

AN INTERPRETIVE STUDY OF THE BULIMIC WOMAN'S  
EXPERIENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

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A Dissertation Presented to  
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Adelphi University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

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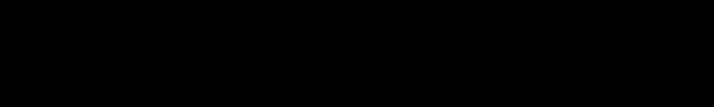
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## ABSTRACT

Title: An Interpretive Study of the Bulimic Woman's  
Experience of Relationships

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Dissertation

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Philosophy

The purpose of this dissertation was to access the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships in everyday life, in order to reveal a contextual understanding of this experience. Literature review revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships has been conceptualized in terms of two main paradigms: the dominant paradigm of human psychological growth and development, and the newer, feminist relational paradigm. A critical examination of present theoretical understandings and previous research related to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, revealed certain deficiencies and limitations in our understanding of this experience. These deficiencies and limitations include: a) the deduction of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships from theory based on investigations about men's or non-bulimic women's experiences; b) methodological constraints in trying to access the experience of relationships (which is constitutive of meanings) with quantitative measures; c) the predominance of only the

empirical, deductive approach to studying the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and building/supporting theory; and d) the general limitations in theoretical knowledge which emerge from a traditional scientific mode of inquiry, i.e., its disengagement from the lifeworld, meanings, and the experience of relationships which are a part of the human realm. In general, there was a dearth of research studies in the professional literature which examined the critical role of meaning and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

The search for a research paradigm which would facilitate the development of a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships led to the selection of a hermeneutic philosophy and approach to the study phenomenon. Specifically, Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy offered a methodological approach to understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach emphasizes the understanding of contextual meanings which are revealed by a text. The contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships emerged from an interpretation of these contextual meanings. The text utilized in this inquiry was developed from seven dialogic sessions with a bulimic woman. The transcribed interviews contained a description of the bulimic woman's experience of

relationships with a) spouse, b) mother, c) father, d) sister, e) best friend, and f) the researcher.

The interpretive work in this inquiry was guided by a number of contexts: a) the interpreter's particular questions posed to the text and based upon the interpreter's own context of history, culture, language, and tradition; b) the structural context of the text as a closed system of signs; and c) the semantic context of the text (e.g., treating the text as discourse, examining the context of sentence and text as "wholes"). Interpretation also involved the following dialectic processes: a) explanation-understanding; b) guessing-validation, c) explanation-comprehension, and d) distanciation-appropriation.

An initial, "naive" understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is presented first. This initial understanding is followed by a structural and semantic analysis of the text, which reveals a more informed, critical, and contextual understanding of the text and the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This critical, contextual understanding reveals a world of meaning about the experience of relationships which is constitutive of certain human actions and temporal experiences. Specifically, a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed: a) a world of paradox, b) a world of explosions, and c) a world characterized by "times of loss, terror, and anxiety." In addition, this world was one of many metaphors and was

actually an extended "ontological" metaphor for human existence.

This study concludes with a dialogue between its findings and a) previous research findings, and b) the assumptions of the feminist relational paradigm. New insights and understandings which are not congruent with either of the main paradigms are outlined. Implications for nursing research, education, and practice are reviewed with an emphasis on a model of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which is reciprocal, interactive, contextual, simultaneous, paradoxical, dialectical, and metaphorical in nature.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother and my clients. It is dedicated to my grandmother because I have felt her spiritual presence in my life despite her physical absence. I have cherished the fact that she is my namesake. I wish that she was in this temporal plane to celebrate all that has been revealed and accomplished with the completion of this research project.

This dissertation is also dedicated to all my clients, bulimic and non-bulimic, who have bravely shared with me their intimate secrets, experiences of time, and worlds of paradox. These discursive gifts have touched me deeply and helped shape my understanding of human experiences, as well as my own self-understanding.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I know that I could fill countless pages with the names of those who have "dialectically danced" through this inquiry with me.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Stephen Greenfield, Professor of Philosophy, who served as chairperson of my dissertation committee. His expert mentorship and strong belief in my abilities to create new knowledge and challenge familiar but potentially out-dated and incomplete understandings of human experience, have enabled me to question, read, and reflect critically, as well as argue cogently and persuasively throughout this research project. Dr. Greenfield has always had a strong belief that philosophical inquiry can provide alternate ways of understanding human experience, and specifically, further the critique and development of nursing science.

In addition, I am grateful to Dr. Judy Ackerhalt and Dr. Dorothea Hays, Professors of Nursing, who served on my dissertation committee. Their expertise helped me to fashion a scholarly research project, and their support instilled me with confidence during the trials, tribulations, and excitement of my work.

I greatly appreciate the time and attention devoted by my readers to the review of this research project. I am grateful for the participation and thoughtful critique offered by Dr. Gail Malloy and Dr. Loise Skolnik in the review and discussion of my work.

I am also indebted to the bulimic woman who agreed to participate in this hermeneutic inquiry. Her ability to risk revealing herself to me by openly sharing her experience of relationships with others, was critical for the actualization of this inquiry. She was right in saying that "we both got something out of our work together." She made this project a reality for me and helped me understand her experience of relationships in new and different ways.

In addition, my appreciation extends to Paul Ricoeur, who if I am ever fortunate enough to meet, I would like to personally thank for being a "light" and inspiration amidst the murky, inchoate parts of this project. His work provided me with hope regarding my ability to explicate and interpret the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and kept me faithful to the hermeneutic circle throughout this inquiry. Ricoeur's work will continue to inform my understandings of human experience and my future research endeavors.

I would also like to extend a heartfelt thanks to my family and friends for enduring through this research adventure with me. I am especially thankful to my mother, Connie, who has been a constant source of encouragement throughout my doctoral work. In addition, thanks go to my colleague and dear friend, Cindy, for the long-distance dialogues, the intellectual stimulation, and her ongoing support. I am glad that we made this dissertation journey together.

I am especially grateful to my partner and best friend, Odysseus. His willingness to dialogue with me about my work, and his continual support and caring, helped me face the intellectual and emotional challenges of this inquiry anew each day. He can probably recite whole sections of this dissertation from memory. Additionally, I want to thank Katie and Paul (my two youngest friends) for waiting so patiently for the completion of my work. We can finally "go out and play together as a family."

Last, words cannot fully express the deep appreciation I extend to my Creator. I have always been very thankful for the inspiration and strength experienced within this particular relationship, which sustained me throughout my research project. Although I did not have "Hermes" communicating the "messages of the gods" to me, I truly believe that my work was in part due to "divine guidance." I believe that the meaningfulness experienced within the relationship with my Maker, in some way, contributed to my ability to explicate the world of meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, and to fulfill both the epistemological and ontological aims of this hermeneutic inquiry.

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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Introduction

The American Nurses' Association social policy statement defines nursing as the "diagnosis and treatment of human responses to actual or potential health problems" (ANA, 1980, p. 9). In psychiatric-mental health nursing, many of these actual and potential health problems involve difficulties in interpersonal relationships. This is certainly the case in assessing the needs of female bulimic clients (normal or near normal weight), who are seen to experience a lack of close, emotionally intimate, and fulfilling relationships, social withdrawal and isolation, particularly with chronicity (Root, Fallon, & Friedrich, 1986).

Since the bulimic client's experience of relationships is a critical predisposing, precipitating and/or perpetuating factor in the disorder (Garner & Garfinkel, 1985), an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is essential. The American Nurses' Association social policy statement notes that a nurse's "conceptualization of a presenting condition is a way of ascribing meaning to it, which may or may not accurately reflect the phenomenon under consideration" (ANA, 1980, p. 11). In order to ensure this accuracy, nurses are encouraged to keep their theoretical interpretations of

phenomena open to revision. This study is an effort to support the idea of openness to different ways of understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This study will discuss how meaning has been ascribed to the experience of relationships in a predominantly unquestioned theoretical way. This study will then discuss and develop another way of ascribing meaning to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships via the use of understanding as it is employed in the hermeneutical approach to the human sciences. This approach challenges nursing to question the predominant theoretical explanations for the study phenomenon and also to consider the use of contextual knowledge and interpretation of meaning in understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

#### Background Regarding the Phenomenon of Interest

Bulimia nervosa is a multi-dimensional and multi-determined syndrome that occurs most frequently in college-age women raised in Western cultures which value thinness, physical attractiveness, and youth (Garner, Olmstead, Coscina, Rockert, and Johnson, 1985). The prevalence rate of this eating disorder among college age women ranges from 2%-5% (Drenowski, Yee, & Krahn, 1988; Hart & Ollendick, 1985; Schotte & Stunkard, 1987; Zuckerman, Colby, & Ware, 1986). Bulimia nervosa is characterized by episodes of binge eating that are followed by purging, strict dieting,

and/or vigorous exercise to prevent weight gain. There is persistent overconcern with body shape and weight (American Psychiatric Association, 1987). The bulimic woman is seen to anthropomorphize food. The connection between behavior and psyche is that the relationship with food is a concretization of the bulimic woman's conflicted and distorted perceptions of herself and others (Beattie, 1988; Garner & Garfinkel, 1985; Johnson & Connors, 1987; McKenna, 1989; Root, Fallon & Friedrich, 1986; Swift, 1982). In this sense, the use of food and bulimic behaviors become the metaphors for the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The experience of relationships is viewed as a critical predisposing, precipitating, and/or perpetuating factor in bulimia (Beattie, 1988; Garner & Garfinkel, 1985; Goodsitt, 1983; Johnson & Connors, 1987; Johnson & Maddi, 1986; Kaplan & Klien, 1985; Lacey, 1985; Lerner, 1983; Root, Fallon, & Friedrich, 1986; Surrey, 1984). Also, since bulimia nervosa is a multi-dimensional syndrome, it can occur across ego or self-pathologies (Goodsitt, 1985) and it occurs within the context of the client's unique experiences of relationship. Therefore, an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is essential in understanding the development, course, and nature of the disorder. In addition, a full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships becomes critical in the work of psychotherapy.

This treatment modality is based upon an understanding of how the client's past experiences of relationship affect present relationships, including the relationship with the therapist (Kohut, 1971, 1977; Malan, 1979; Menninger, 1958; Reisman, 1971; Sullivan, 1953; Weiner, 1975). Also, an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships could potentially help make sense of the connection between the client's experience of relationships and her relationship with food.

In an effort to provide a fuller, richer, and more complete picture of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, this study will investigate the meaning of her experience of relationships in everyday life. In this study, the experience of relationship is seen to be constitutive of certain meanings. These meanings are lived and embedded in the context of the bulimic woman's everyday life. Therefore, it is imperative that we develop a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In this investigation, contextual understanding is distinguished from theoretical understanding of the experience of relationships. Theoretical knowledge of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships represents attempts to order and make coherent unfolding relational experiences. However, theoretical knowledge accomplishes this via interpretations of these experiences as separate from the experiencing person or

after the fact. Theoretical knowledge of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is an abstraction of the experience, while contextual understanding can be viewed as closer to this experience, revealing the local ebb and flow of the meanings constitutive of this experience. A contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships could serve to enhance and enrich the present theoretical knowledge of this phenomenon. Before further discussing the nature of contextual knowledge, I will first address my own assumptions and experiences with female bulimic clients in relation to this inquiry. I will then address the theoretical knowledge presently used in understanding a bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Finally, I will discuss the limitations of theoretical knowledge in understanding this experience, and propose that contextual knowledge can fill the void which exists in our present understanding of this phenomenon.

CHAPTER II  
CONTEXT OF THE PHENOMENON

The Personal and Experiential Context

This inquiry grew from my work with female bulimic clients over the past nine years. In my earlier work as a nurse psychotherapist, I noted how these clients' experiences of relationship were conceptualized in terms of theoretical knowledge based upon the "dominant" paradigm of human psychological growth and development and experience of relationships. Yet in practice, and in speaking with these women and listening to their narratives of experience of relationship, these "dominant theoretical views" which emphasized the bulimic client's struggles with autonomy, individuation, and separation from significant others, seemed "forced" at times. Instead of conceptualizing the experience of relationship in a way that fit the client's experience, it felt like the client needed to be classified and fit into certain theoretical explanations. These explanations felt vacuous to me in contrast to the reality of the experience of relationships described by my clients. The theoretical explanations from the dominant paradigm somehow seemed to "miss the mark" in actual dialogue with these clients. For example, although they spoke of wanting to be "independent" women leading their own lives, they often spoke of their deep desire and simultaneous fear of establishing and maintaining close emotional connections

with others. Also, this second concern seemed paramount in comparison to the first. This latter point became clearer, as I heard them describe "independence" as if it were the same as isolation from others. Independence was something they were "supposed to be striving for," for example, yet it was viewed as undesirable, insofar as it meant disconnection from others.

This latter observation drove me to consider conceptualizing the bulimic woman's experience of relationships via theoretical knowledge generated from within the newer, feminist relational paradigm. Theoretical knowledge generated from this paradigm emphasizes the critical role relationships play for women in terms of their psychological growth and development. It addresses the injurious nature of disconnections for women and how the experience of disconnections is different for men and women. Conceptualizing the bulimic woman's experience of relationships via theoretical knowledge from the feminist relational paradigm seemed to "fit" better. Yet, I was still left with questions of accurately and fully understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships given a) the nature of her particular disorder, b) the fact that theoretical knowledge from the feminist relational paradigm is in its early stages, and c) the absence of research based upon the feminist relational

paradigm regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

Last, the most critical question for me involved understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships without some kind of contextual understanding of the meanings of her experience of relationships. None of the above theoretical explanations provided me with this context. Also, this context would need to come from the bulimic woman's discourse about the experience of relationships and would demand an interpretive approach to the phenomenon.

#### The Phenomenon in a Theoretical Context

Literature review reveals that theoretical knowledge of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships has come from two main paradigms. These paradigms are the dominant paradigm of human psychological growth and development and the newer, feminist relational paradigm. The theoretical frameworks developed within each of these paradigms provide alternative ways to identify and interpret phenomena (e.g., experience of relationships) and influence intervention in practice.

#### The Dominant Paradigm

Theoretical knowledge which has emerged from the dominant paradigm of human psychological growth and development evolved within Western culture and reflects an androcentric bias (Bakan, 1966; Belenky, 1986; Chodorow,

1978; Gilligan, 1977, 1979, 1982; Marcia, 1980; McMillan, 1982). Theoretical knowledge of experience of relationships from this paradigm emphasizes the consolidation of an "autonomous identity" via disconnections from others to attain maturity (Beattie, 1988; Blos, 1962, 1979; Bruch, 1977; Deutsch, 1944, 1967; Erikson, 1968; Freud, 1905; Galenson, 1976; Gardiner, 1987; Levinson, 1978; Mahler, Pine, & Berman, 1975; Orbach, 1985; Ritvo, 1976; Rothchild, 1979; Sugarman & Kurash, 1982). This kind of theoretical knowledge would view bulimia as a way a woman might act out hostile-dependent conflicts and ambivalent struggles for autonomy from mother. Theoretical knowledge from the dominant paradigm is based on assumptions that at some intrapsychic level (more or less conscious), mother is felt to be intrusive, unempathic, or overprotective. These experiences of relationship have often been cultivated and reinforced by actual experiences of deprivation or abuse of the bulimic woman as a young girl. As a child, the bulimic woman would fear that if she tries to separate or individuate from mother, or be "her real self," that this means certain loss, rejection, or injury to mother. In relating to mother, who is often viewed as depressed and/or narcissistic, a merger and nurturing reversal or maternal underinvolvement with emotional detachment is theorized to occur (Friedrichs, 1988; Johnson & Connors, 1987). Separation or independence provokes great anxiety in the

daughter, since detachment risks the loss of mother's love or the hope that it will ultimately be forthcoming (Friedrichs, 1988). This kind of "double bind" is recapitulated in future relationships as well. The bulimic woman would be seen as lacking a sense of self and impaired in her ability to form healthy relationships with either sex. She would view her "real self" as unacceptable to others and distance herself to avoid further hurt or violation (Root, Fallon, & Friedrich, 1986). Therefore, in attitudes to societal expectations and personal relationships, she fluctuates between excessive dependence, evidenced by self-effacing conformity and lack of self-assertion, and exaggerated pseudoautonomy with defensive rejection of help, fears of intimacy, and social isolation (Beattie, 1988). Her avoidance of close relationships is a way to maintain intactness which is threatened by perceived "merger" with others who could be demanding and controlling. Conversely, the bulimic woman's attempts to "please others" would be seen as "regressive" as well--a sign of pathological dependence on others and a deficiency in self-development.

Theory based on the dominant paradigm focuses a great deal on the mother/daughter relationship, but recently, father's role has been conceptualized a bit more. Despite the fact that theoretically father's role is at times viewed

as more active than mother's role, he is also experienced as distant or unempathic. Father's added involvement is theorized as leaving the daughter less vulnerable to merger with mother, however, in many cases, his relationship with daughter is also seen to expose daughter to more experiences of sexualization. Thus, he is seen to devalue her while he increases her reliance on her body to be an expression of her false self in relating to others (Friedrichs, 1988).

Theory developed within the dominant paradigm posits that the bulimic woman's experience of interpersonal disturbances would preclude her obtaining emotional supplies from the outside. Consequently, food is anthropomorphized, serving many purposes (Garner & Garfinkel, 1985; Johnson & Maddi, 1986; McKenna, 1989). The connection between behavior and psyche is such that food becomes a concretization of her conflicted and distorted perceptions of herself and others, i.e., her experience of relationships (McKenna, 1989; Swift, 1985). Treatment based on the dominant view of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships would emphasize separation and individuation from others and a strengthening of ego boundaries. The client would be assisted to define and express her "true self" assertively in relationships with others. She would be helped to see her defenses against closeness in relationships and the need for and right to her own autonomy (Beattie, 1988; Bruch, 1977; Bryant & Kopeski, 1986;

Goodsitt, 1983; Lerner, 1983; Orbach, 1985; Sugarman & Kurash, 1982).

### The Feminist Relational Paradigm

Recently, several feminist authors have proposed a different paradigm for describing and explaining women's psychological growth and development. Theoretical knowledge developed within this paradigm has been used to explain the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as well. These theories state that there are important gender differences in terms of psychological growth and development and the experience and significance of relationships during maturation. Women experience themselves as like their mothers and fuse the experience of attachment with the process of identity formation (Chodorow, 1978). Authors espousing this kind of theoretical understanding claim that the experience and construction of the self for women involves establishing and maintaining affiliation and relationships versus disconnecting or separating from others (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Kaplan & Klein, 1985; Lyons, 1983; Miller, 1976, 1984, 1986; Surrey, 1985). The bulimic woman would therefore, develop via a relational pathway--one which is primary and continuous. Disturbances in her basic relationship to food, eating, and others are viewed within the "larger context of the lack of validation and attention given to the importance of relationships to others that all women confront throughout life" (Surrey,

1984, p. 6). Theory developed within the newer relational paradigm would view bulimia as the bulimic woman's response to the disconnections she experienced with others in her life. She turns to food to cope, comfort herself, self-express, and maintain some kind of connection, albeit with food, not others.

The theoretical understanding emerging from the relational paradigm would not necessarily pathologize the bulimic woman's connections with others as "enmeshed, symbiotic, or dependent." The need for mutual understanding is seen as a critical part of her own growth, self-worth, and ability to act in relationships (empowerment) (Miller, 1976; Surrey, 1985). The bulimic woman would be viewed as pursuing relationships based on her need and desire to be understood and to "understand the other." This need would explain her seeming attempts at "people-pleasing" and her tendency to care for everyone's needs, at times to the exclusion of her own needs. Her felt need to "take care of relationships" is not necessarily a "regressive pull" but could be a movement toward maturity (Kaplan & Klein, 1985). Conversely, her "people-pleasing" attempts may be conceptualized as ways to maintain connection, despite the dysfunctional aspects of a particular relationship. The bulimic woman may resist trying to change the nature of her relationship with a significant other, for fear of

separation from that individual. She would see this separation as destructive, not growth-enhancing, and avoid it at all costs.

Unfortunately, the choice to relinquish one's self in relationships can recur, unless the nature of connections change or unless new, more mutually empathic, empowering connections are established. The bulimic woman may function in the present with images of "self-in-relationship" from past experiences. If, for example, the bulimic woman had not experienced a mutually empathic and empowering relationship with mother, this particular experience of relationship with mother would make it difficult for her to distinguish her own needs/feelings from mother's needs/feelings. She would also have difficulty seeing that responsiveness to self and other are connected, not opposed. She can be left feeling that she needs to respond to one over the other (Gilligan, 1982). Again, this relational pattern can recur in future relationships. These images of self-in-relationship serve to recapitulate the bulimic woman's felt isolation from others, future disconnections, and the turn toward food for such things as connection, caring, comfort, and control.

Theoretical knowledge developed within the new relational paradigm, proposes that it is the nature of the connection which becomes the focus, not the need to separate from mother or others. Treatment based on this theoretical

understanding would involve helping the client to examine and change the nature of her connections with others, as well as the images of "self-in-relationship" she uses when interacting with others. The goal is to establish mutually empathic and empowering relationships (Kaplan & Klein, 1985; Surrey, 1984).

#### Relevance of the Related Literature to the Phenomenon

In summary, a bulimic woman's experience of relationships is presently understood via theoretical knowledge developed from two main paradigms of women's psychological growth and development. However, there are difficulties and deficiencies one encounters when critically examining the theoretical understandings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The most obvious difficulty is that much of the theoretical knowledge of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships is deduced from theory developed from investigations of men or non-bulimic women. As previously mentioned, much of the theory developed within the dominant paradigm to explain women's experience of self and relationships has been critiqued because it is based on research which examined the experiences of men (Bakan, 1966; Belenky, 1986; Chodorow, 1978; Du Bois, 1983; Gilligan, 1977, 1979, 1982; Marcia, 1980; McMillan, 1982; Miller, 1976, 1986; Surrey, 1985). It is questionable, then, whether theory developed within the dominant paradigm can accurately and fully portray women's

experiences of relationships, let alone bulimic women's experiences of relationships.

Theoretical knowledge from the feminist relational paradigm has enhanced our understanding of women's experience of relationships, as it is based on research about women themselves. However, I could not locate any study of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship in this literature. Again, it is questionable whether bulimic women's experiences of relationship can be deduced from non-bulimic women's experiences of relationship.

An additional difficulty encountered when examining the present theoretical knowledge of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship, is the methodology utilized in research to access this phenomenon and to build or support theory. Theory developed within the dominant paradigm has been predominantly based on quantitative measures of the experience of relationships. These measures provide forced choices about the experience of relationship and serve to build theoretical knowledge which is an imposed frame for understanding this experience.

Also, although theory developed from the feminist, relational paradigm has utilized a more phenomenological approach to accessing the experience of relationships for healthy and non-bulimic women, (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Lyons, & Hanmer, 1990; Gleason, 1985; Kaplan & Klein, 1985; Lyons, 1983, 1990; Rich, 1990; Stern, 1990; Surrey, 1985),

it has not produced research specifically examining the experience of relationships for bulimic women.

Last, there is no interpretive research and little qualitative research examining the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The qualitative studies located were phenomenological in nature but did not specifically investigate the meanings of relationship as they are experienced in the everyday life of the bulimic woman. They did not further develop the notion of contextual understanding as it will be developed in this study.

In general, the literature regarding bulimia has overlooked the critical role, meanings, and experience of relationships from the bulimic woman's perspective. Also, there is an absence of theory and research in the nursing literature, about how bulimic women experience relationships. Therefore, although much theoretical knowledge exists regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, there is a dearth of research which substantiates that the theoretical knowledge developed within either of the two paradigms alone can provide an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Also, there are no interpretive studies in the literature which examine the meaning of the experience of relationships for the bulimic woman. The quantitative and qualitative studies

investigating the bulimic woman's experience of relationships will be briefly discussed below. The limitations of present theoretical knowledge for understanding this phenomenon will then be addressed.

#### Quantitative Research

In reviewing the literature, one sees that most studies examining the bulimic woman's experience of relationship have used an empirical, deductive approach. These studies have investigated family member interactions, the experience of relationship with men, and the general experience of relationship with others, e.g., peers.

#### The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationship with Family Members

Quantitative studies examining the bulimic woman's experience of relationships have predominantly involved an examination of family member interaction. These studies have examined this phenomenon mainly via observation and empirical tools such as psychological and family interaction inventories. In terms of the use of family interaction inventories, (e.g., Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos, 1981) and Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) (Olsen, Bell, and Portner, 1978) these measures have often revealed that compared with normal control families, normal weight bulimic clients experienced relationships in their families as lower in cohesiveness, expressiveness, and

independence, but higher in terms of conflict and achievement expectations (Johnson & Connors, 1987; Johnson & Flach, 1985; Johnson & Maddi, 1986; Kog, Vertommen & De Groote, 1985; Ordman & Kirschenbaum, 1986; Stern, Dixon, Jones, Lake, Nemzer, & Sansone, 1989). In these studies, bulimic clients reported their families as a) significantly less supportive and helpful than control families, b) not encouraging assertiveness and self-sufficient behavior, and c) experiencing a great deal of conflict and anger, along with a discouragement of direct expression of feelings. Similar recent findings were reported by Shisslak, McKeon and Crago (1990), except they found that normal-weight bulimic families reported less discouragement of independence at home than bulimic anorexic families. The normal-weight bulimic families did not differ from controls on this dimension.

Strober (1981) reported findings based on FES scores that the family environment of normal-weight bulimic clients was similar to that of bulimic anorectic clients, except families of normal-weight bulimic clients scored substantially lower on expressiveness and conflict and higher on achievement expectations. In 1987, Humphrey used the FES and FACES and found that both normal-weight and bulimic anorexic families reported more distress in patterns of relating than did normal controls. All members of both groups experienced less involvement and support, greater

isolation and nondisclosure, and more detachment among family members than was found in normal families. Garner, Garfinkel, and O'Shaughnessy (1985) reported similar findings of greater family pathology in bulimic families than in normal-weight control and restrictive anorectic families, when using the Family Assessment Measure (FAM) (Skinner, Santa-Barbara, and Steinhauer, 1983).

Finally, in a well-controlled and comprehensive study, Humphrey (1987) using self-report ratings on the Structural Analysis of Social Behavior Tool (SASB) (Benjamin, 1974), reported normal-weight and bulimic anorectic families experienced significant family distress compared to normal controls. Parent/daughter triads in both groups reported greater neglect, attack, and blaming toward each other along with less understanding, nurturance, and support. Humphrey states that results showed that bulimic families experienced more hostile attachment and hostile control, but also less affection and affirmation in the parent/daughter relationships than in restrictive anorexic and normal-weight control families. In addition, fathers and daughters agreed that they experienced their relationships as significantly less friendly and more hostile than were those of the controls and restrictive anorexic families. Also, mother/daughter relationships were similar. Bulimic women reported greater blame, sulking, attacking, withdrawing, and neglecting and avoidance by their mothers than did

restricting anorexics and normal controls. Results again indicated that "families of both bulimic anorexics and normal-weight bulimics were more hostilely enmeshed and neglectful of their daughters in contrast to restricting anorexics who appear much more pseudomutual in that they juxtaposed greater affection with simultaneous control and/or negation of their daughters" (Humphrey, 1987, p. 16). The findings that bulimic women experienced rejection by both parents, with mother experienced as lacking in warmth and caring and father as overly controlling, are supported by other studies as well (Pole, Waller, Stewart, & Parkin-Feigenbaum, 1988; Stuart, Laraia, Ballenger, & Bruce Lydiard, 1990). In general, then, quantitative family measures have shown bulimic families to be much more disengaged and chaotic. There is a great deal of hostility and conflict that is not denied, yet there is no encouragement for its open expression. Although there is greater experience of detachment and isolation, there is a decreased emphasis on independent/assertive behavior. In effect, studies conclude that the bulimic child is enmeshed in a hostile dependent relationship with a family system that is disengaged, chaotic, and neglectful. These families also appear to be much more affectively labile and undercontrolling (Johnson & Connors, 1987).

The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationship with Men

In terms of the experience of relationships with men, bulimic women have been reported to experience a significantly decreased satisfaction and difficulties forming and maintaining relationships. For example, in a longitudinal study examining college-age male-female interpersonal relationships, Thelan, Farmer, Mann, and Pruitt (1990) found a highly significant negative correlation between BULIT scores (self-report bulimia scale) and ratings of relationships with men via the Self-Evaluation of Interpersonal Relationships Form. These results suggest that those women with increased bulimic symptomatology also experience less satisfaction and more difficulties in relationships with men. The investigators posit that their results are consistent with psychodynamic (Bruch, 1973) and feminist socio-cultural (Boskind-Lodahl, 1976) theories of bulimia. Both these theories suggest that bulimic women have serious difficulties in their intimate relationships with men because of a) their strong need for love and approval from men, since they cannot get their needs met in their families, b) their tendency to over-emphasize, idealize, and exaggerate romantic relationships, and c) their fear of rejection by men who are needed for self-validation. Only one quantitative study could be located that investigated the quality of the bulimic woman's marital relationship and the distribution of power in the

relationship. Van den Broucke and Vandereycken (1989) found that despite predominant clinical hypotheses, no evidence was found for an unequal power distribution in the relationship or for perceptual incongruence between the spouses regarding each other's attitudes toward the relationship. Compared with normal subjects, bulimic clients rate their sexual and social relationships as significantly less satisfactory, but they do not report a significantly lower degree of marital adjustment. The bulimic clients viewed both their own and their spouses' affective attitudes toward each other as only moderately negative.

#### The Bulimic Woman's Overall Experience of Relationship with Others

Other psychological inventories completed by bulimic women, themselves, have revealed that they experience a high need for approval from others, an external locus of control, low assertiveness with others, interpersonal sensitivity and poor peer relationships (Connors, Johnson, & Stuckey, 1984; Katzman & Wolchik, 1984; Lacey, Coker, & Birtchnell, 1986; Love, Ollendick, Johnson, & Schlesinger, 1985; Nagelberg, Hale, & Ware, 1984). Becker, Bell, and Billington (1987) provided empirical findings to support the psychoanalytic theory which links bulimia to conflicting wishes for merger and autonomy in interpersonal relationships and relates eating disorders to disturbances in object relations ego

functioning. Findings showed statistically significant group mean differences between bulimic and non-bulimic groups on the Insecure-Attachment Scale (fears of abandonment and lack of autonomy) of the Bell Object Relations Inventory. Also, Jacobson and Robins (1989) reported findings that bulimic woman reported greater needs for social dependency, such as concerns about evaluation and separation and the need to please others. However, their findings did not support Boskind-White's and White's (1983) suggestion that bulimics are particularly socially dependent on men. Results from their Sociotropy Scales (Beck, Epstein, Harrison, & Emery, 1983) showed that bulimic women did report greater social dependency than non-bulimic women in relation to men than in relation to women, but they did not differ significantly in this regard from non-bulimic women.

Root and Friedrich (1985) reported that bulimic women evidenced low T-scores on scale 5 of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Hathaway & McKinley, 1967). This kind of scoring is associated with behavioral characteristics of submissiveness, passivity, and lack of assertiveness in relationships with others. Other studies using the MMPI with bulimics have also shown a pattern of lowest T-scores on scale 5 (Herzog, Norman, Gordon, & Pepose, 1984; Pyle, Mitchell, & Eckert, 1981). Fallon, Friedrich, and Root (1986) conclude that the above

findings regarding low T-scores on scale 5 indicate high socialization to the feminine role. They further state that "traditional feminine sex-role behavior, such as dependency, unassertiveness, and an external locus of control, tends to decrease the individual's sense of self-efficacy and control within the environment" (p. 10).

Johnson and Connors (1987) report findings based on the use of the Eating Disorders Inventory (Garner, Olmstead, & Polivy, 1983) that normal weight bulimic women experience interpersonal distrust. However, they also state that although bulimic women score higher than normal weight non-bulimic women on interpersonal distrust measures and are quite rejection-sensitive, they often willingly seek help from others in their everyday lives. This is not the case for restrictive anorectics, for example, who are avoidant of others. Johnson and Connors add that as research unfolds, we might find that the construct of interpersonal distrust may have very different meanings which would differentiate bulimic women from other sub-groups of eating disordered women. These different meanings would suggest different treatment strategies. For example, for the bulimic group, interpersonal distrust might reflect a fear of underinvolvement or rejection, as opposed to the restrictive anorectic group's fear of intrusive overinvolvement.

### Conclusion

In general, quantitative studies reveal that many

bulimic clients are reported to have had traumatic developmental histories involving victimization experiences (sexual, physical, and emotional), experiences of parental manipulateness, criticism, and unavailability, and relationship losses (Carroll & Leon, 1981; Johnson & Connors, 1987; Logue, Crowe, & Bean, 1989; Oppenheimer, Howells, Palmer, & Chaloner, 1985; Powers, Coovert, Brightwell, 1988; Pyle, Mitchell & Eckert, 1981; Pyle, Perse, Mitchell, Saunders, & Skoog, 1988; Root & Fallon, 1985). It has been hypothesized that the extreme sensitivity in some of these bulimic women has developed in trying to read subtle cues within their families. This sensitivity has allowed them to be exceedingly able to tune into and respond to others' needs, yet be unable to identify and meet their own needs (Friedrich & Pollock, 1982). Therefore, many female bulimic clients are seen to be successful and well-liked, with a number of friends. Yet, while these clients seem to want intimate and close, trusting relationships, they are viewed as actually having difficulty trusting others because of their developmental histories. On closer examination, study findings indicate that bulimics actually have fewer close friends and relatives than non-bulimic controls (Weiss & Ebert, 1983).

#### Qualitative Research

There were no qualitative studies regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships that could be located in

the professional literature, other than two studies found in Dissertation Abstracts. These qualitative studies included Schachtel's (1988) and Crouthamel's (1988) work. Schachtel (1988) conducted a phenomenological study with five bulimic women. His findings described bulimic women as pleasing others, feeling unable to depend on others, and running to food to escape interpersonal conflict. However, relational issues were not the focus of this qualitative study, as the investigator was listening for any major themes associated with bulimia. Also, the validity of findings in Schachtel (1988) is questionable, as the researcher did not discuss bracketing or his own personal assumptions.

Crouthamel (1988) asked 25 bulimic women to describe their experiences with family members during childhood and adolescence. Identified themes included the following: a) lack of cohesiveness among family members, b) denial of feelings among family members, c) the bulimic woman not feeling "good enough" in the family, d) feelings of abandonment and rejection by parents, e) a lack of parental nurturance and support, f) unequal power distribution within the family, g) abuse in the family, h) poor family communication, i) the bulimic woman as parentified child, and j) family member substance abuse. The bulimic woman's relationship with mother was described as poor. The bulimic woman frequently experienced her mother as critical, demanding, and discounting of her

feelings. Role reversal also occurred in some families, where mother was experienced to be weak and dependent. The bulimic woman's relationship with father was also described as poor. Fathers were experienced as emotionally absent and distant, as well as discounting of the bulimic woman's feelings. The bulimic woman felt or feared rejection and abandonment with both parents. However, she felt or feared abandonment more strongly with mother. Also, in general, relationships with mother were described as poorer, more demanding, critical and rejecting than relationships with father. Finally, relationships with siblings were also described as poor and distant. There was no exploration of relational experiences with peers or partners.

It should be noted that in phenomenological studies as those discussed above, scientific inquiry involves the conscious thoughts, feelings, and behaviors experienced by participants. There were no interpretive studies which could be located in the literature which investigated the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Interpretive or hermeneutical studies are not based upon assumptions that the meaning of relationships is directly present in ordinary perception. Instead, interpretive or hermeneutical studies are based on assumptions that consciousness can cover or disguise meaning. Therefore, data gathered by phenomenological studies can be viewed as inadequate in providing a full and accurate understanding of

the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Consequently, what is required is an interpretive study of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This kind of study would not be interested in the invariable structures of the study phenomenon. Instead, this kind of study would indirectly access the meaning of the phenomenon through the richest and most primary source of human expression--linguistic expression. The study phenomenon could then be examined within its linguistic, historical, social, and cultural context.

#### Limitations of Theoretical Knowledge for Understanding the Phenomenon

The above research review revealed predominantly quantitative research findings that have been used to help build and support theoretical knowledge to explain the study phenomenon. It is now critical to examine the limitations of the present theoretical knowledge for understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationship. As mentioned previously, much of the theoretical knowledge of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships attempts to order and make coherent the unfolding relational experiences in her everyday life, but does this in a way that is distanced from the experiencing person or after the fact. Theoretical knowledge which emerges from a traditional, deductive, empirical mode of scientific inquiry is derived from

observing the bulimic woman's experience of relationships in such a way that the observer is no longer completely engaged with and involved with this phenomenon. Acquiring this kind of knowledge regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships requires a point of view which is outside the everyday lifeworld of the person. This point of view is achieved via the use of methods which distance the researcher from the participant and her experience and attempt to overcome personal perspective and personal bias. The theoretical knowledge derived is systematic and coherent, but is empirically grounded in the "facts," i.e., brute data, with the aim of achieving correspondence between theory and "the phenomenon that is really out there" (Polkinghorne, 1983). Theory derived from and supported by the empirical science of the human realm requires an abstraction of the human realm in respect to formal properties, and necessarily implies that an important part of the meaning of human phenomena, e.g., experience of relationships, must be left out of consideration. Formalization (with abstraction of certain elements from the whole of the phenomenon) provides theoretical statements regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships that are relatively poor in content compared to the fullness of human experience which they are presumed to explain (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Therefore, there are certain losses incurred when we

utilize and develop theory in the empirical, deductive, scientific mode, in an effort to explain the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These losses involve holes in our understanding of the meaning of experience in the everyday life of the bulimic woman. In this study, the gaps in our present understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships are seen to be based in the lack of contextual knowledge of the experience of relationships. This study proposes that a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships would illuminate the meaning of the experience of relationships and provide coherence to the ebb and flow of these meanings as the bulimic woman lives them in her everyday life. A contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships could enhance and enrich our present theoretical understanding of this experience. What remains is to describe what is meant by "contextual understanding" and to discuss a way to access meaning which constitutes it.

#### Contextual Understanding of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships

In this study, contextual understanding is conceptualized to be the fabric of understanding woven from the bulimic woman's meanings of relationships as they are lived in the local, immediate situation of everyday life. The particular meanings constituting contextual understanding can be likened to interactive, experiential

forces, where a singular experiential meaning is understood by reference to whatever it is part of, so that meaning in a singular sense and in a wholistic sense are interrelated and can be fully and accurately described. The interactive, experiential nature of meaning is parallel to the interactive nature of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship. Meaning is dynamic and comes to life through discourse. Meaning is explicated and made coherent through interpretation. Therefore, meaning constitutive of contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship is always meaning in a field; that is, the meanings of relationships are interrelated and cannot be identified, except in relation to other meanings. Changes in one meaning affect changes in another. In other words, relations between meanings of the experience of relationship are like those between the concepts in a semantic field (Taylor, 1971). Contextual understanding accounts for the subtleties, the particularities of the experience of relationship and the interrelatedness of these nuances of meaning to any overall meaning of the experience of relationship for the bulimic woman. Meaning is always for a subject, the bulimic woman. In other words, meaning does not occur in a vacuum. Also, it is always a meaning of something, i.e., the meaning of experience of relationship.

Contextual understanding is made up of subjective and intersubjective meanings. Intersubjective meanings are

constitutive of the social matrix in which bulimic women find themselves and act. These are the meanings bulimic women use to describe their experiences of relationships. Intersubjective meanings embody a certain self-definition, a vision of the agent and her society. They are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices in her everyday life (Taylor, 1971). In this way, contextual understanding also accounts for the cultural and historical influences upon meaning within the experience of relationships for the bulimic woman.

In general, a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships would illuminate the meaning of her past connections with others, and the influence of these meanings on the meaning of her present experience of relationships. This contextual understanding creates a mosaic of relational metaphors. Any relationship between past and present meanings of the experience of relationship is clarified and the occurrence of the eating disorder better understood within this relational context. A contextual understanding of the meanings of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships is important in that essential characteristics of the parts of the whole human realm are missed if they are investigated without consideration of their context and their relationship to the whole (Polkinghorne, 1983).

## CHAPTER III

## IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROBLEM

Identification of the Problem

The above literature review, the critique regarding present theoretical knowledge regarding the study phenomenon, and the absence of a contextual understanding of the phenomenon reveal that we may not have an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This idea is also supported in my clinical work with these women. In my practice, I experience a lack of or only partial understanding regarding their experiences of relationships when solely using the above imposed theoretical frames. Although there is much theoretical knowledge that exists regarding a bulimic woman's experience of relationships, there is a dearth of research to substantiate that the theoretical knowledge developed within either of the two main paradigms provides an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. As mentioned previously, there are certain deficiencies noted when critically evaluating theory and research relevant to this phenomenon. These include: a) the deduction of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships from theory developed from investigations about men's or non-bulimic women's experiences; b) methodological constraints in trying to access the experience of relationships (which is constitutive of

meanings) with quantitative measures; c) the predominance of only the empirical, deductive approach to studying the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and building/supporting theory; and d) the general limitations in theoretical knowledge which emerge from a traditional scientific mode of inquiry, i.e., its disengagement from the lifeworld, meanings, and the experience of relationships which are part of the human realm.

In general, the literature regarding bulimia has overlooked the critical role of meaning and contextual understanding in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. There is also an absence of theory and research in the nursing literature about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The bulimic woman's discourse regarding her experience of relationships is essential in providing a full and accurate portrait of this experience, since to be a living agent is to experience one's situation in terms of certain meanings. These meanings are in turn interpreted and shaped by the language in which the agent lives (Taylor, 1971). An investigation is needed to access the meanings inherent in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships in an effort to provide contextual understanding of this experience. Contextual understanding can illuminate the meanings of experience of relationship and bring coherence to these meanings that are lived in the everyday life of the bulimic woman. This study hopes to

provide contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships that can enhance and enrich our present theoretical notions of this experience. Therefore, this study will address the following research question:

"What are the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as they are lived in her everyday life?"

#### Significance of the Problem for Nursing

This study is significant for nursing, in that it will investigate the bulimic woman's experience of relationships using a hermeneutical approach. The hermeneutical approach to inquiry can provide an additional voice in the discourse about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Nurses are situated in others' moment-to-moment experiencing and the meanings lived in this experiencing (Munhall & Oiler, 1986). A study revealing a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships furthers nursing's attempts to understand human beings and human phenomena in dynamic, wholistic, and experience-near ways. Meleis (1987) stated that nursing must "move beyond knowing to really understanding" (p. 6). This study is an attempt to move in that direction.

An accurate and fuller understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships not only brings to light an underlying coherence of meaning relevant to this phenomenon, but could also be helpful in practice. A fuller

understanding of the experience of relationships assists in the work of psychotherapy which is based upon the understanding of past relationships and their effect on present ones. A fuller portrait of the meanings lived in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, i.e., the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, can meaningfully inform the nurse psychotherapist's practice with these clients. A contextual understanding can allow therapist and client to understand more fully the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, including the relationship with the therapist. This understanding facilitates corrective emotional experiences, empathy, and empowerment in therapy as the client's relational themes and meanings come to the fore and are discussed and experienced in the therapeutic relationship. Also, study findings may help illuminate the connection between the experience of relationships and the bulimic woman's relationship with food. The contextual understanding provided in this study can complement and enrich our present theoretical knowledge of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

## CHAPTER IV

## METHODOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE PROBLEM

The Use of a Hermeneutic Approach to Access Meaning and Develop a Contextual Understanding

This study utilized a hermeneutic approach to access and Understand the "flow and context" of the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In this study, the term Understanding (with a capital letter) refers to a specific kind of understanding--the comprehension of meaning. Understanding is the type of comprehension which recognizes the meaning carried by various situations. Therefore, Understanding provides a contextual knowledge of these situations. It is a process that embodies all the processes of the mind operating simultaneously. Understanding involves a dialectical to-and-fro movement from part to whole and whole to part again (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Hermeneutics, the art and science of Understanding or interpretation, has a long history dating back to early Greek culture. The term hermeneutics comes from the Greek word "hermeneuein," which means "to interpret," and is said to relate to the Greek god, Hermes, the messenger and herald for other gods. He reportedly communicated the messages of the gods to the mortals and also translated or interpreted for humans the meaning and intention of these messages (Bleicher, 1980; Polkinghorne, 1983).

Over the course of history, hermeneutics emerged and advanced as an art and science of interpretation, useful whenever it was necessary to translate authoritative literature under conditions that did not allow direct access to it. This decreased access was either due to distance in space and time or to differences in language. In both situations, the original meaning of the text was either disputed or remained hidden, requiring interpretive explication (Bleicher, 1980). Over time, the hermeneutic procedures developed to interpret biblical and classical texts were brought together into a general theory of interpretation, applicable to any text. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to review the full development of hermeneutics, it is important to note that hermeneutic philosophy and its conceptualization of Understanding took a number of turns in the hands of such philosophers as Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer. Hermeneutics has evolved from its conception as a collection of techniques to a general method of comprehension and philosophical foundation for the human sciences, a way of uncovering the hidden structures of human existence (Heidegger, 1927; Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1983).

Over time, Understanding was seen to rest in language itself and within the context of the "dialogical process" (Bernstein, 1983; Bleicher, 1980; Gadamer, 1960). For

example, Gadamer viewed Understanding as a fusion of past and present horizons of meaning (Mueller-Vollmer, 1985; Polkinghorne, 1983). Therefore, interpretation is the dialectical interaction between the expectations of the interpreter and the meanings in the text. The dialectical interaction with the text is also seen in the movement from parts to the whole of the text, exemplified by the process of Understanding called the "hermeneutic circle." This dialectical movement from part to whole is actually more similar to a spiral, however, as one progresses towards a depth understanding of the text (Polkinghorne, 1983). Therefore, Understanding is developed within the context of tradition of the society to which we belong. While standing in this tradition through interaction with other traditions, we are able to overcome its limitations, access meaning, and create new categories of knowledge organization for the future.

#### **A Hermeneutic Approach to the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships**

It is clear from the above brief history that a hermeneutic approach to investigating the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is plausible. A hermeneutic, interpretive approach to the study phenomenon can help access the meanings constitutive of the contextual knowledge of a bulimic woman's experience of relationships. A hermeneutic approach to the study phenomenon would help in

the explication of meaning from a text that discusses these relationships in a possibly "incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory way." Interpretation of these meanings would "aim to bring to light an underlying coherence or sense of these meanings" (Taylor, 1971). For example, an investigation of the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships cannot proceed with the assumption that the participant is fully aware of the meanings of the experience of relationships. Consciousness can obscure the bulimic woman's reasons for acting and cover or disguise her lived meanings of experience. Also, the meaning of the experience of relationships may not be clear because of the metaphorical dimensions of meaning that require deciphering to unfold its many layers and because of the circular nature of relating parts to whole in terms of the meanings of experience of relationships (Ricoeur, 1970, 1981d).

The philosophical underpinnings of hermeneutics fit the aim and phenomenon of this study. For example, hermeneutic philosophy sees the human realm, e.g., the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as historically and culturally bound. Hermeneutic knowledge can reveal the meaning of human expressions, i.e., the experience of relationships, because it is based upon interpretation of meanings and actions that are seen as context-bound interactive forces, as opposed to singular events subsumed under general laws.

Hermeneutic philosophy sees action as reflecting lived understanding and comprehension of one's social or cultural environment. Similarly, a bulimic woman's experience of relationships consists of lived meanings and lived understanding. As Dilthey stated, the experience of relationships can be considered a "life-expression" appropriately investigated via a hermeneutical approach. Understanding is the outcome of human engagement (Heidegger, 1962), and a hermeneutic approach to the study phenomenon would assure this engagement of interpreter and participant, as well as interpreter and text. In this way, meanings regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships could be located in her discourse with the interpreter via a transformed subjective account of these meanings in the form of a text. A hermeneutic approach would involve a textual exegesis wherein the text can disclose meanings regarding the study phenomenon in the interaction with the interpreter. In this approach the text is viewed as an autonomous statement of the bulimic woman's lived meanings of relationships. This exegesis and systematic disclosing of meaning would involve the relation of part to whole and vice versa as outlined in the text. An Understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships would evolve from interpretation of the meanings as disclosed by the text--a written document of the bulimic woman's pre-linguistic experience. This Understanding emerges as the

interpreter accesses contextual knowledge regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as it is revealed by the text. The interpreter's interaction with the text also occurs within certain contexts of language and tradition.

Therefore, interpretations of the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships would be context-bound. They would be the result of a dialectical approach to the text involving interaction between the expectations and questions of the interpreter and the meanings disclosed by the text (the transformed subjective account of meanings). This dialectical interpretive approach involves a process of engagement with and disengagement from the text. The purpose of interpretation in this way, is not to understand the intention of the author (participant), but to understand the meanings spoken by the text. Therefore, the work of interpretation is simultaneously guided by a number of interactive forces. The first force is the interpreter's prejudices and particular questions which she asks of the text, due to her own context of history, culture, language, and tradition. The second force involves the structural context of the text as a closed system of constitutive parts or signs. The third force is that of the text as discourse or speech event, constitutive of sentences that bear meaning and reference. This force involves the context of sentence and

text as integrative "wholes." This third type of context is based upon textual semantic sense and textual reference to the "world" of meaning disclosed by the text. The "world" projected by the text is itself developed within the above contexts of structural explanations and semantic understandings of the text.

Therefore, in this hermeneutic endeavor the meaning of the text is not under the sole power of the interpreter. In trying to fulfill the aim of any hermeneutic inquiry of "making one's own" what was previously "foreign" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 91), this hermeneutic inquiry also relies heavily on the revelatory power of the autonomous text to project the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships to the interpreter. Philosophically, then, "what is made one's own" (understanding regarding self and the study phenomenon) is not something mental, nor the intention of the author, lying hidden behind the text. Instead, it is the "project of a world" (Ricoeur, 1976) regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which the text opens up in front of itself. In this way, the interpreter is not projecting her self-understanding onto the text and giving this self-understanding sovereignty as the appropriate explication of meaning regarding the study phenomenon. Instead, the interpreter at the end of the hermeneutic enterprise is "enlarged in her capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being or

understanding [regarding herself and the study phenomenon] from the text itself" (Ricoeur, 1976 p. 94).

### The Selection of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

The hermeneutic philosophical underpinnings described above predominantly reflect those of Paul Ricoeur, a critical contemporary writer. For Ricoeur, hermeneutics is more than a science which applies the rules of textual interpretation. His hermeneutics is a reflective philosophy, with epistemological and ontological aims. He views interpretation worthy of being called "hermeneutics" if it is part of self-understanding and of the understanding of being. He sees hermeneutics as a philosophical discipline (Ricoeur, 1980). In this inquiry, his hermeneutic philosophical framework was employed in developing a methodological response to accessing contextual knowledge of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Ricoeur's specific philosophical framework, theory of discourse, paradigm of the text, and theory of interpretation were all critical elements in this inquiry.

### Paul Ricoeur's Philosophical Framework

Paul Ricoeur proposes that hermeneutics is the appropriate philosophical and methodological position for the human sciences. Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy is based upon the assumption that man is unable to know himself

directly or introspectively. Instead, only by a "series of detours does he learn regarding the fullness and complexity of his own being and of his relationship to Being" (Ihde, 1971, p.7). For Ricoeur, language is the means to understand man's situations and possibilities. He believes that we have experience to bring to language and that sentences convey messages from the speaker or writer about something which is not merely language itself (Polkinghorne, 1983). Ricoeur states that "it is in language that the cosmos, desire, and the imaginary reach expression; speech is always necessary if the world is to be recovered and made hierophany" (Ricoeur, 1980).

Ricoeur's hermeneutics is erected on the basis of phenomenology and preserves something of the latter's philosophy, despite its differences from it. Ricoeur sees phenomenology as the unsurpassable presupposition of hermeneutics, i.e., that there is meaningful experience to bring to language. However, he also believes that phenomenology is unable to constitute itself without a hermeneutic presupposition, i.e., the subjective meanings of experience (consciousness) can be clouded and distorted and there may be multiple levels of meaning regarding experience (Ricoeur, 1981e). In effect, man comes to understand his own experience and the experience of others via the detours of decipherment of the "objectified" expressions of human life (Bleicher, 1980; Madison, 1988; Ricoeur, 1980). Man

becomes a being who "discovers by the exegesis of his own life, that he is placed in being, before he places and possesses himself" (Ricoeur, 1980, p. 243).

Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy emphasizes a manner of existing which would remain from start to finish, a "being-interpreted." According to Ricoeur, "explication in hermeneutics does not transform experience into something else, but makes it become itself" (Ricoeur, 1981e, p. 107). In remaining faithful to the aim of helping experience to become itself, the goal of Ricoeur's hermeneutic project is not to rejoin or recover behind the text, the original subjective intention of the author, but to "unfold, in front of the text, the world it [the text] opens up and discloses" (Ricoeur, 1981e, p. 111).

Finally, Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy emphasizes the role of context in understanding meaning. Context is critical in that all interpretation places the interpreter in the middle of the meanings of experience as disclosed by the text. Since there is no definite start or end point in understanding human experience, one suddenly arrives in mid-conversation with the text, in regards to the multiple meanings related to experience (Ricoeur, 1981e). Ricoeur's hermeneutic framework emphasizes that words have meaning only in the nexus of sentences, and sentences are uttered only in particular contexts. Polysemy (the multiple meanings of words) depends on a contextual action which

filters out some of the surplus meaning. Interpretation is required to grasp this filtering effect and to develop contextual knowledge of the meanings of experience (Thompson, 1981). Ricoeur states that "the simplest message conveyed by the means of natural language has to be interpreted because all the words are polysemic and take their actual meaning from the connection with a given context and a given audience, against the background of a given situation" (Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 125).

Therefore, contextual knowledge of the meanings of experience is critical. The meanings of experience revealed by the text are often unclear due to the metaphorical dimensions of meaning that require deciphering to unfold its layers, and due to the circular character of relating parts and whole of these meanings (Polkinghorne, 1983). Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy supports an examination of the various contexts that facilitate an explication of the meanings of experience. These contexts include the following: a) the interpreter's prejudices and particular questions which she/he asks of the text, based on her/his own context of history, culture, language, and tradition; b) the structural context of the text as a closed system of signs; and c) the text as discourse, in terms of its semantic sense and its textual reference. Ricoeur has further outlined how to consider these contexts in examining a text. His hermeneutical approach to explicating the

meaning of experience via exegesis will include an examination of Ricoeur's a) theory of discourse, b) paradigm of the text, and c) theory of interpretation.

### Theory of Discourse

Ricoeur's philosophy differs from that of hermeneutic philosophers like Heidegger, in that he does not see the dialogical situation as the focus of hermeneutics. Instead, Ricoeur sees written discourse as the focus of hermeneutics. Ricoeur states, "Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends" (1976, p. 32). In order to understand Ricoeur's theory of interpretation, and in particular, his method for objective interpretation of the text, it is critical to first examine the distinction he makes between language as "langue" and language as discourse.

### Language as Langue

Ricoeur's discussion of language as langue comes from the work of the linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1966). The conceptualization of language as langue, is clearer when one views language as existing in a potential state. In essence, language, as langue, is seen to be a system of signs stored away in our memories, ready to be actualized. Langue is the general code or sets of codes, on the basis of which a speaker produces a particular message or speech-event (discourse). The nature of the code (langue) is a)

general for a given speaking community, b) systematic, c) compulsory (we "inherit" our language), d) atemporal, e) unintentional (is not meant by a particular person), and f) anonymous. Therefore, although the speaker can be the "master" of his own discourse, (particular messages or speech-events), he is a "passive recipient" of langue. In a sense, he inherits the code of language from his culture (Ullman, 1962).

Language, as langue, or code, involves finite sets of discrete entities. These entities include: a) phonemes (the minimum physical units of speech); b) morphemes and words, which are lexical units; and c) phrases, which are syntactical units, i.e., combinations of the units described in a) and b) (Ricoeur, 1976; Ullman, 1962). It is important to note that no entity in the structure of a closed system of units has a meaning of its own. The meaning of the above units comes from their opposition to other similar units in the same closed system. Therefore, in a closed system of signs, linguistic entities exhibit only formal properties and differences in comparison to other linguistic entities. Signs have neither substantive qualities of their own, nor reference to the real world. Langue is the object of a single science--one that examines the algebraic level of the combinatory capacities of these entities. This science, called semiotics, examines the synchronic systems or structures of language.

Ricoeur sees the structural analysis of language as critically important for the understanding of human expressions. He views structural analysis as "not only legitimate, but necessary, since it establishes the inner logic operative within them [human expressions]" (Bleicher, 1980, p. 223). It is this structural model which provides the explanatory attitude needed in the work of interpretation.

#### Language as Discourse

According to Ricoeur (1976), the nature of discourse can be viewed as particular, arbitrary, contingent, and temporal. However, he indicates that discourse also involves the synthetic construction of the sentence itself, distinct from an analytic combination of discrete entities (i.e., in langue). It is the sentence which is actual, the event of speaking. Conversely, the sign of langue is abstract and virtual. The sentence is a new entity then. It is a whole, irreducible to the sum of its parts (words).

Therefore, the unique, intentionl, temporal, and discrete acts of discourse ground the existence of language and give life to the code of language. Yet, as Ricoeur says, discourse is not merely "transitory and vanishing." Discourse may be identified and re-identified as the same, in order that we can say it again in other words (Ricoeur, 1976). In its various transformations, discourse keeps an identity of its own that is called the "propositional

identity of its own that is called the "propositional content" or "proposition." This content is the "said as such" of discourse. From the point of view of the propositional content, the sentence may now be characterized by a single distinctive and indispensable feature: it has a predicate (Benveniste, in Ricoeur, 1976). The predicate of the sentence is essential, since what it says about the subject of the sentence can always be treated as a "universal" feature of the subject. Ricoeur states that the difference between the singular identification of the subject and universal predication of the predicate provides a specific content to the idea of the proposition. This specific content is the "object" of the speech event. It is the part of discourse that remains and can be re-identified. Ricoeur sees the propositional content as the meaning of discourse, the counterpart of discourse as a fleeting, temporal, and discrete event. In this way, discourse has a structure of its own, but not in the analytical, "langue," structural sense. Discourse is a structure in a synthetic sense. "It is constitutive of the intertwining and interplay of the functions of identification [related to the subject] and predication [related to the predicate] in one and the same sentence" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 11). It is this synthetic structure involving the sentence and the "object" of the speech event, with which the science of semantics is concerned.

Ricoeur's theory of discourse and interpretation is based on a dialectic of language as constitutive parts (the linguistic entities of the structural model) and wholes (the sentence and the text). The form of language comes from a semiotic, formal, analytical, and explanatory approach to the text. The meaning, or what Ricoeur calls the "sense" of language comes from an integrative and semantic approach to the text (Ricoeur, 1976). The dialectical interplay of these approaches involving disengagement from and engagement with the text, render an informed, critical, and indepth understanding of the text. Therefore, the context of language as langue and discourse, the context of discourse as event and meaning, and the context of interpretation as explanation and understanding are all essential and interactive in Ricoeur's hermeneutic framework. Before moving into Ricoeur's paradigm of the text and theory of interpretation, it is necessary to briefly address a few other distinctions related to discourse as a dialectic of event and meaning.

#### The Dialectic of Event and Meaning

Ricoeur makes distinctions between the two interpretations of meaning in discourse. One interpretation is meaning as subjective or "noetic" - that which the speaker intends to mean or say. The other interpretation is meaning as objective or "noematic"--that which the sentence means (what the conjunction between the subject and

predicate in the proposition produces. The first interpretation corresponds to the event side of the dialectic of event and meaning, the latter to the meaning side (propositional content). Ricoeur emphasizes that the mental meaning is found in discourse itself. In his theory, this mental meaning should not be reduced to a "mere psychological intention" of the speaker. Instead, the speaker's meaning has "its mark in the utterance meaning" or the propositional side of the self-reference of discourse (Ricoeur, 1976). For example, consider the sentence, "I want to tell him my secret." Ricoeur encourages us to move away from determining the speaker's original psychological intention in making this statement at a specific point in time. Rather, he asks us to focus semantically on how the sentence itself, apart from the original speaker and dialogical situation, means something. In this case, the predicate reveals that the subject has a secret which she/he desires to disclose to a male individual.

Furthermore, Ricoeur divides the objective component of discourse (the meaning as propositional content) into "sense" and "reference." The sense is the "what" of discourse, while the "about what" is the reference of discourse. Ricoeur's distinction between sense and reference is drawn from Frege's work (1970). The sense correlates the identification function and predicative function (propositional content) within the sentence, while

the reference relates language to the world. Thus, language becomes a "saying something about something," and it does so on the level of the sentence (Ricoeur, 1978c). Ricoeur states that "the advance of (ideal) sense toward the (real) reference is the very soul of language" (p. 114). When the speaker refers to something at a certain time, this is a speech event, but this event receives its structure from the meaning as sense. The dialectic between sense and reference speaks to the relation between language and being in the world (ontology). Ricoeur's notion of our ability to bring experience to language is the ontological condition of reference. This condition is reflected in language. For example, we presuppose the existence of something before it can be identified. Therefore, "discourse in action and in use refers backwards and forwards, to a speaker and a world" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 22).

#### The Paradigm of the Text: Spoken Versus Written Discourse

For Ricoeur, the text is the focus of hermeneutic inquiry. He defines a text as "any discourse fixed by writing" (Ricoeur, 1981f, p. 145). Although Ricoeur sees speaking and writing as equally legitimate modes of discourse, he views writing as the full manifestation of discourse. Also, Ricoeur does not view written discourse as merely the inscription of an anterior speech. Instead, he states that fixation by writing "takes the very place of speech." It occurs at a place where speech could have

emerged. Therefore, the text is really a text only when it is not restricted to transcribing an anterior speech; "when instead it inscribes directly in written letters what the discourse means" (p. 146). The text as written discourse involves characteristics different from spoken discourse (Ricoeur, 1981f). These characteristics are encapsulated in the concept of "distanciation" and are discussed below.

#### Inscription, Message, and Speaker

The first characteristic of written discourse involves the surpassing of the event of saying (in the immediate dialogical situation), by the meaning of what is said, (the propositional content). It is the meaning (noema) of the speech event that is inscribed in writing, not the event as event. In "living speech," the ideal sense of what is said moves towards the real reference, towards "that about which we speak" (Ricoeur, 1981f). In the dialogic situation, the subjective intention of the speaker and the discourse's meaning overlap each other. To understand what the speaker means is to understand what the discourse means. However, in written discourse, the author's intention and the meaning of the discourse cease to coincide. In written discourse, the movement of reference towards the act of showing (pointing to what we refer) is "intercepted" (p. 148). Hence, we have the "semantic autonomy of the text," resulting from the disconnection of the mental intention of the author from the verbal meaning of the text (Ricoeur,

1976). In this way, the "text's career escapes the finite horizon lived by its author. What the text means now matters more than what the author meant when he wrote it" (p. 30). Authorial meaning is the dialectical counterpart of the verbal meaning, and they need to be construed in terms of each other.

#### Message and Hearer or Reader

The second characteristic involves the change in the relation between message and hearer or reader, with the shift from spoken to written discourse. In contrast to the dialogical situation where speaker and hearer are present and known to each other, written discourse is addressed to an any unknown reader who can read. With this "universalization of the audience" comes liberation of the text from the dialogic situation. Written discourse again evidences a dialectic of meaning and event (Ricoeur, 1976; Ricoeur, 1981f). It is universal and contingent. The semantic autonomy of the text opens up the range of potential readers. In this way, the text opens itself to an unlimited series of readings, all situated in different socio-cultural conditions. From a psychological and sociological viewpoint, the text is able to "decontextualise" itself in a way that it can be "re-contextualised" in a new situation, rendering an indefinite number of interpretations. This process is accomplished in the multiple readings of the text (Ricoeur, 1981b). The

potential for multiple readings is the dialectical counterpart of the semantic autonomy of the text. The whole dynamic of interpretation involves the convergence of the right of the reader and the right of the text. Therefore, Ricoeur states that "hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 32).

### Message and Reference

The third characteristic involves the emancipation of written discourse from the limits of ostensive reference. The reference of spoken discourse is ultimately determined by the shared reality of the immediate dialogical situation. However, in the case of written discourse, this shared reality no longer exists. Written discourse has a referential dimension that is of a different order from that of spoken discourse. This dimension is eventually unfolded in the process of interpretation (Ricoeur, 1981f).

In written discourse, there is the absence of a common situation due to the spatial and temporal distance between writer and reader. The lack of a "present time" for reader and writer opens the text to multiple readers in an indeterminate time (Ricoeur, 1976). The text, as written discourse, can be an archive, preserving tradition for communities and cultures, while it remains open to the interpretations of future readers.

Therefore, there is an extension of reference beyond the boundaries of the dialogical situation. Written

disclosure allows man to have a "world and not just a situation" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 36). The world becomes the collection of references opened by the text which is freed from the author's original mental intention and situational reference. For example, the "world" of the bulimic woman does not involve imagining particular situations this woman experienced, but it involves "delineating the non-situational references displayed by the descriptive accounts of reality" (p. 36). These non-situational references refer to the bulimic woman's "being in the world" and may often only be alluded to via metaphoric and symbolic expressions. The reader, or interpreter, then, is able to enlarge her/his own horizon of existence and understand the world of the bulimic woman by examining this world as revealed by the text. Only written discourse can project a world, and as Heidegger states, "What we understand first in a discourse is not another person, but a "pro-ject," that is the outline of a new way of being in the world" (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

#### Message and Code

Another characteristic of written discourse involves the relation between message and code. In written discourse, literary genres are discursive codes for the production of the text as a "work." In addition, a work is given a unique configuration or "style" that likens it to an individual (Ricoeur, 1981b). Therefore, a text is something that has been worked upon and formed. In written discourse,

the writer is both speaker and maker of the work, and thanks to writing, written discourse becomes self-contained like other works of art. A text means discourse as written and created (Ricoeur, 1976).

#### Polysemy and the Plurivocal Nature of Written Discourse

In written discourse, words have meaning insofar as sentences have meaning, since the intended content of words is part of the whole, intended content of the sentences. The meaning of words in the sentences of written discourse evidence polysemy. Polysemy is the "property of words in natural language of having more than meaning" (Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 124), or as Ullman states it, "Polysemy means one name with several senses" (Ullman, 1962). For example, the word "ring" can mean: a) anything in the form of a circle, b) a circle of gold, etc., worn on the finger, c) an area in which a game is performed, d) a group of people, e) a sound of a bell, f) to encircle, g) to cause to sound or resound, and h) to repeat often or loudly (New Webster's Dictionary, 1989).

Therefore, polysemic language allows for and requires a sensibility to context. In attending to the context of written discourse, the reader comes to understand the particular meanings of words. Ricoeur sees interpretation as a process in which we "use all the available contextual determinants to grasp the actual meaning of a given message in a given situation" (Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 125). The

polysemic nature of words, the ambiguous nature of sentences allowing for multiple interpretations, and the text as a "complex composition," all contribute to the plurivocal quality of written discourse (Ricoeur, 1981f).

### Theory of Interpretation

Ricoeur's theory of interpretation involves a system of multiple dialectics that are revealed within and applied to the text. In using a dialectic approach to interpreting the text, Ricoeur is able to move beyond the dichotomy of explanation and understanding-- polarities in the history of the human sciences and hermeneutics. In understanding the dialectic of explanation-understanding in interpretation, one understands the importance of the other dialectics of guessing-validation, explanation-comprehension, and distanciation-appropriation. These dialectics are based upon the previous dialectics seen in Ricoeur's theory of discourse, e.g., event-meaning, sense-reference. The dialectics characteristic of written discourse, as discussed in the previous section, require that explanation and understanding both mediate a fully informed and in-depth understanding of the text. The following section will address the above dialectics of interpretation wherein explanation is the "unfolding of the range of propositions and meanings" in the text which informs understanding--the comprehension or "grasping of the whole chain of partial meanings in one act of synthesis" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 72).

### Explanation-Understanding

The polarity of explanation and understanding is seen in the duality of Romanticist hermeneutics. This dichotomy is both epistemological and ontological. It opposes two methodologies and two domains of reality, nature and mind. Ricoeur discusses the struggle within hermeneutics when one uses a dichotomous frame in conceptualizing the understanding of the text. He moves beyond this dichotomy by developing a concept of interpretation that is dialectical. Interpretation becomes a particular case of understanding and is applied to the written expressions of life (Ricoeur, 1976).

According to Ricoeur, understanding "calls for" explanation when there is no longer dialogue and immediacy which allow interpretations to be verified as they unfold. In dialogue, explanation is only understanding developed by questions and answers (intersubjective agreement) between speaker and hearer. Explanation seems to coincide with understanding here. However, as discussed in Ricoeur's theory of the paradigm of the text above, this process of explanation and understanding in written discourse is different. The text's semantic autonomy and characteristics of distanciation constitute the most essential conditions for its objectification and structural analysis (Ricoeur, 1978b). As Ricoeur states, "the text is communication in and through distance" (Ricoeur, 1981b, p. 131). In addition

to the semantic autonomy of the text, the text conceived as a "work" evidences the characteristics of organization and structure that allow and require a structural analysis of the text (Ricoeur, 1981b). Therefore, passing through explanation does not destroy intersubjective understanding, but is a mediation required by written discourse itself.

However, in dialectic fashion, Ricoeur is quick to say that explanation is finally completed by understanding. Whereas structural analysis and the explanatory attitude have reduced the text to codes and makes the text "virtual," Understanding delivers the text to actuality; it is understood as an event of discourse. Understanding involves the "mimetic function," revealing how the text "remakes the world of human action" (Ricoeur, 1978b, p. 155) and places the text back into a "living tradition," as a story told by someone to someone regarding something. Understanding is more directed towards the "intentional unity" of discourse, the text as a whole.

In summary, explanation (structural analysis) is the mediation between a naive, surface interpretation and a critical, indepth one. In this way, explanation and understanding "can be located at two different stages of a unique hermeneutical arc" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 87).

From Initial Naive Understanding to Explanation: The  
Guessing-Validation Dialectic

The first act of understanding takes the form of a guess because the mental intention of the author and the verbal meaning of the text no longer coincide. With the surpassing of the author's mental intention by the verbal meaning of the text, understanding occurs in a non-psychological, "semantic space." The text becomes a "musical score" and the reader, an "orchestra conductor, who obeys the instructions of its notations" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 75). Therefore, to understand is not simply to repeat the speech event in a similar event. Instead, to understand is to produce a new event starting from the text in which the initial event has been objectified. The interpretive dialectic of explanation-understanding begins when the objective meaning of the text is other than the subjective intention of the author. The objective meaning of the text may be construed in various ways and this fact can lead to misunderstanding. The reader is left to construe the verbal meaning of the text by making a guess. In effect, guessing is a more subjective approach to the text.

To construe the verbal meaning of the text is to construe it as a whole. Through reading the text as a whole "work," one quickly experiences the plurivocal nature of the text and its openness to a variety of constructions of meaning. What is essential, is attention to the dialectical

relation of parts in the text to the text as a whole. The initial naive understanding of the text involves a reconstruction of its "architecture," where the text concretely presents as a hierarchy of topics and subtopics. In actuality, though, relating part to whole in the text is a circular and reciprocal process. The judgement regarding what is important in this initial reading and understanding is not driven by necessity or evidence. This judgement is a guess itself (Ricoeur, 1976), and despite the lack of rules for making guesses and judgements, "there are methods for validating those guesses we do make" (Hirsch, 1967). These methods will be addressed later in this section.

To construe a text also involves viewing it as an individual. This process entails identifying its literary genre, the class of texts to which it belongs, and the codes and structures which intersect in the text. Again, this is also a guess. Finally, an initial understanding of the verbal meaning of the text involves considering its "potential horizons of meaning." These can be actualized in different ways, e.g., through metaphoric and symbolic expressions which relate primary and secondary meanings in the text. This kind of analysis also involves guesswork (Ricoeur, 1976).

The second partner in the dialectic of guessing-validation, validation, is a more objective approach to the text. It involves the methods for validating guesses we

make in trying to grasp an initial understanding of the text. Ricoeur, like Hirsch (1967), sees the procedures for validation of guesses as closer to a logic of probability than to a logic of empirical verification. A logic of probability involves argumentative and juridical procedures similar to those in legal interpretation. It reveals qualitative probabilities.

Along with the procedures for validation, there are procedures for invalidation similar to Popper's (1968) criteria for falsifiability. These criteria come from a logic of subjective probability. In moving through the conflict between various interpretations, an interpretation must not only be probable, but more probable, i.e., it makes more and better sense of the text, than other interpretations. Also, an interpretation is always open to further argument (Ricoeur, 1976).

#### From Explanation to Comprehension

The dialectic of explanation-comprehension is the counterpart of the dialectic of sense-reference discussed in Ricoeur's theory of discourse. Since there is the lack of a common situation between writer and reader, the referential function of discourse extends beyond the ostensive reference of the dialogical situation. Even the ostensive references and indicators in the text can no longer stand for what the author originally meant. In this way, the text can disclose and refer to a world now, instead of just a situation. The

abstraction from the immediate situation or surrounding world of the text made possible by written discourse leads to two opposing attitudes. In our reading of the text, we may either stay in a "state of suspense" regarding any type of referred reality, or we can "imaginatively actualize" the potential non-ostensive references of the text in a new situation. In the first kind of reading, the text is "worldless entity" and examined via structural analysis. In the second, the reader creates a new ostensive reference due to her/his engagement with the text in the process of appropriation (Ricoeur, 1976).

In the movement toward a critical understanding of the text, explanation involves the structural analysis of the text. Structural analysis can occur due to the suspension of the ostensive reference of the text to the immediate world. The reader transports herself/himself to the enclosure of the text as worldless entity. The text is viewed as a closed system of signs, analogous to discourse seen as *langue*. The beauty of using structural analysis as explanation entails its belonging to the same field, semiotics, versus the natural sciences.

The structural model is applied to signs longer than the sentence in the text. An example of the extension of this model to the text can be found in Levi-Strauss's analysis of myths (1967), where myth is composed of constitutive units called "mythemes." Mythemes are treated

like other linguistic units in that they are form and not substance. Mythemes show the logical interplay of relations in the myth. They represent an opposite value attached to several individual sentences that form a "bundle of relations." Only as bundles are they used and combined to render a meaning. However, in this case, "meaning" is not what the myth means existentially or philosophically. Meaning is the arrangement of the mythemes, the structure of the myth. Structural analysis reveals that the myth is a kind of logical tool that draws together contradictions in order to overcome them (Ricoeur, 1976).

Structural analysis can help explain the text, but it does not interpret it. Explanation requires understanding; otherwise, all we would have is a sterile view of the text, an "algebra of constitutive units." The constitutive units of structural analysis, e.g., mythemes, are still expressed as sentences and bear meaning and reference. However, the meaning and reference of sentences are only repressed during structural analysis, not neutralized. In order to remain faithful to the semantic autonomy of the text and to the objectivity of "sense" in written discourse, structural analysis is used to acquire an element of distancing from the text. This distancing or disengagement from the text as carrier of meaning and reference, allows for a later appropriation that does "not do violence to it." For example, structural analysis, through its consideration of

elements within the whole, helps set limits to polysemic meaning while it also allows for symbolism in the text (Bleicher, 1980). Structural analysis presupposes that the text has meaning and reference. It leads the reader from a surface semantics (structure) of the text to a depth semantics, "the boundary situations of the text that constitute the ultimate referent of the text" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 87).

Comprehension, the other partner of the dialectical pair, explanation-comprehension, involves the assignment of meaning and a return to discourse as event. This process involves appropriation, which is the actualization of meaning as addressed to the reader. Interpretation is completed as appropriation when reading yields something like an event, an event of discourse in the present moment. What is appropriated is not the mental intention of the author hidden behind the text, the historical situation common to the author and original audience, nor the feelings of the original readers. What is appropriated is the meaning of the text itself. Therefore, what is "made one's own" in the process of appropriation is not something mental and behind the text but the "project" of a world (Ricoeur, 1976). The text reveals a mode of being in the world in front of itself, via its non-ostensive references. The reader does not project his own self-understanding onto the text and read his "aprioris" into the text. Instead, the

text offers the reader a world and a new way of being that enlarges the reader's own self-understanding (Ricoeur, 1981a). In this way, to understand is to understand oneself in front of the text.

Appropriation completes interpretation because it is the last actualizing event in the reader's hermeneutic project - the struggle against cultural distance and historical alienation. Interpretation can now "bring together, equalize, and render contemporary and similar," as it actualizes the meaning of the text for the present reader (Ricoeur, 1981a).

#### Summary

For Ricoeur, hermeneutics is a reflective philosophy involving ontological and epistemological concerns. The aim of hermeneutics is the understanding of experience via the "detours of decipherment" of life expressions. Specifically, for Ricoeur, these life expressions are texts (or text-analogues), pre-linguistic experiences brought to language. Ricoeur's hermeneutic project requires multiple readings of the text. One reads for a sense of the whole of the text and for the meanings of the parts in relation to the whole. Initial readings provide a naive understanding of the text, while later readings offer a critical understanding. Reading involves multiple dialectics used in the process of interpretation. These dialectics of understanding-explanation, appropriation-distanciation,

guessing-validation, and explanation-comprehension involve a process of engagement with and disengagement from the text. These interpretive dialectics serve to help the reader appropriate the meaning of the text and experience the revelatory power of the text to project a new world or "mode of being" in the world. The reader can then experience a simultaneous enlarging of her/his own self-understanding.

#### Relevance of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Ricoeur's hermeneutics provides us an alternative way to understand the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Ricoeur's hermeneutics are not disengaged from the lifeworld, meanings, and experience of the bulimic woman. Ricoeur's hermeneutics is based upon the assumption that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is constitutive of certain lived meanings that are pre-linguistic. Ricoeur states that these meanings are brought to language in spoken and written discourse. His hermeneutics provides a way to understand the opacity or contradiction surrounding the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This understanding involves an exegesis of a text--the transformed, subjective account of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This exegesis unfolds the multiple layers of meanings present and moves the understanding of the experience of relationships away from a solely conscious, subjective account of the bulimic woman (author) and toward the

meanings revealed by the autonomous text. Ricoeur's hermeneutics also remains faithful to the interpreter's hermeneutic task of using his own historical and socio-cultural contextually bound perspective of the experience of relationships disclosed by the text, in forming a naive and later, a more critical understanding of the text. Thus, there is a dialectical interaction, a "fusion of horizons" between the expectations of the interpreter and the meanings in the text. Interpretation becomes a mediation or construction "between each interpreter's own language and the language of the text" (Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 226). What the text reveals may be different based on our changing horizons and the different questions we learn to ask (Bernstein, 1983).

Through the use of the interpretive dialectics, which involve subjective and objective approaches to the text and involve explanation as a mediation between a naive and critical understanding of the text, interpretation renders a richer, fuller, and more informed understanding of the study phenomenon. The interpretive dialectics provide a contextual knowledge of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships via the multiple contexts they uncover in the interpretation of the text. These contexts as related to the interpreter's horizon and the structure and semantics of the text, contribute to the disclosing of a world based on these contexts. This world represents a

full, rich and informed contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This world reveals another way of "being in the world" and also cannot help but enlarge the interpreter's self-understanding.

#### Methodological Explication

In reviewing Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy and methodological approach, I was initially overwhelmed with the prospect of trying to understand and explicate the essence of his rich, complex, and evolving hermeneutic project. As noted previously, Ricoeur's work is informed by many other writers from a number of diverse fields, therefore it took some time, approximately 9 months, just to absorb and "make sense" of his work. Throughout that time, I needed to constantly remind myself to be faithful to one of Ricoeur's most basic premises: the text has a semantic autonomy and recovering meaning does not involve arriving at the author's intention. Thus, in reading Ricoeur's work, I tried to "let go" of this temptation and to focus on what his texts revealed. At the same time, I tried not to read into the texts what I subjectively thought they meant. The multiple readings and reflection on Ricoeur's work involved: learning to move beyond the author's subjectivity while remaining cognizant of my own, engaging with and disengaging from Ricoeur's work, and learning to "lose" myself in the meaning of his texts--in the "play" with his ideas. These activities helped later, in the exegesis of the text

constructed for this inquiry. As Ricoeur states, "assuming the role of reader corresponds to the mysterious metamorphosis which the audience undergoes in the theatre when the lights go out and the curtains are drawn" (1981a, p. 190). Through this metamorphosis, the world of Ricoeur's work and the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships were revealed.

In addition to multiple readings and reflection on Ricoeur's work, I was fortunate in having access to a study that actualized Ricoeur's work in understanding clinical judgment in nursing (Alexander, 1991). In reading a colleague's trials, tribulations, and triumphs with Ricoeur's hermeneutic project as a guide for interpretation, I was further able to concretize and explicate a coherent methodological approach in my own inquiry. Having access to the above dissertation was fortuitous, as I could not locate any other study which used Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy in fashioning a methodology for interpretation of texts.

Through reading and reflecting on Ricoeur's work and on the study cited above, I was able to decide on the nature of the text I would interpret and the way in which I would do the interpretation. Decisions regarding both matters involved the ultimate goal of providing a contextual understanding of the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

### The Nature of the Text

In deciding about the kind of text I would utilize for my hermeneutic inquiry, I considered three different options. The first involved using a text that was already constructed. However, I could not locate any such text. Written discourse about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was often inscribed by individuals who were observers of, or participants in, the experience. For example, mental health professionals recorded clinical vignettes of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Even the few vignettes that I located, which were constructed by bulimic women, lacked the comprehensiveness and detail necessary for a contextual analysis of meaning.

The second option involved using a journal or diary which the bulimic woman would be asked to construct as part of the study. Although this approach to developing a text and inscribing meaning seemed fruitful, I had a number of reservations. For bulimic women, who already have difficulty identifying and expressing their experiences and inner life, writing a journal regarding their experiences of relationship seemed an additional burden or challenge. Committing their experience to dialogue is difficult enough without the need to "locate the right written words" to explicate their experiences. Journal writing might not be experienced as an invitation to share under these conditions

and might obstruct efforts in disclosing experience. Also, my clinical work indicated that bulimic woman do better with written tasks about their experiences once there is a working relationship with the professional. A future study could involve first establishing a relationship with a participant and later asking her to write. However, for the sake of time and practicality, I chose to avoid this option for now.

Instead, I chose a third option, involving the construction of a text based on a transcribed dialogue regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In constructing this text, I interacted with a participant who was unknown to me and taped our dialogues. Asking the participant to dialogue seemed more natural and enhanced relationship building--the key ingredient to initially accessing and inscribing the kind of comprehensive, detailed, and contextually based information about relationships I sought in this study. In this way, the text I obtained was a transformed subjective account of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. By transcribing the tape-recorded dialogues, I would be able to "fix" spoken discourse in a text and preserve the meaning of the speech event. According to Ricoeur, the text becomes autonomous and independent from the author. The text makes the bulimic woman's experience public and brings her experience to language. The text is more than the author's intention and

has the power to disclose a world regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Written discourse is accessible to interpretation, and through interpretation, it is able to reveal a contextual understanding of the experience of relationships, while it also helps to enlarge the reader's self-understanding in this endeavor.

### The Methodology

The methodology for this hermeneutic inquiry was informed by the philosophy and methodological work of Paul Ricoeur, as well as by the work of Lucy Alexander in her 1991 hermeneutic study. The methodology of the present study involved the consideration of multiple contexts and the engagement in multiple interpretive dialectics aimed at explicating the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The explication of meaning would be revealed in the world disclosed in front of the text. This world is the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, which evolved from the following contexts: a) the context of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship brought to language, b) the context of the text as structure and a closed system of signs, c) the semantic context of the text as written discourse, and d) the historical, socio-cultural context of the interpreter as she interacted with and questioned the text. Consideration of the first context (a) has already been described in the above section regarding the nature of

the text. Contexts (b) and (c) will be addressed in the methods section below. The last context (d) involved the questions which the interpreter asked of the text in order to begin and focus the interpretive process. These questions included: a) What is the sense and reference of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as disclosed by the text? b) What are the signifying linguistic units of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship as revealed by the text? c) What is the relationship between the constitutive partial meanings of the experience of relationships and the meaning of the experience as a whole as disclosed by the text? (This includes the ascribed meanings of particular relationships as they relate to the whole experience of relationship.) d) Are there symbols or metaphors revealed by the text? e) What is the significance of these symbols or metaphors? f) Do any of these symbols or metaphors specifically relate the experience of relationships to food or the experience of hunger and eating? g) What is the holistic, contextual understanding or "world" of meaning constitutive of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as it is disclosed in front of the text?

These questions were asked of the text throughout the multiple readings involved in the interpretive process. Several interpretive dialectics were employed in this process. These interpretive dialectics were utilized to

examine and illuminate the above contexts and finally to mediate between them in order to arrive at an informed, holistic, critical understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These interpretive dialectics included explanation-understanding, guessing-validation, explanation-comprehension, and distanciation-appropriation.

### The Method

The method of interpretation outlined below suggests a linear progression of events, but it is important to remember that the entire interpretive process is a dialectical one which consists of a to and fro movement between parts and whole of the text. This kind of movement continued throughout the multiple readings and interpretation of the text. The specific methodology involved the following:

### Distanciation

1. Begin with the acknowledgment of the semantic autonomy of the text and the distance created by written discourse which facilitates an inquiry into the meaning of the text.

2. Read the text semantically as a work of meaning which is disconnected from the author's subjective, psychological mental intention.

Initial Naive Understanding: The Dialectic of Guessing-Validation

1. With the author's intention beyond our reach, acknowledge the initial reading of the text to be a surface, naive understanding.

2. Initially construe the verbal meaning of the text by construing the text as a whole. Read the text as a whole and also read in a dialectical way that facilitates the recognition of how parts of the text relate to the whole.

3. The interpreter, from her own tradition, and historical, socio-cultural context begins to question the text. The following questions are posed: a) What is the sense and reference of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as disclosed by the text? b) What is the relationship between the constitutive partial meanings of the text and the meaning of the experience of relationships as a whole? c) Are there symbols or metaphors (representative of potential horizons of meaning) in the text? d) What is the significance of these symbols or metaphors? These questions assist in rendering an initial surface semantic contextual understanding of the text.

4. Utilize guessing (judgment of importance) in initially answering the above questions.

5. Utilize guessing to identify the text's genre and its class of texts. This activity involves identifying the

text's architecture, its topics and subtopics and how they relate.

6. Utilize validation techniques constitutive of a logic of probability in arguing for the best guesses required in 2, 3, and 5 above. Utilize criteria such as coherence, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, applicability, and contextuality in validating the best guesses as they are revealed in reading the text.

#### Explanation Via Structural Analysis

1. Once again, acknowledge the distance created by the text, e.g., the lack of a situation common to writer and reader. Because of this distance, acknowledge that the text now has a potential world to reveal and not just a situation.

2. First disengage from the text as bearer of meaning and reference, in order to provide boundaries for a later appropriation of its meaning and disclosure of a world.

3. Suspend the text's referential power and read the text as a "worldless entity" or closed system of signs. Identify the linguistic units constitutive of the text and their relation to each other in order to analyze the structure of the text. These identifications serve to explain the text, and they help unfold its range of propositions or "sense".

4. Explicate the system of the specific phrases or sentences that make up these constitutive units and signify

the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

5. Utilize the context of the structure of the text as a mediator for a critical, informed understanding of the text.

Comprehension: Critical Understanding

1. Engage with the text and utilize the system of phrases and sentences addressed above in assigning meaning and seeing the world disclosed by the text. This process involves following the text in its movement from sense to reference: from what it says to what it talks about.

2. Read the text as discourse--constitutive of sentences which bear meaning and reference.

3. Re-examine the initial naive understanding of the text in light of the structural analysis and again ask questions a) through d). This repeated questioning and the use of structural analysis to establish boundaries on the meaning of the text, facilitate an in-depth semantic analysis and contextual understanding of the text.

4. Acknowledge the polysemic character of ordinary language.

5. Explicate the range of possible meanings of the select phrases which signify the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

6. Use the context of the narrative to argue for the most probable meaning of selected phrases. Again, read the text in a to and fro way to relate partial and whole

meanings. This reading of the text will help make sense of the selected phrases by rendering the best, most accurate meanings.

### Appropriation

1. Use the meanings of the selected phrases which signify the bulimic woman's experience of relationships to appropriate the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed by the text. This understanding is a contextual understanding informed by structural and semantic contexts. This contextual understanding is an integrative whole which is made "one's own." Appropriation is an event in which the reader actualizes the meaning of the text.

### Assumptions

The following assumptions guided this hermeneutic inquiry:

1. The meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships can be brought to language.
2. The above meaning can be transformed from spoken to written discourse without doing harm to it. Once inscribed, this meaning becomes more than what the author (bulimic woman) intended and is autonomous.
3. Once inscribed, the meaning is accessible to interpretation.
4. Hermeneutic interpretation has the potential to

explicate the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

5. Human understanding is temporally and contextually bound.

6. There is no absolute or primordial relationship between a word or phrase and that which it represents.

#### Definition of Terms

**Bulimic Woman:** A female between the ages of 18-25 who meets the DSM-III-R criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) for bulimia nervosa. These criteria include the following: a) recurrent episodes of binge eating (rapid consumption of a large amount of food in a discrete period of time), b) a feeling of lack of control over eating behavior during the eating binge, c) regular engagement in either self-induced vomiting, use of laxatives or diuretics, strict dieting or fasting, or vigorous exercise in order to prevent weight gain, d) a minimum average of two binge eating episodes a week for at least three months, and e) persistent overconcern with body shape and weight.

**Meaning:** This term encompasses the sense and reference of a word, phrase, sentence, or the text. The sense is the "what" about discourse or for example, the propositional content (the "intertwining of noun and verb") of a sentence. The reference is the "about what" of discourse. The reference relates language to the world (extra-linguistic

reality), e.g., table or chair. For example, knowing the reference of the word "ring" is not enough to be able to know its meaning as a circle of gold worn on the finger versus an area in which games are performed. In order to know the sense of a word or sentence, one must also know how it relates to the meaning of other terms in the semantic field or to other terms in the relevant sections of a particular vocabulary. Therefore, the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships will be its sense or structural properties and how it relates to other terms in the vocabulary of the bulimic woman, and its reference, or that to which it refers in the reality of the relational life of the bulimic woman.

#### Selection of Author for the Text: Rationale and Method

In this hermeneutic inquiry, a decision was made to select one bulimic woman as the creator of the text. The rationale for this decision was based upon Ricoeur's paradigm of the text. According to Ricoeur, the text as written discourse, has characteristics of distanciation which disconnect it from the author (authorial intention), the initial dialogic or writing situation, and the original audience. Therefore, the text evidences semantic autonomy. The text has a power to reveal meaning which emerges from the text itself. What one interprets is not the subjective meaning or intention of the author. Instead, what is

interpreted is the meaning projected by the text in front of itself.

In addition, the decision to have one bulimic woman act as author of the text emerged from the idea that a richer text would be developed from multiple dialogues with one author over several occasions, as opposed to multiple dialogues with several authors on one occasion. Practically speaking, dialogue regarding multiple relationships takes time. Therefore, there was obvious need for multiple sessions. The nature and breadth of information sought in the dialogues also warranted the need for trust and rapport. Again, these things would be facilitated over time with one author. The amount of information transcribed and pages of the text were also a consideration, since one text inscribing meaning about numerous relationships represents hundreds of pages, and data analysis would be lengthy. Therefore, it seemed reasonable to choose one author for text development in this attempt at hermeneutic inquiry.

#### Method of Author Selection

Initially, 11 bulimic women were identified via therapist nomination to participate in the study. Only medically stable (especially stable potassium levels) normal or near normal weight bulimic women (no less than 10% of ideal body weight for height and age) were eligible for the study. This element is critical, in that starvation and other physiological effects related to purgation can affect

experience and the communication of experience (Keys, Brozek, Henschel, Mickelsen, & Taylor, 1950). Therapists who nominated clients worked in private practice or in the setting of a community mental health center in Upstate New York. Participants for the study were nominated based on their ability to articulate their experience of relationships. After clients were nominated, I would speak briefly with the therapist to ascertain what the client knew regarding the study. Therapists nominated clients after at least informing them of the study and obtaining permission for me to call them. I would then call the nominee and offer some brief information regarding the study. If the nominee was interested in hearing more about the study or desired to participate, I arranged for an interview to provide her with full information and to obtain her consent.

Originally, I had hoped to interview all eligible and interested nominees. After initial dialogues with these nominees, I had planned to choose the nominee who was most articulate regarding her experience of relationships. However, as with any research project, several constraints prevailed which are addressed below. I was fortunate, however, to have established a solid relationship with one very articulate nominee at the start of my search for participants. She was actively engaging in the dialogic interviews with me during the last half of my recruitment

efforts. Ultimately, this nominee became the author of the text in my study.

After four months of recruiting potential participants for the study, 11 actively bulimic participants were nominated. Many other clients were identified, but none were actively bulimic. They were in recovery. I was interested in obtaining an author who was actively bulimic for this initial study. I was concerned that the meanings of the experience of relationships might be different for the recovered bulimic. From the 11 clients initially nominated, only six were appropriate. After phone calls to these clients, I discovered that five were not between the ages of 18-25, the college-age criteria for this study. The other five met the age criteria; however, two of these were experiencing severe personal crises and felt unable to participate in the study. Two other participants could not be considered for the study, since a convenient meeting place could not be established. Of the remaining two nominees, one was hospitalized immediately after agreeing to participate in the study. Therefore, the nominee acquired at the start of my search for participants became the author for the text.

All dialogues with the above author occurred in a natural setting of the participant's choice. Dialogues were audio-taped and transcribed to create a text. During the dialogue, the participant was asked to describe her

experience of relationships in her everyday life. She was asked to describe her experience of relationships with her parents, siblings, partner, a best friend, and the researcher. The participant chose the sequence in which she spoke about particular relationships. The researcher only asked questions to clarify the meaning of certain words, issues, or themes as they emerged. General questions included: a) What makes this relationship (or particular experience) meaningful to you? b) What do you value most and least in this relationship? c) What needs do you feel the other person does/does not meet for you in this relationship? d) Does your use of food relate at all to your experience of relationship with this person?

Hermeneutic Inquiry: Issues of Validity, Reliability, and Interpreter Bias

Validity

In contrast to the traditional, positivistic view of knowledge, hermeneutic inquiry has a different set of underlying assumptions. It is this contrast which makes the traditional scientific concept of validity not applicable within hermeneutic inquiry. Hermeneutic inquiry and other human research paradigms embrace an assertoric view of knowledge which sees the validity of knowledge claims along a continuum, ranging from least to most probable. A logic of probability (Hirsch, 1967) similar to juridical reasoning replaces deductive logic in arriving at the validity of a

knowledge claim. No knowledge claim can escape further investigation or doubt. No claim is "certain" and "absolute." Knowledge claims are temporally and socio-culturally context-bound. However, they do serve as the basis for action within a scientific community. In hermeneutic inquiry, specifically, the most "valid" interpretation is the one which best illuminates the "meaning originally present in a confused, fragmentary, or cloudy form" (Taylor, 1971). The most valid interpretation makes the most sense and is the most intelligible and useful given the reading of the text. Also, what we appeal to as "grounds" for our reading can only be other readings. We cannot step out of the hermeneutic circle to adjudicate knowledge claims or interpretations, or turn to some archimedean point for better understanding.

The way in which the validity of knowledge claims is established also differs in each research paradigm. In the positivistic research paradigm, it is technique and method which ensure validity. In hermeneutic inquiry, validity of knowledge claims is decided upon within a community of scholars. The researcher cogently argues with professional peers for his/her knowledge claim, utilizing practical reasoning and argumentation. Thus, the outcome of argumentative discourse is an agreement about a knowledge claim, not about "truth" itself. Settling knowledge claims has nothing to do with correspondence theory or empirical

verification but with establishing realized rational agreement regarding the most valid knowledge claim (McCarthy, 1973; Polkinghorne, 1983).

### Reliability

The concept of reliability is also incongruent when viewed within hermeneutics and other human science research paradigms. Reliability implies that the same research outcome could be obtained or repeated in another study using the methodology of the original study. The ability to replicate findings or even engage in the exact same hermeneutic procedure in future readings is antithetical to the hermeneutic project. Reliability presupposes and depends upon an unchanging and static view of reality. Conversely, hermeneutic inquiry is based upon a dynamic, evolving view of man and reality. Human understanding is contextually bound by history, society, and culture. Again, there is no overarching framework or archimedean point from which we can understand or study man. Just as researcher and research participant are "beings-interpreted," each interpretation rendered in hermeneutic inquiry is also a "being-interpreted." We always arrive in mid-conversation with the text. There is no definite start or endpoint--only interpretations that are more or less sensical, coherent, and useful given our present reading.

### Interpreter Bias

Positivistic and hermeneutic inquiry also differ in terms of their assumptions regarding interpreter bias. Hermeneutics views the idea that science can provide us with an accurate and certain description of reality as deceptive. According to hermeneutics, all understanding is "prejudicial" and there is no pure ground of observation untainted by theoretical assumptions. Therefore, those engaging in hermeneutics would see inquiry from start to finish as the process and product of a researcher who comes from a certain tradition and who is embedded in a certain socio-cultural, historical context. The researcher can no more disengage completely from the object and process of inquiry, than she/he can step out of herself/himself. Therefore, interpretive work is not a subjective and arbitrary endeavor. Hermeneutic inquiry involves deliberately embracing one's value systems, critically reflecting upon these, and utilizing these value systems as mediations in interpretive work.

## CHAPTER V

### THE INTERPRETATION OF THE TEXT

The interpretation of the text in this inquiry was developed from a consideration of multiple interpretive dialectics aimed at explicating the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The ultimate aim in this hermeneutic inquiry was to reveal a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This contextual understanding is the world of meaning the text revealed about the experience of relationships for the bulimic woman. The interpretive dialectics, i.e., explanation-understanding, guessing-validation, explanation-comprehension, and distanciation-appropriation, were used to examine, illuminate, and mediate between the following multiple contexts which were constitutive of the contextual world of understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships: a) the context of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships brought to language, b) the context of the text as structure and a closed system of signs, c) the semantic context of the text as written discourse (involving the context of the sentence and text as integrative "wholes"), and d) the interpreter's context of history, culture, language and tradition as she interacted with the text. The "world" of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed by the text was

developed within the above contexts of structural explanations and semantic understanding of the text. The use of the above interpretive dialectics helped the researcher arrive at an informal, holistic, critical, and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as it was revealed by the text. This process culminated in the appropriation of meaning of the text. Again, the purpose of interpretation of the text in this inquiry was not to understand the mental intention of the author (participant), but to understand the meanings spoken by the text.

In the use of Ricoeur's interpretive dialectics, explanation and understanding both mediated a fully informed and indepth understanding of the text. The dialectic of explanation-understanding in written discourse evolves from the disconnection of the text from the mental intention of the author, from the original audience and dialogical situation, and from ostensive reference. The dialectic of explanation-understanding is conceptualized first, as the dialectic movement from surface understanding to explanation. This understanding is a naive grasping of the meanings of the text as a whole. It involves the dialectic of guessing-validation, itself a dialectic of subjective-objective understanding of the text. Before further discussing what the text revealed, several other issues will be briefly discussed: a) the author of the text in this

inquiry, b) the transformation of experience to language, c) the transformation of verbal discourse to a text and d) validation of the text as a text.

#### The Author of the Text

The bulimic woman who created the text in this hermeneutic inquiry was 22 years old and had been bulimic (according to DSM-III-R criteria) since she was a junior in high school. It was not until the Spring of 1991, that the author fully acknowledged her struggle with bulimia and her need for treatment. This author denied any history of psychiatric treatment and had entered weekly out patient group therapy only several months before I contacted her about the study. She was referred by her group therapist, who thought the author was very articulate about her experience of relationships.

The author was raised in a home where father was alcoholic. She denied that mother had an eating disorder, and any other family history of psychiatric illness or treatment. She has one sister who is 34 years old. The author reported that she grew up in a home environment where father was mostly absent after she was nine years old. Parents separated when the author was a freshman in high school, and the author lived with her mother until her senior year. She then moved to her own apartment for a brief time and returned home after her father's death. She lived with mother until she married at age 22. She has been

married for one year and has no children.

The author has completed a master's degree in one of the helping professions. She presently secured a full-time job at an area hospital. Her advanced intellectual capacity (she skipped an early grade), her use of language, psychological mindedness, and willingness to examine herself and interactions with others were all helpful in quickly establishing a good rapport and in creating a text that was rich with meaning regarding her experience of relationships.

#### The Transformation of Experience to Language

During the seven dialogical sessions, the researcher assisted the bulimic woman in articulating her experiences of relationship. One informational session was held before the dialogical sessions, in order to explain the study, to secure the author's consent, and to have her sign the consent form. Basic demographic information was also obtained, as was a history of eating to ensure that the bulimic woman experienced bulimia as it is described in the DSM-III-R. The subsequent seven dialogical sessions lasted from 1 to 1 1/2 hours and occurred weekly over an eight week period in the summer of 1991.

The sessions were called dialogues instead of interviews because of the nature and intent of the conversations. The researcher did not come with a structured interview guide to elicit pre-conceived information from the participant (author). Rather,

dialogical sessions helped the participant to comfortably relate her ideas and experiences regarding the study phenomenon. The researcher only asked questions when it became necessary to elicit further examples of the experience of relationships, i.e., when the participant stopped conversation due to uncertainty about what to say next, or when the researcher needed to clarify issues related to a particular experience of relationship which seemed unclear. (See Chapter IV, Method of Author Selection for further details).

All dialogical sessions were tape-recorded for the purpose of fixation by transcription. Therefore, experience, i.e., the lived meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, was brought to language, and the subjective account of the experience of relationships was now ready for transformation to a text.

#### The Transformation of Verbal Discourse to a Text

The taped recorded dialogues were then transformed to a written text by transcription, producing a text of 394 pages. The fixation of the spoken word created the text which was the primary object of mediation for this hermeneutic inquiry. The interpreter could now interact with the text to engage in the work of interpretation. The interaction with the text in the work of exegesis, moved the understanding of the experience of relationship from a solely conscious subjective account of the bulimic woman's

experience of relationship, toward a revelation of the meanings of the experience of relationship, as they were disclosed by the autonomous text.

#### The Validation of the Text as Text

The created text is "a text," because it fulfills certain criteria as discussed by Ricoeur (1976, 1981f). These criteria define a text as: a) a discourse fixed by writing, b) a "work"--as it is something worked upon and formed or created, c) consisting of at least a series of sentences, d) the whole work to date of one author, e) an inscription of an experience to which it bears testimony, and f) an historical narrative, in that it is a recounting of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which occurs within a specific culture. In this way, the narrative acts as an archive for communities and cultures, while it remains open to the interpretations of future readers.

#### Initial, Naive Understanding: The Dialectic of Guessing-Validation

The dialectic of explanation-understanding was first noted in the text in the movement from initial, naive understanding to explanation. Again, this understanding was a naive grasping of the meanings of the text as a whole. It involved a dialectical movement of reading and reflection on the relationship between part and whole of the text.

Initial understanding aimed at an explication of the reference pole of the meaning of a text--how language relates to extra-linguistic reality, i.e., what the text referred to in terms of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In this initial reading, as in all the other readings of the text, the researcher continually acknowledged the distancing created by the written discourse. This distance from the author, the dialogical situation, and the ostensive reference of spoken discourse creates the semantic autonomy of the text and allowed the interpreter to use the text as a source of mediation and revelation in the work of interpretation.

The first act of understanding involved the dialectic of guessing-validation. The initial understanding of the text took the form of a guess because the mental intention of the author and the verbal meaning of the text no longer coincided. These guesses about the significance of part and whole of the text, their relationship, the literary genre, and the potential horizons of meaning in the text were validated with a logic of probability, via the use of criteria such as coherence, comprehensiveness, thoroughness, applicability, and contextuality during the initial reading of the text.

In essence, the first reading of the text involved reconstructing the text's architecture. This work of reconstruction included identifying the genre and topics and

sub-topics of the text (Ricoeur, 1976). The identification of these features of the text will be discussed respectively. An initial reading of the text in this hermeneutic inquiry revealed it to be a narrative.

Before discussing the specific features revealed in the narrative of this inquiry, it is important to digress briefly to address several features common to all narrative works. This digression will add to an overall understanding of the architecture of the narrative. Integral to any narrative work is the narrative's ability to reveal the "temporal character of human experience" and its ability to "creatively imitate or represent human action" (Ricoeur, 1984). The latter of these narrative activities or processes is called "mimesis" or the "mimetic activity" of the narrative. The mimetic activity occurs on three different levels in the narrative. The first involves mimetic activity in the composition of the plot, which is grounded in the pre-understanding of the world of action--its meanings, symbols, and temporal character. The second mimetic activity involves the actual composition or configuration of the internal structure of the narrative which orders events into the telling of a story. This mimetic function involves the "grasping together of detailed actions" or story incidents and making them into a coherent, thematic and temporal whole. The third mimetic activity involves the new configuration or "refiguration" of the pre-

understood world of action and temporality. This last mimetic activity occurs at the intersection of the world of the text (its "sense" configuration) and the world of the reader. In this way, the third activity of mimesis functions in the revelation of the text's reference to the real world, the experience it brings to language, the world of action and temporality it discloses to the reader (Ricoeur, 1984). Therefore, the third mimetic activity contributes to the narrative's ability to "resignify the world in its temporal dimension" and to "remake action" in a sense, for the reader (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 81). In general, the mimetic activity serves to increase the coherence of the plot in the narrative and helps make certain "universals" related to practical wisdom, spring forth from the narrative. In helping configure the plot, mimesis "make[s] the intelligible spring from the accidental, the universal from the singular, the necessary or the probable from the episodic" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 41).

The narrative's ability to reveal the temporal character of human experience and to creatively imitate or represent human action, is expressed via the plot, or what Ricoeur more accurately defines from Aristotle's Poetics, as "emplotment." Emplotment, or "muthos," is the process in which events are organized in the narrative in its attempts to reveal a story. In this inquiry, the narrative was a "telling" of the lived experience of relationships in the

everyday life of a bulimic woman. Therefore, the recounting of the bulimic woman's experiences of action and temporality were narrated within the context of her experience of relationships with significant others. This narrative work was the culmination of the bulimic woman's account of her experience of relationships over a two month period of time in the summer of 1991. The subject matter of the text as a whole, referred to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with her spouse, parents, sister, a best friend, and the researcher. In this narrative text, the above individuals can be viewed as the characters, and the bulimic woman, the narrator. A more detailed discussion of the dimensions of temporality and the structure and world of action for the bulimic woman as it related to her experience of relationships with others will be addressed later in this document. This detailed discussion occurs within the context of more critical readings of the text and within the movement from explanation to comprehension of the text.

In addition to identifying the genre of the text in this inquiry, the reconstruction of the text's architecture also involved identifying the topics and sub-topics disclosed by the text. Through the identification of these topics and sub-topics, the researcher was able to arrive at an initial, naive understanding of the text. In this particular narrative, the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with each of the identified significant

others, can be viewed as topics of the text. Each of these topics was also constituted by sub-topics. These sub-topics referred to what the text specifically spoke to regarding the experience of relationship with a particular significant other. For example, one topic was "the experience of relationship with husband," while one sub-topic was "changes in the experience of relationship with husband over time," i.e., "the experience of relationship before and after disclosing the secret of bulimia to husband." An even more specific sub-topic of this latter sub-topic is "the experience of increased openness with husband after disclosure of the bulimia." The topics and sub-topics of the text must always be read within the context of the text as a "whole work." The "whole" of the text in this narrative refers to the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships.

Therefore, the subject matter of the text will be discussed first, as it related to the experience of relationship with each of the above stated individuals, and second, as it related to the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships. In this way, the initial, naive understanding of the text ensured an understanding that involved the dialectical dance of reading between and reflection upon the parts and the whole of the text.

**INITIAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BULIMIC WOMAN'S  
EXPERIENCE OF RELATIONSHIPS**

The Experience of Relationship with Husband

An initial reading of the text revealed that the experience of relationship with husband involved a) features common to the experience of relationship over time, b) changes in the experience before and after disclosing the bulimia to husband, and c) an association between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of relationship with husband. The changes in the experience of relationship will be discussed first, since much of the text which related to the relationship with husband was organized around the experience with him before and after disclosing the "secret" of bulimia to him.

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman did not disclose her bulimia to husband until 1 1/2 years after their relationship began. The text revealed that before the bulimic woman disclosed her bulimia to husband, she lived a kind of "secret life" within the relationship:

(Excerpt #1)

And I really did hide it! I made a lot of excuses to use a bathroom after I ate. And I knew that he suspected something was up, but I wasn't going to tell him then. I guess I just wasn't ready (Text, p. 4).

The text spoke of the bulimic woman's "secret life" with husband as one which involved keeping the bulimia a

secret and bringing the bulimia into the relationship in "indirect ways," e.g., making comments about eating and food, or becoming upset about not being able to have ice cream. The experience of relationship with husband was one in which the bulimic woman would "hold things in" and feel "terrified" of self-disclosure regarding the bulimia:

(Excerpt #2)

It was a big risk when I told him. I remember...I was terrified of telling him, and I just felt...if he doesn't reject me now then...it will probably be easier after this. I was terrified...he was the first person I told, and so I had no idea...my husband isn't used to illness....I felt like if he found out that I had an eating disorder, he was going to totally say it was my problem - that I brought it on myself....I was terrified of being vulnerable! I felt very vulnerable at that time because for a year and a half, I was keeping this secret. And I felt like I was in control and it was my coping mechanism. Just exposing that - I just felt very vulnerable...[but] I just felt so out of control with my life. And I realized that I needed help....I thought it was like the first step (Text, pp. 37-38, 41-42).

Along with the fear of vulnerability and rejection that the bulimic woman experienced in the relationship with husband at the start of their relationship, she also experienced a worry that her worth as a person would be "judged by her performance." This worry has decreased over time but still exists in her experience of relationship. This worry will be addressed later in this section.

The initial reading of the text also revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with husband before disclosing the bulimia was an experience of "shifting moods" and "explosions." When the bulimic woman was bingeing

and purging, anything could upset her. Therefore, the relationship with husband was strained because of the bulimia. This strain experienced in the relationship with husband is seen in the excerpt below:

(Excerpt #3)

I would have a lot of mood swings because of bulimia, because I was hiding this. I really felt bad looking back because he had no idea what to attribute it to....But he just got frustrated, and I got frustrated. And I would just like push the eating disorder out of my way and just focus all of my negative energy on him, instead of dealing with my bulimia...He probably had no idea of where it was coming from and it just like really put a damper on a lot of things...(Text, pp. 4-5).

When the bulimic woman felt out of control with her eating or over-involved with food, the text revealed that early in the relationship with husband, she was more likely to "focus her negative energy on him" and "give him the silent treatment," "escalate," or "instigate" more conflict." The bulimic woman might also "test him and edge him on." These experiences of relationship with husband would occur more when husband was slow to show affect or anger in response to her "testing him." The text revealed that at times, the bulimic woman "was unhappy with herself" and "projected" the unhappiness on to husband. Conversely, if the bulimic woman experienced any upsetting feelings at husband for "not doing something she thought important," she might engage in bulimic behaviors. In this instance, the bulimic woman would experience anger, hurt, or disappointment with husband and then, binge and purge.

Following a binge-purge episode, she might give him the "silent treatment" and/or feel guilty and upset about her interactions with husband. Therefore, the text revealed that difficulties or pain experienced in the relationship could occur before or after bulimic practices.

The initial reading of the text disclosed that after the bulimic woman revealed her secret of bulimia to husband, she worried that it would "repulse him." The text revealed that this worry experienced in the relationship was quite strong, since husband was the first person to whom she revealed her "secret." The bulimic woman did not experience husband as initially acknowledging her bulimia and experienced "anger, hurt, and upset" in the relationship with him. In essence, the text revealed that it took time for her to really experience husband as accepting of her bulimia and as accepting and supportive of her in general.

The text does indicate that after revealing the secret of bulimia, the bulimic woman experienced increased closeness and openness, and decreased conflict in her relationship with husband. This change in experience is noted in the statement, "I felt like I shed a piece of clothing" after telling him. The text revealed a certain ambivalence in the telling of the secret to husband. Although the bulimic woman feared rejection and repulsion, the text also revealed that she wanted husband to "pick up on things," e.g., comments regarding weight and eating. The

text revealed that after sharing her secret, the bulimic woman felt loved and respected as a "person apart from her performance." The bulimic woman experienced husband as being more understanding of her struggle with bulimia. The bulimic woman experienced him as "genuinely listening" to her and providing her "unconditional support." The text revealed that she experienced less fears of rejection in the relationship, and the relationship was experienced as "safe." The text revealed that after disclosing her secret, the bulimic woman also experienced a better understanding of husband's feelings. The bulimic woman experienced husband to be more confrontive with her versus avoidant of conflict and less tempted to treat her as "fragile:"

(Excerpt #4)

...Before he knew about my eating disorder, he used to back off and just leave me alone. Now, he'll stand up for himself...then he'd just leave me alone...It seems like before he wanted to avoid conflict at all costs. And now that he realizes that I do have an eating disorder, that contributes to the edginess and stuff...I think he feels that he should stand up for himself. But then, he doesn't lay into me...he'll just go off by himself and let me talk to him when I want to...I think he was holding back, and now, ...when we do have an argument...whether its roots are me and the eating disorder or just something else, we tend to get over it a lot quicker (Text, pp. 15-16).

The text also revealed that there were features of the experience of relationship that continued throughout the relationship. The text disclosed that in general, the bulimic woman has difficulty "getting angry" at husband (and others) and in "getting her anger out appropriately" with

husband (and others). The bulimic woman also experiences the need to be the "perfect wife" in the relationship with husband, despite his not requesting this of her:

(Excerpt #5)

...I think that I feel like I have to be the perfect wife! And I know I get that from my mom!....I'm trying to get away from it. But there's always this voice in my head that...I should be doing this, even though he doesn't care. I should be!....She brought me up to just do everything perfectly!....for dinner, you have to spend an hour cooking meat, potatoes, if you can....your ironing always has to be done...the day after you wash. And she goes to the extreme - even sheets have to be ironed. It's very methodical....the house always cleaned...the dishes always done...everything's always regulated and...planned. That's why it's unachievable! (Text, pp. 11-14).

The other experience that has lasted throughout the relationship, is the bulimic woman's desire to have husband "pick up on things" and in a sense, "read her mind" and "know how to take care of her" without her having to state her needs to husband. Although the bulimic woman feels a decreased need to "instigate" conflict or "blow things up," these experiences with husband are more likely to occur if husband has not met her above desire. Also, the text revealed that whenever husband does not perform a certain task or behave in a certain way which is in accordance with the bulimic woman, his oversights may be experienced as a reflection on her in some way. In essence, the bulimic woman worries about what others will think of her, based on husband's actions and choices. Therefore, whenever husband fails the bulimic woman in some way, the "silent treatment"

may ensue or the bulimic woman may get "critical, edgy, or make digs" at husband. This experience with husband is more likely to happen on "bad food days," when the bulimic woman feels over-involved with thoughts of food or actually bingeing and purging. After experiencing the "edginess" toward husband, the bulimic woman experiences guilt. Conversely, the guilt or any other upsetting feelings, particularly anger, can contribute to her increased thoughts of food or bulimic behaviors.

Finally, the initial reading of the text revealed a connection between the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with husband and her relationship with food. Many of these connections have already been discussed above. The next excerpt will show how the bulimic woman's feelings of anger toward husband are connected with binge-purge behavior and how the experience progresses:

(Excerpt #6)

I might get angry at him and then binge and purge and then, that would be it. It just seems more time-limited with him....It's more anger at my self displaced onto him....Sometimes I can't, I feel like I can't communicate something to him. Like he just can't understand what I'm trying to say. I...almost get the feeling..."You can't understand that." "You're so stupid! That you can't understand what I'm saying!" And instead of trying to explain it in a different way, I'll just get angry at him. And that's not when I binge and purge...he'll go into another room and I'll think about it. And I'll say to myself, "That was really stupid of you! Now you're both upset! You could have just said it in a different way! And then, that's when I get angry at myself....All this time he thinks I'm still angry at him and outwardly, that's what it seems like and then, I'll binge and purge because I'm angry at myself for not defusing the whole

thing, which I would be able to do....At first anger at him....unrealistic anger almost....cause he truly doesn't understand what I'm saying, and I could say it in a different way....then I can usually go back and say I'm sorry....I've been sharing it [when she binge-purges] with him....He's usually pretty understanding (Text 164-166, 169).

In general, then, the text revealed that although there were features common to the experience of relationship with husband over time, there were shifts in the experience of relationship as well. For example, the text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced a "lot of love and caring from husband" throughout their relationship. Over time, though, with her disclosure of the bulimia, the text revealed that the bulimic woman has experienced her husband as more understanding and accepting of her bulimia and herself in general. The text revealed that the bulimic woman related to husband (and father) on a "feeling level," in a way she was unable to relate with mother or sister. The final excerpt below reveals the difference in the experience of relationship with husband as compared to the experience of relationship in her family of origin:

(Excerpt #7)

I feel unconditional acceptance from my husband, and my family acceptance came when you did something the right way....And I thought about it...who I got unconditional love from...and the only person I could think of was my husband. And so, it's just...a totally different experience with a relationship. You know you have unconditional love and acceptance versus, you know,... what you received depended on everything you did (Text, pp. 45, 53).

The Experience of Relationship with Mother

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother involved a) features of the experience which continued throughout the relationship, b) changes in the experience of relationship over time, and c) a connection between the experience of relationship with mother and the bulimic woman's relationship with food. In general, the text revealed that the experience of relationship with mother was one in which the bulimic woman experienced feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, guilt, sadness, loneliness, hurt, fears of her own vulnerability, and fears of rejection. In particular, the text revealed an emphasis on the experiences of anger and guilt. The following excerpt shows the nature and intensity of the bulimic woman's anger in the experience of relationship with mother. However, the text revealed that the anger was an unseen, unknown "ocean" of feeling:

(Excerpt #8)

...When I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had a constant anger towards her. I mean it didn't, it usually never came up...It was just always there! I wasn't like always angry on the outside towards her, but it was always there. And so that's why...my binging and purging just happen to seem like erratic....[the anger] is almost like an ocean....But I don't think at that time I really thought about it as anger. I mean, it's only now that I can think about it as anger, And say, you know, I was angry during that period too, and still am. But then, I wouldn't have said...I have this anger with my mom and it's always there. I would have said...I got angry at her when I didn't like what she did or when I didn't feel

validated, when she wouldn't talk to me....And I can't even think of what I would've said if somebody asked me how I felt towards my mom at that time...I just don't think I would've said that...I always had an anger....Probably because, as much as I could at that time, I pushed it away, so I could go on with my daily life. Cause I think if I didn't if I kept dwelling in all the anger and the feelings I had, then I couldn't have done everything I did....I almost feel like I would have been drowned by it (Text, pp. 170-171,173-174).

The text also revealed that many times the bulimic woman's anger was quickly followed by guilt in the experience of relationship with mother. The move from anger to guilt often occurred when the bulimic woman somehow failed to meet mother's expectations. The guilt was related not only to a "misdeed" but to feeling like a terrible person because of the misdeed. The following excerpt reveals the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother after mother read her personal book of poetry and discovered she had sex for the first time:

(Excerpt #9)

...part of me felt like I had failed her. Part of me was very, I want to say angry, with the situation - angry with her for invading my privacy. But when she made the comment that I hurt her more than when her mother died, I wasn't angry at her then. That's when I started feeling guilty...all these emotions during that time...I tried to be angry with her, but then she would make these comments. And I wouldn't be angry with her. I'd feel guilty! And I'd take it on myself....She would make comments, "I fought to get this house back for you and look what you've done"....And I thought, "She did fight to get this house back. I don't know if it was for me, but since she did, maybe I did fail her by acting his way"....I felt like I was really killing her....I disagreed with her about something...At that point...I was a terrible person because....I was causing this extreme pain for both of us (Text, pp. 47-50)

The text revealed that when the bulimic woman was a young girl, mother was experienced as physically attentive to her, available to give her "lots of hugs and kisses, and to tuck her in at night." Mother also told her she loved her. However, the text also revealed that as the bulimic woman grew older, she experienced mother's "I love you's," acceptance, and acknowledgment as based upon the bulimic woman's performance as the "perfect daughter." The text disclosed that performance as the perfect daughter was performance in mother's terms and according to mother's expectations:

(Excerpt #10)

...My family acceptance came when you did something the right way. When you achieved something, there was acceptance. If you did something that was viewed as negative, there wasn't acceptance. If you did something that was against what my mom thought...it wasn't accepted....I would feel unloved....When I was in high school and college and now, I realized that I wanted...I want her to love me for me and not what I do. And I still don't feel like I get that from her....I still feel that her love is based on what I do" (Text, pp. 45-46, 118).

The text revealed that the bulimic woman would experience mother as critical of her, "if mother knew she were anything less than perfect." The bulimic woman experiences mother as someone who "practices to be the perfect person," herself, and who "hides under a perfect image" (Text, pp. 10, 78). Mother is experienced as always worrying about what other people think. The text revealed that the relationship with mother is one in which mother is

experienced as "artificial, rigid, controlling, uptight, stoic, and snobbish." The bulimic woman experiences her mother as worrying about how the bulimic woman's behaviors and choices will reflect on mother. Mother was experienced to alternate between being distant and being invasive or too close. Mother was experienced as not displaying her emotions, nor did she encourage this display with other family members. The text revealed that the bulimic woman would feel "shut out" during attempts to get close to mother. The text revealed that the bulimic woman doesn't "think she [mother] ever really got inside." The bulimic woman "didn't let her in" because she felt "very vulnerable, very scared to do that" (Text, p. 114).

In terms of other changes in the experience of relationship with mother over time, the text revealed that the bulimic woman became more aware of mother's own vulnerabilities and felt "less in awe of her." This increased awareness occurred in ninth grade, when maternal grandmother had cancer and died. There were also changes in the experience of relationship after the parental separation:

(Excerpt #11)

I knew that she always cared about me....because of a mix, because of material things...But I also know I felt sometimes too cared for....My mom hardly had any friends....She was spending too much time with me....I wanted to be able to be apart from her....I had tried to make her understand....we did need time apart, but she didn't think we did....and especially after my parents were separated....her whole life revolved

around me and I couldn't stand that....I felt responsible for....her happiness...(Text, pp. 124-125).

The text revealed that the other change in the experience of relationship with mother occurred after father's death when the bulimic woman was 19. During adolescence, the bulimic women experienced little communication with mother and struggled with mother in her attempts to establish relationships outside the home. After father died, a twist in the experience of relationship occurred. However, the text revealed that the twist was one that led to a "pseudo-relationship":

(Excerpt #12)

Before he died...I moved out of the house....Then after he died...I kept thinking that I lost one parent. I'm going to lose another....It almost felt like something snapped in me. We started getting along again...nothing at all changed in the way we related to each other....I eventually moved back in....we didn't look back at all and we just went on from there and everything I did or said - anything she did or said, it was never brought up again. And it still hasn't....We still have this like pseudo-relationship...Because she would say, "Oh,...it's great we get along now. We talk now." And I would say, "No, it's not," you know...I'm trying to find a happy medium...where I can start...to express my anger....It was just really a turning point in our relationship.... before that we just weren't talking at all and then after that.....like everything was great again....We were talking...she was letting me be freer than she had been before...It was like.... two separate time periods....it seems very artificial....happened too quickly....everything was just pushed under the carpet and there's pretty pictures being painted....I was afraid that if one thing got out...we wouldn't be talking again: (Text, pp. 178-183).

Finally, the text revealed a connection between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of

relationship with mother. The text disclosed that the bulimic woman used to diet with mother as "something to be part of her, to be a part of what she was doing" (Text, p. 138). The text revealed that mother had no weight problem but was experienced to alternate between restricting herself and cooking "tons of food" for others. The text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced mother as "making her scrape her plate." Food refusal was a "personal insult" to mother. The bulimic woman experienced mother's demands to eat, despite the absence of hunger or the potential to become physically sick.

The text initially revealed that the bulimic woman had difficulty remembering specific events or feelings related to the experience of relationship with mother that could be connected with binge-purge episodes. The text revealed that when she is with mother, she works hard at saying "no" to mother's food offers. When the bulimic woman is with mother, she becomes consumed with "thoughts of food":

(Excerpt #13)

...I get very anxious beforehand and throughout the whole visit because she still pushes food into me. I walk into her house and immediately feel different...feel very out of control with my eating....I don't think...necessarily overeat there or binge...just constantly thinking...just eat more than I usually do....when I'm not hungry....(Text, p. 161-162, 164)

However, the text later revealed that there may be a connection between "not being herself" with mother and her bulimia:

(Excerpt #14)

I think there's a connection between food and...just because I know that when I'm going to be around my mom...I have a tendency to really binge and purge. And I think it's because I'm going to go there and I'm not going to be myself. So I feel that if I can be more assertive around her and really...tell her...feel as anxious and tense and...means hopefully, I'm not going to binge and purge....(Text, pp. 318-319).

More specifically, the initial reading of the text revealed that there is a connection between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of an absence of respect from mother. The bulimic woman experiences frustration and anger related to her struggle of wanting validation and respect from mother, but not wanting to compromise herself and her health because of this:

(Excerpt #15)

...when I go to her house, I just feel very anxious and uncomfortable. And I just always feel like I have to have food in my mouth. I guess I just feel a general uneasiness, when I'm there....Because I'm afraid to let my feelings...my feelings will get out when I go to her house....for the past year, I felt very anxious because I knew that I had a lot of feelings of anger toward her. And I think that...I'm worried about letting those feelings get out, cause I'm not prepared to let them out with her. So I may always feel like I have to be eating so I can push the feelings down, so that they don't come out when I'm there...If I let my feelings out to her, I would not get the respect. Because in the past, when I would let my feelings out, I didn't get the respect. When I stated my views...I would not get the respect. But if I keep quiet, just go into her world, almost, then I'm going to get the respect. When I stated my views...I would not get the respect. But if I keep quiet, just go into her world, almost, then I'm going to get the respect. And at this point, especially at her house, it seems the only way that I can keep into her world is to eat. And that stuffs the feelings...in a way, makes me less anxious. So, I'm less likely to bring my own feelings out. But at this point, I'm getting her respect, even though it's not

the kind of respect that I ultimately would like to have...the respect for myself as a person and my feelings. Because I can't get some of those things at this point, I'm trying to get whatever I can...stay unhealthy and keep bingeing and purging, and get this kind of respect, or whether I want to try to become healthy and risk not having the respect at all. It's frustrating because...I feel like it's very black and white. It's an either or type thing. There's really not a sadness there. There's more of an anger...kind of almost anger at myself. Because intellectually, I know that I should make myself healthy and not worry about getting that type of respect...a parent is supposed to validate you...and since my dad's not around, I feel like I should get the validation from somebody in my family, and that's basically her (Text, pp. 365, 367-370).

The excerpt below reveals the kind of experience the bulimic woman has in trying to mediate what she can and cannot get in the relationship with mother and what she can and cannot get in the relationship with food:

(Excerpt #16)

...I guess I feel like I have to strike a balance...That I have to not worry about my mom's validation and speak out. My mom's validation - like if it's there for some things, take it. Concrete things, like I graduated with my master's. And I guess I'm trying to make myself more aware of what's going on...in the relationship with my mother...more aware so that I don't let myself be manipulated by her, and also more aware in my relationship with food, so that I feel that I get better with my eating disorder. I may still eat out of emotion, but I'm aware of it, and I'm striking a balance. I guess I see both of them as...trying to find the middle-ground...being aware the whole time, of what's going on, so I don't slip back into her world...being controlled by her...indirectly controlled by her...live up to her expectations even though they are unobtainable, trying to please her, worrying about what she thinks, trying to accommodate her (Text, pp. 372-374).

Finally, the text revealed that the bulimic woman has not disclosed her secret of bulimic to her mother because

she anticipates the experience will be one of invalidation. The text disclosed that the bulimic woman anticipates that mother will "think it is a big joke" and blame the bulimic woman, and say "it is her problem" (Text, p. 292).

#### The Experience of Relationship with Father

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with father also involved a) features common to the experience over time, b) changes in the relationship at different points in time, and c) the association of the experience of relationship with father and the bulimic woman's relationship with food. In addition, the text revealed information about how the bulimic woman experienced father's relationship with mother. This experience affected her experience of relationship with father and particularly, the changes in this relationship over time.

The initial reading of the text disclosed that the bulimic woman did things separately with mother or with father, but rarely as a family. The text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced time spent alone with father as "fun":

(Excerpt #17)

My dad was always the one that would take me ice skating and sledding and things like that, things that were fun for you...He was the one that gave me a lot of the enjoyment and recreational activities when I was little...We would go for walks...sit outside in front of the house...and we would watch the lightning...watch the stars (Text, pp. 117, 209, 221-222).

Despite the experience of enjoyment and relaxation experienced with father, and the experience that he was "genuinely proud of her," the text also revealed that the bulimic woman experienced a great sense of father's uninvolved involvement in her life. The experience of relationship with father was one of his "being on the sidelines." The text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced a great deal of anger and hurt related to father's uninvolved involvement and his lack of support in her life. This uninvolved involvement and his lack of support were also experienced within the context of her relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #18)

I was angry at him for not being involved...If he was really involved in what I had done and then went and told people about it, I would have felt really good...I was always hurt that he wasn't involved, or if he was involved, it was always on the sidelines...I felt like he didn't give me support - support in the things that I was involved in, but also the support in dealing with my mom. I always felt like he should have stepped in more. I think he saw what she was doing to me cause I almost think...she was almost brainwashing...I think he should have stepped in and tried to intervene and tell her..."Stop doing this to her...stop making her do these things she doesn't want to do!" And he just let her do her own thing with me. And I wanted support from him - trying to get out of things and trying to be my own person. And he just never gave that support....I was very, very angry at him for not stepping in, cause I thought it was his place....maybe he just didn't want to battle her anymore...sometimes I felt he didn't want to battle her anymore...sometimes I felt he didn't care (Text, pp. 214, 228-230).

The text also revealed that the only time the bulimic woman did not experience her father as involved on the "sidelines" was when mother was absent. These times were

experienced as relaxing because father was experienced as "easy-going" and "laid-back":

(Excerpt #19)

The only time that he wasn't involved on the sidelines was when my mom used to go away for any kind of conference or anything like that....she would do that fairly often when I was growing up with her job, and he would take over the house and he did a good job. He would cook...get me off to school...attend conferences...at school...He was really actively involved....he didn't seem to mind at all....He seemed to enjoy it. And now...that I look back, he probably just liked the break away from my mother....he probably felt...comfortable now doing something. She's not going to criticize [him]...almost a relief to have her gone and I felt very secure with him....a very relaxing time...If my mom was there, she always was the one...who always took over... (Text, pp. 216-218).

The initial reading of the text also revealed that despite the fact that the bulimic woman felt anger regarding father's involvement on the "sidelines," this anger was different from the anger experienced in the relationship with mother. The difference in the anger was also related to the bulimic woman's experience of father as mother's victim in the parental relationship:

(Excerpt #20)

...seems like the anger that I had with him...was just more out there...The anger that I had with my father didn't consume me the way the anger I have for my mom does....The anger I have for my father - I resolved a lot of it when he died. And the anger I have for my mother, I have not resolved at all...the anger that I had with him was so related to what he had to go through with my mom. And I almost see him as the victim...hard for me to be angry with him because a lot of the things that he did, I can hardly blame him for as I look back. I think he was just trying to survive with her the best way possible. I was able to get angry at my father....tell myself I'm angry at him....I didn't feel guilty about telling myself

that....and we could get past that....I think he realized what I was saying. I felt more validated....he realized I was angry at something and he was able to understand why I was angry....With my mom, it would have been a totally different scene. She would've said, "You know, you have no reason to be angry," and...just totally put down my feelings entirely....With my mom, I have been angry at her for so long, but it's only recently that I can say that I'm angry with her. And even then, I still feel guilty for being angry at her (Text, pp. 231-235).

In terms of changes in the bulimic woman's experience of father over time, there were changes which occurred at age nine, after the parental separation (ninth grade), and in senior year in high school. The text revealed that the bulimic woman's earliest experiences with and memories of father involved him drinking. She experienced a pressure in the family to keep his alcoholism a secret. When father drank, he was experienced as "unpleasant to live with," sometimes verbally abusive but never physically abusive. However, the text revealed that when the bulimic woman was nine years old, he began to drink "in excess all the time." Father rarely came home for dinner and was out a great deal. Special time with him became "non-existent."

The initial reading of the text revealed that after the parental separation, the bulimic woman experienced anger and confusion for several years into her adolescence. She did not see father much until senior year in high school. However, the text revealed that she would not allow herself the experience of loss in relation to father's absence from the home. The experience was intellectualized as "the best

thing that could have happened," given the circumstances. Several years after the separation, though, the bulimic woman experienced her relationship with father as one in which they were "trying to build something":

(Excerpt #21)

...we were trying to get to know each other because when he started drinking heavily, constantly,...when I was nine or 10, we just lost a lot of time. We lost a lot of contact. And then in high school, we lost a lot of contact again....I almost felt like the person that I saw...was different than the person he was before....it seemed like...[we were] more on the same level (Text, p. 204).

During senior year in high school, the text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced an increased struggle with mother in terms of developing relationships outside the home and moving out into the world. At the same time, the bulimic woman experienced a change in the experience of relationship with father:

(Excerpt #22)

I don't know what happened, but I was just more able to...see that he wasn't the sole cause of the marriage breaking up and before that, that's what I thought....When things started to get shaky between my mom and I - my senior year....I started questioning what she was like... The more I found out about my mom and what she was doing to me, the more I realized that she played a lot of the part in the break-up of the marriage also....I became more tolerant of my dad and I wanted more to have a relationship with him...I would call him more....I guess...it was easier to get to know him now than it was before....We actually talked as adults....more than my mom and I could [do] at that

point....I...actually enjoyed going over there and talking to him....We talked about family...(Text, pp. 200, 204-205, 220).

Finally, the initial reading of the text revealed that

the bulimic woman was unclear regarding the connection between her relationship with food and the experience of relationship with father. Initially, the text disclosed that the bulimic woman "does not see how food relates to the relationship with father." The bulimic woman could not recall any binge-purge episodes that directly related to her experience of relationship with father other than the episodes related to his hospitalization. The text indicated that the bingeing and purging occurred in response to feelings of helplessness and frustration related to her being "overburdened" with decisions regarding her father's care. She felt "totally out of control" and alone in these decisions because other family members refused to take responsibility and become involved.

Later, though, the text indicated that there may be a connection between the bulimic woman's feelings of abandonment by father and the relationship with food:

(Excerpt #23)

I think there's probably some connection in my life between abandonment and what's going on with my eating....a connection between when I basically lost the relationship with my old boyfriend, and then when I lost the relationship with my father....I guess the connection that I see is that...it's the whole connection with them and my mother....My relationship with my old boyfriend and his family was the one thing that could take me away from my relationship with my mother. And the relationship that I had with my father, even though it wasn't great, it was like the one thing - the other thing that could take me away from my mother (Text, pp. 183-185).

In general, then, the initial reading of the text reveals that although the bulimic woman experienced father as uninvolved or involved on the "sidelines," she also experienced her relationship with father as "more on a feeling level than with mother." The text revealed that with husband and father, "feelings entered into the [our] relationship." Whereas with mother, "feelings were not part of the [our] relationship" (Text, pp. 240-241).

#### The Experience of Relationship With Sister

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with sister also involved a) features of the experience which have continued throughout the relationship, b) changes in the experience of relationship over time, and c) a connection between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of relationship with sister.

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman "felt like an only child" growing up, since her sister was 11 years older than she. By the time the bulimic woman was six years old, her sister was away at college and she usually saw her during vacations. In general the bulimic woman experienced sister "as in the periphery." The text revealed that the bulimic woman "gravitated" toward sister, who was less "stoic and rigid" than mother:

(Excerpt #24)

I think because she was so much older and...my mom pushed me in a lot of ways to grow up fast, that I always looked towards her [sister] and always wanted to be like her....when I was in junior high, I's wear her clothes and...she was just somebody that I really looked up to....She wasn't around that much. It was almost like some kind of ideal that I was looking at...(Text, pp. 269-271)

However, the experience of wanting to emulate sister changed, once sister graduated from college and the bulimic woman was 11 years old. Sister was experienced to be even more distant from the bulimic woman:

(Excerpt #25)

...And then she graduated from college and moved away and got a job. And she hated it. And I guess she hated it because she was alone up there...but she started taking it out on the family. And she wouldn't talk to us. And she wouldn't talk to me. And it was just really strange....and she was just really rude overall....It seems like something happened during that time with her...And I don't know what it was, but I really lost a lot of the "I want to be just like my sister type of thing"...I was disappointed that this person that I was trying to emulate was going down before my eyes. I think I was disappointed, and I was confused because I didn't know who else to model myself after (Text, pp. 269-270).

In general, the initial reading of the text revealed that the relationship with sister is one in which the bulimic woman has experienced little validation, limited communication, and very little understanding from sister. For the most part, the experience with sister has been one in which sister remained physically and emotionally distant:

(Excerpt #26)

It seems like we were always very distant. The one distinct memory I have when I was growing up with her is that she would never let me hug her....it was not

like I was 12 years old. This was when I was four and five. It's always something that I remember and when I think about it, I can't think of when I ever hugged her....And that's really strange to me because our family did show affection....They [her parents] were always willing to give hugs and show affection....when my aunts and uncles would come from out of town. We would always kiss and hug them...She participated in that. Yet, whenever I tried to hug her when I was little, she always pushed me away....I remember I was really hurt...a couple of times I cried...because I couldn't understand. And then it got to the point when she kept pushing me away, that I thought something was wrong with me...or I was wrong to do that. And I think after that, I was just angry - after I don't know how many times or how many years....I had no idea why she was doing that....When I think about it, I can't think of my mom and sister hugging either (Text, pp. 274-276).

In terms of other changes in the experience of relationship over time, the text revealed a change in the experience of relationship with sister when the bulimic woman entered high school. This change was an experience of increased competition with sister:

(Excerpt #27)

...I think when I got into high school, and I started...having my own friends and getting good grades...I also felt in competition with her....I always felt in competition with her. And that's the feeling that I know I have now and I think she has now....I remember she was fourth in her class in high school. And I remember when I was a senior...my mom said and my principal saying, "Well your sister was fourth, I wonder where you're going to end up?" And I was third and...I could just feel...a competition there....And still now, even with our husbands and our jobs...I just feel like we're in direct competition...but it's subtle....I just always felt like people were comparing us and that we were comparing ourselves against the other....my parents did like influence it (Text, pp. 272-273).

The text revealed that the only time the bulimic woman really talked more with and felt closer to sister was for a brief time during high school:

(Excerpt #28)

The only time that we ever really talked was when all the stuff was going on with my mom, when I was in high school. And we talked then because she was trying to help....I almost think one of the reasons that it happened was because it was my sister and I against mom - the triangle that I've talked about before....I was able to get close to her then...but she didn't know what to do, and she didn't want to overstep her boundaries with my mother. But then the closeness only lasted so long....she was, we were able to communicate....and talk about my feelings with her...and I did feel validated....I really felt like she was listening....we were able to share something...share an experience....share our feelings about mom....Whereas before, we just never really shared anything about family....I didn't feel like I was competing against her (Text, pp. 274, 277, 279, 280-281).

The text revealed that after the above circumscribed period of closeness, that the experience of relationship with sister became one of distance again, as the bulimic woman entered college:

(Excerpt #29)

It only seemed to last so long. And when I was in college, we really weren't that close again....Her and her husband used to make fun of my major and stuff like that....We like gradually became separated again....she really wasn't able to help my situation with my mother....It was a big disappointment....I think then, my sister and my mother began to line up with each other. And there was two against one, but I was the one....(Text, pp. 277, 282-283).

The text revealed that the bulimic woman has experienced hurt and anger related to sister's aggressiveness, emotional distance, and uninvolved in her

life. The experience of relationship continues to be strained in the present:

(Excerpt #30)

...Now, it just seems like we just don't get along. We just don't really talk. If my sister and I are in the same room along together, chances are there's really not going to be conversation after we talk about the weather and her kids and whatever....it's hard for me because I really want a relationship with her....a lot of times, I just feel like she's so out there....I don't know how to get into her....past this almost aggressiveness...and actually talk to her....We get along OK on the phone....but when we're together face to face, there's no conversation....I want to talk to her, but I can't find the words or I don't know what to say...I'm as much to blame as...her...I'm not saying anything because I'm walking on eggshells. I'm afraid that if I say something, then it'll destroy everything and there won't be any way to have any kind of a relationship....I want to say the right thing (Text, pp. 287, 293, 298-299).

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman still experiences frustration, hurt, helplessness, and anxiety in trying to relate to sister. This experience was disclosed by the text in a recent situation, wherein the bulimic woman wrote a letter to sister to disclose her bulimia. Despite being more open with sister, sister has not responded to the letter. This felt lack of response was revealed to be a familiar experience for the bulimic woman:

(Excerpt #31)

"I've never felt like she could really understand me. And I don't think that...it was because I was that hard to understand, but because she just didn't make the effort to understand me (Text, p. 324).

Finally, the text revealed a connection between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of relationship with sister. The bulimic woman experiences a need to comfort herself with food, when she is with sister:

(Excerpt #32)

When I'm around her, I use food to comfort me....I don't purge and I don't...binge, but I can tell that I'm using food to comfort myself....I'm just thinking about this [recent] camping trip...I almost felt like I had to have something in my mouth constantly, during the whole two days....It's kind of a generalized feeling when I'm with my sister - actually with my mom, too, sometimes, especially when I'm in her house....maybe it's more of a fullness rather than a comfort [she's searching for].... (Text, pp. 301-302).

In summary, the initial reading of the text revealed that despite the hurt, anxiety, and frustration that the bulimic woman has experienced in the relationship with sister, she continues to want a relationship with her.

#### The Experience of Relationship With Best Friend and Peers

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with best friend and other peers involved a) features common to these relationships, b) features of the relationships that make them "work," c) the change in the experience of relationship with best friend over time, d) the bulimic woman's experience of how others see her, e) the disclosure of bulimia in the relationship with best friend, and f) the connections between the bulimic woman's relationship with food and the experience of relationships with peers.

Since the text spoke mainly to the experience of relationship with best friend, the majority of what follows involves this particular relationship. However, in disclosing the experience of relationship with best friend, the experience of relationships with peers in general emerged. Therefore, the experience of relationship with best friend will be discussed first, followed by what the text revealed regarding the experience of relationships with peers.

The text revealed that because of a recent move, the bulimic woman presently has no close friends nearby, and in fact, the bulimic woman has only had two close, best friends. She maintains consistent contact with only one of these best friends who went through graduate school with the bulimic woman. The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman is slow to develop close peer relationships and slow to self-disclose within these relationships:

(Excerpt #33)

...she was in all of my classes...but we didn't really become friends for like six months....But probably for six months after our friendship really started, it was just her sharing stuff with me (Text, p. 329).

The initial reading of the text disclosed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with best friend (and friends, in general) was one in which the bulimic woman felt her input was unimportant:

(Excerpt #34)

...with a lot of my friends and specifically with her, I would feel like what I had to say wasn't important, so I would just listen to her. And when she disclosed a lot of stuff about her past, and a lot of intimate things,....I could share an experience. However, I waited...a good six months before I did that. And so, sometimes, that was hard, cause I would actually think about it and say afterwards, "You should have said something...got something out," but I just wouldn't do it....She seemed to really need somebody to listen, and I just didn't feel like what I had to contribute or what I wanted to say was all that important (Text, pp. 329- 330).

The text also revealed that although the bulimic woman "didn't fear rejection" with best friend, she still felt the need to "hold back" in the relationship. The bulimic woman stated that the experience of "holding back" and feeling like a "burden" in the relationship is something she has experienced in other peer relationships:

(Excerpt #35)

...I've known her [other best friend] for a long time. She was the closest friend that I had in high school...but I didn't feel comfortable in talking about everything with her....sometimes I felt like I was really burdening her with my problems. I felt like I had to hold back in what I said to her. And maybe that's why I held back with A---, [college friend's name] also....I can't remember what signals I got, but I felt like, maybe, I should hold back....keep some of this stuff in (Text, pp. 346-347).

The text revealed that over time the bulimic woman did experience an increased amount of closeness with her best friend in college. The text disclosed what allowed this intimacy to develop:

(Excerpt #36)

I didn't fear rejection from her at all...that if I shared something with her that she was going to reject me. [With] other people, I think I do, but not with her. Probably because we had some similar experiences...when I heard her say something I could relate to...I would think, she went through it. Therefore, if I told her that I went through it...she wouldn't be shocked....The more we talked and the closer we got, I was able to share things with her....a non-judgmental person to talk with...somebody that can relate to what I'm feeling and what I've gone through....she's a very supportive person...validation of my feelings....a female that I can have that kind of relationship with....she fills a lot of the same needs that [my husband] does... (Text, pp. 330, 334-335).

The initial reading of the text also revealed that the bulimic woman experienced the relationship as "secure" with best friend. The bulimic woman spoke not only of the experience of "validation" within this relationship, but also of the experience of "non-competitiveness" in the relationship:

(Excerpt #37)

And it's a very non-competitive relationship. [Whereas] my friend in high school, I didn't feel like I was in a competition with her like my sister, but there was some competitiveness to it....It didn't happen with my friend in college. It was very non-competitive. It made me feel real good because it could have been competitive....we were in a lot of the same classes together...could have made it competitive, but that wasn't in there at all. We really helped each other through school, and we did a lot of things together...grades didn't mean anything to either one of us....a real good feeling to share things with another female and not have...competitiveness in it (Text, pp. 335-336).

The text revealed that the experience of mutual sharing and "open and non-judgmental communication" with best friend was very important in the relationship. The text disclosed

how this kind of relationship with a female was a new kind of experience for the bulimic woman:

(Excerpt #38)

...the communications we had...very open and non-judgmental...someone who really cared and really seemed to care about me and was really listening to me as much as I was into listening to her. And it's really good....She and I could sit down and talk about anything, whereas with my mom and my sister, that would never be the case. She and I are both more verbal than either my mom or my sister, and there were just things we could talk about that I could never talk about with my mom or my sister....We were able to be more open with each other than, I could ever be with my mom or my sister....With my best friend, I didn't have to think about what I was going to say and how that would impact on her. With my mom or sister...I would really pick and choose my words. And I also,...worry about how they were going to react. With my best friend, I didn't have to go through that process before I spoke with her....and not as anxious, if I was going to talk with her....I didn't feel there was going to be the rejection. I think that there could be the rejection from my mother or my sister. If my sister wasn't my sister, she wouldn't be a friend, or somebody I would talk to at all. And I always said that about my mom too. I wouldn't pick my mom as a friend. I wouldn't pick my sister as a friend.....They are not people that I feel comfortable talking with and sharing things with (Text, pp. 338-340).

The text also revealed that the bulimic woman's relationship with food entered the experience of relationship with best friend more directly, after the bulimic woman finally disclosed her "secret" to best friend last spring. Although the text initially revealed that the bulimic woman did not fear rejection from her best friend, the text later revealed that the bulimic woman did fear rejection from best friend in the face of revealing her bulimia to her:

(Excerpt #39)

She was very supportive....[but] I was scared of rejection....That was probably the only thing that I was scared she was going to reject me...but she didn't (Text, p. 331).

In addition, the text revealed that because best friend has rarely inquired about the bulimia, the bulimic woman has questioned her caring. The text revealed a change in the relationship which has involved the bulimic woman experiencing a distance from best friend:

(Excerpt #40)

...We keep in touch now every few weeks. We'll talk, but she rarely asks me about it now....and that's weird for me. I don't know if she's uncomfortable in talking about it, or if she feels that I could be uncomfortable in talking about it. And I don't bring it up because I think she might be uncomfortable. So it's just this cycle....I'm surprised that she hasn't said anything. She's not that type of person to hold things in....sometimes, I think that she doesn't care because she's not asking. She knows what an impact it has on my life. But then I look at it, and I say, "Well, you know that's stupid. She cares about me"....think it's because she doesn't know what to say or what to ask....[I experience] probably sadness also....I did wait so long to share with her....It [bulimia] was one of those things where we talked about it after I told her, but then I was the one to close it, shut the conversation....I might be giving her the feeling that I could be uncomfortable (Text, pp. 331-333).

In terms of the experience of relationships with peers, in general, the text revealed that the bulimic woman fears rejection and is perceived as being "stuck up and snobbish." The bulimic woman feels uncertain about how to handle interpersonal interactions at times and tends to "hold back" in relationships. The text revealed that she is presently working on how to be more open with others:

(Excerpt #41)

Well, the pattern that I usually have...I didn't realize....a lot of times I appear to be stuck up and snobbish. So that's something that I'm working on here...trying to be more open with people....It's something everybody's always said about me ever since I was in high school....number one, the way I dress...number two, I appear not to be like real interested in the conversation or something like that, because I feel like I'm intruding. So, I like, kind of stand back and don't really say a lot, because if two people are having a conversation...I'm afraid that I'm going to intrude into it. So I think my distance sometimes is interpreted as, "Oh, she just doesn't want to be involved with us or anything." Whereas, I don't really know how to handle it. I don't want to overstep my boundaries.....not really knowing why people want me to be around them....[I feel] more intrusive than like a burden in this case....It just seems like there's a definite line between when I get to know people and when I know people (Text, pp. 353-356).

Finally, the text revealed a connection between the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with peers and her relationship with food. The text disclosed that the bulimic woman "lets things pile up" in relationships with peers until it feels like "she has to let it out." The text disclosed the way food is used, when something is lacking in the experience of relationships with peers:

(Excerpt #42)

I think that if I was able to share more things with people and with friends, that I would get comfort. And I think when I don't, that I use food as that comfort (Text, p. 349).

Although the text did not disclose any specific events that contributed to her use of food or her engaging in binge-purge behaviors, the bulimic woman does experience a

connection between her use of food and her inability to self-disclose with others.

#### The Experience of Relationship With the Researcher

The initial reading of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with the researcher involved a focus on the features of the relationship that made it "work" and feel "comfortable." The initial reading revealed that the bulimic woman experienced the relationship with the researcher as very comfortable. Initially, the text disclosed that the comfort was related to the bulimic woman not knowing the researcher and to her beginning attempts at sharing with peers in an eating disorder group:

(Excerpt #43)

I felt very comfortable with this. I think that if I hadn't been going to the group first, I might have felt more uncomfortable. I'm not sure why, but it could just be that I had already started sharing with people that I hadn't known. And it was helping me. So that in sharing these things with you, I also went into it looking at the fact that it was going to help me. And I really haven't felt uncomfortable through the whole thing....I've shared a lot more with you than I've probably shared with my best friend. And I've told you things that I could still feel uncomfortable in telling her at this point. So, I think that has something to do with the fact that I really didn't know you (Text, p. 383).

The initial reading also disclosed that the comfort experienced in the relationship with the researcher was related to a feeling of mutuality:

(Excerpt #44)

...And that it [the relationship] was very mutual. I mean, I was being helped by doing this, but you were getting something out of it....Both parties have gotten something out of it (Text, pp. 383, 389).

In addition, the text revealed that the bulimic woman anticipated some pain in the experience of relationship with the researcher. The bulimic woman stated she knew that "throughout the whole process, pain would be a factor, but that she wanted to get better and knew this would not be easy" (Text, p. 28). The text also revealed that the experience of "validation" in the relationship with the researcher helped promote a level of comfort, despite any pain experienced in the relationship. This is noted in the excerpt below:

(Excerpt #45)

...Probably also, a sense of validation. I think that's why I feel like the relationship worked, because I did feel validated with you. And I was very...comfortable in sharing with you. So, that was a big part of it. Both the non-verbal cues I picked up from you and...you were very attentive, very sensitive. You were probing in a meaningful way....Probably [this relationship was the closest to] my relationship with my husband. Because overall, of all the relationships I had, I think I felt most comfortable in sharing with him quickly. I have in the past and and continue to feel very validated by him (Text, p. 386-387).

The initial reading of the text also revealed that in addition to the validation experienced in the relationship with the researcher, the bulimic woman also experienced a feeling of "non-competitiveness:"

(Excerpt #46)

I think it [relationship with the researcher] has meant a great deal to me because I feel that it has been helpful - just like with my best friend. It's felt good to interact with a female in a non-competitive atmosphere, and [I] just feel very comfortable with that, especially when both parties have gotten something out of it (Text, p. 389).

Finally, the text revealed that the experience of flexibility in the relationship helped it to work and feel comfortable:

(Excerpt #47)

[I thought] that you were going to have more of a set agenda....And you didn't. And I felt good about that cause I felt that you were very flexible....And even though I like structure, I didn't feel confined. It feels very free, very comfortable....Cause I can say what I want to. I mean I feel comfortable in saying that, then. There must be some kind of validation there (Text, pp. 390-391).

#### The Bulimic Woman's Overall Experience of Relationships

Although the text did reveal features of the experience of relationships which did not cut across all relationships, the initial reading of the text did reveal some features common to the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships. This general experience of relationships is clearer after reviewing the above experience of relationships with particular significant others in the everyday life of the bulimic woman. This overall experience of relationships comes from an initial reading of how constitutive partial meanings of the experience of relationship relate to the experience of relationship as a

whole. This initial reading is concerned with meaning as it relates to reference--or how, through the use of language, meaning is initially ascribed to extra-linguistic reality.

An initial reading of the text, constituted by the above sections and their respective excerpts, revealed that the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships involved a) features common to the experience of relationships and b) a connection between the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and her relationship with food. In terms of features common to the experience of relationships, the bulimic woman has difficulty acknowledging feelings (especially anger) to herself, difficulty "getting angry at others," and difficulty "getting her anger out appropriately." The initial reading of the text also revealed that, in general, the bulimic woman is frightened of being rejected, is frightened regarding self-disclosure to others, and is frightened by her own feelings of vulnerability in relationships. This "terror" of self-exposure, especially regarding the bulimia is fueled by her general experience of "needing to keep secrets." This experience of keeping secrets in relationships with others was emphasized throughout her younger years.

The initial reading of the text also revealed that the bulimic woman experienced others, especially at the start of relationships, to judge her worth as a person based on her

performance. This experience was fed by another experience of "needing to be perfect." In addition, the bulimic woman worried about how others viewed her. The overall experience of relationship was one in which the bulimic woman anticipated conditional acceptance based on her behavior and a lack of emotional caring for herself as a person. Throughout much of the bulimic woman's life, she experienced a dance with others that involved over-involvement when she did not want closeness and under-involvement when she did want closeness, understanding, and support. In general, the bulimic woman did not experience a "good fit" in terms of her needs and feelings and the response to these from significant others in her environment. The text revealed that the experience of this "poor fit" changed in the relationship with husband and best friend.

The initial reading of the text also revealed that the bulimic woman "holds back" in relationships. She often "let's thing pile up" until she "can't hold them in anymore" and has to express them. This self-expression can occur by way of talking or arguing with others, by way of the angry, "silent treatment," or by way of binging and purging. The text also revealed that the bulimic woman experiences worry that if she "says the wrong thing," she will destroy whatever relationship she does have with others. She experiences her ideas and feedback as less important than those of others and also feels a burden in relationships or

feels intrusive upon entering into relationships. The bulimic woman worries that her entry into a relationship will be unwelcome and she questions why people seek relationships with her. The text revealed that those relationships in which she has experienced validation of her opinions and feelings and respect for her as a person, apart from her performance, have been the most successful and gratifying. The increased communication she experiences in these relationships is the outcome of a dance between the bulimic woman and the other. This dance involves the bulimic woman feeling validated and secure in the relationship and safe enough to be self-revealing, while experiencing the other as self-disclosing and receptive to her feedback. The text revealed that relationships in which both the bulimic woman and the other feel a sense of mutuality, mutual sharing and mutual support, the relationship is most satisfying.

Finally, the text revealed a connection between the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships and her relationship with food. The bulimic woman was not able to identify specific events or feelings that related to binge-purge episodes, however, she was able to identify certain general experiences that would affect her relationship with food, including: a) not "being herself" in relationships with others, b) difficulty sharing with others, c) feeling out of control, anxious, helpless, and overburdened, d) a

lack of validation, e) acute or chronic feelings of anger, f) a feeling of loss or abandonment, and g) the need to "stuff feelings" that are unsafe to express. The text revealed that these experiences would lead to either the experience of needing food "constantly in her mouth," experiences of over-eating, eating when she was not hungry, binging, or binging and purging. The text revealed that in general, when the bulimic woman could not share her feelings and thoughts with others, she would turn to food to "comfort" herself or to get "some peace." These food experiences would serve to decrease the effects of the above experiences of relationship that contributed to the use of food as comforter and peace-maker. The text revealed that the bulimic woman has difficulty directly seeking comfort from others.

### Conclusion

The initial understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships represents a naive, surface understanding of the meanings of the text as a whole. Initial understanding has provided an understanding of the text in terms of its reference, i.e., how language relates to extra-linguistic reality. However, this understanding is incomplete and is unable to be called an interpretation until it is informed by the explanatory process of structural analysis. Additional readings of the text which involve the interpretive dialectics of explanation-

understanding, distanciation-appropriation and explanation-comprehension are required to produce a fully informed and critical understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These additional readings of parts and whole of the text will reveal an indepth contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which culminates in an appropriation of meaning.

#### From Explanation to Comprehension: The Use of Structural Analysis

The second main dialectic movement within the dialectic of explanation-understanding is the movement from explanation to comprehension. This second kind of understanding is informed by explanation and culminates in the act of appropriation--the critical understanding of the text and the world it reveals (Ricoeur, 1976). In moving toward this indepth, critical understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, the interpreter is first required to take an explanatory "methodological detour" via the use of structural analysis. Structural analysis assists in the explication of the "sense" component of the sense/reference dialectic of meaning. The reading one does in examining the sense component of meaning involves a suspension of the reference of the text to extra-linguistic reality. Instead, the focus of this kind of reading becomes the internal linguistic structure of the text. Therefore, the "meaning" one achieves through

structural analysis is not meaning in the existential or philosophical sense, but meaning provided by the configuration of the linguistic units themselves. Structural analysis is a process within which the text is objectified and viewed as a closed system of signs or "constitutive linguistic units," in each sign or unit relates only to other signs or units in the lexical system of the text. The linguistic units compose the whole and parts of the text, and together they represent the structure of the text. The linguistic units provide "boundary situations" which constitute the "ultimate referent" of the text (Ricoeur, 1976).

In other words, the explanatory detour through structural analysis first requires the reader to remain in a "state of suspense" regarding any reference to reality. During this kind of reading, one treats the text as a "worldless entity," thanks to the non-ostensive reference in written discourse (i.e., the lack of a situation common to both reader and writer). This initial reading gives "structure to" and prepares one for a second kind of reading which involves actualizing the meaning of the text in a new situation. This second reading involves creating a new ostensive reference of the text, seeing the world revealed by the text, and appropriating meaning (Ricoeur, 1976). The first reading which entails the use of structural analysis and the identification of the constitutive units will be

discussed below. The second reading which entails the final movement toward a critical understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships will be discussed in the section that follows.

### Structural Analysis and the Constitutive Linguistic Units

Multiple critical readings of the text revealed a number of constitutive linguistic units woven throughout the parts of the text. Together, these units provided a unified structure and inner logic of the narrative and may also be viewed as codes which assisted in the explanation of the narrative. The codes revealed in this text were constituted by interrelated phrases and sentences, including:

a) units of action including doing and emotive verbs such as "telling about the bulimia," "I was angry," "living a secret life," and, "acting perfect;" b) units signifying the one doing the action, or the actor, such as "the one telling or I" (the bulimic woman narrator), "mother", and "father;" c) units signifying tentative language such as "I guess I was angry" and "I almost felt abandoned;" and d) units signifying extremist or dichotomous language such as "I never felt I could get close," and "I was totally out of control." The identified actor, action, and "other" codes are listed below:

<u>Actor Codes:</u>	<u>Action Codes:</u>	<u>Other Codes:</u>
1) spouse	1) telling about it	1) Tentative
2) mother	2) living a secret	Language

- |                |                  |               |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|
| 3) father      | life             | 2) Extremist/ |
| 4) sister      | 3) being out of  | Dichotomous   |
| 5) best friend | control with the | Language      |
| 6) researcher  | eating           |               |
- 4) I was angry
  - 5) holding in emotion
  - 6) acting perfect
  - 7) see me as a total person
  - 8) getting the validation
  - 9) getting the support
  - 10) being abandoned
  - 11) feeling guilty
  - 12) under mom's control
  - 13) involved on the sidelines
  - 14) everything exploded
  - 15) into her world

An example of the "bundle" of interrelated phrases and sentences which constituted the action code "living a secret life" is shown in the excerpt below:

(Excerpt #48)

...I was bulimic when I first met my husband, and I hid it from him for about two years... So, in a way, I felt like I was living in a secret life... I really did hide it! I made a lot of excuses to use a bathroom, after I ate. And I knew that he suspected something was up, but I wasn't going to tell him then. I guess I just

wasn't ready to tell him. And he was the first person I told....but I also felt alone because the other thing she'd say is, "You can't talk to anybody else." It was one of those things where you can't talk to anybody else outside the family about the family problems....I felt like the burden was on my shoulders. I felt very alone. And then I started talking outside the family, naturally. But I got into trouble for that....if she found out...she would confront me with it. Usually, she was on the defensive. I was on the defensive....she would tell me I couldn't talk outside the family, and she would find out that I did....I would say I needed to talk with somebody. She would say, "You can always talk to me," and I would end up crying. And she would be offended that I was crying....One of the things she did was tell me everything that was going on at the bank....Then she would swear me to secrecy. I just felt like it wasn't supposed to be talked about. So, I mean the whole rifle incident [father's suicidal gesture] put a barrier in our relationship....I grew up thinking that anything that happened in the house was a secret. It was supposed to be hidden. I mean it was so closed to begin with...his alcoholism was supposed to be kept a secret....It seemed like there was a little place for things and the family were supposed to hide in there. And they just got pocketed in their place and that was it....There's a little pocket that holds all those secrets - supposedly of the family....when my mom used to find out that I would tell people about something, and she would get really upset....And I was in such a mentality that you keep everything inside that I never even thought of asking him or bringing it up....I was just more aware of that [father's alcoholism] than other secrets, I guess....Keeping secrets was always there....It's a lifestyle. It's a whole lifestyle (Text, pp. 3-4, 94-95, 126, 201, 204, 206-208).

Analysis of the codes of the text revealed that there were particular relationships among the action, actor, and "other" language codes, as well as distinctions among these codes. The text revealed that certain action codes were associated with certain actor codes. For example, the following action codes and "other" codes were related most often to the actor of the bulimic woman (narrator): a)

"telling about it;" b) "living a secret life;" c) "being out of control with eating;" d) "I was angry;" e) "holding in emotions;" f) "acting perfect;" g) "feeling guilty;" h) "under mom's control;" i) "into her world;" j) "tentative language;" and k) "extremist/dichotomous language." The action codes of "caring for the person instead of the performance" and "getting the validation" were most often related to the actor of mother, moderately related to the actor of sister, and related to a lesser extent to the actors of spouse, father, best friend, and researcher. The action codes of "getting support" and "being abandoned" were most often related to the actor of father, moderately related to the actors of sister and spouse, and related to a lesser degree to the actor of best friend. Finally, the action code "everything exploded" was related to all the actor codes except the codes of best friend and researcher.

In the analysis of the structure of the narrative, the actors are defined by the predicates of action. It is clear that the action codes and the particular phrases and sentences which constitute these codes help to explicate the sense of what the actors are doing or their formalized roles in the narrative. The actors are the ones who do the acts. For example, the ones who "do the telling," "live the secret life," and "act perfect." Also, the actors are the ones to whom the acts are done. For example, it is with the actor of spouse that the narrator (bulimic woman) finally reveals

the secret of bulimia and the actor of mother with whom the narrator (bulimic woman) gets angry. In examining the ways that the action codes help illuminate what the actors do in the narrative, one also observes that the actions of the actors are reciprocal in nature. For example, mother provides validation for perfect performance to the bulimic woman (narrator) who responds with unexpressed anger and guilt. This unexpressed anger and guilt reinforces mother's expectations of perfect performance and the narrator's performance itself. Therefore, the text reveals that the actions of actors are reciprocal in nature and that the actors are in some way all related to one another. The actors in this narrative represent actors within the culture of the bulimic woman's familial and social network. Together, these actors represent a sense structure or "web of familial and social relationship roles." Thus, structural analysis reveals a "hierarchy of actors correlative to the hierarchy of actions" (Ricoeur, 1976).

Finally, in analyzing the action and "other" language codes of the text, one observes that these codes may be grouped according to the actions they addressed. Altogether, three groupings of codes were identified. The first group of action and "other" language codes which follows, represented a "holding back" in the experience of relationships with others: a) telling about it; b) living a secret life; c) holding in emotions, d) acting perfect; and

e) tentative language. The following second group of action and "other" language codes represented the dichotomous shifts and intensity of the experience of relationships with others. This group of codes addressed the felt "overload" or stress in the experience of relationships, as well as the injurious factors or actions which were related to a "breakdown" in relationships. This second group included: a) being out of control with eating; b) I was angry; c) being abandoned; d) feeling guilty; e) under mom's control; f) involved on the sidelines; g) everything exploded; h) into her world; and i) extremist/dichotomous language. The third group of action codes represented the deficiencies experienced in relationships with others. This group also simultaneously represented those action codes related to relationship "healing" and relationship building in the experience of relationships with others. This last group of action codes included the following: a) see me as a total person; b) getting the validation; and c) getting the support.

#### Temporal codes

A narrative work needs to demonstrate the ability to reveal the temporal character of human experience and to creatively imitate or represent human action (Ricoeur, 1984). Therefore, along with the above action, actor, and "other" codes, additional analysis of the text revealed the temporal structure of the narrative as a whole. This

analysis showed that there were varieties of temporal experience offered to the reader. As Ricoeur states, "The narrator offers the reader an "armful of temporal experiences to share" (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 102). This sharing serves ultimately to refigure time itself and to help explicate the meaning of these temporal experiences for the reader. Thus, it is important to examine the "tale of time" revealed by the narrative.

The analysis of the narrative in this inquiry revealed the following temporal features:

1) The narrative limited all the events of the story to the span of time between early childhood (ages 5-6) and young adulthood (age 22) of the narrator. In other words, narrated time involved about 17 consecutive years of the narrator's life.

2) The time the narrative was actually composed and inscribed occurred when the narrator was 22 years old and over a two-month period of time.

3) The narrated time regarding the experience of relationship with each character (significant other) in the narrative differed based on the particular character. For example, narrated time reached from childhood to the present time for the experience of relationships with mother and sister, whereas, narrated time for the experience of relationship with father extended from early childhood to late adolescence because of father's death. Also, there was

an emphasis on narrated time of past experiences of relationships with others, as opposed to present relationships. For example, much narrated time involved the past experience of relationships with mother and sister, as opposed to involving narrated time regarding present or expected experiences of relationships with them in the future.

4) The time spent narrating regarding the narrator's experience of relationships with various characters differed according to the particular character. For example, narration related to the experience of relationship with mother required the longest period of time. Time spent narrating regarding the experience of relationships with father and spouse were approximately equal and required the next longest period of time. Finally, time spent narrating about the experiences of relationships with sister, best girlfriend, and the researcher required the least amount of time, respectively.

5) Temporal experiences were related within the context of the narrator's experience of relationships with the characters throughout the course of her life from age 5 to age 22.

6) There were movements back and forth in time in the narrative. Sometimes these movements covered decades of time during the progression of the shifts in the experience of relationships with the characters. As Ricoeur states,

"As the narrative is pulled ahead by everything that happens--however small it be--in the narrated time, it is at the same time pulled backward, delayed so to speak, by ample excursions into the past,....flashbacks [can] paradoxically make the narrated time advance by delaying it. They can hollow out from within the instant of the event in thought,...so that the total interval of the narrative, despite its relative brevity, seems rich with an implied immensity" (1985, p. 103).

7) There was a juxtaposition of each character's and the narrator's experience of time. The temporal experiences of other characters were revealed by the narrator (i.e., according to the narrator's perception of these experiences).

Structural analysis of the narrative revealed two main temporal codes in the narrative: chronological time and internally experienced or "personal" time of the narrator and characters. These codes became clearer after identifying the particular words, phrases, and sentences in the text which referred to time. Since the narrative in this inquiry focused mainly on the narrator's experience of relationships with and experiences of time in relation to the characters (significant others) in the narrative, this analysis will focus on the temporal experiences of the narrator as revealed in the above two codes. The code of

chronological time will be addressed first and the code of internally experienced or personal time second.

Numerous words, phrases, and sentences which referred to or "marked out" the passing of chronological time in the text. Chronological time refers to the linear, public conceptualization and experience of time, whereas, internally experienced or personal time refers to a temporal experience which is private and related to the various meanings of a temporal event. For example a clock might strike 1:00 p.m. for everyone in a narrative, but what this striking of 1:00 p.m. means and the way in which it is experienced among characters in a narrative can be different. The striking of the hour can be experienced as having taken little or enormous amounts of time. The striking of the hour can also mean fear of imminent death or happiness related to an anticipated festive event.

In the narrative of this inquiry, the narrator marks out or refers to chronological time in the narrative as it relates to certain significant life events. Examples of these events included: a) the time of father's death at age 19 and the change in the experience of relationship with mother at this age in relation to father's death; b) the time of parental separation during freshman year in high school; c) times (certain years) in the experience of relationship with father before and after his consistent absence from the home beginning at age 10; d) the period of

time when others knew the narrator before and after she disclosed to them her secret of bulimia, e.g., one year ago for spouse and last spring for best friend; e) the years or dates of certain rebellions experienced in the relationship with mother; and f) the passing of time in hours or days between binges. The following excerpt reveals a grouping of several specific references to chronological time identified in the narrative. These references to chronological time involve the passing of time as it is related to experiences with husband, old boyfriend, and father, respectively. The following excerpt also shows how chronological time is experienced in terms of clock and calendar time:

(Excerpt #49)

...I was bulimic when I first met my husband. And I hid it from him for about two years. It's only been in the past, just since last October, is when I first told him....About three weeks after his brother's death, his parents and I went to see him [old boyfriend] for homecoming weekend at college and that was like the last time that I actually was with him on any kind of intimate relationship basis. And after that we wrote a few letters....My dad and I got together on a very irregular, infrequent basis....he used to send me gifts constantly for all holidays. And for my birthday, he would send me money, for Valentine's Day, he would send me roses and money. He'd send cards on St. Patrick's Day. Things he never did before....After like I was 10 years old, he was never at home....Even when I graduated from high school, that's when my parents were separated, and they really didn't talk! He didn't sit down in the auditorium. He stood! Like by the door and took pictures there. But he never sat down. So I guess that it's [being on the sidelines] carried through like...12 years later, and he was still like that (Text, pp. 3-4, 150, 198, 209, 216).

In addition to the temporal code of chronological time, the narrative also contained references to the code of

internally experienced or personal time. In the text of this inquiry, these internal temporal experiences were often identified within the context of changes in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with the characters over time. For example, the movement in time from childhood years to adolescent years brought an increased experience of "rebellious or angry times" in the experience of relationship with mother. In effect, the narrator aged, just as other people age, but her particular experience of this passing time was unique to her situation and being-in-the-world. However, internal experiences of time were also revealed as they related to certain unchanged experiences of relationship with characters over time. For example, the text revealed that the narrator experienced frequent, almost continuous "angry times" with mother for a number of years. The following excerpt reveals examples of the internally experienced or personal time code found in the structure of the text:

(Excerpt #50)

The best instance I have of the silent treatment, and this is the longest she ever did it, was when she found out I was having sex in 12th grade. That was when she read my poetry. It was a silent treatment for a good two months. It was a real long time....that was really like talking to a wall! I got nowhere!....Those were a terrible two months because in that time, this happened in January of my senior year, so I was in the process of picking out what college I wanted to go to....And she said that because I had sex, I was too immature to go away to school....I think for that whole, those whole six months [were] almost like a living hell. That's probably one of the worst times (Text, pp. 87-89).

The above excerpt reveals not only the passage of time, but also the experience of pain in its passage. This experience is representative of the narrator's personal time and an example of the personal temporal code found in the text. The following excerpt reveals an additional example of the personal temporal code constituting the structure of the text:

(Excerpt #51)

It didn't turn into bulimia until like when I was 18. I was going out with a guy that I went out with in high school....And that was a really close relationship not only with him but with his family....It was at the point he was about to go back to school down there. We had just had a really good summer...I think it started around that time...the next is when his brother died and then kind of everything exploded - both our relationship and the relationship that I had with his family, and the relationship with my mom....That was basically when it fell apart....throughout this whole time my mom was still on both of our cases and restricted our seeing each other....And this just seemed like the last straw, when his brother passed away. It, at that point, I mean he couldn't handle school and our relationship.....at all the same time....The whole summer was just so good. An it seemed like it was going to work out, and then, in a matter of a day, it just seemed like everything ended. And I didn't have his family anymore. I didn't have him...like I said, everything ended (Text, pp. 146, 148-149, 186-187).

The above excerpt reveals that not only did months pass over the summer, but that the narrator's experience of this time also changed as time passed. This excerpt revealed the rapidity and intensity of changes as they were experienced by the narrator in time. The summer, initially a time of hope and happiness, was ultimately experienced as a time of loss and grief.

### Summary

The above process of structural analysis aided in the explanatory work of identifying and clarifying the internal structure or logic of the narrative. Structural analysis provided codes which assisted in the creation of "boundary situations." The linguistic boundaries identified via structural analysis were essential for the next dialectic movement within the interpretive dialectic of explanation - understanding (comprehension and appropriation). These boundaries prevented the reader from developing an understanding of the text which would be solely based on an intuitive grasping of the intention of the text. Instead, the boundary situations disclosed by the sense meaning of the text helped move the reader to a more critical, informed, and indepth understanding of the text.

Therefore, the work of structural analysis revealed the structural clues of the text. These clues helped reveal the following sense meaning of the narrative: The narrative of the text was a network of actor, action, "other" language, and temporal codes. This system of codes spoke to a phenomenology of relationships within the culture of the bulimic woman's family and social network. Indeed, it is accurate to say that the narrative has been explained, however, the narrative is yet to be interpreted. Structural analysis showed the logic of operations which related "bundles of interrelated phrases and sentences" in the

making of the codes of the text. This logic is the "structural law of the narrative." During the kind of reading required in the work of structural analysis, the text was only seen as text--a closed system of constitutive linguistic units or codes. This kind of reading required the suspension of meaning in terms of the narrative's reference to extra-linguistic reality and the postponement of any actualization of meaning for the researcher as the contemporary reader (Ricoeur, 1976).

The purpose of structural analysis was to move the reader from a surface semantics or initial, naive understanding of the text, to a depth semantics or critical understanding of the text. This movement from explanation to comprehension and appropriation leads the interpreter to see the world revealed by the text and illuminates the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The processes of comprehension and appropriation and the interpretive findings they revealed will be discussed in the following section.

### **Comprehension and Appropriation**

Before presenting the final interpretive findings of the text as they were revealed via the interpretive dialectic of explanation-comprehension, it is important to briefly revisit the processes of comprehension and appropriation of the text. The movement toward comprehension and appropriation involves a second kind of

reading of the text which will ultimately lead the reader toward a critical, contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Whereas structural analysis involved a distancing from the discourse of the text and an objectification of the text, the process of comprehension involves a dialectic of engagement with and disengagement from the text. Disengagement involves the critical reflection upon the plurivocal meanings which emerge from the text, while engagement involves interaction with the text which allows the interpreter to reflect upon the context of the discourse. This latter reflective process leads to the appropriation of the most probable meaning of the text. This appropriation of meaning is experienced as an event in which the present reader experiences a "grasping together" of the parts and whole of the text.

#### Semantic Analysis

During the second reading involved in the process of comprehension, the "boundary situations" disclosed by the structural analysis above, are further revealed by a semantic analysis of the text. It is the semantic analysis of the text which reveals how the "boundary situations" constitute the "ultimate referent" of the narrative (Ricoeur, 1976). It is the task of a semantic analysis of the text to interpret and reveal the extra-linguistic meaning of the narrative. This revelation is possible with

the reading of the text as discourse, constitutive of sentences which bear meaning and reference. Therefore, the movement from explanation to comprehension involves a shift from the "sense-meaning" of the text to its reference: from what the narrative says to what it talks about. For example, in this inquiry there is movement from explaining the linguistic structure of the narrative regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships to understanding the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The reference meaning is informed by the sense-meaning. The shift from sense to reference "delivers the text from virtuality to actuality" in the understanding of the text as an event of discourse (Ricoeur, 1978c). It is in this shift from virtuality and structure to actuality and reference, that the reader can more clearly see the existential issues or aporias of human experience revealed by the narrative.

The semantic analysis of the text is based upon a contextual theory of meaning. The contextual theory of meaning assists the interpreter to reflect critically upon the polysemy of words as she/he attempts to explicate the most probable meanings of the constitutive linguistic units or codes rendered by the structural analysis. The interpreter argues for the most probable meanings of the text as discourse, based upon the context of the narrative. A semantic analysis of the text is necessary as "words have

no proper meaning, because no meaning can be said to belong to them; and they do not possess any meaning in themselves, because it is discourse, taken as a whole, that carries the meaning, itself an undivided whole" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 77). In other words, in ordinary language there are no fixed expressions independent of their contextual uses.

Consideration of only an implied context as given by the familiar dictionary definitions of words is inadequate. For example, in semantic analysis, the interpreter also utilizes the context of the sentence and surrounding discourse when faced with the polysemic nature of ordinary language in the text. This task involves the consideration of the syntactic structure of the sentence because the relationship of noun and verb and their modifiers help filter polysemy.

In semantic analysis, one sees how the context of the sentence and the surrounding discourse render a certain determinateness of meaning to words. This determinateness of meaning emerges only in specific utterances. For example, even when one uses proper names (the most concrete of all words) like "Abraham Lincoln," the context acts as a filter to clarify which Abraham Lincoln is actually referred to in our discourse. The reference could be to Abraham Lincoln, the young man, Abraham Lincoln, the president during the civil war, or Abraham Lincoln, the assassinated president. The context also illuminates the emotive side of word-meaning. For example, the context provides emotive

overtones to the word, "home," in the statement, "Home, sweet home." However, the word-meaning is expressed in an objective fashion in the phrase, "Home Services." Finally, the context of the sentence and the surrounding discourse help dispel the ambiguity of words belonging to more than one word-class. For example, "fire" is primarily a noun, but it can also be used as a verb. The context of the sentence and the surrounding discourse can help with the understanding of homonyms, e.g., the word "sole." This word can be used as an adjective (meaning "only"), or as a noun (meaning "the bottom of the foot" or a kind of "fish"). In general, the influence of context is the main guarantee of the smooth working of polysemy (Ullman, 1962).

In addition to the influence of the linguistic context on certain words, phrases, and sentences in the text, there are also non-linguistic contextual influences which affect language and the understanding of the meaning of discourse. The interpreter considers the context of the situation in which the speech-event occurs. For example, a speech event can occur in a culture in which the whole or parts of language may have a certain meaning (Ullman, 1962). Also, language can be affected by social forces such as new cultural objects in the field of naming, the depositing of beliefs and the projection of social ideals in certain key words, the presence or removal of linguistic taboos, and political or cultural domination by a linguistic group,

social class, or cultural milieu (Ricoeur, 1975). Therefore, linguistic and non-linguistic contexts are important to consider in the process of semantic analysis. Semantic analysis involves an examination of meaning based on multiple contexts.

The interpreter's goal throughout the process of semantic analysis in this inquiry, was to use the context of the narrative to decipher the most probable meaning of a sentence from all the possible meanings. As Ricoeur (1975, 1978b) indicates, words alone have a potential meaning. He states that "in isolation, a word still has only a potential meaning, made up of the sum of its partial meanings, themselves defined by the types of contexts in which they can participate. They have actual meaning only in a given sentence, in an instance of discourse" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 129). Therefore, in discourse, where the sentence is the focus, meaning is actualized and refers to an extra-linguistic reality. According to the contextual theory of meaning, the context allows one to understand the missing parts of discourse implied in the meaning of words, and also, the situations represented by these missing terms (Ricoeur, 1975). In this inquiry, the interpreter moved toward an actualization of the meaning of the text, through the process of semantic analysis. This movement culminated in the act of appropriation, where the contemporary reader

(interpreter) fully actualized the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed by the text.

### Appropriation

Appropriation is the counterpart of the distanciation involved in the earlier objectification of the text. Appropriation involves the assignment and actualization of meaning--the return to discourse as event. The interpretation of the text is completed when reading yields something like an event, an event of discourse in the present moment. As stated earlier in this inquiry, what is appropriated is not the mental intention of the author hidden behind the text, the historical situation common to the author and original audience, nor the feelings of the original readers. What is appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, its "pro-ject" or world (Ricoeur, 1976). The text reveals a mode of "being-in-the-world" in front of itself, via its non-ostensive references. The non-ostensive references are those references that literary works make to certain events, things, states of affairs, and characters which are not "concretely there" (Ricoeur, 1978d). During appropriation, the reader imaginatively actualizes the potential non-ostensive references of the text in a new situation. The contemporary reader, thereby, creates a new ostensive reference because of his/her engagement with the text in the process of appropriation. Appropriation is the final act in the acquisition of a critical and contextual

understanding of the text and of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which it reveals.

What follows the above discussion of comprehension and appropriation are the interpretive findings these processes rendered in this inquiry, beginning with the semantic analysis of the text. This work involved the interpretation of the constitutive linguistic units or codes (interrelated phrases and sentences regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships) in the text. In this work, the text was read as discourse-- constitutive of sentences that bear meaning and reference to the real world. Since the critical features of a narrative work involve its ability to demonstrate the temporal character of human experience and its ability to creatively imitate or represent human action, the semantic analysis in this inquiry focused on the following action and temporal codes: a) telling about it, b) living a secret life, c) being out of control with the eating, d) I was angry, e) see me as a total person, f) involved on the sidelines, g) everything exploded, h) into her world, i) chronological time, and j) internally experienced or personal time. The remaining codes a) holding in emotions, b) acting perfect, c) getting the validation, d) getting the support, e) being abandoned, f) feeling guilty, and g) under mom's control were not interpreted because reading revealed that their literal interpretations were sufficient. In this inquiry, "literal"

signifies the "current" or "usual" meaning, the most common lexical meaning associated with the phrases that constituted the code. For example, the text disclosed that the code, "holding in emotions," means "keeping one's feelings to oneself." This meaning is one that required no further interpretation, when read within the context of the narrative. The meaning of "holding in emotions" is a common and straightforward one. Semantic analysis and further mediation are reserved for those codes that required additional interpretation because of their obscurity and/or potential multiplicity of meanings within the context of the narrative.

The interpretive findings below are presented in the context of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Each action code speaks to particular experiences of relationships. If an experience of relationship with a particular "character" or significant other is not mentioned within the interpretation of a given code, it is because the text did not disclose this experience of relationship as commonly related to the code. In terms of those codes which will not be discussed below, a brief statement regarding the use of the code within particular experiences of relationships is useful. The text revealed that the code "holding in emotions" was often used within the context of the experience of relationships with mother and sister, and to a lesser extent with husband, father, best friend, and

the researcher. The code "acting perfect" was often used within the context of the experience of relationship with mother and used to a lesser degree in the context of relationship with husband and sister. The code "getting the validation" was used in the context of the experience of an absence of validation occurred in the relationship with mother, while a very small amount of validation occurred within the relationship with sister. An experience of increased validation occurred in the relationships with husband, best friend, father, and the researcher. The code, "getting the support," was often used within the context of the experience of relationships with father (an absence of it) and husband (the presence of it). The text revealed that the code, "feeling guilty," was particularly used within the context of the experience of relationship with mother (guilt for angry feelings) and to a lesser extent with husband (guilt regarding her feelings, the displacement of her feelings on him, or regarding the eating disorder). The code "being abandoned" was used within the context of relationships with father and sister, as well as old boyfriend. This code also referred to "being abandoned by a family." Finally, the code, "under mom's control" was used within the context of the experience of relationship with mother.

The appropriation of meaning regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as it was revealed by

the interaction with the text will be presented in chapter VI, after the semantic analysis findings. The work of appropriation involved using the meanings of the above units or codes to appropriate or actualize the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as revealed by the text. This understanding is a contextual understanding informed by structural and semantic contexts. This contextual understanding is an integrative whole which is made "one's own."

#### Meanings of the Text Revealed by Semantic Analysis

##### Telling about it

This phrase initially appears to need little interpretation. However, as one reads the text, it becomes clearer that the verb "telling" and the pronoun "it" in the phrase require further explication. The dictionary provides a number of potential meanings for the verb, "telling," however, in this text, "telling" means more than "giving an account, enumeration, or description" or merely "informing" (Webster's II, 1984, p. 1190). The following passage shows how the verb "telling" is used within the discourse of the text:

(Excerpt #52)

It's only been in the past, just since last October, is when I first told him (spouse)...And I knew that he suspected something was up, but I wasn't going to tell him then. I guess I just wasn't ready to tell him. And he was the first person that I told....Instead, you know, I can actually talk to him now, and he's responsive, willing to hear it....I mean I would make these comments, and I just wonder if I wanted him to

pick up on it. So I just think I wanted somebody to know at that point. I needed somebody to know...to talk to....I wanted him to know that my behavior wasn't because of him....I'm still in the process of telling some people close to me about my eating disorder. And I think that each person I tell close to me, the fear is less and less. But talking to somebody who's a professional who doesn't know me - it's very comfortable...I think it's because you don't know me, and I don't fear the rejection...But [with my best friend] for like six months after our friendship started, it was just her sharing stuff with me. Because with a lot of my friends, and specifically with her, I would feel like what I had to say wasn't important. So I would just listen to her....that was hard because I would actually think about it and say after-wards,...you should have said something...got something out, but I just wouldn't do it....I would think...if I told her...she wouldn't be shocked....the more we talked and the closer we got, I was able to share things with her...and...last Spring...I told her that I was bulimic. I did tell her, and she was supportive....And that was really good for me to tell somebody and not have the rejection...I was scared of the rejection. With telling her...that was probably the only thing that I was scared she was going to reject me, but she didn't. And that meant a lot....I think that's such an intimate subject...I think that I make it an intimacy that I want to talk about with somebody....I did wait so long to share with her. Like I waited a long time to share a lot of things with her, specifically that (Text, pp. 4, 18-20, 59, 329-331, 333).

The above passage indicates that "telling" means more than merely informing another. Instead, the text reveals that "telling" is an act of intimate self-revelation. The intimacy in this act is poignantly illustrated at one point in the discourse of the text, when the bulimic woman compares "telling about it" to the act of "shedding a piece of clothing" with husband (Text, p. 42). Therefore, the "telling" requires the passage of a good deal of time before it happens. For example, the bulimic woman did not tell her

spouse or best friend about her bulimia until at least a year and a half or more into the relationships with them. "Telling" involves a risky exposure of the self as discussed by the narrator (bulimic woman) in the discourse of the text. This exposure is most risky in relation to "telling about the bulimia" to another. In this case, the "it" refers to the eating disorder. The above passage also reveals that the "it" can also mean any self-revelation on the part of the bulimic woman in the experience of relationship with another. The interaction with best friend above, supports this notion. This interaction shows how the bulimic woman perceives her "telling" or sharing in general, as unimportant. The following passage also reveals how "telling about it" to others can be frightening or frustrating. This "telling" carries with it feelings of vulnerability, as well as the risk of criticism, rejection, and invalidation:

(Excerpt #53)

...and I'm kind of frustrated that I couldn't get the point across. I couldn't be direct enough with her [mother]. Thinking that whatever I said wasn't going to be acknowledged or validated anyway....I mean just trying to talk to her about college....Just...trying to talk to her about money for college - I mean, it wasn't up for discussion because she had made a decision and that was that. So whatever I said wasn't going to do anything anyway....I think again I was frustrated because I couldn't talk with her. I could try reasoning with her. We couldn't come to a compromise,...It just didn't work....One of the things I said in the letter [to my sister] was that I haven't told mom about the bulimia, and that I can't swear her to secrecy because that's not right, and I don't want to cause this triangle anymore...if she feels the need

to tell mom, she can. But I'm not willing to talk about it with her at this time....There was no response [to the letter]....And I just waited....I laid everything out, and I left myself so open and vulnerable, when I wrote that, that I couldn't initiate a conversation when I didn't know at all about what she [sister] was thinking or how she would respond....One of the things I worry about in telling my mom about the bulimia is that I wouldn't be validated. And that she would just think that it was a big joke and blame - say it was my problem and everything. And I thought if I approached my sister first, and if everything went well with her...it would be easier with my mom, but now I feel like I left myself wide open, and I have no idea where I stand. So, it's very hard for me. I always have a difficult time with that....hard for me to see her [sister] now and try to second guess what she's thinking (Text, pp. 155-156, 290-92).

As the above passage indicates, "telling" is an intimate self-disclosure which is experienced as potentially injurious in the experience of relationships with others. The injury in "telling" can be experienced as an injury to self (blame or criticism) or an injury to the relationship with the other (rejection or abandonment). The "telling" can be experienced as injurious when the telling is about non-food related issues, but seems especially frightening and potentially injurious when related to the "telling about the bulimia." "Telling" for the bulimic woman is experienced as potentially leaving her in a "wasteland" of disconnections from others. In this abyss created by the "telling," she has often experienced uncertainty as to where she stands in relationship to others. Although the bulimic woman desires to, feels an urgency at times, to directly reveal or expose intimacies about self or about the experience of relationship with others, this self-exposure

is also experienced as potentially threatening to relationships with others. Finally, because the "telling" can be potentially injurious in the experience of relationships with others, it needs to occur at the "right time." This "right time" seems to occur after a long period of time (e.g., after 22 years with sister) or does not occur (as yet with mother) depending on the experience of or potential promise of the experience of closeness with others.

#### Living a Secret Life

This phrase is a somewhat paradoxical phrase seen in the discourse of the text. In other words, it can be viewed as a seemingly contradictory statement that is nonetheless "true," given the discourse of the text. "Living a secret life" is a paradoxical statement in that "living" implies "being in active use," "being true to life," or "pursuing a positive, satisfying existence" (Webster's II, 1984), while "secret life" implies a state of physical, mental, and spiritual being which is not outwardly expressed, something hidden from others or known only to oneself or to a few" (Webster's II, 1984). Taken as a whole phrase, within the context of discourse in the text, this phrase suggests a way of life that actually lacks a sense or experience of vitality. In this way, the statement is a paradoxical one. The discourse of the text seems to show that when the narrator speaks of "living a secret life," she speaks of

having an existence devoid of a certain quality of vitality or "liveliness." "Living," in this sense, is a human activity, but one that seems to lack something. However, the narrator does actually live her life and lives it secretly many times. The text speaks of a certain lifestyle of the bulimic woman, one that is woven from secrets and at times hidden from the view of others. The following excerpt is telling of this secret lifestyle, especially as it relates to the narrator's secret of bulimia. This excerpt specifically speaks to the secret life lived in the experience of relationship with spouse and mother, respectively:

(Excerpt #54)

...I was bulimic, when I first met my husband. And I hid it from him for about two years. It's only been in the past, just since last October, is when I first told him. And so, in a way, I felt like I was living in a secret life...And I really did hide it! I mad a lot of excuses, to use a bathroom, after I ate. And I knew that he suspected something was up, but I wasn't going to tell him then....I would have a lot of mood swings because of the bulimia, because I was hiding this. And I really feel bad looking back because he had no idea what to attribute it to....He just got really frustrated, and I got frustrated. And I would just like push the eating disorder out of my way and just focus all of my negative energy on him....One of the things that I said in the letter was that I haven't told mom about the bulimia...But I'm not willing to talk about it with her at this time (Text, pp. 3-4, 290).

The above excerpt shows that the bulimic woman did "live a secret life" within the experience of relationships with others. In the preceding excerpt, the secret life involved the narrator's eating disorder and how she lived

with the bulimia in the context of her relationships with others. In essence, the bulimic woman was leading a certain kind of concealed lifestyle, yet was not living in the sense that she was not experiencing a certain "aliveness" or "realness" in her living. The above excerpt also shows that the bulimic woman was not living a totally "secret" life, as others in her environment sensed ("suspected") something awry in her "living." In this sense, too, the bulimic woman lived a secret life, but did not live a secret life.

It is important to note that the discourse in the text also speaks of "living a secret life" not limited to the experience of bulimia. The bulimic woman also "lived a secret life" in a general sense. The discourse of the text revealed that the bulimic woman's overall experience of relationships in her family was in part based upon secrets and often lived out in a secretive manner many times. The secrecy experienced in relationships with others at home seemed also to carry over into the experience of relationships with others outside the home. This fact is demonstrated in the excerpt above and in previous excerpts when the narrator speaks of not being able to actively share and participate in the experience of relationships with others. The following passage reveals the secrecy experienced in relationships with family members in particular:

(Excerpt #55)

So, when we're together [narrator and sister], and we talk about the weather and stuff like that, I almost feel now that...in so many ways we have nothing in common. And that's difficult. And the one thing that we do have in common, which is our family, has always been a taboo subject...again, we are left with nothing in common....One of the things she [mother] did was tell me everything that was going on at the bank. You know, everything! Stuff that was confidential....every night she would sit down and tell me this stuff, and then she would swear me to secrecy.... communicating with her [mother], I felt not only vulnerable, but I also felt alone because the other thing she'd say is, "You can't talk to anybody else." She was very...It was one of those things where you can't talk to anybody else outside the family about the family problems. Very closed....when I realized that I couldn't talk to her, and she didn't want me talking to anybody else, I felt like the burden was on my shoulders. I felt very alone....When my mom used to find out that I would tell people about something,...she would get really upset...I think I was more conscious of that [father's alcoholism] than I was of other things. I mean I admitted to myself a lot that my father was an alcoholic. I never asked my father specifically about alcoholism, but I remember...I asked him...to stop smoking. [With] the alcoholism,...I was never that direct with him...As far as the effect on our relationship, the most important effect was when he got the rifle and threatened himself and us. Afterwards, he always had a drink in his hand...I felt like I didn't know him...I just felt like it wasn't supposed to be talked about. So, I mean, the whole rifle incident put a barrier in our relationship to begin with...now I have all these questions about what happened and why it happened. How does my mom feel? How did my sister feel? I have a lot of questions and I'm afraid to ask...I was in such a mentality [then] that you keep everything inside that I never even thought about asking him or bringing it up...I don't even think I thought about it when I was with him. I can't even remember thinking about it. I almost feel now that if I had brought something up, he [father] would have been able to tolerate it, and we could've talked about it. But I don't think I had any way of knowing that then...I grew up thinking that anything that happened in the house was a secret. It was supposed to be hidden. I mean it was so closed to begin with...his alcoholism was supposed to be kept a secret....it didn't affect school or stuff like that

just because it seemed like there was a little place for things. And the family were supposed to hide in there. And they just got packaged in their place. And that was it. I don't know if it's in my heart or my head. I don't know - there's a little pocket that holds all those secrets, supposedly of the family....It's so hard to separate it, just because the alcoholism was always there. Keeping secrets was always there....It's a lifestyle. It's a whole lifestyle (Text, pp. 288, 126, 94, 206, 201, 204-205, 202-203, 207-208).

The above passage reveals that the "secret life" that the bulimic woman lived consisted of various levels. Each of these levels is also experienced across a continuum. For example, depending on the nature of the secret, the "secret life" experienced in the relationships with family members is experienced as potentially destructive. The potential harmfulness experienced within and to the experience of relationships with others ranges from the secret of alcoholism to the secret of father's rifle incident. The first secret did not totally obstruct the bulimic woman's attempts at trying to relate with father, but the latter secret became a "barrier" to the further development of their relationship for many years. The "secret life" also was experienced in terms of its level of concealment. Secrets in the life of the bulimic woman ranged from partially concealed to totally concealed. For example, the bulimia was a totally concealed secret to sister for many years and is still reportedly a secret to mother. However, father's alcoholism was a family secret that was known to all family members, but not openly discussed. Finally, the

secrets in the life of the bulimic woman existed in terms of whom they were specifically hidden from. For example, some secrets were hidden from others within the family, while most secrets (any family problems) were hidden from others outside the family. Also, there were secrets that the narrator and family members in a sense, hid from themselves, such as: a) the absence of the bulimic woman's full acknowledgement of her experience of bulimia with husband, b) the bulimic woman's painful experience of father's threatening himself and others with a rifle, c) the absence of mother's full acknowledgement of family problems, and d) potentially, father's experience of his own alcoholism. Although all family members contributed to maintaining a kind of secrecy within the experience of relationships with one another and also kept secrets from others outside the family, in the discourse of this text, the narrator described mother as the "staunchest" keeper of secrets. In other parts of the discourse of the text, mother is also discussed as the person who maintained the norm that family problems were "taboo" in discussions. The narrator describes mother as the one who would become most visibly "upset" if the bulimic woman revealed family secrets.

"Living a secret life" in this discourse did not mean leading an existence filled with intrigue and stimulation. It meant living a life (if one can truly "live" in this sense) of loneliness and isolation in the experience of

relationships with significant others. "Living a secret life" was experienced as "burdensome," stultifying, and closed off from the outside world. This kind of life, according to the discourse of this text, was lacking in authenticity and involved a proscription of critical questioning and sharing within relationships. "Living a secret life" meant in a paradoxical way, "living the forbidden," (the "taboo of family problems"), "engaging but not engaging in the actuality of life," and "pursuing an existence of prohibitions." In the discourse of this text, "living a secret life" means that the bulimic woman lives a life of contradictions, a life of paradoxes in the experience of relationships with others. Upon first glance, the phrase "living a secret life" seemingly requires little interpretation, but upon close scrutiny, it demands an explication that reveals its rich meanings.

#### Being Out of Control With the Eating

At first glance, the above phrase seems transparent, requiring little interpretation. However, in reading the discourse of the text, it is clear that more than a quick, initial interpretation is necessary in understanding the meaning of this phrase in the narrative. The key to understanding the changing meanings of this phrase lies in the reading of the preposition "with" and also in the changing contexts of the discourse surrounding this phrase. For example, an immediate literal interpretation of the

above phrase suggests that the narrator is experiencing an inability to "regulate or exercise authority over her actual eating behavior." This meaning emerges when one reads "with" in the phrase as denoting the following: "having as an attribute or possession," or "in a manner characterized by." For example, the discourse in the text reveals that the narrator experiences eating which is characterized as being "out of control." The following excerpt which refers to the narrator's experience of relationships with spouse, then mother, reveals this meaning, but also reveals that "being out of control with the eating" refers to being "out of control with thoughts about food," in addition to "being out of control with eating behaviors:"

(Excerpt #56)

I would just become silent, and I wouldn't talk. And he'd say something like, "You know, this is really stupid...it was just ice cream. We can get it another time." And I guess, basically, [I gave him] the silent treatment. And then, if it did escalate, and I did get angry, I would focus and say, "You know this always happens! You always do this! Instead of focusing on what the problem really was - not being able to control my eating. I guess the whole problem was that I was so involved with food, and planning [my eating] and all that stuff. And that was the problem....Just the fact that [food] is still playing a role in our relationship...when I go to see her [mother], I get very anxious beforehand and throughout the whole visit because she still does push food onto me. And I walk into her house and immediately, I feel a different - something comes over me. I'm just very - I feel very out of control with my eating, and I really have to try hard to say no to her when I don't want something and stuff like that...feel very overwhelmed, when I walk into the house with her. When I feel overwhelmed otherwise, eating is not the first thing that I will think of, consume my energy [with]...When I go into her house, it's just...there's food always there...that I

really like! And...I don't think I necessarily overeat there or binge [now], just constantly [am] thinking...playing around [in my head]...how am I going to handle this when she gets to this [offering the food]...When I was living there I did [binge and purge], but since I've just gone back to visit, I won't purge and don't binge like I normally would binge. Just...trying to consume varied amounts of food...just eat more than I usually do. I eat when I'm not hungry a lot (Text, pp. 6, 160-162, 164).

The other meaning of the phrase "being out of control with the eating," emerges when one reads the preposition, "with," as denoting the following: "companion of or accompanying." This alternative meaning of the phrase "being out of control with the eating," is clear when reading the discourse of the text and its changing contexts. The following passage shows that the bulimic woman not only experiences eating that is "out of control," but also experiences a general sense of "being out of control" which accompanies the experience of "being out of control with the eating" (thoughts of food or eating behaviors). This particular passage refers to the experience of "being out of control with the eating" in the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #57)

With her, just being around her gives me like this weird feeling. No words have to be said. I mean, just like I said, walking in there [mother's home]....I don't even have to be angry with my mom to do it. I mean, it could be all the anger that I have from the past. But I don't have to be angry at her presently to [binge or purge]....when I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had like a constant anger towards her...It usually never came up...just was always there. I wasn't like always angry on the outside towards her, but it was always there. And so that's why my bingeing

and purging just happen to seem like erratic. And I really...looking back, even though I don't remember that well, I don't see like connections between specific events that triggered it or anything. I don't have a lot of recollections specifically on when...I binged and purged during that time period, but I can like bring back times but they're not connected with anything. And I just can't remember interactions and how they connect with...purg[ing]. All I know is that now, I don't purge at her house. But I think I said this before when I go to her house. I just feel very anxious and uncomfortable. And I just always feel like I have to have food in my mouth. I guess I just feel a general uneasiness when I'm there....Because I think there's a connection there between food and...when I'm going to be around my mom. I mean, I have a tendency to really binge and purge. And I think it's because I'm going to go there and I'm not going to be myself. And so I feel that if I can be more assertive around her and really...tell her what, how I feel, I'm not going to...feel as anxious and tense, and have all these feelings around her - which means hopefully, I'm not going to binge and purge....I'm sure there is a relationship, but I can't...make the connection. But all I can think of is that I could be trying to use food to fill the gap, or the missing piece. I could be using food as a missing piece....if the missing piece is respect for my feelings and myself - if I had that in a relationship, I think that I would feel more at peace with the relationship. And I think, maybe, I try to use food to feel at peace (Text, pp. 162-163, 170-172, 365, 318-219, 363-364).

The following passage, which refers to the experience of relationship with father and sister, also speaks to the bulimic woman's general experience of "being out of control," which accompanies the experience of uncontrollable thoughts of food or uncontrolled eating behaviors.

(Excerpt #58)

The only time I remember binging and purging that was in any relation to anything with him [father], was when he was in the hospital. And I binged and purged, but to me, that's more of the stress that I was under, of somebody being in the hospital and me staying there 24 hours a day, then something he did or a conversation we had...I mean I was feeling, feeling frustrated in the

hospital! And I was feeling helpless in the hospital! And things like that, but as far as when I had those feelings and [I'd] want to binge and purge [she is uncertain]....[In general, I] felt really hurt. [It was] basically frustrating. For like a month, he was just being transferred from ICU to a regular floor, back to ICU, and the doctors gave us hope for four months until the day he died....just the whole run around was the frustrating part. And the other thing was the whole family dynamics...cause nobody wanted to get involved. The girlfriend wouldn't get involved because of the family...my mom wouldn't get involved in any decision making because they were separated. And my sister hates hospitals...I was told that I should give my number...Who makes the decision of whether to put him on a respirator. I do! I think I felt very overburdened....So, I think when I was bingeing and purging at that time, it wasn't because of any feelings towards my father. It was feelings I was totally out of control. In relation to the whole thing....And I...think I'm angry...at my mom for that, cause she was putting me in that situation....Well, I know when I'm around her [sister], I use food to comfort me. When I'm around her, I don't purge and...don't...normally...binge. But I can tell that I'm using food to comfort myself...I'm jut thinking about this [past] camping trip [with her]. I almost felt like I had to have something in my mouth constantly during the whole two days! And that's not how I normally am....It's kind of a generalized feeling, when I'm with my sister - actually, with my mom too, sometimes, especially in when I'm in her house....It's [food in her mouth] close to comfort....Maybe it's more of a fullness rather than a comfort....My relationship with my sister makes me feel like I'm missing something in myself...And I think I feel that way because one of the...reasons why I wanted a relationship with my sister is because I want her to help me put some of the pieces together of my childhood and stuff like that. And that's why I feel like I'm missing something with her [in] myself by not having a relationship with her....it hurts (Text, pp. 249-252, 301-304).

In addition to the above passage, there are other places in the discourse of the text which reveal that the bulimic woman experiences a loss of control, specifically in regards to her anger. An example of this is seen in the

experience of relationship with husband, wherein the bulimic woman is first "unrealistically angry" with him due to a lack of communication or misunderstanding and subsequently, angry with herself for not "defusing" the situation and seeing that her anger is displaced onto husband (Text, pp. 165-166). Other examples of the bulimic woman's feelings of anger in the experience of relationship with mother will be discussed below.

There is one final point regarding the phrase "being out of control with the eating" which is important to consider. This phrase also means more than the above two interpretations. Again, the context within which the phrase is used in the discourse of the text is critical in revealing this point. The phrase "being out of control with the eating" is often used in the text amidst discourse which would indicate that this same kind of eating actually promotes a sense of being in control for the bulimic woman. In effect, a literal interpretation of the phrase "being out of control with the eating" would refer to a sense of chaotic or uncontrolled eating. This kind of interpretation is appropriate, given the context of the discourse in various parts of the narrative. However, surrounding discourse also shows that the very action implied in "being out of control with the eating," actually allows the bulimic woman some control over her experience of "being out of control" in general (with such things as feelings of anger

of helplessness). Therefore, there is a feeling of "being in control," in a general sense, in the experience of relationships with others, which "accompanies" the "out of control" eating. Consequently, there is a kind of paradoxical action one experiences in reading the discourse of the text which surrounds the phrase, "being out of control with the eating." For example, the following passage reveals that "being out of control with the eating" is also self-preserving in the experience of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #59)

And you know, for about the past year, I felt very anxious because I knew that I had a lot of feelings of anger towards her. And I think, in a way, I'm worried about letting those feelings get out, cause I'm not prepared to let them out. With her...I am, may always feel like I have to be eating, so I can push the feelings down - so they don't come out...that somehow, pushes it back...I was just thinking that if I let my feelings out to her, I would not get the respect. Because in the past...when I would let my feelings out, I didn't get the respect. When I state my view, if I stated my views on something, I would not get the respect. But if I keep quiet...then I'm going to get the respect...seems the only way I can keep into her world is to eat. And that stuffs the feeling. In a way it [eating] makes me less anxious. So I'm less likely to bring my own feelings out. It [binging and purging] almost seems like a way to help me connect, to keep connected with myself. Like the binging and purging is something that's only my own and [something] my mom can't touch. And so it's the one thing that really makes me different from her....I do it so I at least have something that's my own....At this point, I could have something, even though, ultimately, I would like the respect for myself as a person and my feelings. But because I can't get some of those things...at this point, I'm just trying to get whatever I can. Probably one of the reasons binging and purging has worked is...that food is like part of our relationship, and my mom is very comfortable in sharing

food and sitting down [to] a meal. Maybe that's why it's worked...If I had used alcohol as the way to keep myself, to keep myself whole, that wouldn't have worked because she would have been totally against that (Text, pp. 366-368, 320-322).

The above passage reveals that "being out of control with the eating" could be simultaneously beneficial and detrimental to the bulimic woman's experience of self and experience of relationships with others. Although "being out of control with the eating" kept the bulimic woman from herself--distanced her from her own authentic feelings or needs, it also served as a bridge to herself. The eating disorder acted to preserve the bulimic woman's sense of self and allowed her to feel "different" from mother in the experience of relationship with mother. Also, while the eating disorder obstructed the desired development of true intimacy and authenticity with mother, it served to preserve the relationship with mother, despite the deficits experienced in this relationship. Uncontrolled eating or thoughts of eating served to "ward off" or "push down" feelings such as anger, which were experienced as potentially injurious to self or to the relationship with mother. "Unleashed" and directly expressed feelings of anger could lead to mother's criticism, lack of respect, invalidation of the bulimic woman, or potential rejection and abandonment by mother. Therefore, "being out of control with the eating" was preserving of self and the relationship with mother in a paradoxical way. The discourse of the text

also spoke to the experience of relationships with others in which the bulimic woman's "being out of control with the eating" paradoxically served to preserve some kind of relationship with others, albeit ones that were deficient in certain respects. The text specifically revealed these significant others as including husband and sister.

The discourse above indicates that the phrase "being out of control with the eating" has several meanings. These meanings change with the changes in the context of the surrounding discourse and with the alterations in the way one reads the preposition "with" in the phrase. The above excerpts and discussion also indicate that this phrase is embedded in discourse which at times reveals a paradoxical action in the experience of relationships with others. In explicating the meaning of this phrase within the context of its surrounding discourse, a meaning emerges which is beyond its literal interpretation. In this text, the bulimic woman could experience "uncontrolled thoughts or actions" related to food and eating, or could experience a general sense of being out of control which accompanied the unregulated eating thoughts or behaviors. Paradoxically, the "out of control eating" helped her feel i control in the experience of relationships with others.

### I Was Angry

This statement seems quite straightforward when read outside the context of the discourse of the text, however,

its meaning changes with the shifts in the surrounding contexts. The verb "was" in the statement, is the first person singular, past tense of the verb "be." An implied acontextual dictionary definition of the word "was," indicates the following meanings: a) "to have existed in actuality," b) "having been real," c) "to have taken place," or d) "exhibited a given quality". The word "angry" in ordinary language is defined as a "feeling or display of great displeasure or exasperation" (Webster's II, 1984). In interpreting the above statement, the context of the discourse surrounding the statement was critical, as it indicated that at times the bulimic woman would "feel" angry in the experience of relationships with others, but not "display" this feeling. Other times, she would "feel" angry and "display" the feeling indirectly. Infrequently, she would "feel" and "display" the anger directly. Finally, the bulimic woman would also say she "was angry" when the surrounding discourse contradicted this statement. At these times, she may or may not have indirectly displayed the anger. The meanings of the statement, "I was angry" (not really feeling anger or feeling anger with or without a display of anger), would vary depending upon the particular "character" or significant other with whom the bulimic woman was relating, as well as upon a temporal component seen in the text. The following passage reveals the particular

meanings of the statement, "I was angry," as it related to the experience of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #60)

...my mom first found out that I was having sex, when I was in high school. [She found out because] she read all my book [of poetry]....When she confronted me, she had the book in her hands, saying, "I thought I was going to be so nice to you and print all your poems up for you. And look what you did to me." But that was the manner of relating [with her]. And it was always, "Look at what I did to her"....Well, part of me felt like, I had failed her. Part of me was very, I want to say angry with the situation. I was angry with the situation, angry with her for invading my privacy. But when she made the comment that I hurt her more than when her mother died, I wasn't angry at her then. That's when I started feeling guilty.....I really thought I was a terrible person because I did this. I disagreed with her for something...So, I had all these emotions during that time. I tried to be angry with her but, then, she would make these comments. And I wouldn't be angry with her. I'd feel guilty. And I'd take it on myself....after she looked at my book of poems...I was really angry at her...and angry at myself then, because I kept saying, "You knew she was going to invade your privacy! She invaded your privacy before! She goes through your stuff...it just seemed like one more thing...I was angry for her punishment. But at that time, I think that I was, I don't know,...took it on myself, and I felt guilty. I felt like I was really killing her. It's taken a long time for me to be angry and say, "Wait a minute! You know that wasn't fair....But I don't think at the time, I really thought about it as anger. I mean, it's only now, that I can think about it as anger...I was angry during that period too, and I still am. But then, I wouldn't have said...I have this anger with my mom and it's always there. I would have said, I got angry at her when I didn't feel validated, when she didn't talk with me. And I don't know what I would have said otherwise....can't even think of what I would've said if somebody asked me how I felt towards my mom at that time. I can't, I just don't think I would've said that I'm always....that I always had an anger...hard to put it to words. Probably because as much as I could at that time, I pushed it away - so that I could go on with my daily life. Cause I think if I didn't, if I kept dwelling in all the anger and the feelings I had, then, I couldn't have done everything I did. I almost

feel like I would have been drowned by it...through my senior year of high school and the last part of it and then into college, I think the way that I coped was I just pushed it away...only came out when I had...some kind of direct confrontation with my mother...I don't even think that I would have probably been able to access it...I think that when I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had like a constant anger towards her...It usually never came up...It just was always there. I wasn't like angry on the outside towards her, but it was always there...Probably relatively recently,...when I started reading more about it [bulimia], I began to look at my own life...and realize that I was really angry about some of these things. I mean...I'm still going through it and still finding out like...it's almost like things explode... (Text, pp. 49-50, 47, 103, 48, 157-158, 170-171, 175-176).

The above discourse indicates that although the bulimic woman stated the phrase, "I was angry," this statement did not necessarily mean she actually felt and/or displayed this emotion in the experience of relationship with mother. The text discloses times in the experience of relationship with mother wherein the bulimic woman would a) feel the anger but not state or display it, b) feel the anger and display it indirectly (e.g., brief intellectualized arguments regarding certain decisions or binging and purging), and c) not (consciously) feel the anger at all (and possibly display it indirectly via binging and purging). The discourse revealed that in the experience of relationship with mother, the bulimic woman "felt" angry most commonly about "situations" (when she was invalidated or ignored) as opposed to "being angry with mother in general." The above discourse also reveals that the recognition of "being angry" has taken "a long time." In the past experience of relationship with

mother, the statement "I was angry" usually meant not feeling the anger or feeling it for a short period of time and not talking about or displaying it directly. It is during the present time, in the experience of relationship with mother, that the bulimic woman increasingly recognizes her anger with mother. However, as other excerpts have shown, she still struggles with directly expressing or displaying this to mother. This shift in the meaning of the phrase, "I was angry" involves the temporal code addressed briefly above. It is in the movement from the past to the present, that the "was" in the statement actually means that the bulimic woman felt and recognized anger in the experience of relationship with mother. In referring to the anger with mother, the statement, "I was angry," lacked the "actuality" of feeling anger and/or displaying it depending on the situation and point in time during which the bulimic woman interacted with mother.

Conversely, the statement, "I was angry," referred to a more "actualized" state of being angry in the experience of relationship with father and spouse. When used in the context of the discourse in regards to father and spouse, the "was" in the statement more frequently conveys a recognized feeling of anger and an increased tendency to display it in the experience relationship with these significant others. Again, one needs to consider the temporal component revealed by the text. This component

shows that "being angry" in terms of feeling and displaying this feeling, increased for the bulimic woman over time. Therefore, there is a more actualized state of being angry with spouse than with father. The first excerpt that follows, speaks to the bulimic woman's being angry in the relationship with father and ends with a contrast of this experience between the relationship with father and mother. The second excerpt that follows, speaks to being angry in the experience of relationship with spouse:

(Excerpt #61)

I think I was able to get angry at my father - Not to his face...[I remember] I was [angry] when...he told me that all the money he's been giving me was for child support...I remember telling [him] how unfair that was...he should have told me...I mean, I was able to say that to him and get angry at him. And we could get past that...because I think he realized what I was saying. I felt more validated...my feelings were more validated by him than they ever were with my mom...he realized I was angry at something and...able to understand why I was angry...we were just able to get past it....And even though we never directly said something, it just seemed like we were able to get past it....So, I think with him, I was more able to express my anger, and he was more able to understand it...it got out...took me five years before I could really try to forgive him for the rifle scene. But it wasn't something that I like deeply, deeply held inside. I...thought about it on my own, and I could tell myself I'm angry at him. I could express that to myself...with my mom, I have been angry at her for so long, but it's only recently, that I can say that I'm angry with her...even then, I still feel guilty for being angry at her. With my father, I was angry. I could tell myself I was angry right from the start - after the rifle thing...I didn't feel guilty about telling myself that. With my mom...taken me so long to even...be able to tell myself I'm angry....Seems that the anger that I had with him...is that it was just more out there...The anger that I had with my father didn't consume me the way the anger I have for my mom does. Again, it [anger at dad] was just more on the

sidelines. Probably because the anger I have of my father, I resolved a lot of it. And the anger I have with my mom, I have not resolved at all (Text, pp. 233-235, 231).

(Excerpt #62)

I have trouble really getting angry with people, and I hold in my emotions...something like that would cause me to binge and purge. Instead of expressing my anger directly at him [spouse]...[in the past] I would binge and purge and become silent and give him the silent treatment rather than it escalating and me getting my anger out appropriately. Actually, [with spouse] I haven't [recently] been [angry] to the point where I binge and purge. All I can think of is sometimes, I...can't communicate something to him. Like he just doesn't understand what I'm trying to say....get the feeling like..."Your so stupid that you can't understand what I'm saying!" And instead of trying to explain it in a different way, I'll just get angry at him. And that's not when I binge and purge...I'll think about it, and I'll say to myself, "That was really stupid of you! Now, you're both upset. You could have just said it in a different way." And then, that's when I get angry at myself...he thinks I'm still angry at him and outwardly, that's what it seems like. And then, I'll binge and purge, cause I'm angry at myself for not defusing the whole thing...at first anger at him...but it's like unrealistic anger almost....He truly doesn't understand what I'm saying, and I could say it in a different way, but aggravate him almost (Text, pp. 7, 165-166).

The excerpts above reveal how the meaning of the statement, "I was angry," changes with the change in the discourse surrounding the statement in the text. In discourse that speaks to the experience of relationship with father, the bulimic woman is generally able to feel and recognize her anger, and to admit her feelings of anger to herself, even if she did not directly express them. She was able to "grasp" and "hold onto these feelings" in a way she could not access and maintain these feelings with mother.

The bulimic woman also was more likely to display her feelings of anger with father. Although, again, this display did not involve the direct expression of angry feelings, but instead, an intellectualized sharing or disagreement with father. Also, when the bulimic woman "was angry" in the experience of relationship with father, she experienced her anger as "out there," manifest in the world. Conversely, anger with mother is discussed as more of an internal, almost "subterranean" experience which is also "consuming." The text discloses that the bulimic woman's anger in the experience of relationship with mother is part of an "implicate order" which occasionally, though briefly, manifests itself - either by way of a conscious "feeling" of the anger, and/or by way of an indirect expression ("display") of the anger.

The statement, "I was angry," in the discourse concerning spouse, also means that she could more frequently feel and recognize her anger and display it. There is discourse in the text which discloses that the bulimic woman a) can directly express feelings with spouse, b) has insight into how she displaces anger onto spouse, and c) recognizes that her anger is "unrealistic" at times (involves more than the immediate situation with spouse). However, as the excerpt above indicates, she still struggles with a direct expression of angry feeling in the experience of relationship with him. Instead, she may use the

"silent treatment" or binge and purge--both indirect displays of anger.

The text disclosed only a brief reference to anger in the experience of relationship with sister. The bulimic woman states, "I was just angry" in relation to sister's constant rejection of hugs from the bulimic woman as a child. In this context, the bulimic woman was able to admit the anger to herself (allow herself to feel it) "after [I don't know how] many times or [how] many years" (Text, pp. 275-276). However, the discourse also reveals that she did not display these feelings directly to sister.

#### See Me as a Total Person

Semantic analysis of this phrase revealed that it meant more than what is indicated in an initial, acontextual literal interpretation. It is quite logical that one would obviously "see" another as a "total person," when "person" refers to "the living body of a human being," or to "physique and general appearance." However, the discourse in the text indicates that "person" means a great deal more than this literal interpretation. A fuller and more accurate interpretation of the word, "person" revealed its reference to a "whole, dynamic, human being." "Person" refers to a changing, living being who is more than the "sum of her/his parts." Therefore, even the term "total" needs to be carefully examined in the text. In the above context, "total" means something more than "the sum of parts." In

the above statement, it specifically does not refer to a sum of human body parts or even to the sum of a person's accomplishments. The discourse surrounding the statement in the text helps the reader see that "total" means "the entirety of the person" or the "whole" person. In this case, "total person" refers to the bulimic woman, as a whole, dynamic, human being, who is more than the sum of her accomplishments. The following excerpt reveals this meaning:

(Excerpt #63)

A lot of the stuff he [spouse] actually gives me, I need - support in what I do. And I think I need [support] in any relationship, but especially with him. I need somebody that cares about me as a person, aside from my accomplishments. And I need somebody that loves me for me. You know whether I'm unemployed...fail out of school, whether I graduate...he loves me for that [me]. And that's what I need. I need somebody to see me as a total person aside from my accomplishments....I feel unconditional acceptance from [my husband], and my family acceptance came when you did something the right way. When you achieved something, there was acceptance. If you did something, that was viewed as negative, there wasn't acceptance. If you did something that was against what my mom thought, it wasn't accepted. Whereas, now, I feel like, if I had a different opinion, if I did something [my husband] doesn't agree with, he's still going to accept me....And I thought about it - who I got unconditional love from. And the only person I could think of was [my husband]...it's a totally different experience with a relationship...to have unconditional love and acceptance, versus everything you...received, depended on everything that you did....How my mom reacted towards me and related to me depended on my performance....With my mom, I just felt a great deal of pressure....Now, I just don't feel the pressure to perform and...whatever I do, if I get a "B," it's not going to ruin a whole week. It's not going to reflect on me as a person. And that's how I felt with my mom. That if I did anything wrong, it

reflected on me as a person totally. It wasn't just my behavior. It was me (Text, pp. 65-65, 45, 37, 53, 55-56).

The above excerpt reveals that when examined in the context of surrounding discourse, the statement, "see me as a total person," refers to a holistic view of the bulimic woman. The above excerpt also indicates that in the experience of relationship with spouse, the bulimic woman felt "seen as a total person." Conversely, she did not have this experience in her relationship with mother. The text reveals that what is lacking in the relationship with mother is the bulimic woman's experience that mother can truly and fully "see" the bulimic woman in a holistic sense. This leads one to ask "What is really meant by the word, "see," in the discourse of the text?" This question is answered as one turns to the discourse surrounding the statement, "see me as a total person," in the text. The word "see" provides us with a good example of the polysemy of ordinary language. Without the use of the context in the narrative, "see" can mean approximately 20 different things, ranging from "to perceive with the eye" to "to attend or escort." However, when reading the statement within the context of the narrative, it is clear that "see" means more than to passively "perceive with the eye." This meaning indicates a viewing of the person in a physical or empirical context, as "perception" means to become aware directly through the senses. Also, "see" means more than "to take note of," "to

consider," "to attend to." The closest dictionary definition to what "see" means in this text is "to understand or comprehend the real character or nature of." Yet, this meaning still falls short without the use of the context of the discourse in the text.

The interpretation of the statement "see me as a total person" reveals that it means a kind of comprehension or "grasping together" of the whole person (bulimic woman). This "grasping together" is an active, not passive process. In a sense, it parallels what we have defined comprehension to be in the interpretation of the text. To "see" means to understand the bulimic woman in a critical, informed way. The text reveals that to "see" is a dialectical process, wherein the bulimic woman desires others to not only "synthesize" the wholeness and complexity of her person and acknowledge her similarities to others, but to also "discern," to be acutely aware of her differences from others. To "see me as a total person" means to look beyond the "sum of the parts" or the "sum of her performances" to the bulimic woman as a unique and whole human being. To "see" in this sense means to actively view the other in a way that involves the eyes, the brain, and the heart. A holistic "viewing" of the bulimic woman is one in which the other can "see" in a thinking-feeling-doing" way. It is this ability to "see" that the bulimic woman does not experience in the relationship with mother. The bulimic

woman wishes that mother could "see her as a total person," aside from her accomplishments, as a human being who is also an actor (doer). What is lacking in the experience of relationship with mother, is the bulimic woman's sense that mother can "see" her "pathos," as well as her exceptional performance. The following passage reveals the meaning of the word "see" in the context of the statement, "see me as a total person," and in the context of the discourse surrounding the statement. This passage speaks to the experience of relationship with mother and the bulimic woman's feeling that mother cannot "see" her in the way described above. The end of the excerpt also reveals that the bulimic woman has a similar experience with sister:

(Excerpt #64)

...I was with mom a lot. I thought I was her "showpiece." I was her "showpiece"...the one thing I always remember is that I always had to be dressed perfectly and act perfectly, when I went there to meet her co-workers....I always had to have on the white gloves and the tan new shoes and the white lace socks....very vivid to me. And that just kind of sums how it always was....she always had to show me off and act perfectly...she just wanted her family and her daughters, me especially, to make her look good. And that's really what I believe....[When I was younger], I used to twirl the baton...for about nine years very competitively...And it was basically all for her. A lot of it was for her...there were times when I told her I wanted to quit, and she would tell me, "I've spent so much money in this" and "I've invested so much. How can you quit now? How can you do this to me?"...very appearance-oriented also...her goal in life at that time was to make this cute little baton twirler and a lot of times, I just felt like a "showpiece," her "showpiece"...I was torn. It felt good to be acknowledged by other people...but...I was sad that's all she cared about...She wouldn't like ask me about how I felt about it...She would care so much about...if

I got first place, and she wouldn't ask me, "Are you having fun out there?"...That stuff wasn't important...I was sad that she didn't recognize that...the perfect daughter was somebody who got extremely high grades...extremely active in school...that did volunteer work, that never drank, that never did any kind of drugs, that never had sex...had very minimal relationships with guys...that helped around the house, that made a perfect impression to all of her co-workers and her friends...And that basically...didn't do anything that she didn't think was perfect...All of it's not O.K. because it was so unachievable. And it was a package. It wasn't an "either or" type thing...Because I would not achieve one of those things, it wasn't like you did this wrong. You are not a good daughter anymore. That's the feeling I got...You had to do everything...When I was 18, I had an abortion, and my mom found out about it...the first thing she said was, "I can't believe you did this to me! What are people going to think?" She didn't ask me if I was alright...I mean, I really didn't feel acknowledged...I felt very sad, very frustrated, very angry with her...[After my mom found out I had sex at age 16], those whole six months were almost like a "living hell"...one of the worst times...It wasn't just the silent treatment... Basically, almost everything that I was doing as a person, got turned off...she called his [old boyfriend's] parents...and forbade me to see him...the whole thing about college was difficult...she said I couldn't be in Ski Club, which I already paid for with my own money...stuff that I wanted...When I was in high school and college, and now, I realize that I wanted her to love me for me and not what I do. And I still don't feel like I get that from her. I still feel that her love is based on what I do...as I got older, her saying, "I love you," seemed to be more connected with me being the perfect daughter...Just the tone...would almost make me cringe because I thought that because she loves me, she has such expectations...Ultimately, I would like the respect for myself as a person and my feelings...I get less validation from my mom and more from my sister...it makes me feel that they don't care what I have to say and that [it] isn't worth listening to...makes me feel frustrated...very angry. When I put all of the times that I don't feel validated with my mom and sister together...a sadness also...because the relationship is missing something that I want to have...we can't have a solid relationship until they start respecting me more and my feelings more. And I

just think that's missing...respect for me as a person...(Text, pp. 117, 73, 76-77, 51-52, 74-75, 89-90, 118, 107-108, 368, 360, 362-363).

In contrast to the above passage regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with mother and sister are her experiences of relationships with best friend, the researcher, and others in general. The discourse of the text reveals that the bulimic woman did feel "seen" in a holistic sense in the experience of relationships with the best friend and the researcher. Although the statement, "see me as a total person," is not used specifically in the following excerpts, the use of the word "validation" in the context of the discourse below, includes a meaning similar to this statement. In this context, "validation" means accurately "seeing" and acknowledging or confirming the bulimic woman in the way that she is "being" at a certain point in time:

(Excerpt #65)

...the communications that we had [with best friend]...very open and non-judgmental...[she was] someone who really cared and seems to care about me...really into listening to me as much as I was into listening to her and it's really good...I felt very secure in the relationship...didn't feel that there was going to be the rejection...when I talked about different topics...somebody that can relate to what I'm feeling and what I've gone through and could be going through...and even if she can't relate to it, she attempts to ...validation of my feelings...she fills a lot of the same needs [my husband] does. But...she's a female, so it's a different type of relationship than with [him]...like one of the things that I value with him, is the fact that he validates my emotions... and so does she, but it means a lot that it's a female that I'm having that relationship with (Text, pp. 338, 340, 334, 335).

(Excerpt #66)

Probably also, a sense of validation. I think that's why I feel like the relationship worked. Because I did feel validated with you, and I was very...comfortable in sharing with you...that was a big part of it...both the non-verbal cues I picked up from you and just, you were very attentive, very sensitive...you were probing in a meaningful way...The one thing that I was thinking of...is that the relationships that I feel very comfortable in are the ones that I get validation, where I feel validated. And the opposite extreme are the ones that I am very uncomfortable with are the relationships where I don't feel validated at all...one of the biggest themes that run through all my relationships. It's the validation (Text, pp. 386, 359).

Given the context of the above discourse and the syntax of the statement itself, "see me as a total person" means a perspicacious seeing of the bulimic woman as a "dynamic, whole and unique human being." The above discourse also reveals that the bulimic woman's feeling that others "see [her] as a total person" depends upon the experience of relationships with others in her life. In the experience of relationship with mother and sister, this feeling is lacking, while in the experience of relationship with spouse, best friend, and the researcher, it is present. The text did not disclose much specifically regarding father's ability to "see her as a total person," other than the narrator's (bulimic woman's) words that she felt "more validated by father than by mother" (Text, p. 234).

#### Into Her World

An initial reading of this phrase may leave one confused about its meaning, since its literal interpretation

might be construed as non-sensical. Taken outside the context of the discourse in the text, one might see this phrase as a bit absurd, since the whole human race actually inhabits only one world. However, this meaning is rendered when the word "world" refers to the "earth." In the text, one quickly learns that "world" in the above phrase means something quite different than the earth we inhabit. Instead, the text reveals that it refers to a "mode of being" or "way of life," particularly mother's way of life. The entire statement, "into her world," refers to the bulimic woman's location "within the interior" of mother's "world," mother's "way of being." This "way of being" includes a certain way of thinking and feeling about oneself, others, and the environment, as well as a certain way of acting on behalf of oneself or within relationships with others. However, the phrase, "into her world," also means something more than "to the inside or interior of." In context of the discourse, this phrase also connotes a certain valence attached to the word "into." In this text, "into" means "embedded within" or "immersed in." "Into" does not refer to a casual movement toward mother's world, but a "strong involvement within" this "way of being" in the world. The text reveals that there were times when the bulimic woman was so "into her [mother's] world," that the possibilities of living in a different way or coming to know different worlds was not even an option.

The following passage shows how being "into her [mother's] world," especially during growing up years, was experienced as a necessary and normative part of the experience of relationship with mother. The passage also points out how the bulimic woman still struggles in developing a relationship with mother wherein she needn't unknowingly or unwillingly return to that world:

(Excerpt #67)

I was just thinking that if I let my feelings out to her, I would not get the respect. Because in the past - and I'm going by what's happened in the past - when I let my feelings out, I didn't get the respect. When I state[d] my views, if I stated my views on something, I would not get the respect. But if I keep quiet and just go into her world, almost, then I'm going to get the respect. And at this point, especially at her house, it seems the only way that I can keep into her world is to eat. And that stuffs the feeling... ultimately, I would like the respect for myself as a person and my feelings. But because I can't get some of those things at this point, I'm just trying to get whatever I can...I'm really trying to make myself more aware of what's going on...in the relationship with my mom...More aware, so that...I don't let myself be manipulated by her, and also, more aware of my relationship with food...striking a balance...I guess I see both of them as...I'm just trying to find the middle-ground...of being aware the whole time of what's going on, so I don't slip back into her world. I guess, it [into her world] means being controlled by her - not directly, but it being indirectly controlled by her. It means trying to live up to her expectations, even though they're unobtainable. Trying to please her and worrying about what she thinks. Trying to accommodate her. [If I don't]... she can just make me feel...guilt[y]. I think she thinks that since she's given me the world, that I should listen to her and do what she wants to do...I was brought up feeling that I should be so thankful to her for what she's done for me. I guess that's so strong in my mind - that when I don't live up to her expectations, sometimes, it just...comes from that...(Text, pp. 367-368, 373-375).

The above discourse reveals that being "into her

[mother's] world," involves being controlled by mother. The above excerpt shows the bulimic woman struggling to create her own way of being in the world, while she attempts to maintain some kind of relationship with mother. The excerpt reveals that in the bulimic woman's experience of the relationship with mother, she must remain "in[to] mother's world" or share no world with mother. The text discloses that there is no mutually created world of relationship with mother. The discourse discloses how silencing herself and binging allow the bulimic woman to remain in mother's world, in an effort to stay connected with mother in some way. Yet, these actions simultaneously work to distance the bulimic woman from an authentic sense of herself and work to obstruct an authentic experience of relationship with mother. The following passage further reveals the "pressure to perform" for mother and the nature and intensity of the control experienced by the bulimic woman when she is "into mother's [her] world." The excerpt reveals again, the normative nature of being "into mother's world" during childhood years and the questioning of this world as the bulimic woman ages. In this passage, the bulimic woman also uses the word, "system." The context within which this word is used, reveals that "system" refers to the "network of mother's world" or her "order of existence." The words "system" and "world" are used interchangeably in the passage below and in the text, in general:

(Excerpt #68)

Anytime I [would] do something wrong...she made it seem like I shattered her world.... I would feel unloved....With my mom, I just felt a great deal of pressure...but at that time...I was so much into her system...I mean I was really caught up in it. I bought into the whole thing....For so many years, I was just so under her control and her way of thinking! And then, her way of thinking [was], "I have nothing to be angry about! And nothing to be upset about because she loved me and gave me everything that she could give me." That's what she always says...very standard line...And so when I'm angry at her, her voice almost comes inside and says, "But wait a minute, I love you. And I gave you this, and I raised you so well." So, I always say...I have two messages playing in my head...two parts of my brain....I think I was still caught up in the fact that I was judged by my performance...so into that, I didn't recognize that a lot of my unhappiness was caught up in the fact that I was like that....It was part of the whole system....I don't think my mom likes losing control - whether it's of somebody or something. And when my grandmother was sick, she had a lot of control over the situation. When my grandmother died, she lost that part of her life, and she lost that person's control. When she found out that I was having sex, I think, maybe she felt that she lost me to control...I think controlling is really big in her...when I was little, ever since I can remember sitting at the table and eating solid food, I always had to eat everything that was on my plate, even if I didn't want to. And I remember one time specifically...And I got sick afterwards. I didn't make myself get sick! But I just got sick...just didn't want to eat this hot dog, and I remember, she yelled at me for getting sick - that I made myself throw up...when I was seven years old...I just felt so sick from eating ...so full and...probably the other things that were on edge - the emotions or something....I was always angry when she would make me finish everything, when I wasn't hungry....I always thought that she couldn't understand. I mean, I was full! I just didn't want anymore, and that wasn't allotted....it just seemed like she was trying to control something else...because I would scream and cry and tell her..."I'm so full! I'm going to get sick, if you make me eat this!" She just wouldn't budge. She thought I was carrying on (Text, pp. 46, 55, 236, 69, 96, 141-142, 145).

The discourse above reveals that being "into [mother's] her world" is necessary in order to help keep mother's world whole (not "shatter" it) and to maintain some kind of relationship with mother. Remaining "in[to] mother's [her] world" had a protective quality to it, as it allowed a relationship with mother to continue and allowed the bulimic woman to receive the kind of support (material versus emotional) mother was able to give. However, being "into [mother's] her world" was also injurious to the bulimic woman's experience of self and to the experience of relationship with mother. The phrase, "into her world" means being "caught up in" or "fixed within" mother's world (way of life) with its various ways of thinking, feeling, and doing and with all its expectations. Differences between mother and daughter were not considered or "respected" in this world. Nor could others like father or sister deliver the bulimic woman from mother's world. Instead, father remained in a different world, and sister developed her own world as well. The following excerpt reveals how all family members in a sense, were "into their own worlds," with the bulimic woman struggling to shape or re-fashion a world in which she could relate to father, sister, and others, yet still have some kind of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #69)

The only thing that sometimes I remember wanting, was to not have to be with her all the time, and trying to be myself more....I was with my mom a lot. I thought I was her showpiece...my mom hardly had any friends...but

if somebody asked her to do something, she would say, "Oh, no, I'm going to do this with [my daughter]." And she would never see anybody else. So that's when I felt too cared for. She was spending too much time with me...I wanted to be able to be apart from her. I felt that we needed space....I had tried to make her understand...that we needed time apart, but she didn't think that we did...and especially after my parents were separated...her whole life revolved around me, and I couldn't stand that....I did feel sometimes responsible for...her happiness...it really felt like...mom and me against the world....[I] almost felt abandoned, I think, by my father and sister...alone in the same house...day after day, and nobody was there to help...my life felt so invaded...in some ways, she was treating me like a spouse....when things started getting shaky between my mom and I, my senior year...I was able to say I always blamed dad, but mom had a lot to do with the way he acted. So, I think it was at that time, when I started questioning what she was like....[But in the past] I was so much under my mother's control and in her whole world that sometimes...I don't even, I could have never voiced that I wanted him [father] more involved at that time...I think sometimes I thought of it...for a fleeting moment, I would think about it. But then I was so into her world and under her control. And, that's how it was. He wasn't involved and that's it...it didn't phase me that much at that time. I...thought it was normal that he wasn't involved, and that was how it was, and that's how it was going to be....It almost seems like a whole separate world that we were in, and I think that he knew what was going on because...she was almost brainwashing [me]...she was trying to - she tried to do it with him also, to make him a part of her world. And I think he should have stepped in and tried to intervene and tell her, "Stop doing this to her! Stop making her do these things that she doesn't want to do!" He would never do that. And he just let her do her own thing with me....it seems like my sister and I are in two different worlds....My sister's very materialistic. She's very conservative and, I feel like she and her husband live in their own little world...they're the perfect family. And I just have a hard time with that. And she has a very difficult time with what I do....I just always felt like I had to defend myself...it still doesn't seem like she understands...she really has no concept! And I've tried to explain and it's [my choice of career] just not in her world....in so many ways, we have nothing in common (Text, pp. 116-117, 124-125, 220-221, 228-229, 287-288).

The above discourse reveals that the bulimic woman was able to question mother's "world" or way of being-in-the-world when she entered her mid to late adolescent years. Up until that time, however, living in mother's "world" was necessary for the bulimic woman to have a relationship with mother. The phrase, "into her world" does not mean "intrigued and interested" in mother's world in the context of the above discourse. Instead, it means a strong involvement in mother's world which was initially normative and later, a forced choice in the experience of relationship with mother. The text reveals that being "into mother's world" is more frequently a conscious choice now--one made with the hope that it can eventually lead to the making of a mutually created "world" or experience of relationship with mother.

#### Involved on the Sidelines

Another phrase which refers to the bulimic woman's experience of relationship is "involved on the sidelines." This phrase was used mainly in the context of discourse about the experience of relationship with father. A literal interpretation of this phrase that is done without the surrounding discourse of the text, might suggest a lack of involvement in certain competitive events or activities. However, the text reveals that in the relationship with father, the bulimic woman experienced his absence in her life via his lack of involvement not only during times of

accomplishment, but in her life in general. The following excerpt reveals the bulimic woman's experience of her father's lack of involvement in the relationship with him:

(Excerpt #70)

My dad was basically...like proud of anything that I did. And he would really point that out to people." I really didn't like that at all because of the fact that he wasn't involved in my life. So, I felt like..."How can you say these things to people, when you - when it's like hearsay. I mean you haven't even seen me do these things. You just hear me talk about them. Yet, you tell these people. And I was really...angry at him for that....It was such a dichotomy. I was just angry at him...but he loved to tell other people and show me off....not a showpiece...The difference is that I think my father was proud of me. My mom just needed to have me so she would look good. My father didn't use me to make himself look good...he was genuinely proud of me....my mom was just so selective in telling people what she thought people would be impressed with....He would focus on how I got there, and she would just focus on the end [of the accomplishment]. I was angry at my mom because she was using me. I was angry at my dad because he never went to things that he's talking about...for not being involved!...If he was really involved in what I had done and then went and told people about it, I would have felt really good....I was always hurt that he wasn't involved in what I did, or if he was involved, it was always on the sidelines. Like when I used to twirl, [or when] we were at any kind of competition, my mom would watch me from the bleachers, and my father would like stand in the doorway and watch me. And then, as soon as I would get off the floor, he would leave...like leave the whole building. I was just really...hurt that he wouldn't stay and see if I won or anything like that. He would just leave. This is from like...five [years old] on....Even when I graduated from high school...when my parents were separated and they really didn't talk, he didn't sit down in the auditorium. He stood like by the door and took pictures there. But he never sat down (Text, pp. 211-215).

It is also important to consider more than the dictionary definition of the word "sidelines" in the phrase, "involved on the sidelines." The dictionary tells us that

the word "sidelines," means " a space outside the limits of a "sideline" ("a line along either of the two sides of a playing court or field") occupied by spectators and inactive players." "Sidelines" also can mean the "position or viewpoint of non-participants in an activity" (Webster's II, 1984). However, the context of the narrative reveals that this dictionary definition is inadequate in terms of an accurate understanding of the use of the word in the above phrase and of the use of the phrase in the overall discourse of the text. The phrase, "involved on the sidelines," is another paradoxical one, since father cannot "literally" be involved while being "on the sidelines." According to the dictionary, father would be considered only a "spectator." Yet, in a figurative sense, father is "involved on the sidelines."

In this text, "involved on the sidelines" does not mean a total lack of involvement with the bulimic woman, but rather a "selective involvement" depending upon the other "players" (especially mother) present in the life of the bulimic woman. This "selective involvement" was experienced in the relationship with father during times of accomplishment and throughout the bulimic woman's life, in general. The following excerpt illustrates the above points. It reveals how father's "selective involvement" or being "involved on the sidelines," occurred in the context of mother's involvement (sometimes felt "over-involvement")

with the bulimic woman. In other words, when mother was "on the field," father moved toward the "perimeter of the field." When mother was absent, father moved toward "center field" and was experienced as closely involved with the bulimic woman. "Selective involvement" in the experience of relationship with father occurred on a continuum. In the experience of relationship, father was not merely a spectator. There were times when he was not involved at all with the bulimic woman, but also other times, when he was involved in some way, despite his felt distance in the relationship. In the above statements, "field" is a word the researcher uses to refer to the life of the bulimic woman. Mother's "world," as discussed in a previous section, "dominated the field," affected the experience of relationships with father and others, and many times obstructed the development of these other relationships. The excerpt below reveals that when the bulimic woman experienced father as more closely involved with her (in mother's absence), the relationship was experienced as pleasurable and the time with him enjoyable and relaxing:

(Excerpt #71)

The only time that he wasn't on the sidelines was when my mom used to go away for any kind of conference or anything like that. And she would do that fairly often, when I was growing up, with her job. And he would take over the house and he did a good job. He would cook...get me off to school...attend conferences that he had to at school. He was like really actively involved! Well, I always thought that was neat that he did all those things. I mean, he didn't seem to mind at all...doing the laundry, or cleaning, or

cooking...he seemed to enjoy it...I didn't realize this then, but now, that I look back, he probably just liked the break away from my mother...fel[t] comfortable now, doing something...not going [to get] criticized [by mother], if [he] does the wrong...I think he really felt good...almost a relief to have her gone...I felt very secure with him...used to be very relaxing time...things were more easy going....If my mom was there, she always was the one who did things...who always took over....[when] I skipped a grade....I don't remember him being involved in that at all...in the third grade....[my dad wasn't involved] probably because of [with] my mom being around...in other situations, I think he was in the center and didn't mind [it]...I don't know if he was intimidated by her or...just didn't want to deal with her....[when I was younger, and we did have time alone, it was] relaxing. We'd go ice skating...for walks...watch the lightening....I used to love just sitting out[side] there with him...watch the stars....I know that I felt torn....As I got older, and my father started drinking more, I used to get angry with my father....It was the fact that...he was never around now and was always drunk...didn't spend time with me anymore...after like I was 10 years old, he was never at home, and ....would come home at like two or three in the morning....never to go any school events...and I really wanted to have him there....it evolved...even on the weekends, when he was home, my mom and I would just go out, and I wouldn't have any time with him....[except] before they separated, my dad and I went on a vacation together....first I was really apprehensive....I ended up having a lot of fun with him...but then, we got home and he was back into his same old pattern of drinking...but for that time...it was a lot of fun and I felt good. And it was relaxing. It was a nice break away from my mom...then after that, we didn't talk at all or spend time together, until I was in college. And then, I would go over there...his house...and talk with him...a relaxing time because we would talk about his parents and aunts and uncles...about things my mother wouldn't talk about...catch up on everybody. And it was relaxing....my mom was such a stuffy person. My father's very easy going, and just very relaxed compared to her (Text, pp. 216- 219, 221-223, 209, 186, 224-227).

The above discourse reveals the continuum of "selective involvement" the bulimic woman experienced in the relationship with father throughout her life. During times

together (the more active part of the continuum) the bulimic woman experienced father as close to and interested in her, and she was able to work at creating with him a "world of relationship," different from the one she experienced with mother. However, the above excerpt also indicates that father's absence, either due to his alcoholism or missed physical presence, served to obstruct the development of this different kind of "world of relationship." Along with the positive experience of relationship with father, go the painful experiences. These painful experiences of relationship with father related to his level of involvement "on the sidelines." The following excerpt illustrates this interpretation:

(Excerpt #72)

...as early as five years old...I wanted him to step in. And she would dress me up and take me to her office. I think I wanted him to step in and say, "Let's do something else." I was hurt because by him not stepping in, sometimes, I felt he didn't care. And...I thought, "You know, if you really care about me, you would step in and not make me go through this with her." So, I think I was hurt by that also...the fact that he wouldn't step in - a lot of hurt and anger....Seems that the anger that I had with him...it was just more out there...The anger I had with my father didn't consume me the way the anger I have for my mom does...again, it was just more on the sidelines. It's like he was, it just [was] more on the sidelines...probably because the anger I have of my father I resolved a lot of it. And the anger I have with my mom I have not resolved at all (Text, pp. 230-231).

The above excerpt shows that when father was "involved on the sidelines" in a less active way, the bulimic woman experienced a great deal of hurt and anger. Also, although

the anger seemed to come and go, it was still experienced as more "tangible" and "accessible" than the continual undercurrent of anger experienced in the relationship with mother. In general, the text revealed that both father and mother were experienced as not being involved in the relationship with the bulimic woman in ways that felt growth-promoting and healing at times. However, the discourse revealed that mother seemed to move back and forth on a continuum of "under or over-involvement" (emotionally or concretely), while father moved along a continuum of "selective involvement" based on mother's presence or absence. Father could be experienced as engaging in an "under-involved" way, but not in an over-involved way. The bulimic woman wanted more of father's involvement, while trying to find the "middle-ground" of involvement in the experience of relationship with mother. The discourse of the text reveals that today, the bulimic woman is more forgiving of the pain she experienced in the "mismatch" between the desired level and type of involvement and the experienced level and type of involvement in the relationship with father than in the relationship with mother.

It is interesting to note that the phrase, "involved on the sidelines," was not used in referring to the level of involvement experienced in the relationship with sister. Instead, the phrase, "in the periphery," (Text, pp. 269,

271, 295) referred to sister's lack of involvement and absence in the bulimic woman's life. This phrase required no additional interpretation, as the context of the narrative revealed it to mean literally what it suggests; sister is experienced as someone who is in the "outermost region" of the bulimic woman's life. Also, the text uses figurative discourse to reveal that the bulimic woman's attempts to get close to sister are experienced as "landing in the periphery" around sister's heart, as opposed to in her heart (Text, pp. 294-295). In contrast to father, sister was very absent in the bulimic woman's life, and the experience of relationship with sister was one characterized by emotional and physical distance. The initial discourse about sister reveals that the bulimic woman felt like an "only child" early on in life. This was partially related to the age difference between the narrator and sister (approximately 10 years) (Text, p. 269). In general, though, the text discloses only one time when sister attempted to be supportive and involved in the bulimic woman's life. Otherwise, sister was experienced as competitive, uninvolved, and unavailable in the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with her. Despite the statement in the text which speaks to how the bulimic woman gets "more validation" from sister, than from mother (Text, p. 360), the following excerpt captures the overall experience of distance in the relationship with sister:

(Excerpt #73)

I've never felt like she could really understand me. And I don't think that...it was because I was hard to understand, but because she just didn't make the effort to understand me....a lot of times, I just feel like she's so out there. And I don't have any idea where she's coming from...I don't know how to get into her...to get past this almost aggressiveness (Text, pp. 324, 293).

### Everything Exploded

The above code signifying the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, is the last action code interpreted in this section. The statement, "everything exploded," was a very important statement in the text, as it possessed a number of meanings which shifted as the context of the surrounding discourse changed. The word, "exploded," in the statement can be read in a fairly straightforward fashion, with one distinction seen within the context of the changing discourse in the text. The text revealed that "exploded" meant "to burst forth from internal pressure" (within the bulimic woman), or to burst forth from pressure existing within the bulimic woman's interpersonal milieu. Therefore, "everything exploded" within herself (e.g., intra-psychically), and/or "everything exploded" around her. Both kinds of explosions resulted from the experience of relationship and/or led to a change in the experience of relationships. In the first case, the bulimic woman reflected on the experience of relationships herself, or experienced these relationships on her own. For example,

she was physically away from others or did not involve others in self-reflections or experiences, even in their presence. In the latter case, the bulimic woman would experience relationships in the direct presence of others, as she interacted with them in the immediacy of the situation. The following excerpt reveals how "everything exploded" signifies "to burst forth from internal pressure," from within the bulimic woman:

(Excerpt #74)

...I began to look at my own life and to look at things that happened in my past, and realize that I was really angry about some of these things. I mean, and it's...I'm still going through it, and still finding out like...it's almost like things explode and [I] say..."This did happen, didn't it. Your mom shouldn't have done this..." (Text, p. 176).

The above discourse reveals that the "everything" that exploded, were her own "realizations" about her experience of relationships with mother. The excerpt suggests that "internal pressure" possibly resulted from unconscious feelings or repressed thoughts related to the experience of relationship with mother. These feelings or thoughts seem to burst forth and reach conscious awareness, culminating in an explosion or "realization" (a sudden "coming together") about the experience of relationships with others. In other parts of the text, the discourse reveals that the bulimic woman may experience a "bursting forth of feelings," of which she is at least partially aware. In fact, the bulimic woman may volitionally "burst these feelings forth" in the

experience of relationship during a particular interaction. Alternately, the bulimic woman may consciously or unconsciously experience an "explosion" of feelings and act on these feelings. For example, this kind of explosion of feelings may lead to "explosive kinds of behavior" such as escalating and instigating a fight with others or bingeing and purging. The following excerpt, illustrates the above points:

(Excerpt #75)

...He probably had no idea where it was coming from...I was like, "I have to have ice cream. And we couldn't get ice cream!...He thought I was getting upset because...I couldn't have ice cream, which really wasn't it....Just like little things would just blow up. I would make them blow up. I would just become silent, and wouldn't talk, and he'd say..."This is really stupid. It was just ice cream. We can get it another time." And then, if it did escalate, and I did get angry, then, I would focus and say, "This always happens! You always do this!" Instead of focusing on what the problem really was - not controlling my eating...the whole problem was that I was so involved with food....[Other times] I just got him to get angry about something...edge him on until he'll get angry...pick out past incidents and use them to try to get him upset...it's [conflict] probably [has] gone down since we've started talking about the eating disorder...I feel more open. And I can tell him now, "I've had a bad day, I'm depressed about the bulimia," and I don't try to instigate something....[Before], it could be anything, usually non-food related, but the reason I was...I felt...I was doing it...because I as so critical of myself, and...my self-esteem was so low....[For example], him not leaving me a note. I have trouble getting really angry a people, and I hold in my emotions and something like that, would cause me to binge and purge - Instead of expressing my anger directly at him...binge and purge and become silent, rather than it escalating and me getting my anger out appropriately....[Also], I think it's more anger at myself displaced onto him....sometimes I can't...communicate something to him...he doesn't understand what I'm trying to say. And instead of

trying to explain it a different way, I'll just get angry at him...and I'll say to myself, "that was really stupid of you...You could have said it in a different way."...Then...I get angry at myself...and then, I'll binge and purge...because I'm angry at myself for not defusing the whole thing...at first anger at him...but it's like unrealistic anger almost....he truly doesn't understand...and I could say it in a different way, but just aggravate him almost (Text, pp. 5-6, 17-18, 7, 164-166).

It is important to further analyze and explicate the meanings of the word, "everything," as its meanings also depend upon the context of the discourse in the text. In the excerpt #74, "everything" meant the "bursting forth of feelings or thoughts, culminating in the explosion of awareness or realization about the experience of relationships. However, in excerpt #75, "little things" had two references. It referred to "smaller issues" or concerns which seem upon initial reflection to be insignificant. In addition, it signified feelings which seemed to erupt in response to these "little things." In essence, the "little things" exploded into "big things." In other contexts of the narrative, "everything" also meant the bursting forth of pressure or feelings within the bulimic woman's interpersonal milieu. This "explosion" of pressure or feelings would occur around her, in others' experiences of relationship, and within her experience of relationship with others. The excerpt above already revealed an "eruption" of feelings and events within the interaction with husband. The following excerpt will disclose how "everything exploded" or could "potentially explode" in the experience

of relationship with mother and sister, and between mother and sister and the bulimic woman. Most importantly, the meaning of "everything" now points not only to feelings but also, to relationships with others:

(Excerpt #76)

I would have to call her [mother] before I called my sister or [right] after...so that in case my sister talked to my mom before I called her and told her about the job...you know, mom would explode because I didn't call....My mom's going to be pissed that...I didn't call her first....I still feel like she expects me to always think of her [first]....I remember the holidays, after we got engaged. My sister would do things like be an hour late for dinner...and wouldn't have called. And my mother would be pissed off at my sister because she's so inconsiderate. And it would just turn into this big...and it still happens. And everybody would...blow up at each other. And so that would just distance my sister and I even more. And I have a feeling that my sister feels that I'm just like my mother...and she has problems with that...although, now, I think she's beginning to see that I'm not....I want to talk with her [my sister], but I can't find the words, or I don't know what to say...I'm as much to blame as...we're both...I just can't find the words...I almost feel like I'm not saying anything because I'm walking on eggshells. I'm afraid that if I say something, then it'll just destroy everything, and there won't be any way to have any kind of a relationship (Text, pp. 100-101, 285-286, 298-299).

The final statement in the above excerpt reveals the "violent nature" of actual or anticipated explosions in the experience of relationships with others. This "sudden and violent" eruption of feelings and relationships is seen in the phrase, "destroy everything." The remaining excerpt below poignantly depicts the "violent and abrupt" nature of the eruptions occurring within the experience of relationships with others in the life of the bulimic woman.

This excerpt shows how the meaning of "everything" also refers to dreams, hopes, and relationships. The statement, "everything exploded," is used in the context of actual or potential relationship losses throughout the text. These losses or "endings" are experienced as sudden and long-lasting:

(Excerpt #77)

When my parents separated, the week before my sister got married, and previous to that, my father never used to come home - never came home for dinner...[he] would come home at like two or three in the morning and then, leave again. The week between my sister's wedding and when we left our house, my father came home every night for dinner. It was my mother's birthday, and we celebrated. We brought a cake home and bought her a microwave. And I really thought...my parent's relationship was going to work again. We'd be a family. And then, the night that my sister and her husband came home from their honeymoon and opened gifts, there was a terrible argument and everything exploded...my dad came in late, and he was very, very drunk...he started arguing with everybody in the room and was telling my sister's husband that he was so glad the he married my sister...that he couldn't stand having her in the house anymore. Just stuff like that. And my brother-in-law's parents...left and then, my father went downstairs. And as he was going down, he said he was going to kill himself, since he didn't feel wanted up here, upstairs. So he had all of his hunting rifles downstairs, and he locked himself in the garage for a while. And then, he came back up with the rifle and the bullets and put the gun to his head. And I think what saved him and the rest of us was that my mother fainted...And [the next day], my mother and I fled the house. And I just felt like my dreams were shattered. I mean everything was so good, for a week! And then, it was gone...When my parents separated, it really felt like I was being abandoned - by not anybody in particular. But I was being abandoned by a family...And that's how I felt, when my relationship with [my old boyfriend] ended, and when his brother died. The whole summer was just so good, and it seemed like it was going to work out. Then, in a matter of a day, it just seemed like everything ended...when his brother died...that kind of...everything exploded -

Both our relationship, and the relationship that I had with his family, and the relationship with my mom. I think it [the bulimia] started around that time....And I didn't have his family anymore. I didn't have him, and it just seemed like...Like I said, everything ended. So, it just seems like that's happened quite a bit. And when my father died, it seemed like I was...like the last thing. I mean, the only other person that there was, was mom. So, I thought... I just immediately thought that she was going to die also, just because everything else had. I had lost all those other things...that I just thought that she was the last person that I would have, and I was going to lose her (Text, pp. 186, 188, 185, 187, 148).

The discourse above revealed that "everything" referred to not only feelings in the experience of relationships with others, but also to relationships themselves, and to dreams about those relationships. The discourse reveals the violence and suddenness in the changes experienced in relationships with others. Even those relationships, which seemed the most secure (boyfriend), suddenly "exploded" and were lost. Also, relationships that were gradually "dying" (parents) seemed to end finally in an explosion. In the context of the narrative, the statement, "everything exploded," reveals a number of meanings. This statement or similar phrases ("things blew up") referred to situations in which the bulimic woman contributed knowingly to the eruptions she experienced in the relationships with others. However, the statement was also used in contexts in which it conveyed a sense of loss of control and helplessness amidst the eruptions which occurred in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with others. The above discourse also reveals that the past experience of broken

dreams contributes to the expectation of, the fear of, troubled or lost relationships in the future. With this in mind, the meaning of "walking on eggshells" with sister in excerpt #76 is clearer. The bulimic woman attempts to preserve relationships with others via silence or activities such as binging and purging. These activities are done with the hope that "all will not be destroyed," and that "everything will not explode and be lost."

#### The Temporal Component of the Experience of Relationships

The temporal codes revealed by the previous structural analysis were also submitted to a semantic analysis. The semantic analysis helped in the explication of meaning of the temporal experiences disclosed by the narrative. The text revealed that the temporal codes were intimately related to the particular contexts of the experience of relationships disclosed by the text. The two temporal codes revealed by the text were chronological time and internally experienced, or personal time. During the semantic analysis, reading revealed how the text "can free itself from the most linear aspects of time, [while it] can in return, explore the hierarchical levels that form the depth of temporal experience" (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 101). In this section, the semantic analysis of the chronological temporal code will be discussed first and the personal temporal code, second.

### Chronological Time

The text disclosed that chronological time was noted within the context of the experience of relationships with others. Time was "marked out" within three main contexts. The first context involved the passing of time as it related to certain unchanging experiences in the relationships with others. For example, the narrator states, "If my mother was there, she always was the one who did things...the one who always took over (Text, p. 218). On another occasion, she states, "When I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had like a constant anger towards her...It was always there!" (Text, p. 170). The second context involved the passing of time as it related to developmental or situational changes in the experience of relationships with others. This second way of understanding the meaning of chronological time within the context of the experience of relationships to others, was often noted during the reading of the text. This second way of "marking out" the passing of time occurred in the context of significant life events. The text referred to calendar (e.g., special events or holidays) and clock time, as well as to the passage of years, in the context of these life events. The following excerpt shows how the passage of time was connected to certain life events and changes in the experience of relationships with others. In addition, the excerpt ends with an example of a time when only a small amount of

chronological time passes during critical changes and major life events in the life of the narrator:

(Excerpt #78)

When I was 18, I had an abortion. And my mom found out about it...the first thing she said was, "You know, I can't believe you did this to me. What are people going to think?" She didn't ask me if I was alright....And in 12th grade, I think I really got the nerve to just counter her on so many things because I felt like I might as well settle this up because I'm in the worst possible situation anyway....like my parents were separated when I was in ninth grade....and afterwards....my dad and I got together on a very irregular, infrequent basis. And for like the first, I mean, I was really angry with him probably the first...three or four years afterwards. And what he would do is, he used to send me gifts constantly on all the holidays...my birthday, he would send me money. For Valentine's Day, he would send me roses and money....When my parents separated, the week before my sister got married and previous to that, my father never used to come home...The week between my sister's wedding and when we left our house, my father came home every night for dinner. It was my mother's birthday, and we celebrated....Then, the night that my sister and her husband came home from their honeymoon...there was a terrible argument...and my mother and I fled the house....everything was so good for a week, and then, it was gone....in a matter of two days, we got an apartment. And in an hour, we just packed everything that we needed from the house and transferred them to the apartment...I got one day off of school, and that was it. The next day, I was expected to go to school... (Text, pp. 74, 91, 50, 198, 185-186, 194-195).

The third context in which one understands the chronological experience of time involves the passage of time as it relates to the following: a) the use of food (binging, purging, or dieting) within the context of the experience of relationships with others, and b) the self-disclosure of bulimia to others and the changes in the experience of relationship which accompany this self-

disclosure. The passage of time in relation to these events is seen in the following excerpt, which shows the passage of time within the context of the experience of relationship with husband:

(Excerpt #79)

...I was bulimic when I first met my husband. And I hid it from him for about two years. It's only been in the past - just since last October, is when I first told him....Before he knew about my eating disorder, he used to back off and just leave me alone. Now, he'll stand up for himself, and then, he'll just leave me alone...like before, he wanted to avoid conflict at all costs...now that he knows that I have an eating disorder that contributes to the edginess and stuff...I think he feels he should stand up for himself....Now...when we do have some kind of argument...we tend to get over it a lot quicker....I can actually talk to him now....When I first told him about my bulimia, he used to play basketball once a week, and he tried to cancel it....I think he thought he could solve the problem...by doing that...if he was there 24 hours a day. Then I wouldn't binge and purge....I understood where he was coming from...but, I was angry because he didn't understand...he was missing that it had started before him.... (Text, pp. 3-4, 15-16, 18, 26, 27).

Discourse in the text revealed similar relationships between chronological time and the disclosing of the bulimia or the use of food in the experience of relationships with others, in addition to husband. The following excerpt reveals the experience of chronological time in the experience of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #80)

I think my mom influenced me a lot as far as food goes. One of the things that I started to look at when I started going to therapy was how her diet patterns influenced mine. And I guess, like the first time that really happened was when I was 12 or 13 years old. And she was on diets a lot. Just trying fad diets, and the

whole thing was she was never overweight at all....when I was 12 or 13, that was when I started going on them with her...It was just something to be part of her....when I was little, ever since I can remember sitting at the table and eating solid food, I always had to eat everything that was on my plate, even if I didn't want to. and I remember one time specifically....I just didn't want to eat this hot dog, and I remember her yelling at me for getting sick...like when I was 7 years old....The last, like actual restrictive type diet I remember going on was when I became a freshman in college...It didn't turn into bulimia until like, when I was 18....It started the beginning of my junior year, when I started conforming again, different actually....the circumstances around that time...I had broken up with somebody that she [mother] really despised....the second month of my junior year in October, his brother died.... (Text, pp. 137-138, 141, 146, 132).

The above discourse indicated that a certain amount of time was required for the narrator to experience bulimia, approximately 18 years. However, there were also points in time within the experience of relationships with others, wherein she experienced certain events that may have helped predispose, precipitate, or perpetuate (later) her bulimia. These events occurred throughout her lifetime. Also, the discourse reveals that it takes a certain amount of time "to tell" her secret of bulimia to others. This amount of time varies from one relationship to the next. As previously indicted in this inquiry, the amount of time required seems to depend on the level of closeness experienced in the relationship.

#### Internally Experienced or Personal Time

The second temporal code was semantically analyzed and revealed the meaning of internally experienced or personal

time. This second experience of time refers to a temporal experience which is private and related to the various meanings of a temporal event. The particular experience of personal time was unique to the bulimic woman's situation and way of being-in-the-world. Again, the experience of personal time depended upon the context of the experience of relationships with others. The text revealed personal time experienced in the context of a) unchanging experiences within relationships over time, b) changes within the experience of relationships over time, and c) the bulimic woman's experience with food or experience of telling others the secret of bulimia (including the effects of this self-disclosure on the experience of relationships).

In terms of personal time experience in the context of unchanging experiences within relationships, the following excerpt shows the "continuous" experience of anger toward mother throughout the bulimic woman's life. There seems to be many "angry times" in the experience of relationship with mother, in fact, an almost "endless" anger with her:

(Excerpt #81)

...when I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had like a constant anger towards her...it usually never came up...it just was always there! But I don't think at that time, I really thought about it as anger. I mean, It's only now that I can think about it as anger and say, "You know, I was angry during that period too, and I still am. But then, I wouldn't have said..."I have this anger at my mom and it's always there. I would have said, you know, I got angry at her when I didn't like what she did or when I didn't feel validated...because as much as I could at that time, I pushed it away, so I could go on with my daily life.

"Cause I think if I didn't...If I kept dwelling in all the anger and the feelings I had, then I couldn't have done everything I did....Like all through my senior year of high school, the last part of it, and then into college, I think the way that I coped was I just pushed it away. And it only came out, when I had to have some kind of direct confrontation with my mother...I don't even think that I would have...been able to access it....and especially, at that point, I guess it was just like one more thing. It almost...seemed so normal...probably relatively recently....I began to look at my own life and to look at things that happened in my past. And I realized that I was really angry about some of these things...and I'm still going through it and still finding out like...it's almost like things explode... (Text, pp. 170, 173-176).

The above discourse reveals many "angry times" in the experience of relationship with mother. In addition, the discourse indicates that the experience of personal time itself can be "delayed" in a sense. For example, in the past, the bulimic woman often did not recognize that she experienced "angry times," however, she has a feeling that the anger was always there. The above discourse indicates that recent times are experienced as more reflective and actually allow access to personal time experienced in the relationship with mother long ago.

The second context in which personal time was experienced, involved the changes felt within the experience of relationships with others. For example, there were certain meanings attached to the passage of time during critical life events and during times when there were changes in the experience of relationships with others. The excerpt below reveals the particular meanings attached to

the passage of time, at one point in time, in the experience of relationship with mother:

(Excerpt #82)

... The best instance I have of the silent treatment, and this is the longest she ever did it, was when she found out I was having sex in 12th grade. That was when she read my poetry. And it was a silent treatment for a good two months. Yeah, it was a real long time...that was really like talking to a wall! I got nowhere! I got nowhere....those were a terrible two months. Because in that time, this happened in January of my senior year...I was in the process of picking out what college I wanted to go to. And so I had gotten accepted at Boston and University of RPI...and she said that because I had sex, I was too immature to go away to school. So she wouldn't let me go away to school. So not only was she giving me the silent treatment, and I was dealing with all that....for that whole, those whole six months was almost like a living hell. That's probably...one of the worst times (Text, pp. 87-89).

The above discourse revealed that the event of having sex for the first time in senior year of high school carried with it a certain experience and certain meanings pertaining to this time. The narrator undergoes "the silent treatment" and describes this time as "terrible," almost "hellish." In fact, it was experienced as one of the worst times, in terms of the experiences of the silent treatment in the relationship with mother.

Throughout the text, one can find references to the experience of personal time as it relates to critical life events or changes in the experience of relationship with others. For example, the discourse reveals the "relaxing or fun times" spent with father, as well as time the narrator experienced as "lost" because of father's alcoholism. The

text also reveals that with sister, the bulimic woman experiences "frustrating and competitive times." She feels that she should be "using her time" more effectively by talking more with sister. Finally, the discourse of the text often refers to the experience of troubled times and times of loss in the experience of relationships with others. These experiences of time are clear in the following two excerpts:

(Excerpt #83)

And afterwards [after the parental separation] it was pretty crazy. The separation gave no visitation clauses or anything like that. It didn't really talk about child support. And I wasn't told. I always had to ask about it...My dad and I got together on a very irregular, infrequent basis...I was like really angry with him probably...three or four years afterwards. And what he would do is, he used to send me gifts constantly at all the holidays...he said all the money that I've been sending...for your birthday and Christmas, that's supposed to be child support. And I mean, I was like in shock...he was sending me gifts, and this is child support? So, I was just really confused about everything...It was just really crazy, and so I questioned...his love. I questioned his genuiness. I questioned a lot of things. And so after that, I told him that I didn't want anything...I didn't see him that much until my senior year, when all these problems were happening with my mom... (Text, pp. 198-199).

(Excerpt #84)

...a connection between when I basically lost the relationship with [my old boyfriend] and then, when I lost the relationship with my father...the whole connection with them and my mother...the third part of it is when my parents separated. It really felt like I was being abandoned by a family...we [narrator and old boyfriend] had just a really good summer...I think it [bulimia] started around that time. The next [time] is when his brother died. And then, kind of everything exploded - both our relationship and the relationship that I had with his family, and the relationship with

my mom....That was basically when it fell apart...throughout this whole time, my mom was still on our cases and restricted our seeing each other and stuff like that...this just seemed like the last straw, when his brother passed away....And then, the night that my sister and her husband came home from their honeymoon...there was a terrible argument and everything exploded...And I just feel like my dreams were shattered. I mean, everything was so good for a week! And then it was gone. And that's how it felt when my relationship with [my old boyfriend] ended, and when his brother died. The whole summer was just so good. And it seemed like it was going to work out. And then, in a matter of a day, it just seemed like everything ended. And I didn't have his family anymore. I didn't have him. And it just seemed like it. Like I said, everything ended. So, it just seems like that's happened quite a bit. And when my father died, it seemed like...the last thing. I mean, the only other person that there was, was mom. So, I...immediately thought that she was going to die also, just because everything else had. I had lost like all these other things (Text, pp. 184-185, 148-149, 186-187).

The above excerpts reveal how the bulimic woman often experienced time as painful. These excerpts also illuminate how these times involved the experience of loss and the finality or finitude of time in relation to human life. The above discourse reveals an experience of time as passing too quickly or changing too suddenly and violently ("everything exploded"). The discourse reveals quick shifts in the experience of personal time, depending on the context of the experience of relationships. Most interesting, are the parallels in the personal experience of time across the experience of relationships and over time. For example, the bulimic woman experienced "times of loss" in the experience of relationship with a) old boyfriend and his family, b) father, c) mother, and d) her own family unit. These "times

of loss" span from the bulimic woman's past (recollected losses) to the present (immediately perceived losses) and to the future (expected losses).

There is one other context in which personal time is experienced within the context of the experience of relationships. This context involves the narrator's experience with food and/or the disclosure of bulimia to others. The following excerpts reveal the personal experience of time as it relates to the bulimic woman's use of food and the self-disclosing of her bulimia in the experience of relationships with husband, then sister and mother:

(Excerpt #85)

...I've been so open with him about my eating disorder. And I feel like if he's going to reject me at any time, it would be during that time. It was a very big risk when I told him. I remember that...I was terrified of telling him, and I just felt like well, you know, if he doesn't reject me now, then it will probably be easier after this...and I just felt so out of control with my life, even though I felt I was kind of in control...And I realized that I needed help (Text, pp. 37-38, 41-42).

(Excerpt #86)

Well, I know that when I'm around her [sister], I use food to...comfort myself. I...I'm just thinking about this camping trip [we took]. And I almost felt like I had to have something in my mouth constantly during the whole like two days...something in my mouth all the time. It's kind of a generalized feeling when I'm with my sister, actually with my mom too sometimes - especially when I'm in her house...when I go to her [mother] house, I just feel very anxious and uncomfortable. And I just always feel like I have to have food in my mouth...a general uneasiness when I'm there...Because I'm afraid to let my feelings...I'm afraid my feelings will get out, when I go to her house...for about the past year, I felt very anxious

because I knew that I had a lot of feelings of anger towards her...in a way, I'm worried about letting those feelings get out. Cause I'm not prepared to let them out with her. So, I may always feel like I have to be eating, so I can push the feelings down - so that they don't come out (Text, pp.301-302, 365-366).

The above excerpts reveal that the times the bulimic woman discloses her secret of bulimia are experienced as terrifying and risky. There is also an anticipation of rejection from others during these times. In addition, the discourse reveals that time spent with sister and mother is experienced as uncomfortable, uneasy, and anxiety-provoking. These times are also characterized by the bulimic woman's experience of needing food constantly in her mouth to "keep back her feelings" or to provide her a sense of comfort and "fullness" or wholeness. The text reveals that the above times are difficult ones in which the bulimic woman struggles to find the middle-ground within her relationship to food and within her relationships with others.

#### Meaning and Metaphor

Multiple readings of the text revealed that the discourse of the text was not merely literal, but many times poetic, employing figurative language, similes, and metaphors. The following phrases and statements are examples of the poetic discourse of the text:

1. [Telling my husband about the bulimia was] almost like shedding a piece of clothing (Text, p.42).
2. Anytime I['d] do something wrong, I shattered her

[mother's] world (Text, p.46)

3. I felt like I was really killing [mother] her  
[with my disagreement] (Text, p. 48).

4. You were supposed to put on another face, if you  
were mad at a person (text, p.86).

5. [Talking to mother during the silent treatment  
was] like talking to a wall (text, pp.87-88).

6. Those whole six months were [was] almost like a  
living hell (Text, p. 89).

7. Some things she [mother] said were so pointed  
(Text, p. 106).

8. She [mother] could crack a person like that (Text,  
p. 106).

9. I feel like part of my head is divided into mom's  
part and myself (Text, p. 113).

10. I have two messages playing in my head...two parts  
of my brain (Text, p. 236).

11. I just felt almost like a doll (Text, 127).

12. My mother is more like a...rock (Text p. 24).

13. I almost feel like I would have been drowned by it  
[anger], (Text, p. 174).

14. It almost felt like something snapped in me (Text,  
p. 179).

15. Everything was just pushed under the carpet...and  
there's pretty pictures being painted again (Text, p. 181).

16. ...her [sister's] heart is the center of the dart

board, and that's what I really want to get to, but she has so many layers around it (Text, p. 294).

17. I'm walking on eggshells (Text p. 298).

18. My mother is like a...flag pole (Text, p. 243).

For the purposes of this inquiry, one of the most poignant metaphors, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," will be discussed. This metaphor was chosen because it constituted one of the codes ("I was angry") of the text and was discussed more fully than other metaphors. Although the statement, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," is technically a "simile," it may be treated like a metaphor according to Ricoeur. In The Rule of Metaphor (1975) he states that metaphor and simile "differ only by the presence or absence of a specific term of comparison...simile is a metaphor developed further; the simile says "this is like that," whereas the metaphor says "this is that" (p. 25). In other words, simile "explicitly displays the moment of resemblance that operates implicitly in metaphor" (p. 27); simile is an "explicit metaphor."

Also, although the "almost" in the metaphorical statement, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," might suggest an uncertainty or ambivalence regarding the kinship between the narrator's anger and an ocean, the text discloses that this word is used a great deal throughout the text and is part of one of the structural codes of the text ("tentative language code"). The metaphorical utterance

could be viewed as "weakened" in some way by the "almost" in the statement or be viewed as an utterance conveying difficulty in finding an "appropriate" or "fitting" metaphor of anger at mother. However, upon further reading and reflection, the text revealed that "almost" is used often in the text and seems to be a common word, (like "you know") in this narrator's discourse. Therefore, the metaphor loses none of its strength in disclosing metaphorical meaning about the bulimic woman's anger with mother. The excerpt below reveals the discourse in which the metaphor, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," is embedded:

(Excerpt #86)

I mean, I think that even when I was living with my mom and I was bulimic, I had like a constant anger towards her! I mean it didn't...It usually never came up...let me think...It just was always there. I wasn't like always angry on the outside towards her, but it was always there! And so that's why...my binging and purging just happens to seem like erratic...And I really, looking back, even though I don't remember that well, I don't see like connections between specific events that triggered it or anything...in the back of my head...One thing that I could name is [my anger] is almost like an ocean. Where, you know, there's like a high tide and every once in awhile, the waves get bigger. But the water's always there. It just has peaks and valleys. I don't have recollections specifically on when, you know, I binged and purged during that time period, but I can like bring back times...but they're not connected with anything. But I don't think that at that time I really thought about it as anger. I mean, it's only now that I can think about it as anger and say, you know, "I was angry during that period too," and I still am. But, then, I don't...I wouldn't have said, you know, "I have this anger with my mom, and it's always there." I would have said, you know. I got angry at her when I didn't like what she did or when I didn't feel validated, when she wouldn't talk with me. And I don't know what I would have said otherwise. There was...And I can't even think of what

I would've said, if somebody asked me how, you know, I felt towards my mom at that time. I can't...I just don't think I would've said that I'm always...I always had an anger. [It was] hard to put it to words [back then]. Probably because as much as I could at that time, I pushed it away, so that I could go on with my daily life. 'Cause I think if I didn't...if I kept dwelling in all the anger and feelings I had, then, I couldn't have done everything I did....I almost feel like I would have been drowned by it. Like all through my senior year of high school...into college...I think the way I coped was I just pushed it away. And it only came out when I had to have some kind of direct confrontation with my mother. So that's why I can't even, I don't even think that I would have probably been able to access it. Just cause it was pushed far enough back. And especially, like at that point, I guess it was just like one more thing. It almost, it just seemed so normal....Probably relatively recently...I describe [the anger] as an ocean or anything like that...like last year....admitting I had an eating disorder...I started reading more about it. I began to look at my own life and to look at things that happened in my past and realize that I was really angry about some of these things...and I'm still going through it and still finding out like...it's almost like things explode and say, "Oh, you know, this did happen, didn't it. Your mom shouldn't have done this....I think it was me coming up with it on my own...I think I basically said, "Now, if this happened to you now, what would you feel? I'd feel anger"...I just started reading more and...maybe, it was because I didn't want to take all the blame for the problem...there must be a reason why this happened... (Text, pp. 170-177).

Before proceeding to an interpretation of the above metaphor, it is necessary to discuss Ricoeur's view of metaphor and its function in discourse.

#### Ricoeur's View of Metaphor

Ricoeur agrees with Aristotle that in order to use metaphor well, one must "possess the mastery of resemblances" and grasp the unknown relations between things (1975, p. 80). However, Ricoeur (1975) rejects the

traditional view of metaphor, which began with the Greek sophists and was continued by Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, until it died away in the nineteenth century (Ricoeur, 1976). In the past tradition of rhetoric, metaphor was viewed as conveying no new information and was used as "decoration" or as a stylistic ornament which was pleasing to the reader. Therefore, metaphor was initially conceived to be a "trope," a figure of speech, since it proceeded from a "deviating use of the meaning of words" (Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 130). Tropes only affected the names and giving of names. To understand metaphor, then, meant to "restitute" the name which has been substituted. Thus, the traditional view of metaphor involved a theory of "substitution." A borrowed word taken with its deviating use is substituted for a potential proper name which is absent in the context, but which could be used in the same place as the borrowed word. For any number of reasons, the borrowed word seemed more "pleasing" to use. The substitution theory of metaphor was based on presuppositions that it was possible to provide an exhaustive paraphrase of a given metaphor. However, the substitution theory did not account for the "semantic novelty" of metaphor, its ability to create new meaning. In the tradition of rhetoric, the focus was on the "words" or "names" in the metaphorical statement. However, the metaphorical process occurs at

another level, the level of the sentence and of discourse as a whole (Ricoeur, 1978a).

In embracing the view that metaphor needs to be understood at the level of the sentence or within discourse as a whole, Ricoeur supported an "interactive or tension" view of metaphor. Ricoeur's reflection and work on metaphor is based on a synthesis of the work done by I.A. Richards, Max Black, Monroe Beardsley, Colin Turbayne, and Philip Wheelwright (Ricoeur, 1976). For Ricoeur, metaphor is not a trope, but a "general process by which we grasp kinship, break the distance between remote ideas, build similarities on dissimilarities" (Ricoeur, 1978a, p. 132). Thus, Ricoeur views metaphor as instructive and as a "semantic innovation." A semantic innovation is a creation of language which emerges at a particular moment without status in the language as something already established (with respect to designation or connotation). A semantic innovation also has the ability to "redescribe reality," to illuminate new aspects of it. Therefore, metaphor, as a semantic innovation or "semantic event," leads to a "gain in meaning." Most importantly, it involves a gain in the sense and reference of meaning (Ricoeur, 1975).

In Ricoeur's "interactive or tension" view of metaphor, what is essential to the structure of metaphor is that the "old and the new" be present together in a "metaphorical twist." The tension between the literal and metaphorical

meaning of the metaphor exists within this twist. The meaning of the metaphorical statement emerges from the blockage of a literal interpretation of the statement. A literal interpretation carries with it a "semantic impertinence," an incongruity or non-sensicalness. For example, the metaphor, "Man is a wolf," does not literally mean that man is a wolf, a carnivorous animal living in northern regions. One would not commonly associate the subject and predicate in this statement, therefore in the literal interpretation the "sense" meaning abolishes itself. With the "self-destruction" of the literal sense meaning, the primary reference (what the statement refers to in reality) also breaks down. The destruction of meaning is the counterpart of a positive strategy. This strategy is the revelation of a semantic innovation (new meaning) at the level of the entire statement. This innovation in meaning is obtained through the "twist" of the literal meaning of the words. When one receives a metaphorical statement as meaningful, both the literal and the new meaning are perceived. It is important to note that despite the "destruction of meaning" described above, the impossible literal interpretation is not simply abolished by the metaphorical interpretation, but submits to it while resisting. This resistance or tension between the interpretations also occurs between the primary reference and the new metaphorical reference (Ricoeur, 1975). This

effect of metaphor has been compared to "stereoscopic vision:" several layers of meaning are noted and recognized in the "thickness of the text" (Ricoeur, 1978a).

In returning to the above metaphor, "man is a wolf," we saw that the literal interpretation is non-sensical or is an example of a semantic impertinence. To reach a new semantic "pertinence" and a new referential meaning, we need to see the statement's metaphorical interpretation. This process does not focus on the current lexical (dictionary) meaning of words in the metaphor, but on what an interpreter, within a particular linguistic community might associate with a wolf. Alternately, a metaphor can be understood within the context of specially constructed systems of implications as well (Ricoeur, 1975). Therefore, in trying to understand the metaphor, one would speak of man in "wolf-language"; the metaphor acts as a filter or screen in a contextual way, to suppress some details, while emphasizing others. Thus, the metaphor does not involve a simple transfer of words, but a "transaction of contexts" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 80). A metaphor is a semantic event which occurs at the point where several semantic fields interact. It is because of this construction, that all the words taken together, make sense. The context of the metaphor facilitates the understanding of the metaphor and its new creation of meaning in terms of its sense and reference. The metaphor does not only innovatively connect the subject (man) with the predicate

(is a wolf), but also, implies that man is re-described - that man is "really this way." Therefore, in an ontological sense, the metaphor also organizes in a new way, our view of man. In essence, metaphor is a semantic innovation which allows a "new way of seeing" and which makes manifest a new way of "being-in-the-world" through language.

### Metaphorical Interpretation

The above discussion illustrates how a metaphor, according to Monroe Beardsley, (Ricoeur, 1976) may be considered a "poem in miniature." Ricoeur sees the relations between the literal meaning and the metaphorical meaning in a metaphor to be "like an abridged version within a single sentence of the complex interplay of significations that characterize the literary work as a whole" (p. 46). The literary work of this inquiry is the narrative of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. It is a literary work because it brings an explicit and an implicit meaning into relation in regards to the experience of relationships. In order to understand what the metaphor, "[my anger] is almost like an ocean," means as a "poem in miniature" (as a work unto itself and as a "local event" contributing to the interpretation of the whole text) we need to do a metaphorical interpretation of the statement.

The process of metaphorical interpretation is the same as that for larger works of discourse (texts). This work includes the explication of sense and reference and requires

reading and reflection. However, metaphorical interpretation also requires an openness to the text which includes a willingness to submit to certain images the metaphor may evoke. The necessity of engaging in this imaginative process is related to the purpose of poetic language, to "arouse images" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 210).

In order to understand the meaning of a metaphorical statement, one must be able to perceive both the literal meaning and the new meaning within the context of the narrative. Therefore, the first endeavor in metaphorical interpretation is to explicate the literal interpretation. This initial task is natural in reading, as one immediately feels the incongruity of the literal interpretation. The metaphor, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," literally states that the bulimic woman's anger is the entire body of salt water (or parts of it) that covers approximately 72% of the earth's surface (Webster's II, 1984). This is an absurd statement and a good example of semantic impertinence. Anger is a feeling experienced by human beings, while an ocean is a form of nature. Therefore, anger cannot in a literal sense "be" an ocean. It can "be" a human feeling or experience. In trying to make sense out of "non-sense," the next task is to try and grasp the "kinship" between anger and an ocean. This kinship and the sense meaning of the statement seem to lie within the possible shared characteristics of anger and an ocean. This kinship is supported by the discourse

surrounding the metaphor as well. For example, an ocean is a vast body of water. It is great in terms of its size (area) as well as in its depth. It is a great expanse of water which also has the potential of being very powerful, in comparison to smaller bodies of water. The ocean can be viewed as "friend or foe." It can be viewed as life-giving and quietly majestic or life-threatening, wild, and uncontained. Also, oceans are associated with "always having existed." They have existed for many, many years and will probably continue to exist well into the future. In addition, only the surface of the ocean is immediately available to us. We cannot see what lies in its depths, unless we descend below the surface and take a closer and critical look.

The kinship between anger and ocean becomes clearer when reading the metaphor with an eye for the resemblances between the nature of the anger described, and an ocean. The context of the narrative reveals that the bulimic woman's anger, like an ocean, is "constant" and has "always been there." The vastness of the anger is revealed by the surrounding discourse in the statements, "If I kept dwelling in all the anger, and the feelings I had, then I couldn't have done everything I did...I almost feel like I would have been drowned by it" (Excerpt #86 above). The anger is described as a feeling that has great expanse (over the last 22 years) and great depth (fearing she would drown with an

awareness of it). The statements from Excerpt #86 also indicate the potential power of the anger. The discourse reveals that the anger is experienced as dangerous to the narrator's well-being. It threatens to "immobilize" her and in some way, "end her life" (drown her). In this case, there is a dread of the anger (ocean), not a constructive experience of pleasure or power. Finally, the discourse also reveals that "although it [anger] was always there," "it usually never came up," however, there were "high tides and low tides," "peaks and valleys." Also, the discourse surrounding the metaphor reveals that the anger "was pushed away" and "couldn't be accessed" (Excerpt #86). These statements convey the meaning that there is more to the anger than what initially meets the eye. In fact, there are many times when the anger is not visible nor able to be detected. The discourse reveals that the anger is a potentially dangerous, invisible force. In addition, there is a paradoxical meaning to the metaphor, since the anger is "constantly present," "always there, but "never usually comes up."

The metaphor also addresses a temporal component, seen more clearly by examining the discourse surrounding the metaphor. The reference to time is implied in the kinship between anger and an ocean as already addressed above. For example, the anger and the ocean "have always been and continue to be." However, there is an additional reference

to time, since the surrounding discourse suggests that the narrator was unable or unwilling to access her anger (in its immensity) till recently. The discourse reveals that recently, when the bulimic woman has an increased awareness of her anger, these periods of time are experienced as "explosive."

In looking at the metaphor, one must now ask about its referential meaning (the "about what" in reality, to which the metaphor speaks). Mediation on the literal reference of the metaphor reveals that anger is "an ocean," not a "puddle," "pond," or even a "lake." The literal reference relates anger to an ocean, an enormous body of water. Of course, the literal reference is non-sensical, since anger cannot literally refer to a body of water. However, metaphorically, this kinship between anger and the ocean makes sense, since the metaphorical reference of the statement is to the nature of the anger experienced by the bulimic woman in the relationship with mother. Just as the ocean covers approximately 72% of the world, so does the bulimic woman's anger constitute a vast amount of her experience of relationship with mother. The anger is very "large" and very "deep." It is a powerful body of "troubled water." This anger is immense, and it is expansive in terms of years experienced in the relationship and in terms of its depth. The enormity of the anger as an ocean conveys the power of the anger which lies "below the surface." The

anger has usually been experienced as an unseen, unknown force within the relationship with mother until recently. It is a dangerous force and needs to be "pushed back." The energy expended to push back the anger is required for the bulimic woman's continued existence as a "being" in the world and for the continued existence of the relationship with mother. The discourse reveals that her everyday life would have ceased, her action in the world would have stopped, if she had "dwelled" in the anger. She would have been "drowned" by it.

The metaphor, supported by its surrounding discourse, is ontological, since it refers to the bulimic woman's experience of "anger as an ocean," vast, potentially threatening, and needing to be hidden in the depths of herself. This experience of anger and its consequences affected the way she led her life, her "actions" or "inactions." The bulimic woman's ability to "be" in the world, depended upon her ability to "push back her anger." She believed that with "access" to her anger, she would not be able to move on with her daily life. Her "being-in-the-world" involved her "pushing away" anger at mother in the experience of relationship with her. Her "being-in-the-world" and being-in-the-relationship with mother depended on this activity. Again, a paradoxical meaning is conveyed in the metaphorical interpretation of the statement. Although "pushing back" the anger was protective in that it helped

the bulimic woman "cope" and maintain a relationship with mother, it was also potentially injurious. This action of pushing back the anger seemed to add to the felt power of the anger (ocean) and its potentially destructive, immobilizing effects. It also prevented the bulimic woman from allowing her anger to "surface" and reveal itself in an authentic display of herself to herself and to mother. Instead, her "being-in-the-world" involves hiding her anger from herself and mother (and others according to the rest of the text). The "world of relationship" with mother is one in which there is the experience of an immense and invisible anger, one in which the bulimic woman is "not-being" (not acknowledging or directly expressing her anger), in order "to be." This world is one of paradox.

The metaphor, "[my anger] is almost like an ocean," also evoked certain images. Some of these have already been described, e.g., the enormity and depth of the anger when viewed as an ocean. Other images include the image of "high tides" and "peaks" in the experience of anger with mother. These images seem to refer to the times in the experience of relationship with mother, when the anger increased suddenly and surfaced for a brief time. Alternately, "low tides" and "valleys" seem to refer to times when the intensity of the anger subsided a bit. However, the anger "was always there." The image and auditory experience this evokes is

one in which there is a constant "low roar" of the anger (water).

The metaphor (along with its surrounding discourses) also evokes images of the unconscious. The ever-present and usually silent, unseen immensity of anger is very deep. However, the metaphor suggests that this enormity of anger is housed "deep" within the bulimic woman. The anger is kept far away from others and from herself, for the most part. Only occasionally does the anger surface and "show itself." During these times, the bulimic woman would acknowledge her feelings of anger toward mother to herself. She might also overtly display these feelings during "direct confrontations" or might display the anger in indirect ways. The images called to mind when the anger "surfaces," are ones in which the "waves of anger" finally reach the "shoreline" of the bulimic woman's consciousness. The metaphor evokes the image of an "unknown" amount of turbulence surfacing from the depths of anger and taking on action in the form of waves, some small and some large. The large waves, the "high tides," make it to the shoreline. The (anger) water is always present, though, and a constant vigil done near the shoreline to prevent the waves from reaching shore, insofar as this is possible. There is a fear that a fatality will occur; the bulimic woman will drown in her own experience of anger in the relationship with mother. The awareness of the anger which was rare in

the past, and new in the present, seems to happen in an "explosive" manner. This evokes the image of a tidal wave of anger suddenly reaching the shoreline of realization.

Finally, the metaphor evokes certain images in its relationship to the discourse regarding binging and purging. The bulimic woman states that she wasn't "always angry on the outside," but it was "always there." She goes on to describe her binge-purge episode as "erratic" and seemingly disconnected from specific feelings of anger or particular events. The image associated with this discourse surrounding the metaphor is one in which binge-purging may represent some of the "high tides" that reached the shoreline, with the anger still disguised but indirectly expressed. It is important to note that the discourse about binge-purging is located within the same part of the narrative which speaks to anger "never usually coming up" and awareness as "exploding." These descriptions of anger and increased awareness seem related to the other part of the bulimic woman's way of "being-in-the-world"--her bulimia.

It is interesting to note that the narrator was unable to bring her experience of anger in the relationship with mother to language until recently. This "bringing to language" of the experience of anger occurred in the form of a metaphor. This form was powerful and meaningful in a local way and in a way that revealed a "poem in miniature"

regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother. No amount of paraphrasing or literal expressions could have captured the nature of the anger in the experience of relationship with mother quite like the use of the above metaphor. The metaphor, "[My anger] is almost like an ocean," is powerful because it is a "strategy of discourse by which language divests itself of its function of direct description in order to reach the mythic level, where its function of discovery is set free" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 247). This discovery is one in which poetic discourse creatively imitates human action (mimesis). This action passes through the metaphor, just as action passes through the plot (muthos) in narrative. Within the metaphor is the conjunction of plot and human action, the work of all poetic discourse. It is through this conjunction that the metaphor, like the narrative, can disclose a "world" (Ricoeur, 1975). In this metaphor, the world was that of the experience of anger in the relationship with mother, while the world disclosed by the narrative was the experience of relationships with others. Again, the metaphor is a "poem in miniature" about the experience of these relationships.

#### **The Reference of the Text**

A semantic analysis of the text, along with an example of metaphorical analysis of one of its statements, has allowed us to move toward a critical, contextual, and

holistic understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This type of understanding involves the comprehension of the reference of the text, the "world" of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, which it projects in front of itself. The text is able to refer to an extra-linguistic reality (something more than just the "sense" meaning of the text), because of its semantic autonomy, i.e., the distance from the mental intention of the author, the original audience, and the ostensive reference of the initial dialogical situation. We can "imaginatively actualize the potential non-ostensive references of the text in a new situation, that of the reader" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 81). In doing so, we create a new ostensive reference through the act of reading. Therefore, what needs to be understood, is not the initial situation of the discourse, but what points to a possible world, a new way of seeing and a new way of being-in-the-world. The contextual, holistic understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships has little to do with the author of the text and her situation. Instead, this kind of understanding attempts to grasp the "world-propositions" opened up by the reference of the narrative. In order to develop a full and informed understanding of the narrative, one needs to follow its movement from sense to reference: from what it says, to what it speaks about. The reference is the experience which the narrative brings to

language and, in the final analysis, the world and the temporality it unfolds in the face of this experience (Ricoeur, 1984). Poetic discourse transposes human action and suffering into a written work. The experience brought to language in the narrative of this inquiry, resembles experiences disclosed by the "tragic mythos" of the past (Aristotle). The "tragic mythos" turned on the "reversals of fortune," and exclusively, on those from happiness to unhappiness. Tragic mythos reveals one way in which action "throws good people, against all expectation, into unhappiness" (Ricoeur, 1984, p. 46). It is through the mythos (the sense of configuration or plot) that one sees "mimesis," the creative imitation or representation of human action (its reference). The reference of this text, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, is one of reversals, contradictions, paradoxes, and "explosions." This world is also characterized by certain temporal features and experiences.

#### The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships - A World of Paradox

In this inquiry, the reference of the text reveals that the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is a world of paradox and contradictions. It is a world in which the experience of relationship with others involved "not-being," in order to "be-in-the-world." The "not-being" was actually a way of "being-in-the-world," but one in which

there was a lack of "authenticity" within the relationship with others, and many times, within the self. This inauthentic way of "being-in-the-world" was actually experienced as somehow preserving relationships with others and preserving the self in a paradoxical and painful, though meaningful way. This experience of "not-being," in order "to be," was seen most clearly in the relationship with mother, but was also experienced in other relationships.

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was woven from "secrets," which were a large part of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with family members. Secrets continue to be part of her experience with mother and sister, and include past traumatic experiences at home, e.g., father's suicidal gestures with the rifle and his alcoholism. They also include the bulimic woman's hidden feelings or needs in the experience of relationships with others, especially with mother and sister. These feelings (especially anger) and needs have often gone undetected by the bulimic woman herself. In addition, there is the secret of "bulimia" which was only revealed recently to spouse, sister, best friend, and the researcher, but as yet not revealed to mother. Again, however, "living these secrets" in the experience of relationship with others is paradoxical, in that it is a protective and injurious kind of action. In maintaining secrets and/or "not telling" her own secrets,

the bulimic woman experiences that she preserves relationships with others, albeit the deficiencies in these relationships, e.g., a lack of respect for her needs or feelings. These actions are done with the hope of preventing others from rejecting or abandoning her. Keeping secrets and hiding in relationships with others, are ways of preventing any further relationship losses. They are also ways of keeping others' "worlds" (e.g., mother's world) whole and intact. In addition, "keeping things hidden" is somehow self-preserving as well. It seems to ward off potential criticism or invalidation of the bulimic woman's feelings or needs. However, despite the protective quality of "living a secret life," this way of being-in-the-world brought with it loneliness and isolation in the experience of relationships with others. Since the bulimic woman kept her own feelings and needs hidden from herself many times (consciously or unconsciously), she would often knowingly or unknowingly keep these from others. These actions actually served to obstruct an experience of genuineness, trust, and intimacy in relationships with others. Keeping secrets and not recognizing and/or disclosing her own feelings and needs in relationships with others, also prevented her from working through the pain that accompanied actual or potential relationships losses. This situation prevented her from seeing and "being" in relationships in new and

different ways, which might be experienced as more authentic, real, and mutually growth-promoting.

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was one in which she felt "out of control" at times. She experienced a "loss of control" over her thoughts of food and eating behavior in the experience of relationships with others. In addition, she experienced a general feeling of being "out of control" which accompanied these unregulated thoughts and behaviors. Paradoxically, though, the "out of control" thoughts of food and eating seemed to provide a feeling of control for the bulimic woman. In "stuffing" her feelings (through overeating, binging, or eating when she was not hungry) when she was with others, she experienced a decreased anxiety and an ability to stay in relationships with others. Again, the out of control eating or even thoughts of eating, served to distract her from her own anxiety-provoking feelings and needs (e.g., anger and the need to be heard and respected) and somehow preserved relationships with others. They warded off the possibility of rejection, invalidation, criticism, or abandonment that might accompany a genuine self-disclosure of needs and feelings. These "out of control" thoughts and behaviors also served to differentiate the bulimic woman from others, and eating helped her feel "whole" in the experience of relationship (especially with mother). Conversely, though, these behaviors and thoughts

paradoxically were injurious to the bulimic woman and to her relationships with others. They "kept her from herself," and they prevented the bulimic woman from experiencing authentic and intimate relationships with others. These thoughts and behaviors helped her avoid working through the pain and conflict experienced in the relationships with others, while at the same time, they brought their own kind of pain and conflict.

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was one in which it was difficult for her to access, hold onto, or display her feelings in relationships with others. This particular experience was most clearly seen in relation to the bulimic woman's anger in the relationship with mother. Feelings, particularly negative emotions, like anger or hurt, seemed part of an "implicate order," an unseen but potentially powerful internal force. When feelings, like anger, did manifest themselves, it was only for a brief period of time and it was usually in an indirect way. These indirect expressions of feelings, especially anger, were associated with intellectualized arguments, binging and purging, instigating fights, escalating, or the "silent treatment." The way the feelings manifested themselves depended on the closeness of the relationship, the conscious recognition of feelings, and the level of awareness regarding the choice to disclose these feelings. The "vastness" of certain feelings, especially

anger, was experienced as potentially threatening to self and to relationship with others. The bulimic woman feared she would be "consumed" by her anger, that it would stop her "being-in-the-world," "drown her". Paradoxically, though, the anger was both "always there," yet not overtly there. It "never usually came up." Additionally, the need to "push back" feelings, like anger, had a paradoxical effect within the experience of relationships with others. Keeping anger or other feelings hidden from herself and others was both protective and destructive. This action (conscious or unconscious) served to preserve relationships with others and allowed the bulimic woman to "get what she could" within relationships. For example, with mother, she could get material support and recognition for her accomplishments, despite the unavailability of mother's emotional support and acceptance of her as a "total person" with her own needs, differences, and way of "being-in-the-world." Keeping feelings (especially anger) to herself, allowed her to stay in relationship with others. The bulimic woman feared that a direct display of feelings, especially anger, might drive others away from her because of their own vulnerabilities and inability to hear her pain. Direct feeling expression might also bring criticism or invalidation of her way of seeing and living in the world.

Alternately, though, the conscious or unconscious "holding back" of feelings was also destructive in the

experience of relationships. The bulimic woman could not feel truly understood by others, nor could she experience spontaneity, genuineness, and intimacy within relationships with others. The passage of time seems to have helped her in this respect, since she is increasingly able to recognize and display feelings with her husband and best friend, in contrast to her relationships with mother or sister. She is also increasingly able to access and hold onto feelings of anger at mother now, in contrast to her inability to do this in the past. However, the bulimic woman still is unclear regarding the connection between her eating and the experience of relationships with others, especially mother. She "knows there is a connection between the "binge-purging" and the experience of relationships with others, but she cannot recollect what occurs just before the behavior. For her, the eating behavior still seems "erratic" and disconnected from the pain she experiences in relationships at times.

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was initially based upon her "mother's world." This kind of "seeing" and "being" in the world, based on mother's experience of the world, was initially felt to be normative and later, experienced as forced. As the bulimic woman increasingly felt that mother was unable or unwilling to see and understand the "pathos" in her life, she felt pressured to "stay within mother's world" for fear that she

would lose the relationship with mother altogether. The bulimic woman was able to enter and stay in "mother's world" and maintain a relationship with her by silencing herself and eating. She also experienced a great deal of guilt when she became angry with mother's "rules about feeling, thinking, or behaving." The guilt, at least temporarily, would dispose of her anger and keep her in relationship with mother. (The bulimic woman also learned to respond in similar ways in other relationships.) Although the bulimic woman experienced mother as controlling her, when she "stayed in her world," she was able to "get what she could" from mother and stay in relationship. Paradoxically, "staying in mother's world" initially preserved the relationship, but it also increased the bulimic woman's struggles in trying to create her own way of seeing and being in the world while trying to maintain a relationship with mother. At present, the bulimic woman is working to find the "middle-ground" in her experience of relationship with mother and with food, i.e., finding a way to remain authentic and centered within herself in the relationship with mother. However, there are still times when she "goes into mother's world" (plays by her "rules of being-in-the-world") in the hope that she and mother can eventually create a world of relationship in which there is mutual respect and caring.

The bulimic woman experienced father and sister in

separate worlds, although the distance experienced in the relationship with father depended upon mother's involvement. Therefore, a "dance" of involvement with parents occurred. Mother was experienced as either "over-involved" or "under-involved," while father's involvement was selective and based upon mother's presence or absence. The bulimic woman did experience father as under-involved, but also experienced him as appropriately meeting her needs for involvement at times. Mother met the "bulimic woman's" basic physical needs early on and her basic material needs as she grew, however mother was not experienced as appropriately meeting her emotional needs. In addition, mother's following through with meeting the bulimic woman's material needs was experienced as depending upon daughter's "perfect" performance. This performance needed to comply with mother's "rules" or way of being-in-the-world. In effect, the bulimic woman had brief opportunities in which she attempted to fashion a world of relationship with father that was more mutual than that experienced in the relationship with mother or sister. However, father's alcoholism, parental separation, and other life events served to obstruct this creation as well. It is only with husband and best friend that she has been able to create more mutually satisfying relationships. Again, the change in the experience of relationships with these latter two

relates to the passage of time and the bulimic woman's ability to stop hiding from herself and from others.

The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--A World of Explosions

The world of the bulimic woman's relationships with others is also a world of "explosions." These explosions occur within the bulimic woman, in her reflections and experience of others while they are physically present or absent. These explosions also occur around the bulimic woman, in her interpersonal milieu. The internal explosions signify a particular realization in regards to the experience of relationships with others, e.g., the enormity of anger at mother. These feelings may or may not be displayed and may be displayed directly or indirectly. However, there also seem to be "silent" explosions in which feelings regarding certain relationships rise to consciousness, but may not be detected by the bulimic woman. These feelings may be expressed indirectly through the "silent treatment" or in explosive ways, i.e., binge-purging, instigating fights, escalating her affect or behavior in the relationship. In addition to explosions of feelings, behaviors, and realizations in the relationship with others, there are also explosions of relationships. These eruptions in the relationships with others are violent and sudden in nature. Even those relationships which were gradually dying, ended abruptly and violently (father's

suicidal gesture and parental separation). There is a feeling that relationships have been or ultimately will be "destroyed." Although the bulimic woman knowingly or unknowingly contributed to some of the "explosions" that occurred within relationships, (e.g., conflict with husband), there were some explosions in which she was helpless to effect any other outcome, e.g., parental separation. The explosion of relationships is experienced as loss. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is filled with this feeling of loss attached to the termination of relationships. Relationship losses are experienced as sudden and long-lasting, and the bulimic woman often felt there was little time between "good" feelings and the time of their reversal. For example, in a matter of one day, one week, or even a few months, relationships exploded and were lost, seen most clearly in the relationship with old boyfriend, in the context of his brother's death. Multiple relationships were lost as a consequence of this event, and the onset of the bulimia dated to this period in time. Even those relationships experienced as the most secure, seemed to explode and disappear.

In the context of all these relationship losses, the bulimic woman also experienced an explosion of her dreams, dreams about the way in which she desired to be in relationship with others. Her "shattered dreams" about the

relationships with others in the past, served to increase her fears about potential relationship losses in the future. This fear of loss in the experience of relationships with others, further increased her need to preserve the relationships she does have, at any cost. The actions the bulimic woman engages in to preserve relationships and the costs to self and the relationship have already been discussed above. The hope is that these actions will serve to prevent further destruction or explosions in the relationships with others.

The World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--Its Temporal Character

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships conveys a certain temporal character of human experience. Although at present, the bulimic woman is more aware of her feelings, needs, and actions, she still experiences "troubled times" in her experience of relationships with others. Her experience of time varied within the context of the particular experience of relationships with others. For example, she still does experience a great many "anxious and angry times" with mother. She experienced both "fun and relaxing times" and "confused, angry times" with father. The bulimic woman experienced "crazy times" during the parental separation. She also experienced "times of competition, anger, hurt, anxiety, and sadness" with sister, and "times of support,

validation, acceptance, and anger" with husband. With best friend, she experienced "times of acceptance, support, and anxiety." Finally, with the researcher, she experienced "painful and validating times." However, the experience of time which seems to run throughout each of these experiences of relationship is characterized by "times of loss." There is an experience of the finality of life and relationships, and the experience of the finitude of time allotted us "to be" in the world with those around us. The "tale of time" in this narrative is one of time passing too quickly, of abrupt, violent shifts from one period of time to the next. The bulimic woman speaks of "lost time, lost contact" (with father) and not "using her time" effectively (with sister). Time is "marked out" in accordance with the losses experienced in the relationship with others. Time is marked out by "everyday" kinds of losses which occasionally occur in all relationships, e.g., criticism or invalidation in response to the bulimic woman's feeling or needs. Although these may be seen as minor in comparison to other relationship losses, their consistency over time can be just as devastating to the experience of relationship, as other "major" losses. In effect, a loved one may die within our hearts, and we may lose the relationship with this person, despite the fact that she/he is still in our lives. The other kinds of losses which "marked out" time are considered to be more "critical" losses, e.g., parental separation, the

loss of contact with a parent because of alcoholism, father's death, and the loss of the relationship with old boyfriend and his brother's death. The narrative projects a world of "lost time" and "lost relationships" during this time. There are parallels in the temporal character of the bulimic woman's experience or relationships over time. For example, the bulimic woman connects her "times of loss" in the experience of relationships with a) old boyfriend and his family, b) father, and c) mother. The bulimic woman's "times of loss" span from her past (recollected losses) to the present (immediately perceived losses) and to the future (expected losses).

Finally, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships conveys that time is often experienced as anxiety-provoking and frightening, even "terrifying." The "times of anxiety" are often related to the experience of relationship with mother or sister and the need to eat, in order not to reveal her real feelings (especially, anger) or needs. The "terrifying times" have occurred when the bulimic woman revealed her secret of bulimia to others. The reference to uncontrolled thoughts of food or eating behaviors and the disclosing of the secret of bulimia, were other ways in which time was "marked out" in the experience of relationships. It seems that the bulimia, part of the bulimic woman's way of being-in-the-world with others, also involved a temporal component. For example, the bulimic

woman could not make clear connections between how she experienced time immediately before and after bulimic behavior or before and after changes in her thoughts and in her eating. However, she spoke about how she sensed a connection between these things and the experience of relationships. Also, the bulimic woman could discuss metaphors about the "enormity" of her anger with mother, and within that same context, suddenly speak to her bulimia. In this way, she struggles to bring to language, her experience of relationship and her experience of eating during particular times. She can also describe the anxiety connected with the need to "push back her anger," sometimes silently, sometimes explosively with food. In addition, the bulimic woman can describe the anxiety and terror, or fear, involved in disclosing the secret of bulimia to others. In a sense, this experience of self-disclosure in the relationship with others, seems metaphorical to the bulimic woman's general anxieties or fears of exposing herself (her authentic feelings and needs) in relationships. The "terrifying" and "risky" times are those in which she is truly self-revealing to others. These are the times during which she stands "naked" in full view of others. Again, the fear experienced during times of genuine self-revelation, relates to the anticipation of potential losses of (injuries to) the self and/or to the potential loss of relationships. These losses may occur in the form of criticism,

invalidation of feelings or needs, a lack of respect for differences, rejections, and/or abandonment. The terrifying and risky experience of these times is concertized in interactions wherein the bulimic woman eats to "push back" her real feelings and needs, or when she reveals her secret of bulimia. However, this experience is obscurely seen through the actions of eating and telling about the bulimia. The unregulated eating and the secretiveness regarding the bulimia are oblique, metaphorical references to the bulimic woman's general dread of self-exposure in relationships with others. It is difficult for the bulimic woman to bring her experience of these times directly to language. Therefore, hermeneutic inquiry helped in explicating and interpreting this experience.

#### Summary

The above section revealed the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This world of meaning is one of paradox, contradictions, and explosions. The paradox and contradictions in this world involve the bulimic woman's "not being" in order to "be-in-the-world" with others. Actions which promote this inauthentic way of being in relationships with others seemingly a) preserve and are injurious to relationships with others, and b) protect and are injurious to the self. These actions include a) keeping secrets, b) experiencing uncontrolled thoughts of food or unregulated eating behavior, c) consciously or unconsciously

withholding feelings or needs from herself/others, d) not displaying feelings or needs directly, and e) going "into mother's world." The paradoxical nature of these actions brings its own pain, but is meaningful within the context of the experience of relationships with others.

The above discussion also revealed that the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is one of "explosions." These explosions occur within and around her in the form of realizations, explosive feelings or behaviors, relationship losses, and "shattered dreams." The temporal character of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships seemed to vary within the context of each particular experience of relationship, however this world in general was characterized by the experience of "times of loss." In addition, the bulimic woman often experienced "anxiety-provoking, frightening, or terrifying" times in the experience of relationships with others, usually involving self-exposure or self-revelation in the relationships with others. Although these times were most often associated with revealing the secret of bulimia, they also involved the bulimic woman's general fears of exposing herself, directly and authentically within relationships with others. The fears and struggles related to self-exposure are seen in such actions as keeping secrets and not acknowledging or directly expressing her feelings and needs. The struggles and fears related to self-exposure

in relationships are metaphorically seen in the a) actions of eating or thinking about food when she is feeling "out of control" with feelings; and b) in the ambivalence regarding "telling her secret" of bulimia to others.

A final note regarding the discussion of self and the experience of relationships is warranted. Although the language above conveys a certain "dualism" in the discussion of the losses of (injuries to) the self and the losses of relationship over time, it is important to remember that losses, as they were disclosed in this narrative, were always experienced by the self within the context of the experience of relationships with others.

CHAPTER VI  
FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

In keeping with the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach to inquiry, this chapter will begin with a discussion of the appropriation of the meaning of the narrative. Appropriation is the actualization of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In essence, it is the culmination of a contextual, holistic understanding of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The contextual, holistic "findings" of this inquiry will then be discussed within the context of the findings related to previous research on the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as well as within the context of the assumptions of feminist relational paradigm. Implications of the findings to nursing practice, education and research will conclude this chapter.

Appropriation

Appropriation is the culmination of the interpretive process. It is the final act in the acquisition of a critical and contextual understanding of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. It is an

actualization of the meaning of the text, an event in which the present reader experiences a "grasping together" of the parts and whole of the text. What is appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, its "pro-ject" or world (Ricoeur, 1976). The text reveals a mode of "being-in-the-world" in front of itself, via its non-ostensive references. During appropriation, the reader imaginatively actualizes these references of the text in a new situation, creating a new ostensive reference.

In appropriating the meaning of the narrative, the reader "makes one's own, what was other, foreign." However, this "other," is not the subjective mental intention of the author of the text, nor the projection of the subjectivity of the reader in the reading of the text. What the reader appropriates is the horizon of a world (of meaning), the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, not the recognition of the author in an act of a "fusion of consciousness, empathy, or sympathy" (Ricoeur, 1981c, p. 178). In this way, the reader understands her/himself before the work, and understands the world which the work projects in front of itself. Therefore, appropriation did not involve the projection of the researcher's own beliefs and projections. Instead, it was a process in which the

researcher allowed the work and its world to enlarge the horizon of her own self-understanding and the understanding of the questions posed to and arising from the text regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Interpretation was a process in which the disclosure of "new modes of being" gave the researcher a new capacity for knowing herself and knowing the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

One is able to appropriate the meaning of the narrative through reflective reading and the "playful transposition of the text." Therefore, within the process of "making one's own" what was foreign, there is a simultaneous process of "letting go." Appropriation also involves the ability to allow oneself to be "carried off towards the reference of the text" (Ricoeur, 1981a, p. 191). The act of appropriation involves what Gadamer calls a "fusion of horizons." This process is one in which the "world horizons" of the writer and reader converge. Ricoeur emphasizes that it is the text which remains the mediator in this process. This is why Ricoeur states that the present reader (researcher) is able to understand the author "better than himself." In the act of appropriation, the reader unfolds the revelatory power of the text, beyond the limited

horizon of the author's own existential situation (Ricoeur, 1981a). Appropriation, the final act of understanding, involves mimesis. This kind of mimetic activity occurs at the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the reader. The passage from the configuration of the text (its sense-meaning and plot) to the refiguration of time and human action (its reference) requires the confrontation between the two worlds of text and reader (Ricoeur, 1988). Again, reflective reading is the mediator of this refiguration, which culminates in the act of appropriation. It is this appropriation of the text, the appropriation of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, which is discussed below.

#### Appropriation of the World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships

Further mediation on the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships led to the actualization of the meaning of this world. The culmination of meaning projected by the text, revealed a certain contextual understanding of human action and time. The narrative revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is predominantly one of paradox. The main paradox of the experience of relationship involved the action of "not-being" (being

inauthentic) in order "to be" in the world and to "be in" relationships with others. In addition, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was one of "explosions." The "explosions" in the discourse of the text can be viewed as metaphors for sudden and violent changes in the bulimic woman's feelings and actions, and for sudden and violent changes within her interactions with others. These explosions referred to the intensity of affect, loss, and danger experienced within relationships with others. The paradoxical and explosive nature of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships contributes to and arises from the temporal experience of this world - one which is predominantly characterized by "times of loss."

The paradoxical nature of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is seen in the following actions and interactions with others:

1. "Living a secret life" and "not telling about it." These actions which operate within the bulimic woman and within her relationships with others serve to keep certain events (e.g., bulimia, father's alcoholism, rifle incident) and authentic needs and feelings from herself and/or others. In essence, the bulimic woman and others in her environment "keep secrets" that are not always "secrets" in terms of

their being "unknown." The events, thoughts, or feelings may be concealed from self and/or others, but paradoxically, they still exist and are known, in a sense. These "secrets" may reveal themselves directly or indirectly. They are "there, but not there." Also, "living a secret life," and "not telling about it," are actions that lead to paradoxical outcomes. These actions preserve and are injurious to relationships with others and simultaneously can be protective of and hurtful to the self.

2. "Being out of control with the eating" paradoxically worked to create a feeling of "being in control." Although the bulimic woman experienced unregulated thoughts of food and eating behaviors, these thoughts and behaviors worked to "stuff her feelings" and distract her from giving voice to authentic feelings and needs. These experiences helped her decrease the anxiety she experienced internally, which accompanied the emergence of certain feelings and needs. In addition, "being out of control with the eating" allowed the bulimic woman to "be" in the world in a way that was different from mother. Mother did not binge and purge, nor could she control these behaviors in the bulimic woman. "Being out of control with the eating" also produced a feeling of "wholeness" or

"fullness" during interactions with others (e.g., mother and sister). These feelings were comforting, since the bulimic woman seemingly felt "diminished" in some way during these times. Again, however, the paradoxical nature of "being out of control with the eating" brings with it its own pain and suffering. Although it seems to preserve the self and the relationships with others, it also is injurious to the self and relationships with others. The unregulated thoughts of food and eating keep the bulimic woman "from herself" and actually promote a feeling of isolation within relationships with others. In effect, she is connected with but disconnected from herself and others. The differentiation from others and the feeling of wholeness provided by the "out of control" thoughts of food and eating behaviors exist alongside the experiences of diminution, fragmentation, and estrangement within the self and with others.

3. "I was angry" and going "into the world" are feeling states and actions that also contribute to the paradoxical nature of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. We learned that "being angry" does not necessarily mean awareness of or the actual display of anger for the bulimic woman. If anger is displayed, it is likely to be displayed indirectly (e.g., silence) or

displayed in explosive ways (e.g., binge-purging, intellectualized arguments). Therefore, anger is "always there" but "not there," in a sense. Not acknowledging the anger to herself and/or to others, reaps a "paradoxical reward" for the bulimic woman in her relationships with others. This action serves to protect relationships and dispose of possible relationship disconnections and allows the bulimic woman to "get what she can" from others. However, this action also prevents her from being authentic in relationships with others and obstructs her from experiencing true intimacy with others. She remains a stranger to herself and to others. She cannot truly work through conflict or losses experienced in relationships, and instead, remains in relationships which are deficient in various ways. For example, the bulimic woman enters and remains in "mother's world" (through silence or eating) to maintain the relationship with mother. She is able to get the material supplies mother is able to offer, but remains starved for the emotional supplies which she desires. The present hope is that by intermittently entering mother's world, she can hold onto "enough of herself" and try to create a world of relationship with mother which feels more mutually caring and satisfying. However, going into

mother's world carries a price of "turning away from herself," remaining inauthentic with mother, and continuing to feel unheard, invalidated by, and distant from mother. Going "into mother's world" is a costly activity, one which paradoxically "giveth" and "taketh" away.

As stated above, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships also was explosive. The explosions were metaphors for the sudden and often "violent" changes experienced within the bulimic woman as she reflected upon her experience of relationships with others (in their presence or absence) and within the experience of relationships during immediate interactions. The world of explosions signified the world of relationship losses and the awareness of these losses for the bulimic woman. Feelings, dreams, awareness, and relationships do not literally "explode," yet in a metaphorical sense these things did explode for the bulimic woman. Throughout the narrative, one finds many metaphors which allude to the feelings of "things being destroyed" or "blown up." These metaphors frequently referred to certain aspects of the experience of relationships with others. For example, the following metaphors refer to a) how the bulimic woman experiences herself as contributing to the destruction of

others who are in relationships with her or b) her own felt destruction or diminishment, or the anticipation of these feelings within relationships with others:

1. Anytime I['d] do something wrong, I shattered her [mother's] world (Text, p. 46).

2. I felt like I was really killing [mother] her [with my disagreement] (Text, p. 48).

3. Those whole six months were [was] almost like a living hell (Text, p. 89).

4. Some things she [mother] said were so pointed (Text, p. 106).

5. She [mother] could crack a person like that (Text, p. 106).

6. I almost feel like I would have been drowned by it [anger] (Text, p. 174).

7. I'm walking on eggshells [with sister] (Text, p. 298).

The fear of "everything exploding"--that is, the fear of actual or potential losses within relationships, including "everyday" losses (invalidation of feelings and disrespect) and major relationship losses (the termination of relationships), seemed to "fuel" the paradoxical actions and effects also seen in the bulimic woman's experience of

relationships. Despite wanting to be a mutual partner in creating a world of relationships with others, she also wanted to preserve relationships and prevent further relationship losses at any cost. In this way, explosion and paradox interacted in the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

Finally, the appropriation of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships also revealed that this world was predominantly characterized by "times of loss." Further mediation on the experience of "times of loss," reveals that the bulimic woman attempted to prevent the recapitulation of this experience of time. In trying to avoid the recapitulation of "times of loss," she engaged in the aforementioned paradoxical activities. Unfortunately, although these actions seemed to prevent the experience of times of loss and to preserve relationships, they also were injurious to these relationships. The bulimic woman would often experience "times of anxiety or fear" in place of "times of loss." This is most concretely seen in her fear of disclosing her secret of bulimia and in her uncontrolled thoughts of food or eating, which help her avoid being authentic and self-revealing in relationships with others. These actions contribute to her experiencing a lack of

intimacy and understanding in relationships with others, and consequently, to isolation and further experiences of loss. In essence, bulimic behaviors and the "keeping of the secret of bulimia" were metaphors for the bulimic woman's fears of self-exposure and fears of relationship losses (explosions) which could accompany this self-exposure.

In summary, the bulimic woman's paradoxical actions, her experience of explosions, and her temporal experience within the world of the experience of relationships were all interwoven. These experiences interacted with one another and formed the "flux" of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. One can see how over time, the bulimic woman knowingly and unknowingly created a way of "being-in-the-world" which was characterized by paradoxes, explosions, and times of loss. This "mode of being" emerged from the particular experiences of relationships in the everyday life of the bulimic woman, and was one in which the bulimic woman was "not being" in order "to be" in the world with others. Further reflection on this point leads to a refiguration of the ways we have previously understood human existence. For example, Hamlet asked, "To be, or not to be?" This is not the question posed by the bulimic woman within the experience of relationships with others.

Instead, she asks, "Shall I not be, in order to be?" This is a paradoxical question, which is answered affirmatively in the narrative of this inquiry. In not-being, to be in relationship with others, the bulimic woman seems to preserve relationships and prevent further "explosions," while she knowingly or unknowingly awaits further experiences of loss within these relationships. Thus, she strikes a costly compromise in the experience of relationships with others, albeit a most meaningful one.

#### A Final Metaphorical Note

Further mediation on the interpretation of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, revealed that similar to the metaphors regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationship described previously, the entire narrative was an "extended" metaphor for human existence. In essence, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was an "ontological metaphor," the metaphorical reference about our "being-in-the-world," which was projected by the text. In previous discussions, we discussed local metaphors. For example, we addressed how the bulimic woman's anger was an ocean, how explosions represented relationship losses, and how keeping secrets and experiencing out of control eating metaphorically expressed

the fears related to genuine self-revelation. In each of these examples, what is expressed (whether it be through language, actions, sounds, images, or feelings) is metaphorically exemplified. In the same way, the narrative, itself is an extended metaphor, projecting a certain world-- a way of "seeing" and "being-in-the-world." The text as extended metaphor can be likened to a "model" in scientific inquiry. The extended metaphor, like the model, is a "heuristic instrument" or instrument of redescription, which can "re-make" reality in a sense, break down inadequate interpretations and lay the way for new, more adequate interpretations (Black, 1962; Ricoeur, 1975). The narrative of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as extended metaphor, belongs to the logic of discovery, as does the model. Also, as the model is constituted by a complex network of statements, the extended metaphor is constituted by a metaphoric network. The narrative, as a whole, is what projects a world. The narrative is able to disclose a metaphorical reference because it is constitutive of an "area" of experience(s).

The narrative, as poetic discourse, discloses a "model," (a "re-creation" or "re-description") of human action (mimesis) and a certain temporal character of human

experience. It does these things through the creation of a plot or tale (muthos), which "shows signs of composition and order lacked by the dramas of everyday life" (Ricoeur, 1975, p. 244). It is the passing of the mimesis (the imitation, or more accurately, the "re-creation" of human action) through the muthos which Aristotle saw as constitutive of tragic poesis. The muthos, which is organized into a network (the plot or tale), is what constitutes an extended metaphor in this inquiry. As Ricoeur states, metaphoricity is a trait of muthos itself, as the muthos is able to describe a "less known domain--human reality in the light of relationships within a fictitious but better known domain--the tragic tale (p. 244). It is mimesis (human action) which constitutes this "redescription," the metaphorical reference (Hesse, 1966). In this inquiry, the metaphorical reference is found in the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships projected by the text.

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is a metaphorical reference for human existence disclosed by the narrative as extended metaphor. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships as it is disclosed by the text in this inquiry, is not literally the world of relationships lived by all other

human beings. Therefore, it does not literally refer to the experience of relationships for all other persons, however, there is a kinship between this world and the world of the experience of relationships for other human beings. This kinship is seen in the paradoxical, explosive, and temporal character of the world revealed by the narrative. In passing from a literal to a metaphorical interpretation of this world, its meaning is clearer. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to the world of paradoxes, explosions, and times of loss we all experience in relationships with others. The extended metaphor of the narrative refers to the ways in which we all seek to desperately avoid certain painful experiences in relationships with others, and how in our desperation, we at times, paradoxically, arrive at these same feared experiences. In our efforts to preserve the relationships that we have and to protect our selves or others, within the context of these relationships, we may paradoxically and ultimately experience pain after all. Our "imperfect nature" and the finitude and the finality of human life, (which is "thrown into relief" in the context of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships) reveals that we all eventually experience pain in the experience of

relationships with others. This pain may be experienced through "everyday losses" in relationships (criticism or invalidation of our feelings), or through "major" losses of relationships (through separation or death) over time. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to the "pathos" we all experience in trying to love and be loved, in trying to remain "whole" and authentic in relationships, while experiencing fear or ambivalence which may accompany genuine self-exposure and self-revelation to others. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships refers to the promise of pain and times of loss associated with any relationship, but it also refers to the resilience and creativity (some say pathology) of the human being in trying to manage the suffering experienced in relationships. In this inquiry, creativity (seen in paradoxical actions and in bulimic behaviors) was driven by a hope for the chance to be an equal partner in developing a different world of relationships with others, one which was more mutually caring and satisfying. This kind of creativity and the paradoxical answers it provides can be seen to a certain extent, in the experience of relationships for all of us. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships

refers to our own worlds in which we have developed a way of "seeing" and "being-in-the-world" that allows us to hold onto others and/or to be courageous and pursue new relationships. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships refers to how we all feel "out of control," "keep secrets," "not see ourselves or others as total persons," or "go into others' worlds" from time to time to survive in our world of relationships with others. The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to how none of us can totally control everything around us (e.g., "reversals of fortune"), the others in relationships with us, nor even our own feelings. It speaks to the "tragedy" of being an imperfect, temporal creature in an imperfect world. However, this world also refers to how we can, to a certain extent, control our actions and choices within the experience of relationships with others. This task may require a new way of seeing and being-in-the-world, a frightening prospect. In essence, what is required is increased awareness, which informs human understanding. We need to move from a "naive understanding" of ourselves in the experience of relationships with others, to a more critical and informed understanding, which will never be "complete," This process can be likened to a

hermeneutic understanding of ourselves, something the bulimic woman has recently initiated in trying to change her experience of relationships with others (e.g., asking herself questions about her experience of relationships, talking with the researcher, entering psychotherapy, making connections between past and present experiences of relationships, and responding differently in relationships with others in the present time).

In this inquiry, the text was the mediator for the movement from a naive, initial understanding of the text to an informed, contextual, and critical understanding of the text and the world it projected-- the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The work of interpretation, completed in the act of appropriation, was accomplished by moving from the "sense" of the text to its reference. Appropriation is the act in which the contemporary reader understands in a holistic way, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and acquires an enlarged self-understanding through an openness to the different ways of seeing and being-in-the-world, which the text projects. In a similar fashion, the narrative, as extended metaphor, and its metaphorical reference, can mediate an understanding of our own experience of relationships. The increased

awareness and understanding required to change human action and "re-figure" our experience of time (change our "being-in-the-world") were connected to the experience of relationships in this inquiry. The text revealed that the experience of relationships can both obstruct and/or facilitate the development of new modes of being and living in the world with one another.

In keeping with the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach and its epistemological and ontological aims, my hope in this inquiry, was two-fold. I hoped that this inquiry would provide a fuller, richer, and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In addition, I hoped that the work of interpretation conducted in this inquiry, would truly be hermeneutic," providing an understanding of "being" and self-understanding. The understanding of "being" is seen in the disclosure of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, while self-understanding comes from realizing how this world metaphorically refers to a shared world of existence and a shared world of the experience of relationships with others.

Finally, the findings in this hermeneutic inquiry supported Ricoeur's premise about the ultimate function of narrative. The narrative function involves the narrative's

ability to "re-figure our historical condition and thereby raise it to the level of historical consciousness" (Ricoeur, 1988, p. 102). Historical consciousness is the consciousness of belonging to history and the consciousness of making history as agent and/or sufferer. In reading the narrative, we see the thread of historical consciousness in the change of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships over time, her increasing awareness of the context of relationships within which she found herself (belonged to), and her growing awareness of her responses to this context (actions and choices made within the relationships). We also see her increased awareness of the possibility of changes in the experience of relationships which come with different ways of seeing and being in the world. The narrative in this inquiry revealed historical consciousness through the explication and interpretation of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. It was in the appropriation of this contextual world of meaning, that the narrative also revealed historical consciousness in terms of the world of relationships we all share. The text, through the world it reveals, helps us to see, that like the bulimic woman, we all belong to and are makers of history. We can change

history and our experiences of relationships with others by changing our ways of seeing and being-in-the-world, a frightening but challenging and meaningful "pro-ject."

#### Dialogue of Findings with Previous Research

The discussion below will address how the findings from this inquiry relate to previous research regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with others in her everyday life. Previous quantitative research related to each particular experience of relationship and to the overall experience of relationships with family members and others will be outlined first. The discussion of previous qualitative research related to these experiences of relationships will follow.

#### Quantitative Research

The quantitative research related to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships has been largely based upon assumptions from the dominant paradigm of human psychological growth and development. The theoretical knowledge and assumptions which emerged from this paradigm were previously discussed. The assumptions from this paradigm and relevant research findings will be briefly addressed under each particular experience of relationship and compared to the findings in this inquiry.

The experience of relationship with mother.

The main assumptions underlying the quantitative research examining the experience of relationship with mother include: a) mother and daughter locked in a hostile-dependent relationship; b) daughter experiencing a separation/individuation conflict with mother, and ambivalently struggling to develop an autonomous identity; c) mother is experienced as intrusive, unempathic, and/or overprotective; d) mother may be experienced as emotionally depriving and/or possibly physically, emotionally, or sexually abusive; and e) daughter may "merge" with mother and/or be pseudoautonomous, e.g., act as the parentified child. In general, the assumptions of the dominant paradigm have focused a great deal on the mother-daughter relationship. Quantitative research findings have revealed the bulimic woman's experience of relationship to be one in which mother is neglectful, rejecting, attacking, and blaming. Mother is experienced as not understanding the bulimic woman, not demonstrating a great deal of affection or nurturance. In addition, mother is experienced as providing little affirmation of or support for the bulimic woman. Mother can also be experienced as withdrawing, sulking, and avoidant (Humphrey, 1987; Pole, Waller,

Stewart, Parkin-Feigenbaum, 1988; Stuart, Laraia, Ballanger, & Bruce Lydiard, 1990). The relationship with mother is characterized by hostile attachment and hostile control. Quantitative research findings reveal that the mother-daughter relationship is one of hostile enmeshment (Humphrey, 1987).

Many of the findings related to the experience of relationship with mother in this inquiry, are similar to the above research findings. However, some of the findings also suggest the need to re-examine the assumptions of the dominant paradigm and consider anew the kind of research conducted regarding the study phenomenon. In this inquiry, the bulimic woman did experience mother as invalidating, critical, and unable to provide her emotional supplies. Mother could provide material support, but the provision of this also seemed linked to living according to mother's "rules" about life, e.g., "going into her world." During the occasional choice not to adopt mother's way of "being-in-the-world," the bulimic woman experienced mother's "silent treatment" or the withdrawal of any emotional and/or material supplies that were available. The bulimic woman experienced mother as not understanding her in a holistic sense. Mother was experienced as being unable to see and

respond to the bulimic woman as a unique, dynamic human being with different needs and feelings (not "seeing her as a total person"). Mother was experienced as alternately controlling and "over-involved," with demands for "perfect performance," and emotionally unavailable, unsupportive, rejecting, and abandoning. In the context of this experience of relationship with mother, the bulimic woman felt vulnerable and unable to be genuinely self-revealing with mother, i.e., not "telling about it" and "keeping secrets." This difficulty with "self-exposure" is concretely and metaphorically seen in her "being out of control with the eating" and "not telling" mother about the bulimia. Mother was experienced as the "staunchest" keeper of family secrets and the one who strongly reinforced the "closed" nature of the family system. Family problems were "taboo" in discussions. Again, the experienced expectation of "perfect performance" with its reflection on the "person," and the norm against open discussion of family problems, added to the fears of authentic self-disclosure with mother, both in relationship regarding self and the relationship with mother, and regarding the bulimic woman's relationship with food, (an example of the bulimic woman's "imperfections," pain, and needs).

The bulimic woman anticipated invalidation or criticism of her feelings and needs in the experience of relationship with mother. She also anticipated an inability to compromise with mother, and an inability to effect changes related to certain decisions or related to the relationship with mother in general. She experienced an expansive, deep and continuous anger in the experience of relationship with mother, with the intermittent guilt this aroused, and the struggle even to acknowledge the anger to herself. This part of her experience with mother has been difficult to access and accordingly, was brought to language in the form of metaphor. Finally, the bulimic woman experienced "times of loss," as well as "times of anger, anxiety, and uneasiness" with mother.

Although the above findings would seem to support many assumptions which have emerged from the dominant paradigm, other findings reveal the need to re-consider these assumptions and to aim future research endeavors at the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother. For example, this inquiry also revealed that despite the pain, fear, anxiety, and anger experienced in the relationship with mother, the bulimic woman still desired to have a relationship with mother. Findings from this inquiry

indicate that at the present time, the bulimic woman intermittently (and usually, knowingly), "goes into mother's world" in the hope that someday she will be able to create a world of relationship with mother that is based on mutual care and respect. Although the bulimic woman has experienced a need for more space and time away from mother, the need to be clearer regarding her differences from mother, and the need to be more assertive with mother, she may also and paradoxically not pursue these things at times. The interpretation of the text revealed that the paradoxical actions and effects of a) "not telling about it," b) "living a secret life," c) "being out of control with the eating," d) "I was angry," and e) going "into her world" were both protective of and injurious to self and the experience of relationship with mother. The contextual and critical understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship with mother revealed that the paradoxical actions were performed in an attempt to grow and develop as a unique human being, while struggling to remain in relationship with mother and prevent any further relationship losses ("explosions"). Therefore, findings in this inquiry did not support a more polarized and linear view of the experience of relationship, i.e., the

predominant need to separate, individuate, and become autonomous. Conversely, the findings encourage us to consider a more contextual, reciprocal, simultaneous, metaphorical, and paradoxical model for understanding the experience of relationship with mother. In this inquiry, the world of relationship with mother (and others) was based upon the interaction between paradoxical actions, particular explosions, and certain temporal experiences ("times of loss") which characterized this world of relationship with mother. The interaction among these forces is seen metaphorically in the bulimic woman's relationship with food, in the context of her relationship with mother, in her fear of disclosing the secret of bulimia to mother, and in her experience of relationships with other people as well (in the past, present, and potentially in the future).

The experience of relationship with father.

The main assumptions underlying the quantitative research examining the experience of relationship with father include: a) generally, father is experienced as distant and unempathic; b) if father is involved, this makes the bulimic woman less vulnerable to "merger" with mother; c) the experience of relationship with father may involve the bulimic woman being exposed to more experiences of

sexualization; and d) father may be experienced as devaluing the bulimic woman, while increasing her reliance on her body to be an expression of her false self in relation to others. Quantitative research findings reveal that the relationship with father is one in which there is hostile attachment and control (Humphrey, 1987). Father is experienced as neglectful, attacking, and blaming. In general, he is experienced as not understanding the bulimic woman's needs and feelings and is not experienced as nurturing or supportive. Father is not experienced to be affectionate or affirming. These studies have also revealed that the bulimic woman experiences father as "unfriendly" and overly controlling (Humphrey, 1987; Pole, Waller, Stewart, & Parkin-Feigenbaum, 1988; Stuart, Laraia, Ballenger, & Bruce Lydiard, 1990).

The findings in this inquiry did not reveal that father exposed the bulimic woman to experiences of sexualization, nor did it reveal that he devalued her, while increasing her reliance on her body to be an expression of her false self. In fact, the findings of this inquiry would suggest that mother encouraged the bulimic woman to project the "perfect physical appearance" and demonstrate "perfect performance" in the expression of a false self. However, father allowed

mother to reinforce these ideas through his being distant in the experience of relationship with the bulimic woman. It is questionable whether father's increased involvement in the life of the bulimic woman would have "delivered her" from having to remain "in mother's world." However, in this inquiry, the bulimic woman spoke to this issue. She believed that if father had increased his attempts to "step in more," and be more actively involved (more than involvement "on the sidelines"), she would not have been "so controlled by mother." Also, father's inability or unwillingness to "step in" and be more involved in the relationship with the bulimic woman, led to her feeling hurt and angry with father. She questioned how much he cared for her. The findings in this inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman desired father to be more supportive and involved in regards to her activities outside the home and in regards to helping the bulimic woman "deal with" mother. The bulimic woman recalls wanting father more involved as early as age five, yet viewing it as normative that he would not be more involved in the relationship with her. She states this assumption came from being "so into mother's world." The bulimic woman experienced a physical and emotional distance and a feeling of abandonment by father in the relationship

with him. The distance and abandonment were experienced because of a) a daily lack of involvement in her life, b) father's use of alcohol and his suicidal gesture later in her life, c) discord with mother and parental separation, and d) his death.

However, it is also important to note that findings in this inquiry encourage us to re-examine the assumptions of the dominant paradigm. Although father was experienced as unempathic at times, he was also experienced as more validating than mother. The bulimic woman was able to acknowledge her feelings toward father, including her intermittent anger at him. Despite her difficulty being direct about her feelings in interactions with father, she was able intellectually to address her problems with him and express her feelings indirectly. At times, the bulimic woman experienced father as understanding why she was upset at times and experienced him as being more emotionally responsive to her needs and feelings, than mother. Conversely, she experienced mother as being unable to see the reason for her upset, as denying any connection with the bulimic woman's negative feelings, and "putting these feelings down entirely." The bulimic woman's experience of relationship with father also did not involve the nature and

intensity of anger that she experienced in the relationship with mother. she would not feel guilty about anger at father, nor feel "consumed" by it. In general, although she experienced distance in the relationship with father, she did from time to time experience closeness too. She experienced father as being quite proud of anything she did, and did not feel "used" or like a "show-piece," in the way she felt in the relationship with her mother.

Therefore, the findings in this inquiry suggest that the experience of relationship with father may not be one characterized solely by distance and a lack of empathy. This inquiry reveals that father was not experienced as only a "spectator" of sorts, but in fact, father's involvement was a kind of "selective involvement." His involvement was paradoxical, being involved while being "on the sidelines." His level of involvement ranged from high to low, depending on mother's involvement in the life of the bulimic woman at any given time. During times when father was actively involved, the bulimic woman experienced an increased closeness with father and had opportunities to try and build a world of relationship with him, different from that with mother. This world was experienced as more validating and "laid back" than the world of relationship with mother.

However, the opportunity to work at creating this world seemed to revolve around mother's absence. Therefore, the findings in this inquiry suggest that the bulimic woman's experience of involvement with father be examined along a continuum, as opposed to a dichotomy of distance versus closeness. The findings revealed a "dance" of involvement, with father increasing his involvement as mother decreased her involvement with the bulimic woman. Father could be viewed as being under-involved at times but was also appropriately involved at other times, during mother's absence.

The findings of this inquiry also revealed that the temporal experiences of the world of relationship with father were not characterized simply by "troubled and distant times." In general, the temporal experiences of the world of relationship with father involved "relaxing, fun times," "crazy and confused times," "distant, uninvolved times," and "angry or hurt times." The bulimic woman experienced time as being "lost" in the relationship with father because of a) his alcoholism; b) her (conscious and/or unconscious) need to maintain father's secrets (alcoholism and suicidal gesture) and not openly discuss with him, the effects of these things on their relationship;

c) marital discord and parental separation; and d) father's general lack of involvement in her life, especially with mother's increased involvement. Most importantly, the bulimic woman experienced "times of loss" in the relationship with father. These "times of loss" were again, experienced in an everyday way, when the bulimic woman wanted father's involvement in outside activities and his support and intervention in relation to "dealing with mother" and preventing her from being "under mother's control." These "times of loss" were also experienced in the context of father's alcoholism, suicidal gesture, parental separation, and ultimately, in his death. The experience of loss in the relationship with father was critical, as his death also represented the end of potential validation and affirmation from within her family unit. In this inquiry, the bulimic woman connects the loss of father with the loss of old boyfriend and his family, and with the loss of a "family" which accompanied the parental separation. All these losses were experienced as "explosions" in the experience of relationships with others. Over time, the bulimic woman has come to expect death, loss, and explosions in relationships. It is this expectation (thrown into relief with father's death), which also seems to contribute to the

paradoxical actions she employs in order to prevent any further "endings" ("times of loss"), destruction, or explosions in the experience of relationships with others.

The experience of relationship with sister. The quantitative research examining the experience of relationships with siblings is based on the following general assumptions: a) the experience is one in which the bulimic woman is struggling to achieve an autonomous identity and does so, via disconnections from others; and b) the above experience of relationship emerges from a separation-individuation conflict and the ambivalent attempts to resolve this conflict in relationships with others. There was no quantitative study located which specifically addressed the experience of relationships with siblings, however there were quantitative studies examining the experience of relationships with family members in general. Therefore, these findings will be discussed and compared to findings in this inquiry specifically related to the experience of relationship with sister and the overall experience of relationships within the family.

Family interaction inventories have revealed that normal weight bulimic clients experienced relationships in their families as lower in cohesiveness, expressiveness, and

independence, but higher in terms of conflict and achievement expectations (Johnson & Connors, 1987; Johnson & Flach, 1985; Johnson & Maddi, 1986; Kog, Vertommen, & De Groote, 1985; Ordman & Kirschenbaum, 1986; Stern, Dixon, Jones, Lake, Nemzer, & Sansone, 1989). One recent study supported the above findings but revealed that normal-weight bulimic women experienced similar encouragement for independence as did others in normal-weight control families (Shisslak, McKeon, & Crago, 1990). In general, bulimic woman reported their families to be unsupportive. Families were experienced as discouraging assertiveness and self-sufficient behavior, while the family system, as a whole, was experiencing a great deal of conflict and anger. Therefore, bulimic women experience the discouragement of direct feeling expression within the family. In general, bulimic women report a great deal of distress in patterns of relating to family members, less involvement and support, greater isolation and non-disclosure, and more detachment among family members (Garner, Garfinkel, & O'Shaughnessy, 1985; Humphrey, 1987). In effect, studies reveal that the bulimic child is enmeshed in a hostile-dependent relationship within a family system that is disengaged, chaotic, and neglectful. These families also appear to be

quite affectively labile and undercontrolling (Johnson & Connors, 1987).

The findings related to the experience of relationship with sister in this inquiry revealed that sister was basically uninvolved in the life of the bulimic woman. The bulimic woman felt like an "only child" during her growing up years and felt closer to sister only once (briefly), in her late adolescence, when the bulimic woman was experiencing difficulties in the relationship with mother. Otherwise, sister was experienced as distant and absent, "being in the periphery" and living in a "separate world" (like father, at times). The bulimic woman experienced sister (like father), as "abandoning" her to deal with mother alone. The experience of relationship with sister was one also one in which the bulimic woman felt competitive with sister and never able to feel accepted for her accomplishments. Despite the distance felt between her sister and her, the bulimic woman did experience more validation from sister than from mother (during the brief times she was able to receive this). Yet, in an overall sense, the bulimic woman experienced sister as never really understanding her, ("not seeing her as a total person"), nor really "making the effort" to understand her. She

experiences a sadness related to the invalidation and negation of her feelings and needs which she receives from sister and mother, feeling disrespected as a person in the relationships with both of them.

Given the context of the above experience of relationship with sister, the bulimic woman has many times "held in her emotions" and "lived a secret life" with sister. It was only recently, that she disclosed her secret of bulimia to sister. In general, she experiences "times of anxiety and frustration" with sister who seems "so out there," unavailable and unreachable. The bulimic woman also experiences the need to be "using her time more effectively" with sister. She wants to self-disclose more with her, but "walks on egg-shells" worrying that her words will "destroy everything" and prevent any further development of the relationship.

The fear of genuine self-disclosure and worry regarding any potential "explosions" related to this self-disclosure are seen in her "being out of control with the eating" around her sister, needing something in her mouth to feel a "fullness" and a sense of comfort. This inquiry does suggest that the experience of relationships with siblings be more critically examined, since the bulimic woman stated

that an improved relationship with sister would help her "put some of the pieces together of her childhood." She somehow misses something inside herself in not having a relationship with sister. It is questionable whether a more solid and mutually caring relationship with sister might have helped the bulimic woman in her attempts to create a world of relationships with others while trying also to maintain a relationship with mother. In general, this inquiry related that the bulimic woman's world of relationship with sister was based on the interaction between paradoxical actions (which were both protective of, yet injurious to self and the relationship with sister), the presence or anticipation of "explosions" in the relationship, and her experience of "times of loss" in the experience of relationship with sister.

In terms of the findings regarding the experience of relationships with family in general, this inquiry supports many of the findings outlined in the quantitative studies above. The overall experience of relationships in the family can be characterized by a decreased cohesiveness, with the bulimic woman (especially earlier) "under mom's control" and "into her [mother's] world." Other family members were experienced as living in their own "separate

worlds." However, as stated above, this inquiry revealed that father's involvement with the bulimic woman varied with mother's absence or presence. The family was also experienced as not being directly, or assertively expressive of their feelings with one another. This was seen to a certain degree in all family members who were "living a secret life" and "not telling about it." All family members to some extent "held in emotions," which occurred in the context of their concurrent abilities to be affectively labile (possibility of "explosions").

This inquiry also supported the findings of quantitative studies related to the increased expectation of achievement in the experience of relationships within the family. In this inquiry, the bulimic woman experienced a great deal of pressure to be and act "perfectly." She experienced the need to perform perfectly, in order to be loved and valued as a person in the family, especially in the experience of relationship with mother and sister. In addition, this "perfect performance" needed to correspond with mother's "rules" (or even sister's rules later) about what constituted a "perfect performance." If the bulimic woman did not "perform perfectly" according to a set of preformed rules, she would feel rejected and unloved, at

times even losing the material support her mother could provide her. However, the bulimic woman did not experience this pressure to perform perfectly in her relationship with father. She felt he was "proud of anything she did." She did not feel "used" (to help someone else "look good") and merely a showpiece with him, as she did in the experience of relationship with mother. In general, the bulimic woman did not experience mother and sister as able to "see her as a total person." However, she felt more validated by father than by mother, at those times when she was more connected with father. In general, the experience of relationships with family could be characterized as being neglectful. This neglect is seen in mother's alternating and inappropriate "over-involvement" and "under-involvement" and in father's inability or unwillingness to be more consistently involved in the relationship with the bulimic woman.

In terms of "independence" experienced in the relationship with family members, it is important to note that the bulimic woman did not use this word in her discussion of the experience of relationships with family members. Instead, she commented on "perfect performance" and "accomplishments." These activities, and a certain kind

of self-sufficiency and independence which accompanies these activities were encouraged. However, the latter appear to be types of "pseudo-self-sufficiency" and "pseudo-independence." The bulimic woman's performance needed to fit with mother's pro-forma rules regarding "perfect performance" and achievement. There may be other meanings related to the absence of the word "independence" in her discussion of the experience of relationships with others in the text. One might assume that this is related to the lack of experience with being an independent person. However, it is important to note that in this inquiry, there was consistent reference to her wanting to be seen as a total person with different needs and feelings within the experience of relationships with others. The text projected a dialectic in the experience of relationships that cut across all relationships. This dialectic was seen in the bulimic woman's paradoxical actions which served to protect, yet injure the self and the experience of relationships with others. Again, the meaningfulness of this dialectic is clearer, when considering the bulimic woman's desire to be respected and loved in relationships with others, but her concurrent desire to prevent any future "explosions," (relationship losses destructive to self and the

relationship with the other), and to prevent any additional experiences of "times of loss." The dialectic and the paradoxical actions in the experience of relationships with family members, seemed to emerge from and contribute to the high degree of conflict, anger, hurt, and sadness experienced among family members. The experience of conflict and, especially, anger have been found in quantitative studies of the experience of relationships with family members as well. However, this inquiry encourages us to challenge the assumption that this conflict occurs among family members who are experienced as basically disengaged. Although in this inquiry family members are described as living in "separate worlds," the bulimic woman also experiences certain kinds of attachments to them, albeit attachments deficient in various ways. These attachments are ensured through various paradoxical activities, in the hope that she will eventually be able to build a world of relationships with family members which is more mutually caring and respectful. In general, this inquiry invites us to re-examine the words we use (e.g., independence, separation, autonomy, connectedness) in describing the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with family members (and others) and to view these within the context of

the words (literal and metaphoric) she actually uses to bring her experience of relationships to language. The explication and interpretation of meaning regarding the bulimic woman's world of relationships can only occur within this dialectic of understanding.

The experience of relationship with spouse. The quantitative research examining the experience of relationship with spouse is based on the following assumptions: a) the relationship is one in which the bulimic woman will experience the continuing effects of a separation-individuation conflict; b) she will try to resolve this conflict through ambivalent attempts to increase her autonomy, especially via disconnections; c) the bulimic woman also has strong needs for love and approval from men, since she is unable to get her needs met in her family of origin; d) the bulimic woman may tend to over-emphasize, idealize, and exaggerate romantic relationships; and e) the bulimic woman may fear rejection by men, who are needed for self-validation. Quantitative studies have revealed that bulimic women experience significantly decreased satisfaction and difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships with men (Thelan, Farmer, Mann, & Pruitt, 1990). Only one study could be located regarding

the marital relationships of bulimic women. This study revealed that there was no apparent unequal power distribution in the relationship, nor perceptual incongruence between spouses regarding each other's attitudes toward the relationship. However, compared with normal subjects, bulimic women experienced significantly less satisfactory sexual and social relationships with spouses. Although, they did not report significantly lower degrees of marital adjustment. Finally, the bulimic women viewed both their own and their spouses' affective attitudes toward each other as only moderately negative.

The findings in this inquiry revealed that except for her best friend, husband was the only other person with whom the bulimic woman experienced "unconditional love and acceptance." Husband was the first person to whom the bulimic woman told her secret of bulimia. The bulimic woman experienced husband as "seeing her as a total person," apart from her performance. She also felt he did not expect "perfect" performance, as did mother or sister. The findings do reveal that the bulimic woman's ability to see and feel this kind of acceptance, caring, and support from husband involved a temporal component. Initially, in the relationship, the bulimic woman was terrified to reveal her

secret of bulimia, and when she did "tell about it," she was either angered by husband's response to increased time spent with her or doubted his caring because he did not attend a family support group. Over time, the bulimic woman has come to experience husband as supportive and available in "times of loss" and pain. Husband is not experienced as someone who lives in a "separate world." The bulimic woman revealed a decreased fear of rejection in the relationship with husband which seemed to solidify in time, after she revealed her secret of bulimia, a revelation of less than "perfect performance," in a sense. In general, the bulimic woman experiences husband as validating and emotionally responsive, as well as physically affectionate with her.

Although the bulimic woman still struggles with whether to "hold in emotions" in the relationship with husband, over time she has been increasingly able to recognize and directly display feelings and needs with husband. Occasionally, she may be unable to express anger, for example, and "be out of control with the eating," and/or use the "silent treatment," Conversely, she may be "out of control with the eating," which contributes to conflict with husband. The conflict experienced in the relationship with husband has decreased since a) she told husband about her

secret of bulimia, b) husband has increasingly asserted himself during arguments, and c) the bulimic woman has increased her ability to identify times when she experiences "unrealistic anger" with husband and displaces her feelings onto him.

The text discloses that the experience of relationship with husband does not involve the same kind of "explosions" that are part of the experience of relationships with other family members. The bulimic woman still engages in some of the paradoxical actions stated above, in order to prevent potential relationship losses in the relationship with husband. However, the intensity and the frequency of these actions seem lessened in the experience of relationship with husband.

This inquiry challenges us to re-examine some of the underlying assumptions of the above quantitative research studies. The findings in this inquiry indicated that although the bulimic woman did fear (actually felt "terrified" of) rejection by husband, this fear was mainly emphasized in the telling of the secret of bulimic. This telling can be viewed as a metaphor of her general fear of genuine self-disclosure, seen in her struggles related to "holding in emotions." However, this inquiry did not reveal

findings supporting the bulimic woman's needs for "approval." Again, this was not a word used to bring experience to language in this inquiry; instead, the bulimic woman spoke of her need for unconditional love, mutual caring, and respect in the relationship with husband (and others), and the intense need for validation, a recognition of her feelings, thoughts, and needs as real and worthwhile. Findings from this inquiry indicated that the bulimic woman did not want agreement with or approval of her ideas and feelings. Instead, she longed for respect and appreciation of her point of view as something substantive and valuable in solving the problems experienced in relationships with spouse and others as well.

Also, one may question whether the bulimic woman "idealized" spouse, in a way she might have similarly "idealized" father. This inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman was able to bring to language (metaphorically or literally) an experience with both these men which involved both painful and pleasurable aspects of the relationships. In fact, the bulimic woman was quite able to speak literally regarding the relationships with father and spouse. It was in her experience with mother that she had difficulty

bringing painful and particularly anger-provoking experiences to language--thus the use of metaphor.

Finally, the findings of this inquiry did not speak primarily to disconnections from husband or others in the attempt to be "autonomous" in the experience of relationships. Again, this inquiry challenges us to reconsider the language we use to describe the experience of relationship with spouse or others. Language is not merely an expression of pre-linguistic reality, but is also capable of shaping or re-fashioning that reality, i.e., the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This inquiry encourages us to develop a critical and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, and to examine this understanding within the context of our present notions about this experience.

#### The Experience of Relationship with Best Friend.

There are no specific assumptions in the literature about the experience of relationships with peers. However, the general assumption is that the experience of relationships with peers and others is somehow reflective of past disturbed relationships or relationship losses. The

be experienced in relationships with peers and others. The bulimic woman is seen to attempt ambivalently to resolve this conflict through efforts at being autonomous. Her successes are evidenced in her ability to disconnect from others in this endeavor. There may be conflicting wishes for merger and autonomy. These ways of "being" in relationships with others are seemingly dichotomous.

Quantitative studies have revealed that bulimic women experience a high need for approval from others, an external locus of control, low assertiveness with others, and interpersonal sensitivity and poor peer relationships (Connors, Johnson, & Stuckey, 1984; Katzman & Wolchik, 1984; Lacey, Coker, & Birtchnell, 1986; Love, Ollendick, Johnson, & Schlesinger, 1985; Nagelberg, Hale, Ware, 1984). Other studies reveal that bulimic women experience fears of abandonment and a lack of autonomy in relationships with others (Becker, Bell & Billington, 1987), as well as greater needs for social dependency, e.g., concerns about evaluation and separation, and the need to please others (Jacobson & Robins, 1989). Finally, one quantitative study revealed that bulimic women experience interpersonal distrust and are quite rejection sensitive. However, the same study notes that despite the presence of the above in the experience of

relationships with others, bulimic women often do willingly seek help from others in their everyday lives. Therefore, the construct of interpersonal distrust may have very different meanings which would differentiate bulimic women from other sub-groups of eating disordered women (Johnson & Connors, 1987). In general, previous study findings reveal that bulimics actually have fewer close friends than non-bulimic women (Weiss & Ebert, 1983).

Findings from this inquiry, reveal that the experience of relationship with best friend changed over time. Initially, the findings revealed that the bulimic woman experienced a difficulty in sharing with best friend; she worried that she would somehow "shock" her listener with genuine self-disclosure. On first glance, this difficulty might appear related to the bulimic woman's needs for "approval," however, upon closer examination, this difficulty occurs in the context of fearing invalidation and rejection in the relationship with best friend (and others, in general). In the experience of relationship with best friend and across other relationships, the fears of authentically revealing oneself to others are more clearly related to a) the bulimic woman's belief that what she has to say is not worthwhile; b) the anticipation of abandonment

or relationship losses (explosions"); c) the desire not to experience "times of loss" again; and d) the possibility of rejection and injury to self (e.g., criticism, invalidation of her feelings and needs). Paradoxically, then, she acts to "silence herself" initially with best friend or others in the attempt to avoid further injury to self and/or the relationship with the other. However, this act of silence is often interpreted by others as a distancing maneuver, an act of "snobbishness," or a lack of interest in relationships. The bulimic woman also experiences a fear of being "intrusive" in relationships with others, especially during the initial phases of meeting others. She responds to this by "pulling back" a bit, an action that again is experienced by others to be "snobbish" or avoidant.

This inquiry challenges us to continue re-examining constructs related to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships with peers and others. One of these constructs revealed in the quantitative studies was "interpersonal distrust," an imposed way of understanding the experience of relationship with others. This inquiry did not reveal "interpersonal distrust" as much as it revealed "interpersonal terror or fear." This fear of being authentic in relationships due to anticipated relationship

losses and injuries to self was critical in understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In fact, this fear of relationship losses ("explosions") was so prevalent, that the bulimic woman chose (knowingly or unknowingly) at times to "not be," in order to "be-in-the-world" and be in relationships with others. It is also important to note that the fear of relationship losses can be experienced in the anticipation of inappropriate over-involvement or under-involvement in the relationship. Both of these experiences within relationships with others are not respectful or validating of her particular needs and feelings at a given point in time. Those relationships in which there is validation and the "middle-ground of involvement" are less threatening. Unfortunately, the paradoxical actions used to preserve relationships with others may also impede the development of these validating relationships or obstruct the bulimic woman in her attempts to initiate them.

The findings in this inquiry reveal that given "enough time" (at least six months with best friend) and the kind of experience of relationship with the other which is validating and non-judgmental, the bulimic woman is able to begin to disclose authentically in relationships with

others. In this inquiry, the bulimic woman especially valued her relationship with best friend because it was not one of competition (like with sister). She experienced the relationship with best friend as one in which she was "seen as a total person." She felt best friend "really listened" to her, acknowledged her experiences, and related to what she felt. Also, the bulimic woman did not sense imminent rejection in the relationship with best friend. However, even though the bulimic woman experienced her relationship with best friend as validating, she still "lived a secret life" and did not "tell" best friend about her bulimia until recently. Again, this act of genuine self-disclosure involved "times of terror or fear," of potential rejection and relationship loss ("explosions"). "Telling about" the bulimia was an "intimate" act of self-revelation. The findings in this inquiry revealed that the fear experienced in the "telling" about the bulimia decreased with each person she informed. Similarly, the fear of authentically disclosing her feelings and needs in relationships with others also seemed to improve over time. This change seemed related to the bulimic woman's own recognition and validation of her needs and feelings and the more supportive

experience of relationships with others such as best friend and spouse.

This inquiry challenges some of the basic assumptions underlying the above quantitative studies. First, although this inquiry supports previous findings related to fears of rejection in the experience of relationships with peers or others, it encourages us to examine closely the meaning of these rejections for the bulimic woman. This inquiry indicates that fears of "rejection" are not merely fears of disapproval. Rejections or abandonment signal potential "explosions" for the self or "explosions" within the experience of relationships with others. The fear of both rejection and abandonment herald the onset of paradoxical actions which serve to protect self and the relationship with the other. Although these actions (e.g., "acting perfect," "holding in emotions," and "living a secret life") can also be injurious to self and to the experience of relationships with others (e.g., keeping authentic needs and feelings from the bulimic woman and others), they are performed in the hope that eventually the bulimic woman will be able to build a world of relationship with others based on mutual caring and respect.

Additionally, such actions as "low assertiveness" and the "need to please others," mean different things given the context of the above discussion. The bulimic woman "silences" herself to preserve relationships, not simply because she is unable or unwilling to assert herself. In her attempts to preserve and keep intact, the relationships with others, she engages in a variety of activities, which connote more than "pleasing others." Some of these activities are paradoxical and seemingly put others' feelings and needs before her own. However, these attempts at preserving relationships and her own self are made with the hope that an experience of "wholeness" of the self and within the experience of relationship with the other will result. This inquiry challenges us to examine carefully the words we use to describe the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and their particular meanings. There is more meaning, especially paradoxical meaning, behind these experiences in the relationships with others, than the above dominant paradigm assumptions may imply. These meanings have been revealed through a contextual understanding of the experience of relationships.

Finally, it is important to note that the word "autonomy" was not commonly used in the text of this

inquiry. The bulimic woman did discuss the need to be respected as a person with her own individual needs and feelings, yet she wanted these things recognized within relationships, not necessarily outside of them. This inquiry encourages us to consider a model of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which is paradoxical, reciprocal, simultaneous, and interactive. Again, this inquiry encourages us to reflect critically on the meanings of the words we use to describe the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, since these words both express and "re-create" these experiences. This dual nature of language should be considered when evaluating any findings about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, including the findings of the present inquiry.

#### The Experience of Relationship With the Researcher.

In general, assumptions that underlie quantitative research related to the experience of relationship with the researcher would be the same as those outlined in the above section related to the experience of relationships with best friend or others. There were no quantitative research studies examining the experience of relationship with the researcher. This may in part be related to the positivistic

notion that the researcher is basically a "spectator" who conducts scientific inquiry in an "objective fashion."

The findings of this inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of the researcher was one in which she felt validated and seen holistically, "as a total person." The bulimic woman spoke about her comfort in speaking with the researcher, who was very "attentive, (verbally and non-verbally) and sensitive." She experienced the researcher as someone who "probed in meaningful ways." This inquiry revealed that after discussing the experiences of relationships with significant others in her life, she was able to identify "validation" as the core experience she desired in relationships. It was in the context of validating experiences of relationships (spouse and best friend) or with the hope of this kind of experience of relationship (sister and researcher) that the bulimic woman revealed her intimate secret of bulimia. These were the kinds of relationships in which she chose to struggle with the "terror of telling" and authentically self-revealing to others. Although one may assume that the bulimic woman sought knowingly or unknowingly to "tell" the researcher (or others) what "she thought the researcher would want to hear," (somehow trying to "please the researcher" or "look

for approval"), the text revealed that the bulimic woman disclosed many things, things about the experience of relationship which were partially disguised or "cloudy," even to the bulimic woman, yet rich in meaning. Through the validating experience of relationship with the researcher, the bulimic woman was able to struggle through the "telling" of secrets and risk the "re-experiencing" of "times of loss" in producing the narrative of this inquiry. This inquiry assumed that in bringing the bulimic woman's experience to language in the form of a text, and examining this text through the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach, the text would mediate the explication and interpretation of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Therefore, through the reading of the text, one sees the world of relationships that it projects in front of itself. This world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships provides us with a contextual understanding of her "being-in-the-world" as it relates to her experience of relationships with others. At the same time, this contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's world of relationships can enlarge our own self-understanding and ways of seeing and being in the world.

### Qualitative Research

Only two qualitative studies located in the literature examined the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, and both were phenomenological studies. The first study, conducted by Schachtel (1988), revealed that in general, bulimic women a) please others, b) feel unable to depend on others, and c) run to food to escape interpersonal conflict--findings not entirely supported by this hermeneutic inquiry. The current study would encourage us to question the notion of the bulimic woman's need to "please others" and its particular meanings within the experience of relationships with others. The text in this inquiry revealed that although the bulimic woman would "hold in emotions," "act perfect," be "under mom's control," or "go into mother's world," she engaged in these activities not to "please," but to prevent potential relationship losses or "explosions" and the experience of "times of loss." Also, the bulimic woman did not speak to "pleasing others" in the text. She spoke to protecting and preserving her self and relationships with others. She also spoke to how she wanted others (especially mother) to see her as a "total person" with her own different set of needs and feelings. However, the bulimic woman was willing (sometimes unknowingly) to "go

into mother's world" (or into others' worlds) with the hope that eventually she could win mother's respect for her "as a person and for her feelings." She hoped that with mother, she could eventually build a world of relationship that was based on mutual caring and respect.

The findings in this inquiry would support the second notion that the bulimic woman could not "depend" on others. This is seen in her difficulties believing husband or others could understand her needs for support and validation, her feelings, or her struggle related to the bulimia. It is also seen in the bulimic woman's anticipation that she will experience "explosions" in relationships as she did in the past. It is hard for her to believe that relationships could develop differently based on the experience of past "times of loss." However, the bulimic woman did not speak to "depending on others" in the text. She spoke about "fear or terror" in authentically self-revealing her needs or feelings to others. She spoke to her assumption that genuine self-disclosure would lead to relationship losses. This inquiry challenges us to examine carefully what we mean by "feeling unable to depend on others," and to consider these meanings within the overall context of the bulimic

woman's experience of relationships. We must examine the language she uses to describe this experience.

Finally, the findings in this inquiry are not entirely consistent with Schachtel's third finding that the bulimic woman "runs to food to escape interpersonal conflict." This current study revealed that the bulimic woman's "being out of control with the eating" was a paradoxical action which not only served to protect her self from potential relationship losses and pain or conflict, but also served to preserve relationships. Paradoxically though, this action was also injurious to self and these relationships since the bulimic woman knowingly or unknowingly kept her authentic needs and feelings hidden from herself and others. Despite her engaging in these paradoxical acts with the hope of building relationships based on genuineness, intimacy, and mutual caring and respect, she was crippled in her attempts because of these same actions. This inquiry asks us to move beyond linear notions of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and/or the connection of this experience with her experience of relationship with food. This text suggests a more paradoxical, interactive, simultaneous, and contextual understanding of these experiences.

In the second qualitative study, Crouthamel (1988) examined bulimic women's experiences of relationships with family members during adolescence and childhood. This study revealed: a) a lack of cohesiveness among family members, b) denial of feelings among family members, c) the bulimic woman not feeling "good enough" in the family, d) feelings of abandonment and rejection by parents, e) a lack of parental nurturance and support, f) unequal power distribution in the family, g) poor family communication, h) the bulimic woman as parentified child, and i) family member substance abuse. The experience of relationship with mother was one in which mother was critical, demanding, and discounting of feelings. Father was experienced as emotionally distant and emotionally absent, as well as discounting of feelings. The bulimic woman felt or feared abandonment more strongly with mother. In general, relationships with mother were described as poorer, more demanding, critical, and rejecting than relationships with father. Relationships with siblings were also described as poor and distant.

In general, the findings of this hermeneutic inquiry were supportive of Crouthamel's findings, however the experience of relationship with father was revealed to be

somewhat different. The relationship with father was one in which the bulimic woman experienced emotional and physical distance and absence. As we have seen here, father's emotional and concrete involvement increased during mother's absence, and father was not consistently experienced as discounting the bulimic woman's feelings and needs. This experience of being discounted ("invalidated") was emphasized more in the discussion of the experience of relationships with mother and sister. Father could be conceived as "discounting" the bulimic woman's needs and feelings because of his inability or unwillingness to sense and act upon her need for his involvement in her life, despite mother's very active level of involvement with her. However, father is actually presented as more validating and emotionally responsive than mother. This experience of relationship with father occurred during those times in which he was more actively involved with the bulimic woman. Thus, his validation was conditional, depending on mother's absence or presence, as was his discounting of the bulimic woman's needs and feelings. Consequently, this inquiry encourages us to move beyond a linear or dichotomous understanding of the experience of relationship with father being emotionally present or absent, involved or uninvolved,

discounting or validating. Instead, it asks us to consider a more interactive, reciprocal, and contextual understanding of the experience of relationships with father and others.

Dialogue With the Assumptions of the Feminist Relational Paradigm

The knowledge claims generated from this hermeneutic inquiry regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships will now be examined within the context of the assumptions regarding this experience which have emerged from the feminist, relational paradigm. The dialogue between the assumptions of this paradigm and the knowledge claims of this inquiry is the next step in building new knowledge, a communal process. It is important to recall that knowledge claims generated from this hermeneutic inquiry have an assertoric, not apodictic quality. They emerged from a logic of probability which operated within the hermeneutic approach to understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These knowledge claims are temporally, and socio-culturally context-bound. However, they can serve as a catalyst for further dialogue, inquiry, and action within the nursing scientific community.

Assumption (1): The bulimic woman's ability to establish and maintain affiliations and relationships (versus disconnecting or separating from others), is critical to the experience and construction of the self and to the ability to develop relationships throughout her lifetime. The nature of the connections is the critical element, not the need to separate from others. Although the language used in this inquiry to describe the bulimic woman's experience of self and experience of relationships conveyed a certain dualism, the text revealed that the experience of self seemed to occur within the context of the experience of relationships with others. For example, "everyday" relationship losses (criticism, invalidation, disrespect, rejection) were experienced as injuries to the self within particular experiences of relationships with others (e.g., mother, sister, father, or spouse). The findings of this inquiry generally revealed that actual or potential relationship losses, either "everyday" losses experienced within relationships or "major" losses like abandonment, separation, or death, were experienced as injurious to the bulimic woman. Many of these actual or potential relationship losses were experienced to be "explosive," and usually heralded the onset of the

aforementioned paradoxical actions. The bulimic woman engaged in these actions to prevent any further relationship losses, or what might be called "disconnections" within the feminist, relational paradigm. It is important to note that "disconnection" in this inquiry meant not only a loss of a particular relationship altogether, but also those daily relationship losses which abruptly and/or insidiously lead to the deterioration of relationships. These "disconnections" or "explosions" could be experienced within the immediate interactions with another, or within the bulimic woman, as she reflected on her experience of relationship with the other.

This inquiry revealed that despite the pain and "explosions" experienced within the experience of relationships with others, the bulimic woman continued to desire and tried to develop a world of relationship with others that was mutually caring and respecting. However, her use of paradoxical actions to ensure this kind of world of relationships with others both facilitated and obstructed the creation of this world. The bulimic woman wanted to be respected and loved as an equal partner, with her own needs and feelings within the relationship, not necessarily as an "independent agent" outside relationships with others.

However, her ability to develop this experience of herself in relationships and to develop relationships experienced as mutually caring and understanding was obstructed by the use of paradoxical actions which both protected and were injurious to self and the experience of relationships with others. These paradoxical actions could also be viewed as metaphors for her general fear or "terror" in authentically self-disclosing with others. The bulimia was an example of one of these actions.

The findings of this study generally support assumption (1) of the feminist relation paradigm. The bulimic woman's difficulties changing the nature of relationships with others involved the other's vulnerabilities and/or her own fear of relationship losses (disconnections) and her use of paradoxical actions to prevent her from experiencing any future "times of loss." The bulimic woman believed that authentic self-disclosure of needs and feelings would be accompanied by the experience of relationship loss. Bulimia ("being out of control with the eating") helped her "not be" in order "to be" and to be in relationships with others. By silencing herself and eating, she hoped to prevent relationship losses, while she paradoxically created the experience of other losses, e.g., hiding authentic needs and

feelings from herself and others, thus obstructing her attempts at building a world of relationships based on mutual understanding and caring. Paradoxically, although the bulimia allowed her to be different from others (e.g., mother), it also kept other authentic needs and feelings from surfacing and being integrated within the experience of self and within the experience of relationships with others.

Although the findings of this inquiry generally support this first assumption, additional findings fall outside its purview, findings which speak to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. First, it is important to note that this inquiry defines "disconnections" or relationship losses in two different ways, as outlined above. Also, this inquiry emphasizes the paradoxical actions and meanings and the temporal component of the experience of relationships, which are not specifically addressed in the above assumption, nor in the feminist relational paradigm in general. The assumptions of the feminist relational paradigm would support a model for the experience of relationship with others which is interactive and reciprocal. This inquiry, however, supports a model which is interactive and reciprocal, as well as, paradoxical, dialectical, simultaneous, metaphorical, and contextual in

nature. Finally, if the narrative is used as an extended metaphor for human existence, this inquiry would question if men with eating disorders (or men, in general) also experience similar responses to disconnections. Although men have been conceptualized as requiring separation and individuation for healthy psychological growth and development, and needing the experience of autonomy in relationships, this inquiry questions these notions and challenges us to reconsider their experience of relationship losses and their potential paradoxical responses to these losses. Their responses may take a "different but similar shape," due to men's different socialization experiences. Again, Ricoeur would encourage us to look for the kinship between the "different yet similar" aspects of their response to disconnections and their experience of relationships with others.

Assumption (2): The bulimic woman develops via a relational pathway, one that is primary and continuous. Findings from this inquiry would support this assumption, since the text revealed that the bulimic woman experienced a continuous desire to work at building relationships that were mutually caring and satisfying. Despite the pain experienced in relationships that were not "mutually

empathic," (e.g., mother, sister, and sometimes father), the bulimic woman tried to change the nature of these relationships. However, she used paradoxical actions to effect this change, actions which simultaneously obstructed the creation of a new world of relationships with others. Over time, with the experience of validation in other relationships, and with the ability to validate her own needs and feelings, the bulimic woman has been able to experience more mutually caring and satisfying relationships (e.g. husband and best friend). Therefore, this inquiry sees hope in the bulimic woman's future experiences of relationship, despite past relationship losses and her use of paradoxical actions within these relationships. This hope is also part of assumption (2), which speaks to the ability to change the experience of relationships over one's lifetime.

Additionally though, this text emphasizes the paradoxical nature of the bulimic woman's attempts to "take care of herself and the relationship." The feminist, relational paradigm mainly focuses on the importance of relationships in the development of the self and the need to care for relationships, sometimes at the cost of relinquishing the self in the relationship with the other.

The feminist, relational paradigm is based on assumptions that the goal in relationships is to move from a relationship of caretaking to a mutually caring, empathic, and empowering relationship. In this inquiry, the bulimic woman may be viewed as experiencing pain and difficulties in relationships, because she lacked this "mutually caring, empathic, and empowering relationship," early on with mother and/or sister. The bulimic woman spoke to mother's expectations that she listen and accommodate to mother's "world." The bulimic woman needed to "act perfect," be "under mom's control," and go "into mother's world." These experiences of relationship led to the bulimic woman's not being "seen as a total person." These early experiences of relationship are carried into other relationships. They can be used as opportunities to change the experience of future relationships or may act as potential obstructions to this change and the ability to share authentically with others ("not tell about it," "live a secret life," and "hold in emotions").

Assumption (3): Disturbances in the bulimic woman's basic relationship to food, eating, and others is viewed within the larger context of the lack of validation and attention, given to the importance of relationships to others that all women confront throughout life. This text

did not speak to the experience and quality of relationships with college-age peers other than best friend. However, in discussing the experience of relationships with a high-school friend, sister, and mother, the text reveals the emphasis placed on achievement and competition, and not on relationships with others. The text revealed that mother herself was the only female vice-president in the leadership at her workplace. The bulimic woman comments about mother's drive and ambition to achieve, and her expectation that the bulimic woman exhibit "perfect performance" according to mother's rules about what constitutes this performance. Acceptance as a person was based on performance and achievement. The bulimic woman experienced mother to have little or no consideration for the bulimic woman as a "total person" within the relationship with mother. Also, the text revealed that mother discouraged the bulimic woman from going outside the family to consult others on family problems. The bulimic woman also experienced mother as making her the "center" of her life after father left, obstructing the development of relationships with others outside the home. All these forces contributed to the emphasis placed on achievement (not necessarily "autonomy") as opposed to "relationship," in the experience of

relationships with others early in her life. Therefore, this inquiry would support the above assumption.

Assumption (4): Bulimia is the bulimic woman's response to the disconnections she experiences with others in her life. She turns to food in order to cope, comfort herself, self-express, and maintain some kind of connection, albeit with food, not others. The findings of this inquiry would generally support this assumption, but with a few clarifications. The text did reveal that the bulimic behavior was a paradoxical action used to prevent relationship losses ("disconnections"), or the experience of "times of loss." This paradoxical action seemingly emerged from and contributed to relationships with others. The bulimia served many purposes in the experience of relationship with the other (e.g., those outlined in the above assumption). In the feminist paradigm, the assumption is that the bulimic woman may resist changing the nature of relationship with the other, because she fears separation (relationship loss) and the "destructiveness" inherent in this disconnection. Therefore, the bulimic woman is seen as avoidant of making the needed changes in the relationship. Although the text revealed the bulimic woman's fears of the "explosions" inherent in actual or potential relationship

losses, the text also revealed her "being out of control with the eating" as a complex, paradoxical, and multi-faceted action, in response to these losses. For example, "being out of control with the eating" was both protective of and injurious to the self and the experience of relationship with the other. The relationship was preserved but potentially obstructed from further growth towards mutual care and understanding because of the bulimic woman's inauthentic expression of self in the relationship. The bulimia paradoxically worked to create a feeling of "being in control" in the face of feelings of anxiety, anger, and helplessness. In "stuffing her feelings," the bulimic woman distracted herself from giving voice to authentic needs and feelings. Additionally, despite the inauthentic way of being in the relationship, the bulimia allowed the bulimic woman to maintain something different from mother--her bulimic practices, instead of her authentic feelings and needs. The bulimia also produced a feeling of "fullness" or wholeness in the experience of relationships with others. These feelings were comforting during an experience with the other that somehow felt "diminishing." In general, the differentiation from others and the feeling of wholeness provided by the "out of control eating" existed alongside

the experience of diminution, fragmentation, and estrangement within the self and with others.

Findings from this inquiry do not support the notion of bulimia as a way to avoid making changes in the experience of relationship. Conversely, this inquiry revealed that the bulimia was an action employed to mediate these changes, though in a paradoxical way. The bulimic woman is not seen to be avoidant of making needed changes in the relationship because of separation, disconnection, or relationship losses. Instead, she is actively trying to implement these changes, amidst the intense affect, the fear of authentic self-disclosure, and the fear of further relationship losses, which accompany her attempts at changing the nature of the experience of relationship. This inquiry supports the assumption that bulimia is a way of mediating the pain and perceived injury or destructiveness ("explosions") of potential or actual disconnections. However, the bulimic behavior is an active, paradoxical attempt at this mediation. Again, this inquiry supports the feminist, relational assumptions regarding a model of the experience of relationships which is interactive and reciprocal. Additionally, though, this inquiry encourages us to consider a model for the bulimic woman's experience of relationship

that is paradoxical, metaphorical, contextual, and dialectical in its nature.

**Contextual Understanding of the Bulimic Woman's  
Experience of Relationships -  
New Insights and Understandings**

The findings from this hermeneutic inquiry allow us to move beyond prior research findings and theoretical understandings regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The new knowledge claims which emerged from this study and which interacted to form the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships are summarized below. It is my contention that the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships provides a richer, fuller, and more complete picture of this experience. Contextual understanding helped clarify any relationship between past, present, and future meanings of the experience of relationships, as well as provided an understanding of bulimia within a relational context. The new knowledge claims revealed in this contextual understanding illuminated the meaning of the experience of relationships and provided coherence to the ebb and flow of these meanings as the bulimic woman lived them in her everyday life.

These new knowledge claims enhance and enrich our present theoretical understandings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--A World of Paradox

This inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was predominantly one of paradox. The main paradox of the experience of relationships involved the action of "not-being" (being inauthentic) in order "to be" in the world and to "be in" relationships with others. This action of "not-being," part of her "being-in-the-world," was evidenced through the bulimic woman's various paradoxical actions, performed in order to prevent her from experiencing further relationship losses. The bulimic behaviors ("being out of control with the eating") and the act of maintaining the secret of bulimia ("living a secret life") were examples of these actions. The bulimic woman believed that if she authentically self-disclosed needs and feelings, relationship losses would follow. These relationship losses (e.g., invalidation, criticism, rejection, abandonment, separation, and death) were experienced as injurious to the self and to the experience of relationship with the others.

The paradoxical actions served to avoid these injurious experiences, protecting the self and the relationship with the other. However, they brought their own kind of pain and injury to the self and to the relationships with others.

This inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman's world of relationships was constituted by the flux between contradictory, simultaneous, interactive forces. These forces are seen in the above paradoxical actions with their ability to protect, yet be injurious to self and the experience of relationships with others. This inquiry reveals a model of the experience of relationship that is interactive, contextual, reciprocal, simultaneous, paradoxical, and metaphorical. There was a strong and painful, yet meaningful underlying dialectic of contradictory forces (e.g., paradoxical actions and effects) within the bulimic woman's world of relationships. While the bulimic woman was aware of some of these contradictory forces operating in the experience of relationships, she was unaware or unclear about others.

#### The Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--A World of Explosions

The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was also one of explosions. These explosions

can be viewed as metaphors for sudden and violent changes in the bulimic woman's feelings and actions, and for sudden and violent changes related to her interactions with others. Explosions were representative of the intensity of affect, loss, and danger experienced within relationships with others. The world of explosions signified the world of relationship losses and the awareness of these losses for the bulimic woman. The fear of "everything exploding," the fear of actual or potential "everyday" relationship losses within relationships (e.g., invalidation of feelings, disrespect, and criticism), and of "major" relationship losses (e.g., abandonment, and termination of relationships with others) seemed to fuel the paradoxical actions and effects in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The bulimic woman yearned to be a mutual and equal partner in creating a world of relationships with others, yet also felt compelled to prevent any further relationship losses - at almost any cost. Explosion and paradox interacted in the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

The World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--Its Temporal Character

The paradoxical and explosive nature of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships contributes

to and arises from the temporal experiences of this world, predominantly characterized by "times of loss" or "times of anxiety, fear, or terror." The latter experience of time was often generated by a fear of experiencing or re-experiencing "times of loss," since the bulimic woman assumed that authentic self-disclosure would bring further relationship losses. "Times of fear or terror" were especially discussed in the context of revealing the secret of the bulimia, a kind of metaphor for the general fear of authentic self-disclosure. In order to avoid "times of loss," the bulimic woman tended to employ the above paradoxical actions, including "being out of control with the eating." The bulimic woman experienced time as "lost" or "not being used effectively." She also experienced time as moving too quickly, as during the shifts in the experience of relationship with others, part of the experience of "explosions." Over time, the bulimic woman knowingly and unknowingly created a way of "being-in-the-world" characterized by paradoxes, explosions, and "times of loss." This "mode of being" emerged from and contributed to her experience of relationships with others in her everyday life. This mode of being was one in which she was "not

being" in order "to be" in and keep intact the world of relationships with others.

The World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--Local and Extended Metaphors

This inquiry revealed that a literal discussion of experience was often inadequate in conveying certain aspects of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In these situations, the bulimic woman used metaphor to bring her experience to language. For example, the bulimic woman revealed that her "anger [at mother] was almost like an ocean." She also spoke regarding a) "explosions" which signified her experience of relationship losses; b) her need to "live a secret life" (not disclose her bulimia to others); and c) her "being out of control with the eating" (bulimia), which expressed her general fears related to authentic self-revelation. In each of these examples, what is expressed, whether through language, actions, sounds, images, or feelings, is metaphorically exemplified. Similarly, the whole narrative itself is an extended metaphor or model, projecting a certain world, a way of "seeing" and "being-in-the-world." The world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to the world of paradoxes, explosions, and times of loss we all

experience in relationships with others. The extended metaphor of the narrative refers to the ways (e.g., paradoxical actions) in which we all seek to protect and preserve our selves and our relationships, with the hope of creating a world of mutual caring, respect, and understanding with others. Yet, this metaphor also reveals how these same actions can simultaneously and ultimately bring their own pain and contribute to the injury to our selves and to our experience of relationships with others. This inquiry revealed a continued drive for relationships based on mutuality with others, despite the suffering and pain (the "loss and terror") involved in trying to develop them. The text as metaphor can be viewed as a "model" for this particular way of "seeing and being in the world" of relationships with others.

The World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships--The Importance of Validation

This inquiry revealed that the code, "getting the validation," cut across the entire text. The bulimic woman discussed the experience of validation (or the absence of this experience) within the context of each of her relationships: with mother, she experienced no validation; with sister, she experienced a very small amount; husband

and best friend were the main providers of this experience; and the researcher was also experienced as validating. Validation was described as an experience of feeling her "opinions and feelings were worth listening to and were respected." This experience included getting feedback from others but not feeling "shut off." Validation involved the bulimic woman feeling like she can "have her opinions without someone trying to change them," without someone saying she is "completely wrong," or "making fun of them [her opinions]." In the absence of validation, the bulimic woman experiences "something missing" in the relationship, a lack of respect for her feelings, for herself as a person (not "seeing her as a total person"). She connects this "missing piece" in the relationship with her need to "fill in this gap" with food. Food provides a feeling of "peace" in the relationship. The previously seen paradoxical actions of "being out of control with the eating" now serve to protect the self and the relationship (preventing anticipated relationship losses), yet they were also injurious to self and the relationship, fostering other kinds of losses.

The World of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationship-  
Considering the Context of Meaning

This inquiry reveals the importance of critically examining and re-examining the words we use to describe the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Some of these words include" a) "independence," b) "need for approval," c) "interpersonal distrust," d) "autonomy," e) "low assertiveness," f) "need to please others," g) "dependency on others," and h) "running to food to escape interpersonal conflict." In examining these words, we also consider their meanings. The findings in this inquiry remind us about the importance of the polysemic nature of discourse and the need to consider a contextual theory of meaning in trying to understand the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This inquiry encourages us to consider carefully the nature of the discourse we use to describe the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, and to understand this discourse within the bulimic woman's overall discourse (literal, poetic, or metaphoric) about the experience of relationships. This inquiry reminds us that language is not merely the expression of pre-linguistic experience, but that language also shapes and can "re-create" this experience.

Therefore bulimic woman's experience of relationships should be examined within the context of our other ways of understanding this experience.

### **Implications of Study Findings for Nursing**

The meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships explicated in this inquiry has significant implications for nursing research, education, and practice. These implications seem especially relevant for nurses working in high school and college settings and for psychiatric mental health nurses. These nurses are frequently involved in research and education related to bulimia, or are seeing bulimic women in their practice areas. The implications for nursing research, education, and practice are presented below.

#### Implications for Nursing Research

Future research in nursing could use a hermeneutic approach in order to further develop the explication and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Since nurses are the health care providers frequently involved in assessing the bulimic woman's experience of and responses to relationships with

others, hermeneutic inquiry could easily be conducted in the practice setting as well. This continued research is critical, since present theoretical notions indicate that a) the bulimic woman's experience of relationships can predispose, precipitate, and/or perpetuate this disorder; and b) the bulimic woman's relationship with food is currently seen as a "concretization" of her conflicted and distorted perceptions of herself and others. Findings from this inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman's fear of relationship losses ("explosions") seemed to emerge from and contribute to her employment of certain paradoxical actions, including "being out of control with the eating." Also, this inquiry revealed that the "explosive actions" involved with the bulimia seemed metaphorical for other experiences in her relationships with others, i.e., her struggle to self-disclose authentically with others. Other hermeneutic inquiries can further explicate the meaning of such things as "relationship losses," "paradoxical actions," and the particular experiences of time (e.g., "times of loss or terror") in order to understand the interaction between time and human action within the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. Also, further research can continue to explicate the meanings of various phrases

(action codes) revealed by this text, such as: a) "into her world," b) "living a secret life," c) "being out of control with the eating," d) "everything exploded," and e) "see me as a total person." Therefore, this particular text or other texts could be used to explicate further the action and temporal codes at work in the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

As mentioned above, other kinds of texts may be used in conducting a hermeneutic inquiry of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These texts could include: a) a bulimic woman's written discourse (as opposed to verbal discourse transformed into a text) regarding her experience of relationships in her everyday life (e.g., from a diary or journal, or from a composition specifically requested for use in a research study); b) historical documents such as client autobiographies and biographies, or other documents discussing the lives of women who were bulimic; c) fictional narrative and poetry written by or about the bulimic woman; d) metaphors, examined as "poems in miniature," regarding the experience of relationships. In terms of the use of metaphor as a text, metaphors could be taken from written documents or transformed into written discourse from psychotherapy dialogue or discussions with a researcher. In

each of the above examples, the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships could be explicated by considering only her experience, or by an explication of the experience of the significant others as well. This latter approach would add to the contextual understanding of the experience of relationships which is interactive, reciprocal, paradoxical, and dialectical (according to the findings of this inquiry).

In terms of trying to further develop a contextual understanding of the relationship between the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and her relationship with food, various texts as those outlined above, can be used to explicate the meaning of the bulimia within the context of the experience of relationships. For example, the bulimic woman could be asked to write about her experiences with others before and after bulimic episodes. This discourse could be used as a text for hermeneutic inquiry. This approach could be used with bulimic men, as well, to further develop a contextual understanding of the bulimia within the context of the experience of relationships, for both genders. Also, hermeneutic inquiry regarding the general experience of relationships for bulimic men (similar to this inquiry) could be conducted.

Hermeneutic inquiry regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships "across time" and across ego-pathologies would also increase the richness of our contextual understanding of this experience. This inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman came to anticipate relationship losses in new relationships, since she had experienced multiple past relationship losses. However, this inquiry also revealed that over time, with validating relationships, and the bulimic woman's increased insight about her own hidden feelings and needs, the experience of relationship changed. Therefore, temporal experiences of the world of relationships can change over time, as do the interactions of the experience of time and actions in this world. Also, since bulimia occurs across ego-pathologies, hermeneutic inquiry conducted with more severely characterologically impaired and/or bulimic women with varying degrees of bulimic symptomatology could enrich our contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

Additionally, hermeneutic inquiry regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships can be conducted using action as a text for understanding this experience. Future hermeneutic inquiries could further develop approaches to

interpreting the bulimic woman's actions with others, since human action itself, "action as meaningful, may become an object of science, without losing its character of meaningfulness, through a kind of objectification similar to the fixation which occurs in writing" (Ricoeur, 1981d, p. 203). Through this objectification, actions are viewed as similar to speech-acts, constituting delineated patterns with inner connections. Future research endeavors can further develop hermeneutic approaches which use the bulimic woman's actions with others as the mediation for the interpretation of her experience of relationships with others. The use of written discourse and text-analogues (e.g., action) can contribute to a more accurate, fuller, and richer picture of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

Finally, a fuller, richer, and more accurate portrait of the bulimic woman's experience of relationship will emerge from a consideration of the contextual understanding of this experience, within the context of present theoretical knowledge and research regarding the experience. For example, the findings regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships from this inquiry were generally supportive of the assumptions emerging from the feminist,

relational paradigm regarding this experience. However, the findings from this inquiry also were not supportive of some of these assumptions or revealed knowledge claims that were beyond the purview of these assumptions. The findings from this inquiry emphasized a) the bulimic woman's paradoxical actions in relationships with others; b) the bulimic behaviors as active (paradoxical) attempts at trying to develop mutually caring and satisfying relationships, despite the experience of relationship losses ("disconnections") and/or the fear of potential, future relationship losses; c) the temporal component of the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships; and d) a model of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships which is not only reciprocal and interactive, but also contextual, simultaneous, paradoxical, dialectical, and metaphorical in nature. Therefore, the text of this project, as well as the texts for future hermeneutic projects, could help inform research which is based upon the feminist, relational perspective and which aims at understanding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

### Implications for Nursing Education

The findings in this inquiry encourage nurse educators to re-examine the value they place on certain "ways of knowing" in nursing. For example, students at all levels, especially at graduate and doctoral levels should be encouraged to consider not only theoretical knowledge regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships (or other human experiences), but also the value of contextual knowledge in an understanding of this experience. Nursing students should be encouraged to develop an understanding of human experiences through examining each of the above ways of knowing human experience within the context of the other. Similarly, education regarding how to conduct research using numeric data should be accompanied by education regarding the uses of linguistic data. This is particularly important in nursing, since nursing involves the treatment and diagnosis of human responses to potential or actual health problems. The human realm is a realm of meaning, and the nature of linguistic data is meaning (Polkinghorne, 1983). Linguistic data can be used in research to identify patterns, examine the contexts of interactive meanings (forces), and understand the

relationship between parts and whole in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and in other human experiences.

This inquiry would encourage nurse educators in practice and education areas to increase their efforts at helping students/staff carefully consider and question the discourse used to describe the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as well as other human experiences.

Educators should reinforce the notion that students and staff consider the bulimic woman's own discourse (verbal and written), in the attempts to understand her experience of relationships. Graduate students and, especially, doctoral students, should be encouraged to take courses in philosophy, linguistics, and the humanities, to develop the conceptual tools needed to do research within a post-positivistic context. Coursework in philosophy and linguistics would teach students the power of language, i.e., its ability to express pre-linguistic experience and to shape and re-create this experience. These courses would sensitize students to the polysemy of ordinary language, the contextual theory of meaning and the heuristic value of poetic and figurative language, e.g., metaphor's ability to provide a "model" for certain ways of seeing and being in the world. Nursing educators in doctoral programs should

consider providing coursework related to hermeneutic inquiry, particularly as it relates to the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach. This approach promotes the dialectic between understanding and explanation, uses written discourse (experience brought to language) as the mediation for interpretation, and advances a contextual understanding of human phenomena.

Specifically, this inquiry supports educators in their efforts to encourage staff and students to re-examine and question an understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships derived solely from the assumptions which have emerged from the dominant paradigm of understanding women's psychological growth and development and experience of relationships. This inquiry would support educators in their efforts to provide a conceptualization of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships based on assumptions from the feminist, relational paradigm, while encouraging students to also consider additional meanings of this experience which may not fit with these assumptions, e.g., paradox, temporal character of experience, and the importance of metaphor. In general, this inquiry would support attempts at helping students and staff consider a model of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships

which is interactive, reciprocal, contextual, paradoxical, dialectical, simultaneous, and metaphorical.

#### Implications for Nursing Practice

A nurse's "conceptualization of a presenting condition is a way of ascribing meaning to it, which may or may not accurately reflect the phenomenon under consideration" (ANA, 1980, p. 11), and the meanings ascribed to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, regardless of whether these are derived from contextual understanding or theoretical knowledge, can ultimately affect practice. Nurses in the practice setting need to keep their theoretical interpretations of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships open to revision, e.g., interpretations based upon theoretical knowledge generated from the dominant and feminist, relational paradigms. It would be worthwhile for nurses to consider a contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as this kind of understanding represents an additional way to ascribe meaning to this phenomenon and can enhance and enrich our present theoretical knowledge of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships.

In particular, this inquiry encourages practitioners to move beyond a dichotomous and linear understanding of the

bulimic woman's experience of relationships, toward a model of the experience of relationships which is interactive, reciprocal, paradoxical, dialectical, simultaneous, contextual, and metaphorical. This inquiry encourages practitioners to recognize the "meaningfulness" of all client experiences and actions, versus only the "pathological" features of these experiences and actions. In recognizing this meaningfulness, practitioners are encouraged to also help bulimic women see the meaningfulness of their experiences of relationships. This inquiry emphasizes the importance of seeing and helping the bulimic client understand the meanings of her experience of relationships, her temporal experiences of the world of relationships, her actions within this world, and the interaction between temporal experiences and her actions. For example, this inquiry revealed that the bulimic woman's experience of relationships may involve potential paradoxes, fears of relationship losses (explosions), "times of loss and terror" related to authentic self-disclosure.

Nurses in the practice setting can help bulimic women gain an understanding of the meaning of their experiences through the use of verbal and written discourse. Nurse psychotherapists, in particular, have access to the bulimic

woman's discourse about her experience of relationships and can listen for metaphors, the use of poetic discourse and figurative, as well as literal expressions of this experience. This inquiry would encourage nurse psychotherapists and others to listen carefully to the bulimic woman's discourse about her relationships in trying to develop a fuller and richer understanding of this experience. Especially in psychotherapy, metaphor and other kinds of figurative language often express experiences that are not easily brought to language in a literal way. The use of metaphor in the recovery process of the bulimic woman has been addressed by Shahly (1987) and could be further explored and developed within the context of the findings of this inquiry. Also, this inquiry would encourage nurse psychotherapists to carefully listen for such things as relationship losses, "explosions," in the experience of relationship, "times of loss," and paradoxical actions, since in this inquiry, these experiences interacted and cut across the experience of relationships over time. Therefore, an understanding of these past experiences can illuminate an understanding of the present and future experiences of relationship, including an understanding of transference and the relationship with the therapist. This

inquiry provided a model ( a metaphorical one) for understanding the connections between past, present, and future relationships.

Also, this inquiry supports the understanding of bulimia (the relationship with food) within the context of the experience of relationships. In this inquiry, bulimia ("being out of control with the eating"), was a paradoxical action which emerged from and actually contributed to the experience of relationship losses. The bulimia was a paradoxical action of "not being" in order "to be" in the world and to be in relationships with others. Although the bulimia was an action that was used to protect the self and the relationship, and to prevent additional relationship losses, it paradoxically was also injurious to the self and the relationship. Nurse psychotherapists can assist clients to gain an understanding of the paradoxical actions they may employ in their experience of relationships with others. This understanding involves the recognition of the "dual nature" of these actions (preserving and injurious), as well as the recognition that one cannot change one action in the experience of relationships without affecting or increasing a contradictory action or contributing to other contradictory effects in the experience of relationships.

For example, in asking the bulimic woman to "be more assertive," one would expect this action to ultimately be therapeutic and facilitate authentic self-disclosure. However, in a world of relationships which is characterized by paradox, this change might increase the contradictory action to keep secrets or hide from self and others. In this inquiry, the increase in these contradictory actions of hiding from self and others are related to the desire to avoid relationship losses anticipated with assertive self-expression. This inquiry reveals that the bulimic woman uses paradoxical actions in the hope of building a world of relationships based on mutual care and understanding. However, a clear understanding of these actions is not always immediately available to the practitioner due to the multiple meanings of discourse, the (unconscious and conscious) distortions of meaning, and the metaphorical nature of meaning involved in the expression of human experience. Finally, despite the multiple layers of meaning involved in bringing experience to language, this inquiry revealed that "over time" and given "enough time" and the experience of validation in relationship, as well as some increased insight about her authentic needs and feelings, the bulimic woman's experience of relationships can change.

In this inquiry, these changes were seen in the bulimic woman's ability to be more intimate and self-revealing with her husband and best friend. Therefore, this inquiry encourages the development of a psychotherapeutic relationship characterized by similar experiences, with an attention to the context of the meanings of the experience of relationships, and to the understanding of particular meanings within the context of the bulimic woman's overall discourse regarding the experience of relationships. This kind of psychotherapeutic relationship could help foster changes in the experience of relationships. According to this inquiry, these changes in the bulimic woman's experience of relationships might include: a) decreased "times of terror" experienced in authentic self-disclosure, b) an experience of relationships which is "less explosive," c) decreased paradoxical actions (including the bulimia), and d) a decreased anticipation of relationship losses in future relationships. In this way, the bulimic woman might be helped to experience a way of being-in-the-world with others which would not be based upon "not being."

CHAPTER VII  
SUMMARY, EVALUATION, CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this inquiry was to access the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships in everyday life, in order to reveal a contextual understanding of this experience. It was my hope that the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships disclosed in this inquiry could enhance and enrich our present theoretical notions of this experience. Literature review regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed that although there is much theoretical knowledge which exists regarding this experience, there is a dearth of research (and an absence of nursing research), that can substantiate that the theoretical knowledge within the two main paradigms regarding woman's psychological growth and development and experience of relationships, provides an accurate and full understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. These two main paradigms are the a) dominant paradigm which emphasizes the consolidation of an autonomous identity via disconnections from others to attain maturity, and b) the newer feminist, relational paradigm which

emphasizes important gender differences in terms of psychological growth and development and the experience and significance of relationships during maturation. This latter paradigm emphasizes that the experience and construction of the self for women involves establishing and maintaining affiliations and relationships versus disconnecting and separation from others. The deficiencies inherent in present theoretical notions of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships and inherent in the research related to this phenomenon were addressed. Finally, an alternative and additional way of ascribing meaning to the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was offered. This alternative way, contextual understanding, needed to be based upon the bulimic woman's discourse about this experience.

A hermeneutic philosophy and approach were used to access the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, in an effort to develop a contextual understanding of this phenomenon. this particular approach was consistent with the aims of this inquiry, since hermeneutic knowledge can reveal the meaning of human expressions, i.e., the experience of relationships, because it is based upon interpretation of meanings and actions that

are seen as context-bound interactive forces. Additionally, a hermeneutic approach could access meanings about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships that would be a) obscured from consciousness, b) unclear because of the metaphorical dimensions of meaning which require deciphering to unfold its many layers, and c) unclear because of the circular nature of relating parts of the meanings of the experience of relationships to an overall, "whole" meaning of this experience.

Specifically, a review of Ricoeur's hermeneutic philosophy aided me in developing a methodological approach for interpreting the text in this inquiry. The text was assumed to be a written document of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The interpretive process considered multiple contexts, i.e., the interpreter's own context and questions posed to the text, the structural context of the text, and the semantic context of the text. The interpretation of the text evolved through multiple, critical readings and via an engagement with and a disengagement from the text, while employing the interpretive dialectics of a) explanation-understanding, b) guessing-validation, c) explanation-comprehension, and d) distanciation-appropriation.

The explication and interpretation of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed a contextual understanding of this experience. This contextual understanding was the world of the experience of relationships revealed by the text. This world was characterized by a) paradox, b) explosions, and c) certain temporal experiences, e.g., "times of loss." In general, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships revealed a way of "being-in-the-world" with others that involved "not being." Finally, further mediation on the interpretation of the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, revealed that the entire narrative (text) in this inquiry could be viewed as an extended metaphor for human existence. In essence, the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships was an "ontological metaphor" for our "being-in-the-world." This world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to the world of paradoxes, explosions, and times of loss we all experience in relationships with others.

In this inquiry, the text was the mediator for the contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In relying on the "revelatory power" of

the autonomous text, this inquiry fulfilled the aim of any hermeneutic inquiry, i.e., "making one's own" what was previously "foreign" (Ricoeur, 1976, p. 91). In keeping with the Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach, this inquiry fulfilled both the epistemological and ontological aims of this kind of approach to understanding human experience. This inquiry provided a fuller, richer, and contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. In addition, this inquiry revealed how the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships metaphorically refers to a shared world of existence and a shared world of the experience of relationships with others. Therefore, the work of interpretation conducted in this inquiry seems worthy of being called, "hermeneutic," as it provided an understanding of "being" and also enlarged the interpreter's own "self-understanding."

#### Methodological Evaluation

Before concluding, it is important to first evaluate Ricoeurian hermeneutics and the interpretive approach developed for this inquiry. As stated before, the task of developing a methodological approach to access the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships initially felt overwhelming. However, over time, in returning to

Ricoeur's multiple works, disengaging from these, and re-reading these works, I arrived at a methodological explication. Additionally, reviewing the interpretive work of a colleague (Alexander, 1991) helped me in my reflections about the methodological approach for this inquiry and in the ultimate explication and concretization of this approach.

#### The Limitations of Ricoeurean Hermeneutics

There are a few limitations to consider when undertaking a Ricoeurean hermeneutic approach. However, the main limitation is that of time. Ricoeur states that "everything that is recounted occurs in time, takes time, unfolds temporally" (1987, p. 358). Temporal experience is a common feature of all human experience, and it is an important feature of Ricoeurean hermeneutics. It takes a great deal of time just to arrive at a basic understanding of Ricoeur's hermeneutic project. However, it takes even more time to explicate a methodological approach based on his philosophy of hermeneutics. Both the general understanding of Ricoeur's work and the methodological explication, as well as the actual work of interpretation involve a commitment of time, energy, and reflection. All these processes also involve the interpreter's ability to

engage with and disengage from her/his work at any given point in time. This process of engagement and disengagement is critical in the work of interpretation which includes multiple readings of the text and reflection on these readings.

In addition, another limitation is the interpreter's interest in and ability to master language skills. The interpreter needs to have adequate reading and writing skills in order to employ a Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach to understanding human phenomena. The understanding of Ricoeur's philosophy, the ability to do interpretive work, and the interpreter's ability to "bring interpretive work to language" in a coherent and persuasive way, all require good reading and writing skills.

In addition, Ricoeurian hermeneutics requires the interpreter to remain faithful to the hermeneutic circle. The commitment to an understanding of phenomena which emerges from within this circle involves time, patience, and practice. It requires the interpreter to remove her/his "positivistic" garb and remain steadfast in her/his belief that understanding will come from the constant movement from part to whole and back, in the work of interpretation. It also requires the interpreter to believe that despite the

"conflict of interpretations," the most accurate and fruitful interpretation will eventually emerge. As Madison (1988) states:

...This amounts to saying, of course, that "truth" is essentially of a presumptive nature. All interpretation works under the promise of truth. To speak of promise is to speak of the future. "Validity" does not, therefore, come from the past but from the future; validation is nothing other than the harmonious unfolding and reciprocal confirmation of successive experiences (interpretations). This is to say also that knowledge is not so different from faith. When we opt for a given interpretation, we do not do so because we know it to be true but because we believe it to be the best, the one which offers the most promise and is the most likely to make the text intelligible, comprehensible for us  
(p. 15).

Therefore, Ricoeurian hermeneutics requires us to see "understanding" as an event of human experience and asks us not to "control it." For example, we are asked to interact with the text and believe in its power to reveal a world of meaning. Therefore, appropriation of this meaning does not involve the interpreter "fusing consciousness" with the original author of the text, projecting her/his own subjectivity on the text, nor looking for some external "archimedean point" or a-priori notion with which to judge an interpretation of meaning. Appropriation of meaning involves "making one's own" the horizon of a world (of meaning) which the text projects in front of itself.

Therefore, the interpreter needs to have a "disposition of receptivity and reflexivity" (Reeder, 1988). The interpreter must recognize that the hermeneutic phenomenon "encompasses both the alien that we strive to understand and the familiar that we already understand" (p. 222). Ricoeurian hermeneutics also specifically asks the interpreter to believe that the text projects a world which "re-figures" our experience of time and "re-creates" human action, thus providing new ways of seeing and being in the world.

#### The Fruitfulness of Ricoeurian Hermeneutics

Although there are a number of limitations to consider when employing a Ricoeurian hermeneutic approach to understanding human phenomena, there is also a fruitfulness to this approach. In this inquiry, the use of Ricoeur's philosophy in the development of a methodological approach, allowed access to the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This access to meaning ultimately led to the development of a contextual understanding of this experience. The contextual understanding of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is a new voice in the discourse about this experience. It can enrich and enhance our present

theoretical notions about the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This additional voice is one based upon the bulimic woman's discourse, especially written discourse about the experience of relationships. Ricoeurian hermeneutics reveals a way to understand the meaning of experience and the context of this meaning, through its emphasis on language, "the primary condition of all human experience" (Ricoeur, 1987, p. 374). Ricoeurian hermeneutics is based on the assumption that experience is brought to language. As Ricoeur states:

It must be supposed that experience in all its fullness...has an expressibility in principle. Experience can be said, it demands to be said. To bring it to language is not to change it into something else, but, in articulating and developing it, to make it become itself (1981e,p. 115).

The fruitfulness of Ricoeurian hermeneutics also lies in its assumptions that language is more than the expression of pre-linguistic experience. Language can also shape and re-fashion this experience. Therefore, the metaphors of the text, and the entire text, as extended metaphor, can reveal different ways of seeing and being in the world. Both metaphor and narrative can re-figure time and re-create human action. Therefore, the fruitfulness of Ricoeurian hermeneutics ultimately lies in its ability to fulfill epistemological and ontological aims. It can increase our

understanding of being (e.g., regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships), while also increasing our own self-understanding (regarding our shared world of existence and ways of "being-in-the-world"). Although Ricoeurian hermeneutics involves underlying assumptions about human finitude and suffering in the world, it also promotes a hope for the future. That hope involves our ability to see the "possible worlds of meaning we could inhabit," which are projected by the text, and the opportunities of changing our history and our experiences of relationships with others, by changing our ways of seeing and being in the world. This invitation to see and be differently in the world, is a challenging and meaningful "pro-ject."

### Conclusion

This hermeneutic project revealed an additional voice in the discourse regarding the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. This additional voice is that of the contextual understanding or the world of meaning of this experience. This hermeneutic project was based on the assumption that "understanding is not a construct from principles but the development of knowledge we have gained of a wider context and which is determined by the language we use" (Bleicher, 1980, p. 121). My hope was that the

contextual understanding revealed by the text in this inquiry, as well as any future mediation on this text, would further the communal dialogue regarding the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. The issue of context has been central to the interpretive work of this hermeneutic project. This inquiry supports Rorty's notion that conversation is the "ultimate context" in which knowledge is to be understood (1979, p. 389). This project was based on the assumption that the task of hermeneutics is that of "sustaining and furthering the conversation of mankind" (p. 389), to maintain the openness of human discourse. The continuing conversation regarding the world of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships is part of this discourse, as is the continuing conversation about our shared world of existence and our shared world of the experience of relationships with others. Ricoeur encourages us to enter this conversation with an understanding of these worlds, as they are projected by the texts which we read on our journey toward understanding others and ourselves.

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Appendix A  
ADELPHI UNIVERSITY  
MARION A. BUCKLEY SCHOOL OF NURSING

HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW COMMITTEE  
FORM A, SCREENING FORM

Name Mary Tantillo  
Title of Project An Interpretive Study of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships  
Hypothesis None (Interpretive Study)  
Chairperson or Project Advisor Dr. Stephen Greenfield

Research Tools and Methodology: Check all that apply.

Questionnaire ()  
Face-to-face interview ()  
Experimental intervention/manipulation () (Explain)

Indepth dialogic interviews will be audiotaped, then transcribed to develop a  
text for interpretation.

Other () (Explain) Demographic Sheet

Subjects (check all that apply):

Healthy Volunteers ( <input type="checkbox"/> )	Pregnant Women ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
In-patients ( <input type="checkbox"/> )	Children ( <input type="checkbox"/> )
Out-patients ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> )	Psychiatric Patients ( <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ) Bulimic Women
	Minorities ( <input type="checkbox"/> )

Other () (Describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
Ages of subjects College Age -(18-25)  
What provision is made for protecting subjects' anonymity? Code #'s used on demographic sheets, audiotapes, and transcriptions. Upon completion of transcribed  
Describe interviews, all audiotapes will be destroyed.  
Is control group used? No () Yes () Describe \_\_\_\_\_

Brief description of proposed sample and method of sample selection College age bulimic women (meeting DSM-III-R criteria) from the Community Mental Health Center at an Upstate Medical Center will be nominated by their therapists to participate in the study. One study participant will be selected from the nominees as the most articulate regarding the experience of relationships.

- Append: 1) Brief abstract of study.  
2) Consent Form (not needed for paper and pencil tests or questionnaires).  
3) Copies of all instruments.

[Redacted Signature]

Student's Signature

[Redacted Signature]

Advisor's Signature

Action - To be completed by Human Subjects Review Committee.

Deferred  Referred for full review  Full review not required

Reasons Minimal risk with adequate safeguards, non-invasive interviews

Date 4-9-91

Signature [Redacted]

*Clear ASR*



4465

Appendix B  
**STUDY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** An Interpretive Study of the Bulimic Woman's Experience of Relationships

**Researcher:** Mary Tantillo, MS, RN, CS  
Ph.D. Candidate

You are being asked to participate in a research study that will seek to identify and describe the meanings of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships in her everyday life. This study is being conducted to complete my doctoral dissertation at Adelphi University. You have been asked to participate because you have been able to verbalize the experience of relationships with your therapist. There are no known risks involved for participants. However, if you felt uncomfortable after speaking with me about your relationships with others, it would be important to inform me. You would be encouraged to discuss any discomfort with your therapist, or you would have the option of talking to a therapist at the Community Mental Health Center at Strong Memorial Hospital. Other anticipated inconveniences include only the time required for interviewing. Benefits are expected for participants in that you would be contributing important information that could help mental health care providers more clearly understand the bulimic woman's experience of relationships. To my knowledge, there are no studies which have specifically examined the meaning of the bulimic woman's experience of relationships, as they are lived, perceived, and described by the bulimic woman. Other benefits may be gained by participants in that discussing and clarifying your experience of relationships may be reinforcing and confirming for you.

Participation will involve completion of a demographic information sheet and talking with me about your experience of relationships. During our dialogues, I will ask you to describe your everyday experience of relationships with others in your own words. The intent is not to obtain information about how the experience of relationships should be, but what these experiences are like for you. Each individual discussion will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The overall length of our discussion will be determined by you as to when you have completed your descriptions of your experience of relationships. Our dialogues would be audiotape and eventually transcribed so that I can develop a text of our discussions. Also, field notes will be taken about the progress of the interviews.

33 Crittenden Boulevard  
Rochester, New York 14642  
(716) 275-8121

Any information you share would be strictly confidential. Your name will never be connected with the descriptions you provide. This will be ensured by assigning you a code number that will be used on your demographic sheet, audiotape, and transcription. The list of names and identification numbers will be kept in a locked drawer and will be destroyed at the end of the study. Also, upon completion of the transcribed interview, all audiotapes will be destroyed to protect your identity. Information obtained from you will be used to complete my doctoral dissertation in nursing and will possibly be included in future professional journal articles, books, or oral presentation. Again, any information used in these publications or presentations will not identify you by name. Also, you will receive a report of the findings from this study.

If you have any questions now or throughout the study, please ask me. I would be very pleased to respond to them. You can contact me at the address listed below.

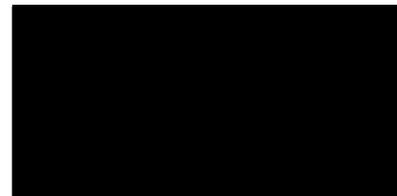
Mary Tantillo, MS, RN, CS  
Community Mental Health Center  
Strong Memorial Hospital  
601 Elmwood Avenue



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You are making a decision whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read and understood the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice, and this decision will in no way affect the care you receive.

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix C

## OBTAINING THE ORIGINAL TEXT

Readers interested in obtaining a copy of the original text used in this study should write to the researcher for details at the following address:

University of Rochester Medical Center  
Department of Psychiatry

