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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Mother-Adult Daughter Relationships

In the Context of Chronic Conflict

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Nursing

By

Carolyn Elizabeth Ziminski

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Mother-Daughter Relationships in the Context of Chronic Conflict

By

Carolyn Elizabeth Ziminski

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor Linda R. Phillips, Chair

One out of ten older adults is a victim of elder abuse. Perpetrators of elder abuse include anyone who is in a position of trust with an elder, though adult children are the most frequent perpetrators of abuse. The role of gender in relationships has been largely ignored in elder abuse, despite the research on aggression in interpersonal relationships demonstrating gender differences. While research has shown how adult daughters successfully transition to caregivers and maintain relationships with their aging mothers, there is little understanding of how these relationships transition to violence and victimization. Mother-daughter relationships are lifelong intimate relationships, making their unique dynamics integral in understanding the context which creates aggression. Therefore the purpose of this study was to generate theory to explain the experience of aggression between adult daughters and their aging mothers, from the perspective of the daughters, describing the factors that influence the development of elder abuse. Grounded theory methodology, informed by feminism, was used to achieve the study aims. Thirteen telephone interviews were completed with adult daughters who self-identified as being in an abusive relationship with their aging mother. Daughters' descriptions of their mother-daughter relationship were framed around their perceptions of past childhood injustices. This past-framing led to the negative emotional responses daughters experienced in their relationship. Despite feeling the relationship was explicitly negative daughters remained in the relationship out of a desire to pursue the dream relationship and validate their mother-daughter bond, as well as a

sense of obligation to do their due diligence. Daughters used both coping and self-protective strategies in managing their ongoing relationship with their mother. These strategies developed over time as daughters found them useful. While the strategies served the daughters' needs, they often came at the expense of the mothers' needs resulting in a situation in which elder neglect could occur. Additionally, daughters found the use of reciprocal and spiteful aggression to be useful, promoting the occurrence of elder abuse. Findings from the study provide theoretical insights to the conceptualization of aggression, power relationships between adult daughters and aging mothers, as well as the development of elder abuse and neglect. Furthermore, the findings have practical relevance as they suggest targeted areas for assessing family safety and elder abuse as well as potential opportunities for interventions.

The dissertation of Carolyn Elizabeth Ziminski is approved.

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2014

Dedication Page

I dedicate this work to all the fast-track BSN-PhDs who get hazed for choosing this path.

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Acknowledgements

This work was supported by a John A. Hartford Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Scholarship, Sigma Theta Tau Gamma Tau at Large research award and the UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship.

I give my sincerest thanks to the many mentors I have had along my journey:

Sister Cyndi Babyak for teaching me a passion for older adults.

Dr. Veronica Rempusheski for teaching me a passion for research, enabling me to consider a PhD, and your continued mentorship as I progress through my career.

Dr. Linda Phillips for your unwavering support and for never saying ‘no’ regardless what I proposed to do, write, research...

The AGNS faculty Drs. Menten, Cadogan and Woods for your constant support and guidance, and for being friendly faces through the ups and downs of the dissertation process.

To my committee members, Drs. Moon and Pieters for your valuable insights and dedication.

To Drs. Mosqueda, Wigglesworth, Burnight and all the great people at the UC Irvine Center for Excellence for their continued mentorship in gero-forensics.

In addition I’d like to express my gratitude:

To the HRSA gero-students for creating a friendly community of support and scholarship.

To my writing group for making the ABD journey less lonely.

And lastly I’d like to thank my husband Andrew, for creating a relationship of mutual support as we navigate our academic careers. And for letting me fill our home with cats.

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*Ziminski, C.E. & Rempusheski, V.F. (2013) Examining Barriers to Self-Reporting of Elder Physical Abuse in Community-Dwelling Elders, *Geriatric Nursing*, (In Press) DOI: 10.1016/j.gerinurse.2013.11.002

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Select Peer Reviewed Presentations *data based

International

*Ziminski, C.E. & Phillips, L.R. (2011, October). An Examination of Elder Abuse and Related Injuries in the Emergency Department. (Podium). *19th Annual International Association of Forensic Nurses Symposium*, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

*Ziminski, C.E. & Rempusheski, V.F. (2009, June) Community-dwelling elders' perceptions of elder mistreatment. (Poster) 9th *International Family Nursing Conference*, Reykjavik, Iceland

National

Ziminski, C.E., & Phillips, L.R. (2012, November). Sexual Abuse in California's Skilled Nursing Facilities and the Unfulfilled Responsibilities of State Aging Policy. (Podium) 65th *Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America*, San Diego, CA

*Ziminski, C.E., Phillips, L.R. & Guo, G. (2011, November). Risk Factors for Neglect in Assisted Living. (Podium) 64th *Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America*, Boston, Massachusetts

*Ziminski, C.E., Wigglesworth, A. & Mosqueda, L. (2011, November). Mechanisms of Bruising and Injury Patterns in Physical Elder Abuse. (Poster) 64th *Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America*, Boston, Massachusetts

*Ziminski, C.E. & Rempusheski, V.F. (2008, August). Community-dwelling elders' perceptions of elder mistreatment: Scale development. (Poster) 2nd *Biennial National IDEa Symposium of Biomedical Research Excellence (NISBRE)*, Washington, DC

Regional

*Ziminski, C.E. & Phillips, L.R. (2013, April). Mother-Daughter Relationships & Female Aggression: A Feminist Analysis of Elder Abuse. (Poster) 46th *Annual Western Institute of Nursing Research Conference*, Anaheim, CA

*Ziminski, C. E., Cadogan, M. P., & Phillips, L. R. (2012, April). Perfect Storm: Contextual Factors in the ED When Caring for Older Adults. (Podium) 45th *Annual Western Institute of Nursing Research Conference*, Portland, OR

*Ziminski, C.E., & Rempusheski, V.F. (2009, March). Community-dwelling elders' perceptions of elder mistreatment: Scale development. (Poster) 21st *Annual Scientific Sessions of the Eastern Nursing Research Society*, Boston, Massachusetts

Honors and Awards

UCLA Dissertation Year Fellowship; 2013-2014

UCLA Collegium of Teaching Fellows; 2012-2013

Dissertation Funding Award (\$2,500), Sigma Theta Tau International; 2012-2013

John A. Hartford Building Academic Geriatric Nursing Capacity Scholar; 2010-2012

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Introduction to Dissertation

Elder abuse is an intentional act by a person in a trust relationship with an older adult which causes harm to the older adult or failure to satisfy the older adults' basic needs (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003). It is estimated 1 in every 10 older adults is a victim of elder abuse (Acierno et al., 2010). The National Elder Abuse Incident Study found older women were the majority of victims of emotional abuse (76.3%), physical abuse (71.4%), financial exploitation (63%), and neglect (60%) (NCEA, 1998). Older women experience the intersecting power disadvantage of being "old" and a "woman" (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Cruikshank, 2009). This is not to say women are an easy target for abuse and neglect solely on the basis of their gender, rather, social and structural processes influence this. Older women (age 65+) outnumber their male counterparts 13.1 to 10 (Werner, 2011). Additionally, older men are more likely to be married (Vespa, Lewis, & Kreider, 2013), and may be protected from elder abuse and neglect by the presence of a younger wife. This underscores the complex role of gender in elder abuse and neglect.

To date, research on the causal factors of elder abuse has focused on individual characteristics such as caregiver stress or substance abuse (Neysmith, 1995; Whittaker, 1995), overlooking the role of gender in the aggressive relationship. Women, often daughters, are frequent perpetrators of elder abuse (Crichton, Bond, Harvey, & Ristock, 1999; Dunlop, Rothman, Condon, Hebert, & Martinez, 2001; Tatara & Duckhorn, 1997). Again, gender alone is not a cause for the high rate of daughter perpetrators, the roles daughters play contribute to the occurrence of abuse. Daughters have life-long relationships with their mothers (Fingerman, 2001). They are more likely to provide intimate care and maintain frequent contact with their mothers as compared to sons (Coward & Dwyer, 1990; Dwyer & Coward, 1991), thus daughters

have increased opportunities in which abuse and neglect can occur compared to sons. While gerontologists have characterized attributes of everyday normative mother-daughter relationships (Fingerman, 1997, 2000; Fingerman, 2001; Sutor & Pillemer, 2006), less attention has been given to the attributes and dynamics of turbulent conflicted mother-daughter relationships. However, without an understanding of how daughters express aggression and victimize their older mothers effective interventions to stop and prevent elder abuse cannot be developed.

Nurses have a nonnegotiable ethical responsibility to ensure the safety of their patients, including the elderly, inside and outside the hospital walls (American Nurses Association., 2001). This includes an assessment of the home before discharging the elder to a potentially violent family. However, there is currently limited knowledge on which to assess family safety. An understanding of the relationships involved in elder abuse, specifically the relationship between the elder and family member, and the meaning of this relationship is needed to be able to develop such interventions. Furthermore, while researchers have suggested that elder abuse is not an event; instead it is part of a trajectory of aging family violence (Phillips, 2008), it is unclear how this trajectory develops and later evolves into elder abuse.

This project sought to understand the trajectory of aging family violence, and the evolution into elder abuse. Therefore the purpose of this study was to generate theory to explain the experience of aggression between daughters and their aging mothers, from the perspective of the daughters, describing the factors that influence the development of elder abuse. Through the use of grounded theory methodology, informed by feminism, adult daughters (N =13) who self-identified as being in abusive relationships with their aging mother were interviewed about their perceptions of the relationship, power and control, and aggression. Study results show the importance of perceptions of the past history in present day decision making and behaviors, and

the relationship management strategies daughters found useful in negotiating the aggressive relationship with their aging mother.

The first manuscript describes the importance of gender in the consideration of violence and aggression. The paper reviews the available literature on female-aggression, including the conceptualization of female-aggression and measuring and estimating female-aggression. The paper then reviews the clinical application of the knowledge on female aggression, and suggests relevant assessment tools and questions for practice.

The second manuscript describes the mother-daughter relationship in the context of chronic conflict, from the perspective of the adult daughter, including what ignites aggression in these relationships and the dynamics which sustain the relationship. Daughters described their relationship in the context of perceived childhood injustices. These injustices, including unfulfilled maternal role obligations, enforced power-dependency and creation of an unstable environment, served as the basis for the negative emotional responses daughters experience in the relationship. Daughters unequivocally describe their relationship with their mother as negative and unfulfilling, as they experienced disaffection and mistrust, anger and resentment, powerlessness and estrangement. Despite these feelings, daughters had strong motivations to maintain the relationship including achieving the dream relationship and doing due diligence. Daughters strived to pursue the dream relationship, and validate their mother-daughter bond through love and caring. Daughters also felt an invisible pressure to do their due diligence and remained in the relationship out of obligation to their mother. These subsequently provide motivation for daughters to remain in the relationship despite perceiving they were receiving nothing from it. Together, these created a situation in which daughters perceived that conflict was inevitable.

The third manuscript describes the relationship management strategies daughters in conflicted relationships with their mothers found useful, and how these strategies promoted or prevented elder abuse. Daughters utilized coping strategies and self-protective strategies aimed at decreasing their personal exposure to aggression and emotional distress when interacting with their aging mothers. Though the daughters used the strategies because they serve their personal needs, it often came at the expense of their mother creating an environment in which neglect could occur. Included in these strategies were reciprocal aggression and spiteful aggression, in which daughters purposefully used aggressive acts with the intention of hurting their mother either to reciprocate in an attempt to end the conflict or out of spite and revenge to right past wrongs.

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DISSERTATION PAPER ONE:

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING – CLINICAL APPLICATION SECTION

Gender, Relationships and Elder Abuse: Assessing Aggression in Mother-Daughter Dyads

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Abstract

Our older adult population is growing rapidly and with it comes a national concern for elder abuse. Elder abuse is an intentional act of harm or failure to provide care by a person in a trusted relationship with the elder. One relationship is often overlooked in both research and clinical practice as having special significance for elder abuse – that of the adult daughter-elderly mother. However, recent studies suggest there are gender differences in the use of aggression which challenge our standard assessment of abuse and may be important for assessing mother-daughter relationships. In this article, the authors review the relevant literature on female-to-female aggression, with an emphasis on its application to mother-daughter relationships and elder abuse. Measurement tools are evaluated in light of the state of the science. We conclude with specific recommendations for clinical practice.

Keywords: elder abuse, mother-daughter, family dynamics, aggression

The importance of gender in relationships has been largely ignored in elder abuse (Penhale, 1999; Whittaker, 1995), despite the research on aggression in interpersonal relationships demonstrating gender differences (Archer, 2000; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 1992; Werner & Crick, 1999). Ignoring the gendered experience of aggression not only creates methodological problems in elder abuse such as overlooking gender-based differences in expressions of aggression in measurement, it also limits theory development which affects our ability to design effective interventions. Additionally, a gender-neutral approach to elder abuse overlooks the uniqueness of relationships, such as mother-daughter dyads, thereby providing only superficial information for clinical practice.

Most female victims of elder abuse are mothers and many perpetrators of abuse are daughters (Bond, Penner, & Yellen, 1995; Pierce & Trotta, 1986; Sharon, 1991). This may reflect population demographics as older women outnumber old men (Werner, 2011), and daughters are more likely to be providing caregiving support than sons (Coward & Dwyer, 1990), thus providing increased opportunities for these two groups to interact and for elder abuse and neglect to occur. The high occurrence of abuse in this dyad may also be related to the complex relationship dynamics of mothers and daughters. Mothers have complex intimate life-long relationships with their children, especially daughters (Fingerman, 2001), which may be important contributing factors to the development of elder abuse. To date, research has largely focused on identifying prevalence rates and individual risk factors, which overlooks the fact that violence is a complex gender-based social and political problem (Whittaker, 1995).

Family violence scholars argue research on women-perpetrated aggression against men is operating without a sound conceptual framework (Dobash, et al., 1992). Similarly, elder abuse is lacking a conceptual framework on which to base interpretations of women-perpetrated

aggression towards aging mothers. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to review the literature on female to female aggression, with an emphasis on its application to mother-adult daughter relationships and elder abuse and discuss the meaning this has for clinical practice.

Background

Elder abuse is a public health epidemic, with a 1-year prevalence of 10% among community-dwelling older adults (Acierno et al., 2010) and a prevalence rate of 47% among persons with dementia (Wiglesworth et al., 2010). According to a National Center on Elder Abuse survey, elderly women were more likely to be victims of every type of abuse except abandonment (National Center on Elder Abuse., 1998). Older women are also more likely to experience poor outcomes from elder abuse (Baker et al., 2009; Rovi, Chen, Vega, Johnson, & Mouton, 2009). Compared to controls, victims hospitalized for elder abuse are twice as likely to be older women (Rovi, et al., 2009). Additionally, independent of demographic variables, self-reported physical and verbal abuse has been shown to predict mortality risk among older women participants in the Women's Health Initiative (Baker, et al., 2009).

Perpetrators of elder abuse may include anyone who is in a position of trust with an elder such as a spouse, adult children, and paid caregivers. However, adult children are the most frequent perpetrators (Lachs, Williams, O'Brien, Hurst, & Horwitz, 1997; National Center on Elder Abuse., 1998; Paveza et al., 1992). The few studies that report gender of children are conflicting about whether daughters or sons are the more likely assailants (Bond, et al., 1995; Pierce & Trotta, 1986; Sharon, 1991). However, data from two other areas suggest there is no reason to think the sanctity of the mother-daughter bond prevents daughters from abusing their aging mothers. First, in general, data show that women report showing more aggression in interpersonal relationships than men (Archer, 2000; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006). Second,

risk factors thought to influence adult children to commit elder abuse include substance abuse (Amstadter et al., 2011; Anetzberger, Korbin, & Austin, 1994), mental illness (Acierno, Hernandez-Tejada, Muzzy, & Steve, 2009), financial dependency of the adult child on the elder (Pillemer, 1985; Pillemer, 1986), depression (Coyne, Reichman, & Berbig, 1993; Paveza, et al., 1992), and caregiving burden (Coyne, et al., 1993). Compared to sons, caregiving daughters experience more perceived burden (Bedard et al., 2005; Gallicchio, Siddiqi, Langenberg, & Baumgarten, 2002) and emotional strain (Mui, 1995), while providing more intimate care (Dwyer & Coward, 1991). Therefore, while the victimization of older women by their adult daughters has been understudied, data sources suggest it is, likely, a significant problem.

Daughters as Perpetrators of Elder Abuse: State of the Science

Our understanding of the scope and nature of elder abuse perpetrated by daughters is limited by several factors. First, gender of the perpetrator is often overlooked in studies of elder abuse. If gender is reported in a study, researchers often fail to distinguish gender by relationship (wife vs. daughter) (Amstadter, et al., 2011; Lachs, et al., 1997). Therefore there are no reliable estimates of the number of daughters who are perpetrators of elder abuse. Second, while feminist research has examined ways in which mothers oppress their daughters, there is sparse research on the power relations between daughters and their aging mothers (Macdonald, 1989). There is a scarcity of feminist aging research (Calasanti & Slevin, 2006; Cruikshank, 2009), causing gero-feminist activists to critique the women's movement for being ageist (Macdonald, 1989). By ignoring issues of older women, feminists have made older women invisible in women's studies thereby reinforcing a patriarchal view. Third, which studies of mother-daughter relationships in late-life exist (Fingerman, 2000; Sutor & Pillemer, 2006; Thompson & Walker, 1984), most gerontological literature on mother-adult daughter

relationships examine qualities of normative relationships and overlook non-normative or abusive relationships. As a consequence, the causation and scope of elder abuse cannot be fully understood without a greater understanding of the dynamics of the daughter-aging mother relationship and its impact in elder abuse.

Although focused on aggression by care recipients toward caregivers, one study provides information of relevance to a gendered examination of elder abuse. Phillips (2008) tested a psycho-educative nursing intervention with woman caregivers aimed at decreasing the intensity and frequency of care recipient aggressive behaviors and other abuse-related outcomes. The individualized intervention included pattern identification, advocacy counseling, reframing the caregiving situation and nonconfrontational caregiver strategies. The sample included caregiving wives and daughters age 50 or older who had experienced either verbal or physical aggression from their care recipients. The study design was experimental, with participants being randomly assigned to the intervention (N=38) or control group (N=45) and data collectors were blinded to group assignment. Findings from the study can be used to guide the discussion of areas in which research about gender-related issues in elder abuse is sorely needed.

First, findings showed the intervention was not successful for daughters providing care to mothers though it was for daughters caring for fathers or husbands, demonstrating the different power relationships between adult daughters-mothers and adult daughters-fathers (Phillips, 2008). This was underscored by qualitative data of daughters' descriptions of commitment to caregiving for mothers being driven by a need for their mother's approval which was not true of the daughters providing care to fathers (Phillips, 2008). Literature suggests daughters form an attachment bond to their mothers in infancy, and rarely end their relationships with their mothers despite the quality of the bond (Fingerman, 2001). Most adult daughters maintain close

relationships with their mothers (Fingerman, 2001), however just because a relationship is close doesn't make it satisfying (Shemmings, 2000). Similarly, satisfying relationships can also be filled with ambivalence, or perceived imbalances between rewarding interactions and conflict-filled interactions (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). The implication for elder abuse research is our critical need to identify which adult daughters-aging mother relationships are prone to aggression.

Second, the Phillips' study (2008) found daughters reported the aggression experienced with their fathers was situational whereas aggression experienced with mothers was *not* context dependent. The daughters described the aggression they experienced with their mothers as a normal part of their everyday interaction (Phillips, 2008). This finding is provocative and challenges previous claims that women's aggressive behaviors are context-dependent when, in fact, they may be dependent on aspects of the relationship processes such as communication and commitment. It has been argued that women-perpetrated aggression is driven by responses to situational factors such as heated arguments (Johnson, 1995). Feminist scholars argue women's aggression is in self-defense and in response to male coercive power and aggression (Swan & Snow, 2002; Whittaker, 1995). Neither argument offers an explanation for the female-to-female aggression experienced in adult daughter-aging mother relationships which suggests another area where research is sorely needed.

Third, the Phillips study showed that all but three of the woman caregivers in the sample had experienced receiving physical and verbal aggression from the older adult prior to the caregiving relationship (Phillips, 2008). This finding suggests that elder abuse is likely a trajectory beginning before the elder needs caregiving support, and it is not an isolated event.

This highlights the important role of family dynamics in the development of an abusive caregiving relationship.

Fourth, the findings showed that in the pre-caregiving relationship the mothers displayed significantly more physically aggressive behaviors than husbands/fathers (Phillips, 2008). This challenges stereotypes of older women as feeble and docile (Cruikshank, 2009), and highlights how interpersonal violence takes place in a relationship of two people and is, therefore, a relationship problem. To date research has largely focused on individual characteristics of perpetrator and victims (Neysmith, 1995; Whittaker, 1995). However, research is needed which examines the interactions between the persons in the abusive relationship.

Women's Use of Aggression

Aggression includes any malevolent act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing harm such as physical injury/pain, psychological harm, and material damage or deprivation (Gelles & Straus, 1979). Women use aggression differently than men, especially in same-sex relationships (Glass et al., 2008; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988). An understanding of female-to-female aggression, including types of aggressive acts and motivations for aggression, is necessary for a complete conceptualization of elder abuse. The literature on this topic is reviewed by two age groups: adolescence and adulthood.

Adolescence

Over the past 15 years, research with adolescents has found females are more aggressive than males with their peers when gender-appropriate measures of aggression are used (Crick, Casas, & Mosher, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz, et al., 1988; Xie, Swift, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) hypothesized that children are aggressive towards peers in ways that damage goals that are valued in their social group. Boys use physical

aggression because they are socialized to value physical dominance (Block, 1983). Since females value engaging in more emotionally intimate relationships than males (Block, 1983; Crothers, Field, & Kolbert, 2005; Lagerspetz, et al., 1988), they consequently use the social embeddedness in social attacks (Lagerspetz, et al., 1988; Xie, et al., 2002). Relationally aggressive behaviors include gossiping, exclusion from the social group, isolation, stealing friends and romantic partners, deliberately ignoring someone, threatening to withdraw friendship, and excluding someone from a group by directly instructing them to leave (Crothers, et al., 2005; Xie, et al., 2002). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) described relational aggression as covertly harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of peer relationships, and hypothesized that this is the main form of aggression displayed by females because interpersonal relationships are particularly important to girls. In empirical testing girls were significantly more relationally aggressive than boys (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Females are significantly more likely to use relational aggression, or attacks on peer social relationships, than overt aggression (direct physical or verbal assaults) from preschool to (Crick, et al., 1997), adolescence (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz, et al., 1988), and college (Hess & Hagen, 2006).

This gendered model of aggression suggests that girls engage in their own unique form of aggression toward each other which involves meaningful, purposeful attacks on peer social relationships with consequences that are particularly distressing for the victims and aggressors, with aggressors experiencing high levels of depression, loneliness, isolation and bulimia compared to their non-relationally aggressive peers (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Werner & Crick, 1999). Furthermore, a qualitative examination of adolescent relational aggression suggested that females use indirect means of aggression as a way to assert power and control in relationships while maintaining socially imposed norms of femininity (Crothers, et al., 2005).

Adulthood

Much of what is known about female-to-female aggression in adulthood is found in the nursing literature which has well documented aggressive relationships among nurses in the workplace, also known as horizontal violence, lateral violence, nurse-to-nurse bullying and relational aggression (Dellasega, 2009; Felblinger, 2008; Hutchinson, Vickers, Wilkes, & Jackson, 2010; Longo & Sherman, 2007; McKenna, Smith, Poole, & Coverdale, 2003; Wilson, Diedrich, Phelps, & Choi, 2011). The nursing profession is primarily comprised of females, and in 2003 the nursing profession was 92.1% female (US Department of Labor., 2011). Recent surveys of nurses questioning experiences with bullying in the last six months have found rates from 39.1% to 85% (Rodwell & Demir, 2012; Wilson, et al., 2011).

The nurse-bullying literature suggests that relational aggression continues as the primary form of aggression in adulthood for female peer relationships. From findings of a qualitative study of nurse-to-nurse bullying, a typology of bullying was developed which includes personal attacks, acts aimed to erode professional competence and reputation, and attacks through work roles and tasks (Hutchinson, et al., 2010). Participants described personal attacks as including both socially destructive behaviors, such as gossiping and exclusion, as well as verbal assaults, such as threats and insults (Hutchinson, et al., 2010). This is similar to other findings which reported that nurses most often experienced socially and professionally destructive attacks from their peers displaying behaviors that denote the form of covertly aggressive acts including rumor spreading, undervaluing others, failing to provide support and supervision, being emotional neglectful and blocking others' learning opportunities (McKenna, et al., 2003). One third of the sample also experienced verbal assault including humiliating and rude comments and unwarranted criticisms (McKenna, et al., 2003). Only 2% of the sample had experienced

physical aggression, with acts including physical intimidation, property damage, sexual harassment involving physical contact, physical assault requiring no medical intervention, and stalking (McKenna, et al., 2003). These findings are consistent with the definition of relational aggression. That is nurses used social attacks to harm peers rather than physical acts. Thus in adulthood women may primarily use relational aggression over physical aggression like in childhood.

Studies from these two age periods have implications for elder abuse. Specifically, current estimates of elder abuse prevalence may fail to measure female aggression by focusing on physical acts. This may explain the controversy about whether sons or daughters are more frequent perpetrators of elder abuse.

Measuring and Estimating Female Perpetrated Aggression

The Conflict Tactics Scale is the most widely used tool in family violence research (Straus, 2012). A modified version is frequently used to measure elder abuse in research though it has been found to not be useful in detecting clinically significant elder abuse (Cooper, Maxmin, Selwood, Blanchard, & Livingston, 2009). The Conflict Tactics Scale conceptualizes aggression, and therefore measures aggression, as direct acts which occur during conflicts. However, the focus of the scale is inconsistent with the literature on relational aggression, which describes female aggression as purposeful indirect acts. Additionally, this is in contrast to Phillips (2008) findings which suggest aggression between mothers and daughters was not context dependent. Therefore by only measuring aggression as a function of conflict the Conflict Tactics Scale ignores that aggression may be embedded in relationship processes and communication styles for mothers and daughters and can occur without prompting. Consequently existing research does not capture the whole picture of female aggression in elder abuse. Leaving

out gender-specific acts of aggression affects our ability to effectively assess for and intervene in elder abuse.

To date, one tool measures female-perpetrated aggression. The Danger Assessment-Revised was developed to measure risk of re-assault in female-to-female aggression among same-sex couples (Glass, et al., 2008). The items on the Danger Assessment-Revised were based on an existing validated tool measuring risk in heterosexual couples. The tool was developed through a mixed methods approach, using focus groups and individual interviews of perpetrators and victims to develop the concepts pertaining to female-committed aggression. The revised tool retained 8 of the 20 original items used with heterosexual couples and added 10 items central to the experiences in abusive female same-sex relationships (Glass, et al., 2008). Compared to the original tool, on the Danger Assessment-Revised there are fewer items asking about overt acts (choking, beating, threatening to kill you) and more items about manipulation and fear (isolation, controlling spirituality, threatening a pet, stalking). The Danger Assessment-Revised is consistent with the literature on relational aggression. Additionally, this tool provides insight that there are unique factors in woman-to-woman aggression compared to male-to-woman aggression. However, it is yet unknown if these factors are only unique to female same-sex relationships or if they apply in other female intimate relationships such as mothers and daughters.

Clinical Application

Based on this review, the context-dependent conflict-based assessment of elder abuse is not sufficient when screening mother-daughter dyads. Fulmer (2004) has completed a comprehensive review of the currently available screening and assessment tools for elder abuse across a variety of clinical settings, but does not discuss screening in specific relationship types

such as mothers and daughters. Given the literature on female aggression, one assessment tool with the most potential for use in mother-daughter dyads is the H.A.L.F (Health Status, Attitudes Toward Aging, Living Arrangements, Finances). The H.A.L.F. is based on the argument that abuse is best understood as a symptom of family dynamics (Ferguson & Beck, 1983). Though this tool is not gender-specific, it does take into account the contextual factors surrounding conflict and the potential family processes involved in abuse that are important considerations for mother-daughter dyads. The questions in each of the four sections are rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale including “almost always”, “some of the time”, and “never”, with questions for both the older adult and caregiver (Ferguson & Beck, 1983). The H.A.L.F. is intended for use in the clinical setting, but does not appear to be used by researchers or clinicians as it has not been published on since. However, this tool is exceptional in that it conceptualizes abuse as a relationship dynamic, not a product of individual characteristics, though it needs to be updated in light of current literature.

Based on the literature review and the questions in the H.A.L.F instrument some appropriate assessment questions for elder abuse among mother-daughters in the clinical setting are suggested (Table 1). The nurse should screen both the mother and the daughter separately, in a non-confrontational style using active listening. The conversation can begin by explaining that aging can present challenges for parent-child relationships and it is important both the parent and child get their needs met. The assessment should continue with questions on relationship history, power and control, communication styles and conflict-resolution strategies which will provide insight into the current level of aggression and the potential to escalate to elder abuse. It is especially important that the nurse should not be afraid to ask direct questions about aggression. The dyad’s responses should be considered in light of the mother’s current health status and

probable disease trajectory. It is ideal to identify not only relationships experiencing abuse, but also turbulent relationships with potential to evolve into elder abuse so that appropriate prevention measures can be taken. An appropriate intervention may include encouraging the dyad to seek counseling to improve their communication skills. Furthermore, dyads may benefit from assistance in identifying other sources of support such as home care services or long-term care facilities. It is important for the nurse to acknowledge that in some situations, the best outcome will be obtained by terminating the caregiving relation and seeking other resources and it is crucially important to be supportive and nonjudgmental of a caregiver who makes this decision.

Discussion

Current clinical practice for assessing elder abuse tends to focus on assessment of outcomes such as bruises, fractures, contractures and neglected state. Based on this review the current assessment method is not sufficient as women are not likely to use physical acts which produce injuries (McKenna, et al., 2003; Werner & Crick, 1999). This is not to say women never commit physically abusive acts because they do (Ziminski, Wiglesworth, Austin, Phillips, & Mosqueda, 2013), but it is not their primary form of aggression. Therefore current clinical practice is ignoring an entire group of at-risk individuals, mother-daughter dyads, by focusing on physical abuse outcomes. Additionally, elder abuse assessment needs to shift from an outcome-based strategy to one which identifies at-risk dyads so that appropriate prevention strategies can be taken.

Researchers have largely agreed on a unifying definition of elder abuse set forth by the National Research Council which was purposely developed by the council to be separate from statutory language. The Council defines elder abuse as intentional acts by a person in a trust

relationship which causes harm or risk of harm to an elder or failure to satisfy an elder's basic need (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003). With the definition, the Council urged researchers to measure the continuum of abuse, including conduct which 'could' amount to abuse (Bonnie & Wallace, 2003). Based on this review it is clear that there are gender differences in the expression of aggression and these gender differences are not being captured in elder abuse. In addition to the recommendation made by the Council, it is important to expand our awareness of risk to include gender-specific behaviors.

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Table 1. Assessment Questions for Mother-Daughter Dyads

Questions for Mothers

- What expectations do you have for yourself as you age?
- What expectations do you have for your daughter as you age?
- Who makes the decisions regarding your health care? Who decides how you spend your time?
- What are typical disagreements you have with your daughter?
- How do arguments with your daughter usually end? Who usually wins arguments?
- What other options do you have for help and assistance?
- Do you wish you had another living situation?

Questions for Daughters

- How would you characterize your relationship with your mother?
- What expectations do you have for your mother as she ages?
- What do you view as your role in assisting your mother as she continues to age? What would you be comfortable helping her with? What would you not be comfortable helping with?
- What motivates you to assist your aging mother?
- What are typical disagreements you have with your mother?
- How do arguments with your mother usually end? Who usually wins arguments?
- Do you say or do things in arguing with your mother that you wouldn't normally say to someone else?
- What do you do to push your mother's buttons?
- What do you do to get your way with your mother?
- Do you feel your mother owes you more than you owe her?
- Do you often find yourself angry with your mother?

Dissertation Paper 2: The Gerontologist

Daughters' Descriptions of Their Mother-Daughter Relationship in the Context of Chronic Conflict

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to describe, from the perspective of the adult daughter, the mother-daughter relationship in the context of chronic conflict, focusing on the background of the conflict, factors that ignite hostility and the dynamics which sustain the relationship.

Design and Methods: Grounded theory methodology was used. An online recruitment strategy was used to identify a sample of adult daughters (N=13), age 18 years and older, who self-identified as having an abusive relationship with aging mother, age 60 and older. Data collection was completed through semi-structured telephone interviews with the adult daughters.

Results: Daughters framed their relationship around their perceptions of *past childhood injustices*. These injustices invoked in the present strong negative *emotions*. Daughters had equally strong *motivations* for remaining the relationship, driven by a desire to reconcile their negative experience through *seeking validation* and *futile-hoping* as well as a sense of obligation to *do due diligence*. Together these factors created an environment of *inevitable confrontation* and a relationship defined by chronic conflict developed.

Implications: Findings from the study provide theoretical insights to the conceptualization of aggression, power relationships between adult daughters and aging mothers, as well as the development of elder abuse. Furthermore, the findings have practical relevance as they suggest targeted areas for assessing safety as well as potential opportunities for interventions.

The longest relationship most daughters have is with their mother. Daughters form an attachment bond to their mothers in infancy, and daughters rarely end their relationships with their mothers despite the quality of the bond (Fingerman, 2001). Most adult daughters maintain close relationships with their mothers (Fingerman, 2001). Daughters spend more time providing aid and caregiving support to their mothers than sons (Coward & Dwyer, 1990; Dwyer & Coward, 1991). When asked to choose among adult children, aging-mothers preferentially chose their daughters over their sons as a source of emotional closeness and support (Suito & Pillemer, 2006). Given the likelihood daughters will become caregivers to their mothers, and the current focus on understanding the concepts of family cohesion and solidarity in intergenerational relationships in later life (Silverstein, Conroy, & Gans, 2012), the unique dynamics of this long and enduring relationship is of particular importance to gerontologists.

Most studies on adult daughter-mother relationships focus on normative relationships rather than explicitly problematic ones (Blieszner, Usita, & Mancini, 1996; Bojczyk, Lehan, McWey, Melson, & Kaufman, 2011; Fingerman, 2000; Pillemer, Suito, Pardo, & Henderson, 2010; Walker & Thompson, 1983). Yet, there are a growing number of studies suggesting there is a subset of mothers and daughters who experience primarily conflicted relationships. These “troubled” dyads have appeared in studies on normative relationships (Blieszner, et al., 1996; Fingerman, 1997), and have been explained away in the discussion sections as representing a distinct but small group of relationships. However, it is possible these “troubled” relationships are actually representative of a fairly common mother-daughter relationship type.

Blieszner and colleagues (1996), in a study of normative mother-daughter relationships, interviewed 15 elderly mothers and mentioned in the analysis a small group of “troubled”

relationships defined by major chronic conflict which was attributed to the daughters' personal problems. Fingerman (1997), in a study of middle-aged daughters' perceptions of continuity and change in their relationship with their mothers (N= 42), clearly identified an "unhappy subgroup" of daughters among her sample. These "unhappy" daughters held resentments about the way they were parented, and did not view their relationships as ones characterized by continuities and change as did the other women. Fingerman (1997) maintained that the "unhappy subgroup" represented a clear typology, though through extensive analysis of the data no other typologies could be identified. Worth noting, is that these "unhappy" daughters were as likely as the others to report providing help to their mothers, demonstrating that in general, despite experiencing resentment and negative emotions, daughters do not end their relationships with their mothers.

As most intergenerational family research is based on post-modernist and feminist ideologies of pluralism, which recognizes the diversity in structures of families and the multiple roles family members can play, it is logical to assume that there are diversities among types of relationships within families. Thus, while there may be families in which the overall experience of members is positive there can also be families in which the overall experience of one or more members is negative. Two national studies of intergenerational solidarity (one in America and one in the Netherlands) demonstrate this point. Both studies developed typologies of adult child-parent relationships, which were conceptually similar and included diverse types of family experiences (Silverstein, Bengtson, & Lawton, 1997; van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006), demonstrating the heterogeneous nature of family relationships.

For a complete understanding of intergenerational family life it is important to give due attention to all types of family experiences, from overall positive ones to ones defined by

conflict. Only focusing on “normative” mother-daughter relationships, those characterized by affection, support, and intimacy, creates a bias that suggests only these characteristics contribute to caregiving, cohesion and solidarity in later-life. However, this approach ignores the equal role that characteristics such as aggression, resentment, and jealousy may also play. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to describe, from the perspective of the adult daughter, the mother-daughter relationship in the context of chronic conflict, focusing on the background of the conflict, factors that ignite hostility and the dynamics which sustain the relationship.

Methods

The guiding principles of grounded theory (GT), informed by feminism, were used to achieve the study purpose. GT is a method of developing theory which is grounded in data on a specific phenomenon (Glaser & Strauss, 1977). Symbolic interactionism, a major tenant of GT, gives importance to histories, which are streams of actions in which people have been interacting over time, in consideration of present-day behaviors (Charon, 2004). Since the mother-daughter relationship is the longest relationship for most women, it is important to consider how the relationship history contributes to present day dynamics. Feminism acknowledges the importance of women’s voices in the development of knowledge (Campbell & Wasco, 2000), and this study allowed adult daughters to share their personal stories and discuss the unique contextual factors and power dynamics which affected their relationship.

Procedures

Study procedures were approved by the UCLA IRB. An internet-based recruitment strategy was used, and daughters were solicited through advertisements posted on topical blogs and websites (caregiving, women’s health, etc.) as well as classified-type websites.

Advertisements began with the question: “Are you in an abusive relationship with your aging mother?” Potential participants were able to contact the PI with the email address provided in the advertisement or by submitting an interest form on the study website (www.elderabuseresearch.org). Eligibility screening and scheduling of the interview was completed by email. All interviews were completed by phone using a third party conference calling agency, which provided security and privacy features. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Daughters were compensated \$40 for their time.

The sample participated in individual interviews. In GT, data elicitation is done with open ended questions that become more focused as the simultaneous data collection and analysis progresses (Charmaz, 2006). Personal semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the daughters to describe their experiences of being a daughter in a chronically conflicted relationship. As a result, rich in-depth data that might have been overlooked and lost through quantitative measurements were gathered about the relationship and a full description of these conflicted relationships was obtained. The concepts of attachment, ambivalence, power, aggression and social support informed the design of the semi-structured interview. From the literature review, these concepts emerged as important and relevant to the phenomenon but not well understood in mother-adult daughter relationships experiencing conflict. Therefore, these concepts were used to shape the interview because they were identified as pieces of missing information that were needed to answer the research question (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The follow-up questions and probes are intended to elicit rich detail while exploring the participants’ answers (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Additionally, at the end of the interview daughters were asked to complete a brief demographic form.

Sample

The sample included daughters, age 18 years and older, who self-identified as having an abusive relationship with their biological mother, age 60 and older. Additional inclusion criteria were ability to participate in a 1-2 hour interview in English and conducted via telephone. The final sample included 13 women aged 23-57 years (mean 43.6) who spoke about their relationship with their aging mothers aged 60-81 years (mean 70.5). The daughters were located in major cities in California, Pennsylvania and New York. The final sample was ethnically diverse including 8 Caucasian daughters, 3 African American daughters, 1 Latina daughter and 1 Pakistani daughter. The sample was also educationally diverse with backgrounds ranging from some high school to multiple graduate degrees, with the majority having completed at least some college coursework. None of the daughters were currently living with their mother. Some of the daughters were in caregiving roles and others expected to be the primary caregiver when their mother needed caregiving support. The average duration of the interview was 81.9 minutes (range 49-135 minutes).

Analysis

Data analysis was completed using constant comparative analysis, with input from the committee members. In constant comparative analysis the researcher codes and analyzes, by comparing data across and within interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Data was hand-coded, starting with line-by-line coding to capture and condense meanings and actions as they were discovered in participants' interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Frequent and significant codes were termed "focused codes" and used to form categories and subcategories. During this process the researcher wrote self-reflexive memos which detailed the logic behind decisions and contained

ideas about the properties and dimensions of the categories, and the relationship among codes (Lempert, 2010). The process of self-reflexive memo-writing increases audibility, a technique used to establish “validity” in qualitative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It also helps to ground the study in the experience of the women establishing adequacy, a criterion of validity in feminist methods (Hall & Stevens, 1991). As the analysis advanced, theoretical coding was used to define the subcategories, properties, and dimensions (Charmaz, 2006). Consistent with grounded theory methodology, theoretical sampling was used to modify the interview guide to purposely sample data related to the emerging categories (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Data collection continued until saturation was met, when the concepts were so fully defined the researchers could recognize an instance of ‘it’ when they encounter it in the data (Glaser, 1978).

Results

Based on the perspectives of these adult daughters, their relationship with their mothers was defined by chronic conflict and they felt **confrontation** was an inevitable outcome (Figure 1). Daughters framed the current relationship within their **perceptions of past childhood injustices** which had been perpetrated against them by their mothers. These past childhood injustices evoked, in the present, strong **emotions** which affected their behavior during current interactions and set the hostile tone of the relationship. Thus currently hostile interactions were rooted in daughters’ perceptions of childhood events. Daughters also had strong **motivations** for maintaining their relationships with their mothers which included a desire to **pursue the dream relationship**, and a sense of obligation to **do due diligence**.

Perceptions of Past Childhood Injustices

Daughters framed their relationship with their mother around their perceptions of childhood injustices. Daughters maintained their pasts were characterized by multiple childhood injustices they blamed on their mothers. Childhood injustices were tied to entitlements which daughters felt they were owed as children. As these entitlements were not fulfilled, daughters felt they had been unfairly or cruelly treated by mothers. Some failures were deemed to be unjust on their face, meaning they were viewed as inherently wrong. Others were deemed to be wrong because they represented treatment that was different from treatment others received. At the core of these narratives was an enumeration of what the mothers had done that the daughters perceived to be wrong.

Unfulfilled maternal role obligations. Unfulfilled maternal role obligations included the ways in which daughters felt their mothers did not live up to their expectations of what a ‘proper’ mother should do. These daughters felt mothers have an obligation and a responsibility to fulfill specific roles such as being a confidant, source of love and support, and source of knowledge about being a woman. These daughters felt cheated that they missed out on the knowledge, love and support their mothers should have given them. For example,

I wanted her to make dinner if I was home. I wanted her to help me with my homework if I needed help. I wanted her to take an interest in what I was doing in school or my extracurriculars. [Participant #5]

While these daughters felt the basic responsibility of a mother was to love their daughters, the daughters spoke of how they had never heard their mother say “I love you”. Daughters also described their tireless efforts of trying to do ‘the right thing’ to make their mothers happy so that they could win them over. Daughters did a variety of things to try to please their mother and gain their affection, such as cleaning the house or caring for other family members:

I don't think my mom really loved us at all. I think we were burdens. She let us know that a lot. She let us know you're here because of a failed condom. I never really felt loved by her at all, but for a long time I thought if I could just do the right thing, say the right thing, make the right joke, you know, make her laugh, make her happy, that she'd start loving me. [Participant #7]

As illustrated by this daughter, daughters' perceptions of being unloved were often reinforced by the mother's failure to display physical affection: "I would always hug my father. My mother never wanted to be hugged, never wanted to be kissed, just not warm. She was not warm." [Participant #10]

Daughters also felt mothers should take an active interest in their children and work to maintain a sense of family cohesion. Many daughters described their discontent with having to 'be the mother' for their younger siblings. Additionally, daughters recalled how their mothers distanced themselves from the children and did not do 'normal' mother things such as putting them to bed, baking cookies or making family dinners:

She would cook dinner every now and then, but it was just like we -- the kids would eat in one room, and my mom was in her room, either working with paperwork, or with one of her boyfriends at the time... There was never like a group family dinner. It was always like she was too busy to be bothered with her own children. [Participant #11]

Daughters' beliefs about what constituted a 'normal' mother-daughter relationship were based on their observations of their friends' relationships with their mothers and on what they observed in television programs. After these daughters reached early adulthood, their beliefs about what constituted a "normal" mother-daughter relationship were further reinforced by their own personal experiences with motherhood. One daughter explained the regret she felt when she saw her friends having relationships with their mothers:

I missed out on doing things with my mother, and I still hear it now, with certain associates how they -- the things they do with their mother. They go out and they shop, and they go to restaurants ... They chit-chat and I just always felt like I missed out on

having a relationship with my mother, being able to come to her and tell her what's bothering me, and get, some type of support, some type of comfort, some type of relief. [Participant #4]

Enforced power-dependency. The second wrong daughters perceived mothers had committed was enforcing a power-dependence which was done repeatedly in situations in which the mothers demonstrated they had all power and the daughter had none. Even from very young ages daughters recalled their mothers making it a point to demonstrate they held power over them. One way mothers exerted their power was by invoking the daughters' guilt over the mother performing mundane and routine maternal caregiving activities. Mothers projected that performance of the everyday maternal role was not a duty, but a gift, and that they didn't *have* to do anything for the daughter, which reinforced daughters' sense of powerlessness and mothers' power:

If she would cook for us, or if she would buy us something new, she would make us feel bad about it. Like we didn't deserve it, like she was going out of her way or like we were taking something from her. [Participant #13]

Another way mothers demonstrated their power was through physical and verbal abuse: "When we were younger, if we showed any kind of anger towards her, she would beat us with her frying pan, or a shoe, or whatever she could use as a weapon." [Participant #7]

Mothers also demonstrated their power by enforcing family secrets. Because of this daughters felt they were unable to discuss their home life with anyone, which created a sense of isolation and reinforced the daughters' feelings of powerlessness. When asked if she ever sought help with the abuse as a child one daughter explained: "No. No, because I was taught that you keep -- anything that goes on in the family stays with it. Anything that goes on behind closed doors, you keep it behind closed doors." [Participant #4]

Creation of an unstable environment. Daughters described their childhood relationship with their mother as one characterized by instability in which their mothers' actions created an unstable environment. The instability came from conflicting views of their mother including the good mother the public saw and the aggressive mother they knew in private family life. As children, daughters found their mothers' paradoxical behaviors to be confusing and frustrating. One daughter described the contrast between the warm loving woman she saw with the neighbors and the cold distant mother she experienced as "crazy-making". The instability in their mothers' behavior intensified feelings of powerlessness and isolation as daughters who knew the truth were taught to uphold the family image, as explained by this daughter:

They made friends with other people that they met, but they didn't know us all that well, and when they came over we all had to put on a face. So, I didn't feel close to anybody quite frankly. I felt like everything was very false. And a lot of it came because if she didn't like how we acted when guests came over, she would beat us. [Participant #6]

Present-day Emotional Experience

Based on the perceptions of the past relationship, daughters experience certain strong emotions that formed the context in which their present day interactions with their mother occurred.

Hostility. Daughters described feelings of hostility, which contributed to the aggressive nature of their relationship. Daughters perceived that both they and their mothers are brimming with hostility and that set the stage for their interactions. Daughters entered every interaction with their mother expecting there would be a confrontation. Daughters described how it was just natural to enter interactions already hostile, which would in turn led to fights and arguments, as highlighted in the following statements: "I mean it's because we do fight so much. It's more natural to start off as aggressive." [Participant #5]

Disaffection and mistrust. Daughters experienced a lack of warmth and trust in their relationship with their mothers. Daughters felt this disaffection began in childhood and had persisted throughout the relationship. One daughter reflected on her lifetime with her mother: “I mean now, more than ever, it’s very apparent that she does not care about me. At least the way that I need her to; at least the way I think a mother is supposed to.”[Participant #9]

Daughters also described how they couldn’t and still didn’t trust their mother. The instability daughters experienced as children intensified the lack of trust as explained by the following daughter:

She's got - things have gotten a little better as we've gotten older, but I really don't trust her. I just don't trust her. I mean, it relates back to when I was little and she would show her - you know, one way she was like the ultimate hostess everybody loved her ...but then as soon as the guests were gone she, she's just mad.[Participant #6]

Anger and resentment. These daughters described a lifetime’s worth of anger and resentment about their perceived childhood injustices. Even though some daughters were grandmothers themselves they still expressed anger about how their mother failed them as children. Daughters seemed to know they were holding grudges and many had sought help through therapy; however none of the daughters had been able to release her anger and resentment. Many were aware their feelings affected their abilities to interact positively with their mothers as explained by this daughter:

I have that much resentment. I love my mom and I know she’s done a lot for me... but I really cannot get past -- I have a lot of resentment in me toward my mother. And I think that’s why we don't get along. Because I won’t let it go and I don't know how to let it go. [Participant #11]

Resentment fueled daughters' hostility in present interactions with their mothers. It was common for daughters to bring up old hurts and grudges in current fights with their mothers, as highlighted by this daughter: "I would constantly bring up that she left my father and I ... which she also does not like to hear. In fact, she asked me when am I ever going to stop blaming her for that." [Participant #9]

Powerlessness. Daughters expressed that the power position mothers held had not disappeared as the daughters grew older and were less dependent on their mother for instrumental support. In their adulthood, daughters felt their aging mothers still held power over them to influence their decisions and behaviors, and their mother could still invoke feelings of powerlessness. Daughters described how in their present day relationship their mother still could successfully order them to do something (like clean or visit a relative) and their mother could still make unilateral decisions in the relationship. One daughter explained how, even as an adult, she was forced to oblige her mother:

Nothing could ever be done, but if it was needed like could you drive me here, can you drive me there, I need a ride, can you do this, can you do that... It was like I had to stop what I was doing and do it... [Participant #10]

Estrangement. As a result of the failed maternal role obligations, daughters often felt detached from their mothers. Daughters were clear that the title of "Mother" was earned by actually 'mothering'. Because daughters felt their mothers had failed to "mother" they viewed the woman they were describing as a mother only through an accident of birth. For example, "She says she's my mother but in my mind... she hasn't earned that title." [Participant #1]

Accordingly, as daughters felt their mothers didn't 'earn' the title it was not uncommon for daughters, of their own choosing, to refer to their mothers by their first names, as explained by this daughter whose mother had passed away in the last year:

The only time I ever called her mom was when we were in a battle royale. It was like, mom or mommy. Everybody thought she was my stepmother... She was my mom, but I never called her mom. I called her by her first name, but dad was always dad or daddy. And my girlfriends found that very odd. I just said, "She's not my mom. I mean she's my mom, but technically she's not a mom. [Participant #10]

In their adulthood daughters struggled to redefine their relationship since they did not view their mother as a mother, and worked to identify what role their mother was actually filling. For example, this daughter thought of her mother as a godmother:

Believe it or not, I see her more as my godmother... It's like my children are her grandchildren, but I'm not her child... I kind of feel like I'm a really close friend of hers who has children and she really loves my children. So, she's like their godparent. [Participant #11]

Motivations for Maintaining the Relationship

Despite daughters' experiences of their mother-daughter relationships as negative and unfulfilling they remained in the relationships. Daughters were motivated to sustain the relationships to gain their mothers' love and validation and from a sense of obligation.

Pursuing the dream. One reason daughters remained in the relationship with their mothers was their desire to achieve the dream of the perfect relationship. Daughters wanted to resolve their negative feelings. The specific things daughters wished for included validation of their past injustices and authentication of their relationship with love and affection (futile-hoping). These desires encouraged daughters to continue interacting with their mothers.

Seeking validation. Seeking validation was the daughters' desire for their mothers to acknowledge that childhood events actually happened as the daughter perceived them – full of injustices. Daughters experienced anger and resentment over their past childhood injustices, and they wanted their mothers to validate these feelings. Daughters experienced additional anger when their mothers would not acknowledge the role they had in creating the injustices, or even acknowledge events in the past had occurred at all. As these daughters described:

...if I talk to my mother about going to see my therapist, if I talk about how I suffer from depression, if I talk about things like that, that's always my father's side of the family. "Well, you know your father's side of the family, they deal with that." ... There will never be any acceptance that anything she did caused the issues - the emotional issues - that I deal with to this day. Never! [Participant #12]

She's not senile, but there have been times when I'll tell her some story from my growing up years, and her reaction is, "You're crazy. That never happened." It's like, okay, then I must have a really good imagination, you know? ... What galls me is if I tell her something happened and she thinks I'm making it up. That galls me. [Participant #1]

Daughters continually searched for validation from their mothers despite failed attempts. The continual search provided motivation for the relationship to continue. It appeared for many the search for validation would never cease because in the few instances in which mothers had offered admissions of guilt, the daughters rejected the admission as not enough.

She said, "As a child, you were very rambunctious." And she said, "You were -- you were smart. You were very smart at a young age," she said, "I don't know. Me not understanding children and maybe how I was raised, I would always try to restrain you." And I said, "What do you mean, restrain?" She said, "Like I would spank your legs and tell you to be still, tell you to sit, because I didn't know how to deal with you." So, that was a -- you know, it was a little breakthrough, but I couldn't get anything -- I couldn't get anything else from her after that. [Participant #4]

Futile-hoping. Futile-hoping was the daughters' search for motherly love, despite a lifetime of control, lack of warmth, and resentment. To stay in the relationship, daughters

believed, or needed to believe, that one day they would have a moment which authenticated their mother-daughter bond. Even though based on their history there was no reason to believe their mothers were capable of showing them love, daughters still searched for their mothers' love and affection. For example, one daughter went so far as to offer to provide care to her dying mother because she thought that was a way they might bond.

I offered her help the last few times -- I said, "When you're ready." She said "I'm not going to kick the bucket." And she was -- you know, and I really didn't want to, but I was so invested in seeing her -- having some time with her where she didn't have her power, where I could speak with her, and love her. [Participant #8]

The daughters kept hoping for any displays of concern by their mothers. Daughters spoke of how their mothers never called them to check on them despite lengthy periods of no contact, but they still hoped one day she would make the effort. Daughters also hoped mothers would make more of an effort to have meaningful interactions in person. For example:

I would go over to visit, I mean literally to visit, and while I was there she'd say, "Oh, can you do..." and I understand she can't do some things. I'm being more accepting of her asking as I get older...it's like I don't want to be the maid. I want to be the company, you know?[Participant #1]

Regardless of all the failed attempts and times they had been let-down by their mothers daughters continued to futilely hold out hope, as best explained by this daughter:

But, I think there's something instinctual in us that wants to keep coming back to our moms until they love us the way we need them to love us. And so I understand that my mom can't do that but I still want her, on some level, to be...a good person or to be the person I wanted her to be. Or be the person that I thought she could be. Or be the person that I hoped - that's probably the best word - hoped that she could be. [Participant #12]

Doing due diligence. Daughters were also motivated to continue on in their mother-daughter relationship because they felt obligated to do their due diligence. Feeling obligated

spurred one daughter to view having a relationship with her mother was like “doing volunteer work”. One source of obligation came from what daughters perceived as societal expectations and norms for institution of mother-daughterhood. One daughter explained how getting to ‘like’ your mother was a luxury, “Yeah, some people had the luxury of actually liking their mother-- I never liked her. The obligation to love her has always been present and there’s nothing but guilt there.”[Participant #8]

Another daughter reflected on her perceived obligation to visit:

I'm sure she'd like me to go over and visit her more often, but I don't drive... But you know, I think I feel guilty because I don't go see her as often "as I should," but it's like according to who?[Participant #1]

Daughters had also been taught by their parents that they had an obligation to their mother: “She would use the words, ‘We’re your family. Who’s going to take care of you if you don’t stay with your family?’ She always used that word [family] a lot.” [Participant #13]

Some daughters felt obligated to their mother due to their religious and cultural upbringing:

I mean, even though I'm not religious, you're raised in the Jewish religion. Like in any religion... you're supposed to respect your elders whether or not it's right or wrong.... I see all these old people, and there is nobody there for them, and I think just doing the right thing as the daughter, in whoever's higher eyes it is, so to speak, I was brought up to do the right thing.[Participant #10]

Lastly, daughters felt the obligation was hardwired into their genetic code, because they shared blood with their mother:

So, but because she's my mom she can say and do whatever and I will, you know, try to talk to her again later. You know, things that I wouldn't bother with other people I wasn't

blood related to. [Participant #6]

Inevitable Confrontation

Daughters described conflict as a normal part of their everyday relationship with their mothers. Conflict was not a result of a provocation or an event; it was the primary interaction mode, grounded in the past experiences and present emotions. Though daughters experienced strong negative emotions regarding the relationship they experienced similarly strong motivations for remaining, creating a negative reinforcement cycle (Homans, 1958). The motivations to remain prevented the daughters from gaining distance in order to de-escalate the situation. As daughters did not leave, there is no motivation for mothers to change their behavior as they were losing nothing in their position of power. This negative reinforcement cycle set up a situation in which confrontation was inevitable and conflict was chronic.

Discussion

These results represent daughters' perceptions of factors influencing their present day relationship with their mother. Daughters gave great importance to perceptions of their childhood, and interpreted present day interactions on the basis of the status quo established in childhood. Perceived childhood injustices were prominent in the daughters' minds as they discussed their mother-daughter relationships, and the past perceptions affected the ways they thought, felt and responded to their mothers. Some support for this can be found in the work of Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) who developed the concept of time-perspective to describe the way individuals assign temporal frames to experiences. Temporal frames help give meaning to those events. Furthermore, they argued that a bias towards one time-perspective, such as the past, can influence judgments, behaviors and decisions (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Interestingly, a past-

negative perspective, defined as negative or aversive view of the past, is strongly related to aggression (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). The outcome of the past-framing for these daughters was an increased level of hostility and a perception that confrontation was inevitable.

Daughters responded to the study advertisement because they believed they were in an abusive relationship with their aging mother. From their perspective, they were the victim of ongoing chronic abuse and aggression stemming from childhood. In a study of daughters providing care to aged-parents in the context of past child abuse Wuest (2010) described the properties of the past abusive relationship as including: emotional distance, feelings of ‘never good enough’, unpredictability, and control enforced by manipulation and fear. Wuest’s (2010) description is conceptually similar to the perceived childhood injustices, providing evidence of fittingness and validity (Dey, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Feminists claim older women’s disadvantage is socially constructed based on society’s views of “older” and “women” (Cruikshank, 2003; Whittaker, 1995), and it is unclear how this disadvantage translates into family life. These daughters perceived they were taught to be in power dependent roles to their mothers in childhood and that this position continued into present family life. In adulthood, daughters did not question the power structure, suggesting they viewed their mother as having legitimate power, or the right to the dominating power role (Raven & French, 1958). Furthermore, daughters viewed their mothers’ sources of power to include both affective and material resources, expert knowledge, as well as coercion and violence. While daughters did provide some assistance to their mothers, such as household chores or making healthcare appointments, daughters were specifically clear they provided minimal *voluntary* assistance and assistance was mainly non-financial. Therefore in private family life, adult

daughters viewed their mothers to have the power advantage and access to certain resources, thereby leaving daughters at a disadvantage.

Though daughters responded to the research advertisement because they believed they were the victim in abusive relationships with their aging mothers, in their discussions of their present day relationship it was apparent the abuse had become bidirectional. While literature suggests all forms of interpersonal aggression are deeply rooted in power and control (Johnson, 2006; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Stets & Burke, 2005), the debate in elder abuse has been who holds the power the adult child or aging parent. Some have suggested the root of elder abuse lies in the dependency of the adult child abuser on the aging parent for the exchange of goods and resources such as financing and housing (Pillemer, 2005). These findings do support the argument that it is the older adult who holds the power in the relationship; however the dependency of the adult child is not always or only financial, but includes affective resources such as love, validation and independence in decision making.

Daughters were motivated to remain in the relationship due to validation seeking and futile-hoping. As their mother-daughter relationships were defined by lack of warmth and trust and lack of identification, the desire to pursue the dream relationship was likely driven by their attachment styles. This is similar to results found by Phillips (2008), who tested a psycho-educative nursing intervention with woman caregivers aimed at decreasing the intensity and frequency of care recipient aggressive behaviors and other abuse related outcomes. In her sample, caregiving daughters described their commitment to caregiving stemmed from a desire to gain their mother's approval. Attachment in mother-daughter relationships is a theoretical concept defined as a daughter's emotional bond with or need to be close to her mother (Boyd,

1990), which can lead to feelings of closeness and security (Ainsworth, 1989; Cicirelli, 1993), and continues throughout the lifespan (Ainsworth, 1989; Cicirelli, 1983, 1993). The behaviors driven by the daughters' need for their mothers' love and validation may be an attempt to reconcile an insecure-attachment.

Though there were goals motivating daughters to continue in the relationship with their mother, the daughters perceived that they received no benefits from doing so. This is interesting as social exchange theory, on which much of the current work on intergenerational relationships is based, suggests that when a power imbalance occurs the disadvantaged member exits the relationship (Homans, 1958). However, despite the apparent power imbalance daughters remained in the relationship. One explanation for this may be found in Goffman's (1999) work on teams, in which he suggests that teams form out of shared common goals and interests with members choosing to participate and having the ability to leave when the team no longer supports their interest. Goffman (1999) notes one exception to this is the family team, in which children have no say in joining the team and they are taught from birth by their mothers how to behave as a team member. Therefore, while reciprocity may be important for normative relationships as argued by the intergenerational solidarity and ambivalence paradigms, reciprocity may have little role in relationships defined by chronic conflict.

Wuest (2010) in her study of caregiving in the context of past child abuse also described obligation as important to the relationship, and one of the factors of obligation was the perceived legitimacy of the demands and the potential for harm to the care recipient. Though the daughters in both studies shared a similar perception of their past, the daughters in the present study had little regard for their mothers needs as they were focused on fulfilling their own needs. Even the

daughters who were in caregiving roles did not view themselves as a caregiver. Daughters provided the minimal support needed to save face in light of societal expectations of obligation or as a result of the implicit power structure and their mother's demands. Daughters did not view their mothers as dependent, did not consider the potential for harm and seemed ignorant of their potential needs; so much so that it appeared that two of the mothers were neglected to death. The striking differences among the studies may be a result of gender differences, as Wuest's (2010) study included daughters providing care to both mothers and fathers rather than focusing on mother-daughter relationships.

Ambivalence has become a prominent concept in the intergenerational relationships literature, and is defined as coexisting positive and negative feelings towards a parent or child (Luescher & Pillemer, 1998). Although it appeared that the daughters in this study were ambivalent as they expressed they did not love their mothers but continued to interact with them, what we are observing is paradoxical behaviors. Daughters were quite clear they gained no positive feelings from any aspect of the relationship. Moreover, daughters were also asked if they held any mixed feelings about their relationship. They uniformly responded they only had negative feelings. This raises some important issues for the measurement of ambivalence, as the data suggests maintaining contact in the face of negative feelings is not driven by ambivalence. The national study on solidarity from the Netherlands defined high support and high conflict as ambivalence in their typology (van Gaalen & Dykstra, 2006). However, it is unclear whether this truly represents ambivalence, as some of the daughters in this study had both high conflict and high support. As there has been a lack of knowledge on the dynamics of conflicted mother-daughter relationships, it is possible that the occurrence of ambivalence has been overgeneralized. This data suggests that ambivalence may not be an important dynamic in the

maintenance of contact among conflicted mother-daughter relationships as opposed to normative mother-daughter relationships.

This study is not without limitations. The sample represents a group of self-selected women, and is limited in generalizability. The use of internet recruitment and telephone interviews excluded women without access to a computer or the resources to participate in a telephone interview. Lastly, though the sample was culturally diverse specific cultural issues were not explored.

Implications

The description of the mother-daughter relationship experiencing chronic conflict provides important considerations for future research. During interviews, daughters were asked direct questions about aggressive interactions occurring during conflicts, such as “Can you tell me about your most recent argument?” and “What is the most extreme thing you have done when fighting with your mother?”, and daughters had a difficult time answering the questions. Daughters had difficulty distinguishing a single “event” from their general everyday relationship which they perceived as constantly at fluctuating between levels of conflict, fighting, and aggression. The tool most widely used in interpersonal violence research, and often used to study elder abuse, to measure aggressive acts is the Conflict Tactics Scale (Cooper, Maxmin, Selwood, Blanchard, & Livingston, 2009; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). The Conflict Tactics Scale asks about direct acts occurring during conflict – something the daughters in this study had difficulty with. As described by the daughters their relationship was defined by chronic conflict, therefore confrontation is inevitable, not context dependent, and a dominant interaction style. This challenges the conceptualization of aggression used by the Conflict

Tactics Scale and suggests other ways of measuring non-physical conflict and levels of aggression among mother-daughter relationships are warranted. As such, further studies on measuring conflict among adult child-parent relationships in later-life are needed.

Additionally, the description of the mother-daughter relationship experiencing chronic conflict challenges the current conceptualization of elder abuse. Elder abuse has been firmly rooted in the theoretical paradigm of caregiving burden, in which elder abuse is the result of the demands of caregiving. Therefore elder abuse is often measured as a function of caregiving with interventions centered on alleviating the burden and improving the skills of the caregiver. This ignores that elder abuse often occurs between individuals, such as parents and adult children, who have long-standing histories together, which may revolve around a lifetime of hostile interactions. Symbolic interactionism posits that in families experiencing aggression, the aggression becomes the primary mode of symbolic communication and interaction (Charon, 2004), as found in the descriptions of these chronically conflicted relationships. These data demonstrate the importance of the relationship history and trajectory showing that aggression is a dynamic which occurs before the onset of caregiving. This is supported by Phillips (2008), who in a study of caregiving daughters found among the woman caregivers in the sample, all but three had experienced receiving physical and verbal aggression from the older adult prior to the caregiving relationship (Phillips, 2008). Therefore, understanding the trajectory and evolution of elder abuse is important in designing effective interventions to prevent future occurrences. With this in mind, future interventions aimed at improving communication dynamics and/or anger management strategies may be beneficial in decreasing conflict and therefore the incidence of elder abuse. Additionally, prevention efforts should shift towards screening families for aggressive interactions before the need for caregiving occurs.

Despite perceiving the relationship as unequivocally negative, daughters continued interacting with their mothers. The sense of obligation forced through society's norms for daughters and mothers was a powerful motivator for daughters to remain in the relationship. This finding is especially important for healthcare providers as often in practice it is assumed if family is present then the older adult has good social support and will have good outcomes. In fact, we should be asking why the family is present and what types of support are they willing to provide? Some of the daughters were currently caregivers or had been prior to death, and other daughters assumed they would take on some sort of caregiving role for their mother in the future. Higher levels of attachment and lower levels of obligation are related to reduced levels of caregiving burden (Cicirelli, 1993), therefore suggesting these daughters who are likely insecurely-attached and obligation-driven are at high risk of caregiving burden and the negative consequences that come with it. It is important for healthcare providers to acknowledge that not every daughter wants to or is meant to be a caregiver, and if that is the case, healthcare providers should help the daughter find alternative sources of care in a non-judgmental non-stigmatizing way.

Summary

These results represent daughters' perceptions of factors influencing their present day relationship with their mother, and while the model represents the daughters' truth it is not the objective truth and is only representing one side of the dyad. However, this study contributes to a fuller picture of the "unhappy" dyads of mothers and daughters which have appeared in several studies on intergenerational relationships. These findings provide insights to the context which contributes to the relationship dynamics of conflicted mother-daughter relationships. Furthermore this study provides further evidence that daughters do not end relationships with

their mothers despite the quality of the relationship or perceived lack of benefits from the relationship.

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Figures

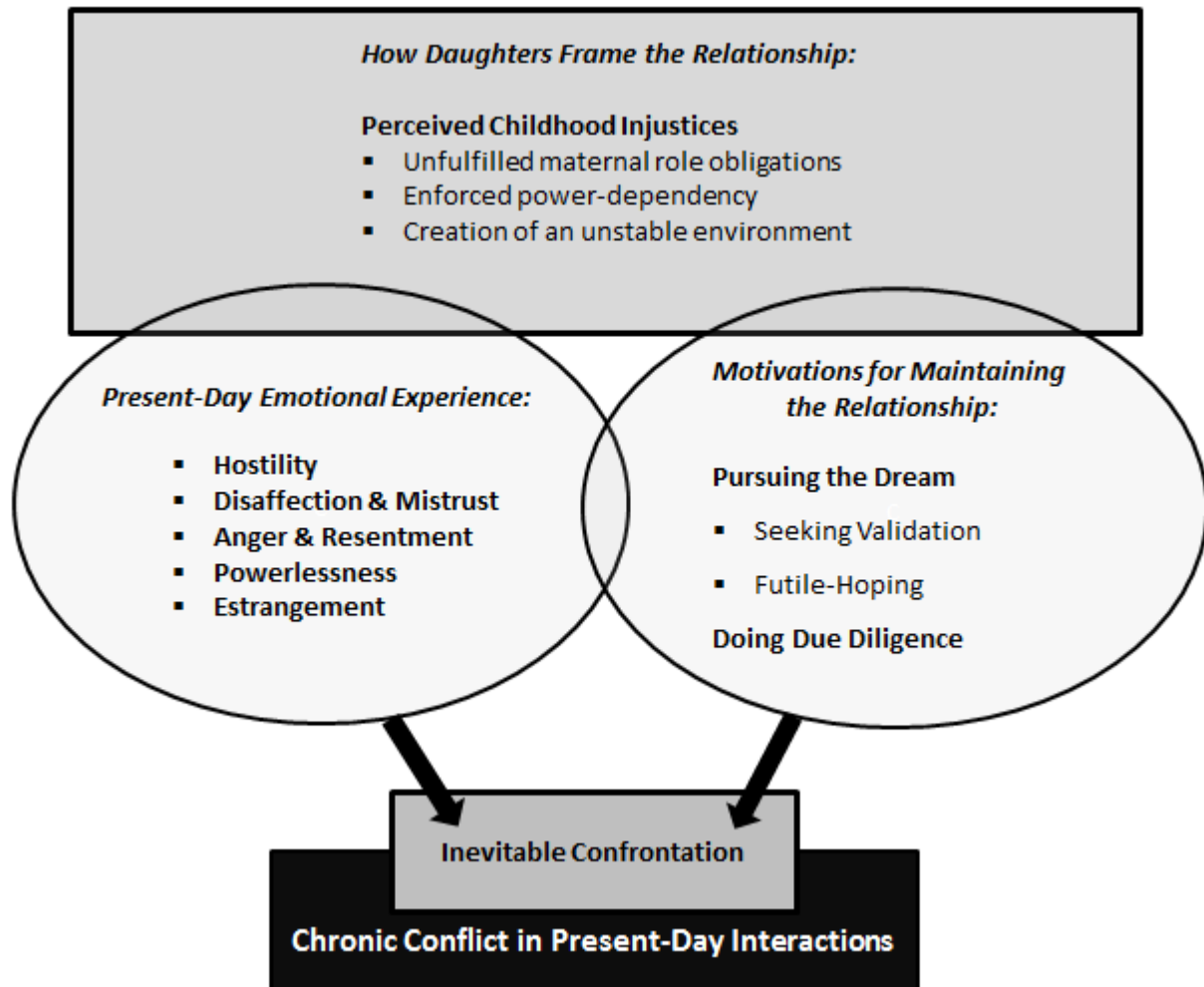


Figure 1. Factors Contributing to Chronic Conflict in Adult Daughter-Mother Relationships

PAPER 3: Prepared for Journal of Advanced Nursing

“Don’t Poke the Sleeping Beast”: Relationship Management Strategies for Daughters in
Conflicted Relationships with their Aging Mothers

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Abstract

Aims: To study relationship management strategies of daughters in conflicted relationships with their mothers, and how they promoted or prevented elder abuse.

Background: Daughters have enduring, unique relationships with their mothers that often carry-over into caregiving. Pre-caregiving relationship quality is related to many caregiving outcomes though it is unclear how.

Design: Grounded theory methodology, informed by feminism, was used to develop an interview guide designed to prompt adult daughters to describe their conflicted relationships with their biological mothers, including the everyday actions they used to manage the relationship.

Methods: Qualitative grounded theory design with telephone interviews conducted between January 2013 – July 2013. The sample (N=13) was recruited through an online recruitment strategy with advertisements posted on relevant websites asking “Are you in an abusive relationship with your aging mother?”

Results/Findings: Daughters utilized coping strategies and self-protective strategies aimed to decrease their exposure to aggression and emotional distress when interacting with their aging mothers. Daughters also used spiteful aggression out of the desire for revenge.

Conclusion: Although the daughters’ strategies served their personal needs, they jeopardized the mothers’ needs by creating an environment in which neglect could occur. Daughters also readily and intentionally used aggression against their mothers. These were strategies daughters have found useful. These strategies may be potential areas for designing interventions to promote healthy family relationships and decrease the occurrence of elder abuse and neglect.

Introduction

In the United States, most elder caregiving occurs within the family and is done by adult children (National Alliance for Caregiving., 2009). Additionally, some estimate that the majority of perpetrators of elder abuse are adult children (Lachs, Williams, O'Brien, Hurst, & Horwitz, 1997; National Center on Elder Abuse., 1998; Paveza et al., 1992), suggesting the largest source of elder caregiving is also the most common source of elder abuse. Women, often daughters, are frequent perpetrators (Crichton, Bond, Harvey, & Ristock, 1999; Dunlop, Rothman, Condon, Hebert, & Martinez, 2001; Tatara & Duckhorn, 1997), and women, often mothers, are frequent victims (National Center on Elder Abuse., 1998). International reports on caregiving (Velkhoff & Lawson, 1998; Zhan & Montgomery, 2003) and elder abuse (Lowenstein, Eisikovits, Band-Winterstein, & Enosh, 2009; Srinivasan & Lee, 2005) mirror data coming from the US.

The interpersonal relationships between caregivers and their care-recipients can influence adjustment to caregiving, decisions to continue caregiving responsibilities, and outcomes for the caregiver (Merz, Schuengel, & Schulze, 2009; Quinn, Clare, & Woods, 2009; Williamson & Shaffer, 2001). Both the pre-caregiving and current caregiving relationship quality is associated with a caregiver's wellbeing (Merz, et al., 2009; Phillips et al., 1995; Quinn, et al., 2009). Few studies have examined the effect of relationship quality on the care-recipient's wellbeing (Quinn, et al., 2009), though it is suggested that the poor outcomes for caregivers (such as burden, depression) have implications for their care-recipients (i.e. elder abuse) (Merz, et al., 2009). In addition, poor pre-caregiving relationships may transition into abusive caregiving relationships (Phillips, et al., 1995). Therefore an examination of the relationship history may provide insight

into the roles and functioning of family members in relationship to present day elder abuse and poor caregiving outcomes.

Currently, there are no clinical assessment protocols which predict if a caregiver will be abusive. In order to prevent abusive caregiving, a better understanding of the potential relationship violence and how elder abuse develops is needed. The role of gender in the expression and experience of aggression has largely been overlooked, with most studies of the causal factors of elder abuse focusing on characteristics such as caregiver stress or substance abuse (Neysmith, 1995; Whittaker, 1995). Mother-daughter relationships are lifelong enduring relationships that seldom end (Fingerman, 2001), and the dynamics of mother-daughter dyads are different than those of other family member dyads (Beeson, Horton-Deutsch, Farran, & Neundorfer, 2000; King, Atienza, Castro, & Collins, 2002; Rozario, Chadiha, Proctor, & Morrow-Howell, 2008). Therefore a gendered examination of the dynamics of this unique relationship is warranted. Without an understanding of how daughters express aggression and victimize their older mothers, and the meanings they attach to these actions, effective interventions cannot be developed.

Aims

The goal of this study was to fill this knowledge gap by examining the relationship dynamics of conflicted mother-daughter relationships, from the perspective of adult daughters in various caregiving roles. This study of conflicted mother-daughter relationships was designed to gain a nuanced understanding of the relationship-management strategies daughters used and the meanings behind these strategies. The study aimed to shed light on the role of history in caregiving and the development of abuse in conflicted mother-daughter relationships. The

research question which guided analysis was: how do daughters maintain their mother-daughter relationship in the context of chronic conflict?

Design

Grounded theory (GT) methodology is the systematic generation of theory from data through induction (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1977). GT is exploratory, hypothesis generating, and allows the research questions to be answered with depth and nuance (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). GT, informed by feminism, was used to explore relationship management strategies daughters in conflicted relationships used when interacting with their mother. Pragmatism, a tenet of GT, claims people's knowledge is based not on 'correctness' or 'truthfulness' but on 'usefulness' and their ability to apply it in their everyday life because that is what gives knowledge meaning (Charon, 2010; Dewey, 1978). Given the association between pre-caregiving relationship quality and caregiving outcomes, the study examined whether historically embedded relationship management strategies carried-over into caregiving. As feminism posits research needs to be meaningful to women (Fonow & Cook, 1991), this study allowed women to describe how they perceived their use of aggression and its role in the mother-daughter relationship. Data are concurrently collected and analyzed, allowing the researcher to refine both data collection and analysis throughout the process (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Data Collection

Data collection took place between January 2013 and July 2013. Consistent with GT and pragmatism, the project's interview guide asked about everyday situations in which adult daughters interacted with their mothers, beginning with open ended questions that became more focused as the simultaneous data collection and analysis progressed (Charmaz, 2006). At the end

of the interview daughters were also asked to complete a brief demographic form. The average duration of the interview was 81.9 minutes (range 49-135 minutes).

Sample/Participants

A purposeful sample of adult daughters (age 18 years+) who self-identified as being in abusive relationships with their biological mother (age 60 years +) were recruited, consistent with theoretical sampling techniques (Charmaz, 2006). This study used an internet-based recruitment strategy, with advertisements posted in blogs and chat rooms on thematic websites related to the study (such as caregiving support sites, women's health sites, violence support sites). Additionally, advertisements were posted on classifieds-type websites for the most populated cities in the US. Plans were to advertise in the 10 most populated cities in the US but after overwhelming response from the first 5 cities and data saturation recruitment ended. Each advertisement included the same IRB approved message.

Persons interested in participating were invited to contact the researcher via the email address provided in the advertisement or to visit the study website (The Mother-Daughter Relationships in Later Life Study www.elderabuseresearch.org) and submit an interest form. Eligibility screening was completed by email, and eligible daughters were asked to provide a time and date which they would like to schedule the interview. A third-party conference calling service was used to complete the telephone interviews as it provided a toll-free number for daughters to call as well as security and privacy features. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Daughters were compensated \$40 for their time, with payment sent through Paypal. Online recruitment of participants allowed access to participants who may not have otherwise had an opportunity to participate in research. Summary of the recruitment

strategy can be found in Table 1. Common reasons for ineligibility among the potential participants included not identifying as being in an abusive relationship with their mother and the age of the mother was less than 60 years. Of the 20 eligible participants who scheduled interviews, some women cancelled due to schedule changes and others decided to not dial in to the interview, resulting in 13 interviews.

Consistent with the simultaneous nature of data collection and analysis, interviews continued until saturation was achieved and no new data regarding emerging categories was gained (Charmaz, 2006). Characteristics of the sample can be found in Table 2.

Ethical Considerations

The main risk to participants was breach of confidentiality, however through the use of the internet and the third-party telephone line the participants' personal information remained confidential. The study was designed to allow the daughters to retain anonymity, with the email address being the only potentially identifying information available. Once the interview was over and compensation was sent, the PI deleted email addresses and all email history. Another ethical consideration was if the daughter reported suicidal ideation or desire/plans to severely harm her mother. As this research was done over the internet and telephone, reporting such instances was not feasible as daughters did not have to provide legitimate names or locations. The PI did compile a list of internet, national, and state resources (depending on the state the daughter was located in) with suicide hotlines, elder abuse hotlines, free or low-cost counseling and support groups and was prepared to discuss the use of these resources with the daughter should the need arise. To conclude the interview the PI asked the daughters their impressions of the interview process, how they felt discussing their relationships and if they had any concerns. Daughters

reported they found the interview beneficial, often comparing it to therapy, appreciated the opportunity to offload and did not report increased levels of distress. This study design and methods was granted approval by the university institutional review board.

Data Analysis

Congruent with GT methods, constant comparative analysis was used to complete the data analysis. Analysis proceeded from line-by-line coding, which was intended to capture and condense meaning and actions, to focused coding, which used the significant and frequent codes to form categories and subcategories (Charmaz, 2006). Through the analysis process data were compared across and within interviews (Charmaz, 2006). Through the simultaneous collection of data and analysis the interviewer was able to refine the interview guide to ask about emerging categories (Draucker, Martsof, Ross, & Rusk, 2007). Analysis was accomplished through hand-coding, with input from the committee members. Microsoft Word was used to organize the codes and categories.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness (termed validity and reliability in quantitative research) is dependent on the methods used and is an open ended process (Emden & Sandelowski, 1999). The techniques used for assuring credibility in this study included prolonged engagement, persistent observation and the audit inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through maintaining a relationship at the local forensic center and an adult protective services agency, the author began prolonged engagement and the process of understanding the context of the phenomenon even before data collection. Additionally persistent observation was achieved by the principle of 'saturation' (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1977). Through carefully documenting memos and field notes the researcher

created an audit trail to examine the logical consistency of the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Moreover, the researcher checked the verbatim transcribed interviews for accuracy to increase the rigor of the sources. Lastly, through writing self-reflexive memos throughout the process of data-collection, analysis and dissemination, the researcher decreased bias (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Mruck & Mey, 2007).

Results

The study sample was diverse with daughters aged 23-57 years (mean 43.6) who spoke about their aging mothers aged 60-81 years (mean 70.5) and represented major cities in three US states. The daughters had varied educational and economic backgrounds. All daughters reported experiencing abuse and neglect as a child, though the severity in type and forms of abuse and neglect greatly ranged from reports their mother was not emotionally invested in the relationship to being severely beaten.

The daughters perceived they were in a persistently conflicted relationship with their mother in which aggression was the main mode of interacting. The aggression was grounded in daughters' negative perceptions of their childhood and their active blaming of their mothers for past wrongs. These past wrongs contributed to strong emotions among the daughters, such as hostility, disaffection and mistrust, which provided context for their present day conflict. Despite the conflict, none of the daughters wanted to terminate contact or the relationship. In fact, daughters seemed driven to maintain the relationship through their management strategies. Daughters had various strategies for managing their relationship and everyday interactions with their mothers (Figure 1). **Coping strategies** were ways daughters made sense of their relationship which allowed them to continue interacting with their mothers. **Self-protective**

strategies served to limit the daughters' exposure to further emotional distress and aggression.

Other strategies served to right past wrongs (**spiteful aggression**). Not every daughter used every strategy; rather each daughter appeared to use the combination they found useful in their situation.

Coping Strategies

Coping strategies helped daughters to make sense of their relationship. Daughters had strong negative feelings about their mothers and found most interactions to be full of "mental anguish". Daughters felt there was sanctity to the mother-daughter bond, and were troubled over having a conflicted relationship. The coping strategies helped daughters to process the turmoil so they could continue interacting with their mother. The coping strategies included making excuses and optimizing.

Making excuses. One coping strategy daughters used was making excuses. The daughters believed their mothers were 'like this' for a reason and the excuses consisted of things daughters perceived likely influenced their mothers' abilities to be good mothers. Making excuses was a way in which daughters sought to understand some of their mothers' current and past actions thereby releasing their mother from some of the blame daughters put on them. Making excuses about her mother made the daughter feel better about the situation, to a point, by temporarily relieving some of the anger and resentment. Excuses included things such as mental illness, addiction, and having had bad parenting themselves. One daughter explained that her mother had a broken relationship with her own mother, thereby leaving the mother little to reference in her own role as mother:

I think the reason she is the way that she is, is because she was raised that way too. She has eight siblings. Out of those eight siblings, her mom sold two of her sisters – to old men when they were kids. She sold them. So, my mom's relationship with her mom is broken. [Participant #13]

It was common for daughters to describe how as they now reflected on their childhood, they believed their mothers had always been mentally ill which had caused them to act as they did. Daughters also suggested that their mothers hadn't really wanted to be homemakers but their fathers had been chauvinists, and they thought their mothers were generally unhappy. One daughter described how she thought the culture shock of moving to America attributed to her mother's poor mothering skills:

I mean, what I know of the Pakistani social structure is when they have a kid, you have your grandma. You have boatloads of aunts. You hire servants. Everyone basically helped you and she - I guess maybe she was in for a nasty shock of what getting married was all about. She married my father, and he had a job here [in the US] already, and they came here. She was suddenly alone, and she had to do everything by herself after a big wedding. [Participant #6]

Optimizing. Optimizing was the ways in which daughters looked for positive meaning in their relationship and past experiences with mothers. These daughters were generally troubled and upset over not having the ideal social-norm mother-daughter relationship. Consequently, they tried to find positive meaning in the relationship they did have. Daughters felt having to endure aggressive relationships with their mothers had taught them how to endure other hardships and 'be a survivor': "When I think of her, it's kind of like -- it's like an instant tightening. It's -- there's no support. There's only a breaking down... and the gift of it is to be a survivor." [Participant #8]

Daughters described other positive benefits they perceived they gained from the relationship, such as having learned to be a better parent. Daughters felt having lived through

their mothers' abuse had taught them how to be better mothers. Additionally, daughters perceived after having a lifetime of handling their mother they were better able to handle other difficult people which they felt was an important life skill.

Self-Protective Strategies

Self-protective strategies served to limit the daughters' exposure to further aggression and emotional distress. Daughters found the chronic conflict and aggression to be emotionally distressing and wanted to distance themselves from it. The self-protective strategies included reciprocating aggression and limit-setting. Caregiving was also a dimension of limit-setting, though it was conceptually distinct as these were limits daughters prescribed to the additional role of being a caregiver.

Reciprocating aggression. Reciprocating aggression included the aggressive acts daughters did in response to their mothers' aggression. It involved direct acts of aggression which occurred during arguments provoked by their mothers' aggression. Since daughters had predominantly aggressive and hostile relationships with their mothers they knew few means other than reciprocation to handle their situations. The goal of reciprocating the aggression might have been to end (and win) the fight, and therefore limit the further exposure to aggression, but typically it just further aggravated the aggressive encounter. One daughter described how she used physical violence in reaction to her mother's abuse:

A couple of months ago we had a cookout and she made a comment about my daughter being too fresh, and I said back to her very quickly and very snarky, "How would you know about a teenager daughter being too fresh? You weren't there for us when we were teenagers." And she got very upset and got in my face and smacked me, and I smacked her back. Literally, I smacked her back. [Participant #11]

The most common type of aggression reciprocated by the daughters was verbal abuse. Verbal abuse didn't always begin with screaming and yelling; it sometimes began with making

poignantly mean comments and escalated to shouting. One daughter explained how she tried to limit the frequency with which she actually raised her voice and yelled because she was afraid it would lose its affect. Yelling and name-calling was a rather typical reply when daughters described responding to their mothers' aggression. For example, one daughter described her "normal" response to her mother: "But I would say, 'You're such a bitch. You're so nasty. You're just jealous of her [a friend].' Just everything like that." [Participant #10]

Limit-setting. Limit-setting was a self-protective strategy which daughters used to restrict their exposure to or reduce the potential for aggression and the related emotional distress, when interacting with their mother. Limit-setting consisted of creating physical, personal, emotional and caregiving relationship boundaries. The basic idea of limit-setting was: "Don't poke the sleeping beast." [Participant #11]

Daughters explained that physical limits were easiest ways to decrease aggression: "We get along fine when we're not near each other." [Participant #11] Daughters restricted their number of in-persons visits and tried to primarily communicate through phone and email. These limits were sometimes very extreme. For example, one daughter explained how she preferred to talk to her mother's voicemail because it won't fight back:

When the phone rings, I hang up. I remember a few times, she picked up the phone and I said, "Ma, I don't want to talk to you, I want to talk to the answering machine, so I'm going to call back, don't pick up." Click, because I don't want to hear it. [Participant #4]

Daughters put limits on the amount of personal information they shared with their mothers. One daughter explained how she read the local paper for the city where her parents lived every morning just in case her mother called. That way she would have something "safe"

to talk about. Daughters aimed to keep conversations with their mothers superficial and not talk about their private lives for fear of starting an argument:

I don't feel the freedom, or liberty to really tell her like, "Oh, I got in an argument with my husband because he didn't do so and so thing," or, "Oh, I got in an argument with the girls because they didn't clean their rooms" ...I would not tell her something like that. I don't feel that freedom because it's just going to start an argument with her and a debate. [Participant #13]

In anticipation of inevitable conflict, daughters also put limits on events that have not yet happened. For instance, one daughter explained that she had considered inviting her mother to visit her in Philadelphia because they had ancestors who were some of the original settlers in Pennsylvania and she knew her mother would enjoy visiting historical sites. However, whenever she considered the idea she quickly squashed it explaining the various ways she knew her mother would act out, argue and make her upset if she invited her. Another daughter uninvited her mother from attending her college graduation out of fear her mother would ruin it. Daughters also limited their mothers' interaction with their own children to protect their children from possible aggression and emotional distress.

"Grace account" is an expression one daughter used to describe how she balanced the amount of aggression she received with the amount she was willing to endure. Daughters in this study all had their own personal limits for what they were willing to endure, and described that when their grace account was depleted they removed themselves from the relationship (for hours, days or years). Daughters exited despite the needs of the mother. The grace account was a protective mechanism. Some daughters described the grace account in terms of physical tolerance, such as when they felt their blood pressures raising or anxiety building in their chests.

Others had a personal limit to the amount they were willing to argue, as highlighted by this daughter who explained reaching her limit in her most recent argument with her mother:

I said what I had to say and I screamed at the top of my lungs when I said it and now I'm very tired. I'm disinterested in her because she's been saying the same crap for an hour and I really just want to get off the phone. [Participant #9]

When their grace accounts were depleted daughters employed their exit strategies. Exit strategies were the options daughters had available for leaving the situation. Daughters knew they would get hurt and upset if they fought with their mothers for too long, and the grace account and exit strategies served to protect them. In addition, exiting was empowering. The most common exit strategy was to hang up the phone:

And then I try to express to her, "Well, Ma, I'm a grown woman, too. You know, I have children also, and grandchildren, so I'm not going for that. And if you continue, I'm going to hang up." So, it's kind of like I'm fighting back, you know, or warding off, or letting her know that -- well, I've come to realize that I don't have to take that nonsense. So, I'll hang up, and she'll call back, and I just let the phone ring. [Participant #4]

One daughter explained how she placed her mother in an assisted living facility because it was the best way to limit her interactions with her mother, and the emotional turmoil interactions caused: "So, we [siblings] didn't talk about it and say, 'Okay, we're going to do this for mom,' because she was just fine being alone – we just wanted out of the equation, and we don't want to be directly responsible." [Participants #13]

Daughters explained how being an adult provided more exit strategies than they had when they were young and had to endure the aggression. Since they had their own cash money, own car and own home they felt empowered to just leave when their grace account ran dry. Exit strategies were not permanent as daughters continued interacting with their mothers. One

daughter described herself as estranged from her mother and explained how they even ignore each other at the grocery store, though she still saw her mother at family events.

Caregiving. Daughters had very clear guidelines of what they were willing to do as caregivers and what the limits would be. Daughters represented a range of situations, some were caregivers and their mother had passed away and others were currently in some sort of caregiving situation. Others spoke about the future possibilities of being their mothers' caregiver as they presumed it would be their role when the time came. Resoundingly, while daughters were willing to coordinate services and appointments, they were not willing to provide daily assistance, housing, help with ADLs or intimate care. Daughters did not want to create a situation where they would have more frequent and personal interaction with their mothers as they thought it would only increase the aggression, fighting and emotional distress:

I'm very happy to push my mother onto other people. And pay them - and pay them to take care of her for me. But I am unwilling - unwilling to - and let me underline "unwilling" 8 million times - to bring her into my house, bring her into a situation where she would be impacting me day in and day out in a negative manner. [Participant #12]

This meant that some of the mothers who required daily help and assistance went without it because their daughters were unwilling to relax their limits. One daughter was the exception, and she assumed if the need came she would move her mother into her house and provide intimate care. As she explained how she thought her caregiving role would go, she realized she could not guarantee it would go well and that elder abuse would not happen:

Because I do have a lot of anger and resentment toward my mother... so, if something were to happen to her right now, where she would be put in a situation where I would have to live and care for her every day... I don't know. She may say something smart to me and I may forget that she is unable to care for herself. I don't know. I don't know how to answer that without incriminating myself. You know, if I lose my temper, who knows? It might happen. I'm not saying it wouldn't happen. I'll put it like that. I wouldn't

say it wouldn't happen, given how I feel right now at this point in my life. [Participant #11]

Spiteful Aggression

Spiteful aggression included direct acts of aggression which daughters felt justified in doing because of past wrongs. The goal of these acts was to hurt their mother out of revenge. Daughters typically gained satisfaction from the spiteful acts, though some described their satisfaction later turned to guilt. These spiteful acts were part of their everyday interactions with their mothers. Daughters spoke openly about their desire for revenge: “I honestly enjoyed it [antagonizing my mother]. I hate to say - I don't want to say I was a narcissist, but I just felt like that for all the things that I can think of, like through my childhood...”[Participant #10]

Daughters also denied their mother help and assistance out of spite, even when they knew their mothers truly needed it. One daughter explained how she was going to help her mother with a problem at her apartment but changed her mind:

So, after I gave it good thought, the little kid in me came out, and it was like, “Hell, no, I'm not doing it. I'm not going to do nothing.” She wasn't there for me when I needed her, you know, so why should I be there? [Participant #4]

The spiteful aggressive acts were direct, purposeful and thought out making them particularly hurtful. The daughters had a great level of social intelligence. Since they had known their mother their entire lives, they had personal, intimate knowledge about how best to be hurtful. They had knowledge that non-family members would not know. Daughters explained how to be intentionally hurtful they would bring up specific instances from the past to bring shame to their mother, such as their mother's drug use or the mother's failure to protect the

daughter against a molestation. Another daughter explained how she called her mother ‘crazy’ to really upset her: “I could call her crazy because she has a real sensitivity to being called crazy because her mother blew her head off when she was my age...” [Participant #9]

While social intelligence made for particularly hurtful spiteful acts, it was a protective factor against the use of physical violence. Only one daughter described engaging in physical violence with her mother. The other daughters did not find physical violence useful, as they knew just what to say to really “light up” their mothers and hurt them. Additionally, social intelligence allowed some daughters to manipulate and control their mothers without using physical force.

Not all daughters had siblings or were on speaking terms with their siblings. However, some daughters collaborated with their siblings to hurt their mothers. The sibling teams excluded mothers and colluded behind their backs. Siblings teams encouraged each other to not call their mothers, to discuss how horrible their mothers were, and generally reinforced the negative image they had of their mothers. One daughter explained how the team collusion made it easier to be her mother’s caregiver, by being able to joke together about how horrible there mother was. Another daughter explained how she and her brothers made it known to their Spanish-speaking mother that she was an outsider:

Between me and my brothers, we always refer to my mom as “Your mom.” Even when all of us are together, and my mom is right there, and we’re talking about my mom, and she’s in front of us, I’ll say, “And your mom? What did your mom say?” We know we have the same mom, but we never call her “my mom.” We always say “Your mom.” [Participant #13]

Discussion

The findings described different strategies daughters used in managing aggression and emotional distress in their conflicted relationships with their aging mothers. Daughters aimed to make sense of their chronically conflicted mother-daughter relationship through their coping strategies. Daughters also aimed to let the 'sleeping beast' lay, and keep the hostility and aggression in the relationship minimal, through their use of self-protective strategies.

One striking finding was the daughters' use of aggression. Daughters reciprocally responded with aggression in attempts to end conflicts. The use of aggression was so embedded in the relationship histories daughters didn't know other ways of responding. Additionally, daughters engaged in spiteful aggression out of revenge for their mother's actions when they were children. This has two important implications.

First, this demonstrates that for conflicted mother-daughter relationships aggressive interactions developed in childhood and continue through adulthood into the caregiving relationship thus suggesting the dynamics of pre-caregiving relationships has great importance for caregiving outcomes, and at least some elder abuse is part of an evolving trajectory. This is supported by findings from Phillips (2008) who found among her sample of woman caregivers the mothers displayed significantly more aggressive behaviors than other care recipients in the pre-caregiving relationship. Second, these findings provide support for the intergenerational transmission of violence theory and its importance in the development of elder abuse.

Intergenerational transmission of violence, which suggests violence is a learned behavior, has been suggested as contributing to the development of elder abuse but has had little empirical testing (Fulmer, 1991; Johnson, 1979; Korbin, Anetzberger, & Austin, 1995). It has also been suggested that elder dependency may force the caregiver to recall past child-parent hostilities

resulting in elder abuse (Hickey & Douglass, 1981), and while none of the daughters interviewed in this study viewed their mothers as dependent, the recollection of past child-parent hostilities did invoke spiteful aggression aimed at revenge.

The findings suggest in clinical practice when working with caregivers nurses should give importance to caregivers' perceptions of the past relationship quality. Nurses should ask direct questions about how the caregiver would rate their past and current relationship, what typical arguments are and how they are resolved. Additionally, as daughters described instances of reciprocal aggression nurses should ask about the care recipients aggressive behaviors. Research on elder abuse among persons with dementia has found asking about care recipient aggressive behaviors is a successful way of screening for elder abuse (Wiglesworth et al., 2010), and the findings from this study suggest it may be a useful way of screening for elder abuse in populations other than persons with dementia.

Of additional importance were daughters' descriptions of their spiteful aggressive acts as direct, purposeful acts intended to hurt their mother fueled by their high level of social intelligence. Much of the current literature on female-to-female aggression has examined female peer relationships and concludes that relational aggression is the main form of aggressive expressed by females (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988), rather than the use of direct physical and verbal assaults. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) described relational aggression as covertly harming others through purposeful manipulation and damage of peer relationships, through the use the social embeddedness in social attacks including acts such as gossiping, rumor spreading and exclusion (Lagerspetz, et al., 1988; Xie, Swift, Cairns, & Cairns, 2002). Though the daughters did use their social intelligence in their attacks, and

occasionally utilized manipulation and team collusion, the daughters described primarily using directly aggressive verbal and physical assaults. This suggests that in mother-daughter relationships, relational aggression may not be the primary form of aggression.

The daughters used limit-setting as a self-protective strategy to restrict their exposure to emotional distress and further aggression. Limit-setting also carried over into daughters' perceptions of their caregiving roles. Archbold (1983) described two types of caregiving roles: care providers and care managers. Care providers actively provided assistance and intimate caregiving services whereas care managers coordinated the care needs. When questioned about caregiving daughters in this study were explicit they were only willing to enact the care manager role. For a conflicted relationship characterized by aggressive interactions, care manager seems like the ideal caregiving role since providing intimate care could increase the opportunities for abuse. However, as Archbold (1983) noted whether being a care manager is even possible is largely influenced by the availability of financial resources. Unavailability of financial resources creates a situation in which neglect can arise when daughters are unable to hire services and unwilling to provide the care themselves. In clinical practice it is often assumed that the availability of a family caregiver means positive social support. These findings, however, document a negative side to social support. Often, caregivers are given instructions and sent on their way without assessing their perceptions of their caregiving role. These findings suggest it may be best to begin conversations with caregivers by asking what duties they feel comfortable performing and which they need help finding outside support for.

The potential for neglect was heightened in light of what these daughters described as the "grace account." The grace account served as the limit to the amount of aggression they were

willing to endure. When the grace account was depleted daughters would exit the interaction for hours, days or sometimes years. For daughters who were active caregivers this meant abandoning the role for some period of time. The grace account provides interesting theoretical insight into the development of elder neglect. Although some daughters had a limited understanding of what their mothers' needs actually were, when they used exit strategies, daughters actively chose to attend to their own needs rather than those of the mothers.

This has several implications for clinical practice. First, daughters may benefit from a consciousness raising of what their mothers' needs are, as they were generally unaware. Second, it is important for the nurse to understand what the daughters view as their limits, and to design interventions to increase the threshold of the grace account thus limiting the potential for neglect. One way nurses may accomplish this is by assisting in leveling expectations and helping the daughter to acknowledge that the only person in the situation she can change is herself. Nurses could do this by assisting daughters in using anger management strategies such as relaxation, cognitive restructuring and problem-solving. Some daughters were using some of these techniques, such as the daughter who problem-solved by reading the local paper to be sure she had a 'safe' topic to discuss with her mother. These strategies may help daughters to remain active in the relationship without resorting to aggression or exit strategies. Third, for some daughters it may be best to teach them to exit sooner before the daughter becomes too upset and angry to make appropriate arrangements for her mothers' care and a situation of neglect occurs.

Limitations

The study is not without limitations. First, this sample is self-selected. As is common with qualitative studies, this study is limited in its generalizability. Although the internet

recruitment method was quite successful in reaching a diverse sample of women in conflicted relationships, it did exclude women who did not have access to a computer such as those with low socioeconomic backgrounds or women who did not regularly use the internet. Additionally, advertising through websites, chatrooms and classified ads may have limited the number of ethnically diverse women in the potential sample pool as women with limited English skills may not utilize these resources. Lastly, cultural issues were not explored in the analysis though there was cultural diversity in the sample.

Conclusions

This study provides insights into the relationship management strategies adult daughters use in their conflicted mother-daughter relationships, and how these strategies may precipitate and prevent elder abuse and neglect. These strategies served the needs of the daughters, by limiting their exposure to aggression and emotional distress, often at the expense of the needs of the mother. The daughters' desire to limit their exposure to potential harm carried over into their commitments to caregiving, creating a potentially dangerous situation for the aging mother and opportunities for neglect. Additionally, daughters' use of reciprocal and spiteful aggression created a culture in which elder abuse was commonplace. However, through their limit-setting strategies daughters reduced opportunities for verbal and physical elder abuse.

It is common to teach pre-licensure students that they need to assess the family and the caregiver; however there are few clear guidelines as to what exactly they need to assess. These findings suggest that perhaps the best place to start when assessing families is to find out whether the older adult and caregiver actually like and feel comfortable with each other. Since not everyone is meant to be a caregiver, some families may benefit from the outsourcing of

caregiving thereby creating a safer environment for both the older adult and the adult child.

Nurses are aptly suited to support families in making this decision, and assist in finding alternative sources for care.

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Tables

Table 1. Summary of Study Recruitment & Enrollment

Total Inquires	Eligible	Not Eligible	Did Not Complete Screening
N=42	59.5% (N=25)	14.4% (N=6)	26.1% (N=11)

Total # Interviews Scheduled	Total # Interviews Completed
20	13

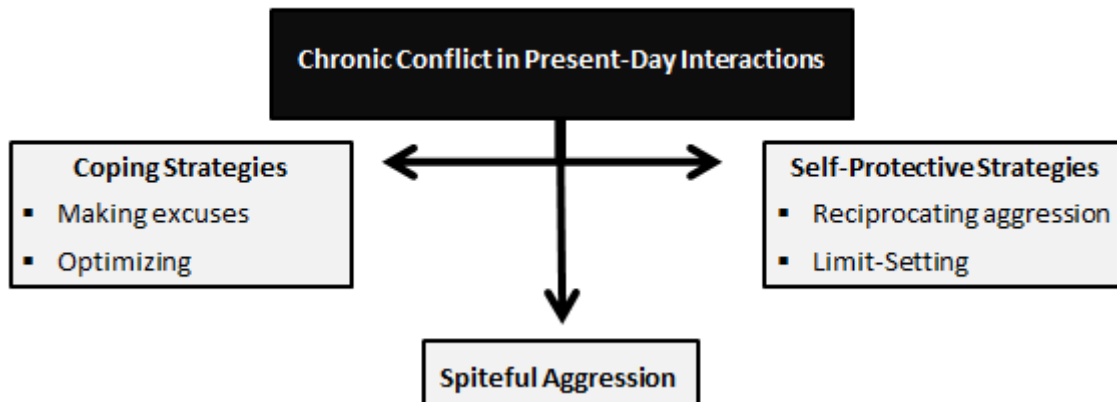
Table 2. Sample Characteristics (N=13)

Mean Age	43.6 years (23-57)
Mother's Mean Age	70.5 years (60-81)
Ethnicity	
Caucasian	8
African American	3
Latina	1
Pakistani	1
Education	
Some High school	1
Some College	3
College Degree	6
Graduate Degree	3
Currently Employed	9
Frequency of Speaking to Mother	
Everyday	2
Multiple times a Week	4
1-2 Times a Month	3
Holidays and Important Events	2
Once a year or less	2
Frequency of Seeing Mother in Person	
Daily	1
Weekly	4

Monthly	2
Holidays and Important Events	1
Once a year or less	5
Parents Lived Together Throughout Childhood	7
Had Other Siblings	11
Had Children	6

Figures

Figure 1. Daughters' Relationship Management Strategies



Conclusion to Dissertation

As elder abuse is a growing global problem (Lowenstein, Eisikovits, Band-Winterstein, & Enosh, 2009; Srinivasan & Lee, 2005), interventions to mediate and prevent the dynamics which promote violence and aggression in families are desperately needed. This project provides several insights to the relationship dynamics which promote and prevent such violence. Findings from this project have practical relevance for nurses in a variety of settings, such as home-care and acute-care. As described in the second paper, relationship history and perceived relationship quality are important contributors to the development of aggression and are topics nurses are capable of assessing and discussing with their patients and families. As described in the third paper, daughters in conflicted relationships have developed coping and self-protective strategies to limit their exposure to aggression and emotional distress. These appear to be strategies daughters found over time to be useful, and may be potential areas for designing interventions to promote healthy family relationships and decrease the occurrence of elder abuse and neglect. For example, daughters used reciprocal aggression as a coping strategy during conflict and interventions such as anger management strategies may help daughters to limit their use of aggression by assisting the daughter in recognizing she is the only one who can change as she has no control over her mother's behavior.

The original proposal study aims were to describe the process of aggression, from the perspective of the adult daughters, and the factors that influence the occurrence of aggression. The original proposal was guided by the conceptualization of aggression which defined it as an 'event' or 'act'. The assumption was the resultant theory would describe a process with various variables, such as power, social support and attachment, influencing the process which

culminated in an 'act' of aggression. Through analysis it became evident daughters didn't experience aggression as an 'act' but rather as a relationship characteristic. This new conceptualization of aggression guided the remaining data collection and analysis.

This project was novel because it examined a specific relationship, the mother-adult daughter relationship, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the problem. This project gave women an opportunity to describe aggression as they perceived it, allowing them to not only describe the acts of aggression used but the meaning behind them. Guided by feminist principles, this study sought to examine the social and structural processes which influenced the development of elder abuse in these relationships, giving importance to the unique perspective of the women in the study. The daughters in this study were in power dependent position both in society, as evidenced by 'doing due diligence' and the invisible pressure of obligation to their mother, but also in their family as taught and reinforced by their mother. Daughters' perceptions of features of a 'normal' mother-daughter relationship provided stark contrast to their own relationships thus eliciting their negative responses and furthering their perceptions of past childhood injustices and negative emotional responses. These women experienced daughterhood as a socially imposed burden, which had detrimental effects to their mental health and wellbeing.

One area of future research includes testing the effect of interventions, such as anger management, on the daughters' emotional and caregiving outcomes. Additionally, examining mothers' perceptions of the relationship in the context of chronic conflict may provide additional information relevant to the development of relationship aggression. Examining the continuities and incongruences of mothers' and daughters' descriptions of the conflicted relationship may

enhance our theoretical understanding of aggression in these relationships as well as provide insight into additional avenues of interventions.

A limitation of this research is a lack of external validation of abuse, which could have been obtained through recruiting using the Adult Protective Services system. However, there were many strengths gained through the use of the online recruitment strategy. The online recruitment strategies proved very successful and were congruent with the aims of qualitative research. Though the researcher lost the benefit of observing and interacting with the participant during the in-person interview, daughters often provided important and relevant stories in their emails providing insights valuable in preparing for the interview. The flexibility and ease of online recruitment and phone interviews allowed women who were juggling multiple roles, such as caregiver, parent, wife and employee, to be better able to participate consistent with the feminist goal of giving voice to women in research. Additionally, daughters reported they found the interview therapeutic and that the anonymity of the phone made them more comfortable in providing intimate information on the aggression than they would have been sharing in person. Lastly, the online recruitment was successful in obtaining a clinically relevant sample as these daughters do interact with the healthcare system with their mother, thereby providing opportunities for nursing intervention. Social workers have reported this involvement in their mothers' healthcare is less often the case among the daughters who are reported to Adult Protective Services.

Another limitation was the lack of information gained on attachment. Attachment was proposed as a variable relevant to the development of aggression. While data from this study do support that idea, there was not diversity in attachment experiences to provide a full picture of

the role of attachment. All the participants appeared to experience insecure attachment styles with their mother so a comparison between attachment styles could not be completed.

In conclusion, this project provided descriptions of a unique relationship, the mother-adult daughter relationship, in the context of chronic conflict. The study provided evidence that the past relationship history influences present-day feelings and behaviors. Additionally, theoretical insights were gained about the development of elder abuse and neglect as well as the conceptualization of aggression. The experience of the chronically conflicted mother-daughter relationship had poor outcomes for both the mother and the daughter. Daughters put their needs above their mothers and used aggression towards their mothers, sometimes out of spite. Daughters also experienced shame and stigma over being in a conflicted relationship. Future interventions need to begin with assisting daughters to recognize the relationship will likely never change and to arm the daughter with practical relationship management strategies which do not jeopardize their mothers' well-being.

References

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