

**WOMEN SURVIVORS OF CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE:
NARRATIVES OF RELATIONSHIPS
WITH THEIR MOTHERS**

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ABSTRACT

This study is a narrative inquiry of the daughter – mother relationship of survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Interviews were conducted and narratives of the co-researcher’s experiences written. Understanding the role of the daughter – mother relationship in the healing journey of women survivors was gained as the relationship was considered over time.

This study makes a unique contribution to the field of narrative research in childhood sexual abuse as well as a valuable contribution to research in daughter – mother relationships. Two significant understandings have been gained through this work. First, the effects of child sexual abuse on the girl/woman were experienced as lasting and have demanded years of counselling and therapy to bring freedom to the psyche and autonomy to the woman. Second, and of particular note is the way childhood sexual abuse provoked a change of enormous magnitude to the daughter – mother relationship, irrevocably altering it.

One survivor became like a sister to her mother while another experienced a role reversal with her mother. She became more like her mother’s mother, as well as taking on the role of wife to her father. None of the women co-researchers experienced her relationship with her mother improving in light of the abuse or in the ensuing years.

This study may enlighten issues of attachment, autonomy and independence within survivors of childhood sexual abuse. It may also benefit the community of survivors as they listen and hear their own story told. This study may have implications for the work of therapists and counsellors working with survivors. Understandings regarding emotional needs, nurturance, family legacy and the work involved to change patterns of living may be gained through this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The Universe Is Made Up Of Stories, Not Atoms

(Muriel Rukeyser)

There was once a storyteller who had told many people of her life. They listened and heard their own stories in hers. Hearing her story, they didn't feel so lonely anymore. Hearing about someone else who had lost things and people she loved, who had felt lonely, scared, and unsure of herself, let them feel less crazy when similar things happened to them.

Because of the healing they felt through hearing someone else's story, some of the listeners decided to become storytellers themselves. As they recounted their stories, they found that letting out secrets that had bothered them for years freed them to feel good about who they were and who they had always wanted to be (Anonymous, 1991).

1.1 Background

It was raining again. Again. Again. I was soaked to the skin as I arrived home from school. Upstairs to wake up my mom, downstairs to put her coffee on, upstairs to bring her a mug with sugar and cream – not too dark and not too creamy. Change my clothes, hang up my coat in the basement, stuff my shoes with newspaper so they kept their shape or something, and back up to the kitchen which was now beginning to come alive with my mother's presence. Out in the shed I feel the dankness, tense my shoulders, push the spider webs, spiders and centipedes out of the way, then fill a bag with Jonathans we picked last fall and stored for winter pies and crisps. Soon the kitchen smells make it all worthwhile

as I sit with my mother, peeling apples, talking and getting dinner ready. Warmth. Comfort. Safety.

I experienced from the earliest age nurturing, care, provision and protection from my mother. And just this past summer spent a privileged two weeks with my now eighty-five year old mother, walking and playing on the beaches of Vancouver Island's west coast. This relationship continues to be a gift: vital, creative, life giving.

As I grew in womanhood, I found myself the mother of four amazing young people. Feeding them and their buddies countless peanut butter sandwiches, Kool Aid and later beer, keeping them clean, dressed and warm, and providing them opportunities to participate in sports and recreational activities befitting their talents and personalities was a normal part of our family life. Optional were the hours I waited up worrying, knowing one of them was at a "pit party" which likely would be busted by the police, the many times I woke up realizing the back porch light was still on, it was morning, and neither they nor my car had returned home; or the time I worried because the foreign country where one was living was experiencing internal dissent with riots, teargas and violence. The worry was optional, but my care flowed naturally from being their mother.

Intertwined with the anxiety were the celebrations: graduations and first professional positions; first cars and apartments. It brought me pleasure and joy to be included in their lives. To be sought out for input in decision making, a sounding board for problems and a confidant to intimacies.

And then the day arrived when I began my counselling practicum placement at Tamara's House, a residence for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse. About two thirds of the way through my practicum, I became cognizant of the absence of reference

to the woman's mother. This surprised and intrigued me. Literature consistently referred to the relationship of the woman with her abuser(s), and the work required to move beyond the power of that relationship. However in the midst of the pain and anguish of these remembered experiences, I did not hear the story of advocates for the child being abused. It surprised and intrigued me that I was not hearing about the child's mother.

During the abuse, it was the child who experienced trauma, the little girl who developed assorted coping strategies and became resilient, and the little girl who manifested alter identities. It was the little girl who wanted to be loved and protected and had every right to be. Primary to child development is a relationship with a mother or other nurturing caregiver. Where was "mother" and what role did she play in the lives of these women? What role had she played during these survivors' childhoods? I sensed these women did not have the privileged relationship I now have with my mother, yet acknowledged mine had grown slowly and painfully to maturity. Many of my own struggles and conflicts as a mother had given me a desire to work at my relationship with my mother, and I subsequently experienced a renewed appreciation for her. But what sort of mother did these women have? I was intrigued and continued to stay attuned to any mention of mothers as I journeyed through the healing process with these survivors.

1.2 Need for Study

Very little information exists on the relationship women survivors of childhood sexual abuse have with their mothers. Although survivors occasionally mention their mothers in their stories, no body of literature facilitates the woman healing in light of this relationship which sociologists and anthropologists unanimously see is of primary

importance in the healthy upbringing of a child. “Just as the child appears throughout history as a symbol of potential, renewal and growth, the Nurturing Parent is also a universal archetype” (Capaccione, 1991, p. 117).

Some of the world’s oldest art was of sculptures of fertility goddesses, formed from the earth with large breasts and hips to suggest an inexhaustible source of life and sustenance. North Americans have been influenced by images of the Blessed Mother or Mary the mother of Jesus. Marble sculptures, statues, mosaics, painted wood icons, Gothic windows and Renaissance murals portray the image of the mother and child in our great museums as well as the humblest homes. This symbol of the nurturing mother also embodies qualities of compassion, understanding, empathy and caring (Cappaccione, 1991; Taylor, 1991). How did each woman co-researcher encounter these qualities in her mother? Was she like this archetype at all?

Too often the survivor’s therapy is pathologically directed with the woman placed on psychotropic drugs to stop bad dreams, nightmares and flashbacks or to dull the mind’s ability to remember or to feel feelings. This study may benefit survivors and therapists by enlightening the relatively unexplored area and the continued (if any) impact this relationship has on survivors’ healing. As the introductory story (anonymous) suggests, it may be in hearing someone else’s story, a woman hears her own story, and feels less crazy about what happened to her. She may find that by letting out secrets, she begins to grow in self esteem and experiences healing.

1.3 Purpose Statement

My research focus was “Women survivors of childhood sexual abuse: Narratives of relationships with their mothers”. The purpose of the study is to understand the phenomenon of the relationship between a woman survivor and her mother. The stories of this relationship and its evolution over time were written after transcribed interviews.

1.4 Explanation of Terms

To facilitate clarity of understanding the language I use in this research, I offer the following definitions:

- **Survivor:** In this study “survivor” means a person who has survived childhood sexual abuse. The abuser could have been male or female. Abuse may have taken any or many of the following forms: Being fondled, kissed, or held for an adult’s sexual gratification; forced to perform oral sex on an adult or sibling; raped or otherwise penetrated; made to watch sexual acts; forced to listen to excessive talk about sex; fondled or hurt genitally while being bathed; subjected to unnecessary medical treatments to satisfy an adult’s sadistic or sexual needs; shown sexual movies or other pornography; made to pose for seductive or sexual photographs; involved in child prostitution or pornography; or forced to take part in ritualized abuse in which the child was physically, psychologically, or sexually tortured (Bass & Davis, 1994, p. 25).
- **Co-researcher:** in keeping with emerging criteria for quality control in qualitative research, I use the term “co-researchers” to describe the women I interviewed and whose narratives I wrote. These women are integrally

involved in the research, and without their participation I would not have a thesis. My commitment to this inquiry includes respecting the co-researchers' views; is to the learning of the co-researchers; is to an open and democratic sharing of knowledge with the co-researchers and to the stimulation and potential for social action this thesis may generate (Lincoln, 1995).

1.5 Research Questions

My research question was: What is the experience of your relationship with your mother? Tell me a story of what it was like for you as a child; as a teen; as a young woman; and in recent years. At the time of my initial meeting with each co-researcher, I provided them with the guiding questions for the first interview. At the end of the first interview, guiding questions were marked for the following session. Guiding questions can be found in Appendix E.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Current Literature on Childhood Sexual Abuse

Foundational to this research is familiarity with the current body of literature written about childhood sexual abuse. I present some of this work to lay a foundation for my research. To obtain the most current information for this study I used the key words “mothers, daughters and sexual abuse” in various data bases. I searched 23 data bases and obtained numerous articles and books. The literature selection is small with many related issues being researched. Primarily the literature revealed books and articles focused on the mothers, with mention of daughters.

These issues primarily have to do with the mother’s alcohol, drug use or mental illness; mothers who are survivors themselves; mothers experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and the effects of socio economic status upon sexual abuse in the family. One study of male sex offenders who were themselves abused, contradicts the researcher’s hypothesis (McKenzie, 2002) and generalized perception of this population. This study indicates a higher degree of perceived warmth, nurturance, and consistency from mother figures of sexually abused boys than the control group. These results reminded me not to enter this study with preconceived ideas but to be deliberately open to an evolving research study.

After the data had been collected and specific phenomenon recorded, I did other literature searches. To better understand the family legacy of these women I searched “patriarchy, and child sexual abuse.” To understand the phenomenon of one of the participant’s self harm, I used “mothers, daughters, and anger.” I read various books about alcoholism and its effects as a family illness. I also searched extensively for current articles on clergy sexual abuse and the religious factor in familial abuse.

An unfortunate phenomenon that is part of our culture is “Mother Blame”. Fathers as well as many sociologists and psychologists have habitually blamed the wife’s failure to meet the husband’s needs for sex or nurturing, as a reason for him turning to his daughter for satisfaction. “Regardless of how inadequate a mother may have been, no behaviour on her part is licence for any man to sexually abuse a child. It’s time to stop blaming women for what men have done” (Bass & Davis, 1994, p. 136; Miller & Dwyer, 1997). It is unfortunate that so much research has been focused on the mother’s responsibilities rather than on the experiences of the children with their mothers at the time of the abuse and the years after.

Generally, it is assumed in situations of incest, the mother knew the abuse occurred. This is not always the case. It has also been frequently inferred that if she didn’t know, she didn’t want to. Mothers have been labelled weak, contributing, passive, inattentive, withholding and collusive. While some survivors may have been handed over to the abuser by her mother, some mothers genuinely did not know the abuse was going on. Sometimes even her greatest efforts have been unable to stop it. Mothers have been dismissed as paranoid, unfit and vindictive, by judges and social workers. And some, against enormous odds have succeeded in protecting their children. “Studies have shown

that most nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children provide their children with some sort of support and protection” (Suffoletta & Samantha, 2002, abstract).

Mother blame has persisted based on the assumption that a good mother knows everything that is happening in the family and should be able to stop anything that is wrong or out of order. A study by Breckenridge and Baldry (1997) concludes that mother blame continues to influence the thinking and understanding of policy makers and child sexual assault workers. They maintain that therapeutic practice can also be strongly biased by this belief to the detriment of both mother and child (Breckenridge & Baldry, 1997). Recommendations are made to encourage agencies to examine their beliefs in this area and ensure that perpetuation of this myth is addressed. The literature challenged my subjectivity around this belief as I began this study. I honestly do not hold this belief, yet I became more curious to hear the mother’s story of this time in her life.

A study by Joyce (1997) revealed two important points for my research. The first is that mothers respond in a variety of ways to their children’s victimization, and second, most mothers do believe their children have been abused when they say they have. Joyce notes earlier research

Tended to locate family pathology that led to incest solely with mothers of victimized children, and to characterize that pathology as typifying the “collusive” mother. Direct studies of the personality characteristics of mothers of molested children find that mothers overall do not display levels of psychopathology greater than those of comparison groups (Joyce, 1997, p. 89).

Joyce notes the development of a continuum by Hooper & Humphreys (1998) which describes mothers of survivors more comprehensively. The continuum offers a construct to consider the social and psychological variables which enhance or limit a mother’s capacity to believe and protect her child. While the mothers’ lives and stories impact the

survivors' stories and are not directly the focus of my study, I do believe they impact the meaning making process for survivors.

In a study conducted by Douglas (2000) with mothers who themselves had been sexually abused, the Parenting Bonding Index and the Intimate Aspects of Parenting Questionnaire were administered. These women recalled their own parents being significantly less caring and their fathers more controlling than the comparison group reported. These women had lower scores on Mother Care which was suggested to be associated with higher parental stress (Douglas, 2000). In another study of non-offending mothers who themselves were survivors, these mothers showed more anxiety and depression symptoms than the comparison group. They were also significantly lower in attachment behaviours (Lewin, 2000). Another study tells the experience of being the daughter of an incest survivor.

Most daughters perceived their mothers as failing to grow up. In turn, the daughters responded with a lack of affection toward their mothers, experienced complications in differentiation and integration of a negative self-view. Even in adulthood, the daughters reported a number of characteristics that are normally associated with being a victim of sexual abuse. (Voth & Tutty, 1999, p. 25)

These studies speak of the mothers of survivors, and while the mothers' lives impact their daughters' lives and stories, they do not tell the child survivor stories I wish to hear.

“The mother's relationship with the child has often been viewed through the survivor's recollections. Most abuse victims view their mothers with intense anger, contempt, and hostility, sometimes blaming mothers for the abuse more than the offenders” (Joyce, 1997, p. 88). A poem titled “To my Mother... by Elizabeth Ann” typifies these attitudes.

Where were you ...
That Christmas when I was four?
Those nights I cried?

I needed you but you didn't hear.
Where were you when I felt alone and cold, afraid to sleep,
Afraid of the assault of his fingers and penis inside me.
Where were you when I cried out for help?
I found only a cold, bitter stone blaming me for it all.
Why did you blame me for so much?
I was only a child. (Mitchell & Morse, 1998, p. 133)

I had heard stories characterized by these sentiments during my counselling practicum. I knew the possibility of hearing them from my co-researchers was probable. I also anticipated hearing stories of healing.

An important piece of healing from childhood sexual abuse is being able to forgive yourself (Bass & Davis, 1994). When a woman starts to feel that forgiveness, it naturally extends to others. Bass and Davis recount how one woman was able to forgive her non-protective mother as she healed and gained a new perspective on her mother's position in the family.

My mother was no more empowered than any of us. She was very much the victim. There's a picture that stays in my mind of my mother standing in the hallway with us kids when my father was in the bathroom, beating one of my brothers, and we're all crying and saying "Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!" And my mother's saying "Don, don't! Oh, Don, don't!" And she's right there crying with us. And to me she was as much a part of the helplessness as we were. I really believe she did the best she could do. It wasn't very good but it was the best she could do. (p. 162-163)

Another woman while doing a creative expression had a similar experience of compassion.

I was at a two week writing workshop. One of the assignments was to take an incident in my family history that I could never really find out about, and to make up the story of what really happened, based on the few facts I did have. I wrote the story of my mother's childhood... I knew my grandfather had been her father, that she'd had to live with him every day. And I'd seen a photograph of her. I knew how she looked, a scared, shy little waif. I created the rest...It allowed me to start thinking about my mother as more than just my mother, as having a whole life before I was ever conceived, and a whole life afterwards. I started to understand, from her point of view, why she'd responded to me the way she had.

The pieces started to fit together. I felt compassion for her and I liked it. (Bass & Davis, 1994, p. 163)

Beginning the research, I did not know what stories I would discover during the interviews with my women co-researchers. I didn't know if I would hear stories of blame, anger, hatred, fear or disgust. I welcomed the honesty and willingness of these women to speak of this very private and intimate experience and relationship.

2.2 Directions after the Interviews

I took an emic perspective, allowing the direction of my research to unfold in response to the stories of the women co-researchers. Future directions I considered pursuing in the literature prior to the interviews included: theories of family systems (Hooper & Humphreys, 1998), attachment theory (Carter, 1999), developmental theories (Skinner, 2000), feminist emancipatory theory (Hooper & Humphreys, 1998) and themes of power. The data directed me to search traumagenic dynamics – a model for understanding child sexual abuse; clergy abuse in the Roman Catholic Church; alcoholism; and self harm in the form of cutting. I did not search family systems theory or feminist emancipatory theory.

Caution was recommended by Atkinson (2002) who states “A theory should be applied to a life story only when it fits the story well – if the theory actually emerges out of the story itself” (p. 135). Keeping this statement in mind as I searched the literature, my decision to include the theories of traumagenic dynamics and attachment theory evolved directly from the stories themselves.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Designs and Methodology

3.1 Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

I chose to complete a Qualitative Study using narrative methodology. My choice of qualitative research is complimentary to my chosen professional philosophy in counselling. It has been my experience in counselling that people construct personal realities in interaction with their social worlds. The research question I posed necessitated a methodology which would allow the truth of each daughter-mother relationship to be accepted as its own reality. The reality of being sexually abused as a child, and the lived experience of the subsequent relationship with one's mother was unique for each woman. There is no universal pattern or experience to this event. A narrative constructivist approach is a central characteristic of qualitative research.

In a narrative inquiry I consider human actions, and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course (Bruner, 1984). As the stories of the mother-daughter relationship unfolded, I heard about the marvellous adaptations to lives, which were dependent on the success of the survivors generating believable narratives. Bruner notes that "We know very little about how narrative thinking develops in childhood. What we do know, of course, is that the ability to comprehend stories develops or is present very early" (Bruner, 1984, p. 100). After hearing the phenomenon of the story

from my co-researchers, I worked with the transcriptions and field notes, writing narratives describing their lives and their experiences with their mothers (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) revealed their struggles writing narrative, speaking of the multiple “I’s” of narrative inquiry. They use the term “plurivocal” to describe the researcher’s voice as “researcher, teacher, man or woman, commentator, research participant, narrative critic, and theory builder. Yet in living the narrative inquiry process, we are one person” (p. 9). I believe embracing these plural voices is the skill of narrative research. However at the point of writing the research story, I had to move beyond the story I initially set out to hear, and write the research story. This required moving out of the collaborative relationship and lived story, into a relationship where we speak more clearly with the researcher “I” (p. 10).

It was noticeable to me that I indeed made a transition in the way I interacted with the data. I had carefully listened to the research participant voice, to my own voice as I recorded field notes, to myself and the co-researchers as women, and to multiple other voices as I considered theory, and commentary. The movement to the researcher voice did not require an apology, as research inquiry was the original purpose for gathering the story. The narrative mode is temporal, considering two landscapes simultaneously.

One is the landscape of action, where the constituents are the arguments of action: agent, intention or goal, situation, instrument. Its other landscape is the landscape of consciousness: what those involved in the action know, think, or feel. (Bruner, 1984, p. 99)

Understanding the meaning of the phenomenon relationships of survivors have with their mothers is an aspect of my inquiry. As I am conducting a basic study I am interested in:

- 1) How survivors interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The overall purpose is to understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences.... Narrative analysis uses the stories people tell, analyzing them in various ways, to understand the meaning of the experience as revealed in the story. (Merriman & Associates, 2002. p. 38)

I heard different meanings made as the survivor and her mother moved through different stages of development. Various meanings were also understood as they impacted the survivor individually (chapter five) and the social world in which they lived their daily life (chapter six).

Symbolic interaction focuses on interpretation within the context of a larger society. In my study, survivors had made meaning of their abuse through interaction with the society they grew up in. At the time these women were children, widespread silence and secrecy on the topic of childhood sexual abuse prevailed. Today's society encourages breaking the silence, and as survivors have continued to journey towards healing, new meanings and understandings have been gained. Bogdan and Biklen (as cited in Merriman & Associates, 2002) say "people can change and grow as they learn more about themselves through this interactive process" (p. 37).

Phenomenology will also inform my study since it respects the reality of our experience-as-lived, the meaningfulness of our practices, while the ethical-philosophical attitude seems to empower subjectivity to radicalize itself to struggle to dislodge and confront the unexamined assumptions of our personal, cultural, and social beliefs and theories. (Van Manen, 2000, p. 6)

There is an honor and respect given to the co-researcher through this methodology. Van Manen expects movement within the participants as they voice their

experiences in light of the past and the present. I experienced that movement among the women co-researchers as they told their story through the voices of child, teen, and young woman.

3.2 Role of the Researcher

As a researcher I situated myself to work collaboratively, as I was invited to enter into each survivor's thinking and perceiving (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It has been suggested that narrative structure provides a forum where experienced events can be voiced in an effort to make them comprehensible, memorable and shareable. My role then was to provide a forum, a safe place where the stories of my co-researchers could be voiced (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990).

3.2.1 My Position as Researcher

I found myself wholeheartedly agreeing with Alan Peshkin (1988) that researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity while the research is actively in progress, not when the data has been collected and analysis is complete. The value lies in increased awareness of how my subjectivity may be shaping my inquiry and its outcomes. Peshkin advocates researchers observing themselves in a focused way, learning about the particular subset of personal qualities that contact with their research phenomenon releases. These qualities have the potential to skew, shape, block, filter, transform, construe or misconstrue what transpires from the beginning of a research project to its culmination in written form. Peshkin further states that subjectivity is like a

garment that cannot be removed. It is such a part of who a researcher is that it will be present in both the research and nonresearch aspects of my life.

Peshkin suggests a variety of ways to determine when my subjectivity would be engaged. Emergence of positive and negative feelings, desires for more of an experience or a desire to avoid an experience, or urges to act in roles beyond the necessity of my research needs are all indicators that my research subjectivity is being affected. In short I would need to monitor how I was feeling and pay particular attention to bodily sensations such as a tightening in my throat, an increased pulse rate, perspiration or rapid breathing. Because of the nature of my interviews, I repeatedly and consciously had to keep myself in the researcher voice rather than the counsellor voice. The counsellor mode is one that seemed to be sought often by the women as they sought affirmation, encouragement, clarity, and advocacy. My role was simply to be the interviewer.

I was challenged as Peshkin was challenged. He recalls he went to great lengths to establish who he was not and reinforced daily, who he was. He was careful to be interested yet nonjudgmental and uninvolved with a school's instructional program. Yet for all his efforts, his feelings were engaged, his subjectivity was present and he frequently thought of what he could do – which was not the purpose of his presence in the school at all. I think it is maturity which lead Peshkin to say he “looked for himself where, knowingly or not, we all are – and unavoidably belong: in the subjective underbrush of our own research experience” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 20). Through self-monitoring, I was able to attune myself to where my topic and I intertwined and separate myself from the emotional enmeshment.

Yvonna Lincoln (1995) maintains that “a text that displays honesty or authenticity ‘comes clean’ about its own stance and about the position of the author” (p. 280). Where researchers are not open in the larger intertextual conversation about their social and cultural positions, their work will be interrogated and deconstructed to determine their situatedness. Within poststructural and postmodern argument, detachment and author objectivity are barriers to quality, not insurance of having achieved it.

Carolyn Ellis (1997) relayed her own conflict between remaining distant and uninvolved as she had been trained, and participating fully, which was her natural impulse. She expresses frustration with recording her “objective” observations of fisher folk’s actions and speech, and noting her experience of their emotional lives. Only in hindsight did she recognize the importance of showing herself in interaction with her co-researchers and understand how conventional strategies may have disempowered them.

In choosing her writing style, Ellis consciously invites the reader to move back and forth between being in her story and their own, where they can fill in their own experiences and provide their own sensitivities about what is happening. She writes in a way that invites readers to sense the unity of human experience where they can connect to what happened to Carolyn, remember what happened to them and anticipate what might happen in the future (Ellis, 1997, p. 131).

Ellis (1997) cites Ronai saying, “Although I present this story linearly, I have to remind myself that we do not live life linearly. Thoughts and feelings circle around us, play back, then forward” (p. 125). My own thoughts and feelings as well as my co-researchers circled and shifted as these stories were voiced. Ellis continues by quoting Denzin saying life is “lived through the subject’s eye, and that eye, like a camera’s, is

always reflexive, nonlinear, subjective, filled with flashbacks, after-images, dream sequences, faces merging into one another, masks dropping, and new masks being put on” (Ellis, 1997, p. 125). This fullness of life is what I experienced with my women co-researchers. A further discussion of my experience as a researcher is found in chapter seven.

3.2.2 Establishing Rapport with Co-researchers

Prolonged engagement required me as researcher to be involved in a site long enough that I “soaked the culture in through my pores” enabling me to appreciate and understand the context of the site and its constituents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 302). An advantage beginning my study was that I completed my six month counselling practicum at Tamara’s House, the site of the interviews. I knew the staff and agency protocols, had experienced women on their healing journey in a variety of settings, both residential and drop-in and participated with them in a variety of programs. Although I brought my own distortions based on my a priori values and constructions, those were unintended and were identified through member checks. Discussion with each co-researcher before and after each interview, as well as phone conversations, pin-pointed where I brought my distortions. Prolonged engagement had the additional benefit of allowing trust and rapport to emerge. These qualities were essential for the sensitive topic I was pursuing, and the relational dimension of this inquiry between myself and my co-researchers (Lincoln, 1995).

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Participant Selection

Sampling for active interviewing is different from quantitative sampling in research. My intention was not so much to gather a representative segment of the population as it was to elicit stories and to understand meaning making for survivors. With this intent I used purposeful sampling, selecting four women survivors of childhood sexual abuse. One of the women participated in one interview for the study but due to unforeseen circumstances, was unable to complete participation. All were women who had articulated aspects of their relationship with their mothers with the recommending professionals, and were willing to disclose the nature and evolution of their relationship from childhood to the present. Additional criteria for participation included an ongoing therapeutic relationship with an accessible counsellor if need arose during this study. If a woman didn't have a counsellor prior to beginning the interview process, Tamara's House supported the woman in obtaining one before she participated in the study.

It has been documented that women who were abused in infancy or early childhood manifest severe disassociative patterns (Morrow & Smith, 1995). Coping strategies to deal with the abuse include the manifestation of disassociative patterns such as escaping reality or "leaving" mentally or emotionally by striving for invisibility or "spacing out." Women who frequently used these coping methods often have fewer stories or memories of their childhood and may lack the memories and stories I am purposefully looking to hear. Consequently I specified that the abuse began no earlier than five years of age. Interestingly, I had two women who really wanted to participate in the study but did not meet the age criteria. Previous clinical assessment had determined

the manifestation of alter personalities. Each of them experienced several personalities from a young age, and therefore there would have been several daughter- mother relationships within each woman. By including the criterion of age of initial abuse, I avoided some difficult situations.

The staff at Tamara's House and professional colleagues recommended women for this study. As well, I utilized the "snowball" effect of personal recommendation. Immediately, I had women expressing interest in the study. The professionals making the recommendations were given a list of criteria to go over with each interested woman. If the woman continued to be interested, they gave each prospective co-researcher a letter outlining the study. This allowed the woman an opportunity to consider the invitation in a non-threatening interaction. Then prospective co-researchers contacted me, and I set up an appointment for the initial interview to discuss confidentiality, informed consent and the possible emotional consequences of participation. Four co-researchers chose to participate in the first interview immediately following the signing of the consent form. They were eager and ready.

3.3.2 Procedures

Data collected through active interviewing is both substantive and processual. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed by me. During the interviews I noted physical signs of agitation or discomfort and reflected those to my co-researcher. In the transcribing I made notes of any affect evident through the audio track. Emotions, hesitations, confusion or contradictions were apparent. DeVault (as cited in Holstein and Gubrium, 1995) says, "Signs of confusion, contradiction, ambiguity, and reluctance

should also be noted because problematic conversation signals occasions where meanings are being examined, reconstituted, or resisted” (p. 79). It was important to check out these signs with the co-researcher. After transcribing the first interview, I did make notes of any ambiguities, and inquired about them in the second interview.

3.3.2.1. Interviews.

Irving Seidman’s (1998) three interview model for active interviewing was a useful model for my study. Prior to the first interview I met with the co-researchers to discuss confidentiality and the purpose of the study. This first meeting did become the “First Interview”. This was totally dependent on the co-researcher’s readiness to begin telling her story. Each interview was ninety minutes. The second interview followed a week later, allowing me time to transcribe and synthesize the data. At the second interview I gave the woman the transcription of the first interview and met with her a few days later to get the changes and revisions. This time frame and additional interaction, also allowed me an opportunity to develop a relationship with each woman, and for the woman to reflect on the story and information she shared.

The first interview resulted in a reconstruction of childhood experiences of the co-researcher’s relationship with her mother within the family, with friends, in her neighbourhood and at work. Leading questions were directed to exploring elements of nurturing, caring and provision within the relationship.

The second interview began with questions to elaborate areas the woman mentioned in the first interview which seemed meaningful to her. I interpreted the importance of certain phenomenon by the emotion used to speak about it or the amount

of time or frequency spent on it. This interview also explored empowering and equipping in the teenage - mother relationship, and the relationship of mother and daughter experiencing womanhood together. Atkinson (2002) who has worked extensively with Life Story interviewing is

interested in having the person tell her story from the vantage point which allows the individual to see her life as a whole, to see it subjectively across time as it all fits together, or as it seems discontinuous, or both. It is after all, this subjective perspective that tells us what we are looking for in all our research efforts. (p. 124)

The story I heard was the mother daughter story in light of the sexual abuse the daughter experienced. It was not a Life Story in the precise way Atkinson speaks; yet it was the story each woman chose to tell, about the life she lived with her mother. I believed it to be an honest telling, what she remembered of it and what she was willing to let me know about it. Atkinson says as a researcher/guide I will never really be in control of the story actually told. I liked this! I entered this research with no pre-conceived ideas, no agenda, and waited eagerly for the stories to emerge.

“Increasingly researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results” (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 646). Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in interactions with respondents and interviews themselves as negotiated accomplishments.

As a counsellor I have worked hard to keep my bias - emotional, cognitive, social or spiritual, apart from the counselling intervention. I have done the same with the interview situation. While I know I am not one hundred percent unbiased as an interviewer, I do know I brought skill and experience to the research interviews that were

helpful in discovering the cognitive and emotional meanings, values and understandings of events. My experiences in the counselling profession provided me with tools to focus the interview/conversation for the co-researcher. While I agree with the critics of interviewing that researcher bias can be great, I have evidence that experienced interviewers can benefit the co-researcher in telling her story.

Denzin (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2000) tells us

The feminist, communitarian researcher does not invade the privacy of others, use informed consent forms, select subjects randomly, or measure research designs in terms of their validity. This framework presumes a researcher who builds collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, and friendly relations with those studied...It is also understood that those studied have claims of ownership over any material that are produced in the research process, including field notes. (p. 666)

Comments such as these confirm my stance that the women in my research are co-researchers, not participants, subjects, objects, clients, guinea pigs or other. They will own the final stories as much as I will. My thesis is their stories and their voice as well as mine. The active interview is a conversation whose point is to capitalize on the dynamic interplay between myself the researcher and each co-researcher, revealing both the substance and process of meaning-making in relation to research objectives (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). As such the direction of the interview, was dictated by the information and focus of the co-researchers experiences, as we staked out and developed narrative territory (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

Gubrium and Holstein (1995) state, “the active interviewer conscientiously, but cautiously promotes multivocality” (p. 77). The interviewer encourages the respondents to shift narrative positions, take different roles throughout the interview addressing the topic from one point of view and then another. The co-researcher is invited to allow her

unvoiced knowledge and experience to be unleashed and various ways she attaches meaning to her relationship with her mother to be explored. This procedure provides an example of the interaction of the interviewer and interviewed in a consensual dynamic interaction showing meaning assembled from “complex resources in relation to narrative contexts and circumstances” (p. 78).

Robert Sunchild’s narrative as told by Tierney (McClaughlin & Tierney, 1993) offers insight into the multiple voices one accesses in the course of daily interactions. The different voices I heard the survivors speaking were the voices of the girl child, the sexually abused child, the maturing adolescent and woman voices. Multivocality is another way of activating meaning making within the woman to the stories she is telling.

3.3.2.2 Reflexive journal.

Because I journal daily for my own personal reflection and growth, journaling at the end of each interaction with my co-researchers was a familiar activity. I wanted to pay particular attention to my subjectivity. Was it engaged? As Peshkin says, “I looked for the warm and cool spots, the emergence of positive and negative feelings, the experiences I wanted to avoid, and when I felt moved to act in roles beyond those necessary to fulfill my research needs” (Peshkin, 1988, p.18). Some of my journal entries were written during and after the transcribing. At these times I heard over and over the voice of the survivor speaking of some painful experience. The repetition brought me to a deeper level of understanding each woman and her journey. My supervisor at Tamara’s House had me writing in a reflexive journal each week during my practicum. I wrote about the issues that triggered emotional reactions from within, or about areas she

understood were core survivors' issues. It was reflective of my subjectivity and where it impeded my usefulness.

My reflexive journal included feelings I experienced, ideas I intuited for the narratives, and phenomenon the co-researcher expressed, about which I wanted to hear more. It was also a place for me to hypothesize, and wonder if... It included my sensory awareness of what I saw, and heard.

3.3.2.3 Audit trail.

An audit trail can be traced through documentations recorded in the reflexive journal, listening to the audiotapes of the interviews, reading the transcriptions or reading the revised Guiding Questions. After each first interview, I prepared additional questions for the second interview, based on what I noticed to be important during the transcribing. One co-researcher told of a tragic fire her mother was caught in: "And she said the day the fire happened...her personal growth stopped! Right then!" In the second interview I invited more of the story to be told by asking, "How has this understanding impacted how you relate to your mother now?"

3.4 Data Analysis

The analysis of the data in a Qualitative Study identifies recurring patterns or themes that run through the data. Findings are a blend of these recurring patterns, supported by the affirmations of the co-researchers, and the entire data set from which they were derived. The process is an artful one, involving detection, selection and interpretation of the data while systematically grouping and summarizing the descriptions

of the daughter – mother relationship (Polkinghorne, 1988). An equal focus was placed on the gathering process as on the content I gathered. Transcriptions were studied to reveal ways each co-researcher constructed reality as well as subjective meanings to her relationship (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). After each co-researcher read through her transcript, I met with her to go over changes and omissions she requested. Always, we engaged in further discussion regarding her story and the meanings she was making of her experiences with her mother in light of what she had said. For each woman, memories were awakened, and links made to her life today. As the interpreter of the data I tried to illustrate “the complex discursive activities through which respondents make meaning” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995, p. 80).

Using illustrations and references from transcriptions of our conversations, I explicated in chapters five and six “how meanings, their linkages and horizons, are constituted both in relation to, and within, the interview environment. ...they ‘deconstruct’ participant’s talk to show the reader both the *hows* and *whats* of the narrative dramas conveyed” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 127).

Meaning making emerges from both a theoretical base and a personal frame of reference. While meaning-making from theory is discussed in chapter four of this paper, Atkinson (2002) suggests three guidelines for accessing personal interpretations for meaning-making.

First, rather than classifying, analyzing or in some way limiting the storyteller, the researcher should not judge but seek to find the personal relevance of the story. Second, a life story is a text like any other document or story in any other field. It can stand on its own, because it automatically and immediately evokes certain personal, subjective responses based on the experiences it describes or the perspective of the reader. Third, we are all each other’s teachers. Like a novel or a poem, a life story has something to say to us about life...These are all reasons

researchers need to take a personal, consider-one-life-at-a-time approach to interpreting life stories. (p. 136)

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that even when data collection is formally completed, “narrative methodologies often require further discussion with participants, such that data is collected until the final document is completed” (p. 7). This was specifically true of some additions I made to Anna’s story. Days before printing the final draft, we met and further discussion led to an addition to the discussion on seeking recompense from the Catholic Church. “The overall interpretation will be the researcher’s understanding, mediated by her particular disciplinary perspective, of the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon of interest” (Merriman & Associates, 2002, p. 38). This type of study gave me permission to look for understandings which would impact the discipline of counselling. These will be for the benefit of survivors.

The voice-centered relational method as described by Mauthner and Doucet (1998) suggests a way I was confident would do justice to each co-researcher and myself as narrator. The method included two or three readings of each interview text while listening simultaneously to each audio tape.

- Reading 1: The text is read for overall plot and story. Main events, subplots, protagonists, metaphors, words, recurring images and contradictions in the narrative were listened for. Then the researcher reads the narrative on her own terms – how I am responding emotionally and intellectually to the people in this story. This reading offers opportunity to be cognizant of my subjectivity. During this reading I often paused, making a note or two in my journal or I made a phone call to debrief. This reading for subjectivity brought me into awareness of my own issues and triggers. “The assumption here is by trying to

name how we are socially, emotionally and intellectually located in relation to our respondents we can retain some grasp over the blurred boundary between the narratives and our interpretations of those narratives” (p. 127). As I read the text accompanied by the tape for the first time, I recorded the main events, metaphors, and recurring images in the right hand margin.

- Reading 2: The text is read for the voice of “I” focusing on how the co-researcher feels, experiences and speaks about self. Different coloured pencils can be used to underline where the narrator uses personal pronouns of ‘I’, ‘we’, or ‘you’ to talk about herself. Changes in pronoun use may indicate a shift in the way the woman sees and presents herself or where she may be emotionally or intellectually struggling to say something. On my second read, I listened for emotion and wrote words of feeling and expression in the left column. On this second read, I also used a highlighter to note words and phrases expressed with strong emotion. This read helped me determine phenomenon which were important to the woman and areas in which I determined to retrieve a fuller telling of the story. Subsequently, I added new questions to the guiding questions for the second interview.
- Reading 3: Reading for relationships. Here I listened carefully for how each woman spoke about her interpersonal relationships: with her mother, father, other family members and the broader social networks in which she was raised, works and presently lives. Each of my co-researchers takes an active part today within the Community of Survivors. I listened for words with moral

and power connotations which impacted their healing and which are important to them in their life today.

3.4.1 Transcription and Analysis of Data

Data was transcribed verbatim immediately after the interview. Thinking “finish to start” is a suggestion Henry Wolcott puts forward for qualitative researchers (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p. 561). Thinking “finish to start” meant making tentative decisions about presentation of the data, analysis and interpretation of constructs, themes and patterns I encountered. Utilizing this approach helped me anticipate the type of data that I should continue to collect, and in what depth. It also helped me decide a format to use for transcribing. I decided to transcribe my own interviews as the material was too sensitive and confidential to hire someone. I also anticipated that doing my own transcribing would immerse me in the story more quickly and deeply, than if someone else transcribed. That turned out to be true for me. The benefit was that I was able to hear the specific phenomenon repeated over and over. I was able to quickly determine commonalities between the co-researchers’ stories. Listening, typing and reading in unison led me to a fuller understanding of the implications of the story. It immersed me into the data.

At the beginning of the second interview I dialogued with each co-researcher to clarify, change, modify, or delete anything they wanted altered in their story from the prior interview. I consulted with them about emerging stories.

One issue of concern to me in data analysis is how “to keep respondents’ voices and perspectives alive while at the same time recognizing the researcher’s role in shaping

the research process and product” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 119). Application of Quality Control criterion was necessary to do justice to the data.

3.5 Quality Control

Holstein and Gubrium suggest where the interview is a dynamic, meaning-making experience; different criteria apply from quantitative criteria such as reliability and validity.

One cannot simply expect answers on one occasion to replicate those on another because they emerge from different circumstances of production. Similarly, the validity of answers derives not from their correspondence to meanings held within the respondent, but from their ability to convey situated experiential realities in terms that are locally comprehensible. (1997, p. 117)

Lincoln and Guba’s basic question in establishing research trustworthiness is to ask “How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?” (1985, p. 290). Their tenants of “credibility”, “transferability”, “dependability”, and “confirmability” are parallel to the validity, reliability and objectivity criteria of the quantitative paradigm. Truth-value is discussed using the operational word “credible”. It was my responsibility to conduct the study in a manner in which the findings would be found to be credible and also to demonstrate their credibility by having them approved by the co-researchers.

Ten years later, Yvonna Lincoln wrote, “I prefer to think of this issue of quality as a dialogue about emerging criteria” (Lincoln, 1995, p.275). Further dialogue in the realm of qualitative research led her to increased openness to the criteria she originally proposed. She views these criteria as fluid and emergent, reflective of the commitment of inquiry to the fairness of the co-researcher’s views, to the learning of respondents as

much as the researcher, to an open and democratic sharing of knowledge as opposed to my privileged gain of such knowledge and to the fostering, stimulation and possibility of social action (Lincoln, 1995).

The commitments that scholars propose for quality in this paradigm are “first to new and emergent relations with respondents; second to a set of stances – professional, personal, and political – toward the uses of inquiry and toward its ability to foster action; and finally, to a vision of research that enables and promotes social justice, community, civic discourse and caring” (Lincoln, 1995, p. 278). I have considered many of these authors’ suggested criteria as they apply to my study.

Persistent observation is another check for credibility. “Tracking” the conversation, indicated when a topic was important to the co-researcher and shifted the focus of my interview. It certainly led to changed questions in the second interview. Observing my co-researcher’s body language also led me to more detailed questions and occasionally a change in focus of the interview. A change in body language or tone of voice led to two occasions where my subjectivity was interfering with the co-researcher’s comfort level. As I noticed my positionality and changed interiorly, the co-researcher again felt comfortable, and was able to safely continue telling the story. An example occurred when I commented to a co-researcher that she looked happy in a photograph with her mother. This led to a discussion of sometimes putting on appearances for the sake of a family picture. This co-researcher was not happy with her mother at the time of the photo, and my assumption was met with a challenge.

3.5.1 Member Checks

Member checks occurred at the beginning of the second interview, and at each meeting to receive transcript revisions. At these times prior to gathering any new information, I checked with each woman about the accuracy of her statements as I transcribed them and requested permission to use them in the study. These were documented at the signing of the Data/Transcript release form. When each co-researcher signed the Sign-Off Release form she gave permission for inclusion of her narrative in my thesis.

3.5.2 Purposive Sampling

As indicated, the sampling was purposive, with specific criteria for participation.

- The women were recommended or referred by staff at Tamara's House or another professional.
- The abuse could not have begun earlier than five years of age.
- The woman had clear recollections and stories of her relationship with her mother.
- She was English speaking.
- I had not had a therapeutic relationship with a co-researcher.
- Each co-researcher had access to a counsellor she was familiar with prior to her involvement in this study.

3.5.3 Thick Description

In this study I utilized thick description from the data of stories taped during the interviews. The interviews offered many descriptions and accounts of the survivors' relationships with their mothers. These provided a full perspective.

3.5.4 Practicing Reflexivity

I think the primary benefit of keeping a journal is awareness of the researcher's voice. Awareness enabled me to move towards acceptance of myself in the research, choose what to include and how to proceed with meaning making. Kouritzan argues, "One layer of analysis of all observational texts needs to be an analysis of the language choices of the researcher" (Kouritzan. 2003. p. 1).

I had to monitor my language choice: the metaphors I used and the descriptors I applied to the anecdotes and stories told me. I know I tend to use descriptors from nature and needed to be discriminating about whether they resonated with the co-researcher's voice. If I was going to adhere to quality criterion in this study I did not want to use language that came from an educated, white, culturally influenced stance. I wanted to use language which resonated for the women. That varied for each co-researcher (Kouritzan, 2003; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In writing the bridges in the narratives I tried as much as possible to use the co-researcher's own words. In that way I did not "pollute" the text.

3.5.5 Positionality

I know that my study will be more credible for the honesty and authenticity I brought to it regarding my own positionality. I am not a survivor of Childhood Sexual

Abuse. I do not come from a family where abuse occurred. Recently in a debriefing session with student colleagues I was asked and challenged “Don’t you get emotional about what you hear has happened to these women?” Yes I do and I have. I have allowed myself to express my abhorrence for the perversity of humanity. I have been angry, appalled and fearful for the lives of these women. Simultaneously I have been curious, amazed, repulsed, sorrowful, empty, sad, encouraged, horrified, and a myriad of other emotions.

The actions of sexual abuse are diverse, and in my personal life, I have encountered everything from non-physical sexual abuse to ritual sexual torture. During my practicum one supervisor counselled me in the area of self-care. She required I journal about my feelings, then link them to positions of power in the workplace, family and church. She invited me to consider political implications for the abused and the abuser as well as the impact personalities and principles play in the presence of sexual abuse in our society.

In this circuitous route, I have discovered an unanticipated detachment from the “stuff” of sexual abuse and a surprising ability to care for the woman and be present and focused on who she is today. This immersion into the world of survivors was where I was positioned as I embarked on this research. Self-care and debriefing were essential components for effectively completing this work so that my subjectivity did not negatively influence my interviews and meaning making. It is a process I continued to participate in while I was immersed in the site, as a researcher.

Unexpectedly, I found myself positioned in the interviews listening and discussing issues of clergy abuse in the Catholic Church. This issue is of great personal

interest to me. While I love the Catholic Church, the model of church as institution is the least comforting and appealing to me (Dulles, 1974). It is this model that protected abusers, while facilitating disbelief towards one of the co-researchers in my study. It is a model that is being challenged and criticized today. I hold the value of personal accountability for one's actions. This dilemma reveals how the secrecy within clericalism has prevented priests from being personally accountable to the people they serve. As a Roman Catholic I experience a frustration that the church has remained outside the laws of our land for too long and been accountable only to a patriarchal hierarchy. I am encouraged to respond to the value of advocacy where "structures or policies seriously ignore or oppose the principles of respect for the dignity of persons, responsible caring, integrity in relationships and responsibility to society" (Sinclair & Pettifor, 2001, 88-89), in order for change to occur as quickly as possible.

3.5.6 Community

Lincoln has labeled an emergent criterion under the rubric "community". This label acknowledges that research takes place in, and is addressed to a community. My research took place in and was addressed to the community of survivors of childhood sexual abuse, the therapeutic community, and the educational community at the University of Saskatchewan. This new rubric precludes the desire of those completing the research to serve the purposes of the community (Lincoln, 1995).

3.5.7 Voice

Increasingly the criterion of “Voice” is mentioned. Voice: who speaks for whom, to whom one speaks, why one speaks, and for what purposes one speaks. Together these voices create praxis even when no praxis was intended. I am acutely aware of the responsibility of giving venue to the voices, to listen to them and then access the experiences they lead to. Tierney argues “postmodern research demands that the researcher be involved both with the ‘research subject’ and with changing those conditions that seek to silence and marginalize” (Tierney, 1993, p. 5). There are enormous implications for our society in giving voice to the survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Research suggests that one in four women has been sexually abused by age eighteen (Finkelhor, 1990; Holz, 1994). That statistic translates to one in four women having a story to tell that will affect costs of health care, services of health care, human service professionals, and necessitate education and advocacy for children’s rights and protection (Burgess, Watkinson, Elliott, MacDermott, & Epstein, 2003).

3.5.8 Critical Subjectivity

Yet another criterion is reflexivity or critical subjectivity. This is described as the ability to:

Enter an altered state of consciousness or high quality awareness for the purpose of understanding with great discrimination, subtle differences in the personal and psychological states of others. This reflexivity is essential to understand one’s own psychological and emotional states before, during and after the research experience. (Lincoln, 1995, p. 283)

This criterion recalls researcher subjectivity, community, voice and use of a reflexive journal. Conversations with my co-researchers to discuss contradictions, heighten self-

awareness, move together to meaning making and create personal and social transformation were impacted by my ability to be reflexive.

3.5.9 Reciprocity

Another criterion exemplifying the relational shift of quality is that of reciprocity. Researchers argue that intense sharing opens all lives involved in this form of inquiry. The people involved in the research effort and their relationships were marked by a deep sense of caring, trust and mutuality (Lincoln, 1995). I saw this evolve during my research. An initial positive relationship was necessary before I selected a woman as a co-researcher. In the initial phone conversations, each woman opened up to tell the beginning of her story. I was surprised by their willingness to be vulnerable, and realized quickly the mutuality required of me to honor their story and their person. As details were intimately shared, I saw this reciprocity becoming a reality. Reciprocity is dependent on the additional criterion of “Sacredness” being present.

3.5.10 Sacredness

Sacredness in the domain of social–science “issues from the egalitarian aspects of the relationships created in the research–to–action continuum” (Lincoln, 1995, p.284). The spiritual or sacred side of science emerges from a profound concern for human dignity, justice and interpersonal respect. This energy is co-created between researcher and co-researchers as relationships are built on mutual respect not power, granting a dignity and a deep respect and appreciation of the human condition. I see this sacredness as an energy that creates synergy – a trust that stirs within the spirits of all involved to

give their best to what they are creating together. Each person is honored and valued. My experience with sacredness during this research is addressed in chapter seven.

3.5.11 Sharing the Perquisites of Privilege

A final emergent criterion from Lincoln is that of “Sharing the Perquisites of Privilege”. While at this time I do not foresee any royalties, accolades or honors being attributed me for the research I embarked on, I realize it could be decisively contributory to the issues survivors encounter. It is a humbling reminder that I will complete my Masters degree out of the incredible pain and trauma these women experienced. Part of my recompense to them will be the counselling knowledge I gain and share with other counsellors, for their benefit and the benefit of other survivors.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

This study followed the ethical guidelines set out by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics and Behavioral Studies Research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Daughter's Narratives

4.1 Introduction

Chapter four is the heart of this thesis because it is alive with the stories of the women survivors and their mothers. Marguerite, Anna, and Sarah are gifted and determined women who met the fear, bewilderment and alienation of childhood sexual abuse with diverse coping strategies. They entered abusive relationships, married, had partners, bore children; and as they lived, they encountered the legacy of the abuse. Its effects lingered years past the actual events. Their resiliency helped them survive. But each woman wanted to be more than a survivor.

Marguerite, the oldest daughter of eleven children was abused by her father in her early teens. Her mother's quick intervention to remove her from the home resulted in many emotional wounds between the two of them while simultaneously protecting her from her abusive father. Marguerite quit school before graduation, and lived with the love of her life bearing his child. Grief enveloped her world when his death left her alone with their six month old daughter. A few years later, her brief marriage to an abusive alcoholic, ended in divorce. Through great determination, she rewrote the story of her life, becoming a social worker who is happily married and proud of herself today. As an adult she enjoyed a renewed relationship with her mother.

Anna also is the oldest surviving daughter of eight children. As a young teen she was abused by a patron at her parents' hotel, and two catholic priests. The disbelief of her mother and father regarding any of the abuse left her isolated and lacking emotional maternal support to this day. She was briefly married to an abusive man and the relationship ended in divorce, leaving her a wonderful son to raise alone. She has fought health problems all her life, working determinedly to raise her son differently than she was raised. She struggles daily with poor health, is presently single, and is self-employed as a massage therapist.

Sarah is the youngest of three sisters. At seven years old she was abused by her oldest sister and at fifteen, her father abused her. With determination and perseverance, Sarah emotionally and physically separated from an enmeshed relationship with her mother, whom she had experienced as her only support. She independently began a new life apart from the family and church she had been immersed in, as a social worker in a different city. Presently she lives with her partner and has two step-sons.

Pseudonyms have been used and place names changed throughout the narratives. Each story is subdivided into parts determined by the focus of the interviewed conversations. The headings vary from story to story as each co-researcher placed meaning on different experiences of her relationship with her mother. The woman's words are placed as single spaced quotations, connected by my dialogue. Unique to Sarah's interviews, was the manner she stressed words and phrases by pausing, or drawing them out, as opposed to changing voice intonation. I wanted to highlight the affect in her story, and therefore these phrases and words are italicized.

Read these and all the survivors' words with spirit. Of primary importance in this study is the impact of the abuse on the survivor's relationship with her mother. I invite you to hear the voices of these women as they tell their stories.

4.2 MARGUERITE'S STORY

4.2.1 Heritage and History

Marguerite's story is steeped in the legacy of her heritage. She recalls with affection carrying her two grandmothers' names.

They're both very unusual names, which I've always been thrilled about. My grandmother was the social worker of the community, the choir director, and the midwife, and so had great skills, and therefore worked with the poorest of the poor. When I do visit our hometown community, they always say "I so clearly remember your grandmother so and so. She was the Godsend of this community for years and years and years!" It's nice to reflect back on that and see some of those traits in my mother. And now, I hear my daughter's voice in the next room, it's like I hear my voice. My take on things. And I say, "Holy smokes! It's just like me!" I'm on the other side of the wall and it's so amusing!

As Marguerite sought to understand her life, she looked carefully at where she has come from and who she has come from. She wistfully considers that had it not been for her childhood sexual abuse she would have journeyed on a much different path. A path that experienced more of the richness of the generational matriarchy.

Because I could see my mother practicing a lot of my grandmothers values and morals and everyday housekeeping type things – or education. She was all for education! I would've been able to stay straight with all the positiveness that's brought forth from the grandmother, to the mother, to myself, and then to my daughter.

But things did change. The experience of being sexually abused as a child sent Marguerite's life into a three hundred and sixty degree spin. It altered the natural flow of the generational relationships, leading to decisions and directions that were unwanted at the time. Born the eldest daughter to French, Roman Catholic parents, Marguerite was

one of eleven children. Early photographs suggest great care in meeting the physical needs of the children.

And here I am with beautiful white leotards and black patent shoes and a cute little red and blue vest and a beautiful frilly blouse and my brothers were nicely dressed too. And I think I would have been about three years old if that, sitting on my mothers lap. And I commented to that and she says, “Yes. I just loved dressing you up.” And the same with my brothers in their nice outfits. You always wear white leotards, the boys always wear beautiful little black socks with their nice shoes and what not and taking a lot of attention to details and caring for us and nurturing us. And I really love that story! And I can see throughout the years and the days of her work that attention, and that great work she put in to making us feel comfortable and warm and loved. Then there became too many kids to look after.

By the time Marguerite was six, there were three other toddlers running around. There were diapers, ringer washing machines and lots of baking to do to feed large harvest gangs. In fourteen years her mother had birthed eleven children and Marguerite, being the oldest girl recalls being placed in a parental care-giving role at a very early age. It seemed she was forever sitting in a rocking chair, rocking either a baby or one of the younger toddlers.

While always experiencing care, nurturance, and provision in the physical and material sense, Marguerite was aware of an inner loneliness – an emotional hunger that was not being met by her mother’s burden of responsibility to the large family. She speaks reflectively with a lingering pain and an earnestness of desire.

The physical aspects that you would practice with a child were met – definitely! That was met! And the spiritual or faith teachings were always there and were always talked about. You could overhear her talk about them while she was working. You could hear the conversations and the talking. But the emotional... and for the longest time I resented that. Because I don’t remember! I searched really hard to remember – one occasion only where my mother hugged me... hugged me – kissed me or hugged me... But me particularly, and my brothers have commented on that themselves. They have missed that themselves – that one on one – personal, emotional, nurturance, is a piece that has been missed.

We had two huge hedges of lilac bushes. And I'll never forget the many times... Now I would have been 9, 10, 11 years old. I'd leave the house; go for a walk with such a lump in my throat! I could have been gone for half a day and would not have been noticed missing. And I would sit in the bush over there and I'd watch the cars go by on the highway, which was a quarter mile away. And I suppose pining for being noticed, for being wanted, for being nurtured, for just one good word being said!

While the longing to have those emotional needs was felt, there were other behaviours occurring within this alcoholic household, which would affect Marguerite. She recalls reading an article in *The Feminist Perspective* about the grooming that takes place over a long period of time by perpetrators in familial settings, prior to the actual assault. She perceives her mother's awareness of these inappropriate behaviours.

So I think my mother must have had it in the back of her mind, given the derogatory talk my father used to do about women. Sexual derogatory talk – always going on. My father did a lot of that in front of the children. Then there was an alcohol situation – alcohol abuse. ... And that has affected a lot of my other siblings too. But the verbal – and even that was more of a subtle – subtle innuendos you could say. So... for some reason my mother twigged.

4.2.2 Blabbing to Mother, Believed and Rescued

On a hot July day twelve-year old Marguerite confessed to a priest her part in what she thought was a sin. The priest, in his wisdom, gave her only one week to talk to her mother about her father's inappropriate and unwanted touching. So with many toddlers running around, a harvest gang to feed and hired hands around, this young girl sat down with her mother and said,

“My father is touching me in places I don't want him to touch me.” I still see the look in her face. As much of a sincere, caring, genuine, loving person that she was.... So loving of children! It must have crushed her! To no end! And in those days, being the good, Catholic, French family, there was no such thing! And so for her to have to deal with it alone. She believed me instantly! Which, speaking of safety.... She believed me. Why, I'll never know. ...The very day I shared with her, it would have been later on in the evening... She confronted him immediately. Being that they were farmers and in the field, it wouldn't have been

that easy. So for her to find the space to do that before nightfall, and being as devastated as she was... And I was so scared! For me I was scared in that little window of time that he would be angry and I would be suffering the consequences of blabbing! I mean when you're a kid you use the word blabbing! And then the whole thing about causing a rift in the marriage. There was already a lot of rift, because of the alcoholism! ... That evening she had the opportunity to talk with me and she said, you know your dad did not deny that he's been coming to your room and that he's been touching you and that he's been inappropriate with you at different times. She said, "I'm angry with him! I don't think there's any excuse for what he did!" Which meant she believed me and wasn't blaming me at all.

This daughter felt great gratitude to her mother for believing her when she had felt unimportant and unnoticed within the family. In the local community, sexual abuse was not talked about. In the 50's children did not know the terminologies, and it was all swept under the carpet in the school and in public. Her voice is thick with varied emotion as she speaks of the abuse and subsequent events initiated to protect her and provide for her safety.

Immediately her mother arranged for her to move bedrooms, sharing a room with her younger sister, which had a lock on the door. There was a decision made to send Marguerite to a convent school three hundred miles away, that September. Part of the thinking within Catholic families at the time was, that if one of your sons or daughters entered religious life, your family was totally blessed. When the incidence of sexual abuse was revealed, Marguerite's mother considered this to be the best time to send her daughter to the convent school. To move her from the family and the perpetrator. Yet in her recollections there is also an awareness of her mother's personal devastation, and consequences for the entire family as well as her own losses.

4.2.3 Moving Away: Resentments, Loss and Grief

In conversation with Marguerite after speaking to her husband about the abuse, her mother says that things will be different between them from then on. As a child almost thirteen, one is beginning to do a lot of adult thinking and she was able to discern how her disclosure impacted the marriage. Years later with hindsight, she was able to identify the triangulation, which became more overt at the time.

In analyzing this and really studying the core of it for many years, I saw what I had not been able to name – that my parents’ relationship did go down the tube as a married relationship in many areas and the bickering and fighting between them was incessant and incredible. ...My father made me feel all along, when I looked back, that I was causing this. That I had caused it!

When Marguerite would return from the convent for school vacations or holidays, she found herself experiencing continued triangulation as a result of the abuse. The atmosphere was often tense between her and her father and her mother.

There was always it seemed like, we and they. My father favored his sons. And of course after this happened, my mother was protective over her daughters, and it appeared that she favored her daughters. But in the end, when a person realizes the convolutedness of all this, what she was doing was protecting her daughters. She would never allow the daughters to go to the barn anymore. So my father would get ticked... And he was constant! Every day my mother would say, “No, my girls aren’t going to the barn! You don’t need them! You’ve got four boys that can milk the cows! The girls are staying here.” And in the end do you know what it was? It was protection!

Marguerite’s attendance at the convent created a gap in care for the younger children and assistance with household duties. Fortunately one of her brothers took an interest in housework and baking. However incessant teasing and blame for this new scenario from her macho brothers and father, greeted Marguerite when she returned for visits. While the actual abuse was over, the ramifications were not.

As soon as her mother decided this was the best time to go to the convent, her mind raced with the impending changes and losses. Missing her brothers and sisters was an enormous loss! With all the time she had spent rocking, feeding, and playing with her younger siblings, it was no wonder that it was devastating for them to see her leave for the convent.

And I had resentments towards her for a long time because of what happened and I had to leave home and I couldn't be there with her and I couldn't be with my siblings. That was the beginning of the end of the relationship with my siblings – my leaving home at thirteen. And how much she must have missed me. She must have dearly missed me.

Many years later, a younger sister confided to Marguerite, that she had been abused by their oldest brother. Simone had just about had a nervous breakdown at a very young age when Marguerite left and went away to the convent. “Because that would have been her only hope and salvation. She said I was her protector. We slept in the same bedroom together. I was protecting her without me knowing,” she pensively recalls. It has been painful to accept that she never knew what was going on at home and was powerless to change anything as a child or teenager.

4.2.4 Self Image and Touch

Marguerite remembers with pride and humour how she was very much a go-getter before the abuse. She recalls making comments of “great inspiration” and hearing an aunt say, “Goodness, gracious, she talks like an adult!” she remembers having conversations with her mother about career, and planning to be a doctor someday. She had huge dreams and self-esteem. Her mother expressed confidence in her abilities, by lending her \$10 to purchase a basket of fruit drinks, to be sold for profit to earn money for a little Brownie

camera. “And I’d go door to door and everybody would buy because I’d carry on the conversation about this and that! And the personality I had!”

Yet when asked about her self-esteem after the abuse, the contrast is startling.

There are photos of me in grade eleven that are frightening to look at. How angry and upset, and I totally lost all my self-esteem! It just went down the tube! ... Fearful. Frightened. Unsafe. No confidence. The shame.... The shame! It’s like it’s written all over you! It’s like it’s – this is written all over me. It’s written on my forehead! And you feel ugly and shameful, and how does a person have self-esteem when that’s the way you feel?

Layers and layers of clothes! For the longest time I wouldn’t look in a mirror! For years I didn’t know my hands existed because you are made to touch something that you didn’t want to touch at a young age. So you blame your hands – as a survivor. And when I was in group therapy about twenty years ago and we had to draw our body on a piece of paper... I drew mine without hands! ... Never recognizing that that was a useful part of my body! It had gone away for some reason.

At boarding school, Marguerite had a beautiful, young thinking, Sister Superior who would regularly pass by the girls, place her hand on their back and ask, “How was your day?” and that kind of thing. It was weird for Marguerite at first, as her experience with touch had been such an unhealthy one. But as she started to see the other girls taking it all in stride and experienced how nice and easy it was, she began to rethink the experience of being touched, and thought, “Oh. That must be OK.”

Marguerite speaks clearly and firmly, acknowledging her mother as a positive influence in rebuilding her self-esteem. As a teenager when she criticized her zits, her teeth, her facial expressions, or her eyes, her mother would affirm her saying, “You are a beautiful person! You have beautiful blonde hair; you have a beautiful clear complexion.” Her mother brought out articles of women who had been successful in different careers, encouraging her saying, “Make sure you read this. This is where it can happen for you.” She encouraged her to order and peruse college magazines and

calendars, and to have pen pals from around the world. After the abuse she had declared, “I’ll do everything I can to not leave you in this kind of a rut.”

4.2.5 Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother

Born and raised in a French community of deep catholic faith, one was expected to follow certain rules. Of course these rules always baffled me because as an adolescent, who had experienced abuse by her father, these strict rules not only puzzled me but angered me. I have asked myself often, Why does a good catholic person profess these expectations of their faith community, and yet, in the walls of their private homes, unspeakable acts are projected to the spouse and children?

The Ten Commandments were foundational to Marguerite’s upbringing.

Particularly the commandment to Honor Thy Parents was recited every night during childhood, and the belief to do so was heavily engrained. Upon arriving home late from a dance, Marguerite’s mother implied she must be sexually active with her boyfriend and therefore must marry him. Obeying her mother’s values was the unquestionable expectation at this point. It didn’t matter that she was so afraid to commit her life to this man.

My mother was excited when a week later, after I had consulted with Daniel, we had set the date for the wedding. He was thrilled because he genuinely did love me. I sure wish the feeling had been mutual! As I stand for the photo, I wish I were holding my daughter in my arms. Why couldn’t she be part of this occasion in my life? She was two years old and would have looked so charming in a yellow chiffon, little girls dress! I could see her waddling down the aisle as a little flower girl.... Instead, my mother suggested Jacqueline stay at the babysitters. You see she was born out of wedlock; therefore it is best that she not be part of this occasion! That would cause gossip. And gossip my mother did not want! She felt we must not promote an uncomfortable situation in the family. Honor and reputation is at stake. My mother is pretty and wearing a pleasing smile. Myself, the oldest daughter is finally married. The first of eleven children to be married. We had to do it proper. The oldest female sets an example to the younger siblings. In the community’s eyes it is absolute to appear prim and proper!

And so it was that Marguerite repeatedly attempted to live her mother's dreams for her. Upon leaving school she needed to get some kind of a job, as she could not go home where her father was. "I went to take secretarial in Edmonton, because I couldn't have gone back home. ... I didn't want to wash dishes in a restaurant. ... My mother's hopes of me were more than that!"

Whenever I did come home for two days to visit on a weekend, she would make it a point to take me upstairs and we would go and sit in one of the bedrooms and close the door. All hell could break loose downstairs with the kids or the siblings or whatever – and it was our one hour together! She wanted to know every detail of what I'd done and how I was living. Who I had met and what my classes were about and all that. So speaking of closeness, that's where I felt ... I felt she wanted to keep connected. She wanted to have that as much as it was a small string for her to hang on to. ... Sometimes I look back and see her envious of me being able to do that, what she didn't have. And that gave her hope in her situation.

In hindsight, her mother felt her life was somewhat wasted. "Other than my eleven beautiful children – my life is wasted in a sense. I could have done something so much better." With pride and admiration Marguerite relays that she could take on any project and work it through to the end and work it well. However being the instrument for her mother's vicarious living, led to a time when Marguerite became rebellious towards her mother's control and recognized that she wasn't doing what she wanted to do. "I was feeling like I was being pushed. She wasn't accomplishing anything, so she'd push me to do that... And I was resenting that. Suffocation."

Resigned to her mother's wishes for a family photo on her wedding day, Marguerite stands, lump in her throat, between her parents, sadly aware of her husband's absence. "Again I am honoring my mother's wish of a family photo. The family is all in

one room, so a photo must be taken! Why am I made to oblige my mother's expectations?"

Recalling her mother's shame over the events leading to Jacqueline's birth, and desiring to honor her parents, Marguerite succumbs to her mother's pressures regarding Jacqueline's absence at her wedding. "Honor and reputation is at stake. So, I had to pretend that my daughter did not exist. That was so painful emotionally! In our community, a common-law relationship was a dishonor to the family, let alone a child, born out of this union!"

4.2.6 Changing Maternal Patterns

Marguerite's mother did not remain ignorant to the personal, emotional nurturance she had neglected giving her children. As her mother grew older, she read psychology magazine after psychology magazine and knew that that's where she had failed. After the birth of Marguerite's first child, things became dramatically different. "My mother responded and gave all kinds of affection. Love and affection! In a totally different way to my granddaughter! And I noticed it right away and I recognized that she was making up for lost time." But not only did her mother begin to demonstrate affection to the grandchildren, but also to her children. What she had been unable to give, she miraculously became able to give.

She started. Like whenever we'd go for Christmas, or she hadn't seen me for a long time, because of career and that kind of thing – moving out of province even – and coming home, she'd be so pleased coming in the door. And I was just about stunned the very first time! And I must have been late 30's coming in the door and she gave me a big hug and a kiss on the cheek and "Happy to see you" and that kind of thing. And when I journalled about it a long time later, I used to get goose pimples thinking about it, you know. It was unique and such a good feeling.

Marguerite is grateful for the opportunity Jacqueline had growing up to sit and chat with her grandmother. “She has the opportunity to have this wonderful experience with her grandmother.” Because of her grandmother’s personal commitment to change, there have been benefits for the entire family. These did not come quickly. There were many hurts and time was needed to learn new ways of dealing with life situations.

Did I make too hasty a decision in getting married to this man? I have given some thought to his excessive use of alcohol, which I have not overlooked. Oh, yes, I know too well what the effects of an alcoholic will cause the family members! I have lived in this bewilderment from age five! With my father yelling and punching his fist on the walls to try to frighten my mother, but instead it would scare the children out of their wits!

Where is the groom? Where is my new husband? Could he be upstairs with his drinking buddies? I knew the answer to these questions, but I went into denial hoping, that just this evening, he would keep his total attention on his bride! Was I fooling myself? I’ll change him! Everyone can change!

Marguerite becomes self-reflective as she considers her marriage to Daniel and the yearning for physical nurturance she experienced as a child.

So we all yearn. And I think Dolly Parton has a beautiful song, Looking for Love in All the Wrong Places. And I see that for many women who get into the same rut that I did. Look for someone who will make us feel good. Who will give us what we’re missing. And that’s where I headed for! As soon as a man was paying attention, showing me attention, I lapped on to that because I was hungry for that! I was desperate for that!

I realized a week after I was married that it was a bad marriage, that it was a wrong move on my part. But what did I have to go by?

Coming from a huge alcoholic family of origin that was really struggling, Marguerite quickly realized she was repeating the pattern experienced within her family in this new marriage. A father who went bankrupt on the farm with alcoholism and a mother who was a homemaker all her life and miserable.

Am I following my mother's footsteps? Her husband drank alcohol excessively and for twenty four years, I witnessed the horrendous effects caused by alcoholism to spouse and children. Will my children witness the same devastation?

He's abusive [Daniel], he's controlling, he has an alcohol problem! I'm stuck in a rut – I'm angry, and where is this getting me? I can't do this for another forty years like I'm seeing my mother! Because the map was laid out there! You'd have to be in total denial and have blinders on to not see that.

It is unbelievable to Marguerite that she found herself exactly in the rut her mother did not want her to end up in. "It's amazing! And I wasn't going to continue this because I saw her nightmare!" So for eleven years Marguerite stayed in the marriage, realizing now that her daughter Jacqueline began to swallow the brunt of this relationship. As a teenager she blamed her mother for keeping her in an abusive, controlling stepfather relationship. At the time Jacqueline began to express her resentments it was like *déjà vu* for Marguerite.

It was devastating. Because it was like the map was right there. On the left page, here I am with my mother. It's all falling into place. The pattern is so totally plain. So when Jacqueline started ... I kept saying history repeats itself. History repeats itself. How do we stop this cycle? So once my daughter began the therapies to understand her situation, then we were able to match together how we felt. How I felt. How she matched what I was doing, or not doing. ... Working on her own self-esteem, dealing with what she had missed in her early years as far as attachment with me the mother, you know the mother-child bonding.

Marguerite's common law husband had died when Jacqueline was six months old.

I grieved for five years. First, I'm coming out of an alcoholic home. We all know that with losses and certain stages of development – you're not prepared for them... and there's huge issues around that! So I'm carrying all this baggage as it is. So with Jacqueline, at six months old ... of course the physical nurturance was second nature to me after raising, or helping raise, seven or eight siblings already with diapers and the whole physical nurturance thing. Not a problem there. The physical needs are met. But her emotional needs ... I see some parents now with their eight month old or year old toddler and how they play with them and they sit and coo for hours together, and I don't remember doing that with my daughter.

Ironically, that was exactly what Marguerite had longed for so much from her own mother.

The hurt and the separation, and the whole rejection emotionally, in a sense, was the focus of my own inertia! My energies were totally into that! So for me to have a concept that you stop and think of how my poor little toddler here, needed me every hour of the day, or quality time – when they're awake, just to sit and to cuddle, to hold her and to cuddle ... I wouldn't do that. So, when we did our work together, we did finally analyze it to the point where that is where she missed! We all know the developmental stages of a person's life and the needs of each developmental stage. ... It was the closeness that wasn't there. The intimate mother-child bond that didn't happen! And it's so crucial up to age three as we know ... and then that stunted us for about eight, ten, years! And of course she went into wrong relationships because of that. Looking for love in all the wrong places.

As a young adult Jacqueline asked her mother "How did you pull out of that?"

How did Marguerite get herself emotionally, mentally, spiritually and socially, from where she was as an abused teenager to where she is today?

Now that I know what I know now, and I see the history, you have to have miracles that happen along the way. And I said, great motivation and tenacity! You know you've had enough pain! You will never, ever, go back to that pain again!

Some of the early motivation came early in the marriage through participation in a women's group.

I had started in a women's group, because I was in an abusive marriage and I had wanted to understand this. First of all, am I making too much of this? If I'm not, why am I in a relationship that is so similar to what my mother put up with for so many years? And I can remember repeating the tape in my mind, saying, I am not living a life like my mother lived! I can remember repeating myself, and the tape was so strong for me! So, I will do whatever it takes to make a more harmonious life for myself as a woman and for my children. ... And you hear women in the group saying what they are not accepting anymore. That they loved each other and they loved their own person. They weren't prepared to accept any more insults to themselves, any more disrespect, anymore things that would stunt their growth. And of course there's your children. So I'm saying I need to show them a different life! This is not what it's cut out to be! This is too uncomfortable! This is

miserable! I'm miserable! Got to do something about it! Enough in group therapy said, "You're not going to change this man."

In discussion with Daniel, Marguerite came to a more complete awareness of how she best could grow and change.

Maybe I had my survivor issues I hadn't quite dealt with yet. That's fine. If it is about me I will work on me, but I'll have to work on my own, because you are making it too difficult, and I can't take any more of this.... Criticizing! Complaining and criticizing that I am a terrible person! I am not such a terrible person! I am going to pull out of this and make myself a good person, and if you don't like a good person, then I'm gone, I'm out of here! I'm gone! ... I brought these children into the world. I shall protect them. A mother bear protects her cubs! So, in order to protect my children, I protect them from harm, I protect them from emotional abuse.... The writing's on the wall if you're an intelligent person.... So I paved the way.

Working in therapy for over twenty years, Marguerite identified the areas of development she missed as a child and young adult. Perseverance and subsequent healing have been huge and vital pieces in breaking the pattern she had repeated from her mother and family of origin. Seeing an advertisement in the paper for GED to finish her Grade 12, Marguerite leapt at the chance to try the test. Phoning her mother to tell her she planned to continue her education, they both celebrated this chance for Marguerite to follow her dream. Her mother volunteered to baby-sit during the test which Marguerite passed. She was ecstatic! The following September, Marguerite enrolled in the one year social work program at the local college, with grandma happily babysitting and supporting this dream. Gaining satisfying employment followed, as did the financial security to leave her abusive marriage. She had begun the journey to be "out of the rut."

4.2.7 Paying the Price

Marguerite never wanted to blame her mother for not protecting her from the abuse. She "wouldn't even go there because of loyalties! To the parent! Love thy parent!"

It took her ten to fifteen years of healing before admitting that she needed to put a little bit of the blame on her mother for not being there to protect her. This became more real for her when her sister disclosed of being sexually abused by their oldest brother. Marguerite encouraged her to share that with their mother. Simone refused! “Mom is too old! She can’t handle that! You can’t ever tell her!” When Marguerite further encouraged her sister to go into therapy for herself, and take a look at where mom was while this was happening, Simone flipped out. “Oh she was busy! Mom never had time! She was so busy!” So I said, “You were six years old! Mom was not there to protect you.” She refused to go there. One didn’t want to put the blame on. “Honor thy parent! It is so strong when you’re brought up in that – I call it cultish religions, you know?” There are certain things you should never say which will make your parents seem less than perfect. “You just don’t verbalize it! ...Once you verbalize it - you’re putting blame!”

Perhaps the deepest hurt came about twelve years ago when Marguerite’s mother said to her:

“You know, you and I have always been like sisters. You have always been sort of the sister that I never had.” That hurt me deeply because all along since the abuse, what my mother did was put me in another category! For her to live with this, and not resent her daughter, because she couldn’t leave the relationship, she put me in the category of sister, because it makes it a little less painful to deal with. Or it makes it a little bit easier to swallow. I’ve read a book on incest and I was able to understand how it was for her. Excruciating!

And so for her to relate to Marguerite at all, she raised her to the level of sister, obliterating the mother – daughter relationship.

I felt that for so long! At a daughter level... whenever she would treat me, it was always at an adult, mature level, which you do with a sister! It fit! The pieces fit! Not that it was easy to swallow! And when I did my own personal therapy on that, it was to sit my mother in a chair across from me and be able to confront her and cry, and do the excruciating moaning and confrontation to her, for the pain that that had given me.

And why did I suffer the price of not being the daughter on account of that abuse? I was paying the price again! I lost my mother - in a way - I lost my mother.... So you could say I lost both parents.

Truly the abuse altered Marguerite's life irrevocably!

More pain has characterized these recent years since her mother's death. She has felt the abandonment of her siblings.

Five of my siblings found out a few weeks after my mother passed away that I had been sexually abused by my father. They had never known that. ... And that's a huge load for them. And so, out of loyalty ... so, the best they can do, without understanding all the dynamics of trauma - survivor's trauma - and it's very common, - is to not even go there, and not even speak to the survivor.

I constantly wish my mother was alive and could see this happening - the rejection by my siblings - so she could steer this ship and bring them all back together and round up the herd, and do her lecture and say "This is not appropriate" and you know. She had the skills and the ... courage - to fix this - or to understand this huge piece of the abuse, so it would have been dealt with and passed on to my siblings, in an understanding way. So that they don't see me as the bad guy in the plague or like the person who has cancer ... and you don't touch them because you might get it.

So since their mother's death, this family secret has impacted the family in a new way.

4.2.8 Renewal in the Maternal Relationship

The benefits for Marguerite of over twenty years of therapy have been a rebuilt relationship with her daughter and grandchildren.

But now we can talk. We've done such work together in understanding it and putting the pieces together and going from there. And my own understandings ... there's wisdom that comes through when she's talking and there's no guilt. ... It's not about who will have the worst strike against who. It's more how can we enhance each other? How can we beautify ourselves in our relationship? "Look at grandma! [Marguerite] Look what she did! At all the positive stuff she did to try and make things better for herself as a woman!" It is beautiful!

4.3 ANNA'S STORY

4.3.1 In the Beginning

When fire destroyed the family home, burning three children to death, and destroying her parents' hopes and dreams, family life became a string of days linked by work, meals and sleep. Well-meaning neighbours kept the newspaper reports of the fire from Anna's father, and her mother in hospital, was prevented from attending the funeral.

A fire!... She's afraid!

So I think a lot of what is going on with mom is fear....And there was a lot of speculation! There was a lot of speculation from in-laws – and I heard it! They've said it to me. That the fire was on purpose!... I went with what the coroner said: "No inquest was deemed necessary." So I believe it was accidental. But in our family there was always this "She must have done this on purpose."

And she was expecting me at the time. So mom was about three months pregnant with me when the fire happened. And...and she says she thinks she was blown out of the house in the explosion. She was doing home dry-cleaning, so the gasoline can and stove got a little too close I guess. So they were not able to get the older children out. And when dad found her she was holding the baby in her lap at someone's house close by...and somebody took her to the hospital, and when they got to the hospital, the baby was burnt too badly. So she died as well.

The trauma was enormous, as Anna's mother and father rebuilt their family and their lives. Anna's father became suicidal as a result of the losses and friends and neighbours would not talk about the tragedy with him. Her mother has been chronically ill as long as Anna can remember with varying health concerns. It always seemed to Anna that "She was trying not to get too close in case she got hurt again." A social worker had the wisdom to suggest her mother's personal growth and development stopped the day the fire happened.

The trauma of it! And then she started finding these ways to cope. So she's very manipulative, and very needy....pretty self absorbed....Last year is the first time she talked about the guilt she felt about the fire! Maybe now because dad is gone

she can really openly talk about it, because he wouldn't talk about it....I've given her permission, because I've said, OK, now I did my homework. I prepared myself for any surprises. Dad had never seen the newspaper article....People hid it from them! So I found it, and I had a Memorial Service. Before the service I phoned the priest who had the baptismal records, who would fax the baptismal certificates, because everything was lost in the fire. And when I got to mom's, I made up a photo album, and we had the Memorial Service and it was just like a funeral. We had friends invited for coffee afterwards. And as hard as that was, I made plans to stay for a couple of days....And you know I'm no counsellor, so I phoned a couple of people and said, I might need back up! I asked one of the palliative care people there that I really trust - a very nice man! And I said, if I get in over my head here, can I call you? And he said, Yah, I can.

Mom said, "I never saw the newspaper articles." I had it with me, but I said, "I think we need to talk about this a long time before I take the article out." So we talked for a couple of hours until she said, "I think I'm OK. I think I can read the article." So she read the article and I think it put her mind at rest a bit. It put my mind at rest to read what the coroner wrote. And I think it put her mind at rest too.

The trauma and subsequent devastation laid the foundation for the family life Anna was born into. By the time she arrived, her mother had lived through more tragedy than most people experience in three lifetimes. Anna's mother had given birth to three children before Anna. "And then, somewhere in there – in about eleven years, mom had eight pregnancies, four miscarriages, a hysterectomy and an open-heart surgery." Her health hung in a delicate balance when the last miscarriage led to a month of haemorrhaging, as she tried to uphold the reproductive teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic Social Services finally intervened, speaking to the doctor saying, "It's OK you know. We'll take care of her soul and you take care of her body." Following a hysterectomy which saved her life, two of Anna's aunts accused her mother of being a sinner. "So, no wonder she wasn't dealing with her children very well! Not a lot of support! The family was very poor. Dad brought home the bacon, but..."

4.3.2 The Family Bible

There were always rules to follow. They were the religious rules but also the 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother'. I was having problems with mom and dad in '94 and the bible opened right to that page. It's marked!

For Anna growing up in a strict Roman Catholic home this commandment and the family religion impacted many parental choices which affected her. As a child, Honour thy Father and Mother was demanded of her.

That was it. I need to remember it's a trigger for me. It's just about you honour what we say, what we do, what we need. Mostly with my dad, it was "what I say!"

Yah! Nooo talking! Always my dad would say, "You are so stubborn!" And I'd say, well there's mom and there's you and you're both pretty stubborn too!... You don't get to talk back. You don't answer back! So, it was a very rigid, very Roman Catholic family. And, "You do because I say so and that's it," and there was no discussion. So the few times I would say, "Something's not right with this"...I paid a high price. And I would often run interference for my brothers and sisters.

It was her mother's dream that Anna become a nun. She wanted Anna to live at the convent while attending school. But as there was no room available, Anna was given accommodation at the orphanage across the street from the convent. It was there that her first abuse at the hands of a priest occurred.

I tried talking...my mom and dad had fights about it! I got the impression she had no say in the decision to send me to the orphanage. She wanted me to become a nun, so she probably had a lot of say about me going to the convent. And she didn't have any say about me going to work in Regina with the priest there, which is where the second priest abuse happened. She said she didn't feel good about it but when my dad decided something was happening...it happened.... You didn't argue....It just happened! And I was old enough to work, so you know, get a job. There was no one who believed me – and when I did try to say anything, my father told me, "Priests don't do that. Priests wouldn't do that!" And it didn't matter all the Mount Cashel stuff that came on the news! I think part of it was that once he figured out priests did do things like that, it was very hard for him to connect that something would have happened to his daughter.

Speaking about sexuality unintentionally and uncomfortably became a family conversation when Anna was a teenager.

But then dad became involved around the kitchen table. And the talk was, “Well, now you’re a woman, behave yourself!” That was my sex talk. And I went, “What about the guys?” And this is not connecting! This is not a real positive moment in my life! Like, you behave – you’re a woman now, so you behave! It’s like dad, dad! I’m thinking now of dad’s attitude towards sex and women and Mom? Excuse me? And it wasn’t long after, I was molested by the first perpetrator, and it was in the hotel. That was before the two priests! And dad didn’t believe me!... You know you must have done something to make this happen!

Mom – all I remember mom saying is she remembered before she got married ...she remembered she had hair down to her waist, and the day before her wedding her mom chopped it all off, and said, “You’re a grown woman now.” Same thing right? You’re a grown woman, behave yourself! You’re a grown woman now, you don’t have time for this... chopped it off, permed it, and she’s a totally unrecognizable person when she walked down the aisle! ... She said what she was told before she got married was, “Well, now you’re his property and you don’t get to say ‘No.’ You have no rights in this relationship. You are his property. He owns you and will do what he wants, when he wants, whenever it is! Cooking, cleaning, sex...”

From the time Anna was a child, her mother’s health necessitated assistance with family responsibilities. As the oldest daughter the responsibility fell to Anna. Beyond helping with the tasks of running the house, she was also required to care for her mother. So much so, she was hardly able to be a child.

But you know I feel like I was always kind of numbed out, disassociated, trying to figure out how I was going to get my school work done and the floors washed and this feels like even as young as seven. Lots of responsibility. And no boundaries. Like I slept in the same bed, and it’s not the same as sleeping with six, I guess...but never any space for myself!..No physical boundaries...lots of yelling and screaming.

I functioned. I did the eggshell walk. Wouldn’t want her to yell and scream and get me in trouble with dad, ‘cause then it would get to physical, corporal punishment....and so you don’t want to go there, because that smarts!

I’m thinking in my adult head, but my little girl comes up and is very angry, that I had to take care of her all the time I was growing up. And she will talk to people now about her neglectful children. She’ll call all of us that, until we show up and then she’s got egg on her face. You know it’s like wait a minute. They’re all here!

This doesn't compute. So I've had problems in the town where she's living with people saying, "Well, you do need to come more often you know."

I get angry...with all the work I've done, trying to figure it out, trying to have a better relationship, and I go into the books the other night and I was livid! Because I couldn't find any pictures where she's holding me....Well the other night was the first time I really got in touch with the anger of how hard I've been working ... and I seem to be the only one right now, of five... 'cause I'm the oldest. Like she goes in hospital and I'm the first to get a call! It's always been my job to take care of her so... I felt old all my life! A little old grandma!

A lingering influence on Anna's relationship with her mother is a jealousy which originated in childhood.

I looked a lot like dad's mother! So we had a little triangle thing going. I think mom was jealous!...A lot! She's been very jealous of my relationship with my dad, my relationship with the dog, my relationship with my aunt. You know just anybody. Well, and with my husband. He flirted with her when they met. And she flirted right back. And I was sort of like this can't really be happening, right?

Assuming responsibility in the family during her mother's frequent hospital stays left a sour taste for Anna's siblings. They still regard her as bossy, to which she defends herself, "You know those orders had to come from somewhere! I did not make them up in my head!" At a deeper level, in assuming this huge responsibility of care for her family, Anna developed an intuition for situations and people. "Well my job as the oldest was to walk into the room and case it – everybody out! Sort of figure out – OK, this one needs, and that one needs ... And so I think I'm pretty hyper-sensitive to things."

Observing her father care for and love her mother almost fifty years, Anna acknowledges with both affection and bewilderment, the deep love he had for his wife. At the celebration of their 40th wedding anniversary Anna arranged a special mass for healing of families.

When they renewed their vows and dad kissed mom, it was like a big smacker! It was like, I think he's in love with this woman! I don't exactly know how!...It was

really all about mom. Where it came to mom he was very sensitive and caring. I asked him one day, “You know she’s not easy. So how did you stay together this long? I didn’t get away with this crap!” And he said, “I took vows when I got married. For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer. And I meant it!” He said you don’t know what’s going to happen! But you make the commitment and it was his mother who was his influence!

His mother was the one person who treated my mother with respect!... She was bedridden for a couple of years. My dad bathed her, diapered her, and fed her....And he certainly knew how to take care of my mom too! So...of all the people I could think of my mother being with in her sort of fragile state, because she was not well physically, not well emotionally, I can’t think of anyone who fit like my dad!

“So I think I learned.” Anna speaks with tenderness, respect, honour and great appreciation of her father’s compassionate care for her mother. It is an attitude she has tried to take on, despite much resistance and negativity from her mother. In the last months of her father’s life, he was too weak to be protective of his intimate relationship with his wife. He chided her for her dry humour in front of the girls saying:

“You, you’re the worst one of all!” And he said, “You! I used to try to discipline these kids and you were the ringleader! You were the instigator!” And I went Oh, Oh! So then, I got the picture of her being treated like a child. So that would tread upon her freedom, her self-respect at some levels. And mom would say, “I’d always know by the eyebrow what kind of trouble I’m in when I get to the bedroom at night!”...So anyways, the observation I made was that maybe there were times when my dad treated mom like a child. Yet he trusted mom to pay all the bills and keep the house running. And with all her health problems, he liked his house clean when he came home, and he liked the kids clean and the meals ready.

4.3.3 Safety, Care and Nurture

Despite her mother’s sicknesses and fragility, photos show Anna all dressed up as a cute two year old with hair and clothes carefully prepared. Her mother must have done it she guesses. Again at eight a picture shows her and her siblings all dressed up. This time she recalls being part of helping her mom and dad get the other children ready. A

picture of Anna in her Brownie uniform is a reminder she attended for a short time as money and opportunity allowed.

During her mother's two month hospital stay after open heart surgery, the woman taking care of Anna and her siblings abused them. Amidst conflicting pressures Anna tried to cope with this experience.

So, apparently dad came home from work early one day. He said he just had a feeling. And he said he found me locked in the bathroom because I wouldn't rinse the baby's diapers in the toilet anymore. And my sister said the impression she got was that just this once I said, "NO WAY! Not this time!" But I had been told that my hide would be tanned and she'd hang it on the wall if I told my parents that I'd been doing all her work. I had nightmares for three years after that! Waking my mom and dad up every night. The only way this came out was my dad got madder than she [the caregiver] was at me.... Got mad at me for having these nightmares every night! So, it wasn't long after that I was at the Clinic, trying to figure out what's wrong with me. But at the same time with mom's yelling and swearing ...we're doing the eggshell walk [because she's just out of the hospital]. She said she noticed something different with all five of us. Like I think we were having trouble bonding with her. I'm not sure if it was the separation anxiety....We functioned. We got used to her not being there. Maybe we were afraid she was going to leave again.

When Anna talks about wanting signs of affection and care from her mother, she quietly speaks of wanting to be held. She regretfully has no recollections of being held or physically comforted by her mother. But during her mother's chronic sickness, the required quiet in her home, and getting farmed out to relatives all over the place, she occasionally found comfort and nurturance elsewhere.

The one - she had sixteen kids. I don't know how women do that.... I'd say, "Oh, you have so many kids already." And I was just little. And she'd say, well, we just throw in another chicken bone, and a little more water. And you feed everybody. She had great faith, and she was a wise woman. You know, like an aboriginal elder. And you knew... she'd be sitting in her chair...and I would go from this uncle's house, and run through the bushes when I was being treated quite badly by his children or him, and she would just fold me up in her arms. And I don't know if I ever really said anything to her. But I just knew I could go there.

And this other woman was my uncle's wife. She was an incredible woman! And I just knew by the way she looked at me and talked to me, it was always with respect, and always with caring. So, I knew I had unconditional love with her.

She also discovered comfort in unexpected places. Dreaming a picture of her ideal life, Anna imagined she would meet Prince Charming. "He would be generous and caring and we would Viennese Waltz our way through life. And mom and dad did some of that, because they loved to dance and I was going to do the same thing." As she grew older and the time to move out on her own loomed near, all she knew was that she loved to dance.

It was the one time when I...It just felt like the only place of refuge and the only place of fun!...We had a hotel and the Beverage Room floor would get washed every weekend and waxed. And then the five of us would go in with woollen socks and polish the floor. I would get five pushes on the juke box – I don't know how many songs that was – and I would get to dance. All by myself, in the Beverage Room. And do little choreography things. And I'd watch Red Skeleton and Carol Burnett during the week and they had the Red Skeleton dancers, and I would just watch. And just cook up stuff. There was no money for me to take lessons....Somebody was always watching and then I'd sort of stop. And then you didn't have the same kind of freedom. The kids were always jealous. Always jealous! It didn't matter that I'd clean their rooms, and change their beds and busted my buns! They were always jealous when I got that time alone. That was actually my only time alone. Was maybe about a half an hour or an hour on a Sunday afternoon in the Beverage room in my woollen socks.

And then I went away to the convent. But I did a lot of choreography there. Everything! It was real amateur! Every chance, I took it! And girls dance together. And then at the orphanage, they had square dancing. And so I was there for the square dancing and the round dancing. And there was no way – you could've cut my feet off and I'd have been there! So it saved my life!

Even now, battling fibromyalgia, dancing remains a constant in Anna's life.

Recently hearing some Latin music she thought, "ooooohhh ... that's kind of nice!" She recognizes the need to have fun in her life - that certain music and dancing give her energy, bringing refreshment and renewal to her spirit. Dancing continues to be a source of nourishment and safety for her. It also recalls for her good times when as a child she

would nag her parents with “Please can I go?” begging them to take her along on their evenings out to square dance.

Looking at family photos reminds Anna of other experiences with her mother. In more recent memory is a very difficult and tense week spent with her mother. A photo capturing the visit shows Anna and her mother with smiles on their faces. “C’mon! Say cheese! Everybody smile!” Yet the picture is the antithesis of the real relationship.

Sometimes...I mean you just do it ‘cause they say “Smile.” I mean I’m not going to poke her eyes out!..That’s just too much evidence! And I remember the day of my wedding...I remember her not being with me, and me yelling and screaming at her, to come up and be with me, just to help me get ready. And I remember her saying, “You have a bridesmaid.” And I said, “Yah, but I want my mom here!” And I remember this time she wasn’t listening...I wasn’t going to be dismissed! I must have screamed at the top of my lungs from upstairs! I remember! And I had never been [insistent] in my whole life. And I think I heard my dad say, “Oh, just go!”

4.3.4 Rebuilding

In the irony of sleeplessness brought on by painful debilitating illnesses, Anna and her father shared many early morning conversations in the last months of his life. They were conversations which gifted her with a deep appreciation of her mother’s and father’s efforts to be parents despite a lack of role models in their own families. “And my mom wasn’t taught either. Her mother treated her far worse than my mother treats me.”

As an adult there have been determined efforts on Anna’s part to build a relationship with her mother. Seeking ways to capitalize on common interests she has accessed her mother’s wonderful skills as a seamstress.

I spend a lot of Christmas’ alone. ‘Cause I’ve been tired so long! But over the phone, I talked to mom about sewing a daybed cover. So I’d phone and say, “I’m stuck again. How do I get around this corner?”...We did it! She’s in Calgary and I was in Edmonton. And she’d say, “Well if you try this.... And I’d say, “Well I got to hang up now and I’ll try this. Maybe I’ll call you back.” So, I mean, she is a

good seamstress....And now I suppose it's a trade. It's a trade. That's how we do it now. So, it's one thing in our lives that feels reasonably comfortable.

These experiences are interspersed with ones of a different flavour. Frequently encountered are conversations and visits which evoke Anna's anger, sadness and frustration. Her presence at her dad's death and assistance in planning the funeral was met by a nasty response from her mother.

Just when my dad died, she was really nasty to me that whole day we were planning the funeral. Everybody was arriving and I kept saying she's tired, she's afraid, and stuff.... And then I was leaving! I was walking back to Edmonton and it was 40 below out! I mean I was not going to be here for the funeral! I'm gone! I'm out of here! I'm leaving! Ship my stuff home! I can't put up with her abuse anymore! So my brother, the baby brother, took her aside and said, "You can't do this! Like you can't do this mom. She's doing the best she can! And don't you see, she's doing a really good job, and she keeps asking you if you want to be a part of it." So he said, "this can't keep going on! Like you can't keep riding her. Because she's busting her buns here!" And so that night she came to my room and she tried to hug me and I pretended I was asleep. It's like a lovers spat, right? Or would be like being with my abusive ex-husband. I just pretended I was asleep. Didn't want to have anything to do with it! And she kissed me on the cheek and it hurt. It hurt! It didn't feel good. It felt like too little too late.

And I wonder why I'm going home for Christmas. When do I get to take care of me? I'm thinking it's just like walking into the fire. You just go in and do what you have to do and get out. And do the best you can.

I take off my daughter cap and put on my therapist cap when I care for mom. And I know how to do things nice. So...sometimes we'll even have nice times, like some laughs. And you know, taking a couple of sewing projects is always a good deal with mom. "Mom I'm having trouble with this."... And I have to keep always standing my ground.

More recently Anna has experienced an anger which is unfamiliar to her.

I don't know what all this anger is at my mother, but I know I'm not the only one feeling it. I know my brother was there when she got sick in August a few years ago. "Since you're here, I can manage two days." So it seems I've carried a lot of the weight for the family. Not bragging...it just seems that way. And I remember he wasn't there for even the one night and things were getting tense already, so I went out to see him in the morning in the garage...smashing cans, and I said "Are you OK?" And he said "No." And I said, I've gotta be quick here and I only have

one thing to say. "I'm sorry." And he said, "Me too!" And I said, "We just have to remember she's scared right now." And he said, "Is that how you do that?" And I said, "I just have to keep reminding me. She's scared! This is fear talking! When she really gets rocking and rolling, I might need to have a time out. But it's fear talking!"

I came back from dad's funeral saying, I was never going again! And then in August of 2000, I definitely was not going back again! 'Cause I came back suicidal that time! Now it had been bad before, but not that bad! I mean it just didn't leave me for about three months!

I kept contact [with her] on the phone, and had trouble with that. I questioned what my motives were...but I didn't go back again. She wanted me to go at Christmas time and I phoned my brother and said, "I can't do it! I'm afraid of what I might do if I go. I'm still really angry!" And he said, "I'll go for a day or two."... I've been the only one going and I think it's somebody else's turn! I can't do all the emotional work in the family! I can't be the only one being there for mom. Because there are five of us!

I think I felt the anger but I'd never recognized it before. I mean I may have said it in the past but not, not so clearly in my own head. So, as a child, I think what I did was I disassociated. Numb out your own feeling, don't go there, you're not allowed. Just scrub the floors Anna, just scrub the floors. If the clothes needed to be hung out on the line, you just go hang them. Don't even ask questions, just pick it up and go! If the floor needs scrubbing... and my most relaxing thing always to do, was to get down there and scrub the floor...you could cry. And nobody would know because the floor was wet and the tears would mix in. And you weren't getting yelled at if you were down there.

While Anna feels she is the only child in the family doing the emotional work needed for healing and building healthy relationships, she readily acknowledges her mother has done a pretty good job of pushing people away. She remains entangled within a family where the women are expected to cook, clean, scrub and do "the whole female thing." But what really bothers her is when the brothers just walk in the door and it's like, "OH!!!!!" My brother said to me, "I didn't do anything yet! And I said, "My point exactly!" I said, "All you have to do is walk in the door dear!" You just have to say, "Hi mom!" And mom says, "My baby will help me make these decisions." So the duplicity

between the ways the daughters and the sons are treated within the family is obvious and frustrating.

4.3.5 The Religious Influence

Her mother's dream that Anna go to the convent and someday become a nun, positioned Anna in a place where some of her sexual abuse happened.

The sexual assaults affected all of my decisions. I was afraid to become a nun. I assumed I would be at risk to be sexually assaulted again. I finally said, I'm not "uh uh! I'm not joining the novitiate next year!" What is this hidden agenda nobody told me about?

The abuse and the resistance of her father to believe Anna caused alienation from her parents and confusion in her identity and self esteem. The sexual assaults continue to impact Anna's comfort level within the Catholic Church and its' practices. Her mother is an avid rosary maker and invites Anna to join her in this craft.

And I don't think so mom. It's not what I choose to do. It's OK for you. And I think for me it's whatever makes her feel more whole. It doesn't matter to me, but don't put so much weight around whether I say the rosary every week, whether I say the rosary every day... and if I'm carrying it with me. She has them hanging all over the house – hundreds of them, sort of this trophy... see what I did? So I'm beginning to understand she takes a lot of pride in that, so that's good. Anything that makes her feel more healthy. I now cherish the rosary that she gave me! And every once in a while I do say the rosary. Just because I feel I want to do it at the time. I'm trying to find some freedom around it.

The disbelief by her parents of the abuse by the priests has kept her mother ignorant to the triggers associated with the Catholic Church. On a visit to her mother's home, a discussion developed about Anna moving in.

I would move in, but I can't go to church right now. I'm too angry. I'm too scared. It triggers me too much. A woman in her twenty's came to see me, telling me I should go to this bible school in Manitoba – she was cured there. And I said, "I can't do that." "But I was cured there," she said. And the third time I said, "I think you're old enough to know, I was in an orphanage for a year. Don't ask me

to explain the details, and I was molested by a priest. And I can't go where you went! 'Cause it's like dormitories, and it's too much like where I was, when I was younger." And my mom was sitting across the room, and she'd manipulated enough that I ended up going to church one morning. By the time I got home she knew I had been there. So her remark from across the room was, "Well, I don't know why you can't go there?" And I said, "Well you're not getting my point." And she said, "You went to church yesterday and it didn't kill you." So then I knew she couldn't be trusted...with anything I confide in her.

Anna continues to experience disappointment and frustration with the lack of her mother's support regarding her abuse. To initiate discussion was a no-win conversation which made her vulnerable to the pain of her parents' disbelief. She speaks quietly and stands in isolation within her family.

If I went to my mom there would be a fight about the whole thing! And she didn't know how to just come to me and support me around it.... Then you're just keeping it IN the family. The family secret! And somehow that wasn't going to help either! It was a secret I had to keep because nobody believed me anyway. And if they did there was just a fight about it. Once my father didn't believe me, who was going to believe me? Everybody I knew was Roman Catholic! And "Priests don't do that!"

Years ago, Anna's mother wrote her a poem titled 'The Helpful One.' While her mother's intentions were sincere and appreciative, the cold facts elicit memories that make Anna want to "start crying, or scream or something!"

You are a loving little girl...Your heart was full of kindness...Just like a little mother, you helped the work to shoulder. Because you were so feeling, you often got real hurt. Your affection showed to people, it made them use you badly....God will not forsake you. He doesn't punish kindness. He himself was love. Someday He'll smile on you Dear One, and bless you with his love. Have faith in your father God and offer all to him, and he will truly give you tenfold, whatever you give to him.

It seems to be Anna's mother's talk about God which frustrates her the most. Her mother's conviction "That God will not forsake you," seems unrealized. "Because my life

is not that easy right now. I sort of say, OK God. Anytime now! It's like too late when I get to heaven. Life on earth has been not easy."

4.3.6 Benefits of the Healing Work

Anna's marriage lasted a brief time. Moving home with her one year old son impelled her to make new choices for her future. She successfully completed her GED, writing the exam cold. Yet ADD plagued her into her adult learning years.

And there's a sense that I'm not meeting my potential...that I could be doing so much better....If you've had trouble learning all your life, there is guilt and shame. You can't put your finger on it because it affects people's lives....It meant my son and I lived on a very low income. I busted my buns and I could only achieve so much! And I could only retain so much information or I couldn't retrieve anymore! After I had my GED I was able to take massage training. It was hard! With not very much science background and single parenting and working full time!

A determined Anna set out to change the pattern of mothering she had received but lacked a model by which to parent differently. She enrolled in lots and lots of parenting classes to deliberately do things a different way.

And I had one woman who taught parenting classes but also babysat Jason for me. And I would watch her. There again, pick up those Golden Moments. If there's only one thing I remember from the parenting classes, it was that you need to hug your kids every day. And we weren't doing that. Jason's father had left when Jason was 11 months old. And when I took parenting classes he was 5 or 6 or 7. Well, that's a lot of years not to be having hugs! And he didn't like it by that point! It was like ahhhhhh! It was the recommendation in the text – that we hug our children every day and maybe even 5 times! OK. We'll try to get one in and see where the other 4 end up you know....And whenever Jason phones, I try to tell him I love him. And every once in a while, I'll send him a card. I'll say, "I love you...Mom." I figure that's enough. He doesn't need all the gory details of what just went on in my last week with social services or with my pain. But once in a while I think I need to be more vulnerable to him. You know I don't think I can complain about the pain all the time. But I think once in a while there has to be a reality check. That this has been really difficult!

Yesterday I called him telling him I didn't think I could go to mom's for Christmas. And I started to cry and complain about my face pain and stuff. I try not to do that 'cause that's what my mom does every phone call. And he said,

“You’ll have to decide mom.” And somewhere in the phone call he said, “Well you know, I’ll look after me, you look after you.” And I thought, Ohhhh, I’m on my own! But I kind of taught him that! I’ll hear it and go, Whooo, where did that come from? But I’m going to take care of me and you take care of you. So it was like I don’t think he took it on.

Anna is proud of her part in Jason’s decision. She knows their relationship is a much healthier one than she had with her mother. The parenting classes and purposeful work she did continue to allow clear boundaries to be set and freedom for each to live separate lives.

Her journey in confronting the trigger the Catholic Church has been for her has gifted her with a growing spirituality, and an ability to separate religion from spirituality.

Today I love to go to church at St. Bernadette’s ‘cause it’s sort of small town poor people, it’s a different atmosphere. So every once in a while on the bus, I just decide to see what’s happening. And I’ve been pleasantly surprised a few times. The one day I was feeling quite suicidal last summer I walked in and it was – the psalm about I created you....And the priest came down and said: George, God created you with your own unique talents. Go out today and use those talents well. Mary...you know he didn’t know me from a hole in the ground, but he talked to five people in the church and he made it very personal. And I was sitting at the back blubbing! ‘Cause I mean he didn’t know I went in that day feeling suicidal, right? So it was like, OK, I hear you God! So for me there’s little miracles that happen. And sometimes I go to church and I’m very disappointed by what I hear. Or the anger comes up. Or I’m triggered. If I’m not feeling well in myself, I will choose to spend quiet time in my room. The church has to be a safe sanctuary for me. And if it isn’t safe going on that given day, I won’t go there. I won’t go. So it’s a very personal thing. I don’t only go there....I think I’m rather liberated in my spirituality because of what’s happened to me. I just look for the Golden spots. Everywhere I go.

In spite of all the relationship difficulties that happened between her mother and siblings, Anna makes choices based on her personal values.

On some level I do know how hard I work in that relationship and in the relationships with my siblings. None of them are easy! Because of the family dynamics. But I keep pounding at it. I keep sending the birthday cards. I keep sending the Christmas cards. And in spite of the fact that some of them have been nasty to me, I keep trying. So when it really gets tough with mom I think of how would I treat any other human being? It comes down to that. And when it comes

down to that, I have no choice except to look at things from her point of view, because I would with anybody else. But for me to look at it from a mother-daughter perspective, I just get angry! I just get angry! And the big acceptance is that I don't ever feel I really had a mom!

With each phone call or visit, Anna has opportunity to put into practice new attitudes which help her accept her mother as she is. "With mom, I look for those Golden Moments but sometimes I forget them. It is very tiring being in relationship with mom." When the social worker stated "The day the fire happened, the only thing I could think of is her personal growth stopped right then," is a realization which needs to be remembered constantly and applied to new situations and circumstances.

I was talking to a friend the other day and she said, "I've been trying to figure out why your mom sounds so immature. But now that you've said that, it makes so much sense!" And so I have to keep remembering it! And like she's really old for 73,74....I think what's happened in her life and most people are only hit with a third of that. And she's been hit with big stuff! Huge stuff! All her life! So, she might be feeling a little old right now and behaving immaturity!

So while acceptance of her mother as she is, continues to be a challenge, Anna longs wistfully for some things to be different.

For the most part my mom often is angry, manipulative and disrespectful. So, I guess what I want from my mom is some gentleness, and some real understanding. I guess I don't want her to be so needy. I wish she would get a life. I wish sometimes that she didn't have to be here anymore, because she doesn't want to be! She wants to be with dad! There's no getting around that! And I sometimes wonder, OK, God, what's the deal here? And then I realize...we're not finished with this yet! There's a lot of healing that has to happen! Before she can go! I wish I was not the only one doing the emotional work.

I wish – I don't only want a relationship with my mother, I want a relationship with my family! I wish it didn't seem that I am the only one doing the emotional work. And I want us to be able to be in a room together at one time and not hurt each other. And I would like to be able to confide in my mom like I do in other people. And trust her with the information – but I know I can't. I mean she's just not there! And I guess I wish I knew what more I could do to make it better.

Anna voices many benefits of her healing journey. One of the greatest is an appreciation of her family history.

The whole family because of mom after the fire, is very interesting! Because we've all got stuff. We've all got stuff particularly related to mom. There's something about a relationship with mom and if it's difficult, you don't grow up as easy.... But for girls...the relationship with mom!

I got to know myself better and I'm really trying to be the best person I can be. And I'm trying to be a different kind of mom and I think I've got my son through some very, very, difficult times...where I decided I couldn't leave him stranded and he couldn't be on his own with those things. But for the most part I've tried to not make my life his responsibility.

About a year ago I almost moved in with mom because I'd had it with social services. And then I was making my problems her problems. And it's a good thing she said "No." I can see it now. Recently I see signs of mom not wanting to make her life our responsibility. She's expressed concerns about not wanting to be a burden. She's also not asking me why my siblings are not in touch with her more often. She did it all the time before, until I set a boundary...many times! It took several years for her to understand that I cannot speak for my siblings. And I can't influence their relationship with her. Not that I haven't tried! More about boundaries...

So with my mother and my son...I really try to do it One Day At A Time. And I don't always get it right, but then I get a chance to do it again!

4.4 SARAH'S STORY

4.4.1 Childhood Safety, Care and Nurturance

A self-professed tomboy, Sarah grew up on an acreage with many favourite places offering comfort, solace and fond memories. With her black lab beside her, she'd walk the golf course or explore the pond. Hanging out in a friend's tree house brought pleasure and adventure, as did exploring each new house her dad built.

You just go off and do whatever and it was good....And I think *in some ways it felt very freeing*. Because no matter what was happening, I could just go off, and take off, and take the dog, and do things. *I guess it sort of felt powerful*. I could go explore! And that was OK.

Hanging out in the kitchen with her mother became a habitual place of safety and comfort.

I'd sort of hang out. Let's try this!...'Cause it's a time when I knew she was sort of around and you could go in and talk. She was there for basics – feed me three times a day, clean clothes – those things she did. Homework as much as she could. I taught her spelling and math – so we learned that together. She gave me positives for that, as no one else took the time to teach her and she appreciated that. Plus she was dyslexic so they thought she was stupid. In grade three my mom took me to the U of M and they found my dyslexia – my math was good, so it was mild I guess. But I think she felt close to me and proud because she gave me that. She did what she could so I was not labelled stupid – and tried to help that image of herself change.

Oh my God she was funny! And she would tell me stories- personal stories – family stories, and sarcasm was a staple between us! As to words, she would often talk to me and with me for periods of time when she did whatever in the house. *I was incredibly shy!* Probably until I hit twenty! So, I was near her a lot, and if we went out and saw company, or had relatives over, I was always close to her because I was shy!

But you know there was always the feeling that I spent a lot of time alone. *Emotionally, I never had a sense that she was sort of there! I always felt that I was there for her!* And that's something I know now is in some sense, unfortunately true. That I was there for her and she wasn't there for me emotionally...

Sarah's family was a card playing family and one of her favourite activities with her mother was a game similar to double solitaire. Chinese checkers and other games of mental challenges and stimulation became favourites. "Then she didn't unload on me and so it was just a time we could hang out. *There wasn't any expectations of having to fulfill anything!*" Prior to the teenage years, she and her mother talked all the time. And "I was sort of like her best friend, and she was really good friends with me too and then when I entered teen age, that changed."

I actually wanted to be a counsellor as a teenager! The idiot that I am! That was my understanding because I got lots of positives, from my peers as to being a good listener! I don't know where I got that from!? My mother! That's sort of what I thought!

4.4.2 Role in the Family

While one sister was the family genius, and another the family beauty, Sarah's role became entrenched as the family counsellor. Many conversations Sarah had with her mother centered on "Sex". As a pre-teen and teen she was aware of how sexualized her mother was.

My mother held a lot of importance in terms of what you looked like and your sexual powers. Partly because my mother has grade three education. So for her, I think being appealing sexually was very important. Her sense was that, "*Women sort of gave sex to get love and men loved, to get sex.*" *I mean that was her axiom!* And in some sense, that is what she bestowed to me! I know that!

I never felt pressured to be Barbie dollish. She just sort of let me do whatever. Which was good and bad! Because in some ways I felt neglected, because she was never paying attention to me. In some ways, I felt I was on my own and sort of raised myself. Often!

And I think with my mother there was a sense of not being comfortable...well she told me too many things. I mean she told me so many things, in so many details about their sex life etc. I think I really hated that to some degree. It's like I was trying to figure it out already, and *I don't want to know!* About intimate details!... Sort of where she was at, and problems they had etc. And I disliked that sort of

intimacy and that sort of closeness with her, in terms of her telling me stuff. But at the same time she felt isolated, and she felt like I was the only one she could talk to. Now I look at it and say, *well, she should never have friggin' done that!* But at the time, I felt I needed to support her, because who else was there? Right? And I think at that point I looked at it as an intellectual sort of problem. 'Cause I was very much into my head, and that's where I mostly go. I looked at it as a problem to solve and that was my way to cope with it. Well, try this, and try this! Not to the emotional part and how that affected me, and the fact their relationship might be bad or whatever! I didn't want to deal with that! So I just looked at it much like the math problem to solve.

It was more that if she wasn't getting along with my father, with her husband...then I sort of supposedly took on that role. So then we were close, and then as soon as things became good with them, I was sort of out of the picture. *And in some sense I knew I didn't have any power in that, right?* I mean she would ask my opinion but she would do whatever she wanted to anyway. So I mean it's not like I had any power in terms of what she would do.

Sarah's relationship with her mother continued to become enmeshed and increasingly complex. Her first sexual abuse occurred as a seven year old by a drunken oldest sister and was talked about to other family members. On a sleepover with a friend at fifteen, her girlfriend got too close sexually for Sarah's comfort. The most intrusive and damaging encounter though, was with her father at fifteen. This happened while her mother was in the hospital. Sarah just "fit into that role."

I said to her, this is what happened, because he viewed me while I was in the bathtub. So I actually caught him. So I said, this is what happens when you're out! And she says, well, Yah, because this has also happened to me! So then it became more about her. I think initially she was good. But then that changed within a day or two and I was just sort of ignored! "It" became ignored. And not looked at. And yet there was a sense that it would be disruptive. It's sort of like, "Yes, I know! That's not a good thing!" But at the same time, I don't think she wanted to disrupt her life and have things change. And neither did I.

So it was sort of like we don't talk about this, and it's left. And I think in some sense my mother was incredibly angry at it, and expressed that anger towards him!...And I just tried to avoid being alone with him obviously, right?...I mean he was so distant anyway! It's funny because in some sense there was a contradiction with him, because I always felt prior to that, that physically he would never hurt me. I don't think I ever heard my father raise his voice to my mother which he certainly could of, because she used to rant and rave at him. And he would never

lose his voice or do anything to her in terms of being physically aggressive. I mean he was actually very quiet!

So I think sexually I was unsure of him...but not feeling a lot of physical threat that he would actually rape me or anything else...It seemed like we had an agreement – You stay wherever you are, I'll be where I... just sort of leaving each other alone.

Sarah expresses incredulity recalling an uncle's visit where he said "Your father must have abused you because you're so angry at your dad!" The comment set the stage to simultaneously feeling affirmed, "Yes!" as well as "I don't want to deal with this!"

Like I was incredibly angry! And I mean...partly the voyeurism...I don't know if it was because he left me with my mother all the time! There was some sense of being incredibly angry at him! And now, looking at it, I realize I couldn't have been angry with her, because she was my emotional support. Where as he was so distant I could be angry with him. But my mother I couldn't be, because she was the only one that I was close to off and on.

The rationalization that it would be safer to stay together as a family after the abuse was fuelled by Sarah's awareness of how miserable her mother would be if they left and took action. So miserable, they would likely end up back with her father. Sarah admits, "I did not want to have us leave and be the only one for my mother!" At 15 with an awakening sense of power, her father did not appear so threatening.

I felt like if I had to, I could go and talk to her or whatever. And there was also the fact that in my mind, I thought maybe I had been abused by him before, and that was also when she was hospitalized. So, my sense was, as long as she doesn't leave home, then I'm all right! *Because it was when she was hospitalized... you were fitting into that role then of taking on wife!* So, if she didn't go anywhere, then...it was all good!

Playing into the dynamics of Sarah's family was her mother's history of being orphaned at eleven, and raising herself in the bush from 15.

So, compared to that, I think whatever tragedy happened in my life was always miniscule to the fact that these huge things happened to her! So I think that was a

part of it for me – *I was taught to minimize – anything in my life!* Like my experience of going to my mother was sort of like if I had a broken leg, she'd have two broken legs and an arm, emotionally speaking! *So, you know, what was the voyeurism compared to all those things?* So in that sense, it never seemed that big!

When speaking of receiving support from two women friends after the abuse, she always “had the sense that because it was voyeurism, it was sort of OK.” Sarah laughs now recalling the blurred boundaries and the minimizing of serious and damaging experiences.

She becomes reflective and confident talking about her self-image and esteem after the abuse.

On one level things didn't change. I was a tomboy and would still go off to play football with the guys and play baseball and do those sorts of things. I don't think anything changed for me as to still feeling a certain amount of safety in being able to do that.

And, I think I became more closed off. I think I became less free. And I think *I became much more aware that I didn't want to use that sexual power that I probably first learned about from my mother.* And I think with my abuser – with my father – I think I tried not to be sexual. *I didn't want to get noticed.*

I just basically continued to be very asexual until I hit about 20, 21. I just closed that part off. I don't think I consciously thought “I don't want to look good.” But I just didn't bother to look good. I still went off to church and I dressed up because that is what I was into. But I think on some level that sexualized power scared me. I really didn't want to have anything to do with it! I just really didn't want to spend energy on sexual energy. I think in terms of that whole wanting to be with anyone else, I don't think I even wanted to go there. I felt more alone often.

Yet the role of family counsellor has continued to be thrown on her, accompanied by blurred family boundaries.

Like my whole family phones me! Even till like two years ago, at two o'clock in the morning, my family would phone without even saying “Hi”! They'd just start blabbing as to what's going on in their life! And what's wrong! I mean that's how it is with my whole family. *I am who they come to in terms of problems!* I mean it

used to piss me off and I still find it amazing! They maybe, just maybe would ask how I was! And it's the same with my mother! Sometimes, but very rarely!
Because they don't really want to know! They want to tell me what's happening for them and what's problematic for them! So that's my role!

A significant experience at the age of 20 impacted Sarah's life in both painful and favourable ways. She had an accident with the family truck, which prompted her mother to kick her out of the house.

I was so angry at her that she would kick me out for something I had no control over. And I remember her saying that at like 19, her children would leave home! So that was it! You're gone! I guess because I was in the church, I was going to Bible school and stuff at the time, it seemed weird to me because my expectation was that I'd get to stay home...if I do that!...She's impulsive and spontaneous, and I guess I knew that, but usually it wasn't problematic. There was just sometimes... *Oh my God! That's what she does!* And it gave me the impression, which I think I knew to some degree before, that if I needed her, she wasn't going to be there.

Getting kicked out had its positive side. Sarah moved to Red Deer for her 2nd year of Bible College. There she went into counselling for the first time where the focus of her counselling became her relationship with her mother.

I started to realize how emotionally she just wasn't there, and how enmeshed I was with my mother. I worked on getting some of that separated out, and luckily the distance meant that I might get a phone call, but it certainly wasn't the same as living at home. And I think it was progressive. I just more and more knew that she wasn't going to be there. *But I kept trying!...I wanted her to be there!* *Emotionally. I wanted her to be there. I wanted her to try to understand. I wanted her to ask about me or care about me or whatever.* Something I guess that I valued 'cause I realized my values are in some sense very different from her values. At least externally....Like what does so and so think? And it's like when I was 11 and ran away from home and slept under the light post, it wasn't like, "How are you?" when you come back. It's like, "What do the neighbours think because you're sleeping under the light post?" Right? So it was always that sort of reflection of what does everyone else think and that made me incredibly shy!

4.4.3 Religious Influence

The unspoken agreement Sarah and her father had to leave each other alone worked fine to outside appearances. Yet inside, Sarah's anger built up over time. "When my father became a Christian, I absolutely hated it! And I started to leave the church!" The church life had been something separate that Sarah enjoyed from age 13. He had not been a part of it.

And so it was something that I excelled at, and it was something that was sort of mine! Right? And so when he entered I think I was pissed off and I also saw it as manipulation – in terms of him crying. It was more like, "you're not really crying because you're sad, it's sort of like you're crying because you want to make things right or whatever!" That happened not long after the voyeurism. He was trying to be forgiven or whatever. And I was at a point where I wasn't ready to forgive him when I was pissed off at him!

And also the church stance was, he was the head of the house! Up until that point in the church, I got to lead, because my dad was sort of passive. It was interesting because my mom thought I'd be incredibly happy about this! ...*I don't want to be happy! I was pissed off! I was not happy!* And then the fact is we would debate things. So part of that was in terms of men and what sort of power they had within the church. But I didn't have to acknowledge that because he wasn't saved! So I didn't have to deal with that power. *But then when he got saved, things were supposed to take their nice hierarchical Evangelical order. I didn't like that!* Because I didn't want to be submissive to my father! I think [my anger] became more apparent. It was more in my face that this is the way it's supposed to be! And I remember being angry with God. Because of course God would have sort of been the father too. *Like what the frig is this?*

Lively intellectual discussions were frequent activities around Sarah's home during her youth. Even with her father, it had always been ok to discuss intellectual things. The scope of these conversations changed after her father got saved. "It became narrower as to what was acceptable within that world of intellectualism." On some level, because Sarah's sister was gay, "Gay was ok. I mean at one point my sister and her lover lived at my parents house! Which again is very funny, because they're very Evangelical

etc. etc!” While not tacitly approving, it was tolerated. It didn’t create conflict within the family.

“I think my sense was that my mother was so straight that she probably wasn’t threatened by that. Right?” Although all topics were open for discussion, it was an observable fact that being gay was not talked about in her family. Sarah noticed the absence of discussion regarding her sister’s sexual orientation, and interpreted this as acceptance of homosexuality. This later became a Pandora’s Box in her own life while still attending Bible school.

Gay was something I didn’t really want to explore for me. I guess I just assumed I was straight! From my sister I knew lesbianism was alright. Not horribly, horrible or really weird. But it wasn’t awful and terrible. It became awful and terrible later! I don’t think I became aware of my sexual orientation until I probably hit 19. Which was kind of funny too. ‘Cause here I was a Born Again Christian!

For a few years Sarah experienced an internal rebellion. Her oldest sister had always encouraged her to be a ‘free thinker’ and she gradually confronted the ambiguity and dualism in her personal life. She wanted to “think on her own and not just go with whatever the party line was.” She had wanted to become a minister, yet doesn’t recall ever feeling excited about that.

I was sort of miserable on some level when I was a born again Christian....On some level I had two selves! Sort of like my mother! Who appeared to be happy and really, really good, but on another level was completely miserable and depressed! I was never content with actually wanting to save people because I knew that I was really miserable!...And I remember right after leaving the church, if I entered a church, I automatically would be happy! And I wasn’t! But I could put that on! And put forward that smile! No matter what I felt like inside.

Sarah admits being angry at the church structure, because she didn’t want to be submissive to men. While able to relate well and get along great with men, she no longer trusts born again men. Trained to be the analyzer–counsellor in her family, she could see

the inconsistencies within the church. She was acutely aware of the dualism of the pastor and people in her church.

Probably the crisis occurred for me, because I was a fundamental Christian. And I think I was pissed off with that at the time because for the most part I was a very good Evangelical member! I was doing what I was supposed to be doing! And yet frustrated because no matter how much I tried, it was never good enough! Those inconsistencies really bothered me....This is what you're saying...this is not what you're doing.

I think the sexuality thing, I mean I almost OD'd when I was 21, and that was partly being gay and in the church....*It was the last thing I couldn't handle!* It was bad enough about leaving the church and having nightmares about this and thinking of going to hell and all that. And then it was sort of like being gay was ahhhhh! I can't handle this!

All of these conflicts contributed to her leaving the church. Over the next few years Sarah became clearer about being lesbian, yet struggled to experience the acceptance from her mother she saw her sister enjoying. Her friends and peer group became her lesbian sister and her sister's friends. Coming home for her father's funeral, during this time of transition, her mother asked:

"How come you hang around with *those* people? *Those* kind of people?" And so I finally just said to her, because my mother was hinting at it, right? She just didn't come right out and say it to me: "Are you gay?" So I said, "*Those* are my kind of people! This is who I am!" And it's funny 'cause when I said "Well I'm one of those people," I said, "I would think you would know! It's not exactly a surprise, right?" And she said, "I knew with your sister, but I never thought you were!" So that was weird. But I guess it fits. *Because my mother was oblivious in some sense to who I was!* So why should I be surprised that she never noticed my sexuality much at all?!

So I think that created a rift in some ways. And it gave her something to lament about. 'Cause she could say, "What did I do wrong?" Typical! She took that as hers! And being about her! What'd she do wrong that she'd have two lesbian daughters! She certainly took that as a negative thing.

4.4.4 Too Much Pain

Leaving the church which had given her safety and security during her teen years, accepting her sexual orientation and the damning attitude of her church and mother towards it, left Sarah floundering for a support system. She recognizes that statistics are high for young people leaving a fundamental church to engage in the rebellion of alcohol and drugs. She speaks of that time in her past when she dealt with her pain in a self destructive way, and to “accidentally on purpose OD” was how she handled it. She had no family or community support system left. She began counselling during her first year away from home to work on her abuse issues. After the abuse Sarah had started cutting.

The cutting was pain. I was in pain! At 19, 18, 17... for God’s sakes! So I used to drink and cut! Probably about 18 was when I first started drinking and cutting. And so usually I would do both! And the drinking would make me able to cut. I externalized my pain in that way. I wasn’t really good at talking about it. Probably didn’t know how to talk about it. Because I was the one who was used to taking care of people and listening to them. So I think it was my only way to say, “Hello!...I’m not doing well!” And so I cut. I mean obviously it was attention seeking. But I really didn’t like the fact that I was attention seeking through cutting! Because I was supposed to be strong and take care of....I just needed to cut – I needed to feel the pain. And I didn’t know any other way to do that, so that’s what I did.

I think the pain was the abuse and *partly to do with my mother*. It was both! I think in part it was the start of separating her story from my story. Because I had so much of her pain and carried that. And so much in terms of not talking and feeling not educated ...which was amazing because academically I’m no slouch! I carried her stuff and wasn’t able to separate from her.

Sarah does not recall talking to her mother about the cutting or the pain.

Which is funny in a way because in some sense emotional things are fine! That’s what I found so weird! It was sort of *my* emotional things weren’t fine to discuss! But as a whole, my family fuckin’ talked about things emotionally! They were all over the place! *Mostly sex was talked about!*

Compounding past hurt, was her mother's impulsive decision to have her pet lab killed. When her counsellor asked if she was mad at her mom for killing the dog, Sarah initially said, "No." Learning not to minimize her feelings towards her mother became foundational to separation from her mother.

I was pissed at her for killing the dog! I was hurt she killed the dog! I cried about it. My other sister would have taken the dog! Or let me at least try to find a place for the dog if she didn't want it. Now looking back at it, I say, "Yah, that's mom!" Because she wanted a reaction, right? She obviously wasn't getting enough attention! So that's partly what she did to create chaos, and how it focused back on her!

Another realization gleaned through her counselling was "how much my mother made a relationship with my father impossible!"

In some ways, he never had a chance! He was always an outsider in his own family. Partly she put me against him! Put me in the role of being her husband, and telling me about their sex life and everything else in their life, and I never got to know *him!*...And I realized how much my mother likes crisis or tragedy. And even if it wasn't there, my mother created some kind of tragedy!

At 23 when her father died, residual guilt from her religious upbringing challenged her again. Part of Sarah felt she *should* go home and care for her mother. Yet she knew she could not and would not. "And I guess in some sense it almost seemed like that's what part of her expected me to do." Recent experiences influenced her decision however.

I realized that there is no way I could ever go home and stay and be supportive. And I guess also I felt that no matter what I did, it wouldn't be enough anyway. There was nothing I could do to fill that gap for my mom!...And I tried! In some ways *I felt disappointed because I tried! I mean I was her counsellor! I was her confidante! I tried to raise her!* And it was never going to happen! From 23 on I had the realization that she just wasn't going to make those changes! She was stuck! And Oh Wow! I mean I still took care of her in some sense, but it was more, "When I want to, fine. But I'm not going to run home and take care of you!"

4.4.5 Making the Separation

Geographical distance initially helped Sarah separate her life, from her mother's. Building a new community with friends and a significant other and coming into her own as a young adult, also enabled Sarah to detach.

Gradually it became more and more ok. And the realization that now I had friends of my own, people of my own and I lived separate from her...I mean I could hear her voice a lot! But there was separation in terms of knowing I was ok on my own and all right. And so I became more into my own community, and what she did was what she did.

Breaking certain family traditions became something Sarah chose to do when she realized they perpetuated unacceptable behaviour. Over the Christmas holidays one year visiting with her mom and sisters, the conversation turned familiarly to knocking their current partners. Before joining the conversation, Sarah paused and thought "Why?"

And Judith asked, "Is this what you do when I'm not here?" And I said, "Probably!" And it was funny because I realized, "Like why do we do this?" I don't even remember having problems with my partner, and why am I saying this? And just the realization that this was the family... 'cause my mom did that with my dad all the time! If they weren't there, you talked about them badly! So I realized, "No. Change that!" Like why am I complaining about her and not just going to her...so my mom tries to take me aside so I can say bad things about my partner. 'Cause that's what she's used to.

Sarah's emotions are strong as she tells of her mother's lack of acceptance of her twelve year relationship with Judith. As a wedding gift to her grandson, Sarah's mom gave a \$500 gift. Sarah shamelessly decided to push her mother's buttons.

Well, how come I don't get \$500 bucks? I've been in this relationship for 12 years! How come I don't get 500 bucks? Knowing damn well why! "Well," she said, "if you marry a man, I'll give you 500 bucks." I said, "Well, I'm never going to marry a man!"...

Watching a harmless TV show on the same visit home, Sarah's mother was prompted to ask of her daughters, "Do I talk about sex a lot?"

So I said, “Yes, you do.” I mean not judgemental, just a statement – matter of fact, “You do!” My other sister said, “Well I’m sort of used to it now. No, it was fine.” I said it was not usual. Most parents do not talk about sex with their children like this. Next, she called me a Bitch! So I said, “Mom, if you can’t handle the answer, to the question, don’t ask!...You asked me...I answered you!” And I said, “Mom, I’m out of here. *I would not accept this from my friends! I’m not accepting this from you!*”

Now partly why I drew my line was sort of like saying “Hello!” My other sister’s 12 years older. She’s been “out” since she was 19. *My mother’s had 30 some fucking years to deal with lesbians in her life and her daughters being lesbians!* So, I figured that was enough time for her to deal with it.

My middle sister Sharon, whose son is getting married, had phoned and invited Judith and I to the wedding. My mother told me that my nephew didn’t want us there as a couple. And so I said to my sister, “Is this true?” because I thought it was really weird, after Sharon had phoned us. Like why go out of her way to phone us and have us both come there? And she said, “No, Jordan’s fine with you coming to the wedding.”

‘Cause at the wedding there are going to be a lot of religious people. So of course my mother and the neighbours!...Oh my God!...You know what really pissed me off? If she had come to me and said, Sarah, you know I really would prefer if Judith didn’t come to the wedding or stay home or whatever, I probably would have said, OK. Fine. No problem....But she comes and lies to me! About them not wanting me to be there! So, no, I wouldn’t say she’s accepting! And now it’s so blatant because she lied! And that was the first huge lie I’ve caught her in! Because my sisters have always said, “Mom lies!” But I’ve never really seen it.

There is sadness, mixed with anger at her mother’s lack of support for her. She expresses frustration with herself that she was blinded to that side of her mother. Yet there is a new energy in acceptance of this realization.

Yah! I know she’s never going to support me in being gay! I feel more accepted within Judith’s family in terms of our sexuality than I do with my own. Well, more accepted with Judith’s mother. And like I said, my mother’s had 31 years, so that’s enough time!...I don’t think she’s going to get there. If it comes up again, it’s just sort of like, Screw You! I’m tired of adapting to you and it being about you!

Seeking acceptance from her family goes beyond desiring acceptance as gay.

Sarah grew up hearing that her oldest sister was like a second mother to her. While that designation suggests closeness, it is not Sarah's experience.

My understanding is that she was close to me when I was younger. But that also became uncomfortable because of the abuse. In later years, it was sort of an obligation thing. Like I did this for you, therefore you should do this for me. So it was like payback time! And I thought, *when I was bloody three and four it's not like I could do it myself!* I don't think I felt any closer to her later on...I think she's close to me. I don't think I'm close to her.

So now when this happened with my mother, my sister was still talking all about her. And I was like *really, really...not doing well!* You know we went out to the gay bar together *and I was really not doing well.* I was in a bad space and it was like "Hello!" I mean I used to think that I didn't articulate well. And I think that's part of it. But I think part of it is *they just fuckin' don't notice! They just don't!!!!* And she didn't! So, no, we're not close! It's all about her. It's like dealing with my family...

Frustration, anger and indignity lace Sarah's words as she tells her story. Yet in spite all that had happened, she has not given up desire or hope for better relationships with her sisters and mother.

In some sense *I still hope that they will be there for me!* I guess I didn't think she [sister] would be, but *I was hoping she would be!* You know? I wasn't surprised. It was sort of like I was a little bit hurt again. But on some level thinking – it would be nice if she was there!

Reflecting on her mother's lack of concern for her, Sarah acknowledges she never gave her mother anything to worry about. "*I was an incredibly responsible adult teenager!*" The intense commitment to the church left no doubt in her parents' minds that she was a virgin as well as a really good kid! "So I guess my sexuality was something she didn't have to worry about. That was all good for her!"

Recently her mother has tried to change the content and focus of her conversations with Sarah. She recognizes she shouldn't have spoken to Sarah about

intimate sexual matters and depended on her as a confidante. Now she might say, “I know I shouldn’t talk to you but....

So she knows that *emotionally she used me*. My mother has actually said to me that “*you were more of a mother to me than my mother was*”, She was basically giving me credit for mothering her. She was right! I mean when I did it, *I had no choice. I absolutely had no choice when I was a child but to mother her!* Because she would literally sit there and think she was losing it.

I needed stability. So I did the best I could for her in terms of being there and listening and trying to come up with answers etc. Not knowing till much later that *she held all the friggin’ cards anyway!* It didn’t matter what I said or did but she was going to do what she wanted to do. *We were so enmeshed! I couldn’t separate her and me*. It was that visceral in the beginning! I couldn’t in an emotional sense make that separation. Because I needed her. I needed someone to be there. I had a hard time being angry at her! I still do to some degree! *Because there was a feeling that being angry at her was in some way being angry at me!* And in some sense screwing me! And I think that’s part of the cutting thing now that I think about it. Was the frustration of not being able to be angry at her! She kills my dog, and she does all these... and No! I couldn’t be angry at her not being there! I mean I didn’t know I could be. So the only way to do that was to take it out on me and cut me!

And I was afraid of how fragile she was. And I was learning that she wasn’t fragile or that I couldn’t sacrifice myself for her in terms of going back and staying home. *But I couldn’t fix her! I tried! I really tried!* And that was hard too because I’m an emotional perfectionist. I like things to be emotionally good and wrapped up and make sense. And I couldn’t fix her. I couldn’t make it right for her! And that was really hard to give up because I had spent so much time invested in trying to make her OK emotionally.

Her story felt like my story! That *my mother* had died and I was abandoned and on my own at 15 and all those things. And all that story felt emotionally like mine because we were so entwined! So to even make boundaries. Oh my God that was scary! Because it felt like I was attacking myself!

“But there was a part of me that was always separate!” Unaware, Sarah somehow at sometime took a part of herself, called it her “core self” and kept it completely separate from her mother. When she began to break from her mother, she was able to take the different part from inside herself.

In some ways I had to re-nurture that part. I had a sense that there was a part of that – a part, that was not well. But I also felt that mostly it was whole. *Genuinely, that it was whole! And that gave me whatever I needed to become me!* It gave me what I needed to know I was OK.

Sarah's intelligence, awareness of being attractive and athletic ability gave her something to nurture that part with. Accessing and investing in these assets was a starting point to rebuild her life. Realizing in hindsight how enmeshed with her mother she was, she is grateful she had the intuition to protect and save that "core self." "So whenever I did that....That's what I did. Thank God!"

4.4.6 Benefits of This Healing Work

Sarah is grateful for the work she has done because she has been able to identify when she holds something against her partner or close friend because they're "not there" emotionally for her. She recognizes this is a trigger, and is careful not to transfer frustration and hurt to the other woman she has felt towards her mother. She views this as continued growth in separation from her mother and autonomy for herself.

She is extremely grateful for "in some sense, finding myself...as being different!" She is enjoying being herself. Different from her sisters and her mother in thinking and behaving, while still having the family legacy of upbringing, physical characteristics and mannerisms. Another benefit relates to the time when she left the church.

I went through a phase that I was backslid'n. I drank too much and did this or that or whatever and was the opposite! And *I realized the church was still defining me! I was just the opposite!* So I guess in terms of my mother, I try to say, I'm not going to be this, just because this is the opposite of what my mother would be! *But because this is who I am!* And find that space. Because otherwise it would still be a reaction!

As a child and young woman, Sarah knew that to hope for different behaviour and attitudes from her mother meant “getting hurt!”

I mean now, there’s no friggin’ way! I think it’s just “NO!” Because every time I expected her to be there and she wasn’t, *it hurt! I would have wanted her to BE there!* I would have wanted her to say “what’s wrong? What’s this? What’s that?” Like sometimes she would do that, but a day or two days later, it would be, “Well, you manipulated me, or you did this.” If she ever did get close, she used it against me. So...forget that! I learned that early on....That she wasn’t there! The ideal I would have wanted was that she’d have been there. ‘Cause she wasn’t!

Communication with her mother has noticeably changed in the last few years. Sarah finds herself setting clearer boundaries and saying, “No. I’m not tolerating this. This is what happened and this is what you did.” Today she is clear that she is making choices for herself and is willing to accept outcomes as they naturally come to pass.

But in some ways I don’t treat her like my mother. I try very hard not to have an expectation of her to be here for me. *I’ve given up on that!* There’s still a little part of me – I guess because I’m her daughter and I would like that! But overall, it’s sort of like “No.” I just don’t go there and I’m OK with that. And I know that I’ve chosen that. *I just do not choose to have expectations for her to be there.*

CHAPTER FIVE

Review and Discussion of the Literature and Narratives As Applied to the Individual

5.1 Preface

Central to each interview was the inquiry, “As a survivor, tell me about your experience with your mother.” I have been educated, informed, and impassioned by the stories of the co-researchers’ lives. Their narratives continue to be tinged with angst and deep longing for what they lost as a result of the abuse, yet are still hopeful to someday receive. The human spirit thrives within the souls of these women.

Synthesizing the individual issues which arose from the narratives with current literature is the focus of this chapter. While Anna, Marguerite and Sarah each were abused in different ways and each experienced a different response from her mother, over time certain issues appeared common to them all. Each co-researcher expressed threads of these issues woven throughout her story. I will consider these common threads before looking at the issues unique to the individual survivor.

Foundational to understanding the experiences, is understanding current trauma theory which explains the effects of childhood sexual abuse. Two current theories are discussed in this paper as each makes a contribution to the topic. Of primary usefulness are Finkelhor’s Traumagenic Dynamics, and Bowlby’s Attachment Theory as Alexander adapts it to sexual abuse.

5.2 Traumagenic Dynamics

David Finkelhor has put forward a theory for understanding the injury of childhood sexual abuse. “These subsequent dynamics alter a child’s cognitive and emotional orientation to the world, and therefore create trauma by distorting a child’s world view, self-concept and affective capacities” (Finkelhor & Browne, 1988, p. 63). Finkelhor argues that while PTSD pathologises sexual abuse, his model brings in the cognitive sphere, allowing distorted beliefs to be involved.

Examples are as follows: **Stigmatization** might distort a child’s sense of her worth and value. Stigmatization refers to the negative connotations such as shame, guilt or badness which are communicated to the child around the experience of the abuse and which are incorporated into the child’s self-image. Pressure for secrecy accentuates the shame and guilt. Stigmatization is reinforced by attitudes the child hears from others in the family or community.

It may grow out of the child’s prior knowledge that the activity is deviant or taboo. It is reinforced if, after disclosure, people react with shock or hysteria or blame the child for what has transpired. Some children may have to deal with powerful religious and cultural taboos as well as the usual stigma. (Finkelhor & Browne, p. 64-65)

This pressure for secrecy is a continued legacy of Marguerite’s abuse, as today only some of her siblings are aware of her experience. She was burdened with guilt as her father excused his behaviour saying she had been swearing and needed to be taught a lesson. She felt further stigma as she confessed her “sin” to her priest.

Anna carried the stigma of her father’s voice saying, “Well you must have done something,” and “Priests don’t do that!” Sarah’s sister said to her, “Nobody in our family has ever been abused!”

Powerlessness, also called disempowerment, is the dynamic of rendering the girl powerless. This occurs as the girls' will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually breached. "It is increased when the child experiences fear, or is unable to make adults understand or believe what is happening, or feels trapped in the situation by conditions of dependency" (Finkelhor & Browne, 1988, p. 64). Finally powerlessness is associated with fear and anxiety, a lowered sense of self-efficacy and a perception of self as a victim. Certainly Anna experienced this disbelief and a confused perception of herself as victim and her only advocate.

The weekend dad was diagnosed with cancer, I tried again desperately to bring my father to a place of understanding the sexual assaults I experienced. I finally told dad that weekend I realized the subject was too painful for him and unless he raised the issue first, I would never talk to him about it again.

Sarah expressed total dependency on her mother for everything, while Marguerite was powerless over being sent to the convent, the subsequent end of her relationships with her siblings and an altered relationship with her mother.

Betrayal refers to the dynamic occurring when a girl realizes that someone on whom they were integrally dependent has caused them harm. They may realize they have been lied to, been misrepresented or deceived. All three women were flagrantly betrayed by their fathers, while Sarah was also betrayed by her sister and Anna by her church.

They may acknowledge that someone they loved or whose affection was important to them treated them with callous disregard. A family member whom they trusted but who was unwilling or unable to protect or believe them - or who has a changed attitude toward them after disclosure of the abuse - may also contribute to the dynamics of betrayal. (Finkelhor & Browne, 1988, p. 63)

A father's assault of his daughter places the mother and daughter in positions of mutual betrayal. It is as though Sarah unwillingly betrayed her mother by being forced into her

role as wife. Sarah is subsequently betrayed by her mother because as her mother's capacity to protect is diminished, she is unable to properly care for and nurture her daughter (Miller, 1990). Marguerite's parents' marital relationship was never the same after the abuse, and she was unable to relate to Marguerite as a daughter again.

Marguerite felt betrayed by her mother as she lost her primary nurturing relationship.

The degree of betrayal is also related to a family's response to the disclosure. Children, who are disbelieved, blamed or ostracized experience a greater sense of betrayal than those who aren't. The refusal of Anna's parents to believe her or even to talk about her abuse has left her alienated to this day. For Marguerite, there is a new betrayal by her siblings. Betrayal is associated with effects such as depression, dependency in extreme forms, impaired ability to trust and to judge the trustworthiness of others, and anger. Some of the manifestations of this might be a vulnerability to subsequent abuse and exploitation, discomfort in intimate relationships, and marital problems (Finkelhor & Browne). The scope of this study limits the prudence of my comment on these.

Traumatic sexualisation is how the child now views sexual behaviour – the child may see such behaviour as the only way to gain affection, or may completely avoid sexual intimacy. Sarah is the only co-researcher who experienced abuse as a young child. She repeatedly spoke of how she was asexual, defining it as “not running sexual energy.” She deliberately did not direct sexual energy towards anyone. Whether Sarah's sense of being asexual can be attributed to her abuse can not be ascertained as the result of this study. While Finkelhor hypothesizes that traumatic sexualisation impacts sexual behaviour, the specific ways cannot be measured. Marguerite, whose childhood was full

of derogatory sexual talk, articulated she looked for love in all the wrong places. This “looking” however, is something that cannot be measured.

Bowlby proposes that basic attachment styles will likely be enduring whether they are positive or negative (Skinner, 2000; Bacon & Richardson, 2001; Bolen, 2000). He contends that attachment is a biological bond between caregiver and child. Julianne Mitchell cites Bowlby (1979, p. 131-132), discussing this bond as related to survival needs:

Thus attachment behaviour is conceived as a class of behaviour distinct from feeding behaviour and sexual behaviour and of at least equal significance in human life... the individual who shows attachment behaviour is usually referred to as child and the attachment figure as mother....When mother is present or her whereabouts well-known and she is willing to take part in friendly interchange, a child usually ceases to show attachment behaviour and, instead, explores his environment. In such a situation, mother can be regarded as providing her child with a secure base from which to explore and to which she can return, especially should she become tired or frightened. (1998, p. 7)

Other attachment behaviours include crying, smiling, walking, crawling, or calling out the name of the caregiver. These behaviours are attempts by the child to engage the caregiver (usually the mother) to stay close enough so the child can see her. The child's attachment to the primary caregiver usually takes six months. Once a normal attachment is formed the child freely moves away from the mother to explore her world. Anna has never felt close to her mother. At the time of her birth, her mother was coping with the trauma of losing her first three children in a fire. It is doubtful she was able to give emotionally to Anna the attention a new baby desired. Anna has never found a picture of her mother holding her. Both Anna and Marguerite have searched for photos and memories of being held. They seek evidence of signs of nurturance and care from their mothers.

Part of Bowlby's theory suggests development of personality is based on a child's first experiences with the primary caregiver. The baby forms ideas of herself based on how she connects with others. If her needs are met, she learns she is of value and merits the care of others; if her needs are ignored, she learns she has little value. Throughout the early developmental phases, the child learns how to take care of herself and how to care for others based on how she is treated by the attachment figure. This "internal working model" is composed of both thinking and feeling parts (Mitchell, 1998).

Subsequent development of Bowlby's theory suggests different types of attachment. Insecurely attached infants are labeled "avoidant". When given a choice, these children did not choose their mothers more than a stranger. These infants' mothers were identified as being emotionally and physically detached from their children.

A second type of insecurely attached infant was identified as the "resistant" type. "These children both sought the mother and displayed angry outbursts toward her upon her return. The resistant child's mother was identified as being contradictory in her response patterns, sometimes responding to the child's needs and other times avoiding the child" (Mitchell, 1998, p. 8-9).

A third category was identified as the "disorganized/disoriented" child. Typical behaviour of these children is seeking to be close to the mother, then vigorously avoiding her, showing fear and anxiety when she returns, and looking at her in a bewildered manner. Sexual abuse is an attribute of a parent whose child uses "disorganized-disoriented" coping styles (Mitchell, 1998).

Mitchell's studies show that several researchers have categorized adults based on their attachments to others who play an important role in their lives (e.g., mother,

husband). These adults have been identified as secure, dismissing, preoccupied, or fearful. She suggests secure adults are those who can think about their childhoods, at ease with an array of feelings, able to trust others and themselves, and able to gain a satisfaction from being close to others. Adults who have avoidant attachments (who would have been avoidant children), generally have few if any memories from childhood, do not feel comfortable being close to someone else, have low self worth and are isolated and angry. A preoccupied adult (who would have been a resistant child), is characterized as anxious, possessive, perplexed, envious, and suspicious. Alexander further suggests that fearful adults (who would have been disorganized children) are hampered or impaired in their interactions with others, show passivity, and may have some of both the avoiding and the preoccupied adult's characteristics.

Alexander (1992, p. 188) as cited by Mitchell, suggests that insecure attachments from the parent to the child are antecedent to the child being abused. She states "Attachment theory offers precise predictions as to how different types of insecure attachments are manifest in different types of parent/child interactions in the sexually abusive family" (1998, p. 9). Research by Bacon and Richardson supports these findings (2001).

Rejection characterizes the child who is avoidantly attached. This child often feels she does not belong to the family and is not cared for by her parents. An avoidant or dismissing mother and father ignore the child and don't respond to her needs. Inaccessibility is characteristic of these parents. Typically then, a child who has developed an avoidant attachment pattern because of rejection may be even less able to defend herself or seek help from others either inside or outside the home. All three

women spoke of not having their emotional needs met by their parents. Both Anna's and Marguerite's mothers were inaccessible due to large families and the consequential work demands, and Sarah's father was "distant." As cited by Mitchell (1998) Alexander (1992, p. 189) states:

Role reversal is the second characteristic frequently observed in families where sexual abuse is present. This parentification of the child is often identified with a resistant form of attachment between parent and child. Growing up as a parentified child can lead to a sense of entitlement in either an abuser, resulting in expectations that one's child should meet one's own emotional and sexual needs, or in a nonabusive parent, resulting in expectations to be nurtured rather than to nurture the child. (1998, p. 10)

Similar statements have also been made by Bifulco & Moran (1998) as well as Manning (2002). Sarah experienced this role reversal when her mother went into the hospital, and her dad expected her to assume the role of wife. She also assumed the role of her mom's husband and confidante as her dad was emotionally distant. Miller says, "She develops something the mother needs, and this certainly saves her life ...at the time, but it nevertheless may prevent her, throughout her life, from being herself" (Miller, 1979, p. 34-35).

5.3 The Experience of Nurture, Care, and Safety

"Traditionally, the mother or mother-figure has been thought of as comforter, nurturer, soother, protector, and champion of her children's rights" (Mitchell, 1998, p.2). Healthy attachment relationships develop when the caregiver or parent sufficiently fulfills the needs of the child. Children have three basic needs which transcend developmental levels and each child's unique history: 1) The need for nurturance; 2) the need for stimulation; and 3) the need for protection (Haynes-Seman & Baumgartner, 1994).

Nurturance includes both emotional and physical. Physical includes sleep, proper hygiene, medical and dental care as well as healthy and sufficient food. “Emotional nurturance is a pre-requisite for self-esteem and includes being valued, loved, cared for, and listened to by the parent or primary caregiver” (Haynes-Seman & Baumgartner, 1994, p. 3). Alice Miller (1979) a renowned psychotherapist contends the child can perceive from her primary caregiver whether or not she is needed. This secures love and security for the child (Miller, 1979). Marguerite, Sarah and Anna articulated that physical needs for nurturance were certainly met by their mothers. The specific emotional needs will be discussed more specifically in the next section.

Stimulation includes both social company and involvement in play and explanatory activities that facilitate cognitive, social, and physical development. In this domain Sarah particularly was nourished as her mother engaged her in adult discussion and taught her to play many card games including bridge. She recalls being a fourth in bridge at age five. Anna’s world was enhanced by dancing whenever she could while Marguerite loved the family gatherings which continued to occur in spite of poverty.

Healthy initial development situates the parent as the primary mediator of the child’s world. They themselves meet the child’s needs for company through playing, talking, and holding. In normal child development the circle gradually increases to include siblings, close family friends, relatives, teachers, and other adults in the community. Unfortunately, Sarah does not have recollections of other friends or adults expanding that circle. Anna’s experiences outside the family were limited by money and her availability from chores. She recalls being in Brownies only a short time, and there

was no money for dancing lessons. Marguerite was fairly isolated on a farm with increasing poverty as she got older.

Children need assurance of safety in their environment, and rely on their parents or other caregivers to protect and buffer them from danger and abuse from people. They need consistent and predictable limits which can give them the freedom to explore and express themselves in ways that are not harmful to themselves or others. (Haynes-Seman & Baumgartner, p. 3)

Sarah relates the one thing staying the same after the abuse, was her sense of comfort and freedom to explore and continue “to play football with the guys, and play baseball or go off for walks. I don’t think anything changed for me, as to still feeling a certain amount of safety.” Joanne Hall says, “All children need opportunities to identify safe places, to interact with safe people, and to learn how to locate these protective resources through trusting their own senses” (p. 46).

Developmental theorists contend that all children have a basic need to be mirrored. Mirroring involves the mother or other caretaker acknowledging and responding to the child’s need for love and approval (Miller, 1979). The mother/caretaker provides adequate mirroring if she validates, admires, and understands the child in the child’s world. If the child’s needs are met, the child feels good about herself. If the basic needs are unmet, the child often feels invalidated and unloved (Mitchell & Morse, 1998).

It is not uncommon for a person who was sexually abused and whose sense of self was violated by a mother/caretaker to find it difficult in childhood and adulthood to trust others – whether the person is a significant other, a therapist, a support group member, or even a friend. Erickson has stated that an individual needs to form a basic trusting relationship with at least one individual who assumes a caretaking role in order to progress through the other developmental stages. When a mother is not able to accept the child as she is, the child may reach adulthood feeling as if she has no inner self and is of little value. (Mitchell, 1998, p. 6)

It was important for Anna that she had nurturance from others because of her mother's inability to nurture her in satisfying ways. In childhood, her neighbour and an aunt occasionally fulfilled those needs. At the convent a young nun tutored her daily and after her divorce a woman advocate walked her through the steps to get away from her abusive husband with kindness, information and affirmation. She quotes a female writer from a magazine article saying these words resonate with how she feels about herself: "I have achieved nothing. I have no excuse for existence. I haven't justified my existence yet." Anna says "this is sort of me in a nutshell." Anna easily says she has unfinished work to do in her relationship with her mom. She has never been able to trust her or confide in her, yet still longs for that to change.

While Anna's mother offered no significant intervention or response to her abuse, Marguerite's mother expressed outrage to her husband and stated to Marguerite that things would change in the marriage relationship. Marguerite was conscious that her mother's demeanor altered after the disclosure. Hooper (1998) notes two key findings on mothers' responses to the sexual abuse of their children. First is evidence mothers experience trauma themselves with reactions and expressions similar to those of grief and loss, or the aftermath of rape or sexual abuse itself. Anger is a known reaction to grief and loss (Neimeyer, 1998). Second, many studies show that mothers support to the child is a significant factor in the child's healing and the absence of support has a detrimental effect (Hooper, 1998).

Once the abuse is disclosed, whatever the mothers' response, her relationship with her daughter is often damaged by the abuse. Women's role as primary caregivers and

protectors of children is challenged by this damage as much as it underlies the importance of mothers' support for children (Hooper, 1998).

Repeated trauma in childhood, forms and deforms the personality. The child trapped in an abusive environment is faced with formidable tasks of adaptation. She must find a way to preserve a sense of trust in people who are untrustworthy, safety in a situation that is unsafe, control in a situation that is terrifyingly unpredictable, power in a situation of helplessness. Unable to care for or protect herself, she must compensate for the failures of adult care and protection with the only means at her disposal, an immature system of psychological defenses. (Herman, 1997, p. 96)

“Adaptation to this climate of constant danger requires a state of constant alertness” (Herman, 1997, p. 99). Anna unwittingly affirms this perspective when she said, “I think my job as the oldest was to walk into a room and case it – everybody out!” Children raised with sexual abuse develop extraordinary abilities to scan for signs of attack. “They learn to recognize subtle changes in facial expression, voice and body language as signs of anger, sexual arousal, intoxication or dissociation” (Herman, p. 99). For the most part this happens outside of conscious awareness.

In this climate of profoundly disrupted relationships the child faces tremendous developmental tasks. She must find a way to form primary attachments to caregivers who are either dangerous or, from her perspective, negligent. She must find a way to develop a sense of basic trust and safety with caregivers who are untrustworthy and unsafe. She must develop a sense of self in relation to others who are helpless, uncaring, or cruel, as well as develop a capacity for intimacy out of an environment where all intimate relationships are corrupt (Herman, 1997, p. 101).

Anna navigated the profoundly disrupted relationships with her mother by “doing the eggshell walk” and doing any chore that needed to be done. She continues to struggle to define herself with her mother. She survives visits with her mother by putting her therapist cap on – not her daughter hat. Sarah spoke of how at 15 she had a sense of feeling powerful. That she could handle being around her abuser father.

Friends visiting any of the girls' homes, would have little opportunity to see what was going on and may have interpreted survivors' angst in light of their own family experiences. It was impressive to Sarah that her uncle accurately identified the cause of her anger, but there is no indication he did anything to address the abuse by her father. If normal life experiences taught the woman that adults could not be trusted, could not protect them or were at risk themselves, it should not be surprising that asking for help was not a normal coping strategy. This seeming passivity can be an active coping strategy if the survivor assumes that verbalizing the predicament will exacerbate the problems. In Anna's situation, her pleas to be believed were consistently ignored. They were met with a wall from her father and subsequently her mother. Speaking up was not a helpful intervention.

Mainstream perspectives in literature continue to expect women to provide most of the care giving in the family. This is totally unrealistic, given the number of employed women today. Indeed the critiques go all the way from advising women not to bear children, to demanding more recognition and celebration of childbirth, to suggestions that fathers assume half the nurturing role of their children, to the notion that men are presently inadequately prepared for the role of nurturing children (Carter, 1999). In the families of all three women, none of the fathers were prepared to nurture in ways that the women longed for. Carter remarks:

The overemphasis on the 'perfect mother' has led to a psychological determinism and reduction in research since the work on bonding theories became prominent in the early 1950's, as if this early infant bonding is going to determine the whole history of society and our culture, and that the failure of a child to bond to his/her mother is tantamount to abuse (1999, p. 43).

The inability for the three co-researchers to adequately bond in ways that satisfied their needs for care, protection and safety however are indicative that there is truth in these bonding theories. Children are not discussing theory when they speak of their pain. They are professing their reality.

All of the abused child's psychological adaptations serve her fundamental purpose of preserving her primary attachment to her parents in the face of daily evidence of their malice, helplessness, or indifference. To accomplish this purpose, the child resorts to a wide array of psychological defenses. By virtue of these defenses the abuse is walled off from conscious awareness and memory, so that it did not really happen, or minimized, rationalized or excused so that whatever happened was not really abuse. (Herman, 1997, p. 102)

Many abused children cling to the hope that growing up will bring escape and freedom. But the personality formed in an environment of coercive mental control is not well suited for adult life. The survivor is left with fundamental problems in basic trust, autonomy and initiative. She approaches the tasks of early adulthood – establishing independence and intimacy - burdened by major impairments in self-care, in cognition and memory, in identity, and in the capacity to form stable relationships. She is still a prisoner of her childhood, attempting to create a new life, she reencounters the trauma. (Herman, 1997, p. 111)

Indeed Marguerite and Anna reencountered the trauma of failure when they sought love and affirmation in their marriages and Sarah expressed a sense she was previously abused by her father. Today Sarah questions her ability to make new friends, wondering if she still knows how.

5.4 Emotional Needs

“Low self-esteem was found to be related to an unstable self-concept, psychosomatic symptoms of anxiety, interpersonal vulnerability and awkwardness, reduced faith in people, and docility” (Elliot, 2001, p. 14). Mruk quotes Rosenberg (1965, p. 31) who suggests: “The individual lacks respect for the self he observes. The picture is disagreeable, and he wishes it were otherwise” (1999, p. 123). Rosenberg also suggests the concept of mattering as being the self-perceived extent to which one makes a

difference in the lives of others. Each co-researcher expressed a longing to be missed, heard, or recognized for their contribution to the family. Each woman wanted to 'matter' to her mother.

There is persuasive evidence that parental approval, encouragement, responsiveness, warmth, nurturance, support, and affection are related to children's and adolescents' self-esteem, as well as other aspects of their social, emotional and academic adjustment. (Demo, 2001, p. 143)

In our society, it is difficult for young children to avoid contact with parents, with the likely outcome that mothers exert more influence on children's self-esteem than fathers (Demo, 2001).

Oates suggests types of emotional abuse, some of which describe the needs the co-researchers longed to have fulfilled.

Rejecting. This involves behaviours that communicate or constitute abandonment of the child, such as the adult's refusing to touch or show affection to the child. In this way the adult is refusing to acknowledge the child's worth and needs.

Ignoring. The adult is psychologically unavailable to the child. This is often so because the adult is so preoccupied with personal needs that there is no ability to respond to the child's behaviour. Depriving the child of stimulation in this way interferes with the child's intellectual and emotional growth.

Isolating. The adult prevents the child from taking advantage of normal opportunities for social reaction. The child has limited opportunities to form friendships and comes to feel alone in the world. (Oates, 1996, p. 100-101)

Typically, neglected children do survive childhood, but with various handicaps usually involving a sense of identity, self-worth and mastery (Bifulco & Moran, 1998).

"Emotional neglect most often stems from parental ignorance and unawareness, chaotic lifestyles, poverty, lack of support, and lack of appropriate child-rearing models"

(Iwaniec, 1995, p. 5). Sarah's mother readily admits that Sarah was more like a mother to her than a daughter. "You were more of a mother to me than my own mother was."

Sarah's mother's mother had died when she was 11, and she raised herself from the age of 15. She did not have a child-rearing model to follow for parenting Sarah. Anna and Marguerite also lacked models by which to raise their children, because of the deficient parenting they received. Alcoholism and abuse certainly provide chaotic lifestyles.

When she was four years old, Carolina Prescott with her mother and infant sister became a fugitive from her abusive father. At the age of fifteen she wrote:

Being taken advantage of sexually was a violation not only of my physical well-being but also of my mental and emotional privacy and freedom. This betrayal by my father, who was supposed to protect and nurture me, is almost inconceivable. Two summers ago, with the help of some good and wise friends, I began to understand that I am in control of my emotions – I started to learn how to relax. I learned about loyalty to one's self, about the difference between acceptable and unacceptable compromises. I no longer feel like I live in a hole coated with self-pity and envy. (Prescott, 1994, p. 215-216)

Carolina's experience of healing within the context of a group is similar to where Anna, Marguerite and Sarah initially experienced emotional healing. Marguerite first learned to respect herself and believe she was worth taking care of in her first support group. Anna watched and listened intently in parenting classes and Sarah benefited from the women's group on campus. "I never let myself totally be dogmatic in feminism, but it became important. I hung out with women at the women's center at the U of M. They became a group for me to let me get out of the church."

The degree to which a family communicates has implications for the construction of meaning and therefore is a facet of power. Sometimes knowledge which would have empowered a survivor to realize that parts of her experience were abusive was hidden. Specific sexual topics were difficult in some families. Other topics of difficulty were those of emotions and feelings (Skinner, 2000). Sarah's family experience confirms how

difficult it was to discuss emotions. “In some sense emotional things are fine! But it was sort of like my emotional things weren’t fine to discuss, but as a whole, my family fuckin’ talked about things emotionally!” Anna’s family offered limited information which was not open to discussion and consequently was not empowering. Marguerite was raised in a social era where sexual abuse was not discussed, and knowledge which would have empowered her was unavailable.

“Enveloped in role reversal, repudiation, and unpredictable, unexplained events, these girls had few opportunities to develop a sense of coherence” (Hall, 1996, p. 44). Coherence promotes competence and life satisfaction through the process of anticipation. Where the ability to imagine a possible future is narrowed or completely occluded, these women were unable to imagine a future for themselves. Marguerite lived her mother’s dreams, Sarah initially followed the mission of her church and studied to be a minister, and Anna had no dream other than to dance, which her father totally discouraged.

“Women who were able to recall a person or situation that presented a counter reality to their constant experience of negativity were better able to imagine a future and to find routes to independence from abusive homes” (Hall, 1996, p. 45). Certainly Marguerite’s mother’s advocacy is relevant to her returning to school and rebuilding a life for herself and her children. Sarah found much support in the women’s center on her campus during her transition out of the church. “I discovered sociology and feminism and different ways of looking at the world. It made sense. There is this inequality, and feminism explains that.” These ideologies helped Sarah envision a future for herself and new possibilities. Anna continues to be grateful for the women’s advocate who directed her to Canada Employment and Social Services, sharing her wisdom and experience.

“She made sure I had everything I needed to get away from my abusive husband. How much that meant! She didn’t hug me but she really, took good care of my son...”

Many children experience feelings of anger and betrayal at their mothers for not having protected them from the abuse. Girls who are sexually abused by their fathers are often angrier with their mothers than with the abusers (Miller, 1990). “Such responses are partly the result of children’s fantasies that their mothers are all-knowing and all-powerful, derived from their early experience of total dependence on them. To an extent, maternal failure is inevitable against such unrealistic expectations” (Hooper, 1998, p. 5). The reality of their mother’s powerlessness may be as much a reason for anger as the illusion of their power. Sarah who did express anger at her father admits she wanted to be angry at her mother but couldn’t because she would have no other emotional support. That idea was unbearable. Anna is now experiencing anger to a degree never expressed before. Marguerite was angry at her mother initially for separating her from her siblings, and only in her forties did she allow herself to experience the anger and blame she felt towards her mother (Joyce, 1997).

Anger at mothers allows girls to begin to break their identification with their mothers and subsequently their break with feeling powerless. Hence they begin to feel worthy of protection from the abuse. Hooper suggests this directed anger serves two purposes. First it can play an empowering role for a girl until she develops a more realistic understanding of her mothers’ position. Secondly it is easier to direct anger at women than men. When Sarah understood her cutting in relation to her anger towards her mother, she was able to cease the self-harm and begin a separation from her mother she had been unable to accomplish before.

Feeling anger is a part of the shift in power that occurs. It marks women's belief that they do not deserve to be abused. And fully recognizing the extent of the abuse they suffered. It is painful and often overwhelming to feel the anger, because in the past it may have led to danger for these women from the abuser. (Kirkwood, 1993, p. 118)

“Empathy means the ability to ‘feel into’ someone else’s experience” (Manning, p. 33). Empathy is a process winding through the lives of generations of women, influencing the quality and intensity of their relationships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

The essence of the mother-daughter relationship is the extent to which both players can bridge the gap to reach each other. Every stage of development offers new challenges, rewards, and opportunities for breakthroughs or failures. The process of empathy begins at conception and continues well past death. (Manning, p. 26)

Of the three co-researchers only Marguerite has been able to claim she and her mother have bridged the gap and reached each other (Morrison & Clavenna-Valleroy, 1998). There have been many breakthroughs and many disappointments for them. Empathy has characterized both women in the relationship. Marguerite expressed understanding of the pain her mother experienced sending her away from the family. She also empathized with the trauma her mother experienced as the wife of an abuser. She continues to voice empathy towards her mother for the crippling effect of the abuse to two daughters.

There is a section of literature which discusses childhood sexual abuse and lesbian orientation. Hall's (1996) study of lesbian women highlights the lack of warmth and comfortable intimacy that was obviously missing from these women's family life. Instead, women described “an emotional wilderness in which they ‘begged’ and ‘waited endlessly’ for loving words and actions” (p. 36). Their family stories lacked an identifiable nurturant individual and told of excruciating loneliness. In the setting of these emotionally needy homes, attention received from sexual abuse was extremely confusing.

Sarah commenting on the emotional environment at home says, “emotionally, I never had a sense that she was sort of there! And that’s something I know now is in some sense true....In some ways I felt neglected, because she was never paying attention to me, right? I felt like I was on my own and sort of raised myself! Often!”

An incest survivor often has problems trusting other women, partly as a reflection of her feelings about her mother. These feelings may be coloured by betrayal, feeling let down, rejected or ignored. These feelings permeate her relationships with other women. “Consequently the victim’s ability to develop normal supportive relationships with women is hindered. Severe mistrust of women results if the survivor has actually been abused by her mother or other female relative” (Hall & Lloyd, 1989, p. 61). Sarah reflects on her experiences of friendship with other women.

For periods of time I’ve had close friends. Over the last years, those who were my close friends became mine and my partner’s close friends. It’s tough! In some ways I haven’t sort of fostered that out. And part of that is being lesbian....There’s straight women who I talk to....But I’ve wondered like why do I not have? And I have had! And I’ve tried to periodically foster a friendship with someone. I think I’m partly irritated because it takes so fucking long! And I didn’t realize I’d lost friends. And, plus, like who do I meet? I don’t know if I’ve lost the ability or what, but it seems hard.

Sarah’s abuse was repeatedly minimized within her family. In a discussion with her mother when Sarah was in her 30’s her mother said, “Nobody’s ever been abused in our family.” The ramifications of that disbelief are difficult to ascertain.

I conclude this section with a poem to a mother illustrating the relational importance of reciprocal care Nel Noddings encourages. Reciprocal care is about respect, autonomy and mutuality in the relationship. It expresses the emotional nurturance this study’s co-researchers desire. She states:

We are both free – that which I do, I do...I might do far better if you reach out to me and help me and far, far worse if you abuse, taunt or ignore me.

But even a plant needs water
And I have NO recollection of your hand touching me,
A kiss, or a hug – initiated by you...
And I still am
And you still are
And we are NOT.
I grieved over the loss of a mother,
A relationship that never was... many
Years ago, (Withersell & Noddings, 1991 p. 49).

5.5 Loyalty to Mothers

Marguerite discloses that the main reason she was reluctant to talk about her relationship with her mother is loyalty.

I remember clearly my own situation for 10, 15 years in not admitting that I needed to put a little bit of blame on my mother for not being there to protect me. I didn't want to. Wouldn't even go there because of loyalties! To the parent! Love thy parent! Honor thy parent! It is so strong when you are brought up in that. There's certain things you should never, ever do that is going to make your parent seem less than perfect. You just don't verbalize it. You can think it, but you don't verbalize it. Because once you verbalize it, there's an action! There's something that will take place! And you're putting blame...

Another experience provided Marguerite fuel to reflect on her loyalty to her mother. She considers her marriage to Daniel.

There was no choice! The ultimatum, was...and I'm in a very unhappy marriage. And if you don't think that many days and many times I have said to myself and again would never verbalize it, the resentment towards my mother for being in this abusive marriage relationship was great! Was very great!...So I started acknowledging this within myself.

Judith Herman discusses the challenge an abused child confronts regarding parental loyalties.

The abused child's existential task is formidable. Though she perceives herself as abandoned to a power without mercy, she must find a way to preserve hope and meaning. The alternative is utter despair, something no child can bear. To

preserve her faith in her parents, she must first reject the first and most obvious conclusion that something is terribly wrong with them. She will go to any lengths to construct an explanation for her fate that absolves her parents of all blame and responsibility. (Herman, 1997, p. 101)

Marguerite's analysis of survivors' loyalties is confirmed by the way her sister Simone expressed loyalty to her mother. Simone remembers her abuse from her oldest brother beginning prior to starting grade one. The last time he raped her she was 14. Their mother never knew a word about that, and Simone maintains her mother was too busy, never had time, and later when Simone disclosed the abuse to Marguerite, she claimed her mother was too old and couldn't handle it! She forbade Marguerite from telling. Simone manifested many indicators of abuse, almost having a nervous breakdown at a young age; hitchhiking to Toronto at 11 with the big truckers and coming back with a broken jaw; prostituting in Toronto and alcoholism by 13. The external symptoms of deep emotional pain were present, yet Simone would not tell her mother of her abuse. Marguerite also acknowledges the risk involved if she or Simone had faulted their mother and she had not responded to their plea (Sen & Daniluk, 1995).

After their mother died, five of Marguerite's siblings found out Marguerite had been sexually abused by their father. With this incomprehensible information, they abandoned her. She accepts that without understanding the dynamics of survivor's trauma, their confusion and bewilderment leave them speechless. They have not spoken to her, nor do they seem inclined to be educated to the impact of abuse in a family.

As the survivor attempts to resolve these questions, she often comes into conflict with important people in her life. There is a rupture in her sense of belonging within a shared system of belief. Thus she faces a double task: not only must she rebuild her own "shattered assumptions" about meaning, order and justice in the world but she must also find a way to resolve her differences with those whose beliefs she can no longer share. Not only must she restore her own sense of worth

but she must also be prepared to sustain it in the face of the critical judgments of others. (Herman, 1997, p. 178)

5.6 Pain and Cutting

“A cutter who has been abused often employs the psychological defense of self-mutilation” (Levenkron, 1998, p. 103). She utilizes physical pain which is familiar to combat emotional pain. Levenkron relates the story of Lynn, one of his patients who experienced frequent and extreme sexual abuse as a child.

This kind of pain is overwhelmingly complex and vague, and because it is undefined, it cannot be reasoned with, it has no name. Lynn’s emotional pain seems to have an infinite life. In order to control it she creates physical pain, which is finite and results in a state of calm. The infliction of pain on oneself is often a substitute for anger toward another, and possibly the unconscious desire to inflict pain on that other person. Consciously inflicting pain on another person is forbidden for a variety of reasons: the fear of the destruction of a needed person, or the fear of loss of love or care by that person. (Levenkron, 1998, p. 103)

Sarah certainly never wanted to hurt her mother. “And I had a hard time being angry at her! Because there was a feeling that being angry at her was in some way being angry at me! And was in some sense screwing me!...And I think that’s part of the cutting thing now that I think about it; was the frustration of not being able to be angry at her!” (Miller, 1990).

Sarah recalls her mother saying to her: “You were more of a mother to me than my mother was.” Sarah admits she needed stability! So she did the best she could to be there for her mother. “Not knowing until later that she held all the friggin cards anyway! I was so afraid of how fragile she was. And I guess it was learning that she wasn’t fragile or that I couldn’t sacrifice myself for her...”

Another of Dr. Levenkron’s patients, Carla, “cut her arms and breasts when she was angry with herself, or felt anger towards her parents, but believed them both to be too

emotionally frail to deal with her hostility” (Levenkron, 1998, p. 110). Carla planned her cutting to create the most pain with the least damage to herself. This plan allowed Carla an expression for her anger and disappointment without directly hurting her parents.

Levenkron suggests that children who are placed in a parent-child role-reversal are extremely vulnerable to behaviours which become important to themselves. When Sarah experienced herself as seemingly more powerful than her mother, she had no sense of security. “In order to sustain herself emotionally, she makes self-inflicted pain a dependable and necessary part of her life” (Levenkron, 1998, p. 128). Sarah said about her cutting:

It became a habit!...I really didn't like the fact I was attention seeking through cutting! Because I was supposed to be strong and take care of. But I needed somehow to feel the pain! In part it was separating her story {my mother's} from my story. I had so much of her pain and carried that in terms of not talking and feeling not educated and stuff...which was amazing because academically I was no slouch!

The tasks of separation are part of normal development through adolescence. However, coupled with betrayal, role reversal and the abuse Sarah experienced in her teen years, the tasks were enormous (Kenmore & Spira, 1996).

CHAPTER SIX

A Review and Discussion of the Literature and Narratives As Applied to the Social Interactions of the Survivor

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the impact the abuse had on the social dynamics of the co-researcher's experience with her mother.

6.2 The Family Legacy

The damage to the mother – daughter relationship is ongoing beyond the event of the abuse itself.

Because of secrecy around the lies he tells, both the mother and child will be unaware of the extent of the offenders' contributions to their own experiences and reactions, and to the difficulties in their relationship. While the offender's role is largely invisible, the mother and child will often be experiencing damaging guilt and blame in their interactions with one another. (Lovett, 1995, p. 730)

Anna experienced the secrecy Lovett describes. Her parents did not discuss the abuse with the abusers whose role subsequently became invisible in the inner workings of the family dynamics. Their disbelief left Anna experiencing the damaging guilt and blame described as she recalled her father's comments "and you know you must have done something to make this happen."

Louise Armstrong speaks of her research with incestuous families saying: We identified incest as something fathers and stepfathers had done throughout history and continued to do, not in spite of the fact they knew it was wrong, but because they believed it was their right: justifiable. And this is what the offenders said as well. "It's natural; it's perfectly normal." (Armstrong, 1997, p. 331)

The social workers in Kirk's study (1999) tended to underestimate the value of familial networks where the abuse took place within the family. Many teen age girls exhibit more autonomy than social workers would prefer and many opted to remain at home with the perpetrator. One teen opted to remain at home to protect her younger sister. This behaviour has been documented in feminist analysis of child and woman abuse as well as female oppression (McNab & Kavner, 2001). These observations show contemporary constructions of feminism as involving a high degree of responsibility for others to the detriment of self (Kirk, 1999). Sarah vocalized these sentiments in her decision to stay at home. She recalls feeling guilty when her mother said:

“You wouldn't like it if I left, because then where would you be?” I'd be with her but you'd lose this and you'd lose whatever. And in all honesty, she was right! I mean I didn't want her to leave 'cause I didn't know how that would affect the changes. At the time I felt sort of bad that I thought she'd stayed in this relationship for me. And then of course after I left home she was still in the relationship, so obviously that wasn't true!

In a reciprocal way, Sarah also felt responsible for her mother.

I think I knew she would be miserable if we left and she took action. There was more safety in staying where we were. I did not want to leave and be the only one for my mother! And in some sense at 15 you have more of a sense of feeling powerful...in some sense he wasn't that threatening!

Concern in Kirk's (1999) study also revolved around the mother-perpetrator relationship. The social workers determined the girls saw their mother's continued relationship with the perpetrator as minimizing what he had done, or their mothers doubting the abuse had ever occurred (Joyce, 1997). For Anna, her parents continued honor bestowed to the priests who abused her was indicative of their disbelief and doubt the abuse had occurred. “And once my father didn't believe me, who was going to believe me? Everybody I knew was Roman Catholic! Priests wouldn't do that!”

Another family legacy is that of addiction. Families living with active addictions live in states of chaos and turmoil which may be causal factors to an environment where abuse occurs (Briere, 1988; Hall, 1996). The language of the alcoholic family is one Marguerite learned in her childhood and adolescence. Eileen S. a member of Al-Anon speaks of what she learned from her mother, growing up in an alcoholic family.

As a child I learned very well from my mother. At the same time I learned to speak English I learned another native language as well. I learned the language of the alcoholic family, including all of the intricate ways our communications malfunction in relationships. One of my primary goals growing up was never to be like my mother. (Eileen S., p. 16)

This sentiment is reflected in Marguerite's words: "Am I following in my mother's footsteps? Her husband drank alcohol excessively and for 24 years I witnessed the horrendous effects caused by alcoholism to spouse and children. Will my children witness the same devastation?"

Reciprocally, Eileen shares with the interviewer the positive qualities imparted by her mother in her dysfunctional family. "I found myself telling this woman about all the good stuff I'd gotten from my mom – her kindness, compassion, generosity, level-headedness, intellectual curiosity, loyalty, and her non-judgmental attitudes" (Eileen S. p. 16). Marguerite is also quick to point out the good stuff she has received from her mother. Her great respect for manners and etiquette, her constancy in recognizing and appreciating people, the way your presence was honored, her gracious hospitality, the value she placed on education, and her attention to details.

When Marguerite was in her 30's she recounts the change in her mother's ability to meet her emotional needs. Then there were hugs and kisses, warm and affectionate

greetings and “Happy to see you” all of which brought goose pimples to Marguerite just thinking about it.

Of all the family bonds that we expect to hold up under duress – the mother–child bond is for reasons of both biology and social practice, the most invincible, the most mythic. Anthropologist Robin Fox believes the essential irreducible family unit is neither extended nor nuclear but just the pair of a mother and her child. (Stone, p. 22)

Stone suggests family stories undergird much of the rules and mores that govern family life. These rules suggest beliefs and behaviours that family members follow to keep harmony in the family.

Anger, illness, injury, suicide – these are some of the arenas where the family has its own series of rules, many of them covert, which it wants to have followed. Ironically, they strive toward a certain kind of harmony. Any family has to do its intricate dance together for at least twenty years and sometimes longer. It helps, therefore, if everybody knows the steps. (Stone, p. 94)

The steps of the mother-daughter dance may be partially explained by the Self-In-Relation model where a girl sees her image reflected in her mother’s sense of self (McNab & Kavner, 2001). Daughters who have a great “emotional openness and the capacity for identification with parental feelings and experiences, may unconsciously become the carrier of traumatic experiences that parents wish to disown or suppress” (Vogel, 1994, p. 35-36). Anna and Sarah identified deeply with the trauma their mothers experienced. It is possible that for Anna carrying the experience of the fire and the deaths of her siblings has simultaneously given her great empathy for her mother but also kept her enmeshed in their relationship, unable to completely separate. Sarah spoke of the pain of separation and how for much of her life, her mother’s story including the trauma of being orphaned at 11 became her own story.

When the mother carries trauma which she must for her own survival, disown and distance herself, the daughter, by virtue of her relational self-development is

likely to absorb this trauma, to encompass it within herself unknowingly....The relational self that is the legacy of the development of girls in a social context where mothers are the primary caregivers, renders the female child more open to receive this non-conscious, disowned material. (Vogel, 1994, p. 44-45)

Family myths are meant to explain why – why Anna’s parents’ house burned down, why Marguerite’s mother couldn’t hear of Simone’s abuse by her brother, why priests wouldn’t abuse Anna, why Anna’s mother favors her sons over her daughters. The term myth suggests the explanation given might well be untrue, or at least too limited. But they offer possible explanations for emotional cataclysms within the family and can be acceptable solutions to our worries. So we may believe emotionally without truly assenting intellectually (Stone, 1988). For each of the women in my study, family myths served to protect someone from dealing with the consequences of the truth.

In our culture beauty is linked to youth and a woman’s status is often related to her beauty. “Hence an inevitable tension between mothers and their daughters, and inevitable ambivalence in mothers toward their daughters” (Stone, 1988, p. 187). Anna experienced this tension in her relationship with her mother because she looked like her father’s mother. “And see, I looked a lot like his mother. So we had a little triangle thing going. I think mom was jealous! A lot!”

However it is experienced, the emotional aura, more or less blatant remains fixed. “The result seems to be that daughters unlike sons, rarely feel special and almost never feel entirely acceptable, even to themselves, because they never feel entirely acceptable to their mothers” (Stone, 1988, p. 187). Again, this scenario is reminiscent of the way Anna is treated differently by her mother than her brothers were.

What really bothers me is the brothers just walk in the door and it’s like ‘OH!’...it’s the whole female thing...you’ve been cooking, cleaning, scrubbing,

and the son walks in the door and...my brother says to me, 'I didn't do anything yet!' And I said, 'my point exactly! All you have to do is walk in dear!'...You notice the differences a lot. The contrast between the way she treats her sons and her daughters.

Anna continues to often feel unnoticed, and rarely special or important to her mother, yet she continues to insist on keeping her voice quiet lest her mother get irrationally angry.

In contrast to the literature that suggests mother-child bonding is natural and instinctive providing automatic satisfaction in mothering, sociological research has indicated that the experience of mothering involves conflicts and contradictions rooted within the social conditions in which it is undertaken, and in which isolation, depression and frustration are common occupational hazards. (Hooper, 1992, p. 35)

Mothering for Anna's mother included the trauma of losing three children to a fire, and repeated medical problems due to miscarriages and pregnancies. The torment and physical suffering were isolating and depressing by their very nature.

Marguerite's home life was peppered by her father's frequent comments that "I should have married so and so, and he'd name her. His true love was another woman." It was not Marguerite's mother. The satisfaction in mothering this man's children must have been impacted by these recurring outbursts. Marguerite expressed her understanding of her mother's situation saying, "She so resented having stayed in the marriage. Divorce was unheard of! You just put up and there was no place to go. There was no welfare, there was no such thing." Marguerite, in studying her mother's life was able to say, "What a situation to be in when you're thrown that in your face!" Her grandfather had been uncomfortable with the pending marriage, as Marguerite's father's drinking was recognizably out of control before the marriage. And of course things got progressively worse with physical and verbal abuse as the alcoholism progressed. In these situations

mother-child bonding may not be natural and instinctual as survival may pre-empt emotional nurturance.

While mothering can give a sense of meaning and purpose to women's lives this is constructed by social interaction between the woman, her child and others and the outcomes are unpredictable (Hooper, 1998). Marguerite's mother said "Other than my eleven beautiful children, my life is wasted in a sense. I could have done something so much better." Where a mother had a subjective sense of powerlessness to influence events in general, related to her own experiences of violence, isolation and consequent depression, it meant she lacked confidence in her ability to exercise authority over her children and did not always recognize the child's vulnerability in relation to adults (Hooper, 1998). This may be applicable to Marguerite's mother's inability to fully anticipate the abuse by her husband and the later abuse of Simone by her oldest son. A sense of powerlessness also impacted the ability of the mother to define the abuse, which is ultimately a power relationship between adults and children. That Anna's mother minimized the abuse and claimed no one in the family had ever been abused is indicative of this powerlessness within the family system.

Grooming is done by perpetrators preparing the environment so the abuse can occur with ease and without question or suspicion (Tharinger, 1990). Marguerite mentions reading a book about grooming in familial settings.

The grooming takes place for a long period of time prior to the actual assault. So I think my mother must have had it in the back of her mind, given the derogatory talk my father used to do about women. Sexual derogatory talk, always going on. Then there was alcohol abuse. (Tharinger, 1990)

She also states that sexual abuse can be degradation of women and sexual talk, which her father did a lot of in front of the children (Bass & Davis, 1994). This form of abuse is also part of grooming for further acts of sexual abuse.

In her 30's Sarah tells how she initiated a conversation with her mother regarding her father abusing her. "So I was acknowledged as to my father, but then the discussion was all about my father's sexuality and his reading dirty books and such, and about being a voyeur with my mother." The environment in Sarah's home for familial abuse appears to be set by her father's abuse to her mother, his sexual literature, and her mother's constant sexualized conversation with Sarah from an early age. Family discussions were frequent in Sarah's home life, and "Mostly sex was talked about!" All of these conditions were part of the family birthright these girls were raised in.

6.3 Religious Experiences in the Survivors' Families

The patriarchal structuring of our society positions teen-age girls as belonging to their families in ways teen age boys do not.

Children are linked to a gendered system of power through their historical social position as the property of fathers, as well as their own identity as male or female (O'Toole & Schiffman, 1997, p. 305). Girls continue to be bombarded with messages about their diminished social value relative to boys. (p. 306)

This sense of "belonging" to one's family is true for all three co-researchers in this study.

All three attribute it to the role of fathers as defined by their religious experience.

Each of these women was brought up in a family where "Honour your father and mother" was an important element. For Sarah, it became conflictual when her father got saved. Prior to that, she didn't have to acknowledge his power because although he was

male, “he wasn’t saved!” When her father became saved, “things were supposed to take their nice hierarchical Evangelical order. I didn’t like that!” The demands of this commandment required unquestioned obedience to their parents.

For Marguerite, it meant accepting the stigma of her father’s excuse for his abuse. He said, “You swear once in a while, therefore you’re becoming a tomboy...and I wanted to teach her a lesson.” Her mother’s assumptions and innuendos provided social stigma to marry Daniel. Her mother assumed they were sexually intimate.

If that were the case, we should get married. So ...the good catholic “Honor thy parents’, one of the Ten Commandments, recited every night during my childhood...this belief was engrained in me. Whether or not I was sexually intimate with Daniel was not relevant. But obeying my mother’s values was the unquestionable expectation at this point.

In Anna’s circumstance, there was the stigma of disbelief. It meant no discussion and certainly no arguing with her father and mother when they did not believe she was abused. Unfortunately this was a recurring scenario throughout Anna’s teen years. In Anna’s situation it was not only disbelief towards her as a daughter, but what she was implying about her family’s church.

Cases of clergy misconduct are especially damaging because church members believe priests are called to emulate the highest ideals of charity, chastity and care of their parishioners. These ideals are ideals of “Holy Mother Church”. In this metaphor, Anna’s abuse is synonymous with betrayal by a mother. For those abused by members of the clergy it is double the abuse.

The abuse by a priest of anyone, especially a minor is among the most shocking and depraved of moral aberrations. Bishop Harry Flynn who shared intimately with victims from Lafayette, Louisiana, relates that their psychological torment was so

immense that despite the passing of time, victims continued to be affected by the memory of the detestable violation to their body and their spirit (Flynn, 2002). Anna's conversation with her mother regarding moving in together echoes this statement. "I can't go to church right now. I'm too angry. I'm too scared. It triggers me too much."

Children and adults have been hurt, solemn vows have been betrayed, and a false sense of compassion, linked with a protective clericalism has allowed some priests to do terrible things over and over again. Anna has been irrevocably wounded by the abuse of two priests. Anna's family has also had to deal with these allegations, choosing either to believe them or disbelieve them. Both stances have had repercussions for Anna, and those who love her.

The literature regarding clergy sexual abuse, overlaps the discussion on clerical secrecy, the "Old Boys Club" and patriarchy. It speaks to the church's freedom to have her own ecclesial laws and discipline as well as the people's right to access of information. There are many articles that address the motherly, protective, behaviour of church officials protecting priests, above their responsibility to the vulnerable. There are articles discussing power and control as critical factors in sexual abuse, and the relationship between the priest's position and those needs (Neuhaus, 2002).

The literature also traced society's acceptance of clergy sexual abuse as a topic we are finally willing to read about and address. These allegations were written about as early as 1987. Sociologists, psychologists, journalists, historians and pastoral leaders have much to say about the willingness to examine the issues today. Some say the original problem with acceptance of this story was skepticism: that the hierarchy of a church that has done so much good in the world could condone anything so horrible.

Anna's father's mentality that "Priest don't do that!" is reflective of this thinking. Fifteen years ago reporters may have believed anything about politicians, but not men of the cloth preying on children with impunity. Fifteen years ago a crime such as this was one that veteran police reporters treated delicately because of the subject matter. Even ten years ago it was rare and shocking to read detailed accounts of sex acts in a newspaper. Journalists today suggest that the Monica Lewinsky-Bill Clinton affair changed all that. A cultural shift occurred after that time which made it possible for pedophilia and ephebophilia in the church to become front-page news (Cannon, 2002). Anna's abuse from the two priests occurred over thirty years ago. The era was a time when clergy abuse would not have been believed, or talked about openly.

Historically there has been "Liberty of the Church", to govern her own affairs. Beginning with the Council of Nicea in 325, there has been a history of ecclesiastical liberty basic to the various exemptions and immunities in current law and practice that protect religious freedom not just for Catholics but for everyone (Neuhaus, 2002). The right of religious institutions to govern themselves may be severely challenged by the legacy of the Christian Brothers at Mount Cashel, priests at Indian residential schools, as well as religious in isolated rectories across our country. While sin is the business of the church, crime is the business of the government. Historically there was a time when there was an ecclesial court to deal with clerics who committed sins that also were crimes. Although it had no standing in law, that manner of handling things continued in a vestigial and informal way until today. If the police suspected Father of a crime, they reported it to the Bishop with the confidence he would take care of it. That trust certainly no longer exists (Neuhaus, 2002).

In a non-taped conversation with Anna, she speaks of the struggle she realizes would be encountered should she ever choose to press charges or seek an apology from her priest abusers. It would be emotionally, mentally, socially and financially draining. She has already experienced alienation from her parents over the abuse. Recently attending a seminar for abuse survivors, she was informed by a lawyer, that should she become part of a class action suit, she should be prepared for the church to sue her for libel. Further, she was told to not count on any financial compensation. From this and anecdotal experiences of other survivors she believes she may not encounter “Mother” church if she presses charges, and does not possess the trust Neuhaus (2002) writes about.

It is impressive to me that despite the wrongdoing of the catholic priests who abused Anna, the ecclesial institution has not destroyed the spirit of the human person. She participates in the services of her church when she feels “safe” and attends services in a variety of churches. She says, “I think I’m rather liberated in my spirituality because of what’s happened to me. I just look for the Golden Spots everywhere I go.” Her attitude has given her a new perspective and freedom of worship. Sinead O’Connor, herself an abuse survivor echoes this perspective saying, “I always knew that God was there despite religion, and I’ve always been interested in rescuing God from religion” (Cullingford, 2002, p.207).

The Christian attitude of forgiveness presents a conflict for survivors. Sarah voiced this conflict when her dad got saved. “And we’re going to have a nice perfect family and God would forgive him etc. I didn’t want to forgive him! I didn’t want to reconcile with him!” Margaret Kennedy says, “Nowhere in the bible is forgiveness even discussed when the person harmed is less powerful than the person doing the harming.”

(2000, p. 132). Expecting the vulnerable or weaker person to forgive the powerful continues to safeguard the abuser from the consequences and reality of their actions. This exacerbated the relationship Sarah had with her mother as she “thought I would be incredibly happy about this [her father getting saved] right?”

Marguerite recalls “confessing” to a priest about her father’s abuse. “All we had at 12 years old is the great belief of the religious denomination, that you confessed to a priest. For some reason, I knew it was a sin, ’cause sin is a big thing. For me, I thought it was a sin. That’s how it came to me.” It was fortunate for Marguerite that her priest did not suggest she had sinned, but focused on the expedience of talking to her mother within a week or he would initiate the disclosure conversation.

Sarah also expressed anger at God at the time her dad entered the church. “When he got saved, things were supposed to take their nice hierarchical Evangelical order...It was more in my face that this is the way it’s supposed to be! And I remember being angry at God. Because of course God would have been the father too, the same... what the frig is this?” The links between one’s human father and a Father God image are very strong (Kennedy, 2000).

A discussion of the impact the church had on these families would be incomplete without recognizing the demands of raising children. Within eleven years, Anna’s mother, had four miscarriages, eight children and a hysterectomy. Marguerite’s mother raised eleven children. For each of these women, while their children’s physical needs were met, it was the emotional nurturance that lacked. While a discussion of emotional needs occurs elsewhere in the study, the attribution of family size is discussed here. Anna refers to her family as being “very rigid, very Roman Catholic, and religious rules to

follow.” Her mother only had the hysterectomy with the endorsement of Catholic Social Services. Tension between the Catholic moral teachings and the social outreach within the church are exemplified here.

The Catholic family pressures were judgmental and significant as she was called a sinner by her sisters. From Anna’s perspective however there was zero to scant emotional energy spent on the children as it was. To a child who wanted and needed her mother, it made no sense to damn someone who was emotionally and physically not able to be present to the children she had, and who might die with another pregnancy. Yet the catholic teachings continued to suggest limiting conception was wrong.

This situation was similar in Marguerite’s family. “And that’s where the difficulty comes and that’s where I had a lot of healing to do in that I was neglected emotionally because of the work she had to do.” By the time Marguerite left home at 13, crop failures, her father’s alcoholism and bankruptcy of the farm had materially impacted the family so that the younger children grew up with poverty and very traumatic times. This new situation accentuated her mother’s sadness and regrets for her children as well as feeling trapped within the marriage. Divorce was not allowed in the Catholic Church, and it was inconceivable for her to go against the teaching of the church.

In Anna’s family until her father was willing to discuss the abuse, it was fruitless to discuss it with her mother. In this family the mother would not go behind the back of her husband.

The weekend dad was diagnosed with cancer, I tried again desperately to bring my father to a place of understanding the sexual assaults I experienced. I finally told dad that weekend I realized the subject was too painful for him and, unless he raised the issue first, I would never talk to him about it again.

The final common religious experience shared by these women was going to religious schools. Sarah attended her church's Bible School and Anna and Marguerite were sent to convent schools as teenagers. It was the Catholic understanding at the time that if a young woman entered the religious life to become a nun, "your family was totally blessed." As Marguerite put it, "Coming from a Catholic community there was a big hope that I become part of a religious order." So there was an emphasis in Marguerite's community to try to get a daughter to consider religious life.

Anna's parents talked a lot about her becoming a nun, and when she finally said "I'm not," they pulled her out of the convent. She sensed there was a hidden agenda that nobody told her about. It turned out that becoming a nun had been her mother's dream and giving up dancing to join the novitiate was viewed as an appropriate sacrifice by her father. Definitely there were plans for her without her input. "I was afraid to become a nun. I assumed I would be at risk to be sexually assaulted again."

"As I entered the church, then I wanted to become a minister," said Sarah. She entered Bible College at 18, went off to church many nights of the week and frequently attended bible camps. "But I was never happy!...I was never content with actually wanting to save people. So that was weird, because that is what was publicly expected of me. I got strokes for that. I mean I was a good Evangelical! Right?" She says when her father entered the church she began to question "this church thing." The hypocrisy of the church leaders was also a factor motivating Sarah to change her plans. Her mother had also belonged to the church, but had never been as active as Sarah. Reflecting on her mother's response when she left the church she says, "I think in some sense my mother was probably somewhat disappointed that I left the church."

6.4 Breaking the Cycle – Changing the Patterns – Rebuilding

For the sake of their children, survivors are often able to mobilize caring and protective capacities that they have never been able to extend to themselves. An unexpected outcome of Skinner's (2000) study was the insight survivors had to their own mothering compared to the way they were mothered. As children moved through various stages of development these new mothers often revisited the issues they had faced at that age. Some of these issues were a mother's lack of care, real pleasure in interacting with their children, doing simple things together and even fears for the child. These are examples of different reactions to an inadequate parenting model.

Anna was adamant she was going to break the cycle and do things differently with her son. She attended parenting classes, carefully observing and imitating the teacher who also babysat Jason. She had not understood the value of hugs, as they were absent to her childhood experience. She quickly introduced hugs and words of endearment to her family life. Anna took her son on a trip to Disneyland, just relishing in the fun of it.

Marguerite spoke of breaking the cycle of abuse in her family.

For my children's sake! I brought these children into the world, I shall protect them. A mother bear protects her cubs! So in order to protect my children, I protect them from harm, I protect them from emotional abuse...their safety – they were having digestive problems because at every meal he would criticize how they were eating, or he'd criticize whether they ate enough or they didn't eat enough and it was constant complaining and criticism. Jacqueline was starting to want to sleep at everybody else's place instead of our own home! The writing's on the wall!

From that point on she paved the way for a new life with her children, divorcing her husband and moving to another city. She had recognized the pattern of verbal abuse she had grown up with and knew firsthand the negative effects. She began counselling so she

could understand her daughter. At that time she realized she had to do a lot of personal work. “I needed to learn about healthy parenting”.

The core experiences of psychological trauma are disempowerment and disconnection from others. Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships with others. The survivor must recreate the psychological faculties that were damaged or deformed by her abuse. These faculties include the basic capacity for trust, autonomy, initiative, competence, identity and intimacy. These must be reformed. (Herman, 1997, p. 133)

Sarah’s abuse coupled with her mother’s emotional unavailability from an early age truly left her disempowered and disconnected from others. She repeatedly spoke of being shy, and clinging to the security of her mother. Her sense of autonomy and identity were all but shattered, and her experience of healthy intimate relationships was very small. From the time Marguerite’s father abused her, she was alienated from the family home. Visits were safe, but living there on a permanent basis was no longer an option. She became disconnected from her mother and her siblings who she had a “little mother” relationship with. For Anna, one of three abusers accessed her disempowered living situation at the orphanage, where she was disconnected from her family and the other students who lived at the convent.

The survivor faces the task of creating a future. She has mourned the old self that the trauma destroyed; now she must develop a new self, new beliefs and a new sustaining faith. In this way the survivor reclaims her world. For survivors of childhood abuse the psychological experience can only be compared to immigration. The woman must rebuild a new life within a radically different culture from the one she left behind. (Herman, p. 196)

For Sarah, the task of rebuilding a life within a radically different culture was apparent when she left the predictable and safe confines of the church and her family. Her cutting was a loud cry of pain at the loss of all security and familiarity in her life.

The impact of the sexual abuse continues to make shock waves throughout the survivor's life. Issues that may have been resolved at one stage of recovery may be reawakened as the survivor moves to new places in her development. Marriage, divorce, birth, death, illness or retirement, can be triggers for a resurgence of the traumatic memories.

Those who have survived abuse learn that their sense of self, of worth, of humanity, depends upon a feeling of connection to others. The solidarity of the group provides the strongest protection to terror and despair; and the strongest antidote to traumatic experience. Trauma isolates, the group re-creates a sense of belonging. Trauma stigmatizes and shames, the group bears witness and affirms. Trauma degrades the victim, the group exalts her. Trauma dehumanizes the victim, the group restores her humanity. (Herman, 1997, p. 214)

Marguerite began changing the pattern of her behaviour through the support group for abused women. Sarah experienced the supportive community of the Women's center at her university and says, "They became a group for me." Anna experienced the support through the parenting groups and survivors' groups. She continues to access groups where she finds safety and support. In one group she is presently in she says "I know who not to ask for hugs and I know who to ask." All these women had few support networks after their abuse.

Ellen Prescott (1994) and her sister were repeatedly abused as young children.

They were examined, questioned and put in tough positions at young ages. Ellen states:

Oddly, given a choice, I wouldn't wish the abuse away. Done is done. Nothing is good or all evil. Good has of this: learning about acceptance and self-love, friendships with other abuse victims, belief in and empathy for abuse victims, poetry and strength. My relationship with my mother is nauseatingly healthy. I know of no one who likes and respects their mother as much as I do. I enjoy spending time with her; we have great talks. (Prescott, 1994, p.216)

Ellen mentions the friendships with other abuse victims she has developed. Each co-researcher in the study has been and presently is in friendships with other survivors. It has

been through their involvement with the community of survivors and articulating their story with professionals that referrals were made for them to participate in this study.

One aspect of rebuilding that was only lightly touched on by the co-researchers is that of education and advocacy. Marguerite's mother made a commitment to her daughter to do everything possible to help get her out of the rut. Education was a part of that action. The education allowed Marguerite to get a job she loved and to continually improve her socio-economic standing.

Anna says, "Dad always wanted me to go to school and get more education. The insistence was there, but there was no money." A year of Business College led her to a receptionist job "but I wanted to be taking more care of people. I wanted to be more involved!" Her training as a massage therapist opened some new doors for her, and she says, "Up until this year I thought it was really my calling." Presently her health impedes the full benefits of the work and her ability to do it full time.

As part of Sarah's theology degree at Bible School, she had to take a year of university. There she discovered sociology and feminism which have allowed her to get into the field of social work and counselling which she has always loved. All of these women have participated in groups for survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and all have in diverse ways become advocates for the survivor.

Survivors move to a place where they reject the demands to remain politely silent. They remember, speak up, and take every opportunity to 'make political' incest experiences. Politicizing abuse is a lifelong effort aimed at 'denaturalizing' abuse, and disabling its aftereffects. (Champagne, 1996, p. 2)

Finkelhor and Browne's model may also be applied to the behaviours that daughter and mother exhibit to each other as part of the healing process. Recognition from the mother of her daughter's powerlessness, the stigmas she endured, the betrayal

and the inappropriate or traumatic sexualization that was present in the home will positively impact healing the daughter-mother wounds. Reciprocally, as much as the daughter can understand these qualities in her mother, communication and healing will improve.

Marguerite evidenced this reciprocity in her relationship with her mother. I include a sample of Marguerite's statements about her mother which example her present understanding (Morrison & Clavenna-Valleroy, 1998). She is teary as she recalls being sent to the convent school and her mother's sense of powerlessness and stigmatization. "And how much she must have missed me. And I look back; she must have dearly missed me." Reflecting on losing her daughter-mother relationship after the abuse she says of the betrayal her mother must have felt: "She put me in the category of sister, because it makes it at little less painful to deal with. Excruciating! She had to raise me to the level of a sister! Not that it was easy to swallow!" Another remark shows the understanding Marguerite had, appreciating the experience of betrayal by her father to her mother. Regarding her father, Marguerite said: "For him to have done that to her! For her husband to have done that to her! That's got to be the hurt of the hurt of the cruelest!"

Skinner's research indicates:

Those survivors who were able to assume a greater degree of responsibility for their actions and control over their lives were the ones who were able to separate themselves from their childhoods. This involved realizing they could improve conditions for themselves and their own children rather than maintaining the view that because they had been damaged nothing was going to be easy for them. (Skinner, p. 101)

Each of these women co-researchers has improved conditions of nurturance, care and safety for herself and her children. While admittedly nothing has been easy, they have not been deterred.

6.5 Benefits of the Healing Work

Sarah began her healing work seeking counselling at age 20, for issues around anger at her mother and her sexual abuse. Over the past two decades, she has continued to access counselling and small groups, as well as the study and group work she participated in through her university education. In her early twenties with two small children, Marguerite began her journey of healing within a group for women with abusive partners. She pondered the irony of repeating the same pattern her mother had exemplified. The continuous work she has done over 30 years has included parenting work, personal counselling for her sexual abuse and work centered on her family of origin. Anna's journey to healing has included parenting classes, and group and individual counselling for her sexual abuse issues. Each co-researcher has accessed different healing experiences at different stages of their journey.

Counselling is seen as a support to survivors and a source of help. In Skinner's study it enabled one survivor to realize she wasn't treating herself like a human being. Another woman appreciated two different counsellors at different stages of her healing. The first was empathic and comforting and the second was a survivor herself and was less sympathetic and more confrontational. (Skinner, p.95)

While each narrative includes the benefits voiced by the co-researcher, there are commonalities worth mentioning together. Marguerite clearly spoke that a motivator for beginning the healing journey was the pain. She wanted no more pain! She spoke of realizing she was repeating patterns of parenting and family life identical to her family of origin; something she had determined she would never do. Anna also realized she was parenting in isolation and without a healthy model to follow. Both women were amazed to realize the benefits hugs and attention could bring to everyday living. Sarah recognized

clearly she wanted to differentiate from her mother. She had unknowingly saved a “core self” and wanted to nurture and heal that self. She too had had enough pain! (Sen & Daniluk, 1995).

Both Anna and Sarah articulated tension in present relationships with their mothers. Both acknowledge and accept they cannot change their mothers, but can change only themselves. All three women desire healing so their families will be happier and healthier. Marguerite still longs for the benefits she believes will come when her siblings embark on a journey to understand the sexual abuse to herself and her sister Simone. She admits they remain ignorant to the trauma of sexual abuse. Anna clearly speaks of her desire for all her family to be able to sit in a room together and not hurt one another. Sarah chooses to hold no expectation of her mother, yet has a deep desire for her sisters and mother to “BE there” for her.

All three spoke of benefits to their intimate relationships. Sarah identifies past times when a partner was unable to “be there” for her, she held it against them. She now catches herself transferring resentment to her mother onto her partner and changes her behaviour. Anna is proud of teaching her son not to take on her issues. It allows freedom for each to live their life independently. For Marguerite, the main benefits are a nurturing relationship she belatedly experienced with her mother, and now has with her daughter and grandchildren.

All three of these women had a time of “looking for love in all the wrong places.” Marguerite succinctly expressed this. Sarah mentioned a period of confusion where she was in a “bi” stage while accepting her sexual orientation. Anna refers to her abusive husband and how even her brothers would take issue with him if they met him. The phase

of looking for love in all the wrong places was prior to the healing work each has done. Each is in a healthier place today, with appropriate boundaries governing their intimate relationships.

Each of these women also did not experience a daughter-mother relationship as they would have liked. After the abuse, Marguerite's mother regarded her as a sister, a relationship which is "a little less painful and a bit easier to swallow." It must have been extremely difficult for her mother to experience her husband sexually preferring her daughter to herself. "And why did I suffer the price of not being the daughter on account of that abuse?" Anna physically cared for her siblings, taking on many of the jobs her mother would have done had she been healthier. She also cared for her mother through much of her illnesses. "I don't ever feel I really had a mom!" Sarah experienced a role-reversal, becoming her mother's mother.

Telling our own stories is a way to impose form upon our often chaotic experiences, and in the process to develop our own voice. Listening to our own stories is a way for us to nourish, encourage, and sustain ourselves to enter into a caring relationship with all the parts of our self. (Witherell & Noddings, p. 97)

Participating in these interviews was helpful to all co-researchers. At the conclusion of the second interview Sarah said, "I liked it actually. I mean 'cause most of the time I don't get to talk about myself much! I get to say this is what it's like with my mother! So that's actually been good! I've enjoyed that!" Anna expressed the interviews being opportunities for more clarification. Giving voice to her anger and naming the disrespect in her relationship with her mother have provided her much food for thought. "Well I thought the talking would clarify things for me. It's only raised more. Maybe when I read the transcript it will clarify. Some of your perspectives have made it a little clearer for me that maybe I really do on some level know what I'm doing here!"

Marguerite's final comment was "I don't think there are any words that would – that can say how grateful I am to have had this opportunity with you."

While telling the story has gained these survivors support from feminist groups, other survivors, counsellors and some sympathetic friends and family, it also involved risk. Sexual abuse has isolated these women from the "norm" leaving them with the need to deny, or hide part of themselves within many areas of their lives. Survivors are in a "double-bind" in a society which avoids discussion of painful issues. Their loss is further compounded by losses of support or trust while they are dealing with the abuse. Survivors are simultaneously constructing meaning from the events that surrounded their loss and having these meanings challenged by people or events (Skinner, 2000). These women continue to forge ahead. None of them is willing to settle for life exactly as it is. All of them have unresolved issues related to their abuse. Their stories will continue to unfold.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Implications

7.1 Implications for Further Research

There was no intention or purpose in this study to provide definitive experiences a woman survivor may have with her mother. As understood through reading the narratives, there are diverse factors which set the stage for abuse to occur. Assorted responses to the abuse from family members and the many nuances in the existing relationships all colour the experience.

There are two distinct conclusions I draw from this study which I suggest have implications for further research. First is the agreement among my co-researchers that their relationship with their mother has been of critical importance all through their lives. It has affected their self-esteem, their autonomy, and their ability to make their way in this world. The common threads as explicated in chapters five and six indicate this.

The second conclusion I make is that the desire for nurturing, care and safety was desired and pursued by the daughters towards their mothers throughout their lives. It did not stop when they left home, nor has it stopped yet. Being treated disrespectfully, ignored, or used has not deterred this desire for affirmation from mother. As evidenced by Marguerite's story, her mother's influence within the family in relation to her abuse by her father is still a festering issue, years after her death. A longing is still expressed for

mom to make things all right again. Each woman's mother still holds some power in her daughter's life.

Similar research may be undertaken to understand the experience of a daughter – father relationship when the mother is the abuser. Guiding questions could still focus on phenomenon of nurturance, care and safety as experienced by the woman over time from childhood to womanhood.

Of further interest would be reciprocal studies interviewing men who were abused as children and their relationships with their mothers when the abuser was male. A separate study might be undertaken to gather narratives of male survivors of childhood sexual abuse and their experiences with their fathers when the abuser is female.

Based on the lived experiences of Marguerite, Anna and Sarah, I suggest some additional areas for further research. Research on mother – daughter relationships where the mother is a trauma survivor is needed to follow up to the research done by Vogel (1994) on mothers' traumatic experiences being absorbed by their daughters. This is studied in connection with the Self-In-Relation model (McNab & Kouvner, 2001). Is gender a risk for secondary trauma? How does that contribute to an environment for abuse to flourish? These are important areas to research as qualitative studies.

In the Literature Review in chapter two, I mention many empirical studies which measure symptoms of PTSD, drug and alcohol use, or mental illness in mothers (Suffoletta & Samantha, 2002; Breckenridge & Baldry, 1997; Douglas, 2000; Lewin, 2000). The usefulness of empirical studies is not always transferable to a therapeutic situation. Further research could be done which gathers the stories of the families' experiences when the mother's capacity to nurture, care and provide is impeded. There

was just one study I found which measures daughters' perceptions of their mothers (Voth & Tutty, 1999). I did not come across any studies which linked these symptoms with early maternal trauma, and ensuing family dynamics as a result of the trauma.

Design for such a study could be focused life stories. Narratives gathered over three interviews, allow the co-researchers to reveal themselves in layers, gauging the safety of the interview process. Opportunity could be provided to examine events and their contexts from different angles while knowing commitment is brief and closure forthcoming (Hall, 1996).

I suggest further research should be done on the impact to each member of the family on moving out of the family system. Marguerite's experience of leaving, impacted each family member negatively, as did Sarah's choice to stay. Does one solution consistently present more stability emotionally, mentally and physically for the child?

With friends, Janie and Ellen Prescott incorporated *Abused Children Talk In Kentucky, Inc.* to encourage everyone to listen to children and to act on behalf of their protection.

Dear Reader, I hope that everyone who reads this book can see how abuse affects children. We need to protect children and not put them back into unsafe environments. I am one of the fortunate ones because my mom listened to me, even when the judge made the wrong decision.... Yours sincerely, Ellen Mari Michelle (age 14). (Webster, 1998, p. 238)

The experience of Ellen and her sister led their mother to a radical decision to leave their country and flee, for the girls' safety. That was one specific response to familial abuse.

Social workers (Kirk, 1999) continue to see the importance of certain family features. Those of the perpetrator and the mother, and those relating to the structure and situation of the family such as the quality of support networks and whether the family is

an original or blended family. 1) The structure or constitution of the family unit and 2) the interpersonal relationships within the family unit are also important. Social workers tried to change the structure by ideally removing the perpetrator or failing this to move the girl or secondly to change the focus of relationships within the family.

“Social workers also saw the quality and form of family relationships as extremely important” (Kirk, 1999, p. 175). Quality of parenting was the principal concern in the home situation. The articulation of this concern placed primary responsibility on the mothers. This enduring motif continues to thrive in the minds of social workers and our society with gender prescribed roles. Contradictions arose in the thinking of the social workers as some viewed the woman’s primary responsibility to the husband in fulfilling his sexual wants. Others saw the primary responsibility of the mother to be care and protection of the children. “Women are simultaneously exposed to the pressure to conform as autonomous self-reliant mothers and submissive, dependable wives” (Kirk, p. 176). These women were either condemned as bad wives or bad mothers.

Governments and other funding bodies need to encourage alternative research which moves away from traditional blaming/responsible models of family which reproduce notions of gendered divisions of responsibility and capability. Since the population of women constitutes over half the population, women centered researchers should be given priority for future research grants to help bring about a reasonable balance in views toward the mother-daughter relationship (O’Toole & Schiffman, 1997).

Lovett’s study (1995) highlights the importance of empowering mothers in our society. Comprehensive interventions are needed, to empower the mother-daughter relationship. Positive interventions and relationship building may assist in serving to

protect future generations of children from abuse. Some research selecting the most effective interventions would be necessary here.

A study by Carter (1999) discusses effects of childhood sexual abuse on children and learning abilities.

The children in this study suffered considerable trauma from the sexual abuse, and the majority of them did not do well in school because of fear, isolation, low self-esteem and anger caused by the abuse. School boards could be encouraged to continue and/or develop education programs that create a safe environment in which children can disclose. ..In addition to continuing with these types of prevention programs on reporting, boards of education could also provide training for teachers and school personnel that would increase their ability to understand and support children and mothers in such situations. (Carter, p. 193)

All of the women in my study showed difficulties in high school. Their low self-esteem impacted their confidence and ability to get involved with both teachers and peers. I particularly support Carter's idea of schools supporting children and mothers in abusive situations. Each of these women told their mother of the abuse. The educational emphasis should be heavily placed on disclosure at home or to a safe caregiver or nurturer as opposed to a teacher who has a position of power in the child's life.

Through the counselling I have done with survivors I have met some survivors who have found school and the academic world a place of safety or refuge. Further research could be initiated to retrieve those stories from survivors.

7.2 Implications for Counselling

The first and most natural implication for counsellors from this study is the importance which needs to be given to hearing the daughter – mother story from survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The co-researchers voiced consensus of the critical

nature of this relationship throughout their lives. They also said their hunger for emotional nurturance from their mothers was a desire which remained with them into adulthood. I suggest in a counselling situation where the client is seeking clarity in personal issues of autonomy, independence, self-esteem, care, nurturance and safety or emotional health, that the client's experience of relationship with their mother be storied. These issues may be linked to this relationship with their mother as evidenced by the stories of Anna, Marguerite, and Sarah.

The value of narrative therapy as a tool for meaning making for survivors of childhood sexual abuse would be another natural implication resulting from this study. Utilizing narrative methodology I was able to write the stories of survivors' experiences with their mothers in a way which resonated for each co-researcher. Narrative therapy offers each person a way "to externalize their story and experience a sense of personal agency" (White & Epston, 1990). These men write further about the value of narrative therapy:

As they break from their performance of their stories, they experience a capacity to intervene in their own lives and relationships. The discovery of unique outcomes, as well as the externalizing of the problem can then be further assisted by encouraging persons to map their influence, and the influence of their relationships with others, on the "life" of the problem... Various questions can be introduced that assist in engaging persons in this ascription of new meaning, questions that actively involve them in...the "re-authoring" of their lives and their relationships. (White & Epston, 1990, p.16)

It is this very opportunity to "re-author" their lives and relationships which makes narrative therapy so useful, meaningful and positive for survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

As I reflected on the implications of this study for counselling, I was continuously reminded of the necessity and significant value of listening (Ivey & Ivey, 2003). As an interviewer, I was required to listen to the story unfold as each woman set her own pace, and told what she wanted to tell. Listening is the first and perhaps most important skill in counselling. My experience as an interviewer taught me to be slow to intervene, as I otherwise might miss the roots of the story by speaking or directing too quickly. The stories I heard and share with you would not have been told if I had directed the interview more frequently.

It is imperative that survivors of sexual abuse receive opportunities to develop skills which empower themselves in all life situations. Self-esteem and assertiveness training can counter stigmatization; learning to set boundaries and acquiring skills in self-care can contradict experiences of powerlessness; experiencing community can counter experiences of betrayal; and learning self respect, positive sexuality and forming healthy relationships can all contribute to countering traumatic sexualization, experienced through childhood sexual abuse. These skills are most often learned through group participation and work, which simultaneously validate one's experiences, provide opportunities to meet people who have had similar experiences and build friendships. Counsellors can refer clients to access these opportunities for skill development or develop groups for their own clients.

Because of the importance these women placed on their relationship with their mothers, I suggest implementing psycho-educational groups focusing on the daughter-mother relationship. Topics could include, mother's family of origin; mother's parenting model; participant's parenting model; separation from mother; establishing autonomy;

communication; blame; lasting effects on the daughter-mother relationship of the abuse; mothering as a survivor; empathy; reciprocity (Morrison & Clavenna-Valleroy, 1998); hopes and dreams; and acceptance.

While it is important that therapists support and validate the daughter's expressions of anger and rage that may be directed at her mother, it is also important that we deepen the daughter's exploration of these feelings so that she may better understand the feelings of pain and loss that are so profoundly associated with her relationship with her mother. (Sen & Daniluk, 1995, p. 56)

Grief and loss are major issues in counselling survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Herman suggests the fundamental stages of recovery from sexual abuse are: 1) establishing safety, 2) reconstructing the trauma story, and 3) restoring the connection between survivors and their community (Herman, 1997).

Hall (1996) discussed specific environmental characteristics using retrospective narratives of recovering adult women.

Narrative provides a longitudinal means of approaching the places and events of the past. By understanding what happened in childhood, framing these events in their contexts, and exploring what occurred between the earlier abuse and the situation of an adult woman trying to heal from trauma, patterns of current difficulties become more comprehensible and less pathologized. (p. 30)

Herman (1997) discusses the narrative method of counselling in more detail.

The recitation of facts without accompanying emotions is a sterile exercise without therapeutic effect. At each point in the narrative, therefore, the patient must reconstruct not only what happened but also what she felt. The description of the emotional states must be as painstakingly recalled as the description of facts. She is not simply describing what she felt in the past but is reliving those feelings in the present. The therapist must help the patient move back and forth in time, from her protected anchorage in the present to immersion in the past, so that she can simultaneously re-experience the feelings in all their intensity while holding on to the sense of a safe connection that was destroyed in the traumatic moment. (p. 178)

Herman further notes that survivors need to explore the questions of “why?” and “why me?” in order to reconstruct themselves and restore their own sense of self-worth. Counsellors could invite the women to contextualize themselves as part of their family background.

Mothers whose daughters were abused will have needs for counselling as well. They have experienced the loss of a daughter to a husband or lover or other person. Their role as protector has been attacked; their own space has been violated. “Women are likely to resolve the grieving process more easily if they have had secure experiences of attachment as a child themselves” (Hooper, 1992, p. 52). Helpful as well is the validation of others to their experiences and responses to the abuse of their child. Hooper purports that the secondary victim must feel supported and understood to be able to comprehend and let in the experience of the primary victim” (Hooper, 1992). To that end, individual and group counselling needs to be made available to survivors’ mothers and families.

Suggestions include the need for mothers and daughters to move towards mutual understanding of the abuse through discussion of issues where blame may be attributed to mothers. Issues such as victimization, effect of trauma, alliances formed to accommodate dysfunctional behaviour (Rothery & Enns, 2001) all may need to be discussed. It follows that if the reframing of individual stories is of benefit for individuals, then the restructuring of a family experience would have benefits for them as a unit. In Skinner’s (2000) study she did not observe these insights born in the experience of her participants. Too often they saw themselves as pawns rather than narrators in control of their own stories. It appeared the story for them was ongoing, that the present could still be affected by the past (Skinner, 2000).

I recommend that all children be taught from a young age about “safe touch”. All children should be raised to know their rights about their body and appropriate ways for others to touch their body. School health programs are a natural place for this to begin and continue where they are already in place.

Advocacy remains a tenet of the Code of Ethics (2001) for psychologists in Canada. Louise Armstrong reminds us “the person is political” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 333). She suggests over the years of speaking out about incest and child sexual abuse we have heard the words, but no longer understand the meaning behind them. Incest appears to have been reformulated by therapists and healers and its meaning has changed. It is no longer male power which needs changing but women and their symptoms that need to change. Armstrong concludes that “the iceberg remains the socially tolerated act of child-rape by fathers” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 335). Where this is true in cities or regions of our country, counsellors must become advocates for reform. The public arena needs the informed voice of this profession.

The value and importance for counsellors to keep current of the research and methods that are helping survivors is paramount to ethical practice. The relationship of daughter and mother studied in this thesis continues to indicate that “The Mother-Daughter show is the longest running show in town” (Manning, 2002, p. 17).

7.3 My Experience as a Researcher

There were two dimensions to my research experience. The first and most profound was that of interviewing the women survivors and sitting with their stories. Hearing their voices over and over made the words fresh and more alive with each

hearing. The range of emotions I experienced was huge! I wept with Anna as she washed the floor and let her tears spill, blending with the wash water, when nobody saw or heard. I ached with Marguerite sitting under the lilac hedge feeling a hole in the pit of my stomach as I recalled my own experiences of loneliness, wondering if anybody cared. I could hardly listen to Sarah tell over and over, the minimizing of her abuse. I longed for somebody to hear her now.

In the middle of the night I awoke from a very vivid dream calling out “Who will protect the children?” That question ultimately reflects the impact this study had on me. The most emotional moments for me were as the child within each woman spoke of her pain and hunger to be heard. The effects of the abuse in terms of family ignorance, trauma, disbelief and minimizing continue to this day.

I remember vividly about five minutes into my first interview with Sarah, as she spoke of being gay, wondering if I was giving off any negative vibes. I instinctively knew that my reaction was somehow, extremely important to her. Checking out my subjectivity is not something I need do with gay people, because I am quite comfortable. I was conscious of an unspoken importance to my response. In checking out my field notes I wrote down “Sarah uncomfortable, testing.” Only in hindsight after writing Sarah’s story, and finishing these last chapters do I understand how intrinsic and core, the issue of sexual orientation is for Sarah. One’s sexuality is a part of everything an individual is and does. If I had not accepted her and she had not felt safe with me the interviewer, I doubt I would have received the story I did receive from her.

There was a moment in the interview with Sarah when I burst out laughing. My laughter was in response to her very tenuous, unclear, unsure statement about her abuse.

“I guess I had the sense that because it was voyeurism, it was sort of OK.” Sarah joined me in laughter at the incredulity of her experience being minimized by her mother. My field notes say, “I laugh at how she says it’s OK”. My laughter was not in judgment of her mother. It was the laughter shared over our human ignorance to this unbelievable experience of childhood sexual abuse.

Throughout the interviews, I am surprised by the laughter. The laughter spontaneously happened as we laughed together in incredulity and disbelief over the way our society has minimized sexual abuse and looked for scapegoats and people to blame. I heard laughter from each individual woman as she shared some of the humorous memories of growing up with her mother. I heard how laughter and humour became a friend to Sarah in her assertiveness and their struggles regarding her sexual orientation within her family. Anna laughed as she shared acceptance of the favors her brothers receive from their mother. Marguerite laughed with joy at the pleasure she receives experiencing growth and change within her family relationships. I had a wonderful time with these women! I enjoyed the moments I had with them. I was amazed at their resiliency, their adaptability and their willingness to change which continues to prevail through difficult times.

7.4 My Experience with the Research

Lee (1993), writing regarding researching sensitive topics, notes that stress induced through in-depth interviewing, and means of dealing with researcher–stress have largely been ignored. He cites Brannen (1988, p. 562):

Researchers who are entrusted with the confidences of their respondents ought to be protected by some of the safeguards that customarily are associated with the

role of the confidant. Confiding is normally a reciprocal process. Even professional confidants – counselors and psychotherapists – have their own confessors. (p. 106)

Researcher-stress is something I encountered through the interview and transcribing process. While I had set in place several opportunities for my co-researchers to have access to counselling before, or after the interviews, I had not set out any specific provision for personal debriefing. I quickly realized this would be vital for emotional balance. I was able to reconcile my need in an ethical manner, through a colleague in the counselling program who I discussed issues with in a general way. The second person who made herself available to me was a counsellor at Tamara's House.

Of interest is the fact that none of these women co-researchers accessed the counselling available to them. All of them are well on in their healing journeys and were able to cope with issues on their own or with the various supportive relationships they have. I was grateful there was no secondary trauma brought on by the study.

Also relevant to this sample was the years of therapeutic work these women have done. Marguerite has been part of purposeful healing work for over thirty years. Anna is not far behind and Sarah, the youngest has about twenty focused years of counselling and group work. The benefits of that work impacted the clarity of their story. They were able to articulate the nuances and subtleties of their relationship with their mothers. We all benefit from their work.

I now hold the position that transcribing one's own interviews immerses the researcher more quickly and deeply into the story, than otherwise possible. While it is tedious and arduous, I was pleased with the end result, and did not have to correct errors

transcribers frequently make. I had heard the voice of woman, daughter, survivor, sister, and mother over and over by the time I began writing the individual narratives.

Anticipating member checks at the time the Sign-off release forms were completed, revealed some of my fears and apprehensions. I worried whether the co-researchers would find their narratives honest representations of what they had said in the interviews. My fear was based on concern I might have allowed my ignorance, positionality or other bias to interfere with the meaning of their experience. I was also concerned that with two months since the interviews, the co-researcher may have changed her mind about completing the study, or want to tell a different version of the story. It was a relief to have the narratives returned virtually unchanged. The verbal affirmations further solidified the stories and I conclude the member checks are an accurate and vital indicator of validity.

I wanted to use Lincoln's (1995) quality criteria in this study to ensure reliability and validity but was unsure how realistic they would be to use. Today, I have confidence they are valid indicators in qualitative work. Throughout chapter three I have referenced their application in this study and their value. In concluding I want to remark on the last three criteria Lincoln discusses.

Already each co-researcher wants a share in the Perquisites of Privilege (Lincoln, 1995). They have each asked me to share with them information which might be applicable to their situation. How did I take certain aspects of their story and shed understanding on it through the literature? I have been asked to copy certain studies so they can read and continue their growth and healing. I am excited to be able to share in what I have learned because of their abuse. This is also a specific example of Reciprocity

(Lincoln). There has developed a mutual respect between myself and each co-researcher that has marked the entire study. I am grateful for that evolution.

The final criterion is Sacredness (Lincoln, 1995). This criterion is about dignity, justice and interpersonal respect. My life has been irrevocably changed through completing this study. I conclude with my comments to Marguerite after her final interview. These were reflective of my sentiments towards each co-researcher's words and participation in the study.

I am grateful! It is overwhelming for me. Your vulnerability, your willingness. ...I feel like I am walking on holy ground and sitting on holy ground right now. I'm with someone who has done an amazing amount of work...who has not let the stuff of life defeat her! But has walked forward with personal strength and with integrity and with beauty! ...I feel very privileged to have had you share with me. So, Thank You.

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Information Letter for Research Study

Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narratives of Relationships with Their Mothers

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narratives of Relationships With Their Mothers*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researchers:

Mary Lou Fletcher, Master of Education Candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. 343-7152.
marylouf@shaw.ca

Walt Pawlovich, Professor and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. 966-7672. FAX 966-7644
Walt.Pawlovich@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedures:

The purpose of the study is to understand the daughter – mother relationships of women survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and how these changed over time. I would like to include the story of your relationship with your mother in my study.

You have been recommended to participate in the study by a professional who knows you and is familiar with your story. Thank you for your willingness to consider being a participant. This letter of information explains the study in detail. If you agree to participate, I ask you to phone or e-mail me at the numbers above and we will arrange to meet. Here are the procedures from there:

- At the first meeting we will discuss informed consent, confidentiality and the potential emotional consequences of participation. We will also make sure the criteria for participation are met.
- You will be asked to participate in two to three interviews of no more than ninety minutes. The interviews will be like conversations, and will take place at Tamara's House during the hours the Drop In Center is open. These interviews will be audio taped. You will be invited to share stories of experiences with your mother during childhood, adolescence and the present.
- I will transcribe each tape before the next interview when we will review the transcript for accuracy and intent. Interviews will take place one week apart, and your participation in the study will be about three weeks from start to finish.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

One criterion for participation in this study is that you have a personal counsellor you can meet with if the need arises during the duration of this study. I have prior assurance from Tamara's House of their support in finding counselling for you if you presently do not have a counsellor. This way, if new flashbacks or memories surface that require therapeutic intervention, professional help will already be in place.

Opportunities for talking with Drop In Center staff will be available before and after each interview, as well as at the time of signing the Data/Transcript Release Form and the Sign-Off Release Form. As well the Sexual Assault Centre offers a 24 hour phone line at 244-2224.

If at any time you determine it is too difficult to continue participation in the study, you are free to withdraw. This withdrawal will not affect you in any way. Only I will know of your withdrawal.

The study has the possible benefit of assisting you on your healing journey. It may also benefit the community of survivors who are enriched by hearing "their story" as told by you. The study may also benefit the community of therapists who work with survivors by better understanding the impact of the daughter – mother relationship.

Confidentiality:

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Your story will be coded individually, and direct quotations will be used to write the narratives for my thesis. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interviews, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interviews, only your pseudonym will be used. All identifying information such as Saskatoon or Tamara's House will be removed from our report.

Right to Withdraw and Questions:

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time. If you withdraw from the study, any data you have contributed will be destroyed. Ongoing consent to participate will be elicited prior to each interview. If you choose to withdraw at any time or choose not to participate in the study after receiving this information there will be no impact to you on the services you receive from Tamara's House.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Fletcher

Appendix A

Behavioural Research Ethics Board Application for Approval of Research Project

1. Name of researcher, supervisor and department

Mary Lou Fletcher, Master of Education Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan.

Under supervision of Walt Pawlovich, Ph. D. Professor & Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, University of Saskatchewan.

1b. Anticipated start and completion date

I anticipate beginning data collection in November 2003, with completion date of the study March 2004.

2. Title of the study

Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narratives of Relationships With Their Mothers

3. Abstract

I propose to do a narrative inquiry of the daughter – mother relationship of survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Through participants' stories, I will consider the meaning of the role of the mother – daughter relationship in the healing journey of women survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Stories will be gathered of how this relationship evolved over time.

This study may enlighten issues of attachment, autonomy and independence within survivors of childhood sexual abuse. It may also benefit the community of survivors and therapists.

Interview protocol and research questions that will be addressed are found in Appendix E.

4. Funding

No grant or contract has been awarded nor is in application for this study.

5. Participants

I will select three to five participants for this study. Participants will be located using purposeful sampling techniques, namely criteria, and snowball procedures. Participants will be recommended by counsellors at Tamara's House, a residential safe house for women survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and referral from independent professionals. These professionals will make initial contact with the women to determine their interest and will provide an information letter outlining the purpose and objectives of the study. This will give her an opportunity to consider participation in a non-threatening, non-coercive manner. Individual women can contact me if they desire more information as well as to express a willingness to participate in the study.

As prospective participants contact me, I will set up an initial interview to discuss informed consent, confidentiality and the possible emotional consequences of participation.

Criteria for participation in the study are:

- 1) The woman will be over the age of 18 years.
- 2) The woman will be recommended for participation in this study. The professional recommending her will be knowledgeable of the extent of the woman's healing from the experience of her abuse as well as her emotional, mental and psychological stability.
- 3) The woman's abuse will not have begun earlier than five years of age.
- 4) The woman will have recollections of her relationship with her mother, and have articulated stories of their experiences.
- 5) The woman will not have been in a therapeutic relationship with me.
- 6) The woman will have a counsellor she is familiar with prior to her involvement in the study.
- 7) The woman will be English speaking.

This study will be gender specific to females and I will interview women survivors only. My research question is about the phenomenon of the daughter – mother relationship: a specific female phenomenon. It does not preclude that male survivors have a mother – son relationship which has its own stories, but this study will be concerned only with women.

5.1 One criterion for participation in my study is that the woman be recommended for participation. Women who are emotionally raw and extremely vulnerable will not be recommended for the study. Participants will not be women I have had any therapeutic relationship with. Therefore the likelihood of potential coercion is minimal. It is possible I will have met some of the women invited to participate in this study, as they may have lived in the residence, or participated in some of the seminars or alternative therapies offered through Tamara's House, during the time I did my counselling practicum there.

5.2 Loss of privacy or anonymity will be minimized as the counsellors at Tamara's House or other counsellors in the community make the initial contact with the prospective women participants. There is a code of confidentiality present at Tamara's House and service users are expected to honor this code. "Who you see here, What you hear here, When you leave here, Let it stay here".

6. Consent

6. i Women will be given information by professionals in a letter of information and invitation to participate. At my initial meeting with each prospective participant, the woman will have opportunity to ask questions and discuss concerns regarding participation. Should she wish to consult with a counsellor or peer she may take a week to make a decision. The participants' signature on the form will signify understanding of her rights, and will be taken as consent to participate.

6. ii At the end of each interview I will set up a time for the next interview, approximately a week later. I will phone each participant to confirm her continued willingness to participate. I will remind the woman of her right to withdraw from the study if there is discomfort and a decision to cease participation.

7. Methods/Procedures

The primary method of data collection will be interviews. Each of the participants will be interviewed two to three times for no longer than ninety minutes per interview. These will be audio taped and transcribed prior to the subsequent interview. At the following interview the transcription will be reviewed for accuracy and consent for use.

A list of the Guiding Questions for the first interview (part of Appendix E) will be given to the woman at the initial meeting. She will be encouraged to reflect on these prior to our first interview so as to come prepared to share the stories she perceives as most important. Preparation ideas will be given to her as well. The second set of guiding questions will be given after the first interview to prepare for the second interview.

The times and dates for the interviews will be set according to what is convenient for the participant. The location of the interviews will be at Tamara's House and the times will coincide with hours the Drop In Center is open. This center offers on site counselling for those who may need it.

8. Storage of Data

All data collected during the study will be properly coded to ensure confidentiality of participants, and safely stored in a locked filing cabinet at the university. If a participant chooses to withdraw from the study, her data will be destroyed. Upon completion of this study, Dr. Walt Pawlovich will securely store and safeguard all data collected for a minimum of five years, in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan regulations.

9. Dissemination of Results

Data collected will be used to write my thesis. The thesis will be submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. There is a possibility the data may be used for conference presentations and journal articles.

10. Risks or Deception

There is to be no deception involved in this study.

There are some risks involved, which are documented below:

- a) The participants come from a vulnerable population of women who have previously experienced severe emotional trauma due to sexual abuse as children.
- b) I am planning to use audio-taping.
- c) The topics for stories are personal and sensitive in nature. The respondents may possibly be triggered by uncomfortable memories or flashbacks after the interviews.

One safeguard I have implemented in my study to minimize participant risk is the criteria for participation. Only women who are referred will be participants. Recurring flashbacks, nightmares, uncontrollable feelings and trauma will not be characteristic of their stage of the healing journey. Women may have experienced these in earlier stages of their healing and they may occasionally experience them, but characteristically they will be experiencing more emotional, mental and physical stability.

While audio tapes will be used, each woman will have granted consent prior to their use and has the right to disallow any information obtained through these interviews. Also, at any time a woman has the right to turn off the audio tape recording if she is feeling it is a risk to her in any way.

All data will be coded and pseudonyms used to protect the confidentiality of the participant.

In consideration of the possibility that these risks may trigger unpleasant reactions either during the interviews or after, the participants will have access to a personal therapeutic counsellor who has competency working with sexual abuse issues. Additionally, the interviews will take place at Tamara's House during times counsellors are on site should the need arise to speak to a professional counsellor.

11. Confidentiality

Participants will be informed verbally at the initial meeting and in writing to their rights of confidentiality. They will be given an information and consent form that documents details of the study, including the right to withdraw, and the right to tell their

stories in the way they want. A signature on the form will indicate their understanding of their rights, and will be understood as consent to participate. Prior to each interview, consent will be revisited.

All data will be coded, and pseudonyms used in order to ensure confidentiality throughout the duration of the study and upon completion. Each case will be coded individually in order to write the narrative. Individual quotes will be isolated. Participants will have the opportunity to review and revise all transcribed data, and each will give permission to include excerpts of verbatim material. By signing a Transcript Release Form (Appendix C) participants acknowledge that the transcript is an accurate reflection of what was shared in the interviews. Participants will have final say in what is included in the final document. Signing a Sign –Off Release Form (Appendix D) will indicate the participants consent to what is included in the final document.

12. Data/Transcript Release

All data will be coded and pseudonyms will be used in order to ensure confidentiality throughout the duration of the study and upon its completion. Each participant's data will be coded individually. Individual quotes will be isolated and acknowledgement made to the pseudonym. Participants will have the opportunity to review and revise all transcribed data, and give permission for inclusion of verbatim material. Participants have a right to exclude any or all of their responses. By signing a Transcript Release Form (Appendix C) participants acknowledge that the transcript is an accurate reflection of what was shared in the interviews. Participants have the right to withdraw any or all of their responses. Signing a Sign –Off Release Form (Appendix D) will indicate the participants consent to what is included in the final document.

13. Debriefing and Feedback

Opportunity for debriefing and feedback will take place when I have written the narrative of their story. At this time I will ask them to read it and if they agree the narrative is an accurate story of what they told me, I will ask them to sign the Data/Transcript Release Form and the Sign-Off Release Form.

14. Required Signatures and Date

Mary Lou Fletcher – Masters Candidate, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education.

Dr. Walt Pawlovich – Supervisor, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education.

Dr. Vicki Schwean – Department Head, Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education.

15. Contact Names and Information:

Mary Lou Fletcher
701 – 606 Victoria Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0Z1

marylouf@shaw.ca
306-343-7152

Dr. Walt Pawlovich
College of Education,
University of Saskatchewan,
Room 3359, 28 Campus Drive,
Saskatoon, Sask. S7N 0X1
Walt.Pawlovich@usask.ca
306-966-7672 FAX: 966-7644

Appendix B Information and Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Women Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Narratives of Relationships With Their Mothers*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

Researchers:

Mary Lou Fletcher, Master of Education Candidate in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, University of Saskatchewan. 343-7152.
marylouf@shaw.ca

Walt Pawlovich, Professor and Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, College of Education, University of Saskatchewan. 966-7672. FAX 966-7644
Walt.Pawlovich@usask.ca

Purpose and Procedures:

The purpose of the study is to understand the daughter – mother relationships of women survivors of childhood sexual abuse, and how these changed over time. I would like to include the story of your relationship with your mother in my study.

You have been recommended to participate in the study by a professional who knows you and is familiar with your story. Thank you for your willingness to consider being a participant. This letter of information and the consent form explain the study in detail. Here are the procedures from here on:

- At this first meeting we will discuss informed consent, confidentiality and the potential emotional consequences of participation. We will also make sure the criteria for participation are met.
- You will be asked to participate in two to three interviews of no more than ninety minutes. The interviews will be like conversations, and will take place at Tamara's House during the hours the Drop In Center is open. These interviews will be audio taped. You will be invited to share stories of experiences with your mother during childhood, adolescence and the present.
- I will transcribe each tape before the next interview when we will review the transcript for accuracy and intent. Interviews will take place one week apart, and your participation in the study will be about three weeks from start to finish.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

One criterion for participation in this study is that you have a personal counsellor you can meet with if the need arises during the duration of this study. I have prior assurance from Tamara's House of their support in finding counselling for you if you presently do not have a counsellor. This way, if new flashbacks or memories surface that require therapeutic intervention, professional help will already be in place.

Opportunities for talking with Drop In Center staff will be available before and after each interview if you wish, as well as at the time of signing the Data/Transcript Release Form and the Sign-Off Release Form.

Another opportunity for 24 hour counselling is the Sexual Assault Centre phone line at 244-2224.

If at any time you determine it is too difficult to continue participation in the study, you are free to withdraw. This withdrawal will not affect you in any way. Only I will know of your withdrawal. There will be no impact on the services you receive from Tamara's House.

The study has the possible benefit of assisting you on your healing journey. It may also benefit the community of survivors who are enriched by hearing "their story" as told by you. The study may also benefit the community of therapists who work with survivors by better understanding the impact of the daughter – mother relationship.

Data Storage:

All data collected during the study will be properly coded to ensure your confidentiality. It will be safely stored in a locked filing cabinet at the University of Saskatchewan. If you choose to withdraw from the study, your data will be destroyed. Upon completion of this study, Dr. Walt Pawlovich will securely store and safeguard all data collected for a minimum of five years, in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan regulations.

Confidentiality:

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Your story will be coded individually, and direct quotations will be used to write the narratives for my thesis. You will be given the opportunity to review the transcript of your interviews, and to add, alter, or delete information from the transcripts as you see fit.

The data from this study will be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interviews, only your pseudonym will be used. All identifying information such as Saskatoon or Tamara's House will be removed from our report.

When you sign a Transcript Release Form (Appendix C) it will acknowledge that the transcript is an accurate reflection of what was shared in the interviews. Signing a Sign-Off Release Form (Appendix D) will indicate your consent to what I include in the final document.

Right to Withdraw and Questions:

You may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data you have contributed will be destroyed. Ongoing consent to participate will be elicited prior to each interview. Should you choose to withdraw or not participate in the first place, there will be no impact from your decision on the services you receive from Tamara's House.

If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact the researchers at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time. This study has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Sciences research Ethics Board on _____ . Any Questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Office of Research Services (966-2084). On completion of the thesis you will be given a copy if you would like one.

Thank you for considering participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Mary Lou Fletcher

Consent to Participate:

I have read and understood the description of Mary Lou Fletcher's study provided above. I have been provided an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Researcher)

(Date)

Appendix C

Data/Transcript Release Form

I, _____, hereby give acknowledgement that the transcribed interview data accurately reflects what was said in my interviews with Mary Lou Fletcher. I am satisfied with the efforts that have been taken to ensure that any identifying information of this material has been altered or eliminated. I hereby authorize release of these transcripts to Mary Lou Fletcher to be used in the manner described in the research Consent Form.

I have a copy of this Data/Transcript release Form for my own records.

Participant

Date

Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Sign - Off Release Form

I, _____ have reviewed the stories and final interpretations drawn by Mary Lou Fletcher, and I agree that they accurately reflect what I shared in the interviews. I hereby give permission to include the above material for inclusion in Mary Lou Fletcher's (researcher) final written thesis, and /or to be used in the manner as described in the information and consent form. I am satisfied with the efforts that have been taken to ensure that any identifying information on these materials has been altered or eliminated.

I have a copy of the Sign-Off Release Form for my own records.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix E Guiding Questions

Preparation: Participants will be invited to peruse at home and bring in if they want to, any photographs, diaries, letters, journals or mementos that hold special memories and stories relating to their experiences with their mothers. The purpose of these suggestions is to assist the participant in stimulating memories about her experiences with her mother.

The interviews will be conducted as conversations. The following guiding questions provide a broad sweep of possible directions the conversations may go in.

Interview 1. The Focused Life Interview

- Tell me a favorite story about you and your mother.
- Tell me about your most vivid recollections of people, places and things you shared with your mother in your childhood.
- Tell me a story about how you experienced being cared for as a child.

Interview 2 & 3 Details of the Experience

Using information gathered from the first interview I will discover more of the story.

- Tell me a story showing how you felt about yourself before the abuse began. Can you tell me a story about how you felt about yourself and your mother after the abuse?
- Tell me about your teen age dreams for your future?
- Can you recall a story of ways your mother helped you to prepare for those dreams to be fulfilled?
- If your mother wasn't the one primarily involved in raising you at this time, tell me about the relationship you did have with her.
- Describe the relationship you now have with your mother.
- Tell me a story of the relationship you'd ideally love to have with your mother. Describe everything you can about it.
- Tell me a story of a struggle in your relationship with your mother?
- Can you tell me the story of your biggest triumph in your relationship with your mother?