

**Mom Blobs, Midwives, and Other Metaphors:
A Postmodern Feminist Inquiry into
Mother Daughter Narratives**

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the uses and meanings of metaphors in mother-daughter stories. This project both produces and shares the meanings that mothers and daughters make in and through the narratives of their relationships. This inquiry is a collaboration between myself and six female participants. The primary means of data collection were two open-ended conversations with three mothers and their respective daughters.

This thesis is informed by a postmodern and feminist methodology. Therefore, there are no conclusions per se, rather, the continuation of questioning and a sense of the fragments of understanding provided by this text.

Future research from a postmodern perspective is suggested. In particular, implications for counsellors within the therapeutic relationship are discussed.

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This work is lovingly dedicated to my mother and daughter who continue to be my greatest teachers.

CHAPTER ONE

Thesis Statement

This study examines the uses and subsequently the meanings of metaphors in mother daughter stories. My passion for this has many roots: I am both a mother and a daughter; these relationships are integral to my sense of who I am. As a feminist, I understand that women tend to organize their lives in and through relationships. As a therapist, I believe that stories are potent medicine. I concur with Belenky, Clincher, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) that women tend to ground their epistemological premises in metaphor. Our personal narratives, rich with metaphors, can have enormously significant therapeutic potential.

In Western society, the concept "medicine" is approached and understood as some form of allopathic intervention. Medicine implies both a discipline and a commodity in and through which some dis-ease or symptom is identified and treated, an intervention that operates from outside individuals and their immediate context. In this thesis, I use medicine as a metaphor for the process of healing as well as the tools used to facilitate

this process.

This inquiry is a collaboration between myself and the participants. The text produced is not simply my story. It is not only their stories. It is our story. The teller and the listener are both subjects in and of the narrative. Thus, we work together in the production of a text. Metaphor is also an interactive process. Metaphors rely on the production and maintenance of shared meanings systems. This project both produces and shares the meanings that mothers and daughters make in and through the narratives of their lives and relationships.

This thesis is informed by a postmodern feminist approach, an approach which requires and calls forth both specificity and structural analysis. By this I mean that the particular concerns of feminist methodology and analysis calls the researcher to examine the ways in which her own knowledge and the understandings that her work produces are situated. Thus, this perspective calls on me not only to describe my interpretations of a social phenomenon, but also to explore my own contextual milieu and consider how the research process is shaping, and is shaped by, my inner landscape.

Thomas (1993) argues "all science is a metaphor, our conceptual models and theories provide 'as if' images that stand for the things they represent" (p. 17). Knowledge and ideas are metaphorical in that they supply symbols and techniques for translating and speaking about the social domain. The contours of the social world depicted by theories provide ways of both seeing and moving within it. The theatrical metaphor of dramaturgical analysis, the biotic metaphor of functionalists, and the conflict metaphor of Marxian scholars are each social constructs used to make more intelligible a "world out there." Each set of concepts and the theoretical context they illuminate constitutes a separate discursive framework. These discursive frameworks both define and articulate their terrain of inquiry. As a consequence, discourse is, as semioticians and postmodernists argue, a type of language game (Lyotard, 1988; Lyotard & Thebaud, 1985). Science, as a discourse, elaborates upon what Foucault (1974) refers to as a series of "truth games" and these games of truth provide the substance and the limits for the metaphors that become our life narratives.

Assumptions of Metaphor

What exactly is a metaphor? Webster's New World Dictionary (1990) defines it as the "application of name or descriptive term to an object to which it is not literally applicable" (p. 370). Metaphors allow examination and discussion of objects from several perspectives by employing alternative sets of images. Metaphors do not reproduce mirror like representations of the objects they characterize. Instead they give directions for finding the images that are intended to be associated with that thing (White, 1993). They have a focus and a frame that suggests interpretive rules for assigning meaning to them and the language by which we name and pull together those meanings (Gordon, 1978).

I am inclined to use "metaphor" and "story" as interchangeable concepts. However, there are differences. Metaphor is archetypal whereas story is both individual and archetypal. Metaphors can involve protagonists, character development, dramatic devices, and some form of conclusion. Some metaphors are long stories, like the kind used by Lankton and Lankton (1989). Others are short, perhaps only one or two words or ideas

where a brief connection is made. A metaphor can be a one-time event, or it may be a theme that runs throughout the course of a relationship. For example, a friend and her teenage daughter were dialoguing about the multiplicities of identities and her daughter said "I don't think of you as a person. I see you as my Mom." My friend's response:

What am I then, a Mom blob? Not seeing me as a person allowed her to assume that I didn't have any desires, any wants, my own ways of approaching situations. The phrase "Mom blob" then became a flag, a conversational shorthand for the both of us over the next two or three years as we worked through a bunch of other stuff. I am an incredibly protective parent and had a lot of difficulty with her doing things like walking alone at night. I noticed over the next couple of years we both utilized it in that shorthand kind of conversational way. She would look at me and say you're Mom blobbing again meaning that I wasn't approaching the situation from a position of really looking at her and who she was but I was dropping a "Mom" reaction on top of it in a way she found problematic. Also I could use it when I felt her taking my existence for granted.

Thinking in metaphor is as natural as breathing to me. Therefore, when a client who also thinks and relates in metaphor told me I had been the "midwife to her pain," we both understood this to mean that she had labored long and hard to deliver the pain that had grown for months inside of her. As she released this painful offspring, I witnessed its "birth," held

it for a moment and then released it to the universe. I view the role of the therapist as a vessel, a container of her client's story, one who holds it, resonates to it, bears witness and ultimately releases it to the universe to dissipate.

During the past decade considerable interest has developed in using metaphor as a means of creating change in counselling (Barker,1985; Divinyi, 1995, Paulson, 1996). In the counselling context, the use of metaphors provides an alternative intervention strategy when direct communication is ineffective or undesirable. Goncalves and Craine (1990) believe that metaphor usage is helpful to clients because it accesses tacit or unconscious levels of cognitive representation. Adler (1993) suggests that metaphors provide a nonthreatening means for clients to speak indirectly about feelings that are difficult to articulate.

Although the merging of metaphor and storytelling within the therapeutic context represents an emerging treatment intervention in the counseling area, it has historical antecedents as a powerful communication tool. Metaphorical communications such as the parables in the Bible, the koans in Zen Buddhism, and the legends of Aboriginal

peoples have long been respected methods utilized to instruct and to guide human beings throughout their lives (Groth-Marnat, 1992). The early storytellers used metaphors for similar purposes as modern therapists in that the metaphors were intended to reduce rigid thinking, alter the divisive effects of language, escape the illusion of confusing words with reality, and provide alternate frames of reference (Bettleheim, 1976; Divinyi, 1995).

Storytelling

Storytelling is at the heart of the Aboriginal oral tradition, and has been used to entertain, to teach, to pass on cultural norms and spiritual values, to explain the natural and physical world (Pellowski, 1977). Oral testimonies are cultural and spiritual documents in which much is implicit, in which metaphor and symbol play a role in how ideas are presented (Cruickshank, 1990). The oral tradition has been the vehicle for self-understanding and healing since the dawn of humankind, and predates written communication. We could say language developed as we told our stories. Oral stories can be used spontaneously as well. As a presentational art form, stories offer ". . . the knife of insight, the flame of

the passionate life, the breath to speak what one knows, the courage to stand what one sees without looking away, the fragrance of the wild soul" (Estes, 1992, p. 212).

Oral history has become a much more disciplinary craft since its initial recognition and use as a legitimate method of inquiry. Oral history has become much more than the production of "documents" (interview tapes or thousands of pages of transcripts) to be archived for future use. In the contemporary context, oral history is, minimally, a method of inquiry into social realities, a means of accessing the events of the recent past from the perspective of the participants in those events. Oral history is also a way of exploring the lived realities of a variety of social actors.

Indigenous people had natural meeting places at the fires around which they sat and talked spontaneously at a very deep level. Contemporary women have the challenge of creating their own version of the fire where the transmission of wisdom occurs through shared visions and reenactment of the oral tradition of storytelling. Telling our stories to one another is a powerful act; so is the act of writing our stories. "If our told stories can sweep across our souls like a strong wind, our written

stories have hurricane potential" (Wittig-Albert, 1996, p.5).

The spoken word is temporary, transient. Hence, when the teller of those stories is no more, the oral stories often die with the narrator. In some parts of Africa, when the wise woman of the village, known as a griotte, a keeper of stories, dies, it is said a "whole library burns down" (Minh-ha, 1989). Stories are thereby lost to a future generation that will never know the courage, passion, and joy of the those who went before them. In Life lived like a story, Julie Cruikshank (1990) chronicled the life histories of three Yukon Native Elders : Angela Sidney, Kitty Smith and Annie Ned, illustrating clearly that what is understood as the past continues to provide the link to the present and the future.

I believe the spiritual resides in the details of life: telling one's personal or communal story authentically can be a spiritual event. Exploring this is a spiritual quest because it entails an investigation of one's place in the link of life. Through stories we find our roots and insight into our purpose in existing (Simpkinson & Simpkinson, 1992). In the sacred act of telling our stories we access a soulful, private place. Perhaps this is why it hurts so deeply not to have our stories believed and

respected.

From the time I was old enough to form complete sentences, I have journalled. Tattered, coiled scribblers eventually progressed into buttery soft leather volumes. Writing my life's desires, triumphs and tragedies made me feel "real." I *must* exist for here it is on these inky pages. Like David Copperfield in Dickens classic tale, I wondered whether I would be the "hero of my own life" (Dickens, 1911, p.1). My daughter gravitates toward the journal entries that were written at the age that she is now. I was not always a mother with responsibilities and rules. Once I was a twelve year old girl who tricked my brother with dog food sandwiches, worried about being unpopular and mothered my four year old sister. The borders of my dairy entries were filled with dried pressed flowers and the doodled names of boys I pined to be near. Although the flowers have faded, the words exist to be revisited by my daughter, my mother and ultimately me.

Mother-Daughter Stories

Mother-daughter relationships can be found at the core of women's writing. Women exploring their own experiences and the experiences of

other women through fiction (Barefoot, 1986; Morrison, 1974; Tan, 1989), through poetry (Alta, 1971; Astra, 1986), and through mythology (Estes, 1993; Hall, 1980), will often write about this fundamental important relationship. Susan Koppelman in her introduction to Between mothers and daughters: Stories across a generation (1985) says:

Women who write fiction write stories about mothers and daughters. Often, a woman writer's first published story is about the relationship between a mother and a daughter. Nor do women writers abandon this subject as they grow in their craft and their lives (p. xv)

In Of Woman Born (1977), Adrienne Rich urges women to recognize and to explore what she defines as the most formative relationship in their lives:

The cathexis between mother and daughter--essential, distorted, misused--is the great unwritten story. Probably there is nothing in human nature more resonant with charges than the flow of energy between two biologically alike bodies, one of whom has lain in amniotic bliss inside the other, one of which has labored to give birth to the other (p. 225).

Every night when our house is draped in sleepy darkness, my daughter requests the same bedtime story. Not a selection from her overflowing bookcase but "tell me a story about when I was born, before I was born or

when I was little." Although the stories are so familiar she can recite them herself, she still seeks the well-versed tales that link her heart to mine and to the generations of women whose genes she carries. Storytelling serves a vital function in a daughter's development: it is one way that she makes sense of her past and develops an identity for the future. The personal mythology a woman creates to define herself depends on her early memories and on the stories she is told. Mothers typically are the chroniclers of a family's narrative history (Minh-ha, 1989). A woman achieves her psychic connection to generations of feminine wisdom through hearing her mother's and grandmother's narratives about women's physical, psychological, and historical changes: bleeding, birthing, suckling, aging, and dying.

Naomi Lowinsky (1990) refers to what she calls "motherline" in her book of the same name. When a woman comes to understand her life story as a story from Motherline, she gains female authority in a number of ways. First, her Motherline grounds her in her feminine nature as she struggles with the many options open to women. Second, she claims carnal knowledge of her own body, its blood mysteries and their power.

Third, she makes the journey back to her female roots where she will encounter ancestors whose struggled with similar difficulties in different historical times. It reminds her that all things change in time: babies grow into school age children; every generation has had different ideas about what is good for children and no child is raised in perfect circumstances. Understanding that our stories are stories, and hence open to radical revision, can help to begin to heal from the wounds that experience necessarily inflicts upon as we grow and change.

Healing Fiction

The story as a cure and a protection is at once musical, historical, poetical, ethical, educational, magical and religious. The act of healing is therefore a sociocultural act, a collective, motherly undertaking (Minh-ha, 1989, p. 140).

Women through the ages have been shamed, degraded, victimized, silenced, and filled with self doubts (Goodman, Koss, & Russo, 1993). Historically, those who resisted were shunned, shackled, cloistered, burned at the stake and imprisoned for defending themselves against their intimate attackers. Within this two-thousand-year-old time frame, mothers have been wounded by a society that negates motherhood and trivializes it to the point where women are ashamed to say "this is my work, it is

important, I am valued."

Today, women join together to analyze patriarchy and tell their "soul stories" in order to repair the dis-eases of disconnection, abuse, hunger, neglect, and violence. Jung (1969) called these types of stories "healing fiction." These stories are told from a deep place of survival and reconnection to life force. As each story is shared, the others settle into their bodies and become fully present. Shortly into my intern placement at Chrysalis House in Kentville, Nova Scotia, I witnessed the healing possibilities as women in groups told their stories of abuse and courage to a receptive, respectful audience. The women gathered there spoke of their previous lives as being "toxic," "diseased," and "cancerous." Wittig-Albert reminds us "in telling the stories of our lives, we can cleanse the infection and close the open, painful wounds that have distorted us" (1996, p.6). Stories act as an "antibiotic" that finds the source of the infection and concentrates there, that is, in the unconscious where they stir a deep authentic part of oneself. As medicine, they "close the wound that will not cease its bleeding" (Estes, 1992, p. 198).

Medicine stories enter the psyche and act as a pharmacopeia to combat

psychological malaise. This requires a teller and a listener. A good listener is a witness, not a filter for someone's experience. Telling someone "I hear you" is not the same as saying "I agree," although it has been manipulated socio-linguistically to have the same connotation. Listening strengthens our relationships by cementing our connection with one another. It also fortifies our sense of self. In the presence of a receptive listener, we are able to clarify what we think and discover how we feel. Thus, in giving an account of our experiences to someone who listens, we are better able to listen to ourselves. Our lives are "coauthored in dialogue" (Nichols, 1995). Authors Cahill and Halpern argue:

learning how to witness is essential because we live in a time when great numbers of people are beginning to tell their truths. Some of these truths are hard to hear, some involve terrible childhood abuse and betrayal, yet they must be told and heard (1990, p. 75).

In a moving account of his response to being told of his cancer, literary critic Anatole Broyard (1992) wrote of his reliance on healing narrative:

My initial experience of illness was a series of disconnected shocks, and my first instinct was to try to bring it under control by turning it into a narrative. We describe what is

happening, as if to confine the catastrophe. When people heard that I was ill, they inundated me with stories of their own illness, as well as the cases of friends. Storytelling seems to be a natural reaction to illness. People bleed stories, and I've become a blood bank of them (p. 21).

When medicine and healing are defined as restoring harmony among the parts of our lives, the use of the story becomes the venue of therapy. The therapeutic process is, by nature, a shared and creative process, with therapist and client working together to create a new paradigm through which healing can occur and new and healthy behavior can develop. It is the constant challenge of the therapist to discover creative methods and tools which will effectively facilitate this shared process. Storytelling is a creative and powerful intervention method which allows the therapist to utilize a virtually limitless range of material to guide and direct someone through the healing process.

The very essence of the therapeutic process begins with the person attempting to communicate the reason for seeking counselling. In this initial and critical stage, an individual often represents their reason through story and metaphor. In order to establish and strengthen rapport and to begin to develop a therapeutic relationship, the counselor must then

communicate an understanding and appreciation of the client's view of reality. In my experience, this can be accomplished through the utilization of client generated metaphors or by augmenting the therapeutic process through the infusion of metaphors created by the therapist.

A number of references exist that discuss the construction and development of metaphors (Barker, 1985; Combs & Freedman, 1990; Lankton & Lankton, 1989). The issue arises as to how to generate metaphors for therapeutic use. The literature suggests two major ways: by formalizing the process to the point that a set of logical steps is developed to reach a specific goal via a carefully constructed story (Lankton & Lankton, 1989) or by allowing the metaphor to emerge more from an intuitive context (Gilligan, 1987; Combs & Freedman, 1990).

According to White and Epston (1990), people seeking therapy have stories about their lives that are not working for them. It is never too late in fiction or in life to revise. Freedman and Combs (1993) expand upon this belief saying:

People can change the stories they tell themselves about their lives by recovering events at odds with the dominant story and performing meaning on those events as a way of

authorizing new stories. These new stories can then change people's ideas about themselves and about what is possible for them (p. 294-295).

I am reminded of the Jungian notion of "healing fiction" and the power of revisioning whenever visiting my mother who has a sandbox in her city apartment. Copious amounts of soft white sand, toy cars, and various digging implements retell the story of her absent childhood. Cherished children's classics hold court around her bed. Paint brushes stand at attention ready to be commissioned into her next piece of art. And yet none of this appears at odds with her fifty-six years. The sandbox is the bottom drawer of a dresser, the books pleasure her visiting grandchildren. Everyone loves to be in her space. She makes no apologies. She often reminds me "it is much better to have a childhood at this age as one can afford better toys."

For some people, metaphors may permit contact with their inner world of experience. The directness of a story allows the therapist to gauge the client's willingness to openly communicate their experience. Additionally, if an individual is extremely indirect then the counselor, through the use of metaphor, can communicate an understanding that allows the

acceptance or rejection of the communication within the boundaries of one's own reality.

Since individuals in counselling may have difficulty expressing troubling thoughts and feelings, stories offer the archetypal connections enabling them to express conflict at a symbolic level. These stories unite people with the experience of their contemporaries, and with their psychic ancestors. They may come to resolution of their issues by identifying with symbolic others in stories.

This approach is consistent with many First Nations perspectives. Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline (1996), a Metis healer from Northern Manitoba says that if a person has a challenge and seeks guidance from the Elders, their response is never direct or a "this is what you should do" approach. Rather, a story will be told that the person seeking counsel may identify with. In *Seeds of thought, arrows of change: Native storytelling as metaphor*, Yvonne Rita Dion Buffalo (1990) describes the role of the Plains Cree medicine people and the use of story to facilitate healing. Instead of the labeling and prescribing characteristic of Western methods of treating people, the Plains Cree approach emphasizes process,

symbolism, and energy flow. Healing is viewed as part of the life process and is incorporated in ancient and contemporary ceremonies, stories, and songs. The kinds of narratives told range from allegories and parables, to tales about the origin of tribal customs and ancestral heroes.

The narratives in a mother-daughter relationship are comprised of many stories. They are the tales of two different lives, of two different people, separated by generation and by the changing role of woman, yet linked by blood, by body, and by stories. The connections between these lives appear as they are woven into the narratives of these lives and through the text of this thesis. In the next chapter, I address my selection of a postmodern feminist approach and its fit to my topic of inquiry.

CHAPTER TWO

Methodology

Postmodern Feminist

In this chapter, I begin with the connections between metaphor and knowledge. Metaphor is often considered an ornament of thought. However, it also operates as thought's ground and determinant. Systems of knowledge are conceptualized and even created as metaphors. To understand knowledge, that is, to understand the kind of action and thing referred to in the statement, "I know something," is to access and process the act of knowing. This process is often carried out under the aegis of a metaphor. The machinations of knowledge, truth, power and discourse, the subject matter of most postmodern theorizing, also operate in and through mother-daughter relationships. Indeed, for women the operations of power-knowledge first reach our everyday lives in and through mother-daughter relationships. Feminism provides a space to value mother-daughter relationships as primary and positive forces in the everyday lives of individuals. Postmodern feminism opens mother-daughter relationships

as a contested terrain for inquiry as well as an integral social process that is often exclusionary.

I am attracted to postmodernism as a celebration and a tolerance of pluralities and diversities rather than unities and universals. Epistemologically, postmodernism draws inquiry toward the space in-between the contradictions and conundrums that operate as both the links and the ruptures in intimate relationships. To define precisely the term postmodernism is to defy one of its central tenets. What I mean by that, is that it is not possible to define postmodernism as being "this" or "that." For Harvey (1989), postmodern theorizing is characterized not so much by a single definition as by a number of interrelated characteristics, such as Lyotard's (1988) dissent for dissent's sake. Postmodernism offers an analytic form that combines and compares metaphors and symbols to obtain contrasting meaning, and uses a parodying of standard meanings to show their irony (Featherstone, 1988). Lovlie advocates using postmodernism as an index term for a position that is different from dominant Western scientific inquiry--"a different position which in fact makes difference its point of view" (1992, p. 120). Andy Hargreaves (as

cited by Packwood & Sikes, 1996, p. 39) summed up postmodernism in a succinct way:

Adopting a postmodern theoretical position involves denying the existence of foundational knowledge on the grounds that no knowable social reality exists beyond the signs of language, image and discourse. All that is available, analytically, to the postmodern theorists is the practice of deconstructing existing versions of social reality, and of giving voice to other versions which are normally neglected or suppressed.

In The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge (1988) Jean-Francois Lyotard turns to language and, specifically, to Wittgenstein's notion of language games to organize his analysis of power. For Lyotard, in order for scientific knowledge to exist, it has to be expressed through language, in a form of narrative. It is therefore subject to the rules which govern the ways in which languages are used within social formations. Lyotard does not consider all social relations to be language games. However, they are the necessary minimum for the existence of society. Lyotard rejects conventional scientific knowledge approaches, since for him these are underpinned by a representational conception of language where the social bond is constituted in ways inconsistent with language games. Lyotard argues that in order for conventional scientific

knowledge to be declared the "winner" of knowledge and truth, then narrative knowledge must be the "loser." Since "truth" is a single entity, modernism tends to be intolerant of multiple viewpoints.

As language games, scientific and narrative knowledge have equal validity: however neither narrative nor scientific knowledge can validate the other since the "relevant criteria are different" (p. 26). The status of scientific knowledge as a discourse of truth has been privileged in a way that disenfranchised narrative knowledge in the process of legitimizing modern science. Thus, behind modern scientific knowledge is what Lyotard calls a metanarrative, metadiscourse, or grand narrative, which seeks to legitimize science as a form of knowledge privileged over other forms of knowledge. Modern science is therefore in the paradoxical position that "it cannot know and make known that it is true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative, kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is not knowledge at all" (1988, p. 29). The mother-daughter relationship is also paradoxical. It requires the most intense love on the mother's side, yet this very love must help the daughter grow away from the mother in search of independence.

This inquiry into mother-daughter narratives is not intended to be representative. I do not intend to produce a generalized or metanarrative which can speak for all women regardless of their cultural heritage. In this type of work, there is no single story, no metanarrative. Instead, there are a series of stories that, when put together, constitute one individual version of the "myth of research" (Packwood & Sikes, 1996). This is to say that postmodernism challenges the belief that research is not a self-perfecting discourse.

I approach both inquiry and analysis through the caveats that postmodernism offers feminism: useful ideas about method, particularly a wariness toward generalizations which go beyond the confines of culture and region. Postmodern feminist theory replaces unitary notions of woman and feminine gender identity with plural and complex constructed conceptions of social identity, treating gender as one relevant strand among others, attending also to class, race, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

Postmodernism, as I understand it, is a point of convergence on the narrative of the individual and the acknowledgment of the situated, partial

nature of knowledge claims within the context of the shifting and often contradictory nature of identity. Packwood and Sikes (1996) suggest it is not that metanarratives are to be discounted, but rather that those narratives are to be deconstructed into the micronarratives of the individuals.

It was therefore my desire to deconstruct, to analyze and recognize constructions. To deconstruct is to take apart, turn inside out, dismantle, reverse and examine from a different angle a construction. In deconstruction, I looked for excluded voices, exceptions to rules and prescriptions, and for hidden explorations between the lines of a story. I tried to look into the spaces between and beyond the main and central dominant discourse.

By the early 1990s a number of writers (Flax, 1990, Hekman 1990, Nicholson, 1990) recognized that in replicating the categories underpinning mainstream social science, they were defined as marginal within their chosen field. Feminist theory provided a challenge to academic disciplines that had claimed to transcend the perspectives of any one particular view or group. The project of postmodern feminism

includes a challenge to claims of objectivity in scholarship, which functions to disguise the value laden nature of theoretical enquiry.

Hekman (1990) argues that the rationalism at the basis of Western thought is specifically masculine. The claim that only rational, abstract, universalistic thought can produce truth embodies a masculine definition of truth. In each of the dichotomies, the male is associated with the privileged element: rational, subject, culture, and the female with the marginalized elements: irrational, object, nature. Masculinity, by its association with rationality, objectivity and universality, assigns femininity to a permanent category of subordination. The feminist critique, therefore, extends the postmodern critique of reason as transcendental and universal by revealing its specifically gendered character.

Throughout her work, Flax (1990) argues that postmodern approaches provide a more facilitative framework for the confirmation of feminist thinking than the legacy of the enlightenment dualities. Like many women she had previously attempted to fit her own learning about women's experience and histories into pre-existing theoretical

frameworks, only to find that the "add women and stir" approach could not adequately account for gender relations.

Flax's contends that psychoanalysis, feminism, and postmodernism have much to offer about the relationships between gender, knowledge, power, self and justice. She contends that each theory is flawed and cannot stand alone as a basis for understanding, but together they contribute to a number of insights. In her discussion of the self she does not seek to develop a feminist viewpoint which is more "true," but a feminist deconstruction of the self which is located in concrete social relations. As she puts it, "such a self is simultaneously embodied, gendered, social and unique" (1990, p. 199).

Flax argues that in most cultures the first intimate relationship is with a woman/mother figure. Repression of these primary attachments is one of the crucial ways in which masculine values dominate in a culture. Flax urges feminists to continue to seek "location and participation" in the retelling and reconstructing women's "differentiated yet collective experience" (p.119). "What memories of history," she asks, "will our daughters have if we do not find ways to speak of and practice the sense

of *we?*" (p. 221).

Postmodernism feminists propose a collective as well as plural understanding of truth. All knowledge is contextual, historical, and discursive. Packwood and Sikes (1996) argue that it is necessary to situate deconstructions and voices within their social, political, economic, and moral contexts. If not, there exists a danger that research methods and approaches that solely reflect personal experiences and emotions lead to "self-indulgence and narcissism rather than to enhanced understanding and useful ways of viewing the world" (p. 335).

Discourses create subjects and objects, and the mechanisms for positioning subjects. People are positioned in a variety of subject positions, such as woman, mother, daughter, and student. It is through this positioning within a network of multiple determinations that discourses secure the affective and effective management of people. This process is never complete or entirely successful, for while discourses attempt to "fix" human subjects, the very fact of multiple determinants undermines the attempt, and thereby provides the possibilities of resistance.

As a method, then, postmodern feminism takes up the discourses in and through which subjects are constituted. In this study, the mother-daughter relationship is characterized as a principal narrative in the construction of women as subjects (and objects) of inquiry. Mother-daughter relationships provide one site in and through which subject constitution takes place. Here we can see the constitution of mothers, daughters, and women as subjects. The ongoing relationship between the construction or articulation of subjects and the ways in which individuals actively resist these constructions is the subject matter of this inquiry. This notion resonates with me as I recall a conversation with my daughter around my remembering what it was like to be her age. I reminded her that at birth I was given a name and that name was not "Mom."

Feminist and postmodern theoretical approaches provide a discursive space in which otherwise marginalized people find an opportunity to speak about themselves. In addition, these voices need not simply contribute to the same old truth game by speaking in denial: I am not who you think I am, I am this. Instead, these theoretical and methodological approaches facilitate more subversive responses to the truth games of

dominant scientific inquiry. Power-knowledge discourses regulate in two different yet related ways. Discourses empower by creating active subjects with certain capacities. However, these same capacities may disempower by objectifying subjects, making them subject to power. In this process, knowledge is an aspect of regulatory power which operates externally. At one level, this produces empowered subjects: individuals who are empowered by learning and knowing more about themselves. However, subjects disempower themselves in the very process of self-empowerment, because this very power of learning about oneself is also the condition for self-regulation; one learns the limits of one's own possibilities.

Foucault (1974) argues that as subjects, there is no transcendental position from which we can become empowered, but only particular discursive positions within power-knowledge formations. For Foucault, objectification is an integral component in the process of subject constitution. Within this framework, subjects emerge in and through the subject positions that they come to occupy. Subject positions and the power relations associated with their construction and maintenance have

no *a priori* power position. Power is a process that can only be observed in and through its operations.

Power and knowledge, rather than being counterposed are inseparable, each a condition for the possibility of the other. Foucault (1974) argues that knowledge is always found in relation to its uses: "no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge." In order to understand power we must understand the objects over which it is to be exercised effectively. Meanwhile, the conditions of possibility for certain forms of knowledge and their legitimization as truth-claims are brought forth through power. Foucault (1979) argues that "power and knowledge directly imply one another: that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (p. 235).

Power and knowledge are salient ingredients in the mother daughter mix. Women are said to have power through nature, that is, power because they are able to give birth. However, this power is private, intrapersonal, fragmented power that does not often extend to the public,

political world. Belenky et al (1986) concur that knowledge for women is a personal, subjective, and private matter, based on intuitive and experiential epistemologies as opposed to more scientific theories which are located outside of women's own experiences and feeling. To a small child, a mother can be viewed as having absolute power. As the child matures, power and knowledge gains a more reciprocal flow where knowledge and power ebb and flow between the mother and daughter and back again. This reciprocal and reflexive process of construction builds mothers and daughters as interdependent selves.

Methods and Procedures

Participant Selection

To study the process of flow of power and knowledge between mothers and daughters, I invited three daughters and their respective mother's (six women) with diverse cultural, racial, and sexual orientation backgrounds to participate: a white, Lesbian mother and daughter; an African Canadian mother and daughter and a Mi'kmaq mother and daughter. This group of women were selected based upon their interest in

listening to me discussing the project. This is not to suggest that each mother and daughter "spoke" for their respective culture. Rather, these diverse mother-daughter combinations offered an opportunity to access distinct experiences and provided a space to explore similarities and differences in each of the narratives. It is a postmodern view that increasing the heterogeneity of viewpoints, pathways, involvements and constructions opened this inquiry to multiple realities. While some women may share common interests, women's realities are by no means universal. All lives are interwoven with differences, producing women's lives as a tapestry created of threads of different shades rather than one woven in a single color.

I was particularly interested in first blood stories. For this reason, the minimal requirement for participant selection was that the daughter participant was sixteen years or older. In addition, at age sixteen, young women have greater opportunities for independence from their mother (e.g. obtaining a driver's license and dating) and I expected that this would provide a foundation for the construction of their own narratives. I thought that this would then decrease the probability that these young

women would rely completely on their parent(s) to assist them in narrative construction. Some independence was necessary in order for me to explore the on-going power relation in mother-daughter relationships.

Through informed consent, potential participants were made aware (1) that participation was voluntary, (2) of any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being, such as conflict within their mother daughter relationship as the result of issues raised in the interviews and (3) that they may freely chose to stop participation at any point in the study. Participants were asked to verify and approve the use of their dialogue in the thesis by being given the opportunity to read the portions of the text containing their narratives and to choose their own pseudonyms.

The participants consented (see Appendix A) to the sessions being tape recorded and transcribed. Although informed consent neither precludes the abuse of research findings nor creates a symmetrical relationship between researcher and researched, it can contribute to the empowering of those who are researched (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992). When research becomes collaborative, cooperation, active assistance and

collegiality may exceed the demands of informed consent (Diener and Crandall, 1978; Wax, 1982).

The simple act of telling your story to a receptive listener can be an act of empowerment and transformation, encouraging a sense of authorship in one's life. As social actors, we are all involved in retelling our experiences and lives. In doing so, we chronicle our lives in terms of a series of events, happenings, influences, and decisions. This chronicling of a life, or part of a life, often comes from a point of "privileging" the person's lived experience (White & Epston, 1990). The participants were encouraged to read and critique the thesis and were invited to be present at the defense, provided this does not conflict with their desire to remain anonymous.

Conversations

I intentionally, and with conscious consideration, chose to have conversations with the participants. This is not merely a language game, rather a philosophical and political shift as well. Oakley (1981) argues that an interview is not merely a conversation. It is, rather, a "pseudo-conversation"(p. 32). Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe an interview as

simply "a conversation with a purpose" (p.268). Some of the qualities of a conversation exist within the process, however, within the traditional, research paradigm an interview is essentially a tool of data collection.

In the case of women talking to women, Oakley stresses the essential requirement of creating a non-hierarchical alliance and the necessity of the researcher to enter into the conversation and invest her own identity in the relationship. As the narratives of the participants resonated within my own experiences, I shared my story as well. Packwood and Sikes (1996) argue in a narrative construction of research, it should be possible to locate the voice of the author in the text itself, rather than having it "reconstructed in a self-conscious way through a dialogue with itself" (p. 338).

Scheurich (1995) maintains whether we call the interview interaction "interviewing," "conversation," "storytelling," or simply "an interaction," is of much less importance than what we think occurs in this interaction.

In A postmodernist critique of interviewing he writes:

The complex play of conscious and unconscious thoughts, feelings, fears, power, desire and need on the part of both the interviewer and the interviewee cannot be captured and

categorized. In an interview, there is no stable "reality" or meaning that can be represented. The indeterminate totality of the interview always exceeds and transgresses our attempts to capture and categorize (p. 249).

A pilot conversation was conducted prior to the research conversations to provide an opportunity to apply the questions I had developed and to examine my conversational style within the open-ended, semi-structured format chosen. The pilot conversation proved useful in assessing the appropriateness of questions and in deepening my own understanding of the personal content of the discussion. It gave me an opportunity to examine the socially constructed identities I brought to the process: white, feminist, first-born daughter, single mother, middle-class, therapist, academic. The participants brought their own past issues and influences as well. It is not possible, nor is it preferred for either the researcher or the participants to think we can shed our previous belief systems.

The primary means of data collection were two open-ended conversations with three sets of mothers and daughters. Each mother and daughter combination was interviewed together with myself as researcher. A follow-up conversation after the initial communication was required to dialogue more fully on issues raised during the first meeting.

The first question asked of each group after the initial interview was: "Did any issues arise for either person as a result of the first interview?" I had specified in the consent form (see Appendix A) that counselling would be provided for any and all participants who encountered difficulty within their relationship as a result of the research process. None of the participants reported any conflicts. It was important to me that the participants' lives would not be negatively affected by our conversations. Although I could not be entirely responsible for any conflict, I would not abandon them once I had "collected" their stories.

The conversations were held over a period of three weeks. Each of the conversations, approximately ninety minutes in duration, were held in the homes of the participants, upon their requests. Their generosity in inviting me to be present in their homes, I believe, fostered a feeling of collaboration. Additionally, in an attempt to recognize and then equalize the power relation between the interviewer and the interviewee, using the homes of the participants may have removed the physical power structure of inviting them to a place of my choosing. I brought food to each session. In the public realm food is status and honor. Those we value, we

feed. Publicly apportioning food is about determining power relations, and sharing it is about cementing social equality (Wolf, 1990).

During the process with each mother and daughter, I witnessed on occasion the conversation moving away from the question posed. My former, yet lingering empirical self surged with thoughts like "stay on topic, please don't go off on a tangent." My newborn postmodern self recognized that participants resist or change the conversational discourse as the result of misunderstanding the question or a conscious, possibly unconscious, desire to lead in this dance called conversation. On one occasion I drove away after a session, my eyes brimming with tears of frustration and fear that I had not gotten the answers to my questions. The "ah-ha" moment occurred when I realized as a postmodernist I was not seeking an answer to a question. From a postmodern perspective, my initial reaction was a point of examination and introspection.

The conversation tapes were transcribed by me, hence the tapes were heard by me only. The tapes will be destroyed after the thesis has been successfully defended. The conversation questions directed narrators to address issues of their first blood, descriptions of their mother daughter

relationship, and a section I entitled "soul gifts." These questions were constructed in consultation between the researcher and her committee (see Appendix A). Conversations not included within this work may be used for subsequent writings. This was outlined in the consent form and agreed to by the participants. I recognized my power as the researcher to pick and choose those stories I wanted to tell. The primary locus of work in a narrative genre is the realization of the subjective reality of the researcher in determining the reality of both the research process and the product as well as the acceptance that this reality will be reinterpreted by anyone reading the text (Packwood & Sikes, 1996).

Data Analysis

In terms of data analysis, metaphors were considered in a variety of ways: the intent (or function) of the metaphor, its cultural context, and the semantic mode of the metaphor. In the analysis of this data, I was concerned with not only how metaphors were structured but also with the ways in which they were used and the ways in which they were understood. Throughout this inquiry, my own conceptual framework was present and influencing what I saw and heard.

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were analyzed using NUD*IST, a qualitative computer software program. This process involved highlighting every paragraph and assigning codes based upon the paragraph content. Many paragraphs contained more than one code. For example, first blood stories were coded as knowledge sharing between mothers and daughters as well as metaphors. NUD*IST facilitates this process through its "tree" structure, which enables the data to be indexed in a flexible fashion. It encourages exploration and searching of the indexing nodes according to the developing theories of the researcher (Richards & Richards, 1991). NUD*IST is one example of a code-and-retrieve program. Code-and-retrieve programs mark segments of data by attaching code words to those segments, and then search the data, retrieving and collecting all segments identified by the same code or by some combination of code words (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996).

While I was engaged in the coding process I was aware of the postmodern doctrine that meanings reside in the reality that the interpreter brings to the text. The labels I assigned to the paragraphs, the codes, were based upon my own conscious and unconscious assumptions and

orientations. Another person undoubtedly would have assigned different codes based upon their "reality."

During the second conversation, I presented each person with a copy of our first conversation. Each of the participants were invited to provide feedback and discuss any changes, deletions or additions which they felt would more accurately reflect their individual or collective experiences. Repeated listening to the audio tapes also helped to deepen the analysis, based on tone of voice and nuances in communication that were not possible to detect from the written transcripts. One of the limitations of written text is the inability to communicate the richness and vocal variation of participants and their laughter. While transcribing their narratives, I observed the frequency of their laughter as they told their stories.

In Western culture, the stories of mothers to their daughters have been routinely labeled and subsequently dismissed as "old wives tales"; a derisive label that allots the art of storytelling to women at the exact same time as it takes all value from it. Mothering, as a set of social practices or life skills, is also devalued and/or downplayed in dominant discourses, as

a result, both the practices and the stories they generate are often lost. In the next chapter, the participants and I tell our stories.

CHAPTER THREE

Introducing the Participants

Rachel & Draven

Rachel, 39, is a vibrant, energetic, intellectual, Caucasian, woman loving woman. She is the mother of two children: Draven, 17, and a 15 year old son. She is a graduate student, educator, and therapist. She lives with her partner and two children in a small town in Nova Scotia.

Draven is an articulate, imaginative, creative 17 year old young woman. She spends her time writing, studying Latin and hanging out with her friends.

Toni & Journee

Toni is an outspoken, passionate social activist who at age 55 looks more like Journee's sister than her mother. She is active within the African Canadian community. She is a mother of five, grandmother of three and a "happy divorcee."

Journee, 33, is a soft spoken, political, educator who mothers her two boys, age 9, and 1 year. She and Toni live together in a Maritime city.

Moonheart & Xena

Moonheart, 60, is a fun-loving, spiritual, imaginative Mi'kmaq woman who owns and operates a convenience store. She is the mother of four grown children. She enjoys writing, painting and storytelling with her five grandchildren.

Xena, 23, is a strong-willed, sensitive, playful individual. She is the first person in her family to attend college. Her goal is to become a designer. She celebrates her heritage and incorporates a great deal of Aboriginal design into her work.

Renaming

Women will starve in silence until new stories are created
which confer on them the power of naming themselves.

Wittig--Albert (1996)

I have always disliked my given name. My mother told me that at age 10 she would lie in bed at night planning me: her escape from a tumultuous childhood. The scenario was always the same. I would be called Susan. I would have dark eyes and dark hair and most importantly she would love me and I would love her back. Although I understood the emotional history of my naming I disliked it for its commonness. Every year my classroom roll call would be populated with "Susan's." Back then I was Sue T. Back then I did not feel common. Nor do I now. I wanted my name to reflect my individuality and uniqueness.

I am cognizant of the fact that as women we never really have our own last names. Our birth name is our Father's last name and then if we enter into heterosexual marriage we can share the last name of our husband. It bemuses me that women with hyphenated names think of themselves as liberated when in actuality they sport two male last names. I believe the only way our last names can be our own is to design them, like Malcom X. In my next life, I will be Susa Moonbone.

Offering narrators the opportunity to choose their own pseudonyms enabled them to have an active voice in the construction and analysis of their life narratives. Each participant had a different philosophical, spiritual, and emotional reason for the names they chose.

Rachel: I don't have any concrete notions as to why I chose Rachel except I really like it. I found it interesting reflecting on it later that it's a Jewish name. I have an unusual first name and Rachel is not the kind of name that people would go "Your name is what!!!" My daughter's real name doesn't raise any eyebrows. The name she chose for herself is really unusual.

Draven explains why she chose her particular moniker and its significance to popular culture and nature.

Draven: It's from the movie *The Crow*. One of the main character's last name was Draven. It's become one of those cult movies. I really liked the name and a bunch of my friends have decided to use that. It sounds like Raven. And

I grew up in the North where Ravens were rampant. I have an affinity for Ravens.

Journee possesses a strong philosophical background, both in terms of formal education and her world view. This framework contributed to her renaming choice.

Journee: In addition to my having a strong, emotional preference for the letter "J" when it comes to naming children, I chose Journee to symbolize my belief in moving forward. You know life is not a destination, it's a journey. Now the reason I chose to spell it with the double 'E-E' is to stress individuality. Journeys can share similar routes but it is always an individual path because we are different in where we will go.

Toni, Journee's mother, claimed the designation she had planned to give her daughter.

Toni: I would like to be able to say I chose Toni out of respect for writer Toni Morrison, however, (laughter) I can't because I didn't. I am an ardent fan of Toni Morrison's though. I chose Toni because it's short for Antoinette and that was the name I had intended to give my daughter here. However, I was so tired after her birth that when I was asked her name I said _____, which I grew to like very much. So now I will reclaim the name for me.

Toni's change of plans regarding her daughter's naming is often the

case upon seeing one's newborn child and discovering the name previously selected does not suit this new little person. Moonheart's choice of a pseudonym is deeply embedded in her spiritual beliefs, her synchronicity with the natural world, and her desire to be identified as a writer.

Moonheart: I have often dreamt of becoming a writer and this would have been my pen name. In the traditions of my people, the moon holds a special significance, both physically and spiritually. I am in tune with the moon and with my heart as well.

From observing several mothers and daughters and listening to their stories, it is not uncommon for a daughter to show resistance in the form of irreverence for her mother's attitudes, beliefs and expression, expressed here by Xena in a joking way.

Xena: Oh My God, Mom! (laughter) That name, you make it sound like you're one of those damn stuffed care bears.

Moonheart: Well, (laughter), I am a bear. I have always protected you and your brothers and sisters with the fierceness of a mother bear. And now I is an old bear, which is much more dangerous to those who mess with my cubs

(laughter). Do you remember all the times you were growing up I would tell you to take your heart to the moon?

I identified with Moonheart's metaphor of being a "bear." Not until the birth of my own child did I experience the intensity of feeling toward protecting my child. Moonheart also speaks of being an old bear which she considers to be more dangerous. My mother reports that since menopause she has taken up with new unexpected powers and a confidence that she did not enjoy as a younger woman. Divorced and living alone, my mother expresses that she no longer has to "be the good wife" and "do the right thing."

Xena, has her own reasons around name selection which like Draven are based upon popular culture, in particular a popular media celebrity.

Xena: When you first suggested to us that we chose a name I was tempted to choose the name Pocahontas. The reason why is because when I was little I went to white schools and because we look very Native, the kids would call me Pocahontas. So even though I was only about 5 or 6 when this first happened, I knew from their tone that it was not a "good thing." Not a compliment. Since I've been going to school in Toronto, I have met some gay and lesbian students who take back hurtful slurs against them and claim those words. Like being called queer, dyke, or a faggot. At first I was shocked to hear them refer to themselves in that way but

then I got it. So if I take back the name Pocahontas then it no longer has the power to hurt me. However, I'm not quite there yet so instead I will use the name Xena. Do you know who I mean? Xena, the warrior princess. She's on every Saturday afternoon or something. I find it fascinating that Xena appeals to heterosexual men and lesbians.

Telling Our Stories

First Blood Stories

One evening as I sat at my computer "thesising," my daughter lay sprawled across the bottom of my bed, reading her latest chapter book. "Can I read you something Mom?", she asked. I have worked constantly to resolve the cognitive dissonance I experience everytime my daughter wants to spend time with me or share something while I am working on my thesis about mothers and daughters. I would catch myself saying "Oh darling, can it wait until later because I'm working on my mother and . . . of course, please share." She read:

"This is something your mother wanted me to tell you and I'm afraid I've put it off. It's a matter that really only your mother should talk to you about. But she didn't want to do it in a letter, so she wrote me and asked me to. I should have brought it up earlier but I keep forgetting how fast you are growing. Norah scuffed her feet. Uncle Gerald was probably waiting for her by now. What was her guardian going on about in such a roundabout way. What it is . . . Aunt Florence looked hopeful. Perhaps Flo and the others have already mentioned it, or you've read it in one of the magazines you girls read. Mentioned what? Norah never read the boring magazines that

Clare always had around. She shook her head.

Well, then, I'll have to explain. It's something that happens to you when you're around thirteen. Although Mary didn't get one until she was fifteen. It happens to everyone, every woman, that is, and we just have to put up with it. Aunt Florence took a deep breath and then her rich voice took on a storytelling quality. Every girl and every woman has a little room inside her. As the month goes by the little room gets untidy, and then a little visitor comes and sweeps it clean. Then it becomes untidy again until the visitor comes again the next month. Now when your little visitor comes, and it might not even be this summer, but it will probably be this year, you will come and tell me so I can get you equipped, all right? I've brought all you need with me, just in case." (Pearson 1991, p. 32)

I asked her if some girls actually believe there is a "little room" inside of their bodies. She said she was fairly certain that no one did. I was intrigued by the metaphor of the "little untidy room" and "the visitor" who comes to sweep it clean. How would this Aunt have described a pregnancy? Possibly, the room is expanded and becomes a house? A home for the next nine months to its fetal renter?

I recall when I was a teenager that some of my friends would say "George was visiting" or "Uncle Red had stopped by for a visit." Then we would dissolve into laughter, certain our

elaborate coding system had gone undeciphered by boys. I intentionally use the term "first blood", both in the interview process and in the writing of this exploration. I did not want to distance myself this time from factual reality with euphemisms intended to soothe, soften or make palatable a natural event.

Speaking in code is not only restricted to first blood stories. Consider the effect on meat sales if instead we said "I need to go to the store and buy some dead cow flesh." Calling it beef provides psychic distance from what the product actually is. In my work within the arena of death and dying, I have never seen a sympathy card that uses the words dead or died. Tranquil, ambiguous terms like "passed on," "passed over," and "gone home" extend support to the bereaved. While some general misunderstandings may occur as the result of this ambiguous discourse, more insidious, are the power relations embedded within these encodements, and in particular the connection between codes, secrecy, and shame.

My own journey into womanhood began in 1969. The American astronauts had landed on the moon; Sesame Street was created and Margaret Atwood wrote The Edible Woman. Coincidentally, I became a woman or so I thought. My mother and I had spoken on many occasions about what this event would look like. We both looked forward to it in

eager anticipation. I had gone to the school washroom and was shocked to see the toilet bowl water had turned this amazing crimson shade. For a brief moment, I wondered as I peered into the bowl whether I had eaten too many of my mother's pickled beets the night before. I told my teacher, who thankfully was a woman, that I needed to go home and I ran the whole way.

Once I got home, I recollect my mother taking me into the bathroom and offering to show me on her where to insert the tampon. I convinced her that it wasn't necessary and she left me alone with the box and accompanying instructions. I recall vividly opening the little booklet and staring at the side view diagram while thinking, "What part of my body looks like a puffy letter C?" I struggled with copious amounts of Vaseline, then finally emerged victorious. I walked gingerly down the stairs and into the kitchen, all the while wincing back tears for it was not very comfortable. My mother asked Where did you discard the applicator? Applicator? Oh no! I did remove the outer wrapper but as far as an applicator was concerned, I was wearing it! I tore up the stairs and grabbing the string like someone releasing a parachute, I pulled hard and discarded the cardboard invader. Another hour passed and I emerged, sans applicator, into the sisterhood of women. I want my daughter to be able to regard herself as a warrior; one who can bleed monthly and not die from her wounds.

My daughter is two years past the time that I started. So everytime she calls me from her room and her voice has that shrillness of excitement, I come running in while asking "has your period started?" So far the animation in her voice has been about spiders on the wall. I want her transition into the realm of womanhood to be positive and powerful. Recently, I have been dialoguing with her around the possibility of

having a First Blood Party. She has gone from "if you do this thing I'll die of embarrassment" to "what kinds of presents?" Maybe it doesn't have to be on the grand scale I would like it to be. Maybe she and I will go to a hotel overnight, order room service, and have pedicures. Rereading this sentence I am struck by how middle-class and white we are. What a white, middle class "thing" this would be to do and yet this is who we are. I would enjoy a ritual more nature inspired but that is my journey, not my daughter's.

As part of the examination of the mother daughter relationship, I explored the experience of first blood stories with each of the participants. First blood stories characteristically reside in the hushed tones of female company, not "fit" for polite conversation, or worse, not worth dialoguing about at all. The process begins when girls speak in code around boys and continues by not inviting men, in particular fathers, to gain knowledge and intimacy around this sacred mystery. Draven supports this argument by choosing not to tell her father that she has "started."

Draven: I was 12 years old. We had gone to Australia with my father, my brother and I that summer. It was two days before we were scheduled to come back and my Uncle was driving us to visit my Great Uncle who is in a nursing home. I swear he's 206 if he's a day (laughter). He's probably only 98, but he's old, a very old man. I felt really sick in the car. I figured it was probably 'cause we were bumping along this really dusty, old dry highway. In the middle of nowhere and I was drinking Pepsi and eating scotch mints. Probably not a

great combination. I thought Ugh! I feel really sick. I went into the bathroom when I got into the nursing home and looked down and the first thought that came into my mind was "oh, my period started. And then I went "Oh, my period has started!" And then I was stuck, I didn't know what to do. I didn't feel comfortable telling my Dad. I knew what it was! But I didn't really know what to do about it cause she wasn't there. It wasn't like I could say "Hey Mom, guess what." So I used toilet paper for two days until we got on the plane and Dad said you know just in case your period does start, it probably won't. . .and I'm looking at him going Yes, get on with it. There are pads in the bathroom on the airplane. So I thought Yes! There weren't any pain killers or anything but I waited about thirty seconds and went to the bathroom.

Draven's narrative reinforces that dialogues surrounding female events are delegated to the mother to teach her daughter about bodily functions, societal roles, and what it is to be female. Additionally as part of her White western cultural experience, Draven's immediate response when faced with pain was to gravitate toward painkillers; a pharmaceutical response to her discomfort. Draven's story continues:

Draven: I remember in that trip somebody referred to me as a child and I got really angry about it . I'm not a child, I'm 12 years old.

Rachel's memories focused on her fear and embarrassment of not being able to apply a tampon correctly when the time came.

Rachel: Well I don't remember my mother ever having conversations about my period or about what would happen. I have to frame this with I know she must have, because of the later part of this story. What I do remember, quite clearly, is my mother bought me a box of junior tampons. I knew what they were for. I knew that my period was going to be coming and all those kinds of things. I don't remember having any feelings of being upset about it. None of that kind of stuff. I do remember using up the whole box of tampons practicing (laughter). I was so scared that I wouldn't know how to use them when the time came. It was just one of those 10-packs. Well then of course when I finally did start my period, I had no tampons. I was then embarrassed to tell my mother that I had used them all up (laughter).

Fear and embarrassment are common themes when preparing for "womanhood." As Rachel notes, not remembering specific conversations does not mean information was not given. Within the mother daughter relationship, every moment has the potential to be a teachable moment. "The talk" is generally not a pre-arranged evening, with slides and refreshments. Rather, on-going discourse, including informal discussions in the car, and at the supper table, all contribute to the transmission of knowledge, attitudes, wisdom and stories that serve to connect or sever the mother daughter union.

When my daughter was around three years old, she found a

brand new box of forty Super Tampons in the bathroom. She painstakingly peeled off all the wrappers and then as her bathwater filled the tub, she shot 40 brand new tampons into the bubbly water and squealed in delight as they expanded; their string tails bobbing in the surf. I responded with some squealing of my own: "Oh honey, that was a brand new box. Tampons are expensive." Since the death of my partner, her Dad, money was tight. Her solution was to suggest that I wring them out and hang them on the clothesline. I smiled thinking of the potential response of my neighbors: "Time's must be tough for the widow Smiley." Later she inquired exactly what did I do with those little white things. I captured this moment to discuss the female experience, and thus created opportunity to dialogue, teach and share.

Positive mothering discourse relies on seizing the moment and building blocks of trust that will eventually support a bridge of connection between mothers and daughters over time. Rachel expresses her understanding of the connections to family patterns of first blood stories and to mother daughter bonding.

Rachel: Family history can often play a lot in when girls periods start and my family history is one of almost everybody starting really early. My mother was 10 when she started her period. I was 11 and a half so when Draven did start her period it was August and she would turn 13 the following January so she was like 12 and 2/3. During the previous year I had from time to time asked her if this had started yet. I wanted her to know that she had a place to talk about it, and a part of it was about being excited.

Toni's first blood experience was unceremonial. She was more

interested in sports, being with neighborhood friends and accepted the process as a natural one.

Toni: I don't remember anything that my mother told me. Of course she did tell me but that was a different time. It was more confidential. I remember having the day off school and that was it. I was very athletic so it didn't stop me. I hung with a group of neighborhood kids. We were not a gang. But we were guys and girls and we were interested in playing baseball, football and hockey. We just hung together right up until high school.

Responding to a cultural stereotype, Toni's admonishment that "we were not a gang" was an important component of her story. On the audio tape, she emphasizes the word "not" while leaning forward in her kitchen chair. Toni's story continues:

Toni: I was 11. I think I had basically one day of discomfort and that was it. I never got another day off school because of a period. It was, when I think about it now, really pleasant. There wasn't a lot of chat about it, nothing mysterious. It was just a part of being a woman. But I did not think of myself as being a woman when it happened. I don't ever remember my mother saying you become a woman at this point. I wouldn't have paid any attention to it anyway. It was like when's the next baseball game or football game and I just went on with life. It was just a little blip and that was it. I don't know maybe you're suppose to get more into it. I guess that's how all the woman in our family went.

In Toni's family the women who bled before her carried on without

much of an acknowledgement of the event. Toni illustrates for us that in her generation and cultural community first blood and womanhood were not synonymous. Rather, life goes on much as it had before.

Journee shared Toni's love of sports. Unlike her mother, Journee embraced the occasion of her first blood with joyous abandonment.

Journee: I think I had to have been in about grade 7 or 8. I was very much into my sports so nothing stopped me. Mom always told us you can swim, you can do anything that you want. I was so excited everybody had to know. We had borders in the house and everybody had to know. That's the one thing I do remember, EVERYBODY had to know- (laughter) but nobody cared. I think that my upbringing has been so open. In our house, my girlfriends comment on it. Everything's talked about. To this day everything is talked about.

Toni confirms Journee's reflection on the openness of their communication.

Toni: My niece said I could never have a conversation like that with my mother. It's the kind of conversations we have always had. Very early before condoms were a big thing my boys used to get them in their stockings.

I found myself nodding in agreement: both from my perspective as the daughter of an open mother and also as a

mother. My daughter's friends' gravitate toward my kitchen like moths to a porch light. They come to eat soft, warm from the oven chocolate chunk cookies. They come to speak of things and ask those questions they dare not ask their own mothers. Like playing dress-up at the door of puberty, they come to try on behaviors and ideas. Inevitably the conversation turns to "who's going with who" and who has "started."

Interestingly, it is my daughter who is the first to shriek "Oh my God, why are we talking about this?" In me, she has a person who will dialogue with her at any time, about any subject. And yet it is her friends who clamor to be near me, who laugh at all my jokes, and say "your Mom is cool." Because my style of mothering is all she has ever known, maybe an acceptance of and appreciation for me not is not always possible, at least at her current age. I recognize in her the resistance I felt toward my mother at her age. I tell her "avoid the rush, appreciate me now". She grimaces like someone thrown into an ice cold lake before they were ready. I certainly did not appreciate the uniqueness of my mother when I was twelve. Fit in, blend and be part of the crowd were my mantras for survival.

On November 12, 1972 I wrote in my journal:

I wish, just once, that she could just be normal. My friends have mothers who bake cookies, belong to the PTA and don't hang out with their children. Why can't she grow up, blend in and stop embarrassing me.

I recognize in these words and in the reaction of my daughter now another form of resistance towards the social authority invested in

mothers. Mothers are not the only source of information and support for daughter's transitions to motherhood. Moonheart shared her affiliation with her sisters as sources of knowledge.

Moonheart: It was a while ago but I do seem to recall learning most of my information from my sisters. We shared a bedroom, all five of us. We had two sets of bunkbeds and a single bed over by the door. At night, we would tell each other stories in the dark. Sometimes the older girls tried to scare us younger ones. But mostly it was warm and close and special. I had my first moon time when I was 11 and I do remember it started at night. I could see the moon from the top bunk and I was convinced the moon was beaming on my stomach and that is why it started. I told my oldest sister and she was so excited. She teased me about not being allowed to sleep on the top bunk anymore because I would bleed all over my sister on the bottom bunk. I thought How much blood is in there (laughter)? And then we all waited for our youngest sister to start because then our conversations at night, in the dark, could be about womanly things.

Moonheart uses a culturally based code, moontime for menstruation, illustrating the Native cultural connection to nature. Her narrative reflects the understanding that first blood marks her transition to "womanly things." Moonheart's story continues:

I guess my Mom must have told my oldest sister about the way it would be and then the information flowed down like a waterfall into smaller streams. I can remember stories my Great-Granny used to tell us about full moon ceremonies

where the women would sit on moss in the sweatlodge and let their blood flow into the earth to nourish new life. Again I thought how much blood is there?? (Laughter) I find it interesting that ceremonies such as these are being embraced again by young people and also the white community.

Moonheart's metaphor for knowledge as "information that flowed down from a waterfall into little streams" aptly describes the process of knowledge from mother to daughter, from one generation to another. Moonheart speaks of old ways being embraced and regarded as new. Draven shared Moonheart's intrigue about the volume of blood expressed monthly.

Draven: I remember when we had like sex ed , it wasn't like sex ed but that's what it was called in grade 6. We had it like for as long as I could remember. They showed us pictures of ovaries and stuff but it doesn't actually talk about sex. My teacher in Grade 6 had told us that when you have your period, it might seem like a lot of blood but actually it's only a teaspoon or two. I remember thinking, sitting on the toilet in the bathroom of the nursing home that there's more than a teaspoon there. I know there is (laughter).

From conversing with other women, it would appear to be a common theme among sixth grade family studies teachers to collect only girls into a darkened classroom to watch a flimsy film that made a rather halfhearted attempt to explain why having your period should not be

considered "the curse." Within these "sex ed" classes, there was a great deal of anatomical information shared but little practical education around the art of installing and wearing "the equipment."

When my daughter was in primary, I received a telephone call from the school nurse asking if there was a reason why my six year old was wearing a pad in her underwear. I was at a loss to explain why. As soon as she arrived home, I asked. Her response: "I see you put them in your underwear so I did too." Despite numerous discussions, and observational learning she had learned "how" but did not fully understand "when" or "why."

Xena, like many women of her generation, attributes her knowledge to images flickering on a television screen. Like Draven she was not comfortable talking about first blood or anything associated with it with her father. Xena's father shared her discomfort, while Draven's father was open to being included in discussions.

Xena: I think most of my knowledge, if you want to call it that, came from commercials on the television. I used to cringe when I'd be sitting on the couch watching T.V. with Dad and this feminine hygiene ad would come on. We would both stare straight ahead and not speak and of course deny that we were both uncomfortable. I can remember sitting there with my Dad and thinking 'Wow Native girls don't get periods', because all I ever saw were these white girls swimming and playing tennis (laughter). It seemed appropriate that they should have this "thing" for all the

torment they caused me. Unfortunately, native girls do have periods and I was 13 when mine started. I had all the supplies just waiting to be used. Before I started, I would go open the cupboard in the bathroom and look at them, arrange them, month after month. I found tampons really uncomfortable at first but now I couldn't imagine using anything else.

While the mother daughter relationship can be further enhanced by the sharing of first blood experiences and stories, it can also be a time of separation and resistance. Draven tells her story:

Draven: I remember many times thinking you have no idea what I'm going through, how dare you come and try to impose some sort of judgment upon my life So you might have gone through whatever, but it's completely different. And it might not be, but that's what I was thinking at the time. It's like that she would dare to compare what I'm going through with what she had gone through. Regardless. What is was. I don't care that we were wearing the same color socks, on the same day when it happened. I remember being not mad at you for not being there because it wasn't anything that anyone had any control over. But I remember being upset that she wasn't there so I could say Mom my period started what do I do?

Draven's feelings around wanting her experiences to be unique and different from her mother's is consistent with the teenage search for self, autonomy and separation. It is during this period of life, that young woman often express disbelief that their mother's actually know anything

about anything. As if mother's arrive on this planet as "mother units," never having been young girls. In their transition from girls to women they alternate between wanting mom to be nearby for support, while distancing themselves from her care and protection. Mother's struggle with similar feelings. Rachel expresses her feelings at being absent for her daughter's first blood.

Rachel: I knew it was a transition stage for her and I had a real sense of disappointment and feeling cheated. You waited 12 and 2/3 years, you couldn't have waited 5 more days? It wasn't at her, it was at her body.

Rachel had always tried to take the time to share life information with Draven so she felt cheated when "the big event" occurred without her support. She shares other stories of teaching through mothering discourse.

Rachel: When she was 5 she wanted to know how babies got out. I remember lying in bed with her because I use to lay down with her everynight until she went to sleep. I was opening and closing my fist and making it get bigger and bigger. This is the cervix opening and this is how babies come out. And she was like "how big does the hole get?" (laughter) I showed her and she was like Uggghhh! Years later I told her about episiotomies and she decided she was never having babies. All of hers were going to be adopted.

We had always talked about sex throughout her life and

certainly in the last couple of years since she had been living with her Dad. We would talk over the phone.

While Rachel was expressing her positive intent to offer mothering support, it was not always positively received by Draven.

Draven: But that was always really embarrassing for me. I remember getting mad at you over one particular time when you asked me if my period had started and I was like No! No it hasn't! I remember thinking I don't want to talk about this over the phone. It hasn't started and I'd tell you if it did but I don't want to talk about it anymore.

Embarrassment again surfaces as a common theme, along with displaced anger. This gives us another insight into forms of daughter's resistance to mother's authority in the ongoing construction of their identities as women. These moments of hostility did not interfere with Rachel's efforts to share her support and information with her daughter.

Rachel: I was really proud of her and her ingenuity. One of the first things I said to you when you told me that it had started was "do you have any pads?" And she said "well I do now". And I said "well did you get your Dad to get them?" Or something to that affect. And she said "no, I got them when we were on the airplane." And I said "but you told me it started two days before." And she said "well yeah I just used toilet paper, lots of toilet paper and kept going in the bathroom and then I found that there was some on the plane so I took a whole bunch" (laughter). I was glad that she did at least know what was happening to her body and she wasn't

that far away from me and was scared and unknowing. She was really clear about what was happening to her body and really was resourceful given that she didn't want to talk to any of the people who were available to her.

As Rachel's retelling of Draven's first blood story illustrates, women's resilience begins at a very early age. Advertising executives are aware of this female resourcefulness. Both panty hose and hair color are marketed under the name "resilience." It is much more than a product or a physical trait; it is the gene that is transmitted in the DNA of every mother and daughter. As woman's roles evolve to include more home responsibilities and more professional accountability, women simply become more. I would often ask my mother how she was able to juggle so much. Now, my daughter asks me. The answer is still the same: "We're women, this is what we do." This in itself teaches mothering discourse to our daughters.

Metaphorically Speaking

The word metaphor is derived from the Greek *meta* plus *pherin*, meaning "to bear, to carry" (Daley, 1992). In this postmodern feminist inquiry, metaphor operates as both the theoretical framework for and the process of the text. It seems appropriate to use metaphor in relation to women's lives, women's narratives, discourses on mothering and being

mothered. All of these, like this thesis, include bearing an embryonic form and carrying it through to some kind of fruition.

Lakoff and Turner (1980) have written that :

Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone: as children, we automatically, as a matter of course, acquire a mastery of everyday metaphor.

I asked each mother and daughter to describe their relationship with each other metaphorically. Draven has a well developed, visual imagination.

Draven: The picture I get it's twilight and there is a very large old stone bridge. It's cracked in places but still very quite walkable. There's a lot of big, tall trees - Oak, maple and . . they're all really tall and old. I like oak. I like the way it sounds and the wood. My brother in Australia has big eucalyptus trees in his backyard. It reminds me of Australia. It's not like I'm standing on the bridge but I'm standing away from it down, almost as if I'm on a boat. Sometimes there's a bird and sometimes not. The bridge is a soft blue and the bricks are gray.

Rachel produced her metaphoric description of their mother daughter relationship with equal speed.

Rachel: What I thought of as a metaphor of my relationship with Draven is her bedroom. When Draven was 18 months old, she had a room that was designated "the baby's room" and there was indeed a crib in it. The baby's room was simply a physical space for her things to be but her actual sleeping space was where I was. When you were little for a long time your room was a space that I crafted and I created.

Draven: Pink bunnies!

"Pink bunnies" becomes a metaphor for resistance, by a daughter still working to define her identity as separate from her mother and from expected sex roles.

Rachel: I know! You will someday forgive me. Literally a metaphor for where you were at that point in your life. For a long time, when you were growing up, I was solely responsible for the look of her bedroom and then gradually she incorporated things. I chose what color the walls were going to be painted and also took the kids with me to pick out borders. Draven wanted dinosaurs on her wall and I made her have bunnies. Which she someday is going to forgive me for but at 17 apparently hasn't gotten there yet. I had done some very non-traditional stuff both in terms of gendered behaviors with my kids and in terms of my lack of knowledge and therefore my lack of expectations with the kids in a whole lot of ways that turned out to be really positive for them. But there were some ways in which I was still doing very typical stuff: the idea that a little girl would have dinosaurs. What really burned her ass was that her brother got the dinosaurs that she wanted. Dinosaur border,

dinosaur sheets and bedspread to match and her room was pink with these little pink bunny families with strollers, very Victorian, pastel Victorian bunnies with . .

Rachel's narrative explores consciously now how she unconsciously then, reproduced sexist discourse. But the bunnies metaphor comes to mean more. Draven speaks:

Draven: When you and Dad split up I hated it. I thought God Damn bunnies . .

Victorian bunnies on wallpaper provided a visual metaphor for Draven to reveal her anger, disappointment and sadness over her parent's decision to separate. Like children, who cut up family photographs to express their feelings, Draven used the wallpaper border to express herself.

Rachel: A few of the bunnies disappeared off the wall. There was a section of bunny wall missing. As she has moved into and through the teen age years I have moved way out of her room, both physically and in other ways. I think this space is really reflective of who she is. Posters on the wall that really are significant of the different aspects of who she is. Everything from her cabbage patch dolls pink snowsuit to newspaper articles and things that she has found of interest through the years. The Mona Lisa with a reefer in her mouth (laughter), family photos. A big batch of stuff from Drama Fest that has figured so hugely in her life. The room is reflective not only of who she is but it's also I think very reflective of how I've changed in terms of my involvement within the room. I have had to actively train

myself to stay out of her room in terms of cleaning it and to come in terms of being an invited participant in her life. Not coming in to criticize the room.

Rachel's description and feelings around Draven's room strongly resonates with me: wanting the control, recognizing her daughter's blossoming autonomy and waiting to be invited. Since my daughter was a very little girl, she has wanted to sleep in a variety of unusual places. For several weeks she slept in a hall closet; where shoes and umbrellas once lived. An outgoing and gregarious child, she nevertheless prefers to sleep in enclosed spaces. Two nights were spent in a sleeping bag under my bed; three nights were spent in a cocoon of comforters in the bathtub and countless nights have been spent suspended in a hammock in her room.

When asked why, she would always reply in the same way: "I feel safe in small spaces." Currently at age 12 she has fashioned this amazing tent of blankets and clothespins around her sleeping space. I know when she invites me in to snuggle and read that I have been gifted in a special way. Although, the clutter runs contrary to how I would prefer it to be, I console myself with the hopeful belief that when she reflects upon her childhood, she will have rich memories of special spaces, safe cocoons and a mother who could be counted on to support her unconventional spirit.

As I crawl into her space on my hands and knees, gingerly avoiding all her treasures, she reminds me to "remember all this because when I'm famous reporters will ask you what I was like as a kid."

Toni and Journee chose the life-sustaining metaphors of air and water

to describe their union.

Toni: It's solid. It's more than something that can be described as an object. If it's a building, a building can disappear. It doesn't crumble what we have. So the only thing I could think to describe it as is water or air.

Journee: I thought water right off the top.

Toni: It's never ending, it's on - going. On the one hand I can't catch it, I can't pick it up. Air, the same way. I can't touch. But both are very necessary for one's existence. Even if we lived apart it would still be water or air.

Moonheart's description of their relationship speaks to the ways in which nature, in particular trees, have a honorable space and purpose in Native experience. Metaphors shape how experience is conceptualized and embedded in metaphors and figures of speech are many of the shared thoughts and assumptions of a culture.

Moonheart: Part of our culture is to think and relate in a somewhat indirect way. For example, the use of storytelling to communicate an experience. I find my non-Native friends sometimes become frustrated with this part of my heritage. "Oh no not another story" they say. "Just tell us what you think." But why should I make it so easy? And how do I know what they need? If I tell a story or a fable then they take what they want. So I will tell you about my relationship with Xena and you may take what you wish. When she was born I envisioned her as a tiny little sapling. In fact,

remember the clearing behind the house? With the birth of each child I would plant a tree. And sometimes when I was really overwhelmed with mothering and all that was on my plate, I would go out to this clearing and talk to those trees. And then back into the house I would go to tackle whatever I had left behind. Xena, my little sapling. Well our relationship is like a tree that becomes part of a forest. I as a tree have weathered many storms, grew strong in the sunlight and oh yes, of course I have changed and she has changed in the autumns of our life together.

Xena's description of her relationship with Moonheart draws upon similar philosophies Journee spoke of in relation to her naming choice: the "life is a journey" metaphor.

Xena: I had been home from Toronto for a couple of days when Mom and I, just the two of us, went for a walk in the woods behind my Uncle's place. I said to her as we walked that this path, this route was about us, our relationship. The path twists and turns in some places. Some parts are actually quite rocky. And do you remember that place where the path forks off into two roads? I said to you that symbolized my teenage years where I really felt the need to diverge and create my own identity. But then the path comes back together and the journey together continues.

Few journeys are completed without the occasional detour or distraction. Again and again the mother - daughter relationship initiates new directions. Inevitably there are times when we lose our way, encounter road blocks, and unfamiliar territory. Yet we must travel on.

The "life is a journey" metaphor links many mother daughter relationships. This passage could be read nonmetaphorically as enjoying a walk surrounded by nature, however, for Xena it evokes a journey of knowledge and embodies both the notion of subjectivity as constructed with and in resistance to our mothers.

Soul Gifts

A salient commonality of the mother daughter relationships shared in this thesis is our healthy mother daughter bonds. Referring to our respective relationships as "healthy" is not to imply or suggest we were, or are, conflict free. I am suggesting instead that our relationships were built upon mutual respect, trust, strength, and periods of conflict layered with deep levels of love.

When I was a little girl, I was convinced I was adopted. Although I had seen pictures of my eighteen year old mother pregnant with me and subsequent black and white photos of every milestone of my young life, I was not convinced. The reason for my disbelief that she was my "real" mother was because I would not, could not believe my good fortune. Of all the children born on this Earth, how was it I was chosen to be with her? What did I do pre-utero that deemed me worthy of such an amazing mother, teacher, mentor and friend? Eventually, I came to accept that I am her daughter. Conversely, during times of conflict I would again entertain

the adoption scenario but this time it meant "please, I must be adopted. These can't be my real people."

I envision every soul gift my mother has ever given me as a beautifully wrapped box. Some are harder to open but inside all the gifts are precious. And because there are so many of these presents they disappear into the clouds and fade from my view. She taught me that I can get up after a night of grief and despair, weary and bruised to the bone and do what needs to be done for my child. She has taught me that everything precious, including our dignity, can be taken from us, but the one thing that cannot be taken away is our power to chose what attitude we will take toward the events that have happened.

This gift of recognizing choices in how I will view my life's events has sustained me through widowhood at age 27, starting a catering business, and going to university for the first time at age 31, through how I carry myself daily in this world. Several years after the death of my partner, my daughter gifted my soul with these words:

Before babies come to this planet they get to chose who their Mother's will be. And when I saw you I knew. I knew that I would not have an Earth father for long. I knew that I would not have brother's and sister's but it was O.K. Because I knew I'd have you.

I visit this soul gift whenever our strong wills are colliding.

I invited each mother and daughter to share the soul gifts they have exchanged within their relationships with each other.

Rachel: The gift Draven has taught me is from the day she was born is the ability to unconditionally love someone that I did not know that I could do. The lesson that I have learned and am on-going learning is how to be patient with an individual, an individual and constantly growing and changing person.

I identified wholeheartedly with Rachel's quest for patience. For me, being a mother is a constantly evolving process of adapting to the needs of your child while also changing and growing as a person. Nothing is quite as hard as helping a person develop her own individuality, especially while you struggle to keep your own. The ongoing construction of our subjectivity while taking an active role in another's is not an easy task.

This theme of individuality resonates with Journee, as well as the gift of open communication.

Journee: When I think about what my mother has given me, she has given me the ability to be an individual. She's mentored, disciplined, been there when my relationships have busted up, taken care of my boys. She's given me also the ability to open up and talk. When I talk with my girlfriends it's one of the things that they envy the most. Lots of times they come running out here to get a dose of a parent that is not looking to criticize, or change you or tell you how to do something, but someone who's just going to listen and say O.K. now what do you want to do? Yeah, but what do you want to do? I've never lived away from home, I've always lived with my mother. I have my own home downstairs but you'd never know it. We think like, duplex's, gotta be close, close by or whatever. But I've always been

able to be independent, to be me. I mean I sort of grew up in the shadow of my parents. I was Me. The quiet political one.

Toni echoes Journee's sentiment of connectedness, both in physical proximity and spirit.

Toni: I think we're just very supportive to one another. You know living together came out of necessity. My marriage broke up. There were still 5 kids and a little girl, a baby so she came through because we needed a place to live and she was the only one working, the oldest child. We decided to buy this house together. So she really helped save the family in terms of keeping us together because I didn't know quite what we were going to do. Now that was a very material thing but an essential thing at that point and I was not in the best of shape emotionally. I mean I'm sure we would have managed had she not been working. I'm not too sure how. So that's been really great.

Draven attributes Rachel with the gift that she is not limited in what she chooses to do.

Draven: I've learned a lot. And I think I will continue to learn for an indefinite period of time. I think that despite you saying that I can't be in the FBI (laughter). Never mind that I'm not an American citizen. She's taught me that I can be whoever and whatever I want (except an FBI agent).

In other words, Rachel has gifted her with the power to construct her own subjectivity. Moonheart gave Xena at an early age the important and life sustaining gift of not participating in victimizing behavior.

Xena: You taught me that no one can make me feel inferior without my consent. At first I didn't understand, as a little kid, I thought how can I be consenting to this racist treatment? And remember all the times you held my face and said the kids at school were jealous of me and my power so that's why they try to beat me down. I actually now believe that. I try everyday never to give my consent. And I'm going to try not to get all choked up here, but if you were to die tomorrow that gift would sustain me through the rest of my life. But don't go (laughter).

Moonheart: It is every mother's hope and dream to have their child vocalize such words. It seems mothers are usually the ones being blamed for every bad thing that has ever happened. I have tried to teach all my children not to participate in the negative, not to agree to be victims. Xena has given me a wondrous gift and that is she frees my mind up to imagine that someday, I could be a writer. She gives me courage. She is like an eagle that has survived many harsh winters and emerges in the Spring. She is my hero. I see her struggle and win and I know I can do it too.

At the end of this passage, Moonheart metaphorically describes Xena as "like an eagle." The eagle has sacred significance within Native culture: the eagle's feather has ceremonial use when used to fan the smoke of burning sage and sweetgrass; it carries with it the prayers of the people. Additionally, the eagle is synonymous with bravery and unity with the natural world, in particular the winged ones. Moonheart continues to reject her status as "writer." It would appear that if her identity as a writer

cannot be externally validated, then it cannot be internally accepted. She gains courage from her daughter, teaching us about reciprocity in the mother daughter relationship. Mother's not only help in the construction of daughter's identities, daughters have a large and ongoing influence on their mother's.

CHAPTER FOUR

No Conclusion

I wanted a perfect ending. Now I've learned the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end. Life is about not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next. Delicious ambiguity.

Dying from ovarian cancer Gilda Radner (1989) wrote these words in her journal. Several months later she died. Within these private, reflective words she encapsulated the postmodernist view that texts in their widest possible definition do not have absolute meanings. This results in a deep reading of the text context, rather than merely accepting what is being said. The mother-daughter story is not bound by the continuums of time and space; it is as timeless as the universe. Therefore there can be no conclusion, but rather the continuation of questioning and a sense of the fragments of understanding provided by this text.

At the onset of this project, in the initial proposal, I was interested in offering participants the ability to choose their own pseudonyms and the underlying significance of such an offer. Rituals of renaming occur in

many initiatory ceremonies at the age of puberty. In the Catholic church a girl selects a name when she is confirmed at the age of twelve, a name intended to reflect her conscious dedication to the spirit. In the myth of Demeter and Persephone, Kore is renamed Persephone after her sojourn in the underworld. When she was abducted from the Elysian fields, she was a girl, a maiden; after her return she is a woman, a queen (Paglia, 1991).

In the Australian Aboriginal culture, each child is named at birth, but it is understood that as a person develops, the birth name will be outgrown and the individuals will select for themselves a more appropriate name that symbolizes a particular strength or interest (Morgan,1991). In some Native tribes, such as the Blood, a name could reflect a physical disfigurement. Yvonne Rita Dion Buffalo (1990) explains while this may seem cruel to an outsider, from a Native perspective the naming is intended to help people accept their affliction.

Rachel's use of the word "real" to describe her daughter's birth name raises a postmodern question: what constitutes as real? I do not consider Sue to be my real name, simply the name my mother chose for her own reasons. It is my legal name. When we speak of what is real, there is a

sense of honesty, truth, and legitimacy connected with it. Conversely, if something is not real then it does not exist. It is imaginary, illegitimate, and false. Similarly, Moonheart writes everyday, and yet she does not consider herself to be a "real" writer because she has not sold any of her stories. The work of women is often devalued by a patriarchal society that seeks to undermine women's work, in particular work that is not rewarded with money. An exception to this is volunteer work which is generally highly regarded in most communities.

Journee's name speaks to the reality that each woman's path to individuation is different, yet each strives for the same destination. We seek the place where we are at peace with who we are, comfortable with our place in the world, and inspired to continue learning. Once we set foot upon the path of growth, there is no turning back. We are led onward, and the information that we need to grow and to heal emotionally and physically is laid before us.

Xena addresses a variety of lesbian themes in choosing her pseudonym. The first theme is the powerful practice by some within the gay community to take back hurtful slurs and reclaim them. The term,

"dyke", which is often used to denote a lesbian, was originally an early twentieth century slang term of abuse either for any lesbian or for any woman who rejected male advances. Its origins are unknown, although one suggestion is that it began as -dite, from hermaphrodite, on the grounds that heterosexist orthodoxy insist that a woman whose sexuality is independent of man must be part male (Mills, 1991).

Secondly, Xena the warrior princess, is the unabridged champion of contemporary lesbians. In larger urban venues, lesbians gather in community to watch Xena do battle with evil patriarchal forces. Lastly, in the past several years, there has erupted a movement among women from all sexual orientations to claim their inner warrior. As women, each of us, at least once in our lives, hears the inner warrior, "the wild woman within which seeks to be heard" (Pinkola-Estes, 1993. p. 3) .

Kornfield & Feldman (1996) in their book Soul food: Stories to nourish the spirit and heart, write about Don Juan:

Don Juan, a great Yaqui shaman, spoke of the difference between an ordinary person and a warrior, saying that to an ordinary person everything in life is seen as either a blessing or a curse, whereas to a warrior everything is a challenge. In embarking on new journeys and making new beginnings, we,

too, are called upon to learn how to be a warrior, but a warrior with a heart (p. 42).

When women connect with their warrior selves, a confidence and a desire emerges to share the stories that have been denied oxygen and audience. Bolen (1993) has argued that one of the major functions of a friend or a therapist is being a witness to the life story of another person.

Two areas of my life provided the fodder for my interest in first blood stories : my daughter and her upcoming first blood and as a therapist I saw the effects of women loathing their femaleness. In Promiscuities: The secret struggle for womanhood, Naomi Wolf (1997) argues, and I concur, that a girl's passage through tests and rigors into womanhood is marked in the realm of body control such as dieting, but also in the realm of sex acts and the accumulation of material possessions. Despite its classist connotations her message speaks to the lack of ritual in contemporary North American and European societies.

Become a woman, in our culture, does not mean: show us you can weave, as it did in Melanesia, or even show us you can embroider samplers, direct the servants, and play a harpsichord, as it did in "refined" society in the nineteenth century in the West. No, in our culture, the cliché exclamation to an adolescent

girl, "My, how you've grown," has no cultural echoes whatsoever; the reference is purely physical. In our world, "Demonstrate that you are a woman" means simply "Take off your clothes" (p.134-135).

The message expressed by the Aunt in my daughter's chapter book, is that menstruating is dirty and untidy. Hence, the naming of sanitary products. Simone de Beauvoir (1949) shared this view that menstruation is at its best an "untidy event" and at worst "a burden, and a useless one from the point of view of the individual" (p.88). Susan Brownmiller (1986) writes, "despite its testament to female fertility and to gender, menstruation runs diametrically counter to the prized feminine virtues of neatness, order and a dainty, sweet and clean appearance" (p.14). In The mothers, Robert Briffault (1927) pointed out that in Arabic the word "impure" originally referred to, and was the source of the concept menstruation.

Mary Daly (1979) argues that the "menstruating women is called filthy, sick, imbalanced, ritually impure. In patriarchy, her bloodshed is made into a badge of shame, a sign of her ontological impurity" (p. 233). In early Judaeo-Christianity, a similar notion is enshrined in the Bible

(1989), under Leviticus: "When a woman has a discharge of blood which is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening" (p. 91). Weidereger (1978) writes: "The most damning euphemism attached to menstruation reflects the belief that the monthly flow of blood is the curse God laid upon women for Eve's sin in the garden of Eden" (p. 87). "Eve was framed" says the button on the backpack of a young woman I saw waiting for the bus.

Draven's annoyance at being referred to as a child illustrates for us the "commonsense" reality of western society that womanhood, in this generation, is measured by first blood. Technically, one is able to conceive a child after the onset of menstruation. This is not to say that that is a reasonable response to one's ability. In this modern/postmodern age female bodies have the ability to reproduce at an age that is out of sync with emotional maturity and financial independence.

In the novel Kinflicks, by Lisa Alther (1977), the main female character is a keen football player at the age of thirteen, and her first blood takes her by surprise: "So unprepared was I for this deluge that I

assumed I had dislodged some vital organ during football practice the previous afternoon. " After embarrassed reassurance that what happened was indeed normal, her mother adds, "no more football. You're a young woman now" (p.40). Unlike Toni and her mother, to this mother, first blood and football were not events that could co-exist with each other.

Referring to one's cycle as moon time sounds utterly poetic, perfect and palatable to my ear. I have always disliked the harshness and punctuation-esque term of "period." Menstruum, the earliest word for the menstrual discharge, was the neuter form of the Latin menstruus, meaning monthly. The term monthly period, later shortened to period, appeared around 1822 (Mills, 1989).

To ritually shed blood, means the ability to take on women's ancient powers. In some cultures the womb shedding its lining every month is celebrated collectively by sweats or in huts of seclusion where women practice purifying rituals (Beane Rutter, 1993). Lately there has been a resurgence of interest by the White community and young Native women to embrace the traditional, ceremonial ways of Native elders (Cahill and Halpern, 1990). Ironically, these practices have been erroneously labeled

as "new age". From a postmodern perspective, appropriation becomes the production of another subject position through the erasure and appropriation of another.

In Xena's telling of her first blood knowledge, the media plays a prominent role. Contemporary young women are bombarded by an avalanche of feminine hygiene advertisements, images of tampons floating on lily pads, accompanied by soft background music. The choices are as numerous as the frequency of commercials: dry weave, wings, light days, heavy days, extra wide, extra narrow. If one were to believe this onslaught of information, then women's menstrual blood is blue and a great deal of swimming, horse back riding, and playing tennis occupy our time monthly. This is an illusion which is both classist and racist.

Xena's assumption that only White girls, as portrayed on television commercials, experienced monthly cycles was a clear illustration of both the power of dominant discourse, and how we may develop resistant identities. Feminine hygiene advertisements on the surface appear innocuous however, they quickly become insidious and powerful when the connection is made between representation and exclusion.

As the participants shared their metaphorical stories with me, I became aware that one of the most important requirements for an effective metaphor is that it meets the individual at her model of the world. For Draven, multiple embedded metaphors, the bridge, the bird, the trees, may access the mind at different levels of unconsciousness description. I asked her to describe the meaning of such a complex, intriguing metaphor. She too was at a conscious loss to explain its significance. Is the bird merely a species of the littleness metaphor? For me, the bridge is suggestive in many rich ways of a mother's role in sustaining and helping her child bridge the passage to adulthood. The aging trees could be symbolic of the mother-daughter chronology, the dependence relation, about bending and not breaking. Joyce Divinyi (1995) speaks to the desire to interpret, by admonishing one to avoid the urge to "explain" the meaning of the metaphor. The swiftness with which Draven accessed and produced this metaphor was suggestive to me of its strength and power.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) point out that metaphors (like water and air) are most likely to represent relationships where specific concrete language is inadequate in describing experience. Furthermore, Toni and

Journee were not aware on a conscious level why they had chosen air or water. I asked them if there was anything they would like to say around their choice of metaphor. They reported not "knowing" why it was chosen. I did not pursue this desire to "know" as I give credence to the tenet that emotional responses should be respected for their unexplained power, not the subject of forced scrutiny. I was left to ponder whether the significance of the water metaphor has its origins in amniotic fluid; the essence of life. From the water of the womb to existence outside of the womb, the mother daughter relationship is fraught with tears of joy, anguish, and frustration and salty perspiration, for sustaining a healthy mother-daughter bond is hard work.

In the section entitled, Soul Gifts, Moonheart speaks to the common occurrence of mother blaming prevalent in many cultures. In her book Toward a new psychology of women, Jean Baker Miller (1976), asserts that bad mother myths are perpetuated by a culture that finds it easier to blame mothers than to comprehend the entire system that has restricted women. Miller argued that more mother-blaming occurs among middle-class white women than women of color and those raised in poverty.

Rather than blame their mothers, culturally diverse and working-class women recognize their mothers' courage as survivors in the face of violence and oppression. They recognize at some level, the power of societal forces in the construction of our identities. Paula Caplan in Don't blame mother (1989) advises her female clients and students to interview their mothers. Caplan argues that women who realize that the culture of mother blaming is the cause of much of the guilt, anger and pain in mother daughter relationships are more equipped to overcoming its effects.

Personal Reflections

I approached this exploration as if it were a photograph: a snapshot in time of six women and myself. I focused the lens of postmodern feminist inquiry, removed the filter and set the timer enabling me to "run around" and be captured in the picture as well. I tried to position our stories so no one was blocked from view. In the "tableaux" of postmodernism the goal is to shoot film from a variety of positions and see what develops. This topic addressed through a postmodern feminist perspective is made sense of by its particularity within both its immediate context and historicity.

Choosing a methodology was not an overnight process. I read until I was sure my eyeballs were bleeding. I joined a postmodern chat group on-line. I spent days, weeks, and months trying to open my mind as wide as I could to allow postmodern feminist thoughts to flood my mind. Like the synapses that connect dendrites with nerves, the connections between mother-daughter relationships and the postmodern are numerous: its shared complexity, the inherent resistance, the construction of identities, and plural realities.

At times the process was consuming to the point where I became excited, and at times overwhelmed with the postmodern feminist connections in all aspects of my life. Movies, books, and television programs were experienced as something other than light and shadow images or sheer entertainment. Feeling any kind of excitement and joy around the research process was a new emotion for me.

My first experience with research took place within the canons of empirical psychology. In an attempt to continue the analogy of research as photography and/or art I characterize the approach taught by modernist thinkers as "paint by number." Numbers were said to represent the lived

experiences of the participants. The rules were fairly straightforward: Do not "color" outside the lines, follow the recommended colors and everyone produces the same picture. Although there was a certain amount of professional safety within this approach, I nevertheless felt like a round peg being pushed into a square hole. Packwood and Sikes (1996) identify that there is "considerable pressure to engage in a positive presentation of self to the potential audience of colleagues as a proper, scientific researcher" (p.336). I wanted to abandon the white lab coat of traditional authority and expose myself as someone who does not seek to be an objective, detached, and distant observer. The challenge became to move away from this privileged approach and get into the "muck" of the ambiguous indeterminacy called postmodern.

Within this thesis, the participants and I struggled with the construction of ourselves as subjects and objects of inquiry: Mothers, daughters, researcher, and participants. Postmodernism offered an acknowledgment of the situated, fragmented nature of knowledge claims within the context of the shifting and often contradictory nature of identity. As with a photograph, years from now, the participants and I will

be able to look at his written snapshot and remark " look at how we have all changed."

I struggled within myself to show the slippery patches. Due in part to my positive appraisal of most every event and my desire to write something "pretty" I railed against showing the ruptures, the essence of any significant social interactions. I resisted the resistance. In the History of Sexuality (1981) Foucault asserts that resistance is actually the product of power. When Foucault speaks of power he uses metaphors such as "nets" and "capillaries." The image of a net suggests to me that things can fall through. Capillaries bring an image of complex networks. Through these metaphors Foucault suggests the plurality of diffusion of power rather than a monolithic power. Therefore, the multiplicity of determinations provides for an instability through which struggle and change can take place.

Foucault (1980) argues "where there is power there is resistance" (p.95). Certainly within the mother-daughter relationship this can be observed. Throughout the stories of the women in this thesis, resistance wove a common thread. For example, Draven's resistance to pink bunnies

on her bedroom wallpaper, my daughter's resistance to my open style of mothering and Xena's description of her mother-daughter relationship:

The path twists and turns in some places. Some parts are actually quite rocky. And do you remember that place where the path forks off into two roads? I said to you that symbolized my teenage years where I really felt the need to diverge and create my own identity.

Although Journee did not speak directly to resistance as part of her process with Toni, she nevertheless stressed her mother's nurturance and support of her individuality. It is my experience that individuality is not born in the absence of resistance, but rather it is a by-product.

Locating myself within this research, I am aware that, though my own experience has informed and shaped this inquiry, I have also been transformed by this process. I gained several new insights and understandings which have affected the way I move in the world in particular, my approach to counselling and the way I mother. This inquiry helped me to realize the end of the expert therapist but not the end of the knowledgeable therapist. The role of postmodern is to make us more modest and anxious about our knowledge.

Counselling discourses are another example of the power which lies

immanent in a set of practices where power is hidden from the awareness of those through whom it circulates. As a feminist therapist, I seek constantly to equalize the power playing field within any therapeutic relationship. It is in disrupting the exercise of power, rather than seeking to overcome it, that client resistance is expressed and such resistance can take any number of forms: missed appointments, extended periods of silence to open hostility. Fairclough (1992) argues that counselling as a form of confession is:

a discourse technique in practice with contradictory orientations to domination and emancipation. It brings the inside of people's heads into the domain of power-knowledge, but it is also a technique for asserting the value and individuality of people (p. 59).

A harder to identify, yet nevertheless present force, is resistance experienced by the therapist. In the past, I would have viewed certain clients as difficult to work with and/or barriers to their own healing process. Now, I recognize the resistance within our therapeutic relationship as a strong testament to their inner core of strength.

"Celebrate the rebel" signs currently adorn mirrors and doors in our house. My daughter jokingly wonders if it is some kind of a trap to trick

her into confessing past exploits or into doing something. I reassure her, this is the result of understanding from a postmodern perspective that resistance is one way to recognize, support, and celebrate the ruptures within social relationships.

Future research in this area could include exploring from a postmodern feminist perspective the role of resistance and power within the counselling relationship. In previous studies power and resistance are often viewed as areas to be controlled, channeled, and overcome. I am suggesting instead that it is a healthy quality that requires oxygen not extinguishing.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Mom Blobs, Midwives and Other Metaphors: A Postmodern Feminist Inquiry into Mother Daughter Stories

A study to be completed as partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Education in Counselling, Acadia University, Wolfville, Nova Scotia

The purpose of the above study is to examine: (a) the use and subsequent meanings of metaphors in the stories of Mothers and daughters and their therapeutic potential, and (b) the healing potential of stories. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Interviews will be carried out over the course of a month. Participants will meet with the researcher for at least two sessions. Each session will likely last between an hour and a half to two hours. If, as a result of the interview process, issues surface that cannot be resolved between the mother and daughter, counselling will be offered, at no cost to the participants.

If you agree to be a participant in this study, it is requested that you review and agree to the following.

As participant, I consent to:

1. The interview(s) being audio-recorded with the understanding that the tape(s) will be destroyed- or returned to me- after the final document has been approved;
2. A verbatim transcript of the interview(s) being made in order to assist in the writing of the final document. I understand that my name will be replaced with a pseudonym of my choosing;
3. The information disclosed in the interviews is to be used for the above study and any subsequent journal articles.

As researcher, I agree to:

1. Hold the interviews in a place mutually agreed upon by both the participants and myself. The location should be private and conducive to the interviewing process;
2. Do everything within my power to ensure confidentiality of the interview process and to respect the anonymity of participants;
3. Remove all personally-identifying characteristics from the final document.
4. Provide each participant with an opportunity- where direct quotations from the interview(s) are used in the final report- to ensure (a) that they have been quoted accurately, (b) that they have not been quoted out of context, and (c) that no personally identifying characteristics have been inadvertently included;

I have read and understood the conditions outlined above. I agree to participate in this interview, in accordance with the conditions outlined above.

Name of Participant

Date

Pseudonym

Sue Smiley (Researcher)

Date

678-1922

Interview Questions

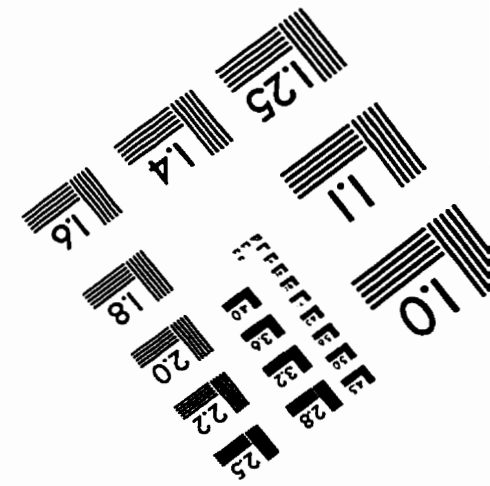
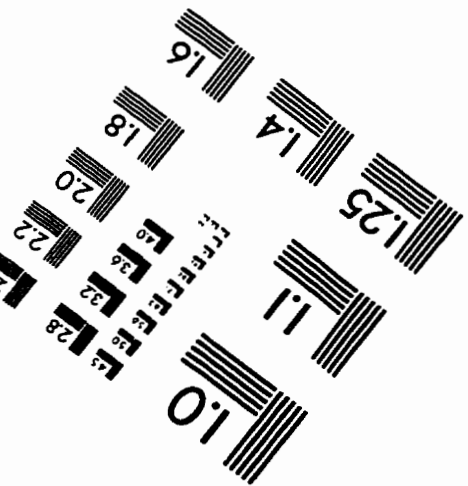
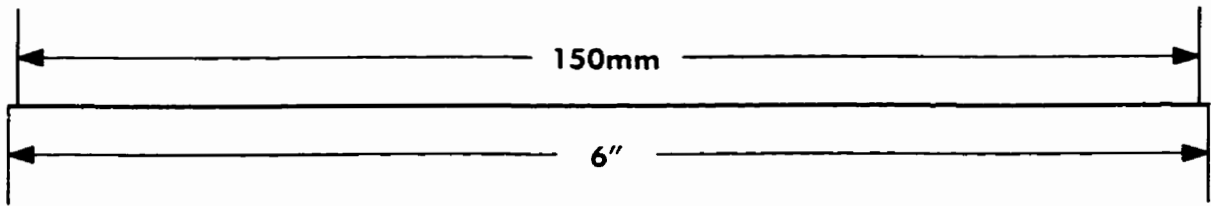
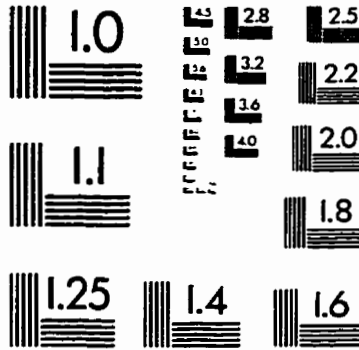
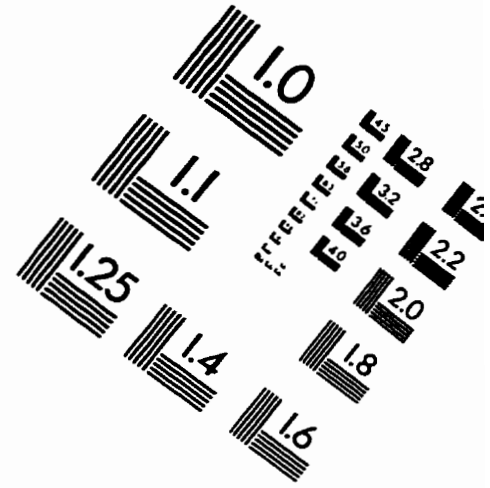
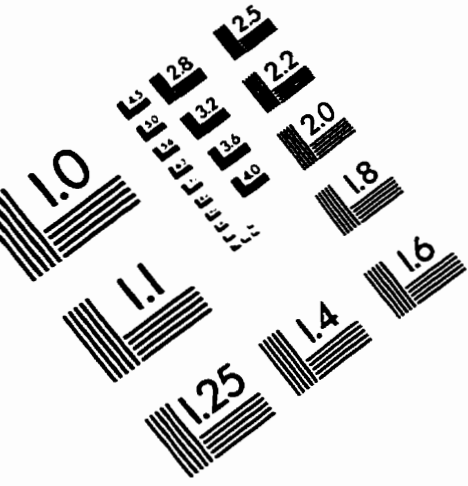
I want to invite you to chose a name for yourself to be used for this thesis. I am intrigued by the power of renaming. Additionally, could you share the significance of the name you chose?

A portion of this work is to examine first blood stories as transmissions of knowledge about self, sexuality, one's body, etc. from mother to daughter. Could you share with me any memories you have around that time of your own first blood story? What kinds of messages did you receive? Who was the sender?

I have observed that much of women's talk is spoken in metaphors. I am interested in the metaphors you both use to describe your relationship with each other. For example, some people speak of planting a seed, watching it grow, nuturing it, cutting the seedling back when necessary, etc. How would you describe your relationship?

What lessons or gifts have been part of your journey together?

IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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