventions 'frame' the social situation, informing the individual of the rules and expectations governing the experience. First, the diarists all agreed that there was a particular appearance in structure that set diaries apart from other notepads or books. The women interviewed for this study described having or longing for a small, feminine, lock and key diary as girls. Second, the diarists interviewed for this study described a particular style of writing as a convention associated with diary-keeping; stylistically the diarist should be romantic, dreamy, emotive, and confessional. Both conventions tended to be associated with young women's diaries. For the women interviewed, these two conventions play a large part in guiding the diary-keeping experience and they are evident in our popular culture today.

These two romantic conventions help to establish rules for appropriate diary-keeping behaviour, and these rules often reproduce dominant gender discourse. The findings show that the diary is gendered in structure and style, making the normative behaviour associated with journaling feminine. This means that the diary experience is framed in a way that guides diarists toward femininity – with particular rules about what it means to be female. Far more women and girls write in diaries than do men and boys, and the appearance of the diary is organized to reproduce this gender gap (Schiwy, 1996). Diaries marketed toward girls are most often small, lock and key, hardcover notebooks fashioned in feminine colours and patterns with lined and dated pages (Mallon, 1984). Thus, to follow Goffman's frame analysis, the diary-writing experience is organized in part by these elements; diarists are to be delicate, private, daily, pretty and orderly. As the diarists interviewed indicated, the diary is structured in a way that only allows the diarist so many thoughts – the book is small, the pages are short, and the pre-dated entries dictate the amount of room to which the diarist is entitled. With the diary structured in this way, the diarist is also encouraged to be concise, neat, and orderly. Her thoughts are meant to be ordinary; that is, she is meant to record the everyday routine of her life on a daily basis. Thus, rather than the diary being a space for liberation and free-thinking, the space is instead organized in a way that asserts some amount of control over girls' and women's thoughts, feelings, and

perceptions. In the same sense, the lock and key binding the diary shut also gives the illusion of freedom of expression. And yet, with the twist of a bobby pin, this seal is easily broken. Similar to a chastity belt, the lock and key serves only as a tease. Neither instrument protects women's privacy and freedoms; instead both create and maintain the allure of gaining access to and violating the feminine intimacies within. Both entice the viewer to transgress the apparent armor. And in both cases, the armor – not of the woman's design – is easily transgressed. This structural convention of the journaling genre reproduces dominant discourses about what it means to be feminine: pretty, polite, and accessible.

The second convention that the diarists identified, a romantic writing style, also reproduces what it means to be a young woman in this society. This style is unique to the social experience of diary-writing and is evident in diary-inspired literature produced in our culture. For instance, many of the diarists pointed specifically to *The Diary of Anne Frank* as their source of inspiration. Anne whimsically referred to her diary as "Kitty" and announced "we're going to be great pals!" (14 June 1942, p. 1) She confessed her secret crushes, her difficulties with her sister, her love for her father, as a young girl would to a confidante. She writes in the conventional diary-keeping style, romantic, and at times dramatic: "While I should find it so blissful, I shouldn't know where to start!" Anne Frank's diary influenced and likely reflected the journaling of countless young girls. In *A Book of One's Own* (1984) Mallon takes examples of girls' diaries from his childhood friends that mirror Anne Frank's style and subject matter. He describes the structure and style of the diary thusly:

On its vinyl cover is the cartoon of a girl (in sweater and pearls) seated at a desk, mooning over an open diary and the picture of a boy. Hearts swirl around her head. The lock is missing and the owner has written "STEVE & ME" in ballpoint across the vinyl, thereby identifying the diary's main plot interest... Before Steve come Ricky and Dennis, with minimal ecstasy, trauma, and remorse... Amidst the copied-out lyrics of Connie Francis songs and the tales of romance at basketball games, problems are pondered: "What am I gonna do? Gordy R... likes me and I've gotten into a 'se terrible predicamente'. I've acted like I like him & I do, but not romantically... Then he pulled me around & held me in his arms (boy I wish it really did happen this way!)" (p. 211-212)

Mallon's examples present the adolescent girl's diary as a cultural artefact that tells us what it means to be a young female diarist in this society. The conventional diary-keeping style reproduces dominant gender discourses in which young women are romantic, fanciful, and

somewhat silly. In his book, adolescent girls' diaries are introduced in a chapter entitled "Confessors". Mallon argues that adolescent girls journal as confessors; they journal to profess "I was wrong." In suggesting that girls journal in order to confess, Mallon has identified what Goffman would call part of a major organizing element of the adolescent girl's diary. For instance, many of the women interviewed described confessing guilty secrets to their diaries. And like Jenn, Lucy, and Brenda commented, diarists at times even feel it necessary to apologize to the diary itself after long gaps of silence. In some ways, the diary has been framed as a vessel for feminine guilt rather than female celebration. Thus, the framing of the diary-writing experience includes a conventional, cultivated style which offers guiding rules for how the diarist should behave; the diarist should be concerned with romance, fantasy, emotion, and drama. And the convention also defines what is not reflective of the genre; the diarist need not be political, assertive, reasonable, or intellectual. The conventional style also encourages girls to repent for their everyday lives. Therefore the genre of diary-writing is one that in style reproduces traditional notions of femininity. The diarist is to be romantic, emotive, and confessional. Yet all of these elements of the journaling genre are to be done in a refined manner within the daily, pretty, orderly conventional structure of the diary. Once again, the gendered genre of journaling involves closely monitoring and controlling femininity and females. Thus the two conventions identified by the diarists interviewed for this study – structure and style – work to reproduce dominant gender discourse.

And yet, romance, emotion, and confession are not all necessarily oppressive. After all, confession can be an admission of guilt, but it can also be a declaration of ownership over one's actions. The diary has been framed in a way that reproduces dominant discourses about femininity that can be constraining, but there is room for rebellion. For instance, despite the fact that Anne Frank began her diary with girlish whimsy and continued in this fashion, her journaling often took on a far more serious tone. While hiding in the Secret Annex from the Nazis during World War Two, Anne recorded her romantic fantasies and dramas. However, these feelings were written alongside political, social, and theological commentary about the world around her. She wrote about her everyday life in one breath, and the meaning of life in the next. Similarly,

several diarists mentioned the novel *Go Ask Alice*, the fictional diary of a drug-addicted adolescent girl. "Alice" begins her diary with a crush on "Roger" and ends her diary quite differently: "Another day, another blow job" (p. 84). Alice uses her diary to record fantasies about becoming clean, romantic notions about getting off the streets, and confessions about relapsing. These kinds of fantasies, romantic notions, and confessions are far from typically feminine. The diarists interviewed for this study also reported resisting the more feminine aspects of the diary-writing genre. All of the diarists described moving away from the more traditionally feminine diary towards a diary that better suited their needs. This involved transitioning from an accessible lock and key diary to a steel toolbox with a metal lock, a password protected computer, or a non-descript scribbler. Other women kept the basic structure of the traditional diary but changed their style from whimsical and romantic to aggressive and analytical. Some defied the allotted space and wrote whenever they wanted in however many diaries they chose to keep. Thus, we can identify conventions of the journaling genre that reproduce dominant gender discourses, but the findings also suggest that the diary has been used to resist those discourses as well.

Contrary to the literature that suggests diary-keeping is an activity unworthy of sociological study (cf Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Smith & Watson, 1998), the findings from this research establish the diary as a cultural artefact deserving of unique academic theorizing. This means identifying the conventions of the journaling genre and exploring those places in our culture where they appear in order to produce a more comprehensive picture of the social experience. A full and in-depth analysis of the diary-keeping experience is thus warranted, and would include *Anne Frank*, *Go Ask Alice*, and of course, the everyday diarists writing in their diaries as we speak. Therefore, this research will add to the diary-related literature by beginning to explore diary-keeping from the perspective of diarists. With these diarists' input, this research has identified diary-keeping as a social act guided by social conventions that provide rules for appropriate diary-keeping behaviour. Heavily embedded in our popular culture and literature, these conventions make the diary unique and identifiable in structure and style. The conventions distinguish the diary-keeping experience from other similar social experiences such as autobiography or personal narrative. The unique structure and style of the diary-keeping

experience reveals rules about how the diarist should behave, most of which reproduce dominant notions of femininity. And yet within the frame of this social experience we see both reproduction of and resistance to dominant discourses. Thus, to use Goffman's language, this social performance is organized by elements that reproduce dominant gender discourse. The diary is not socially organized as a resistant space; in fact, it appears to be a space organized to be reproductive of dominant gender discourses. Yet, as the findings suggest, it is within the space provided by the traditionally feminine genre of diary-keeping that many women come to feel free.

6.2 ***"The Diarist is seriously playful in the lead role!"***
Deconstructing dichotomies and winking at those watching

Like the experience of both reproduction and resistance in diary-writing, Goffman (1974) notes that there are many aspects of a performance that are seemingly dichotomous. For instance, during the course of a play, all participants understand that the reality of theatre is the participation in fantasy. The performers are at times silly in their seriousness and serious in their silliness. A performance is playful and yet many of the participants are at work. Putting on a play often involves presenting very private scenes in a very public setting. By the end of the performance, what seemed like meaningless moments are now understood to be most meaningful. Goffman argues that social experience is fraught with such apparent dichotomies. The diary-writing experience is organized around many seemingly dichotomous concepts, and the diarists interviewed for this study problematized many of these binary terms. Each woman interviewed paused when attempting to define their journaling as either leisure or work. Likewise, the diarists all struggled to explain why they needed to make their private experiences public by recording them in a diary. And all of the diarists were intrigued with the ordinary details they chose to record. They each suggested that those apparently ordinary moments were actually the most extraordinary moments of all. These dichotomies – leisure/work, public/private, extraordinary/ordinary – were all exposed and complicated by the diarists in this study.

Scott's (2003) post-structuralism asks feminist social scientists to "confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition" (p. 389). This perspective involves

attention to the deconstruction of language, discourse, and difference, and critically explores and exposes the power infused into the dominant binary terms governing our experiences.

Poststructuralist theory works to deconstruct such categories to expose their inaccurate claims to universality and analyze their contributions to systems of power. Scott warns us not to be satisfied with the unexamined dichotomy, as this will only lead to the imposition of “oversimplified models on the world, models that perpetuate conventional understanding rather than open up new interpretive possibilities” (p. 379). Scott describes the naturalization of binaries as established in order to encode meaning, in particular negated meaning. She uses the example of the binary terms ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’ to suggest that these concepts are understood in our society to be oppositional when in fact that dichotomy is socially, historically, and politically constructed. Feminist post-structuralist theorists like Scott argue that dichotomies are often created to reproduce dominant gender discourse.

Wearing (1998) supports this theory, and applies feminist post-structuralism to the work/leisure divide. Traditionally, Wearing argues, leisure studies was organized around the male-centred dichotomy of work vs. leisure. Leisure theory surfaced in the 1970s, an era when people began working less and having more time away from the workforce. Leisure theory, thus, tended to revolve around “non-work” time (p. iix). This conceptualization of leisure has contributed to a gender bias in leisure studies, namely because of conventional assumptions about work. Work, Wilson (1988) argues, is typically conceptualized as paid work outside the home that is rewarded by leisure. As the binary opposite of work, it then follows that leisure is unpaid activity that takes place outside the workplace. Wilson contends that this creates a gender-biased approach to leisure studies, as these assumptions about work and leisure are male-centred. Women, even those who work outside the home, are more likely to do a substantial amount of unpaid domestic work. This means that the sharp divide between work and leisure is not representative for women. As was discussed in the findings section of this research, women’s leisure does not begin when “work” ends, and women’s “work” is at times leisurely. In the work/leisure dichotomy, women’s work in the private sphere (cooking, tending to children, caring for friends and family) is conceptualized as leisure simply because of the sphere

in which it takes place. The result of this dichotomy is a feminization of the private, leisure sphere and a masculinization of the public, work sphere. Thus, through the work/leisure dichotomy, women's work is often devalued and misconceptualized and their leisure is often overlooked and misconstrued.

When feminist leisure studies researchers have explored women's leisure without being dependent upon on this male-centred dichotomy, they have found that women find their leisure in more complicated spaces (cf Kay, 1998; Wearing, 1998; Shaw, 2001). The findings from this study are no different. To follow Goffman's theatre metaphor, diary-writing is a play at work. The female diarist problematizes and complicates the oppositional definition of work and leisure. Although the diarists did not find a single term that they could agree upon (terms considered included: mental therapy, emotional work, maintenance of a relationship, non-obligatory free time, work, and leisure) they did agree that the work/leisure dichotomy was not representative of their diary-writing experience. Using traditional definitions of work and leisure, the experience has characteristics of both. The diarist typically writes in her non-work time in a domestic space. The diarist is unpaid. The activity is individual, freely-chosen, and intrinsically motivated. Each diarist agreed on these leisure-like characteristics. And yet each diarist also struggled to consistently refer to journaling simply as "leisure". Just as every diarist defined the activity as somewhat "leisurely", every diarist also described journaling with work-like attributes. Journaling could be hard work as well: obligatory, drudging, laborious, productive, and requiring a considerable amount of effort. Many diarists commented that emotional work can be anything but leisurely. The diarists' conceptualizations of their journaling could be viewed as indecisiveness. However, what their conceptualization more accurately reveals is the male-centred nature of the work/leisure divide. The diarists complicate the binary terms and in doing so they expose the discourses of power and privilege behind the dichotomization of work and leisure. Thus these findings problematize the work/leisure divide by illustrating the ways in which women's experiences with journaling complicate and diffuse the barrier between the two terms.

In the same sense, diary-writing complicates the dichotomization of 'public' and 'private'. As Wilson (1988) argues, the private has long been feminized and the public masculinized.

Along with this conceptualization comes oppositional gendered attributes assigned to each term. The term 'private' is characterized as a calm, passive, quiet, haven from the outside world. The masculinized term 'public' is characterized as an exciting, active, noisy arena for engagement with the outside world. The diarist is engaging in a private, feminized act. She often appears calm, passive, and quiet; many diarists also described their diaries as a secret haven from the outside world. And yet, to follow Goffman's theatre metaphor once more, the performer absorbed in a secret soliloquy gives the appearance that she is participating in a private act, however, she is slyly aware that she is performing to the public at the same time. The diarist works very hard to keep her diary private; however, by recording her thoughts, feelings and perceptions on paper she has made her life quite public. Like the stage performer, the diarists described feeling the sense of an audience as they worked. The diarist is being watched by a future audience – even if the future audience is just the diarist herself – and like the performer, she often gives the appearance that she is unaware of being watched. In this sense, the diarist is complicating the dichotomization of private and public. As a diarist, she is accomplished in aspects of both ostensibly oppositional realms. She operates in quiet secrecy and keeps her diary hidden. Yet she also excitedly, actively, and noisily puts her story out into the world. The diarist is polite and refined yet she is also aggressive and coarse. She performs in both feminized and masculinized spaces, problematizing the dichotomization of the two and exposing the power behind such a dichotomy. The diarist, dreamily in the middle of a love-struck doodle dedicated to a secret, forbidden crush, privately gives a wink to her public.

Those watching might think little of the doodles, etchings, and rambling entries recorded in the diary. However, as the diarists involved in this study revealed, audiences can be sure that each 'ordinary' entry contributes meaningfully to the larger picture in extraordinary ways. Goffman (1974) argues that the beauty of a performance is that the audience can be sure that each scene, however meaningless in appearance, is fundamental to the larger purpose of the play. He states, "we do not have to find what is significant; the selection has been made" (p. 144). Why else would the playwright include it? And if the director thought the scene in question was meaningless, why did she present it to the audience? How can something be both ordinary

and extraordinary? These binary terms, like leisure/work and public/private, are part of dominant gender discourses. Smith (1999) argues that 'the everyday/everynight world' has been feminized and overlooked in favour of exploring the extraordinary lives of men. 'Ordinary' has become associated with the feminine, characterized by the routine of shared, everyday, private life that fails to produce anything grand or noticeably exceptional. Day-to-day life is unimportant in the grand scheme of things and unlikely to make any great mark on society. 'Extraordinary' has become associated with the masculine, characterized by the possibility of great achievement, accolades, adventure, and danger, events that set the individual apart from the rest. 'Ordinary', feminized life is thus devalued in this dichotomy, whereas the 'extraordinary' life that men are capable of living is considered very valuable to social progress and development. As such, 'ordinary' women's diaries have typically been overlooked in academia because they were considered to be too mundane to warrant academic study (Personal Narratives Group, 1989).

Each diarist interviewed for this study did indeed confess to recording the mundane aspects of her life. But the diarists did not describe these aspects as unimportant. Many diarists suggested that they recorded those ordinary, everyday events because they felt those moments to be anything but ordinary. For instance, Helen recorded nice, simple things that people said to her during everyday interactions: an exchange with a cashier, or a brief phone call from a friend, a note from one of her children, or a wave on the street from a passing motorist. Brenda made lists of apparently ordinary and random things: leather, pinecones, truffles. But to Brenda, these are extraordinary, sensual aspects of life that she loves. For other diarists, it was only upon rereading their journals that they understood the relationship between the everyday details of their lives and the overarching extraordinary themes of their lives. When reading over old diaries, Jenn noticed how gleeful she was about seemingly small everyday exchanges and interactions with her father. Each of these entries struck her as evidence of how frequently and desperately she has sought her father's approval and how much that experience has shaped her life. When Kris looked back on her old diaries, she realized that there had been signs all along that the man she was having an affair with was not going to leave his wife. These little signs, that seemed unimportant at the time, were extremely meaningful to her entire relationship with this man, and

with men in general. Each detail that the diarist selects in the telling of her own story, no matter how ordinary or mundane, is vital to her interpretation of the meaning of her life. That means that each ordinary entry is in fact an extraordinarily special piece of the puzzle. And thus as Goffman (1974) states, "Here, then, is a warrant for taking ordinary activity seriously" (p. 560).

As a feminist, post-structuralist theorist, Scott (2003) urges us to explore these purportedly dichotomous terms to expose the power and privilege they uphold. Binary terms such as masculine and feminine are often kept apart to stress their contrasting characteristics, and to value one and devalue another. Scott argues that these binaries are naturalized, despite the fact that they do not often represent people's experiences in the world. For the diarists interviewed in this study, life was far more complicated than these dichotomies suggest. As these women illustrate, the diary has aspects of leisure *and* work, the private *and* the public, the ordinary *and* the extraordinary. The diarists exposed the dominant, male-centred discourses behind these dichotomies by professing that they did not represent their experiences in life. And they disrupted the naturalization of these dichotomies by describing examples from their lives in which the two opposing terms unite. By exposing and disrupting these dichotomies, the women involved in this study are resisting being bound by binaries. As Goffman might say, there is a play at work here. And this play involves elements that organize the experience in a way that disrupts dichotomies. Each time the performer takes the stage she is toying with the line that divides leisure and work, private and public, ordinary and extraordinary. And each time the diarist puts pen to paper she is turning to her audience and winking at the solemnity with which we keep these two words apart.

6.3 ***"The Diarist hogs the spotlight!"***

Providing 'me time' and the possibility of personal space

Within the activity of diary-writing there are many possibilities. There is the possibility of work, and there is the possibility of leisure. There is the possibility of privacy and of publicity. It is possible to be ordinary and it is possible to be extraordinary. Thus, it should not come as a surprise that within the pages of a diary there is the possibility of constraint and there is the

possibility of liberation. For the diarists interviewed, the possibility of resisting those constraints and enjoying the freedom the diary offers was contingent upon two elements that were consistently identified as meaningful to the organization of the experience: time and space. Findings indicated that the diary was meaningful insofar as it provided women with the possibility of personal space and 'me time'. Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective focuses on these organizing elements when exploring a social performance. Time and space, he argues, can be extremely meaningful to understanding human experience. Rather than looking solely at the *cause* of human behaviour, Goffman suggests that we explore the context in which the behaviour takes place. Thus, when attempting to understand the meaning of diary-writing for women, it is extremely important to understand what kind of time it is, and what kind of space it is. As the diarists explained, the reality is that the diary can be the kind of time and space that is both constraining *and* liberating.

The seemingly dichotomous experience of being both constrained and liberated by the diary was described by each diarist interviewed for this study. Diarists reported being constrained by their gender in their journaling pursuits. Marriage, children, poverty, the responsibilities of home and the ethic of care were all cited as constraints on diary-writing. Diarists also reported being constrained by their journaling. The diary at times kept the diarist from reaching out to others, speaking her mind, and being assertive. The diarists also overwhelmingly described feeling liberated by their diaries. They shared experiences of being totally one-sided and selfish, aggressive and angry, silly and messy. These experiences made the diarists feel free, while often feeling constrained by the context within which they journaled. Shaw (2001) draws attention to places in the literature where challenges to dominant discourses that apparently empower women have concurrently disempowered women. She points to women's body-building as an example of a leisure activity in which characteristics of femininity such as softness and passivity can be resisted while simultaneously reproducing these attributes in the athlete's frilly attire. Similarly, Lafferty and McKay (2004) suggest that while an aggressive sport such as boxing allows women to challenge dominant gender discourses, certain expectations surrounding appearing and behaving feminine still remain and can in fact be reproduced by the sport.

Freysinger and Flannery (1992) also found that while leisure could create a place for resistance for women through strengthening relationships, it could also act to reproduce the feminine role.

Wearing (1998) advocates exploring women's leisure as occurring within "containers". This approach emphasizes the meaning and context of women's leisure, and the societal factors that often contain women's leisure (such as dominant gender discourses). Goffman (1974) also uses the term "containers". He muses that "as natural persons we are supposed to be epidermally bound containers," but instead we are bound within social containers, frames that govern our activity but do not entirely control it (p. 33). Thus, there is room for an act to be resistant despite existing in a reproductive 'container', and this research supports this notion. What this research has shown is that journaling gives way to the possibility of resistance despite the experience taking place in a rather gendered 'container'. This possibility lies in the relationship between time and space, and diary-writing.

When their diary-writing was constrained by gender, or when their diary-writing was constraining, the diarists interviewed for this study reported feeling dissatisfied in terms of time and space. The diarists felt that they didn't have the time for journaling, or that other responsibilities occupied their time. In this sense, women's diary-writing was constrained by time or lack thereof. However, there were also moments when the diarists described feeling as though it was not the right "time" for journaling. In those particular times, the diary did not give these women what they needed, but instead restricted them from seeking help from others. In these cases, the diary inhibited the time the diarist spent reaching out or speaking out to others. Similarly, when constrained, the diarists were unfulfilled by the space the diary offered. For instance, many women discussed feeling that the space was too small, too frilly, too accessible, too contrived for them to feel truly free. Thus the kind of time and space that the diary offers can be time and space that organizes the experience as constraining for women.

However, these constraining aspects of the diary were overshadowed by the insistence from the diarists that diary-writing was predominantly liberating in terms of time and space. Each woman interviewed described journaling as meaningful because it offered the possibility of "me time". When engaging in "me time", these diarists described feeling as though they did not have

to care about anyone but themselves. They each had their own word for this experience (selfish, soul-searching, self-centred) but the commonality lay in their delight in spending time with themselves. And not only was the time me-centred, the space was as well. The diarists described needing adult space, space where they could seek companionship free from judgment. These women were seeking out what Wearing (1998) would refer to as “personal space” in which they could resist the gendered discourses of passivity, selflessness, and the ethic of care. In Wearing’s reconceptualization of women’s leisure, this “me time” can provide women with the lead role in their leisure lives. As the star of the show, the diarist is reveling in the spotlight that so rarely shines her way.

Thus, there are possibilities for women through journaling, possibilities partly organized by the elements of time and space. As Wearing suggests, in this time and space it might be possible to create diverse subjectivities, to rewrite femininities, to go beyond what is expected of women in this society. However, as we have seen, there is not always time for diary-writing, and the diary is not a perfect space. It is a complex, at times, contradictory space. The diary can reproduce and simultaneously resist dominant gender discourses. The diarist can be constrained in her journaling and her journaling can constrain her. Despite these constraints, and perhaps because of them, the diarist is able to enjoy the freedom of “me time”. So although women can be resistant by spending time within some of these reproductive leisure spaces (or ‘containers’), the space is neither definitively resistant nor reproductive. Like leisure, journaling is not inherently beneficial, therapeutic, or liberating. If the time is right, the diary offers women a space. It is, as these women illustrate, what you do with it that counts.

6.4 **“Carefully-crafted with flawless vision – The Diarist tells it like it is!”**
Managing impressions and taking complete creative control

Through time and space, the diary gives women the opportunity to take control over the performance of the story of their lives. Goffman (1959) suggests that during a performance the members of the theatre production work very hard to control the impression of their play, to have their performance understood within the appropriate frame. The diarist as lead actor, playwright,

and director, takes great effort to ensure that the audience does not see what is going on back stage. The diarist only reveals the front stage of the production to the audience during her performance, and she does so in a very controlled manner. The diarists interviewed for this study found great meaning in this process of controlling their performances. The diarists described selecting details, developing plotlines, and creating characters through their diaries, as well as editing, censoring, revising, and sharing their stories. Many women noted that they often intentionally included and excluded thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in the diary as they saw fit. Others said that though they did not intend to select particular events over others, they noticed interesting inclusions and exclusions when looking back at old entries. Others said that they modified their diaries when they felt that the 'true' experience was not being represented correctly. The diarists were both playful and serious in these processes. Many women were gleeful at the idea that their diaries were one-sided and their characters were larger-than-life. Others worked fervently, revising, rehashing and rereading, to expose the truth of their identity. Others still felt completely accurately represented by their diaries. Every diarist found the ability of having an overview of their lives extremely meaningful. Now that they could explore the "bigger picture" the script provided them with, they could identify and capture the major themes and patterns of their lives. Goffman describes this behaviour as "impression management" and argues that within the frame of a performance it is understood between all participants that everyone has a role to play in maintaining appearances. The members of the production create an "information state" that is meant to frame and inform the experience. Hochschild (1979) adds the term "deep acting" to Goffman's discussion to suggest that performance occurs in even the most private of human behaviour, despite the fact that there is no (readily apparent) audience. Impression management of the information state, as well as some very good deep acting, allows the diarist to take control over the performance of her life.

According to Goffman (1959), impression management refers to the audience's responsibility to "believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he (sic) appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be" (p. 17). Goffman asserts

that another very important aspect of the production is that the performers are not simply performing for the benefit of others, but are in fact also maintaining their own belief in the part they are playing: “one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he (sic) can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality” (p. 17). Impression management involves maintaining the appropriate frame of the experience, which includes the rules, assumptions, and roles governing the behaviour. According to Goffman (1959) there are three defensive and protective techniques involved in impression management. Dramaturgical loyalty (the performer, playwright, and director must be on the same page, so to speak), dramaturgical discipline (each participant in the production must play their part properly), and dramaturgical circumspection (each participant must be careful to avoid disrupting the performance).

Impression management also involves creating a viable “information state”. Goffman (1974) explains that the playwright, performer and director create a state of knowledge for the audience by shaping and crafting the information the audience receives. This knowledge is limited – the audience is not allowed to know all that the playwright, performer and director know. An information state does not control the audience’s response, but guides it, just as the diarist guides her audience through the information she has specially selected from her diary. The diarist crafts the information state by developing a particular presentation of her story and by determining how, when, where, why and for whom the presentation will take place. This is all part of impression management, maintaining the frame and appearance of a performance. Through discipline and loyalty to the performance, the diarist is taking control of the impression of her story the audience receives. She is taking control of the lead role, script, and bigger picture, thus she is attempting to control the response of the audience, even if that audience is the diarist herself.

Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective offers an extremely useful framework for analyzing the diarist as performer, playwright, director, and audience. However, what Hochschild’s (1979) “deep acting” allows us to better understand is the role of emotions in diary-keeping. Hochschild suggests that “Goffman’s approach might simply be extended and deepened by showing that people not only try to conform outwardly, but do so inwardly as well” (p. 556). Her analysis

provides a more complex understanding of those performances that are quieter and more private. Whereas Goffman tends to focus on the actions or positioning of a performer, Hochschild explores those performances that reveal the “feeling rules” guiding our social experiences. Even within performances that are not quite so public or viewable, our behaviour is guided by rules about what is and what is not appropriate in a particular situation. Hochschild states “if we are to investigate the ways people try to manage feeling, we shall have to posit an actor capable of assessing when a feeling is “inappropriate”, and capable of trying to manage feelings” (p. 557). Each situation is framed in part by rules about what we are allowed to feel, which emotions are appropriate. Thus Hochschild’s analysis allows us to explore the more private, muted, hidden performances that do not take place on centre stage but instead on the periphery. Despite the quieter nature of these performances, the performer is still deeply immersed in acting. By focusing on the private, less grand social performances involving the management of emotions, Hochschild adds a gender-consciousness to Goffman’s dramaturgical perspective, which is very useful to this research.

The diarists interviewed for this study described being aware of these “feeling rules” that governed their behaviour, even within the privacy of their diaries. Certain emotions (namely strong emotions such as anger, violence, aggression, grief, passion, depression) were kept out of their diaries to protect potential readers from pain or misinterpretation. Often the diarists professed that they were protecting themselves as well; many women did not want to see themselves as angry, violent, or desperately sad. In order to protect themselves, these women simply refused to read certain entries or diaries altogether. Most of the diarists vowed to never share their diaries in order to manage impressions. Others tore up certain pages, scratched out certain words, or rewrote certain passages that they feared were inappropriate. These kinds of strong emotions are not appropriately feminine by social standards. Women are not supposed to lash out violently or crave things passionately. The diarists’ experiences illustrate just how powerful gender discourse can be. Their behaviour exemplifies Hochschild’s “deep acting”; many of the diarists feel these norms and expectations so deeply that the performance of them extends to less public, less organized social experience. Women’s behaviour is guided by feeling rules,

and the feeling rules are slightly altered from one experience to another. Certain feelings are understood to be inappropriate for women to express in certain circumstances, even in the privacy and secrecy of the diary. Hochschild suggests that this leads to “emotional work”: evoking and shaping particular feelings that are deemed appropriate in specific social situations (p. 561). For the women involved in this study, the diary was not an asocial space free from impression management. Rather, it was often a space for the practice of deep acting. And yet many women felt that the diary was an appropriate place for some of those usually inappropriate emotions. Several women commented that they found they could be angry, aggressive, passionate, or depressed in their diaries; more so, at least, than they could be in other areas of everyday life. Thus although the diary is not an asocial place free from dominant gender discourse, it does appear to be a space where the performer can resist some of those feeling rules and try new emotions on for size.

Regardless, the diarist is always engaged in the maintenance of her performance, which involves impression management, developing an information state, and deep acting. Through the process of penning the script, directing the performance, and presenting the show, she carefully crafts a specific impression of her story. She gives her audience the information they need to know in order to create the response to her story that she wishes to hear. However, the audience does not question whether or not this is “real reality” – they secretly know it cannot be (Goffman, 1959, p. 66). They are aware that they are playing a role in a performance. Their role, Goffman suggests, is to participate fully in the fantasy of the performance as though it were truly reality. If the actor, playwright, and director were successful in maintaining impression management, creating the information state, and engaging in deep acting, they can be sure that they have controlled the performance to the best of their abilities. Likewise, if the diarist is successful in creating characters, developing plotlines, interpreting themes, editing and censoring, then she has become the primary visionary of her life. The diarist can begin to envision herself and her life in different ways, to control the overarching themes and tiny details. As Virginia Woolf wrote in her diary as she made dinner, “I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down” (5 August 1929). Ingredients for dinner, the smallest of details,

are now under the control of the diarist just by putting pen to paper. In possessing a diary, a woman is publicly taking ownership of an object (and its contents) that is *by* her and her alone, and *for* her and her alone. The diary stands out as created by and belonging to an individual woman. This is meaningful to the diarist because she is so rarely recognized for her work in public. She is so rarely seen as extraordinary. And she is so rarely the teller of her own tale. Yet in her private, ordinary, spare time, the diarist crafts her life story over and over again, managing her impressions and legitimating her interpretations. And by putting her diary out into the world, she is celebrating that interpretation.

6.5 ***“A risky performance – The Diarist flirts with disaster!”***
Experiencing vulnerability and threatening exposure

If she is successful at impression management, Goffman (1974) argues, the audience will view the performer as she wants to be viewed. This is why the audience is so very important to the diarist. The diarist writes in part to hear her present talk to her future. She imagines some viewer watching her story, even if she is only (as Mead describes) imagining the response of the ‘generalized other’. She takes some delight in knowing that her life is at least *viewable*. The diarist writes because in some small way she finds meaning in the knowledge that she is confessing her secrets to someone, even if that someone is a future self. As Mallon (1984) puts it, the diarist wants to be “both the priest and the penitent” (p. 209). And each diarist interviewed confessed to wondering how she would be perceived by her audience, regardless of whether that audience was a large group of strangers or merely a future self. Thus the diarist is dedicated to being successful at impression management. This involves Goffman’s three elements of impression management: dramaturgical loyalty (staunch loyalty to the performance), dramaturgical discipline (deep commitment to the roles being played), and dramaturgical circumspection (constant preparation for possible disruptions). However, the diarist is not always successful at impression management. Sometimes the audience does not behave as it should. Sometimes the diarist’s interpretation is misunderstood. Perhaps she was not disciplined enough in impression management, perhaps she did not create a viable enough information state, or

perhaps her acting was not sufficiently deep. Regardless, the diarist is always in danger of having her performance disrupted. Simply by keeping a diary, the diarist puts herself at risk for vulnerability and exposure. Because it is that very audience that she seeks that can also make her run and hide.

The diarist in complete creative control wants to ensure that the audience she has selected knows its role, that the show goes as planned, and that her interpretation is expressed and understood. When kept in the diarist's control, playing their role, the audience members are, according to Goffman (1974), "official eavesdroppers" (p. 135). As official eavesdroppers, the theatergoers are essential participants in the play. As Goffman puts it, "no audience, no performance" (125). Through impression management, the information state, and deep acting, the diarist works tirelessly to ensure that the audience understands its role. The audience that is behaving in accordance with the diarist's wishes responds appropriately throughout the performance. For instance, the audience laughs *with* the diarist, not *at* the diarist. If the diarist stumbles in her performance, the audience politely feigns ignorance. Even if the audience knows how the story turns out, they pretend to be surprised along the way. According to Goffman, an audience member behaving appropriately acts as a collaborator and participant in the performance.

But this is not always the case. Although the diarist attempts to minimize risk by preparing for expected problems, avoiding situations where a potential problem could happen, and making sure that the appropriate audience and venue is selected, there is always the possibility of an "inopportune intrusion" occurring (Goffman, 1959, p. 209). Rather than being a theatergoer, one who follows the rules of the framework and behaves appropriately, an audience member might become what Goffman calls a 'spotter'. A spotter is an unplanned imposter. She interrupts, disrupts, and intrudes. She misinterprets, exposes, and mocks. She threatens and at times overwhelms the diarist's control. This is the person that all diarists fear – the unauthorized reader of her diary. Goffman maintains that "it is these disruptions which the techniques of impression management function to avoid" (p. 208). However, the diarist is always at risk of encountering such a spotter, for she has knowingly created this public, viewable, tangible artefact

full of her thoughts, feelings and perceptions. She could have destroyed the diary, she could have resisted the urge to write in it, she could have called a friend or even just spoke her feelings aloud. Yet she chose to craft her story and put it out into the world for some generalized or specific other. And because of that choice she has knowingly put herself at risk for all of the dangers that an intruder brings: embarrassment, misinterpretation, mockery, disruption, interruption, and loss of control. The diarist has purposely made herself vulnerable.

In Goffman's (1974) *Frame Analysis*, there is a chapter on the "vulnerability of experience" (p. 439). In this chapter Goffman discusses instances where the frame of a social situation becomes susceptible to disruption due to a social actor's deception, misunderstanding, ignorance, and so on. When a social experience becomes vulnerable, the frame has been jarred in some way that confuses the social behaviour occurring within the frame. This can result in awkwardness, embarrassment, anger, and/or humour for any or all performers engaged in the social experience. Thus the experience is vulnerable. Yet what Goffman does not discuss is those experiences that are framed by vulnerability. Vulnerability, in these instances, is an organizing element in the experience. What happens when the very nature of the experience is organized to make the performers vulnerable? The diary is one example of such an experience. Diary-keeping is framed in a way that makes the participants in the behaviour vulnerable. Unlike Goffman's "vulnerability of experience", the frame of the experience is not shaken or jarred when a 'spotter' intrudes upon the performance. Rather, the vulnerability to intrusion upon one's diary is built directly into the experience. Like the theatre performer, the diarist tries her hardest to prevent 'spotters', and yet, in both cases the social actor is inviting the possibility of intrusion simply by engaging in the activity. The result can be embarrassment, anger, misinterpretation, or mockery, but the diarist understands these elements to be part of the organization of this particularly vulnerable experience. One element that the experience is organized around is the discovery of one's diary; each diarist interviewed discussed the fear or reality of having a sibling, parent, spouse, child, friend, or even stranger, find and read her diary. The structure (lock and key) and style ('secret friend') of diary-writing reveals the vulnerability of this experience. The very fact that the diary is private yet public, ordinary yet extraordinary, selfish, one-sided and

personal makes the artefact a tantalizing object for the intruder. As one male admirer said of Anais Nin's famous diaries, "I want to read all the diaries. I want to know the secret of woman... I will hypnotize you, open the safe, and read them all!" (Mallon, 1984, p. 86)

And yet, we continue to write in our diaries, despite the fact that their very existence makes us extremely vulnerable. As Mallon (1984) points out, "Putting love in writing has, after all, cost men and women everything" (p. 196). For women the risk also lies in expressing those emotions that are not appropriate according the 'feeling rules' of our society. In her diary, a woman might express rage, passion, violence, or blatant sexuality. If discovered, her diary could reveal those ways that the diarist has resisted dominant gender discourses and transgressed social norms. The diary could also reveal how the diarist has felt about her experiences and those around her. Rainer (1978) has an entire section of his instructional book on diary-keeping dedicated to the "threat" of diaries. The author coaches his readers on ways to deal with threatened spouses (though in the examples provided, all spouses are "husbands"). Rainer offers an example of one thing to say to those "threatened persons":

I don't want my writing to be a threat to you. I'm not doing it to write unkindly about you or to hide things from you. I'm writing so that I won't hide from myself, so that I can become clear enough about myself to share with you what I really think and feel. My intimacy with myself can make our relationship more open. (p. 46)

My research found that Rainer is correct, the diary is threatening to others and this can be troublesome. In some ways Rainer's statement reflects the feelings of the diarists interviewed for this study. Many of the diarists discussed the importance of self-improvement, self-awareness and communication. But Rainer's perception of the meaning of diary-writing for women also differs quite strongly from the findings of my research. What Rainer assumes is that women cannot own their diaries outright, that the ultimate purpose of such an activity is to *share*. This activity is about giving, not taking, according to Rainer. The diarists interviewed for this study often stressed the opposite: that they loved their diaries because they belonged to them and only them. They loved taking time and space away from the ethic of care. They loved putting themselves first. This does not gel perfectly with Rainer's perception of diary-writing. Moreover, many diarists completely contradicted Rainer and stated that they knew their diary was a threat, and thus they often wielded their diaries like weapons. The diary can be used to lash out at those

we love and hate. Its very existence can prove cycles of abuse, manipulation, or flaws in character. So yes, Rainer is correct in assuming that the diary is threatening, very much so in fact. However, he is wrong to suggest that women should apologize for creating this threat.

Women are not unaware of the elements of vulnerability and threat involved in the experience of diary-keeping. In fact, in contrast to Rainer's example of the diarist as apologist, these aspects of diary-keeping are somewhat thrilling for women. Tantalizing secrecy is promised in the framing of this experience. Women enjoy the elements of vulnerability. We enjoy the vulnerability because as diarists we are completely in control of placing ourselves in such a state. As we have discussed, a woman voluntarily makes her thoughts, feelings and perceptions knowable and viewable by recording them in a diary. As women we so rarely have the chance to create self-imposed vulnerability, vulnerability of our own choosing. We are born physically vulnerable; we are positioned in vulnerable locations in society through patriarchy and the intersections of race, class, sexuality, age, and ability. Our bodies, voices, intimacies, and ultimately vulnerabilities are often socially controlled or controllable (Haskell & Randall, 1998). And yet here is the diarist, positioning herself in this location of accessibility, vulnerability, and threat. In placing herself in this position, she is resisting the social reality that women are often made vulnerable by others. Thus this vulnerability is liberating for a diarist. She is not simply welcoming vulnerability, she is creating it. The diarist is delighting in the thrill of metaphorically (and sometimes, I am sure, literally) holding a desired object above her head and chanting "nyah nyah nyah nyah nyah!" This combination of being so vulnerable yet so threatening makes the diarist gleefully resistant.

This is not to deny, however, that there can be truly dangerous outcomes to being so vulnerable and threatening. Diaries can appear to be (and can be) a site for the woman unleashed, a woman who has taken control or has lost control (either are threatening), a woman who is taking pleasure in herself. Mallon (1984) repeatedly suggests a strong connection between the diary and sexuality. He remarks "... our ultimate act of intimacy would be to show each other our diaries" (p. 225), "the very word diary excites us with the promise of guilty secrets to be revealed" (p. 247) and "... the impulse to write [becomes] as urgent as his impulses toward

sexual activity” (p. 225). Mallon suggests that diaries have long been used to record sexual encounters, mainly those encounters that describe guilty, secret sexual activity. He cites homosexuality, adultery, and other socially deviant activity likely to be the subject of diary entries. Longing, yearning, and fantasy are often involved. For, as he states, “The diary is a place where the desire to transgress is recorded” (p. 247). The diary can be a space for deep intimacy, freedom, indulgence, selfishness, and desire. All of these aspects of the diarist threaten dominant gender discourses and thus can put women in dangerous positions. But we should not jump to the conclusion that women should then avoid those aspects of the diary that might be dangerous. Rather we should explore those moments in women’s lives where danger meets pleasure.

In Vance’s (1993) *Pleasure and danger: Exploring female sexuality*, she suggests that feminists become uneasy when discussing the intersection of pleasure and danger for women. Practices of pleasure (Vance mainly discusses sexual pleasure) that incorporate danger have often been overlooked in feminist theory. This hesitance to unite pleasure and danger largely stems from the horrifying history and reality of sexual violence (and violence in general) against women. However, Vance argues that because feminists have been apprehensive about exploring women’s experiences with pleasure and danger, we have neglected to theorize about the meaning of this intersection in women’s lives. Many feminists have followed Vance’s lead (cf Dubois & Gordon, 1983; Jackson & Scott, 1997; Liguori & Lamas, 2003) and have begun to theorize about pleasure, danger, and women. Diprose (1998) suggests that the “safe sex” discourse that has brought about so many positive results in today’s society, also “attempts to protect women from dangers assumed inherent in erotic life, such as domination, submissiveness, and loss of freedom and self-control” (p.1). While recognizing and acknowledging that heterosexuality, aggression and domination have led to making women sexually vulnerable and exposed, Diprose also argues that none of these things are necessarily that bad. Concern for the safety of women is absolutely vital, she maintains, yet we are often equating safety with protection from erotic life. And, she asserts, there is nothing inherently oppressive about desiring some danger. A feminist theorizing of pleasure must include those

experiences where women derive pleasure from danger, from risk, from the possibility of losing control. One such experience is the experience of diary-keeping. The diarist resists the temptation to side with either pleasure or danger, and once again, unites two purportedly dichotomous terms.

With such strong links to female desire, it follows that the diary would also have strong links to control over women's desire, hence the construction of the diary as traditionally feminine. The easily violated, chastity-belt-esque, lock and key feature is one obvious example of the need to both hide and trespass upon women's intimacies. The routine, delicate, girly, frilly, silly diary that is the most common introduction women have to the practice of journaling is another example of trying to shape and control women's desires. The style of the diary-writing genre also suggests that women are to be romantic, emotive, dreamy, and passive. The intimate details of women's lives are therefore meant to comply with the rules of the genre and contain and mold women's desires. When women behave appropriately, reproducing societal 'feeling rules' and deeply acting in accordance with dominant gender norms, their intimate details look innocent, somewhat trivial, modest, and whimsical. And, as Rainer implies and as the flimsy lock and key suggests, these intimacies are meant to be accessible to others. Yet the women I interviewed had long histories of resisting these appropriate behaviours within the 'container' or frame of the diary-keeping genre. They all replaced the initial lock and key diary with a journal that was more practical and personal. They wrote all over the pages, regardless of the line size or pre-assigned date at the top of the page. They created their own diaries out of scribblers, computers and toolboxes. They wrote spontaneously and selfishly for leisure and for work. They made the ordinary extraordinary and the private public. These diarists took ownership and control over their diaries and reenacted, recreated, redirected, and rehearsed their lives. Despite the gendered frame of the activity, and the often constraining rules guiding the experience, these diarists described doing everything that is feared women will do; they took control of their lives, stories, time, space, dreams and desires; they disrupted and complicated powerful dichotomies; they lived on the edge and put themselves in positions of vulnerability, laughing at the fact that they have created something that others desire. Within these diary 'containers', often fraught with

the reproduction of dominant gender discourses, diarists assert their vulnerability and flirt with disaster, opening themselves up for the thrill of risk.

In *Leisure and Feminist Theory*, Wearing (1998) implores feminist leisure researchers to explore areas of leisure that might put women at risk. She asserts that much of leisure research revolves around the notion that leisure activities are “positive, self-enhancing experiences which are for the good of all” (p. 119). The conceptualization of leisure as inherently beneficial has meant that researchers have neglected to study those areas of leisure life that might involve hurting oneself or others. Though Wearing does cite several exceptions to this assertion (namely Cuneen et. al, 1989; O'Malley & Mugford, 1991; Rojek 1996), she argues that much of the work done around risky leisure has been male-centred. Wearing asks leisure researchers to explore and theorize about women's leisure spaces that might be risky or dangerous. She poses her challenge thusly: “The space that leisure can offer for emotional release that is destructive to others and/or the self has yet to be researched and strategies for change suggested” (p. 123). This research attempts to rise to Wearing's challenge. Findings from this study suggest that women are seeking danger and pleasure through the diary. Releasing their emotions onto the pages of their diaries puts them at immediate risk for exposure. Exposing these feelings could result in embarrassment, pain, ostracism, and/or punishment. Thus I would argue that this research speaks directly to Wearing's challenge for research dealing with risky women's leisure. The diary is threatening and powerful and it can be extremely dangerous and harmful to women and others, diarist and audience. And yet women continue to put themselves in this risky position of vulnerability, sometimes on a daily basis. Women do this because for the diarist, it is worth the risk. And the risk, at least in part, is what it is worth.

Goffman (1974) suggests that the social performance is a remarkable sight to behold. For, he posits, as observer to the performance, “it is possible to see a person's feelings grow into passions, and those passions into words and deeds” (p. 138). Through this study, we were able to observe how the diary-keeping performance allows us a window into the exploration of women's feelings, passions, words and deeds. This process is meaningful to women because

we are crafting a space and time of our own that is laborious and leisurely, private and public, ordinary and extraordinary, dangerous and pleasurable. This space may partly reproduce the dominant gender discourses that frame it, yet that does deny the possibility of resisting those discourses. The experience of diary-keeping includes rules about acceptable behaviour that can be constraining to women, yet that does not deny the possibility of being liberated by the experience. As Goffman maintains, an organizing element of social experience is contradiction. Thus it is not surprising that the experience of diary-keeping is not strictly dichotomous; the diary is organized as neither resistant nor reproductive, but as the diarists interviewed for this study explained, the experience can have elements of both. I would suggest that this research illustrates several key aspects of reproduction. The experience can be constraining to women, reinforcing dominant discourses of femininity such as passivity, frailty, and accessibility. However, the diarists interviewed for this study described far more instances of resistance that were extremely meaningful to the pursuit of journaling. The diarists described revamping the structure and style of the diary, taking 'me time' in their own personal space, controlling the telling of their stories, envisioning their lives differently, and putting themselves in emotionally risky situations.

Thus, to return to Goffman's question, what is guiding this doing? What are the organizing elements of this experience? The findings from this research have identified many organizing elements of the diary-keeping experience. The experience is organized by conventions that create a gendered diary-writing genre. This genre is organized by the elements of structure and style, both of which reproduce dominant discourses about femininity by encouraging diarists to be pretty, polite, emotional and romantic. The experience is also organized in a way that unites gendered and ostensibly oppositional elements (elements of work and leisure, private and public, ordinary and extraordinary), which disrupts and exposes the power behind these dichotomies. The elements of time and space organizing this experience draw our attention to the context of diary-writing. These elements can be constraining and/or liberating for the diarist, however the women interviewed for this study suggested that these elements most often provided for positive experiences: the experiences of 'me time' and personal

space. The experience is also organized by elements of ownership. Through the diary the diarist has creative control over the production of her life. She is the lead actor, the playwright, the director, and even the audience for the performance of her story. Finally, the diary-keeping experience is organized by elements of risk, danger, pleasure, and desire. In this way, the experience of diary-keeping is almost necessarily a vulnerable one. And yet, in an exhilarating turn of events, women do it anyway.

7.0 ***Final bow and notes for future adaptations...*** Conclusion

Through my initial research questions for this study I hoped to glean some insight into the experience of diary-keeping for women. In particular, I asked:

1. What is the meaning of diary-keeping for women as a leisure pursuit?
2. How does performance relate to the act of diary-keeping for women?
3. How does the resistance of dominant gender discourse relate to the act of diary-keeping for women?

Upon analysis of the interview transcripts with seven diarists, I found that the experience of diary-keeping was meaningful for women because they felt in control of the process of performing their own lives. In terms of performance, I argued that women do “perform” in their diaries insofar as they play the part of the lead actor, playwright, director and even audience in the presentation of their life story. By framing journaling as a performance, I am highlighting the importance of certain elements in diary-writing. The theatre metaphor positions the diary within the frame of a public, interactive, social activity full of norms, expectations, rules, guidelines and assumptions. This framework highlights romance and drama, and suggests boundaries of space and time. A ‘play’ connotes leisure, yet a ‘play’ is also work for the performer, playwright, director and even audience. A performance is a dramatic, narrative presentation filled with characters and plotlines, and it is recognizable as separate from lived reality. “Performance” also refers to an act that is a great feat or accomplishment. The diary is all of these things. Because diarists create this play at work, because they take control of the entire performance of adventure, romance, and intrigue, and because they flirt with disaster in doing so, I conclude that the diary-keeping experience can be a resistant space for women. Although the ‘container’ that this activity takes place in can reproduce dominant gender discourses, diary-writing was fundamentally described as a way to defy many of these discourses.

This research also set out to address several gaps in the existing literature. As evidenced by each diarist’s struggle to define journaling as either work or leisure, the diary has been difficult to place in leisure studies literature. This absence will be addressed through this

research. Though the diarists did not come to any conclusion surrounding the categorization of journaling as work or leisure, their descriptions of the activity fit well with Wearing's (1998) conceptualization of leisure as 'personal space' and further problematized the traditional work/leisure dichotomy. Another gap in the literature that this research addresses is the lack of diarists' reflections in the understanding of diary-keeping. The diarist's interpretation of her own diary-writing has been left out of the literature (cf Weisser, 1996; Jokinen, 2004), and this research attends to that gap by collaborating with seven female diarists. Lastly, this study speaks to the concern raised by Wearing regarding the lack of research on dangerous forms of women's leisure. This research has shown that the diary, despite appearances, can be a very risky space indeed. When wielded like a weapon by a woman, we should all duck for cover.

Along with these gaps in the literature that were addressed, this research also leaves many gaps unfilled. Future research on women and the diary should address those gaps, such as the need for a discussion of privilege and the diary. Although the group of women interviewed were a fairly homogenous group in terms of demographics, a few differences in status revealed diary-keeping to be influenced by social factors such as socio-economic status, marital status, and motherhood. There is also the need to address issues of privilege in diary-keeping. How does a surplus (or lack of) time, money, or power effect diary-keeping? Another gap left unfilled is the aspect of heteronormativity as an organizing element of the diary. Cohen (2005) defines heteronormativity as the practices and institutions "that legitimize and privilege heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as fundamental and "natural" within society" (p. 24). This is an area that was overlooked in this research due to my own heterosexual privilege; because of my sexual preference and the heterosexuality of each of my participants, I tended to take the 'boy crazy' aspects of diary-keeping as a normal assumption. And on that note, I would also encourage exploration of the experiences of boys who might be crazy about writing in diaries. Since beginning this project I have encountered several men who, upon learning the subject of my study, confessed to keeping diaries throughout their lives. In most instances the men referred to these books as 'journals', and many had long since turned to blogging, or some form of electronic journaling. A study of masculinity and the diary would be a fascinating new direction.

As I head off in new directions, I have become intrigued by a new branch of diary-related research. In a recent issue of my provincial newspaper, *The Chronicle Herald*, an article appeared entitled “Cringe readings relive depths of teen angst”. Then in smaller print it explained further, “Participants air old diaries in public, reading only material embarrassing enough to make them cringe” (2007, May 18). Since reading this article, I have become fascinated by the concept of a “Cringe Reading”, which is an organized event taking place in a bar where participants volunteer to read only the most embarrassing of old diary entries. The website for these Cringe Readings, <http://queserasera.org/cringe>, describes the history of Cringe as follows:

The first inklings of Cringe came about back in 2001, when Sarah Brown found her old diaries at her parents’ house, and decided it would be a good idea to send the most painful excerpts to her friends in a weekly email. Two years later, she moved to Brooklyn and told roommate Liz Schroeter about this endeavor, prompting Liz to dig out some old teenage zines of her own. The first Cringe Reading Night was held April 6, 2005, at Freddy’s.

Since 2005, more and more cringe readings have been popping up, and Cringe has been featured in articles from The Los Angeles Times, Paste Magazine ABC Nightline, Spin, and Newsweek. The Cringe website says that they are always looking for more readers and newer venues. Clearly Cringe is on the rise. Given the connections I found between diary-keeping and performance, as well as the areas I would like to develop in terms of gender, sexuality, pleasure and danger, Cringe could be the next act of my academic career. Thus, as the curtain falls on this particular performance, work has begun to set the stage for new and exciting adaptations.

Appendices

Appendix A – Informed Consent Form

Today's Date, 2006

Dear _____:

This study is being conducted by Caitlin Mulcahy under the supervision of Professor Diana C. Parry of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. You are being invited to participate in a research study on women and diary-writing as a leisure pursuit. We hope to learn more about women and the role of diary-writing (described as keeping a personal record of occurrences, experiences, and reflections in a diary or journal) in their lives.

As a participant in this study, you will be engaging in an interview, discussing your experiences with diary-writing and what the diary has meant to you in your life. For instance, we will discuss the following themes and questions: At what points in your life do you write? What do you typically write about? Who do you write your diary for? And so on. You may leave unanswered any question you prefer not to answer.

Participation in this interview process is expected to take approximately one hour of your time. However, there will also be a period several months after our interview where I would touch base to discuss my findings with you. At this point I would hope to receive your feedback on my analysis so as to ensure that your interpretation, if different from mine, is heard. Though no monetary compensation will be allocated, I certainly hope that you will feel that you have benefited from sharing your experiences with me and subsequently the larger academic community. You may withdraw from the study at any time by advising me of this decision.

With your permission the interview will be audio-taped, and with your permission anonymous quotations will be used in the final report. All information collected from participants in this study will be presented and stored anonymously. Your name will not appear in any report, publication or presentation resulting from this study. You may choose your own pseudonym or code that will appear in the research. The data will be kept indefinitely and will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home. The audiotapes and transcripts used during the interview process will be labelled with your pseudonym or a code.

If you have any questions about participation in this study, please feel free to ask myself or my supervisor. Our contact information is below. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. In the event you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes at 519-888-4567, Ext. 6005.

Thank you so much for your time.

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CONSENT FORM

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Caitlin Mulcahy of the Department of Recreation and Leisure Studies at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 6005.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

YES NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

YES NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any course paper that comes of this research.

YES NO

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix B – The Interview Guide

1. Let's begin by talking about your introduction to diary keeping...Tell me about your history with diary-writing...

Prompts:

- *When did you start?*
- *How did you start?*
- *Why did you start?*
- *What role did diary keeping play in your life?*

(This question was designed to open the discussion on a broad note before getting into the more complex or personal questions. Because it was somewhat straight-forward and chronological, it allowed the participant (and me) to get comfortable with the interview. It also allowed both of us time to ponder the meaning of diary-keeping for the particular participant, as they steered the direction of the conversation.)

2. How did your diary keeping progress over the years?

- *How much of a priority has diary-writing been in your life?*
- *Have you ever stopped? If so, why?*
- *Have you ever started writing in a diary again after stopping? If so, why? If not, why not?*
- *Are there times in your life that stand out as times when you have written more often? Less often?*

(This question was chronological for the same reasons as stated above. These initial questions were meant to develop a comprehensive picture of their diary-keeping habits over the course of their life time. The questions dealing with stopping and starting their diaries were meant to uncover the meaning of diary-keeping at various points in their lives. These questions were meant to explore the reasons the diarist sought out her diary; the reasons she needed her diary, and the reasons why she might not have needed her diary.)

3. Why do you keep a diary today?

Prompts:

- *As you are writing, who are you writing to?*
- *Who are you writing for?*
- *Have your reasons behind keeping a diary changed over time?*

(This question was designed to bring us to the present after discussing the participant's history with diary-writing. After discussing the meaning of her diary in the past, she could then compare and contrast those experiences with her diary-keeping today, even if she did not currently write. This question also allowed the participant to look into the future and explore ideas of a future audience, which would get at my research question dealing with themes of performance.)

4. Walk me through a typical diary entry...

Prompts:

- *What prompts you or motivates you to write when you do?*
- *Does it matter where you are when you write?*
- *Is there a time when you typically write (a time of day, week, year, a particular emotional time such as anxiety, anticipation?)*
- *What is typically going on in your day while you write?*
- *What aspects of your life do you write about?*

(As with previous questions, this was meant to go through details that might be easier to recall instead of delving straight into more complex, analytical questions. It also painted a more comprehensive picture of the diarist's writing routine and practice, which gave me insight into the meaning of the activity as a whole. I was able to see commonalities and differences between the

participants' diary-keeping and this allowed me to get a better idea of diary-keeping as a shared social experience.)

5. What aspects of your diary deal with being a woman?

Prompts:

- *How would you characterize these places in your diary? Describe the emotions you were feeling at the time...*
- *Tell me about what purpose the diary served when writing at these times...*

(My project deals specifically with the connections between women, the diary and dominant gender discourse, thus this question allowed me to explore the relationship (if any) between these factors. From this question I was able to develop an analysis of what diary-keeping means for women specifically.)

6. Do you ever share your diary with anyone?

Prompts:

- *Have you ever in the past?*
- *Do you ever plan to?*
- *If no to any of the above, why not?*
- *If yes, can you tell me about that experience?*

(This question was designed to explore aspects of performance in diary-keeping in terms of audience. It was also meant to get a better understanding of the purpose and meaning of diary-keeping in terms of an interaction between self and other.)

7. When you read back through your diaries, paint me a picture of who you see...

Prompts:

- *Is that "you"?*
- *Have you seen yourself change? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways have you stayed the same?*
- *Have you always been honest with yourself in your diary?*

(Again, this question revisited notions of performance in diary-keeping. However, this question was meant to understand not only audience, but also the creation of characters, editing and censoring in the diary.)

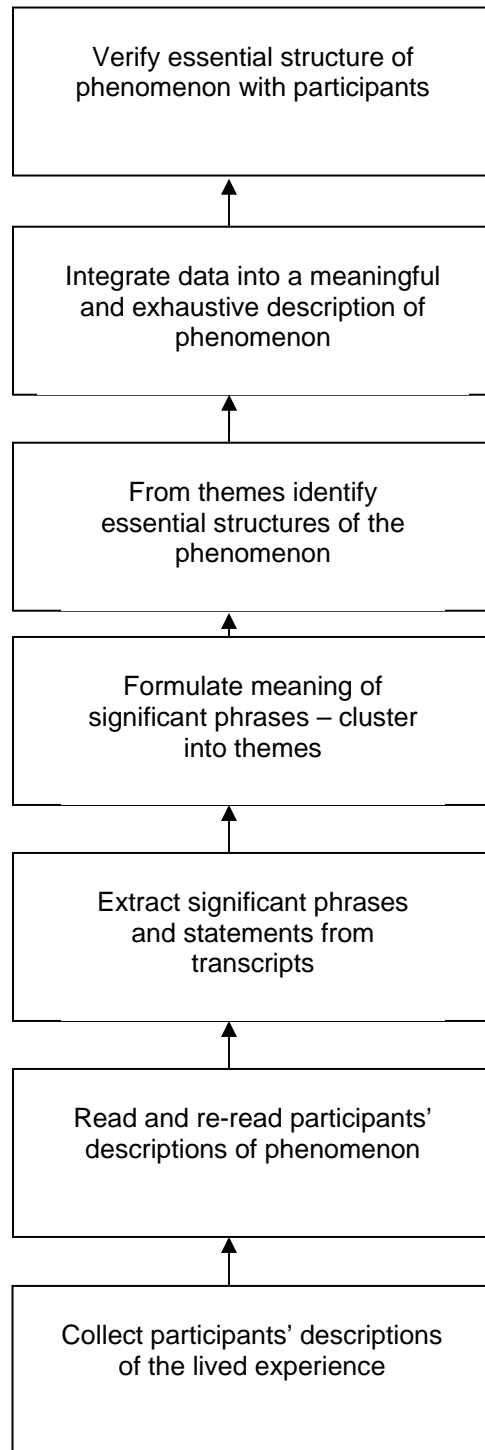
8. Tell me how diary-writing makes you feel...

Prompts:

- *How do you feel as you are writing?*
- *How do you feel about keeping a diary?*
- *Would you consider your diary-writing time to be leisure time?*
- *How would you feel if you were to stop?*

(As my final question, this was meant to summarize the participant's feelings about her diary-keeping. After discussing her history with diary-keeping, her present practices, and elements of performance in journaling, I felt it was a good time to explore the overarching meaning of diary-keeping. This question was also designed to explore the connections between women's diary-keeping and leisure. Out of all of the questions, this one surprisingly proved to be the most controversial and sparked the most debate. Just this one 'prompt' created a far deeper understanding of diary-keeping and leisure for this research.)

Appendix C – The Vancouver School of Phenomenology Approach to Data Analysis (Halldorsdottir & Hamrin, 1997).



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