

Running head: THE ENMESHMENT DANCE

The Enmeshment Dance--An Adult Manifestation
of a Daughter-Mother Relationship

Miriam Kuropatwa

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

Department of Educational Psychology

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**THE ENMESHMENT DANCE-AN ADULT MANIFESTATION OF A
DAUGHTER-MOTHER RELATIONSHIP**

BY

MIRIAM KUROPATWA

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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I would like to dedicate this study to my children, Rachel, David, Sharon, Ruth, Robert, Riki, and Rebeca. I would particularly like to thank my husband, my best friend, and my editor, Ralph, who enabled and empowered me to evolve into the woman I am. To my children, their spouses, Steve, Sherri, and Steve, their partners, Darren and Catherine, and to my grandchildren, Yoni, Tali, Ellie, Leo, Eliezer, and Hannah, I would like to wish a life that is full of love, health, peace, and prosperity. To my husband, I would like to wish a life that is full of all of those and one that continues to be dominated by the strength and the partnership that has brought us to this point in our lives. May we all continue to grow into people that are worthy of the family with which we have been blessed so far.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Ray Henjum, who continually motivated me to finish, my committee members, Dr. Zana Lutfiyya, who agreed to teach me about qualitative research and delivered, and Kim Clare, who waited patiently to encourage me.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the participation of the five women whose stories formed the foundation and the heart of this study. To Karen, Meg, Lillian, Ellen, and Lora, thank you.

To all mentioned above, and to all whose eyes will look upon the pages herein, I wish a life of unconditional reflection of their innerself. To the women, the daughters, and the mothers, I wish you a life of brilliantly polished mirrors.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of daughters who felt that their mothers exerted excessive emotional control over their daughters' lives, putting their own adult needs ahead of their daughters' childhood needs. This relationship between mother and daughter, begun in childhood, continued in adulthood, and carried over to the daughters' relationships with other adults, is called "the enmeshment dance."

Using the naturalistic and holistic approach of qualitative research, I interviewed five women between the ages of thirty-nine and sixty-five. I selected participants who were in a collegial, familial, or personal relationship with me. The in-depth interviews included questions that dealt with the daughters' childhood recollections of experiences with their mothers, the daughters' adulthood recollections of experiences with their mothers, the daughters' recollections of experiences with other adults, any connections that were found between childhood experiences with their mothers and adulthood experiences with their mothers, as well as any connections that were found between the daughters' experiences with their mothers and with others.

The limitation of the study was the small number of participants. The advantage of the study was also the small number of participants. In other words, what the study lacked in generalizability it made up in specificity.

The conclusions of the study included a specific description of the childhood

and adulthood relationships of each participant with her mother and with others. Many connections were drawn between the childhood and adulthood relationships of the participants. As well, connections were drawn between the daughters' relationships with their mothers as well as with others. The in-depth interviews revealed information that validated and added to the information available in the literature on the relationship between daughters and their mothers.

Through analysis of the in-depth interviews, seven themes emerged: unmet childhood needs, financial difficulties, protecting mother, feelings of inadequacy, connections and patterns, anger and making changes. Almost all the participants were represented in each of the seven themes. All the participants indicated that they gained more information about themselves or their relationships through the process of interviews. Although only one participant specifically used the word "meshed", all the participants were enmeshed with their mothers early in childhood, either through a process of attachment or abandonment.

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CHAPTER ONE

Daughters and Mothers

I would like to provide the reader with the background regarding the choice of the topic, an introduction to the topic as presented in this paper, as well as information about the rationale for embarking on this study. When the time came in my graduate work to choose a topic to study, I was drawn to the topic of the relationship between daughters and their mothers. In narrowing my study, I focused on the daughter in the relationship. This enabled me to explore my own personal experience as a daughter. I wanted to learn more about the perspectives of daughters who felt that their mothers had exerted excessive emotional control, either directly or indirectly. In this study, this excessively controlled relationship is called "the enmeshment dance". I attempted to do this with a detailed literature review as well as in-depth interviews with five selected participants.

Personal Recollections

My memories of childhood seem to revolve mostly around my mother--how she felt, how she experienced life, what she thought, and how completely disappointed she seemed to be in the way her life had turned out. One of her recurring statements was: "If only I had not married your father, I could have

..." When I try to recall my experience of childhood, I have difficulty remembering how I felt, how I experienced life and whether I was satisfied or disappointed with my life at the time.

As an adult, I remembered a long-forgotten shopping trip to the grocery store with my mother, when I was a young child. In recalling the event, I remembered the red impressions of heavy, paper, shopping bag handles, pressed into the palms of my hands. The next memory blurred that image, both visual and kinaesthetic, and I remembered the red impressions being on my mother's hands, and not mine. Although the recollection was several years old, I still could not distinguish whose hands they were. I was so absorbed, in childhood and as a young adult, by my mother's feelings, thoughts, and actions, that there hardly seemed to be any room for me.

As an adult I also remembered being 16, still in my parents' home, and going out on a date. I remembered being in the hallway of our apartment building, pounding my fist into the wall, in anger and rage. Prior to leaving the apartment, my mother had reminded me once again, that I was having fun while she was staying home and feeling miserable.

As an adult, when I remembered that event, I could not recall what I did that evening or whether I had a good time or not. I could only recall what my mother said and how deeply it affected me. There seemed to be no room for me, as a

child or as a young adult, without her intense presence in my experiences and my memories.

At the age of thirty-four, I found myself screaming and yelling at my mother for always dropping in on me and my family, unannounced and uninvited, never leaving us alone to lead our own lives. At the age of forty-two, I found myself searching for a topic to study.

Given my own experiences as a daughter, I wondered what the experiences of other women, daughters of their mothers, might be. I interviewed other women to find out if they had similar stories to tell. I found out how they were affected.

Daughter and Mother Enmeshment--Daughters who Felt their Mothers' Excessive Emotional Control

Although it may seem initially, that some of the personal stories described (above) and some of the research described (below), is only an indication of a close relationship between a daughter and her mother, perhaps occasionally a little too close for comfort, I would like to emphasize the difference between closeness and a more extreme relationship in which one--the mother, the powerful one, overwhelms the other--the daughter, the vulnerable one.

Erikson (1963) recognized that the relationship between a parent and a child can be used by the parent against the child:

it is necessary to understand the basic human fact that childhood provides a most fundamental basis for human exploitation. The polarity Big-Small is the first in the inventory of existential oppositions such as Male and Female, Ruler and Ruled, Owner and Owned, Light Skin and Dark Skin, over all of which emancipatory struggles are now raging both politically and psychologically. The aim of these struggles is the recognition of the divided function of partners who are equal not because they are essentially alike, but because in their very uniqueness they are both essential to a common function.

. . . . Exploitation exists where a divided function is misused by one of the partners involved in such a way that . . . he deprives the other partner of whatever sense of identity he had achieved, of whatever integrity he had approached.

In our country . . . the child is the adult's partner. (p. 418)

In this study, enmeshment referred to the excessive emotional control that some mothers exert on their daughters. According to Bradshaw (1988): "Enmeshment is the term used to describe the isolation of ego boundaries . . . all the boundaries are overrun" (p. 71). As Minuchin (1974) observed: "The sense of belonging dominates the experience of being, at the expense of a separate self" (p. 113).

Long Term Effects and Affects of Enmeshment

Lerner (1988) commented specifically on enmeshment between a daughter and her mother. Lerner (1988) found that her client, Ms. J., was unable to complete her graduate work and take on greater responsibility in her professional career. Ms. J. seemed initially concerned about competing with her husband. Upon further investigation, it became clear that the concern began in the enmeshed daughter-mother relationship:

The patient was locked with a rigid, blaming position toward her mother that was similar to her stance with her husband. This entrenched position served . . . to maintain a fused, hostile-dependent tie between mother and daughter. Because the level of differentiation in a marital relationship is the same as that achieved in one's family of origin, the striking parallels between the patient's relationship with her mother and that with her husband were hardly surprising. (p. 182)

In this dependence on others, the grown up daughter loses herself. By depending on others, she loses her independence. By waiting to hear what others have to say, she forgets to listen to her own voice. She is silenced by her own fear, a fear that arises every time she tries to break free of enmeshed relationships.

Enmeshment of daughters with their mothers, the daughter's inability to separate adequately from her mother, as well as the longer lasting effects and affects of that enmeshed relationship are the specific items that I researched. Exploring further the effects and the affects of that primary relationship, I examined the daughters' relationship with other adults as well as their ability/inability to be independent of other adults, while maintaining a clear sense of self. I related to Lerner's (1988) example and wanted to know if other women could, as well.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to find out what some women recalled about their relationships with their mothers as well as to discover what emerged out of their stories. Enmeshment seems to be a function of the absence or underdevelopment of boundaries between daughter and mother. The question arose, therefore, of how were the common developmental boundaries prevented from emerging between daughter and mother. In this study, I stressed the information provided by women that suffered from such a developmental deficit. I did not seek distance from the affected informants. I very much wanted to be able to reconstruct the view of the world as seen through their eyes, felt through their bodies, and arrived at through their experiences. In this way, I hoped to be able to validate my own experience and that of other women, elaborate on the literature that has been written on daughter and mother enmeshment, as well as

provide further understanding for healing strategies for daughters who feel overly controlled by their mothers and others.

The enmeshment dance would not be more than a moderately intriguing observation if it did not also have a crude psychic wall upon whose bricks is smeared the blood from women's heads battering in vain and painful efforts to stop this cloying dance and find an exit to a free and authentic life. This was my own experience of the enmeshment dance with my mother.

I was interested in the area of enmeshment, specifically daughter mother enmeshment. By speaking with women who were enmeshed in childhood by their mothers, and who continue to be enmeshed with others in their lives, I hoped to emphasize the message that every individual is entitled to know herself as she would have been if her inner self was not invaded by others.

Alice Koller (1981) commented on her own experience with her mother. "I just don't know what my own feelings are I don't know what to look for inside me. I don't know how to identify *that* I'm feeling something, let alone to give a name to it" (p. 135).

As Minuchin, Rosman and Baker (1978) said: "In general, all therapeutic operations that challenge enmeshment are operations that support individuation" (p. 103).

Initial Theoretical Perspectives

Birth, infancy, childhood and youth is a sequence of events throughout which a daughter is radically separated from mother, and nurtured in the launching pad for travel throughout adult space. Such space is the environment within which the daughter is regarded as an adult, is treated as such, and is expected to behave and perform accordingly. It is also the deep inner space which fundamentally shapes the affect, and psychological competence and comfort of the adult daughter. Bottom line, it is the developmental journey from symbiosis to differentiation, from dependence to independence, from raw need to the decision to love. Donald Winnicott (1965) commented on the gradual movement of the infant towards independence:

This journey . . . is something that is not only an expression of the innate tendency of the infant to grow; this growth cannot take place unless a very sensitive adaptation is made by someone to the infant's needs. It happens that the infant's mother is better than anyone else at performing this most delicate and constant task. (p. 5)

Enmeshment seems to be a condition that results from the failure of the normal developmental sequence of splitting, separating, and developing personal boundaries, containing personal identity. Because human developmental processes are untidy, inconsistent things, no enmeshment is anymore "total"

than is any developmental sequence "perfect." Humans are imperfect creatures and enmeshment is perhaps best understood as one polar extreme on the continuum of human development.

As Minuchin (1974) said, "In all enmeshed families the processes of differentiation are handicapped. In the pathological range, the family's lack of differentiation makes any separation from the family an act of betrayal" (p. 113).

Enmeshment, it seems, is no random accident. It seems to be the inevitable outcome of a mother's inability to let a child grow, her unwillingness to nurture a daughter into the radiant pleasures of self-sufficiency. This should not be read as maternal malice aforethought. Mother seems to be taking care of first things first, and for an enmeshing mother, the priority is to satisfy her own needs. The daughter, as child and as adult, merely has a bit part in the drama staged by mother. In her life, her play, mother has the only starring role. Hyde (1986) commented on the daughter mother dyad: "mothers and daughters are caught in a self-perpetuating transgenerational cycle of starvation the psychodynamics of the mother-daughter relationship considered normative in this culture bear all the earmarks of covert incest" (pp. 78-79).

Whether it is malice aforethought or not, enmeshment is a form of abuse and just like any other form of abuse, it must be named before it can be healed. As Bass and Davis (1988) determined, "Most adult survivors keep the abuse a

secret in childhood. Telling another human being about what happened to you is a powerful healing force that can dispel the shame of being a victim" (p. 58).

Once it is named and described, it can be understood and brought to the attention of the enmeshed daughter, the enmeshing mother, or an outsider who can help in some meaningful way to stop the pattern. As Bass and Davis (1988) reported, "Now I try to be more aware of where that behavior came from. I don't want to repeat what they did to me" (p. 379).

Women, adult daughters of enmeshing mothers, may be psychologically and behaviorally disabled by the distorted developmental experience. Never permitted to differentiate self from mother, they may have poorly developed, porous personal boundaries. Such incomplete selves may not be the best armour with which to enter and perform in the community of adults. As Lerner (1988) said:

Women who have unconscious loyalties to remain their mother's child and avoid autonomous functioning are inhibited not only in the expression of anger and protest, but in any activity that demands the subjective experience of feeling alone and standing on one's own two feet. Such women will have difficulty tolerating the experience of separateness and difference inherent in having an original idea, in entertaining a critical or innovative thought that is theirs alone, or in tolerating the competition necessary to achieve professional success. (pp. 63-64)

Hyde (1986) warned of the potential for a continuing cycle of covert incest and abuse as daughters grew up to be mothers and had children. "Every mother is the daughter of a daughter who has not been mothered" (p. 79).

The enmeshment dance seems to occur early in childhood, taught by the mother and diligently learned by the daughter. Forward (1989) found that:

If you are the adult child of a deficient or inadequate parent, you probably grew up without realizing there was an alternative to feeling responsible for them. Dancing at the end of their emotional string seemed a way of life, not a choice. (p. 48)

The enmeshed daughter seems to be one whose childhood was experienced through her mother and whose adulthood continues to be experienced externally through others. The daughter begins the dance with her mother. As an adult, the daughter continues the same dance with other adults. As Eichenbaum and Orbach (1987) observed:

The mother's need for attachment, combined with her identification with her daughter, creates a fusion between the two of them (a merged attachment). The mother is not separate from the daughter . . .

The daughter has an equivalent experience as she grows into womanhood. Not only does she retain her mother's presence inside her, not only does she feel acutely aware of her mother's neediness, not only does

she feel responsible for maintaining the attachment she feels her mother needs, but, unconsciously, she will bring this responsibility with her into her future relationships with both lovers and friends.

In adult relationships, she is searching to find herself. But because the only mechanism she has for doing so is through merging and identifying with others, she comes to these relationships with emotional malleability. She comes with her emotional antennae ready to tune into the needs of others this process means that she loses sight of her own separate needs and desires. (pp. 62-63)


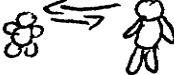


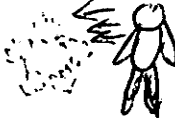


Orbach and Eichenbaum (1983) emphasised the difficulty of daughters separating from their mothers as opposed to sons separating from their mothers.

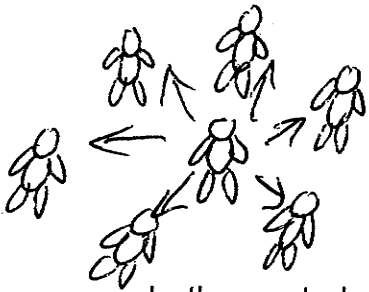
The mother, because of her shared gender identity, relates to her daughter as though she were an extension of herself. This makes it hard for the daughter to know herself apart from her mother the daughter then moves away from mother with trepidation, not terribly sure in her own boundaries, feeling somewhat insecure and shaky about her sense of self as different from her mother. (p. 122)

Figure 1 (below) is a step by step representation of the potential process of a daughter's enmeshment by her mother described above. This representation emerged as I examined my relationship with my mother as well as from some of

the literature on enmeshment and other terms used to describe enmeshment: smothering (Secunda, 1990), bond permanence (Miller, 1990b), fusion and merging (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987), entrapment (Bradshaw, 1988b), pursuing (Lerner, 1988), loss of self (Friedman, 1985), diffuse ego boundaries (Minuchin, 1974) and undifferentiation (Zeulzer & Reposa, 1983).

Figure 1

- 
 - A child is born
- 
 - The child looks into her mother's eyes expecting to see herself reflected therein
- 
 - The mother looks at the child and sees only herself and not the child (absence of mirroring)
- 
 - The child feels empty, unreflected, unmirrored, invisible (loss of self)
- 
 - The mother sees the emptiness and immediately begins to fill it with her own needs and wants (mother fills the child's inner vacuum--enmeshment)
- 
 - The child is enmeshed by the mother. The child's needs and wants are submerged (childhood enmeshment)
- 
 - The child grows up to feel that her survival depends on meeting the needs and wants of her mother (introjected parent)



- The child becomes an adult and finds other adults who can fill the vacuum (adult enmeshment)

In the next chapter, I reviewed literature related to the topic of daughters raised by mothers who exerted excessive emotional control over their daughters.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, I discussed the related literature on family enmeshment, daughter and mother enmeshment, as well as areas of the daughter and mother relationship that were related to the excessive emotional control that some daughters felt from their mothers. Related literature also covered the healing process whereby daughters were able to become independent of their mothers.

Childhood Needs

When a child is born, that child is dependent on others to provide basic needs--a safe environment in which to sleep, play and grow; an adequate diet of food and drink; as well as an appropriate approach to learning the various skills necessary for survival including sitting up, standing, walking, eating, drinking, sleeping and talking. Among these basic needs is one that shares a high priority with the physical, developmental needs--the need to be reflected in the eyes of a significant person, usually the mother. The child needs to be seen as a separate human being with the potential for development in many unknown ways as well as ways that are known and understood through family history as well as by theoretical paradigms. In other words, given what mother knows about the child's family background and child development in general, she can nevertheless see the child as a being, separate from herself and others, filled

with unknown potential. This potential must not be seen as an enemy by the mother, but rather embraced as a gift. According to Alice Miller (1990b):

Every child has a legitimate need to be noticed, understood, taken seriously, and respected by his mother. In the first few weeks and months of life he needs to have the mother at his disposal, must be able to use her and to be mirrored by her. This is beautifully illustrated in one of Winnicott's images: the mother gazes at the baby in her arms, and baby gazes at his mother's face and finds himself therein . . . provided that the mother is really looking at the unique, small, helpless being and not projecting her own expectations, fears, and plans for the child. In that case, the child would not find himself in his mother's face but rather the mother's own predicament. This child would remain without a mirror, and for the rest of his life would be seeking this mirror in vain. (p. 32)

In Winnicott's (1986) description is the picture of a helpless human being whose self-image is dependent on the mother. In addition to all of the newborn's physical dependencies, the infant also has a need to see herself in someone else's eyes. Bassoff (1991) noted that:

Every child needs to be *mirrored*--to have her inner experiences acknowledged and, as psychiatrist Heinz Kohut puts it, "to be looked upon

with joy and basic approval by a delighted parent . . ." The need to be mirrored accurately and lovingly is most urgent during our formative years . . . as author Nancy Friday says, the baby must have the best seat--the only seat!--at the Adoration Banquet. (pp. 4-5)

This task is mainly provided by the primary caregiver, usually the mother.

Erikson (1968) examined the stages of life and found that the "earliest and most undifferentiated 'sense of identity' . . . arises out of the encounter of maternal person and small infant, an encounter which is one of mutual trustworthiness and mutual recognition" (p. 105). According to Miller (1990b):

The child has a primary need to be regarded and respected as the person he really is at any given time, and as the center--the central actor--in his own activity . . . we are speaking here of a need . . . whose fulfilment is essential for the development of a healthy self-esteem. (p. 7)

Bassoff (1991) commented on the nonjudgemental reflection of the infant:

Through a newborn's unsteady eyesight, the world appears a blur; she cannot bring into focus objects that are too near or too far. But from the vantage of mother's holding arms, she is able to focus on mother's face, which is the perfect distance from her own, and to see it with absolute clarity

. . . . The most fortunate among us discover that mother is more than a mirror who non-judgementally reflects what we assert. (p. 21)

When the mother looks at her newborn baby, she may or may not be able to reflect that baby's image back to the newborn. The absence of reflection of the baby's image by the parent, allows for no evidence that the child exists. Instead as the mother gazes at her child, the process of the child being seen by the mother, is reversed. Instead of the child being seen by the mother, the mother insists on being seen by the child. Instead of the mother providing a reflective mirror in which the child can see herself, the mother insists that the child be a mirror for the mother. According to Bassoff (1991):

The mother who requires that her child mirror her, rather than the other way around, is a woman who herself has been robbed of vitality. She is wounded and in need of healing. Her young daughter, who loves her better than her own life, wants simply to make her well. But because she is small, relatively helpless and powerless, the little daughter--hard as she tries--cannot fix mother's life. (pp. 17-18)

Furthermore, instead of seeing the child--the newborn infant, the mother sees in the child another opportunity to live the life she wanted to live. The poet, Anne Sexton (as cited by Middlebrook, 1991) put it simply, "I made you to find me" (p. 86). The child gazes at the mother, expecting to see in the mirror, the

image of herself--a newborn infant. Instead the child looks into a well polished window, directly into the mother's inner self. Miller (1990c) indicated that:

The birth of every child inevitably awakens or reawakens desires in the parents that somehow are connected to making up for their own childhoods. Either they look to the child to compensate for their not having had good parents ("At last here is someone who will show concerns for me, who will treat me with consideration and respect") or to be the child they once were ("Now I shall have someone to whom I can give all that my parents had to deny me"). (p. 27)

Whether the mother is hoping to live again through this infant, have the parental love that she missed in childhood from her own parents, or relive the childhood she felt she missed--the infant loses the centre of her mother's attention. The centre of the mother's attention is the mother. The attention is taken away from the child and usurped by the mother.

Bradshaw (1988b) concluded that in the eyes of these parents: "The children are in their control; will obey them because not to obey is equivalent to death; will never abandon them; will possibly extend their lives through achievement and performances" (p. 69). That is, the children's achievements and performances will extend the lives of the parents by reflecting the parents' talents rather than the children's abilities.

The Loss of Self and Self-worth

As the child realizes--sometimes at birth, sometimes in infancy, often as a toddler, that the parent is the primary focus of importance, the child loses her own sense of self and becomes involved in ensuring the parent's sense of importance. In other words, the parent becomes the primary focus of importance in the child's eyes. There is no room or very little room, for the child, when this happens.

Alice Koller (1981) felt no sense of what she would like to be when she grew up. She did not have a clue other than that which was available to her from outside herself, from her mother. This state of dependence may be appropriate for an infant who has not yet discovered the separation between mother and child. However, for a growing, young child, for a maturing, young woman, and especially for the grown-up adult, this dependence does not allow for "tapping into" the inner self, the inner knowledge of needs, wants, and preferences. Complete dependence on others prevents the child, and later the adult, from using a personal filter to sift through the information provided by others. Without appropriate mirroring and reflection, the child may grow up looking for that which was not provided at the appropriate time of need.

Alice Koller (1981) described the kind of life she lived as she pursued an acting career and later an academic career in philosophy:

I walk desk to couch, couch to table, table to fireside chair, chair to stove, stove to refrigerator, and there I lean, crying. The endlessness of reflecting myself in other people's eyes. Turn a pair of eyes on me and instantly I begin looking into them for myself. I seem to believe there is no me except in other's eyes. I am what I see in your eyes, whoever you are

Why can't I see? What's wrong with my own eyes? If I knew how to look at what I see, then what? Then I wouldn't need other people's eyes. (p. 113)

Bassoff (1991) commented on the life of Alice Koller:

One of the most destructive effects of poor mothering can be a child's feelings of disconnection from her self. When the unempathetic mother fails to recognize and resonate with the growing child's real feelings, the child herself begins to feel unreal and to mistrust her perceptions. She is not in touch with her inner life--her intuitive sense of instincts--but is rather cut off from it. Instead of trusting her intuitions, the wounded daughter turns to outside sources to tell her how she should feel. This was the case for Alice Koller, who had existed for thirty-seven years never knowing what *she* wanted, who experienced herself only as a reflection in other people's eyes. (p. 135)

Suffering the loss of a separate self seems to be a prelude to allowing others to be the only available means of interpreting information about life. Seeing oneself through other's eyes and believing that what others, including mothers, think and feel, is only one way of receiving information and arriving at a decision about ways of behaving, feeling, and making choices. Another important aspect of thought, feeling and actions comes from a sense of self-worth and self-esteem, gained originally with the help of a nurturing parent and developed continuously throughout one's life. Interaction with others as well as a separate identify can combine to form personal preferences, needs and wants. In enmeshment, personal preference, needs and wants seem to be subsumed by the preferences, needs and wants of others.

Paradoxically, it is the desire to preserve connectedness with the mother that results in the disconnection from the Self. Friedman (1985) found that, "Women with bulimia have been separated from the real Self by the need to please parents who could not accept and nurture the emerging Self, and by their natural ability to play a part, to be pleasing" (p. 66).

When the daughter gazes at the mother and sees the mother's needs and wants, the daughter knows what she must do. This newborn infant knows that she must deliver to the mother what the mother needs and wants, or die. As Hyde (1986) noted:

For a mother to need something from her child and for that child not to supply it constitutes betrayal of the mother by the child, which is experienced by the child as tantamount to self-annihilation. Not to be there for her mother is to have her mother not to be there for her. And since mother equals existence, the child's existence threatens to cease. She then descends inside herself to a place of utter desolation; this place is then described by so many women clients as a huge emptiness inside them, a hollowness, a black hole, an overwhelming sense of abandonment and desperation. (p. 79)

In the absence of a separate identity, the child may look outward for acknowledgement that she exists. In childhood, she looks outward at the mother for recognition that she is worthy of existence in and of her own right. In adulthood, she may continue to look to others for acknowledgement, recognition and permission to be. As Koller (1981) observed:

The applause I played for everywhere and the attention I made my mother give me were exactly the same thing: substitutes for her love. I tried to make the whole rest of the world give me what she couldn't give me. If I were the greatest actress, maybe she'd look at me. If I were a brilliant philosopher, maybe she'd look at me. And if she looked at me, I'd have her attention, her real attention, which was her affection: I'd have her love

I've never believed that I'm beautiful because she never told me that I was I've never stopped being that five-year old. (p. 125)

Family Enmeshment and Daughter-Mother Enmeshment

Being separate, being an individual, being someone who demands her own personal space is difficult for the woman who has been enmeshed.

Enmeshment thrives on togetherness. Enmeshment survives where individuality is non-existent or at best, minimal. Satir (1983) pointed out that:

an individual who has not achieved an independent selfhood will often take any evidence of different-ness in someone he is close to as an insult or as a sign of being unloved.

This is because he is intensely dependent on the other person to increase his self-image. Any reminder that the other is, after all, a separate being, capable of faithfulness and desertion fills him with fear and distrust. (p. 123)

Bradshaw (1988b) discussed the heightened sensitivity of those who are enmeshed in taking care of others:

You feel others' feelings and continually act in ways that will make others feel better. If they are angry, you change your behavior so that they will feel better. If they are sad, you will do things to take away their sadness. (p. 161)

Love and Robinson (1990) pointed out that enmeshment is a familiar pattern of communication between a parent and a child:

In the broadest terms, there are two ways that a parent-child relationship can be out of line: (1) the parent and child can be *estranged*, which means there is too much distance between them, or (2) they can be *enmeshed*, which means they are too close. Of the two, enmeshment is the more common.

(p. 8)

The closeness of enmeshment is not one that promotes healthy patterns of growth and development. On the contrary, it is stifling, debilitating and sucks the life's energy out of the enmeshed adult. Sauer (1982) noted that:

The enmeshed family uses more than prayer to stay together. The pronoun "we" becomes dominant in these families as the members tend to think and feel for each other. Family loyalty and fraternity are fostered and encouraged to the detriment of extrafamily contacts and associations. Children are urged to stay close to the family, to be on guard with neighbours, and to be wary of strangers. (p. 300)

Weltner (1982) specified one particular aspect of enmeshment between a parent and a child in order to explain this relationship:

The overly enmeshed relationship between a parent and a child can best be understood in terms of the difficulty of managing anger in single-parent families. The anger that normally helps parent and child to distance themselves becomes too frightening within this vulnerable unit The problem of managing anger between parent and child dictates a relationship in which there is a loss of separateness, and in which clinging and separation problems abound. (p. 205)

Brone and Fisher (1988) concentrated on the enmeshed relationships of adolescents who suffered from difficulties with food:

The childhoods of many obese and anorexic adolescents are characterized by intense parental involvement marked by enmeshment enmeshment refers to the extreme closeness of family members and the intense involvement each has in the affairs of others. In such an extremely close-knit family, it is extremely difficult for the child to develop a sense of self-identity. Their thoughts and feelings are so entangled with those of other family members that they are unable to recognize their own needs. Without the privacy to learn about oneself and discover the qualities that make one unique, a child develops a sense of ineffectiveness Such a child is ill-equipped to face the challenges of adolescence. (p. 159-160)

Such a child also has difficulty facing adulthood. Bradshaw (1988b) commented on the marriage mythology; the joining together of two people who are not complete without the other:

The notion of husbands and wives being the others' "better half" actually exposes the common fallacy of our cultural script on marriage. Our rigid sex roles promote two half-people joining together to make one person

Two half-people can create an *entrapment* or *enmeshment* rather than a relationship. In an entrapment, neither person has the freedom to get out. *Each is entrapped by needing the other for completion* They are held together in an emotional symbiosis. (p. 65)

According to Orbach and Eichenbaum (1983), the daughter's gender plays a large part in the mother's expectations of a female infant as opposed to a male infant:

After all who better than a daughter to be aware of the needs of someone so close? Mother expects to be looked after by a daughter in a way that she doesn't with her son. The daughter . . . comes to feel hungry, deprived, and frightened of her own "insatiability" just as her mother felt She may choose to have children, and the wheel of dependency turns once again with a complicated mixture of the woman responding to the needs of her infant at

the same time as she sees in the body of her child the infant part of herself that still needs and wants nurturance. (p. 140)

Love and Robinson (1990) discussed healthy parenting as a:

largely selfless task, one that requires a great deal of sacrifice, patience, and self-discipline. The parents offer advice to the child but don't expect any in return. They listen to the child's woes but don't depend upon the child to listen to theirs. They take care of the child's needs but they don't allow the child to feel responsible for their needs. (pp. 107-108)

Forward (1989) found that:

When a parent forces parental responsibilities on a child, family roles become indistinct, distorted, or reversed. A child who is compelled to become his own parent, or even become a parent to his own parent, has no one to emulate, learn from, and look up to. Without a parental role model at this critical stage of emotional development, a child's personal identity is set adrift in a hostile sea of confusion. (pp. 32-33)

The grown up daughter of an enmeshing mother, cannot see herself as a separate person with a separate identity. It is questionable whether she sees herself at all. When she interacts with others, she is aware of their needs, not her own. She has needs but cannot recognize them. She is so busy trying to

figure out what others want, she neglects herself in the process. Miller (1990a) observed:

If primary emphasis is placed upon raising children so that they are not aware of what is being done to them or what is being taken from them, of what they are losing in the process, of who they otherwise would have been and who they actually are, and if this is begun early enough, then as adults, regardless of their intelligence, they will later look upon the will of another person as if it were their own. (p. 14)

Unable to freely experience her own feelings and to separate from her parent, the grown-up may take responsibility for consequences of situations that involve her, even minimally. Responsibility for others and for the feelings of others, may become a major focus of her life. Trying to satisfy others may become her primary goal. Making decisions about her own life may be directly related to what she believes others would like her to do.

According to Love & Robinson (1990):

Parents who are enmeshed with their children often negate the child's thoughts and feelings. They reward their children for thinking and feeling the way they do, or for conforming to an ideal. Through these daily lessons, the child learns to equate intimacy with invasion. (p. 106)

Hyde (1986) emphasised that:

It is only with great difficulty in therapy that a woman comes to recognize that her sense of shameful neediness and lack of fulfillment is because she has mothered her own mother. Thus, she herself has not been adequately mothered by her own needy mother and therefore has not learned to nurture herself or to trust that she can get nurturance from others To deal with the emergency of having to become a caregiver at an age when she needs to be taken care of for her own emotional survival, every girl develops a "false self", a competent, high achieving "perfect" self, so that her mother will, hopefully, love her. Under this false self is her "true self", the needy, unfulfilled, hurting child who feels unlovable and undeserving of love.
(p. 79)

Enmeshment and Covert Abuse

Friedman (1985) described enmeshment "as a loss of Self" (p. 67). The vacuum that is created by the lack of mirroring and reflection is an empty vessel waiting to be filled. The child is empty due to the loss of self. There is a vacuum within the child waiting for someone else to do something with that emptiness.

Love and Robinson (1990) discussed the effects of child rearing that taught children to meet the needs of their parents. "The children suffer in three significant ways: (1) they are deprived of good adult role models, (2) they feel

obliged to meet the needs of their parents and (3) they have to suppress many of their own needs" (p. 110).

The initial act of ignoring the child is followed by a secondary act of usurping the child's being. As the child is left empty through the absence of parental sustenance, the vacuum is immediately filled by that parent's needs and wants. In fact, the child welcomes the filling of that empty space in order not to feel empty. As Bradshaw (1988b) commented:

Alcoholic families are severely enmeshed As the alcoholic marriage becomes more entangled and entrapped, the children get caught up in the needs of both their parents, as well as the needs of the family system for wholeness and balance. Nature abhors a vacuum. When the family system is unbalanced, the children attempt to create a balance. (p. 93)

Fossum and Mason (as cited by Bradshaw, 1988b) described what happens to a child that is not allowed to experience her own emotions and therefore cannot separate at the appropriate developmental time.

When children begin to fill the parent's needs and shut down emotionally, they cannot rely on their own emotions and become consciously and then unconsciously dependent on the parent for thoughts and feelings. This dependency is soon transferred to the outside world. (p. 149)

Morrell (1993) developed a fictional character whose profession-spy, was completely dependent on his ability to become whatever character he was supposed to be at any given moment in time. "He was an actor who'd so immersed himself in his roles that when his roles were taken away from him, he became a vacuum. His profession wasn't only what he did. It defined what he was" (p. 311). Sauer (1982) addressed the issue of family enmeshment in the following way:

The word "enmeshment" as it is currently used in family therapy attempts to describe a family situation in which the members are intertwined, interwoven, overinvolved and preoccupied with each other. Enmeshment is usually characterized by loss of boundaries between family members in which the unique individuality of the members merge or blend together into a general mix of selves. (p. 299)

Miller (1990a) observed that, "Overt abuse is not the only way to stifle a child's vitality" (p. 92). She described a family in which the father encouraged the son to be kind, easy going and pleasant. The son was sent away to school at a very early age and returned as a young adult, unable to recognize either of his parents. Throughout his life, the son was told to stifle all his feelings in order to please the parents and eventually realized that in fact, he was filled with rage.

Covert abuse is a form of abuse that is harder to detect than overt abuse. This form of abuse is harder to identify because it is indirect. It is harder to heal because it cannot be seen as easily as overt abuse. Enmeshment is a form of covert abuse. Bradshaw (1988b) found that:

Abandonment is the precise term to describe how one loses one's authentic self and ceases to exist psychologically. Children cannot know who they are without reflective mirrors. Mirroring is done by one's primary caretakers and is crucial in the first years of life. Abandonment includes the loss of mirroring. Parents who are shut down emotionally . . . cannot mirror and affirm their children's emotions Without someone to reflect our emotions, we had no way of knowing who we were Our identity demands a significant other whose eyes see us pretty much as we see ourselves

Besides lack of mirroring, abandonment includes the following: Neglect of developmental dependency needs; Abuse of any kind. Enmeshment into the covert or overt needs of the parents (pp. 11-12)

Enmeshment of daughters by their mothers is a form of destructive entrapment. Secunda (1990) described the smothering mother whose "deepest wish is to have her daughter forever joined to her. And her daughter, caught

between the tender trap of her mother's warmth and her own sense of worth and competence, swings like a pendulum between engulfment and escape" (p. 120).

Smothering is used here as a form of covert abuse that does not allow for the child's growth and development as a separate individual. Smothering, Secunda's (1990) description of an enmeshed relationship, does not describe a caring, nurturing, sacrificing mothering but rather describes the kind of mothering that puts the needs of the child last. The mother's needs overwhelm, override and supersede those of the child. Mother comes first, as do her needs, her wishes and her wants. Secunda (1990) further noted that:

According to author-journalist John Gewdson, smothering is a form of child abuse Dr. James Garbarino does not define maternal hovering as "child abuse." But it is . . . an unwise child-rearing strategy. There is psychological damage done when a mother wants too much closeness. (p. 117)

Forward (1989) commented on the inability of any parent to be:

emotionally available all the time

Parents are only human, and have plenty of problems of their own

But there are many parents whose negative patterns of behaviour are consistent and dominant in a child's life. These are the parents who do the harm. (p. 5)

Enmeshed daughters are unable to reach their potential, whether from giving up the struggle or from being distorted by ineffectual attempts to become their own persons. According to Erikson (as cited in Ackerman, 1989):

the greatest crime of all is breaking the spirit of a child. Inside all of us is a childhood spirit This spirit of childhood is that part of all of us that wants to experience and enjoy life to the greatest of our potential. It is that part of us that constantly reminds us to take the risks, feel the emotions, reach out for warmth and communicate with the inner parts of ourselves that have been silenced too long. (pp. 38-39)

While still a member of the Swiss and the International Psychoanalytical associations, Alice Miller (1990b), having already endured two analyses as part of her psychoanalytical training, began to experiment with spontaneous painting. As a result, she was able to get in touch with her own childhood abuse.

I was amazed to discover that I had been an abused child, that from the very beginning of my life I had no choice but to comply with the needs and the feelings of my mother and to ignore my own Had just one person understood what was happening and come to my defense, it might have changed my entire life. That person could have helped me to recognize my mother's cruelty for what it was instead of accepting it for decades, to my great detriment as something normal and necessary. (pp. xii-xiii)

In reflecting on the quality of life she may have had if only one person had recognized her pain and reached out to her during her childhood, Miller (1990b) also pointed out the helplessness of the child in the face of the needy mother. Without an advocate, the child must accept the reality that the mother doles out and thus, suffer the consequences.

The Healing Process

Bassoff (1991) discussed the clear messages between individuals in a healthy relationship. "I am me and you are you. I cannot do with you as I like because you are not part of me. You cannot do with me as you like because I am not part of you" (p. 10).

In my research, I read about family enmeshment in general and about daughter-mother enmeshment specifically. I also discussed the topic with a variety of people, in particular women who have empathised with daughter-mother enmeshment. This process of research, exploration and discussion has been and continues to be a healing process. With each discovery came pain and grief or affirmation and validation. I felt grief and pain for the past and that which was missed; I felt affirmation and validation for the sharing and the realization that something did happen and its effects were long lasting.

As Miller (1990b) noted, "true autonomy is preceded by the experience of being dependent True liberation can only be found beyond the deep ambivalence of infantile dependence" (pp. 23-24).

Bassoff (1991) commented on the process by which women can recover from the wounds of childhood: "In order to heal, women who as children were unmothered or undermothered, must learn ways to soothe themselves and to fill up the 'holes' within that have resulted from early deprivations" (p. 121).

It was this process of recovery that motivated me to do this particular work. As Bassoff (1991) concluded, "in an effective therapy, a 'mute' client is transformed into a talking one: In order to heal our wounds, we must first *name* them" (p. 142). According to Secunda (1990):

The first step toward recovery . . . is recollection

The second step is to allow the feelings of loss to surface rather than be unconsciously rerouted and bubble up in other relationships

It is then possible to relinquish childhood expectations, which persist in our need in adulthood either to continue to try to win the approval of one's mother, or to continue to hate her. (p. xxi)

Friedman (1985) described the difficult process of separation by the daughter from the mother:

Recovery constitutes a transformative journey, driven by the force of the emerging Self, beginning with the death of the life in the mother/daughter dyad.

Giving up the life in the mother/daughter dyad is experienced with tremendous sadness and grieving not only for the loss of what was, but also for the recognition of what never was . . . the passage from enmeshment in the mother/daughter dyad which smothers the Self is marked by the grief and rage of the unmothered child who is now emerging. (p. 67)

As Miller (1990b) observed: "That probably greatest of . . . wounds--not to have been loved just as one truly was--cannot heal without the work of mourning" (p. 85).

Miller (1990a) commented on the need for parents to examine their own childhood in order to be better parents to their children.

parents are helpless when it comes to understanding their child so long as they must keep the sufferings of their own childhood at an emotional distance

Thus, I see it as my task to sensitize the general public to the sufferings of early childhood. (p. xvii)

Forward (1989) discussed the healing process as it relates to stopping the enmeshment dance that is begun by the mother and often continued by the daughter as she grows up and continues to be enmeshed with her mother as well as with other adults in her life:

In the movie *War Games*, a U.S. government computer was programmed to start a global nuclear war. All attempts to alter the computer's program were futile. However, at the last second, the computer stopped itself, saying: "Interesting game. The only way to win is not to play." (p. 318)

In these words, the hope for healing, the possibility for separation from mother and others, as well as the potential for the recovery of self, springs eternal.

CHAPTER THREE

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

The purpose of this study was to describe the childhood and adulthood relationships of daughters with their mothers as well as with other adults. Specifically, I studied the perspectives of daughters who felt that their mothers had exerted excessive emotional control, either directly or indirectly. In this study, this excessively controlled relationship is called "the enmeshment dance." In this chapter, I will describe the research plan.

The approach selected for this study used qualitative research methods that are naturalistic and holistic. As Guba and Lincoln (1981) noted:

Naturalistic inquirers take an expansive stance. They seek a perspective that will lead to the description and understanding of phenomena as wholes or at least in ways that reflect their complexity. They enter the field and build outward from whatever the point of entry happens to be. (p. 71)

Wolf and Tymitz (cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1981) clearly stated that: "Naturalistic inquiry attempts to present 'slice-of-life' episodes documented through natural language and representing as closely as possible how people feel, what they know, and what their concerns, beliefs, perceptions, and understandings are" (p. 78).

Characteristics

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) indicated that, "The qualitative researcher studies people in the context of their past and the situations in which they find themselves" (p. 6). This holistic approach allowed me to compile a whole picture of the participants involved in the study. This approach was particularly effective at accomplishing the purpose of the study, looking at relationships of the participants in the past as well as in the present. Approaching the study from a holistic perspective also allowed me to elicit a more complete picture of the participants in order to draw out details that would be relevant to experiences of other women. Jack Douglas (1985) approached the participants by letting them know that:

The world is a serious place where only people who are directly involved in it can know completely what it's like. *You* are that expert and I meekly beseech your help in gaining a more complete--never complete--understanding of it. (p. 60)

This approach to participants in this study was expressed in a similar manner. Every woman's story is unique yet shares similarities with other women's stories. As each participant described her own circumstances in her own words, she was also communicating that information to a larger audience. Not only does this approach allow the individual participant to tell her story; it

also allows other women to identify with and relate to that participant's own experiences.

The interviews gave a voice to women whose perspectives of their experiences might otherwise not be heard, even ignored. Every woman's experience is as important and as relevant as any other woman's experience. The possibility that there is an absence of bruises, financial hardship, or gross physical negligence, does not make any woman's experience any less important or relevant than any other woman's experience. As Carl Rogers (1961) noted:

What is most personal is most general I have almost invariably found that the very feeling which has seemed to me to be most private, most personal, and hence most incomprehensible by others, has turned out to be an expression for which there is a resonance in many other people. It has led me to believe that what is most personal and unique in each one of us is probably the very element which would, if it were expressed, speak most deeply to others. (p. 26)

In this study, I reviewed the relevant literature and highlighted the information specifically related to the daughter and mother dyad. Furthermore, I attempted to shed more light on healing strategies that may be useful and practical for women who feel emotionally controlled by their mothers and by others.

Potentially, women may, after reading this study, name a problem in their lives that to date, has remained unnamed.

I conducted the in-depth interviews, in keeping with the qualitative nature of the study. As described by Guba and Lincoln (1981), "the naturalistic inquirer is likely to depend on himself as instrument, perhaps because it is frequently impossible to specify with precision just what is to be assessed" (p. 72). Bogdan and Taylor (1975) summarized the motivation of researchers:

If you are a social scientist, your motivation for entering the project will probably have something to do with a desire to present your subjects' views and experiences to others, to develop understandings of people and situations that you did not understand before, to create social change, and to make some contributions to your field or to advance professionally. If you are a student, you will have similar or additional motives. (p. 105)

Jack Douglas (1985) described the role of the interviewer as being a handmaiden to the Goddess who is the participant:

there are many times when the creative interviewer must actually expose himself to embarrassment through intimate self-disclosures and actively degrade himself by exposing personal truths in order to reveal that the interviewee is the Goddess and the interviewer is merely the handmaiden. (p. 57)

In this study, I gave a voice to some women's experiences. The design of the study was qualitative, using in-depth interviews with five women. These interviews were meant to emphasize the validity of these five women's experiences while describing their perspectives of the relationships with their mothers as well as with other adults.

Research With Women

In addition to the qualitative approach used in this study, I also made use of the feminist approach in doing research with women. Enabling women to tell their personal, intimate perspectives of their relationships, as well as recording, documenting and analyzing their in-depth interviews, I was able to give each woman an opportunity to share specific information about her life. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) observed that:

feminism influenced the subjects that (feminist) qualitative researchers studied . . . researchers took seriously actors and categories of behaviour that had previously received little, if any, attention Feminist researchers in the social sciences have been attracted to qualitative methods because they enabled the interpretations of women to take center stage. (p. 27)

Approaching the women as a woman who had shared similar experiences, allowed for a closeness to exist that might otherwise not have been present.

This was particularly evident in my relationship with the participants during the interview process. As Anne Oakley described:

A feminist methodology of social science requires that . . . the mythology of 'hygienic' research . . . be replaced by the recognition that personal involvement is . . . the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives. (p. 58)

Research Design

Bogdan and Biklen (1992), "discussed research design as an evolving process, one in which the questions to be asked and the data to be collected emerge in the process of doing research" (p. 77). As the researcher in this study, I experienced this particularly in the feedback sessions when participants clarified the themes and impressions that had emerged. In one particular theme (feelings of inadequacy) one of the participants, Ellen, clarified that she felt no feelings of inadequacy despite the constant arguments between her and her mother in the household that they shared. This was quite different from the themes that were emerging for the other four participants.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) described the in-depth interviewing from the perspective of the qualitative researcher:

Our own view is that through interviewing the skillful researcher can usually learn how informants view themselves and their world, sometimes obtain an

accurate amount of past events and current activities, and almost never predict exactly how an informant will act in a new situation. (p. 83)

The feminist researcher within me sought to strengthen the validity and the accuracy of the account of each participant. As well, although predictability may not be applicable, a pattern is found within each account and that pattern offers some predictability.

Researcher Role

Having heard the stories of other women in my work as a counsellor, and having had personal experience with the issues of daughter and mother enmeshment, I felt empathy with women who expressed difficulties around the issues of daughter and mother relationships. I worked with women in an egalitarian mode that encouraged sharing, trusting, and communicating deeply, intimately, and often courageously with one another. The interview process that I used was best described by Anne Oakley (1981), "the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of the interviewer is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own identity in the relationship" (p. 41).

I chose a topic that was close to my own personal experience so that I would be able to maintain the highest degree of involvement. Unfortunately, this carried with it a major drawback. I could only approach the work for a certain period of time every day, and then, needed to take some distance from the work

in order to get back to it. Often, my reactions to some of the material made it necessary to take longer breaks. As Friedman (1985) observed:

The Self, the kernel of unique identity . . . will withdraw, hiding away in the unconscious, and a daughter will concentrate her efforts on being pleasing, being like her mother, and avoiding attack. As time goes on, a young woman may habitually fend off any internal experience of the Self. Powerful feelings or urges which arise from the Self will cause her anxiety. (p. 64)

As I listened to the realities of the lives of the participants, my true Self was constantly exposed to a myriad of feelings.

Data Collection

The data was collected through in-depth interviews. The interviews reflected, as closely as possible, what the informants said and felt. As Bodgan and Biklen (1992) observed:

In keeping with the qualitative tradition of attempting to capture the subjects' own words, and letting the analysis emerge, interview schedules and observation guides generally allow for open-ended responses and are flexible enough for the observer to note and collect data on unexpected dimensions of the topic. (p. 77)

Taylor and Bodgan (1984) pointed out that in-depth interviewing is particularly useful when the researcher wants to learn more about the unique and individual perspective of the participants.

We are referring here to life histories based on in-depth interviews. More than through any other social science approach, the life history enables us to know people intimately, to see the world through their eyes, and to enter into their experiences vicariously. (p. 81)

Since most of the women clearly identified professional helpers, friends or family in their lives, specifically available and on call should the need arise to speak to someone about something that came up in the interview, it was not necessary to provide the names of counsellors to the participants. I discussed this with the participants during the process of selecting participants. One participant referred directly to her counsellor during one of the interviews. "My counsellor said that there are times when she finds me being able to mellow out and not be present." Specifically, I did not enter into a counselling relationship with the participants. There was additional information that participants wanted to share when the data collection was completed. I clarified that there would be no more interviews for this study. As Bogdan and Biklen (1992) remarked, "There comes a point where you have enough data to accomplish what you have

set out to do This is the time to say goodbye and get on to data analysis" (p. 152).

Each participant signed a Letter of Consent (Appendix A) giving her permission to participate in the study. The research question and the purpose of the study were described in the Letter of Consent. The tasks and the time were identified. Each participant had an opportunity to provide comments and feedback on the summary of themes that emerged as a result of the data analysis. I offered each participant a full transcript. Some chose to take it home with them to read, and a copy was made available for that purpose. Some chose not to read through theirs at all. A summary of the results of the study was provided to each participant. Specific mention was made in the Letter of Consent of the participants's ability and right to pursue or not pursue any particular item in the interview. This was exercised by Ellen, when she chose not to discuss her concentration camp experience at length. Also Meg, in her second interview, chose to opt out of making specific observations on the first interview.

I feel really distracted tonight. I don't know if it is because I am not feeling well now, or the questions are too difficult tonight. But I am having difficulty thinking about it. I mean, obviously, I have more work to do.

Both Ellen and Meg were allowed to opt out. None of the participants chose to end the interview process or participation in the study prior to its completion.

I conducted seven interviews with five participants. In total, the interviews lasted eight hours and twenty minutes. Each interview ranged from one to one and a half hours. Three participants were interviewed only once, while two participants were interviewed only once completed all the responses to all the questions. These three interviews ranged from one hour and five minutes to one and three quarter hours. Of the two participants that were interviewed twice, both had only one hour for each interview and could not extend the length of the interview. One of these two participants completed only half of the responses to the questions in the first interview, thus a second interview was set up to complete the balance of the responses. The other participant completed all her responses in the first interview, but there were enough questions for clarification to warrant a second interview.

All the interviews were recorded by audio tape. Pseudonyms were used during the taping session. Meg's first audio tape, the first interview that was done, was not recorded well and could not be heard. This tape was stored along with the rest, but never transcribed. This faulty recording may have led to Meg having had two interviews rather than one, with the need for clarification during the second transcribed interview. After all the interviews were completed, the tapes were transcribed. The total number of pages transcribed was 165.

Pseudonyms were used in the recorded interviews as well as in the transcriptions for all the participants. Additional names and identifiers were changed.

In the first interview with each participant, five broad questions were used in order to facilitate the interview process:

1. Describe your childhood recollections of experiences with your mother;
2. Describe your adult recollections of experiences with your mother;
3. Describe your adult experiences with other adults;
4. Tell me what connections, if any, you find when recalling experiences with your mother in childhood and in adulthood;
5. Tell me what connections, if any, you find when recalling your experiences with your mother and with other adults.

The questions were flexible and changeable, as insight and suggestive information emerged from data collected during the interviews. One example is an additional question that arose as a result of a response given by one of the participants. The participant mentioned working through some issues and I asked an additional question, "Do you want to talk a little more about working it through after she died?" As Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested:

When working within the naturalistic paradigm . . . the investigator typically does not work with either a priori theory or variables; these are expected to emerge from the inquiry. Data accumulated in the field thesis must be

analyzed inductively (that is, from specific raw units of information subsuming categories of information) in order to define local working hypothesis or questions that be followed up. (p. 203)

I had a vested interest in the topic of study because I had a background that was similar to the participants. I was able to empathize with the participants' stories. On the other hand, I worked hard to ensure that my perspectives of my experiences did not distract from a clear understanding of the participants' perspectives of their experiences. This was accomplished mainly by a minimum of talking as the interviewer and by giving each participant an opportunity to see the full transcript as well as the themes that had been gathered from the transcripts. Feedback and comments were noted and integrated into participant responses. As a result of the feedback and comments, some changes were made to clarify some of the original interview information. One of the informants clarified that she had received "a lot of criticism as well as not receiving praise."

During the feedback sessions, it was generally accepted that all the material shared in the first interview, as well as all the emerging themes were valid and could be used in the final study. Most participants found new insights into their own situations as a result of their interviews. One participant realized something new about her father that, "while I believed that I was the apple of his eye I didn't see much of him."

I reviewed all seven transcriptions and audio tapes, in order to identify emerging themes. I made available summaries of the themes as well as full transcriptions to each participant, for comment and feedback. I offered each participant, in turn, her own transcription as well as a summary of her themes. I requested their comments and feedback. This took place almost a year after the initial interviews were completed, because of my schedule at school and at work, my personal choice to take some distance from the study at regular intervals, as well as the schedules of the participants.

Four participants did not choose to read through their transcriptions prior to commenting on the themes and impressions. One participant did choose to read her transcription, in particular since it had been a long time since her interview. A second feedback session was set up with her, to elicit comments on the themes and impressions. The feedback sessions with the five participants lasted between fifteen minutes and one and a half hours each. The two participants that needed two feedback sessions each were the same two participants that needed two interviews each. One participant ran out of time and needed to come back to complete the feedback; the other participant requested to read the transcription prior to providing feedback. The total time taken by the five participants in giving feedback to the interviewer was five and three quarter hours.

Identifying the Participants

I selected five women to interview. These women were acquaintances, colleagues, friends or relatives, with whom I had spoken over several years, while preparing to choose a topic of study for my thesis. These five women had related, over a number of conversations prior to the interview, strong feelings about their relationships with their mothers. These feelings included love, pity, dislike, anger, frustration, and occasionally, rage.

Choosing the number of women to interview was an ongoing, evolving process throughout the length of the course. The final number was determined by the information gathered. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) observed:

Naturalistic sampling . . . very different from conventional sampling . . . is based on informational, not statistical considerations. Its purpose is to maximize information, not facilitate generalization. Its procedures are strikingly different, too, and depend on the particular ebb and flow of information as the study is carried out rather than on a priori consideration. Finally, the criterion invoked to determine when to stop sampling is informational redundancy, not a statistical confidence level. (p. 202)

Although I spoke with other women about the topic of daughter and mother relationships, I chose these five women to interview based on their interest in this topic, their place in the healing process, as well as their availability during

the process of the study. All five women had identified difficulties in their relationship with their mothers and most had worked with a professional helper on that relationship as well as on other issues in their lives. All five women felt that they had worked through many of the difficulties; as well, they acknowledged that there was still more work for them to do. Their perspectives come from a position of strength, rather than from a position of weakness.

Karen

Karen is a woman in her early sixties, divorced, with four adult children. While married, she was able to fulfill her long awaited goal of graduating from university. Karen is a recovering alcoholic. She is presently helping her mother to make the transition from her own apartment to a senior citizen's care facility. As the only surviving child (Karen's sister died six months prior to Karen's birth), Karen successfully involved other professionals in ensuring that her mother received daily care. This enabled Karen to continue her ongoing plans to disengage from daily involvement in her mother's care. Since her divorce, Karen has worked in a social service organization. She has purchased her own dwelling and is preparing for retirement. She is active in a number of volunteer organizations and is involved with her children, her extended family and friends. Karen was raised as an only child, after the death of her sister. Karen and her parents lived in her grandmother's house together with her grandmother. Karen believed that her grandmother supported her parents financially. When Karen

was ready to graduate from high school, her father fell at work and was permanently disabled. Karen did not enter university as expected. Instead, she went to business college and then to work to contribute to the family income. One day before her father's accident, Karen received her driver's license. "I started driving, taking care of my mother, taking care of my grandmother . . . when I was 17, almost overnight . . . and my mother just became continually more dependent on me."

Karen was very ill right up until puberty. She contracted excema six months after birth. Karen had a low threshold for infection. She missed a lot of school and was tutored by her father, a professor at the university. When Karen was in elementary school, she contracted diphtheria and was quarantined in the hospital for an extended period of time. Upon her return, she found that her mother and her grandmother had grown to be close. "I have a picture of my mother and grandmother . . . and they look like one and three quarters persons. They were totally meshed together, to the point where nobody else could get in."

Although Karen, like her mother, was an only child, Karen did not invite her mother to live with her and her husband. Karen's marriage did not provide her with a healthy relationship, although she stayed in it for over twenty years. Isolation continued to dominate Karen's life as she was unable to form long lasting relationships. Each time Karen made friends, she lost them--moving from one city to another, giving birth to a child ten years after all her friends had

finished having babies, and again when she stopped drinking. With each transition, Karen's friendship group changed and she found herself starting all over again. Karen is divorced and lives on her own.

Meg

Meg is a woman in her late thirties. She has a post graduate degree in the field of educational psychology. She has had a lengthy career in a variety of social service organizations, both as a paid employee and as a volunteer. She is the second born of four children and grew up on a farm. She worked on the family farm until she was a young adult, and she still returns to help out. Meg is very active in the women's movement and participated in advancing the cause of women locally and abroad. She continues to make inroads in her personal work with her family of origin as well as other personal issues.

Meg, like Karen, spent a lot of time alone as a child. Meg's parents were farmers. Her mother was an only child from a family of professionals. Meg's father came from a large, farming family of thirteen kids. Meg indicated that her father resented her mother's wealthy parents and isolated his wife and his children from them. At times, Meg's mother did come to her parents for financial help. Meg's father often withheld money from Meg's mother so that food was sometimes scarce. Meg and her siblings worked as "hired hands" on the farm. With her mother's constant pleading, Meg was asked to "fix her dad."

While Meg was doing her very best to make sure that her dad was not upset, Meg's mother was emotionally unavailable for Meg.

Meg identified the lack of a long term, intimate relationship in her life as a cause for concern. She had one long term relationship ten years ago that ended with the man saying he had to be on his own. He then married someone else six months later. Recently, another relationship that became more intimate over time, ended abruptly, catching Meg off guard once again.

Meg became an active feminist, understanding more about women, men and power. As part of her personal work and to tell the truth about herself, Meg recently told her mother that she is a lesbian.

Lillian

Lillian is a woman in her mid-fifties, married with adult children and adult step children. At the time of the interview, she was very involved in the care of her mother who had fallen and broken her hip. As an only child, responsibility for her mother weighs heavily on Lillian, even though there is a fair geographical distance between the two. Lillian is involved in the care of her in-laws, as well as her nuclear extended family. Lillian has a post graduate degree in the field of educational psychology. Lillian is self employed and is busy with paid and volunteer work.

Lillian found out recently that she was a breach birth. Her mother suffered a great deal of pain in delivery and was unable to have more children. When

Lillian was almost two years old, her father was called away to war. Lillian's mother had not bonded with Lillian at birth and she did not want Lillian to bond with anyone else. "The major recollection I have is that my mother thought my father and I were a team, and we were against her . . . she would say, 'well, he'll lie and you will swear to it.'" Lillian's father returned from the war and began working seven days a week, 14-16 hours a day.

Lillian remembered a childhood without any luxuries, including often the absence of basic necessities. Lillian became overly responsible, feeling shame when she lost or misplaced something. "I always felt like an adult." Lillian, like Lora, did not hear compliments from her mother directly. "She hasn't accepted me as the loving wonderful child from the miraculous experience of childbirth . . . She does criticize me as the person but she praised the things I do."

When Lillian entered university, she thought about getting a job so that she could earn money and buy things for her parents. Lillian remarried after several years of being a single parent. Lillian's husband is supportive, however, Lillian needed to give up her career in order to relocate with her husband. Lillian recently became a grandmother.

Ellen

Ellen is a woman in her mid-sixties, widowed with adult children. She has spent her life, with the exception of a one year period, sharing a home with her mother. Ellen is a tradesperson by profession. She was involved in the family

business for many years, and more recently, administers the family estate. She has one older brother, whose children have depended on Ellen since the demise of their mother. At the time of this interview, Ellen was involved in arranging for the transfer of her mother to a senior citizen's care facility. This was initiated by Ellen, due to her mother's deteriorating health.

Ellen is a product of her concentration camp experience, as well as her family, Eastern European Jews who survived the Holocaust. Before, during, and after the war, Ellen and her family faced two overwhelming priorities: ensuring their physical survival, and maintaining their sanity, in a world gone increasingly mad. Ellen's experience with her mother in the concentration camps was so horrific as to test the boundaries of any human behaviour; as well Ellen was one of a very tiny minority of young girls (four out of two thousand) whose mothers remained with them. "I was not like the others. I was special." Having her mother by her side, protecting her, is a good example of Alice Miller's (1990b) comments about having at least one person on your side.

When Ellen and her husband arrived in Canada, they immediately sent for Ellen's parents to join them and live together in the same house. Initially a financial decision combined with the duty and obligation that Ellen felt, Ellen conscientiously overcame many obstacles in order to make sure that her parents remained in her home. "It's her duty" was a very familiar refrain to Ellen.

Ellen made friends easily and enjoyed a variety of relationships with various groups of people. Her relationship with her brother was never as close as Ellen would have liked. "It has always been the European way . . . the mother's son . . . it is always the son . . . it doesn't bother me . . . it is a standing joke with us . . . still it bothers me . . . we are not so close anymore."

Ellen bottled up many feelings in order to avoid being minimized or confused by circumstance, duty, tradition or obligation. Beginning in childhood, the latter three were reinforced by the horrific circumstances in the concentration camps. "I would never have made it without her . . . not that I should say thank you . . . but there is a responsibility . . . I still feel she deserves it." Motivated further by the financial realities of being immigrants, Ellen waited almost seven decades before putting her mother in a nursing home, becoming physically independent of her mother.

Lora

Lora is a woman in her late forties, married with young adult children living at home. She is self-employed, and has a post graduate degree in educational psychology. She is the youngest of three surviving children (the first born son died shortly after his birth) and both her parents are now deceased. Lora is involved in volunteer work and maintains a large social network as well as a steadfast devotion to family, extended family, and friends. She put herself

through school, tackling several professional careers during a relatively short period of time.

Lora was an excellent student who worked very hard at school. Lora accomplished good grades and won scholarships throughout university. Lora was raised with no direct praise and a great deal of criticism. She was able to get praise from others by ensuring that everything that she did was perfect. "I tried very hard at whatever I did . . . trying to please . . . always looking for the pat on the back because I never got it growing up."

Lora was sexually abused throughout her childhood, by a boarder that was living in her family's home. Lora, like Meg and Karen, was left alone a lot, providing many opportunities for Lora to be abused by the boarder. Around the age of nine, Lora was asked by her mother to borrow money from the boarder. Lora received the money for her family and the abuse continued. Lora recalled that she had an aversion to loans that came at "too high a personal cost." Lora grew up in a home where there was never enough money, even for basic necessities. As an adult, she was strongly committed to financial security. Lora married a man who was mentally, psychologically, emotionally and physically abusive.

Lora's mother was an immigrant who was the only member of her family that left her country of origin and came to Canada. Lora's father was hospitalized shortly after Lora's birth. Her grandparent's, Eastern European Jews, did not

survive the Holocaust. Lora's older sister was her mother's favourite. Her older brother, born after the first son died, was the favourite of both parents, especially Lora's father.

Recently, Lora married a supportive man. Lora took time to look at where she came from and to identify where she would like to go. "I became more internally focused and directed as opposed to externally directed. I . . . can make better judgments about . . . what I like and what I don't like . . . I'm learning how to say no."

As an adult, Lora did some personal work with professional counsellors about some issues relating to her childhood, her parents--in particular her mother. Unfortunately, this work was done after Lora's mother died and Lora was never able to talk to her mother about their relationship.

The informants range in age from their late thirties (Meg) to their mid-sixties (Ellen). All five women are devoted to issues relating to women and the betterment of humankind. All five women have identified ways in which they are similar to their mothers and ways in which they are different. All five women have made changes in their lives, some smaller, some more significant, relating to how they treat themselves, and how they treat others, in particular their children, if there are any. Four of the women have university degrees. Ellen is a tradesperson and a survivor of the Holocaust. All five women are financially

independent. In the next chapter, qualitative research methods will be discussed generally as well as specifically relating to this study.

Data Analysis

A conceptual framework emerged from the data collected in the in-depth interviews. Emerging themes were chosen on the basis of their continual and recurring appearance, whether in any one interview with any one participant, or in the theme recurring in all or most of the interviews. Emerging themes were analyzed and then shown to participants for comments and feedback. Maher and Tetreault (1993) commented on their own work:

As we came to understand the relational and narrative quality of this work, we sought new ways of organizing and representing our data, of depicting what was on our informants' minds in terms of their own particular contexts problems, and concerns. We then found, in various combination of places, the four themes they arose partially from the data themselves, they captured categories of concern shared by ourselves, the literature, and the informants and they were broad themes that could be seen evolving over time. (p. 23)

In the next chapter, the seven themes will be discussed, summarized and analyzed.

CHAPTER FOUR

EMERGING THEMES

This chapter was organized according to seven themes that were gathered from the information provided by the five participants. The seven themes are: unmet childhood needs, financial difficulties, protecting mother, feelings of inadequacy, connections and patterns, anger, and making changes. As the themes emerged, it became evident that the participants verified much of what was found in the literature. The daughter's relationship with her mother in childhood and in adulthood, as well as her relationship with other adults, was told in the words of each participant, in summarized detail. In order to maintain maximum confidentiality for the participants, complete transcriptions of the interviews were not used; rather, brief excerpts were included.

Unmet Childhood Needs

This first theme dealt with the unmet childhood needs of the participants. Ackerman (1989) described adults whose needs as children were not met. "I believe that the greatest pain . . . occurs not when you realize that you have been victimized, but rather when you became aware of what you have missed" (p. 39). Childhood needs include: healthy mirroring (Miller, 1990b), satisfying dependency needs (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987), basic trust in others (Erikson, 1963), acceptance and affirmation of the growing child (Bradshaw, 1988),

protection and nurturing (Bassoff, 1991), accurate reflection (Bassoff, 1991), and validation of needs and feelings (Forward, 1989).

Friedman (1985) summed up the sense of the losses that the individual suffers when many of these childhood needs have been unfulfilled. "Since the real Self has never been seen or supported, the only sense of identity comes from being enmeshed with mother" (p. 63).

Several authors, in particular Alice Miller (1990b), are identified in this study as emphasizing the basic childhood needs of every child and the resulting effects of not having those needs met. Miller (1990b) mentioned the lack of "a healthy self esteem" (p. 7); Bassoff (1991) noted the upside down nature of the relationship in which the child wants to take care of the parent, "Her young daughter, who loves her better than her own life, wants simply to make her well" (p. 18); Bradshaw (1988b) pointed out the terrible bind that the child experienced anytime she did something that the parent did not want her to do, "not to obey is equivalent to death" (p. 69).

Each of the informants felt that some basic childhood needs were not met. Each of the informants experienced some of the losses of these childhood needs through their mother, either directly or indirectly. Each of the informants is very experienced in protecting mother from blame for these experiences, yet each recognizes that something was missing or taken away from them in childhood.

Each came to these realizations at different points in their lives, usually after a great deal of personal probing and healing.

The childhood needs of the participants in this study were neglected and ignored by mothers who were caught up in circumstances that became more important than the needs of their daughters. These circumstances included the untimely death of a sibling (Karen), an abusive husband (Meg), a breach birth (Lillian), an older brother (Ellen), and a sick spouse (Lora).

Karen was born shortly after the death of her sister, who died while Karen's mother was still pregnant with Karen. Karen was not well and was not allowed to participate in everyday activities like other children, "I mainly recall being sick most of my childhood . . . there was all this worry . . . that I might die like my sister did."

Meg needed her mother's protection from her father's abuse. Meg's need for protection was never met. Meg reported:

When dad was being abusive, of course I had lots of needs. And mom wasn't there emotionally. She was focused on my dad and her own survival I don't feel like my needs as a kid were met . . . in my experience with my mom, when I needed her, she wasn't there.

Lillian offended her mother by the very act of being born. From the moment of birth, Lillian's childhood needs were ignored in favour of fulfilling the mother's

needs. Lillian could never ask for forgiveness for an act in which she was a helpless participant. Nor was she given the benefit of this information until very recently. Lillian observed:

The question I have in my mind is--Was there any real bonding right at the beginning? Was there resentment that she was unable to have more children? As a result of that was the feeling that it was my fault? So, right at the beginning, I did something to hurt her . . . which was the kind of general gist of her feelings The first experience that she and I had . . . in her mind was negative.

Ellen identified her position as the girl in the family, always in second place to her brother. In addition to the accepted way of behaviour towards male and female children, childhood needs became insignificant by comparison to the increasingly dangerous situation in Europe. Ellen identified needs and almost immediately minimized those needs that she had of her mother. "She . . . always expected more from a girl than from my brother Now, I can see it was the times He was the prince it is hard to judge at that time . . . we were as protected as ever."

Lora's basic childhood needs for words of affection and encouragement never materialized, "praise, never got it from my mother I was insatiable for praise I would need a hook for someone to need me what I could do

for them." Lora's childhood needs for protection against sexual abuse were ignored. When Lora tried telling her mother that she was sore after one incident of sexual abuse, Lora's mother "jumped to the conclusion, 'You're not letting him touch you, are you?'" and Lora never mentioned anything about the abuse to her mother again. Lora made it very clear that her mother did not actually know what was happening. Nevertheless, the boarder continued to abuse Lora sexually.

Financial Difficulties

Financial difficulties played a part in each of the participants' lives, both in terms of the presence of financial problems as well as in terms of aggravating the relationship between daughter and mother. Four of the participants were born into homes that were already experiencing financial difficulties. Ellen's financial difficulties began with the onset of the war, confiscation of their property, and their internment in the concentration camps.

Bassoff (1991) commented on the relationship that develops between daughters who feel that their mothers are deprived in some way:

Sadly, some daughters, believing that their mothers are poor in talent, opportunities, accomplishment, or joy, feel that their most important purpose in life is "to bring Mama lots of *nachas*--to be the jewel in her plain crown." They do not believe that they have value apart from meeting mother's needs.

In extreme cases, they may begin to experience themselves not as 'I' but as an 'it'. Like a commodity--a car or a washing machine, for example--whose value is determined by its serviceability they feel worthwhile only if they are serving mother . . . by making her happy or proud. (pp. 32-33)

Four of the participants contributed generously to helping their mothers financially. One participant tried to excel in her studies initially and eventually paid her own way academically.

Karen's grandmother told Karen who was really supporting the family. "My grandmother . . . told me when I was 13 that . . . if it hadn't been for her, our whole family would have starved in the street." This was several years prior to Karen's father's accident, after which their financial situation became even worse.

Meg's parents were both farmers whose daily lives involved struggle and worry about money. Their situation was made worse by her father's abuse. Meg's father used money as part of his abuse, both in terms of withholding money from his wife who needed to purchase food for the family as well as in terms of isolating the family from Meg's wealthy grandparents. Meg's mother was isolated from her parents and in turn, Meg was isolated from her grandparents as well as from her mother who was not available for Meg.

Lillian remembered a childhood without any luxuries, including often the absence of basic necessities. Her own childhood needs took second place to

the hardships that her mother suffered, diminishing Lillian's needs. "There were times when I was young that we did not have any food And those times were hard on my mom." Lillian became overly responsible. When Lillian lost an item of clothing, her mother made her feel like she had deliberately gone out to do something that was meant to hurt her mother primarily, and therefore not accidental. Even as a young adult, Lillian continued to think of her parents' needs primarily, wanting to make money and buy them things and take them places.

Ellen's financial hardships began when she was nine years old and her family was forced into the concentration camps. Her physical survival became completely and totally dependent on her mother who scrounged for every bite of good, often giving Ellen her own scraps. Ellen's adult life, after her marriage, was directly impacted by the initial financial necessity of living together with her mother in the same household. "There were circumstances . . . financial maybe . . . we started living together It was a way of getting ahead . . . doing what you can do." Initially, a financial necessity, living together became a matter of duty, obligation, and tradition. "It was expected, and you learned to respect it There was no choice." Tradition, reinforced by horrific circumstances, necessitated by financial need, accounted for the fact that Ellen was not free to make a choice; the choice was made for her.

Lora was asked to borrow money from the boarder that had been sexually abusing her. Lora's family was able to move from one house to another with the help of the loan. However, they were never able to get into a business with that money. Lora indicated that her mother "was not a good business woman."

Protecting Mother

All five participants tried to protect their mothers when describing hurtful and painful events in both childhood and adulthood. Not only did these participants protect their mothers at the time of the actual event, but also when recalling the event during the interview. As Lerner (1988) found, when women talk about their mothers, "Such acts may unconsciously be experienced as a violation of an unconscious oath to remain their mother's child and avoid autonomous functioning" (p. 74).

Meiselman (as cited in Zuelzer & Repose, 1983) commented on the extent of the pressure put upon daughters by their mothers:

Never able to have given up the pathetic hope to obtain the mothering and protection they missed as small children, they will go to any length to satisfy their needs for affection, attention, and support, even if at the cost of their own children. (p. 101)

This pressure, applied in childhood and reinforced throughout their lives, is strengthened by the daughter's needs. As Bassoff (1991) observed, "Just as

children turn to their mothers for recognition, so do grown women yearn for their mothers' basic approval and understanding" (p. 7). Participants protecting mothers during the actual event as well as during the interview, recalling a lifetime of events, was understandable.

Karen learned at a very young age how to be obedient, giving her mother the least amount of trouble. Karen's constant illness allowed her mother plenty of time to spend with Karen's grandmother. Whenever Karen strayed, she was quickly reminded of where the primary relationship lay. Once, after falling down and hurting herself, Karen tried to let her mother know that her grandmother was to blame for the fall. "My recollection of it as an adult is that my mother was more upset because of my grandmother being upset than she was that I was hurt."

Meg's childhood was spent protecting her mother from her father's abuse. "A very common phrase I remember from my childhood was 'go see if you can put your dad in a good mood.'" Meg protected her mother throughout the interview. Whenever Meg recalled something that had been done to her by her mother, she followed that thought immediately with, "maybe I am being too hard on my mom . . . I am really putting her down an awful lot." While Meg was trying to protect her mother, Meg's feelings about her experiences with her mother seemed to be confused and minimized, "I don't know . . . I just don't remember other times."

Lillian protected her mother in childhood by being careful not to lose her belongings, by being cautious when playing out on the street, as well as by excelling at school, completing university so that she could buy things for her parents. During the interview, Lillian protected her mother by referring to her mother's hard life. "I think there are many things that I recollect about my life that were difficult for my mother So, that first." Lillian provided very little information about her own problems, concentrating primarily on the problems experienced by her mother. Lillian protected her mother by providing her with just cause for taking ownership of Lillian's children. "She sometimes speaks of them as if they were her children. And maybe that is because she wanted other children. . . . That's just fair, you know? An eye for an eye sort of thing." Lillian felt that her mother had some rights to the grandchildren when she found out that her mother could not have any more children after Lillian's breach birth.

Ellen's mother lived in Ellen's home for four decades, physically protected by Ellen, the adult, in the way that Ellen, as a child, was protected by her mother in the concentration camps. The glaring difference in the two situations--Ellen's mother acted as a parent in the face of war and its unique and terrifying circumstances, while Ellen, the daughter, acted out of duty and obligation.

In childhood, Lora protected her mother by making a huge sacrifice when her mother asked her to borrow money from their boarder, who was abusing Lora. When Lora described the event, she seemed to understand the impact of the

request for herself as an abused child. Still, Lora used protective words to explain her mother's request. "Survival was very important to her, she'd do anything to survive including selling her own daughter." During the interview, Lora insisted that she never directly told her mother that she was being sexually abused by their boarder. It was difficult to discern during the interview whether Lora was protecting herself, or whether she was protecting her mother who might appear even more cruel had she truly know that Lora was being abused.

Feelings of Inadequacy

Four of the participants expressed feelings of inadequacy, initially in relation to their mothers, but eventually in relation to others. Love and Robinson (1990) clarified what the establishment and the maintenance of clear boundaries between adults and children in a family, could provide:

in healthy families, there is a clear separation between adults and children. Whether the family has one or two parents and regardless of the number of assorted relatives living under one roof, the adults and the children are kept apart by an invisible boundary. This boundary can be likened to a one-way valve. It allows the adults to meet the needs of the adults. Although love and affection flow freely in both directions, the children are not allowed to become a part of the adult support system. (p. 97)

Four of the participants were asked to fulfil the needs of their mothers, either directly or indirectly. As Thorman (1983) found, "Because of excessively strong desires to have their emotional needs satisfied, adult family members look to their children to take on adult roles for which they are not prepared and cannot possibly perform" (p. 86).

No matter what Karen did, she always felt like she was competing with the memory of her sister.

I always felt that . . . she didn't really want me. What she wanted was my dead sister to be alive again. Because my dead sister was very lively and quite aggressive, and dark haired, and I was quiet and shy and blonde.

Karen's mother spent time with Karen's grandmother and Karen felt like an intruder when she wanted her mother's attention. Even when Karen became a major contributor to the financial well-being of her family, she was not complimented and thanked, rather she was asked to do more and more.

Meg's feelings of inadequacy began in childhood as she was put in an impossible position, by her mother. Meg recalled:

feelings of inadequacy I had an impossible job as a kid--to make my dad happy. And when I couldn't do that . . . then I felt like I wasn't trying hard enough, or I wasn't smart enough, or whatever I couldn't keep my mom from the pain.

With one request, Meg felt inadequate for her inability to help either parent--one to feel better and the other to stop hurting.

As an adult, "the realization that I haven't been in a long term relationship . . . in nine years has made me feel maybe a bit inadequate . . . a bit angry, a bit panicky . . . I want that intimacy in my life." Meg continues to hear very loud messages in her everyday life, some of these are brought on by the past and some are reinforced by the present. Meg continues to feel "like an imposter . . . like I am inadequate . . . that is a really big tape in my head."

As a child, Lillian stated that she:

felt inadequate . . . I still can almost remember in detail every single thing I ever lost in my entire life . . . money was so tight . . . It was so irresponsible, so unthinking, so uncaring, that also made me feel . . . that I was doing something against my mother . . . every time something happened that maybe was accidental, it was like I planned it." Lillian's feelings about herself as a young adult and as a parent continued to be that she ". . . could never do anything right enough . . . could never do it adequately." Her response to this continuing feeling in adulthood was to defend herself at length even when it would have been more appropriate to give one reason and drop the matter.

No matter how well Lora did at school or elsewhere, she felt that her mother

was focused only on her brother and her sister. "What I did wasn't ever good enough." While trying so hard to please her mother, Lora became a perfectionist who often could not see past her own hard work. Looking back, Lora saw some benefits to being a perfectionist but was also able to see the drawback. "I think I did OK in work situations because of the perfectionist side although at the time I wouldn't have thought I did well enough, good enough." Lora expressed a large sadness that she was unable to talk to her mother after she discovered more about her mother's family background as well as her parents' history. "I didn't treat her very well and today I regret it."

Connections and Patterns

When I asked the five participants if they were able to identify any connections and patterns between their relationship with their mother in childhood and in adulthood, all were able to find similarities. When I asked the five participants if they were able to identify connections and patterns between their relationship with their mother and with other adults, all were able to find commonalities. Bassoff (1991) observed:

We repeat patterns of relationship because the repetitions allow us to feel comfortable, to remain on familiar turf We are continually looking for evidence that confirms what we believe to be true. Hence, if our mothers disapproved of us, we may gravitate toward those who think little of us and thereby confirm what she and we have "known" all along--that we are pretty

worthless--or stupid or ugly or lazy or crazy or mean or selfish. Of course, we do not consciously set out to form ties with hurtful people

We also repeat childhood relationships because we want to correct what went wrong with them in the first place. We want a second chance. For example, if we were denied mother love as children, we may throughout our adulthood continue to seek such love from other, or, more commonly, from others who represent her. (p. 107)

All five participants are care giving, nurturing and supportive women, mothering others to make up for being "motherless" (Rich, 1976, p. 290).

Karen identified connections and patterns between her relationship with her mother and her relationship with other adults.

I would be inclined to say that my relationship with my mother coloured my whole life, because I chose to marry a man with the same flaw she had the most important people in my life--my mother and my husband, were always attached to someone other than me, in both cases, their parents.

Karen also indicated that her therapist confirmed her belief that chemical dependence was very much related to her relationship with her mother. Karen felt like she did not have a supportive mother in childhood and still feels that way today. "I still feel sorry for myself that I don't have a supportive mother I never have had."

Meg found connections and patterns between the demands that were made upon her, in childhood by her mother, with the care giving that she provides to other, in adulthood. "Generally, I probably think that I give away more stuff . . . or give in to other people, so I can avoid conflict." Meg identified a very strong connection and pattern between her mother's inability to be present for Meg, in childhood and Meg's lack of success in a long term relationship.

My mom wasn't always present for me I would be afraid of being in an intimate relationship because that was my experience. And no I am an adult, and I have the ability to take care of my own needs. But it still would not be great for me to have someone who could not be present for me.

Meg's mother continued to demand that Meg fix her parents' relationship. Meg noted that this demand has never ceased. Meg named this behaviour emotional abuse. "I'm naming my mother as abusive . . . wishing that it wasn't so."

Ellen was raised to believe that a close family relationship was correct and preferred. "I am following in my mother's footsteps which I always said I am not going to do." Even when Ellen clearly identified a pattern that her mother taught and that she learned as a very young child in her mother's home, that pattern was repeated despite Ellen's best efforts to avoid the repetition. The strong connection with a belief in a close family at all costs, did not allow Ellen to make

the choice to live apart from her mother. Ellen's pain about the distance between her and her brother could not be soothed by her ability to integrate more easily and make friends more quickly than other immigrants that arrived at the same time as Ellen.

Lora married a man who was mentally, psychologically, emotionally, and physically abusive. It took a long time for Lora to get out of that marriage. Lora received no praise and lived with a great deal of criticism in childhood. In adulthood, she found a connection and continued the pattern of living with an abusive husband.

Your level of tolerance for garbage is way too high on the inside I felt really lousy about myself I saw a parallel between . . . my abusive husband and my mother and how close they were, it blew my mind.

Anger

All the participants experienced anger in their relationships with their mothers. All the participants covered up their anger with other feelings and thoughts. "At first I get mad I flare up. And then I get upset and I cry. And then I say, 'well, that is the way that will be I may as well enjoy it.'" All the participants rationalized, minimized, or apologized about being angry, at some point in the interview. Lerner (1980) found:

The expression of legitimate anger is more than a statement of dignity and self-respect. It is also a statement that one will risk standing alone, even in the face of disapproval or the potential loss of love from others. For our female Patients, this requires a particular degree of courage Women who have unconscious loyalties to remain their mother's child and avoid autonomous functioning are inhibited not only in the expression of anger and protest, but in any activity that demands the subjective experience of feeling alone and standing on one's own two feet. (pp. 143-144)

While the expression of anger is a statement of separateness, the expression of hurt and sadness brings others closer. Anger is difficult for a woman who has not been allowed or encouraged to separate from her mother. Lerner (1980) pointed out that, "Much of the feminine socialization process, as well as the structure of the traditional nuclear family, may predispose both mother and daughter to seek enmeshed, dependent relationships" (p. 145). The main perpetrator may not be mother, but mother is the instrument.

Miller (1990a) was emphatic about the childhood need to get angry appropriately and without severe consequences. "The greatest cruelty that can be inflicted on children is to refuse to let them express their anger and suffering except at the risk of losing their parents' love and affection" (p. 106).

Karen identified anger in her relationship with her mother primarily after Karen married and did not invite her mother to come and live with her. ". . . after

I married it was a relationship of pure and utter hostility. She was furious with me all the time. Always angry. There was never any interaction between the two of us where she wasn't really angry." Karen continued to be in this relationship with her mother throughout her marriage and even after her divorce. Karen continued to maintain her independence, often with anger and hostility towards her mother.

Recently, Meg understood her inability to deal with conflict as well as her inability to express anger, as a leftover lesson from childhood. As an adult, Meg continued to feel difficulty in these areas. "Nobody said to my dad 'why the hell do you think you have the right not to speak to us for two weeks?' nobody still says 'I don't like the way you'" The childhood message that Meg received and experienced consistently and constantly, was that the family must be kept together at all costs. As well, Meg did not see her mother getting angry and learned that it was not "appropriate" for a woman to be angry.

Lillian described her relationship with her mother as being argumentative. "It seemed that the general remembrance of the relationship between my mom and I was that we were always at odds. I never got along with my mom My mother would always argue and I would always argue with her. So, she and I argued a lot when I was young. I remember that very clearly." When Lillian described the arguments that she had with her mother, it seemed like she was

describing events that happened between two equals rather than between a parent and a child.

It was not always easy for Ellen to share her home with her mother. There were disagreements and arguments. These usually ended with Ellen's mother threatening to move out, followed by Ellen getting angry and leaving the house to cool off. Ellen continued to live with her anger. Ellen remembered how she had to phone home during a vacation with her husband and her children, in order to reassure her mother. "Always . . . on vacation, we had to phone home, where we are, what we are doing, where the kids are And that was aggravating I would be mad about it." Ellen rationalized on the basis that her mother was only continuing the worry that began in terrible times, when people's safety was constantly in jeopardy.

Although Ellen did not have the satisfaction of being able to discuss things with her husband, at least she had the ability to get very angry. "I was never one to talk. I would blow up. And (husband) was quiet. He wouldn't talk to me for two, three days, and then it was done." Since the issue was never discussed, Ellen had to get over it and move on.

Lora remembered that her mother yelled a lot. "She'd sometimes spank us a bit on the bum, I remember her using the word stupid a lot." As a teenager, Lora was able to ignore her mother's demands. "I hated her with a passion she

was always trying to tell me what to do, what to say, very interfering but I would not listen to anything she told me."

Lora resented her mother's bragging about Lora. Although Lora's mother never said anything to Lora directly, Lora would often hear her bragging to relatives about Lora's accomplishments. "It almost seemed as if she was bragging about herself and not . . . about me, rather it was a reflection on her." Lora was able to let go of strong emotions such as anger and blame after she received some therapy about issues related to her family of origin. Those strong feelings were replaced by sadness and regret.

Making Changes

All the participants made small and significant changes in their relationships with their mothers as well as with others. These changes were not easy to make but were made nevertheless. Miller (1990a) commented on the importance of revealing the truth.

by uncovering the unconscious rules of the power game and the methods by which it attains legitimacy, we are certainly in a position to bring about basic changes. The rules of the game cannot be comprehended, however, unless we develop an understanding of the hazards of early childhood. (p. 62)

One of the participants summed up what happened in her past and what needs to happen in her present and her future. "In part, I think it is just learning that stuff I should have learned when I was . . . two and three, but it all got pushed aside . . . and now I need to reclaim that stuff."

Hyde (1986) found that "the daughter/woman can only learn to nurture herself and obtain nurturance from others after she has given up her loyalty to her mother and her conviction that everyone else's needs take primacy over hers" (p. 79). All of the participants experienced some of this as they started setting limits for themselves and others. Some made changes on the basis of wanting to get past "the overreaction that leads to being enmeshed by anger, supplication , or victimization" (Secunda, 1990, p. 351). Some made some changes on the basis that they did not want to pass their pain on to the next generation (Miller, 1990a, p. xiv).

Karen began making changes in her life when she left her mother's home, married her husband, and moved to another city. Although this was a step away from her mother, she found herself in a similar situation with her husband. Karen made further and more drastic changes when she stopped drinking, left her husband, and began to live on her own. Karen set boundaries with her mother. "My relationship with my mother is helpful to me today because I don't see her more than every two weeks."

One of the important changes that Meg made in her life, is to protect herself from her mother. "I still feel very protective of what I say and what I don't say to her because she still . . . tries to manipulate my life." Meg compared the past and the present. "The old way was like being a messenger for my mother now I try to understand . . . what my needs are, and take care of my needs." Meg shared the dual feelings that arise when she protects herself as she prepares for another visit with her mother. "In part it feels . . . good! And in part it feels like . . . loss of that ideal relationship." Meg changed her approach to the workplace as well. "I put myself before the work, or the women's movement, or my co-worker. And I realized that I needed to get out of that place for my own health, instead of enduring, doing the work, and leaving at the end of the project."

Lillian reported that generally, "I am trying to listen to myself to hear if I am replaying my mother or not. And sometimes I stay on track and sometimes I do not." Encouraged by her husband, Lillian worked out a new approach to her mother's criticism. She learned to say, "I will take that into consideration, thank you very much." Lillian made friends that remind her to take care of herself and who practice self care in their everyday lives. "I never knew my mother to really have very many close friends she didn't forgive their inadequacies I try not to do that I know when I need to talk to somebody and I ask that."

mind, a whole lot more I don't have to worry about what people think, and just think of me . . . on the whole, my relationships are much more positive."

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this study, I studied the relationship between some daughters and their mothers. My primary focus was the daughters. I chose to talk to women who, like myself, felt that their mothers had exerted excessive emotional control over their daughters' lives. This relationship was described as "the enmeshment dance."

The purpose of this study was to find out what some daughters had to report about their relationships with their mothers. I also hoped to discover what impact those relationships had made on the lives of these daughters. In order to do the research, I reviewed the related literature.

Using qualitative research methods, I conducted seven in-depth interviews with five selected participants. Each interview was taped and transcribed. After the tapes were transcribed and analyzed, I selected seven themes. I held feedback sessions with each participant in order to elicit comments about the interviews, the introductions, as well as the themes. Full transcriptions were offered to each participant for comments.

The purposeful sample of five participants was small. There will be a limited generalizability from this study. However, this study added in specificity what it lacked in generalizability.

Personal Comments

Having completed the interviews and the feedback sessions with the participants, I found that each participant provided a wealth of information that was honest, heartfelt, and meaningful. This information expanded the knowledge base surrounding the daughter and mother relationship. The participants exhibited a great deal of courage in sharing openly and without censorship and for that I am very grateful.

Whether it was with a cloying dependency or with callous abandonment, each participant was enmeshed with a mother who influenced her childhood as well as her adulthood. It was a privilege to interview five women who had so much to share about their own relationships with their mothers. Their stories, their insights, and their feedback provided the material for this study. I felt a personal sense of validation and affirmation from the material that they shared. It was my hope that other women reading this study might do the same.

Conclusions

The experiences of the five participants with their mothers and their relationships with others in the past as well as in the present, was well covered by the recollections and reports of all the participants. The documented recollections gleaned from the in-depth interviews and presented in this study, as well as the emerging themes, validated the experiences of the participants

themselves. The specificity of the information shared by the participants served as an excellent resource to be shared with other women.

The participants were able to draw many connections between their experiences with their mother in childhood as well as in adulthood. The participants were able to find patterns that began with their relationship with their mothers and continued to make an impact on their relationships as adults, both with their mothers and others. The detailed descriptions provided by the participants, enhanced the literature available on the relationship between daughters and their mothers.

There were a total of seven themes that emerged from the wealth of material shared by the participants. These themes were: unmet childhood needs, financial difficulties, protecting mother, feelings of inadequacy, connections and patterns, anger, and making changes.

The first theme, unmet childhood needs, also appeared in Chapter Two, Review of Related Literature, as childhood needs. All five participants identified unmet childhood needs: Karen, born shortly after her older sister died and unable to break through the bonds established between her mother and her grandmother; Meg, left alone as a child but asked to 'fix her dad'; Lillian, born a breach birth and asked to take on adult responsibilities; Ellen, a young married woman who dared not get angry with the mother who had saved her life; and Lora, born into a family that did not want another child and sexually abused. All

five participants were born into families where conditions and circumstances made it very difficult for their primary childhood needs to be fulfilled. All five participants had mothers who did not acknowledge their daughters' pain and losses. All five participants had mothers who demanded of their daughter, either implicitly or explicitly, that they, the daughters, help them, the mothers. All five participants had mothers who did not allow their daughters to seek out nurturing and support elsewhere, not even with their (daughters') own fathers. As Miller (1990b) found, "even a mother who is not especially warm-hearted can make this development possible, if she only refrains from preventing it. This enables the child to acquire from other people what the mother lacks" (p. 32).

Each participant understood, at some point in her adult life, that she was not responsible for her mother's happiness. Each of the participants realized that, in fact, it was the mother's role to concern herself with the happiness of her children. The pain and losses of the participants were validated as they shared their experiences during the in-depth interviews.

The second theme, financial difficulties, was not directly covered in the literature. In fact, when I initiated the work on this study, financial implications were not a factor. This emerged only after the five participants disclosed information about their background. Financial difficulties were evident in each of the participants' homes. This made it even harder for the participants to take responsibility for themselves and leave their mothers behind. Each participant

felt a stronger need to take care of the parent who was suffering because there was also a lack of money. The daughter's desire to do something for her mother continued the longest for Ellen who was sixty-five before she moved her mother out of her house and into the nursing home.

The third theme, protecting mother, was mentioned in the literature. Participants' protection of their mothers did not end with, but included, actual events as they happened as well as recollections shared in the interviews. In Lora's case it did not even end with the death of her mother. Lora's mother died a long time before the interview took place. Yet Lora, like all the other participants, continued to protect her mother when relating incidents that happened while her mother was still alive.

The fourth theme, feelings of inadequacy, was mentioned in Chapter Two, both in the loss of self and self-worth as well as in family enmeshment and daughter-mother enmeshment. Only four of the participants indicated feeling inadequate in childhood or in adulthood. Ellen specifically said that no matter what happened between her and her mother, Ellen never felt inadequate. Four of the participants felt inadequate as children and continued to wrestle with those feelings as adults. As Miller (1990a) noted, "The way we were treated as small children is the way we treat ourselves the rest of our life. And we often impose our most agonizing suffering upon ourselves" (p. 133).

The fifth theme, connections and patterns, connections between childhood and adulthood experiences with mother and others; patterns of behaviour by the daughter in childhood and in adulthood with mother and with others; was a very important theme. Finding connections and patterns was another step on the path to healing the past. All five participants found connections and patterns in their experiences with their mothers and with others, both in childhood and in adulthood. Once the enmeshment dance was identified, the next step was to figure out what the impact of being enmeshed meant for the daughter who had grown up with the enmeshing mother. Guba and Lincoln (1981) stated the importance of this step in discussing qualitative methodology. "It is virtually impossible to imagine any human behaviour that is not heavily mediated by the context in which it occurs" (p. 62).

The sixth theme, anger, appeared intermittently in the literature review, particularly in Lerner (1980). All five participants recalled anger in their relationships with their mothers. Several recalled anger in their relationships with others. One participant, Meg, indicated that she still has difficulty around issues of anger. I did not anticipate this theme emerging. It was only after all the interviews were transcribed and analyzed, that there seemed to be enough said by the participants about anger. This theme indicated a strong degree of recovery and healing in all the participants. As Secunda (1990) found, "Virtually all therapists believe that getting beyond blame and anger toward one's mother

is necessary for healing to begin" (p. 351). In order to get beyond the anger, it is first essential to identify the anger.

The seventh theme, making changes, initially appeared in Chapter Two, the healing process. All five participants contributed significantly to this theme. All five participants acknowledged that they would like to make more changes in their lives. All five participants discussed the difficulties inherent in making changes. As Miller (1990c) found:

The earlier a child masters something, the more deeply it becomes imprinted and the more certain he is of success for the rest of his life. This is why, conversely, negative messages and experiences are so difficult to unlearn. (pp. 10-11)

Given the hardships that each participant identified in making changes, as well as the recollections of experiences with their mothers, it is evident that all five participants learned their lessons at a very young age.

Only one participant, Karen, used the word "meshed" in describing her mother's relationship with her grandmother. The picture of them that Karen recalled, looked like they were one and three quarters, rather than two people. This image, as well as the ties that bound these two women together were not necessarily the same as those that bound the participants in this study with their mothers. Nevertheless, the enmeshment dance, the enmeshed relationship

between the participants and their mothers, is one that fits. Karen was enmeshed by her mother who let her know that she must behave in certain ways in order to be at all acceptable. Meg was enmeshed with her mother who demanded that Meg assume responsibility for fixing her father. Lillian was enmeshed with her mother who refused to bond with Lillian but demanded that Lillian be a good and responsible child. Ellen was enmeshed with her mother who saved Ellen's life and implicitly demanded payback. Lora was enmeshed with her mother who neglected Lora's care but demanded her accomplishments.

Implications

The following implications are based on the in-depth interviews and the feedback provided by the participants in this study. These implications are suggested for further research as well as for counselling.

Implications for further research include more in-depth interviews with a greater number of women; more collection of themes based on more in-depth interviews; a complete range of ages of participants; as well as women of different cultures, ethnic background, social and economic status. On the one hand, daughter and mother enmeshment is likely to be a universal feature, basic to human development. On the other hand, I believe that the stories of enmeshment are the key to helping some women identify or relate to their own condition of enmeshment. Therefore, more in-depth interviews with a greater range of stories, in a variety of different formats, would allow for a greater pool of

material that other women could find helpful. In addition, this material can alert observers to identify warning signals in the behaviours of girls as young as two to six years of age, thereby introducing the mirroring that can address the risk of enmeshment.

If the implications for general research are to further the telling of stories of enmeshment, the implications for counselling are the mirroring and the insight that the stories empower women to achieve. Implications for counselling would include providing women with a non-judgemental, non-critical environment for recalling and reflecting upon their relationships with their mothers; counsellors reflecting those stories back to the women, identifying themes; and carefully checking with the women to ensure that the counsellors reflections are agreeable to the woman who has told her story.

It is up to the counsellor to provide that space and that opportunity that this woman may never have had previously. Clearly reflecting her story may be all that is necessary to allow that daughter to come to her own conclusions about her past. The next step might then involve some reflections on the part of the counsellor, based on the information provided by that daughter. At every step of the way, these reflections must be validated and confirmed by the daughter, letting her know that she is the final judge of what is or is not a true picture of what happened.

The daughter, the client, must always be the final arbiter of whether something really happened or not. She must be given total control over the implications of her story. Whatever the counsellor may think, must be checked over and over again with the client. Probably the most difficult task that a counsellor faces, working with a woman that has not been reflected adequately or appropriately and has been enmeshed with her mother as well as with others, is to make sure that the woman has an opportunity to individuate - to bring forth her own ideas, reflect her own thoughts, validate her own experiences and affirm her own condition. The counsellor's job then becomes one of being a good listener as well as a good probe in eliciting the information gently and carefully without influencing the interpretation of that information.

A caution that I felt must be added after having listened to the stories of the five participants in this study, as well as having analyzed the themes and eliciting feedback from the participants, is that no client can be rushed. Even without the presence of the therapeutic relationship that a counsellor has with her clients, it was important for me not to overstep the feedback provided by the participants. In other words, there were times when my analysis or the literature did not match the analysis and the feedback provided by the participants. There were times when some of the participants did not want to delve any further into certain aspects of their relationships. There were times when participants disagreed with a theme, feeling that was not relevant to their experience. These

hesitations, interpretations, and issues of timing, must be respected. No counsellor may push a client into an analysis or a stance. The client must be ready and in agreement with any analysis or stance. The client, in particular the daughter who has experienced excessive emotional control by her mother as well as by others, must be allowed as much freedom as necessary to pursue her own issues at a time when she is ready, or not all.

Both researchers and counsellors need to feel comfortable in hearing the stories of women who need to talk about their mothers. In a society that has blamed women for so much and allowed men to remain blameless, it became very important to balance the scales and give more responsibility to the male population for disallowing women's personal and professional growth and development. However, that does not preclude the major influence of the mother in the daughter's life and her ability to influence that life positively or negatively.

Appendix I

LETTER OF CONSENT

Dear _____,

My name is Miriam Kuropatwa. I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Psychology. I am working on my Master's Thesis as well as on a course at the graduate level. The research project is part of a course assignment. The research will be used for my thesis.

The purpose of this project is to describe the experience of daughters who felt that their mothers exercised excessive emotional control over their lives, putting their adult needs ahead of their daughters' childhood needs. The research question is to describe the daughter's perspective of her childhood relationship with her mother as well as her adulthood relationship with her mother and with other adults.

If you agree to participate, you will take part in one or two-one hour interviews. After each interview, you will be provided with a summary of topics and themes in order to provide comments and feedback, if you choose to do so. A full transcript of the interview will be provided to you upon request. A summary of the results of the study will be provided to you once this portion of the research is completed. Interviews will be used for course work as well as for my thesis.

You can withdraw from the study at any time. During the interview, if there are any topics that you would rather set aside for discussion at a later time, or if there are certain topics that you would rather not discuss at all, let me know. I would like you to feel comfortable and in control of the interview.

Each informant will be given a pseudonym in order to maintain confidentiality. Interviews will be taped and tapes will be transcribed. The tapes will be kept by me for five years after the publication of the thesis. At that time, I will destroy the tapes.

If you wish, you may contact either of these individuals about the study:

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 Informant

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