EXPRESSIONS OF MOTHER-DAUGHTER DISCONNECTIONS AND
HOMELESSNESS IN PRINCE GEORGE

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine expressions of mother-daughter disconnection and homelessness in Prince George, Northern British Columbia. The primary groups for this case study are mothers or daughters living in an emergency shelter in downtown Prince George, BC, i.e., the Association Advocating for Women and Children (AWAC). A descriptive multi-method collaborative autoethnographic design was used for the study. In-depth face-to-face interviews which were conducted during the research were combined with field notes to write this thesis. This thesis gives insight into the reasons for homelessness and disconnection in the mother-daughter relationship using a creative art process. This present thesis follows the pattern, and builds on the scholarship of my predecessors, two research activists (Harding, 2010; Bradley, 2013).
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Figure 1. Front view of the AWAC facility

Figure 2. Back view of the AWAC facility
Chapter One: Introduction

I am beginning with a poem and a personal story, since every mother and daughter have a story to tell about the relationship they share as two people of the same sex.

A baby asked God, "They tell me you are sending me to Earth tomorrow, but how am I going to live there being so small and helpless?"

"Your angel will be waiting for you and will take care of you."

The child probed further, "But tell me, here in Heaven I don't have to do anything but sing and smile to be happy."

God said, "Your angel will sing for you and will also smile for you. And you will feel your angel's love and be very happy."

Again the child asked, "And how am I going to be able to understand when people talk to me if I don't know the language?"

God said, "Your angel will tell you the most beautiful and sweet words you will ever hear, and with patience and care, your angel will teach you how to speak."

"And what am I going to do when I want to talk to you?"

God said, "Your angel will place your hands together and will teach you how to pray."

"Who will protect me?"

God said, "Your angel will defend you even if it means risking its life."

"But I will always be sad because I will not see you anymore."

God said, "Your angel will always talk to you about me and will teach you the way to come back to me, even though I will always be next to you."

At that moment there was much peace in Heaven,
but voices from Earth could be heard and the child hurriedly asked,

"God, if I am to leave now, please tell me my angel's name."

"You will simply call her, 'Mother."

Anonymous (n.d.)

Just as this poem illustrates, I came down from Heaven as a child and found my mother to be that angel God said she would be. Further, calling her mother was easy because she performed all the tasks a committed mother should. The story of my life started three decades ago when I came into this world as the fourth child of a family of six, three girls and three boys. I am the last daughter, and that position has brought me much affection and many gifts from my father and older siblings, but especially from my mother.

My relationship with my mother is remarkable and memorable; it is a relationship I will treasure and cherish for as long as I live. My mother is my mentor, role model, friend and sister. Her mentorship brought additional qualities to the dynamics of my life. In addition, my mother was my primary source of advice and support for issues pertaining to my future, education, career and family. Further, she tutored me about cultural and societal norms, morals and values, which were integrated into my personality. This tutorship was accompanied by discipline and assignments which were challenging and rigorous, especially as a developing child.

This, however, did not stop her from enforcing and buttressing her ideologies. She successfully equipped me with the skills and knowledge I needed and molded me into the woman I am today. The disciplines, customs and traditions she instilled in my persona have been consistently useful in my journey in life. My mother empowered me through her teachings, care, love, kindness, patience, and prayers. Subsequently, these attributes gave me
a sense of self-worth, integrity and confidence to succeed in life. Further, they helped me to understand my cultural background and define my identity, perceptions, behaviors, character and beliefs as an individual. She also helped me to develop a degree of eloquence in my interactions with other people, which boosted my sense of morality and confidence.

Similarly, as described by Chang, culture is engrained in people psychologically, and makes them agents of culture in society. When you are an agent of culture, you interact with people from various geographical locations, and the act of interacting exhibits cultural values that are inherent or internalized in you (Chang, 2008).

In my interactions with people from different backgrounds and culture, however, I have come to realize that not all daughters have a wonderful relationship with their mothers; this is also reflected in various ethnic groups and cultures within my home country, Nigeria, and other African countries. My knowledge about daughter-mother relationships was broadened when I first came to America and I began to learn about them by interacting with people from different nationalities as well as watching shows on television, such as family court programs. I realized the major challenges to healthy daughter-mother relationships were poverty, homelessness, mental health problems, addiction, loss of jobs and intergenerational abuse (such as slavery and rape). Against this background, this study explores the challenges facing mother and daughter relationships, in regard to the ‘expression’ in the hearts of these women. Furthermore, their definition of a mother-daughter relationship is different from what a mother–daughter relationship means to me.
Definition of Terms

Mother: A mother is a term used to address a female parent or a woman having or is regarded as having the status, function, or authority of a female parent (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).

Daughter: A daughter is a female child or person who is related to her parents by blood or other ties (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.). A “mother” is related by blood, whereas “related by ties,” refers to “adoptive parents.”

Relationship: Defined as the connection, association or involvement between persons by blood, marriage or emotional ties (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, n.d.).

Background information

The mother–daughter dyad is an important relationship that exists in every household where there is a female child. This relationship may be positive or negative. A positive relationship refers to a strong connection between the mother and daughter, while a negative relationship can occur when there are disconnections and strife between the mother and the daughter. Several studies have shown that this relationship is important and it plays a vital role in shaping the lives of both the mother and the daughter (Flynn & Fitzgibbon, 1991; Lesch & Kruger, 2005).

The impact of this relationship has been intriguing to researchers, because parents have an important place in the lives of children, and the mother, as the usual primary caregiver, plays a more important role than the father in bringing up children (Akgün & Yeşilyapıрак, 2010). Moreover, the mother and daughter usually have a strong connection and greater intimacy than any other adult/parent/child relationships (Thompson & Walker, 1982; Troll & Fingerman, 1996). This connection creates a special bond and association between
the mother and daughter which may predict the quality of their future relationships (Bowlby, 1988). Furthermore, this relationship frequently has intimacy, warmth, and support, creating a deep shared bond across their life spans (Cochran, 1985; Cochran 1993; Ross & Rossi, 1990).

Additionally, Fischer (1991) observed that interdependence and emotional connections were higher in the mother and daughter-relationship than any other parent child relationship. Figure 3 clearly echoes the view of the author and gives a clearer understanding of how a mother and daughter connect as well as the similarities they possess as two women from the same household with hereditary traits which deepen their connection, bond them together as one and display the negative attributes they both carry in their purse “person” that could lead to disconnections.

Figure 3. Graphical representation of the mother-daughter relationship

The mother-daughter relationship is like a purse with baggages on both sides. One half is for the mother and the other half for the daughter. The middle part is what connects both women.
Each half has little stickers that emphasize the similar attributes/characteristics, and the baggage the mother and daughter carry in their purse, "person."

However, despite their connections and interdependence, the complexities associated with the relationship are also significant. These complexities may be due to an inadequate understanding between the mother and daughter, which has the tendency to lead to strife, disagreements and disconnections. Moreover, these complexities and disconnections, for the most part, commence when the daughter is growing up, from infancy to adolescence (Henwood & Coughlan, 1993). For example, my cousin Lisa, the only daughter in a family of three, was a bundle of joy to her mother and was referred to as the apple of her mother's eye because of the bond and connection they shared as mother and daughter. As Lisa became an adolescent, however, the connection with her mother became weaker. This may be due in part to peer pressure, since she wanted to be like her friends and make decisions independently. Lisa's mother could not tolerate this lifestyle; hence, she constantly scolded her for every negative behavior.

Consequently, Lisa was upset and decided to distance herself from her mother completely by leaving the house and went to live with her boyfriend. This broke her mother's heart and damaged the relationship between them. Interestingly, Lisa became pregnant and the boyfriend denied responsibility and kicked her out of the house, which resulted in her becoming homeless because she could not go back to her mother's house and had to live in a shelter until she gave birth to a baby girl. This is an illustration of how a mother may have issues with her own childhood and adolescent life that spill into her relationship with her daughter (Busciglio, 2009).
Another example is the movie Precious, in which the mother was wicked, evil, hateful, self-centered and jealous of her only child. Tragically, the mother had experienced neglectful abusive and damaged situations in her own life and there was a disconnection between her and her mother. Therefore, she lacked empathy, inner resources, connections and biological care she needed to give to her daughter, Precious, because one cannot give what one does not have.

Consequently, these dynamics may result in a breakdown in communication, which is a major barrier in running a smooth relationship and also an indicator of a disconnection or damage in relationships. Thus, when a relationship is disconnected due to a communication breakdown and other negative effects, it may lead to homelessness. Homelessness is very common in our society and is a complex issue. Some of the factors that contribute to homelessness are Canada's and Prince George’s social policies, while others may come out of the individual’s background, health, and life experiences (Scott, 2007). Above all, the mother and daughter are not at the same stage of life. The relationship is never equal or balanced because they were born in different generations and also have diverse life experiences. However, in spite of this, the daughter may subconsciously emulate the mother. There is always the understanding that, despite the various experiences in their lives, there are still many similarities in these experiences that make them think and feel like their experiences are the same.

The mother-daughter relationship is a unique relationship that begins with conception. This relationship can be identified as the most powerful and influential in a woman’s life because it comes with vigor. It is unique because every mother was once a daughter and every daughter may eventually become a mother. The mother-daughter
relationship is a relationship in which the mother ideally nurtures her daughter from infancy to maturity. Further, certain traits like morals, ethics, attitudes, traditional customs and laws are transferred to the daughter. Therefore, I will say that this relationship is a basis for teaching, sharing and empowering our daughters to secure their sense of self-worth in their minds and bodies (Reilly, 1998).

Every relationship has its ups and downs, but the mother-daughter relationship is the most complicated of all. The relationship is complex, yet so simple because it is more like a bitter sweet, see-saw that witnesses many phases. A common factor in this relationship is that of growth at every stage and bonding. Nevertheless, the bond between the mother and the daughter is commonly thought to be frail but resilient. In most cases, the attachment in the relationship tends to be stronger, especially in the early years of the daughter’s life, but may have the tendency to become weaker when the daughter reaches adolescence, and may cause disconnections between the mother and daughter.

As is indicated by the word ‘resilient’ we commonly imagine the relationship does not break no matter the tension that tests it because the mother and daughter are bonded by blood. However, there may be a disconnection if the mother and daughter do not have good ways of relating with each other. This will lead to misunderstandings that will make both parties be upset and withdrawn, creating a communication gap and hindrance in the flow of events. Moreover, this disconnection will be reflected in their actions and deeds. Additionally, it will be shown in their body language or signs, but primarily by the expressions on their faces, thoughts and attitudes. Several studies have shown that the mother plays a very significant role in building up the self-esteem of the daughter. Baruch and Barnett (1983) suggest that the experiences a daughter derives from a quality relationship she
has with her mother will be associated with her self-esteem. Sholomskas and Axelord (1986) claim that when a mother supports and shows interest in her daughter’s ideas, the daughter develops a higher sense of well-being. The mother-daughter relationship has a significant place in the daughter’s life, and the quality of this relationship affects her self-esteem.

Therefore, I would say that the earlier the mother learns to understand the daughter, before she begins to want to make her own decisions, and the earlier the daughter learns to understand the mother, even before she grows into an adult, the better for both women.

**Research Objectives**

The aim of this study is to examine the expressions of mother-daughter disconnections and homelessness in Prince George. The study shows some of the reasons for disconnections between mothers and daughters in their relationship. Art sessions were held at the Association Advocating for Women and Children (AWAC) following the pattern of my predecessor (Harding, 2010; Bradley, 2013) These two scholars/activists completed their M.A.s in Gender Studies while researching AWAC women’s engagement with art.

Furthermore, for the purpose of this study, the women at AWAC defined what a mother and daughter relationship meant to them in their own terms because some of these women have had frequently disturbed connections with their mothers/caregivers and daughters. Some of them have no relationship with their children because they were taken from them and placed in the care of others. Next, the issue of homelessness was explored and discussed.

The rest of the study has been organized as follows; chapter two is based on a review of literatures that deal with gender, the mother-daughter relationship, theories explaining the nature of the relationship, mother-daughter disconnection and homelessness. Chapter three describes the methods used in achieving the aims and objectives, and the results are reported
in chapter four. Chapter five concludes the study and recommends possible ways to enhance the lives of mothers/daughters at AWAC and places like AWAC.

**Significance of the study**

The expression of mother-daughter disconnections and homelessness is an important topic of study that can help raise awareness of the issue in the Prince George community. This study has exposed some of the misunderstandings, conflicts, and problems that result in disconnections between mothers and their daughters and homelessness. Mother-daughter disconnection may be too easily brushed aside as if it is not important.

However, in most cases, the relationship is still termed as the most powerful for woman. A daughter’s relationship with her mother lays the foundation for her relationship with herself. Furthermore, she will either learn how to claim her life from her mother, and be fully visible in all her relationships or learn how to silence herself and accept invisibility as a normal way of life (Hasseldine, 2006). Next, mothers are often responsible for transferring their values and morals and preparing their children to be functional members of society (Johnson, 2000). Mothers have a significant effect on their daughters’ lives and choices because daughters are groomed by the mother from infancy with her standards and precepts, which the daughter has assimilated over time and has inculcated into her lifestyle.

This thesis may be helpful to counselors, psychologists, educators, parents, social workers and mothers. The findings of this study may serve as a tool to tackle problems in various capacities and dimensions in the mother-daughter relationship.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the literature on gender, the mother-daughter relationship and theories explaining the nature of this relationship. Mother-daughter disconnections and homelessness are discussed and creativity was introduced.

The Mother-Daughter Relationship

The mother-daughter relationship has long been recognized as significant in the lives of both parties (Horney, 1967). Mothers and daughters are believed to have a stronger connection and greater affection than other adult/child relationships (Thompson & Walker, 1982; Troll & Fingerman, 1996). In other words, the mother-daughter dual bond is the most demonstrative in a family relationship (Fisher, 1981; Martell, 1990; Thompson & Walker, 1984). This shared bond is characterized by closeness and intimacy (Cochran, 1985; Walters, 1988). The strength of this bond is in a consistent flow which both parties experience throughout their lives as two individuals, from the time the daughter is an infant to the time of the mother’s death (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987).

Therefore, the mother plays an enormous role in the inner world of her daughter’s thought throughout her life. Clinicians are aware of the importance of the attachment daughters have with their mothers (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1987). They believe that the relationship can be a source of strength to the daughters (Walters, 1988). The importance of the mother-daughter relationship involves mothers as role models, mentors who bring additional qualities to the dynamics that are constitutively created in the rich combination of intense intimacy, extreme dependence and vital responsibility (Flax, 1978).

We consider this relationship to be the most important because it is an active relationship that goes well past childhood; it has a great impact on the daughter’s sense of
self and her psychological development. The importance of a mother to a daughter is clear; ideally, a daughter experiences feeling of nourishment, tenderness and security with her mother (Douglass, 2005). Nevertheless, the attachment styles for both the mother and daughter will predict the quality of their future relationships (Bowlby, 1988). The development of female identity will ideally characterize closeness and connection between both parties (Chodorow, 1978).

Subsequently, mothers constitute the primary object of love but may also be seen as a rival as the first model for the daughter. Therefore, if a daughter experiences a disagreement between her developing self and maintaining her attachment with her mother, the relationship becomes equivocal. However, despite this differentiation, the relationship still remains important in the daughter’s life. Consequently, this relationship will be regarded as a source of strength to both women. Above all, the mother-daughter relationship is one that can provide support and solidarity. It is significant to all women because it offers to involve closeness, intimacy and support, and a deep bond across life-spans (Rossi, 1993; Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Cochran, 1985). In addition, the mother is the cornerstone of the relationship, and the bond between mother and daughter is the mortar and brick that holds the relationship together.

**Theories on the mother-daughter relationship**

The mother-daughter relationship has been recognized by scholars from diverse theoretical approaches. Examples of such theories are psychoanalytical theory, social learning theory and feminist theory.
Psychoanalytic theory

Psychoanalytic theory assumes that all babies are cared for mainly by their mothers. Every child’s first bond occurs with its his or her mother, who is the first person with whom the child identifies, though this process of identification is different for girls as compared to boys. Psychoanalytic theorists tend to emphasize the daughter’s unconscious internalizations of maternal values and behaviors; this explains why daughters become like their mothers (Boyd, 1989). This theory claims that a daughter’s primary love object is her mother (Rastogi, 1995) and it also stresses the importance of early mother and child bonding (Chodorow, 1978). In psychoanalytic theories, the focus is on what distinguishes the mother-daughter relationship from other dyads (Boyd, 1989). The mother is the world to the child, especially in the early years of development. Qualities exhibited by the mother, with regard to how she treats her child, affect the behavior of the child in the future.

However, biological relationship is not everything when it comes to care giving. A responsible adult care-giver or guardian can provide equivalent care-giving as the biological mother. Although the age of the child is also imperative as the younger the child the easier it is to establish a relationship.

Social learning theory

This theory attempts to explain why some girls become like their mothers. Social Learning Theorists disregard the idea of unconscious identification, and instead advocate principles of modeling (Frieze, Parsons, Johnson, Ruble & Zellan, 1978). Similarly, these theorists suggest that girls learn to be like their mothers by consistently and positively being reinforced when they imitate their mother’s behavior. According to Weitzman, there is evidence that children learn sex-role behaviors. Furthermore, this theory suggests that
punishment and rewards attached to the girl's childhood experiences are central in shaping women's sex-role behaviors (Gergen & Davis, 1997).

**Feminist theory**

Ruddick (1989), a feminist theorist, begins with the principle that all thinking arises from practice. In her view, women build a way of thinking that emerges from the procedures of caring for a needy or fragile being. Ruddick believes that daughters learn to blend with others, especially the mother, who is the primary caregiver, whereas sons learn to detach from their mothers. Mothers are like scholars whose work is guided by a discipline (Ruddick, 1982). They act in response to the demands of their children by acquiring a theoretical scheme and sense of connection, through which they order and express the facts and values of life. Furthermore, Chodorow (1978), argues that fewer distinct boundaries are drawn between mothers and daughters than between mothers and sons. Daughters may not give up attachments to their mothers in forming a relationship with the father, but will rather define themselves in a relational triangle with both the mother and father.

**Feminist theory and motherhood**

In the theoretical study of women in patriarchal culture, the oppression of women has been taken into account; the roles of women as mothers of daughters and as daughters of mothers have also been taken into account. The mother-daughter relationship is seen as both feminist and interdisciplinary (Hirsch, 1990). Feminist theory in motherhood emphasizes that we live in a patriarchal society where the father, for the most part, is at the center of affairs in the family. Gender is socially constructed. Mothers and daughters, 'women or girls' have been discriminated against in the family, schools and workplace.
Feminists generally see social institutions and social attitudes as the basis for women's position in society. In sexist societies, these institutions have created structured inequities between women and men. Feminists believe in transforming institutions to generate liberating social change on behalf of women. Feminism is a way of both thinking and acting. The feminist movement of the 1950s-80s brought about significant change in the family, society and workplace. The movement created a generation of women who were workers as well as wives and mothers. Women were no longer stay-at-home mothers, but could raise children while pursuing their career aspirations. The testimony to this movement includes women who work in law offices, schools, universities, women's health collectives and shelters, public and private institutions of every description, places where women were not found before. This includes a new sensitivity to women's issues in the courts, among legislators, and in literature. In all aspects of society one finds many women who acknowledge the influence of feminism and continue its battles in their private and public lives (Glickman, 1993). Subsequently, some mothers may be radical feminists or social feminists. However, whatever label they decide to identify with, the theory influences their behavior, attitudes and beliefs, which they later pass on to their daughters.

**Feminist mothers and daughters**

Feminist mothers and daughters refer to women who see themselves as feminists. According to Webb (1992), studies have shown that some adolescent daughters stated that they have a good relationship with their mothers, and also see themselves and their mothers as feminists (Debold, Wilson & Malava, 1993). Furthermore, daughters often identify with their mothers or want to be like their mothers. They maintain elements of the primary relationship, which means they feel alike in fundamental ways (Chodorow, 1978).
Feminist mothers value connections and, in most cases, work out their unresolved relationships with their daughters (Hirsch, 1990). They meet the demands of their children by performing maternal practice. Maternal practice is seen as a form of preservation, growth and social acceptability which also includes maternal work. To be a mother is to be committed to meeting these demands through works of preservative love, nurturance and training (Ruddick, 1989). Furthermore, maternal thinking includes the planning of strategies to meet these demands.

Feminism has improved the lives of some mothers by reducing tensions and ushering in peace and tranquility (Ruddick, 1989). The feminist movement has proven that as supporters of women or mothers, feminists are sturdy allies of mothers (Ruddick, 1989). A mother-daughter relationship in which the mother is supported by her female kin, feminists, and friends, engages in meaningful work and has high self-esteem provides daughters with the capacities for nurturance and a strong self (Chodorow, 1978). Furthermore, working mothers are role models for their daughters. Previously, maternal employment studies showed that if a mother works outside the home, the chances are greater that her daughter will do the same (Sandifier, 1993; Schulenberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Finally, although feminist mothers are actively involved in redrawing the human map, because they are not comfortable or satisfied with the restraints of the traditional role of a woman as a ‘mother’ they still enjoy their intimate closeness with their daughters.

Mother-Daughter Disconnections

The Webster Dictionary defines a disconnection as the breaking of connections between parts, putting the object out of action and also making it incoherent and illogical. However, for the purpose of this study, disconnection will be referred to as a psychological
state where mother and daughter are no longer joined or connected. Sometimes they may appear outwardly connected but internally something has disrupted their bond. Furthermore, disconnections and isolation are hypothesized as major causes of psychological distress which result in separation that may lead to decreased energy, paralysis, low self-esteem and the avoidance of forming relationships. However, when daughters or girls reach adolescence, the healthy resistance they put up often leads them into open conflicts or struggles.

Mother-Daughter Connections

According to Webster’s Dictionary, a connection is a relationship in which a person, thing or idea is linked or associated. The connection in the mother-daughter relationship is normally formed at birth or is sometimes established through social ties, for example, if a person adopts a female child as their daughter. The connections between mothers and daughters tend to be strong, not only because the mother is the primary care giver, but because they are of the same gender and there is a social attachment between both women. Daughters see their mothers as their role models. They may enjoy connections, identified devotion, emotional closeness and deep disclosure. A strong mother-daughter connection enhances the possibility for both women to have a strong female self. Furthermore, it unites the mother and daughter, enhances their self-esteem, and identifies the patriarchal culture as a “dragon to be slain”. Daughters experience a sense of connectedness and grow up learning to understand the needs of others (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988). Above all, a strong mother and daughter connection may be associated with higher levels of adjustment in both women (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1988).
Homelessness

A house generally takes the form of a dwelling or a physical structure; however, a home implies particular social relations or activities within the physical structure (Austerberry & Watson, 1986). The word ‘home’ invokes images such as personal warmth, comfort, strength and security, sacred feelings, fond hopes and carrying a meaning beyond the notion of shelter. A home is a place that says a lot about an individual, particularly for women. Furthermore, a home gives us choices; it fortifies us from the world and provides a retreat (Scott, 2007). Homes can also be seen as anchors of life, whether they are permanent or temporary, located in one place, rented or owned (Alterman, 1993).

Homelessness is defined as the absence of a stable residence or a place where one can sleep and receive a meal (Wolch, et al., 1998). Homelessness has been referred to as a lack of customary and regular access to a conventional dwelling. The issue of homelessness is a serious problem because the Canadian government has not been able to tackle the situation completely. It is a complex issue, since most of the factors that contribute to this condition relate to Canada’s social policies, while other factors could include the individual’s background, health and life experiences (Scott, 2007). People are not homeless by choice; the reality is that homelessness is not limited to any particular age, gender or to individuals of any single intellectual ranking. Homelessness affects thousands of girls and young women in Canada.

Avramor (1995) describes homeless people as persons who lack access to adequate personal accommodation and are unable to access and maintain an ample personal dwelling from their own resources. Some of the negative words used to describe the homeless include: lazy, bum, slut, squaw, crack whore, and trash. These horrible words contribute to the
homeless feeling stigmatized, dissociated and disconnected from the society in which they live. Moreover, the barriers they face in society constrain the extent to which their needs are met and the kinds of solutions that are possible, thereby heightening their exclusion and disconnection from society. Some homeless women, (i.e., mothers and daughters) in Prince George may be of Aboriginal heritage. These women are associated with poverty, unemployment, addiction and oppression, all of which affect their spiritual and emotional well-being. Examples of women who fall into this category are mothers and daughters at AWAC.

According to Harding (2010), women living in shelters typically do not have access to the scholarly language that encapsulates notions of colonization, marginalization, disempowerment and other terms related to the liminal spaces in which they live or to the structural and theoretical aspects of those spaces. Although some of these women have clear insight and thoughts, they rarely have a place to convey their thoughts and observations in a way that anyone can hear or relate to, let alone in a way that might contribute to concrete changes that directly benefit them. Some of these women may not have obtained an adequate formal education because of their poor or disturbed backgrounds, and cannot be employed because of this flaw. Consequently, as a result of a lack of employment with no income to spend, they cannot afford the basic necessities of life. Having a low income, staying with a violent partner because they cannot afford to leave, being bound to a pimp or a drug dealer, "couch surfing" from one relative to another or living in unhygienic, unsafe building are all situations in which women become or remain homeless (Scott, 2007).

The story of homelessness for most of the women who live at AWAC started with the history of their forefathers, who were colonized by Europeans in the 1800s. Throughout
Canadian history, Aboriginal people have consistently been victims of this invasion (Brodie & Bakker, 2008). From the early years that people were relocated to reserves in western Canada, Canadian government administrators and statesmen, as well as the national press, promoted negative images of Aboriginal women, and those in power used them to explain the conditions of poverty and ill-health on reserves (Carter, 1996). Aboriginal women were partly blamed for the failure of reserves by Indian officials. These officials assumed that Aboriginal women were indifferent in motherhood, lazy in housekeeping, indulged in idle gossip, were disagreeable in temperament and were responsible for infant mortality. Next, the church system was implemented and missionaries were given autonomy over Aboriginals. Aboriginal women’s sovereignty was sternly reduced and they became subservient to the missionaries at the mission settlements (Cooper, 1996). This act, which was introduced by the missionaries, was a deliberate action meant to hasten the Aboriginals’ extinction (Finkel, 1995; Martens, 1988; Carter, 1996).

Furthermore, not only were indigenous women oppressed, but all women were systematically oppressed, as women at that time were often thrown into punitive institutes for hystericis, and domestic physical and sexual abuse was legal (Feinberg, 1996; Kimmel, 2000, Davis, 1990; Angier, 1999). Subsequently, the most bizarre elimination of human rights occurred during the late nineteen century with the establishment of the Canadian Indian residential school system. The residential schools caused post traumatic stress disorder, emotional extremes, social and occupational impairment that destabilized family structures which affected grandchildren of the residential school students (Cooper, 1996). The missionaries wanted Aboriginal people to assimilate and adapt to their ways of life because they saw them as savages. They wanted to eradicate the native languages and beliefs and
replace them with Christianity (Lawrence, 2004; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004). Additionally, children and youths, the future of the Aboriginal people, were taken from their families to the reserves in order to be trained in Eurocentric cultures at boarding schools. This isolated institution was the scene of physical, emotional and sexual abuse. The result of this was the intense violence that still affects the descendants up to the fourth and fifth generation. Mothers were heavily affected by this act because they lost their children to residential schools. Girls who grew up to be women and mothers were not exempted as well. This violence brought about emotional trauma and imbalance, addictions and homelessness, which are now a major problem for some Aboriginal women (Lawrence, 2004).

Homelessness, which is a terrible situation, can harm women’s physical health. Homeless women report severe chronic and acute health conditions at a much higher rate than the general population (Kappel, 2001). Further, clinical studies have shown that homeless women report exceptionally high rates of emotional trauma and traumatic violence, such as sexual and physical assault. Moreover, the death rate for homeless women is ten times higher than that of housed women in the same age bracket (Cheung & Hwang, 2004).

The realities of homelessness

Homeless women are at a high risk for fear, anxiety, post-traumatic reactions, depression, sexual problems, drug and alcohol abuse, poor school adjustment and aggressive behavior. Emotional and behavioral problems, along with substance abuse and physical health problems are common among this population. Physical health problems can include chronic diabetes, hypertension, respiratory problems, seizure disorders, and kidney and liver diseases. Moreover, not having a place to rest and relax in safety can significantly influence an individual’s health as it can raise stress levels and contribute to various physical health
problems. Living on the street and not having shelter from the hardships of the outdoor environment can further complicate health. Environmentally-related illnesses such as skin diseases, hypothermia and frostbite are regarded as some of the consequences of life on the street which are common among homeless people. These diseases can lead to early death if they affect the victim severely.

Subsequently, Novac, Brown & Bourbonnais (1996) point out that housing practices and policies tend to put women at a disadvantage. Overall, women earn less than men and tend to have greater domestic responsibilities. Women with a small amount of financial resources may depend on relationships with men for shelter and security. These relationships could be common law or marriage. Nevertheless, whatever the type of relationship these women are involved in, they may face a loss of housing in the future when these relationships break down, and this kind of disruption gives them fewer options for re-housing.

Additionally, some of these women who are either mothers or daughters experience domestic violence in these relationships. Many of them choose to ignore the violence for fear of being thrown out by their spouse or partner. However, when they decide to flee from such abuse, they may find themselves not having a safe stable place to live. These women who have become homeless as well as other homeless women in the city are often at a higher risk for further victimization compared to low-income women who have shelter (Fisher, Hovell, Hofstetter & Hough, 1995). This circumstance can result in depression because homeless women have a greater tendency to fall into depression than the general population (Bogard, McConnell, Gerstel, & Schwartz, 1999). There are many possible reasons for this. Loneliness may have much to do with depression for the homeless. Social isolation from
their original neighborhood may be a factor because some women are housed at a distance from their relatives, neighbors, and friends. Additionally, separation from a partner, even in cases of domestic violence, can cause loneliness and increased levels of depression (Bogard, et al., 1999).

Furthermore, mothers/daughters who are homeless may be disaffiliated from families and social networks. Thus, they may have few social ties, low levels of education, unstable employment and long-standing histories of poverty. Moreover, the longer they remain homeless the fewer reliable networks they have with both families and friends. Consequently, they become acculturated to homelessness and seek affiliation with available support systems, which may include other homeless people, shelters, and service providers and may become accustomed to street life. In addition, Novac et al. (1999) discovered that women sometimes believed that living on the street or in shelters was safer and more secure than remaining in an abusive relationship.

Shelter

Shelters, for the most part, are designed to be temporary and do not provide a ‘home’ environment. Shelters in Canada have become longer-term residences for those without options, even if they are not an appropriate solution to meeting the long-term needs of any population. A report on chronically homeless women showed that almost all had at some point suffered sexual violence. It claimed alcohol and drug addiction is an increasingly common problem that shelters rarely address.

Emergency shelters are, it was agreed are not good places to stay. Some women spent nights outside with groups of friends instead of in shelters whenever they could. Many felt insecure because of the close proximity to so many people who were dealing with their own
struggles. The population changes so quickly, with mothers and daughters coming in and going out after a period of time. Shelters are unsafe because they lack security and many fights and thefts occur there. Consequently, residents often feel unsafe and have to constantly look over their shoulder due to a fear of violence. Moreover, the large number of inmates they house are vulnerable to communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and influenza.

Many aspects of shelter life cause stress for the women who use the shelter system. Shelter life is very hard. Women who live in shelters are faced with rigid rules and supervision, a lack of sufficient space within the shelter and cuts in government funding or budgets. All of these factors mentioned above contribute to the stress and frustration of homeless women in shelters as well as shelter staff. When the government makes cuts to budgets or funding for shelter, it affects staff because some of them will be laid off, and the number of staff left to do the job will not be sufficient. This may increase the stress level of the staff, thereby making it difficult for them to be empathetic to the residents and maintain order within the hectic shelter environment.

Subsequently, dealing with insensitive social workers is another huge problem that homeless women encounter. Social workers, for the most part, ally with child and youth family services, taking the children of homeless women and putting them in care. The moment the children are taken, homeless mothers/daughters often begin to fight for custody by going to court, dealing with the police in some cases, and dealing with welfare/housing to get full custody of their children. This situation can go on and on for a while, and the mother might end up losing her children but may be given the privilege to visit them, depending on the circumstances. This condition will add to the mother’s stress level and also put the children in a state of trauma because they have been taken away from the woman they have
known from their conception who loves them so much, and they are being taken to strange houses and environments to be chaperoned by strangers.

**Trauma**

Homelessness is traumatic and most homeless women are trauma survivors. The traumatic experiences which these homeless mothers/daughters go through create problems in daily living, which can interfere with the women's ability to obtain or maintain housing. Trauma may be particularly disruptive for homeless women because many are affected by the trauma that results from being homeless, and also they may carry trauma from the events that led to their homelessness (Wakin, 2011). Oftentimes, the pathways to homelessness and the realities of homelessness are laced with multiple traumatic events. These events have cumulative adverse effects on these women's physical and mental health. The trauma accrued in homelessness through a loss of stable housing, poor conditions of shelter life, an increased threat to personal health, etc., may lead to social disaffiliation, learned helplessness, and demoralization (Tischler, et al., 2009; Goodman et al., 1991). This trauma may also be responsible for a lack of trust in others as well as depression and shame.

**Survival sex**

“Survival sex” has become a way of life for many homeless women, involving an exchange of sex for food, clothing, and shelter. This type of risky sexual behavior makes mothers/daughters even more vulnerable to the contraction of HIV and other STDs. This practice also places women in situations where they are participating in unprotected sex with multiple partners, and many of these partners may be intravenous drug users. As a result of “survival sex” behaviors, combined with the lack of use condoms, these homeless women are at a much greater risk for infection than the general population of women.
Homeless women tend to experience more problems than those who are housed because they are exposed to many dangers and lack simple things such as good sleep, eating healthy meals and regular exercise. They often rely on junk food or cheap food and cannot control their diet, thereby reducing their ability to improve their individual physical health. Women who are homeless are likely to experience more violence and tend to have a considerably higher mortality rate compared to women in the general population (Cheung & Hwang, 2004).

Next, many homeless women lack regular health care. They use emergency services, which makes it difficult for them to build comfortable relationships with care staff. Sometimes they get inappropriate treatment from health-care workers, discouraging them from returning to health care settings or speaking honestly with health-care workers about their issues. Furthermore, feelings of rejection from the denial of health services may contribute to their psychological trauma (Goodman et al., 1991).

**Women and Poverty**

Poverty is a critical issue for women and the number of women in poverty is increasing every day. A greater percentage of women than men live below the poverty line. Poverty is a women's issue because women are more likely to experience it than men, and they account for almost two-thirds of all minimum-wage workers in Canada. Poverty traps many women in abusive or violent relationships.

Poverty is entwined in a 'web' of social, political and economic issues and these factors determine whether people, especially women, are likely to compromise their well-being for the sake of subsistence and survival. The burden of poverty is sharpened by limited access to basic services, poor housing and limited employment opportunities. Estimates of the incidence and depth of poverty in our society vary. Although poverty is not confined to
any racial group, it is heavily concentrated among women (Cheru, 2002). Moreover, women, due to low status and economic disempowerment in their communities, are afflicted the most by poverty, resulting in their inability to provide adequate financial stability for themselves and their families.

Women with children, particularly single mothers, are among those most likely to be living in poverty; a fact which lends credence to the view that links women’s poverty with their caring roles. In the course of caring for dependent children, many women find themselves dependent on partners or society for economic security. These children, for the most part, sustain them and give them reasons to persevere. Poverty adds significant vulnerability to the experience of mothering. When mothers continue to worry about their children, childcare and their mothering abilities, it makes them vulnerable and powerless in their ability to protect their children from an unsafe world. The lives of poor mothers are burdensome, not so much because of the presence of children but rather because of poverty; this poverty is not caused by their children, but by structural features of society. However, how these women live in the midst of the unrelenting demand of children and poverty, which should tell us about their patience and willingness to persevere.

Furthermore, low-income women with young children are at particularly high risk for poor psychological health. Mothers on welfare are at an increased risk for high psychological distress because they experience stressors such as persistent welfare dependence and inadequate social support. Research suggests that poverty weakens a mother’s ability to cope with new problems and stressors as well as her ability to use various types of social support (Coiro, 2001).
Nevertheless, the intransigent, ugly reality of poverty intrudes and imposes itself and women in our society experience and deal with it daily. These women try to defeat it, but for the most part they cannot and all they can do is withstand it and endure their poverty.

Next, the unequal distribution of wealth/income in our society affects the health of women in society. Kawachi et al. (1994) determined that a large gap between the rich and poor in a society inhibits social integration, limiting public policy development and investments in social programs. These limitations yield an inadequate support system for all members of the society, especially women. Wilkinson (1996) claims that negative health consequences arise because women living in poverty have limited access to opportunities and healthy choices such as nutritious food and physical activity; more exposure to pollution and infections; more heart diseases, diabetes, mental illness and cancer; lower birth-weight babies; and shorter life expectancies. Additionally, socioeconomic status is a key indicator of a woman’s health. The adequacy of a woman’s income plays a role in determining how healthy she is as an individual, which then impacts the health of her family, and later the health of the community. Inadequate income denies opportunities and can be a pathway to disease, dysfunction and disruption in our communities (Raphael, 2007). It is a social injustice that women living in poverty are sicker and do not live as long as those who are living in upper-income brackets.

Subsequently, women living in poverty are more likely to have: poor scholastic achievement; work in dangerous, stressful or unstable jobs; live in poor housing conditions and unsafe neighborhoods; spend most of their income on housing that is most often only temporary; have fewer social supports and networks, making them vulnerable to abuse; and engage in health-risk behaviors such as smoking, drugs, and alcohol. They are also more
likely to have challenges in accessing health care services due to a lack of transportation, childcare issues, and financial constraints.

Living conditions present hazards to women’s health such as poor housing with mould, poor heating, and an undependable water supply, along with insufficient clothing to dress properly for cold weather (Sudbury & District Health Unit, 2006). Other contributing factors include a lack of access to an adequate supply of healthy food options, communication tools such as phones or the Internet, and educational opportunities that limit employment opportunities and socialization.

Income and power often go hand in hand, especially in relationships between men and women. The less money a woman has, the more vulnerable she is to violence by her partner (Reid & Tom, 2006). Morris (2002) claims there is a long-term impact on women’s abilities to leave unstable relationships which, in turn, increases women’s vulnerability to abuse. This is not to say that only poor women are vulnerable, as violence against women occurs in all income brackets. The sad truth is that women living in poverty have limited resources, resulting in their having limited choices (Blackburn, 1993). It is difficult for women to leave abusive relationships if they do not have sufficient financial resources to take charge of their own lives. Feelings of being trapped, helpless, and worthless are commonly expressed by women in these situations (Williams & Lawler, 2001).

In relation to handling crises, women living below the poverty line often lack some key resources such as time to deal with a crisis, knowledge of how to solve the crisis, and access to professionals who could assist in solutions. They also experience increased levels of stress due to having less leisure time and greater financial pressures (Williams & Lawler, 2001). Increased levels of stress can leave women more vulnerable to crime, illness, low self-
esteem, having a sense of no control over one’s life, chronic economic hardships, few social resources, poor health, unstable employment, marital problems or divorce, disconnections in relationships and racism (Amato & Zuo, 1992; Belle, 1990; Brown et al., 2003; Coiro, 2001; McGrath et al., 1990; Ross, 2000).

Poverty is also linked to increased separation and divorce rates (Rank, 2000). Economically secure partners are desired by women, for the most part, and considered marriageable partners; however, poverty weakens the possibility of uniting with a financially stable person, thereby weakening and reducing the chance of marriage among the poor (Rank, 2000). Marital satisfaction is negatively affected by the financial stress experienced by impoverished married couples and often contributes to separation and divorce. Married couples living in poverty often lack the resources that could be helpful in dealing with a strained marriage such as access to the funds needed to alleviate financial strains or to counseling/therapy to deal with marital problems. With such limited resources, increased chances of divorce and separation exist for married couples with low socioeconomic status (Rank, 2000). When divorce occurs, it seriously affects the children who are born to that union, especially teenage children. Teenagers are prone to be emotionally and psychologically affected when their parents decide to go their separate ways due to divorce and poverty. This situation, for the most part, can lead to pregnancy for some of these teenage girls or daughters because the majority of teens who get pregnant are those who live in or have lived in poverty and come from divorced homes (National Conference, 2004).

Moreover, findings have shown that poverty is a prominent factor for teenage girls/daughters who have children out of wedlock. Teenage girls from different cultural groups get pregnant out of wedlock; nonetheless, the majority of those who experience some
sort of poverty tend to not only have the child but choose to keep the child (Musick, 1993). Girl/daughters who experienced poverty and had low math and reading skills were five to seven times more likely to become adolescent mothers than those girls/daughters who had at least average skills or did not live in poverty (Musick, 1993). Furthermore, not only will teenage mothers have less of a chance of finishing high school and getting married, but they are also more likely to get on welfare and remain on it. Almost four-fifths of all adolescent mothers will ultimately depend on welfare. Their perspective of the future is also very short-term and vague (National Conference, 2004).

In addition to teen pregnancy, girls/daughters who live in poverty are more at risk for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection (National Conference, 2004). Girls/daughters from ages 10 to 14 who live in poverty are three to four times more likely to have an STD than a male of the same age (Books, 1998). Books (1998) also says that "comparisons of the heterosexual AIDS rate for 19-year-old men, and women shows the rate for young women is more than ten times higher than the rate for young men" (p. 189). Numerous factors contribute to teenage pregnancy. One of the major reasons is poverty. Books (1998), claims that "poverty causes young single motherhood more than young single motherhood causes poverty" (p. 190).

Furthermore, when any adolescent goes through her teenage years, she faces a time of searching to try to discover who she is. Combine that sort of searching with poverty. The teenage girl/daughter is not only searching to establish her self-esteem but is having trouble finding it as well. Most girls/daughters who live below the poverty line cannot find this sort of love and acceptance at home. Often times, they seek male attention, which they often lack at home. They become entangled in a relationship and in this relationship they find either
abuse or temporary acceptance. Frequently, the young girl/daughter gets pregnant. Some of these adolescent mothers turn to their babies to find the love and acceptance for which they so desperately long and that was not supplied by their family or a man (Musick, 1993).

In addition, many teenage girls become caretakers at a young age. They begin to change diapers and clean their houses. Since they are already used to taking care of children, they begin to have the mindset that they might as well take care of their own children and clean their own houses. Thus, these young mothers often find themselves pregnant. Subsequently, many teenage girls/daughters in poverty-stricken homes witness their own mother's sexual behavior. Since no father is often present, there may be more than one man who enters the home. The daughter imitates what she sees (Musick, 1993).

Research has indicated that not only do daughters mimic their mothers' sexual lives, but they also tend to have sexual partners who are adult men, not teenage boys. This is as a result of the father's absence and the mother's busyness with work or other children (Musick, 1993). Other female adolescents sell their bodies through prostitution. This too often results in pregnancies. In addition, often times, young women are taken advantage of, whether through rape or abuse. These girls/daughters then become pregnant and eventually become single mothers who are likely to remain unmarried. This situation, for the most part, might increase the likelihood that the mother and her children will remain in poverty. In sum, although every individual and family, regardless of their economic status, has needs, those living in poverty face additional struggles and strain as they attempt to cope with and seek help for their complex needs.
Mother-Daughter Creativity

The creative process comprises the potent capability to be an alternative voice for sub-altern populations (Harding, 2010). Phenomenological art/visual ethnography counters traditional definitions of art; however, it appreciates the role of the creative process and pays reverence to the origins of the feminist art movement. Feminist art and art criticism are rooted in political activism, social examination and self-knowledge, thereby underscoring the cogency of voices, which may have been marginalized due to race, class, gender and sexuality (Harding, 2010).

This master’s thesis is built upon the work of the previous two activists; Dahne Harding, and Reeanna Bradley. These activists were graduate students of University of Northern British Columbia who did their research work with the women at AWAC based on their research topic. They carried out successful research, got good results and became more knowledgeable about shelter life and the experiences that women at AWAC encounter in their daily lives.

During my research, AWAC women participated in different art sessions at the women’s shelter. In the process of making art, they expressed their thoughts, feelings and experiences about their relationships with their daughters/mothers and their reasons for being homeless. I observed the function of art as a tool of creativity in these sessions and perceived the expressions of these women through art making. Nevertheless, creativity is a search for recognition and order. On some level, the women at AWAC would love to have an orderly, safe and comfortable life, just like any other people in society.
Gender

Gender is included as a subheading because, in theoretical analysis, I can say it is of primary importance in this research. All the participants and facilitators involved in art making in this research were women. According to Harding (2010), anybody connecting in creative pursuits must necessarily bring their gender, persona, and life experiences to the process. It may be found in the image content, in the manner of working or in the type of work they engage in. However, in this aspect, gender and gendered experiences were frequent themes which were worked on.

Summary

In summary, the mother-daughter relationship plays various important roles in the daughter's life in terms of protecting her mental health, establishing better social relationships, developing a healthier outlook on life in general, and having a healthier view of both women as mother and daughter. Furthermore, for the expressions of disconnections and homelessness which affect women, the major factors responsible are poverty and addictions. Disconnections, however, may occur as a result of a lack of understanding between mother and daughter. Subsequently, the situation of homelessness is very critical in Prince George. However, the issue has not received sufficient attention by the government. Therefore, women and other categories of people are still suffering from the problem of not having a home.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology of this study. Below, it describes the research design, data source, participants, oral tape recording, field notes, consent form, location, procedure, transcription, data analysis and ethical approval. This qualitative research used multi-method collaborative autoethnography and semi-structured interviews to study and understand mother-daughter disconnection and homelessness in Prince George.

Autoethnography has a storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self and engages in the study of others (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography formally pushes the study of the common, privileging the value of individual experiences and strives to recognize the experience of the researcher and the participants (Chang, 2008). Moreover, recognizing the experiences of the researcher and participants is added advantage to the research because it gives one an insight to their lived experiences which will enable one to tell one’s story as well as “theirs”. Besides, understanding oneself and studying others has value in itself because as a relational being, “Self” is invariably connected to others in the community and world because the circles are interwoven (Chang, 2008).

Autoethnography is an excellent vehicle through which the researcher comes to understand others and themselves. Self is a subject to look into and a lens to look through to gain an understanding of a societal culture (Chang, 2008). Furthermore, autoethnographic studies frequently cover emotive topics, sometimes including those conventionally kept private, such as a mother-daughter relationship, motherhood, and childhood with a “mentally ill” mother. These topics fit autoethnographic inquiries well because researchers have direct
access to intimate information and can investigate the subjects in depth. Such emotive autoethnographies powerfully engage readers in a meaningful understanding of the autoethnographer’s personal and societal context (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography as a qualitative research method utilizes ethnographic methods to bring culturally interpretation to the data of the researcher with the intent of understanding self and its connection to others.

**Research Design**

The design for this research is a qualitative one that attends to the expressions of mother-daughter disconnections and homelessness. Further, the research focuses on the reasons for disconnections between mothers/daughters and the state of their homelessness. This research design gives the researcher the freedom to plan as needed so that the most insightful understanding of complex human experience can be gained with no presumptions, but an open mind (Chang, 2008).

Furthermore, this research design is reader-friendly in that the personally engaging writing style tends to appeal to readers more than conventional scholarly writing (Chang, 2008). When a topic is chosen and contextualized appropriately by the researcher, autoethnography can powerfully engage readers in understanding not only the autoethnographer’s world but also the participants. Finally, this particular research design celebrates rather than demonizes the individual story (Chang, 2008).

**Data Source**

The main source of data was the women at AWAC. I collected all the necessary information that pertains to this research from the female residents until reaching the saturation point. This simply means that in the process of probing for important information from my participants, they responded accordingly until they had nothing to say. Academic
journals, articles, field notes and textbooks were used to strengthen certain points because in autoethnography data are primarily text-based rather than number-based (Chang, 2008). In addition, two previous M.A. research projects (Harding, 2010; Bradley, 2013) and some interviews performed during art sessions were also included as part of my information and insight base.

Harding (2010) used a qualitative art-based phenomenology to examine the lived experience of women at the margin in Prince George, British Columbia. The research project, done through the use of multimedia collage, investigated the potential of art as a powerful method for theorizing about the system of oppression which arbitrate everyday experiences. It became obvious that there was a link between the creative process, feminine solidarity, and healing while creating a model for community arts-based research. The primary group for this project consisted of homeless women at AWAC and the discussions were centered on these women. Moreover, the women at AWAC did contribute to Harding’s academic understanding of marginality through their stories, their conversations and most importantly through their art. There were women who theorized about the over-arching structures of oppression along with the women whose personal stories gave examples of how oppression has affected their lives.

Bradley (2013) used multi-method collaborative autoethnography in her research to study gender and artistic expression at AWAC in Prince George, British Columbia. Bradley’s thesis explores the power dynamics inherent in discussions on legitimate knowledge and gender expectations. She expanded and built upon the work of Harding, using the women at AWAC as her primary group of study. She combined feminist theorists such as Hooks, Butler and Feinberg to position the voices that surfaced from marginalized populations.
Bradley’s research project explores how oppressed people can personalize visual arts to undermine the common structures of intellectual and gender hierarchy.

**Participants**

The participants in this research are Aboriginal women, and mothers/daughters living in an emergency shelter in downtown Prince George called AWAC. The rationale for interviewing and observing these key informants was to ascertain their viewpoint on the experiences they encounter as homeless mothers/daughters and also the disconnection they experience in their relationships. Understanding relationships in others is one of the tasks that autoethnographers undertake (Chang, 2008). The number of participants was 14 women in total and their age ranges from 19-40.

**Oral Tape Recording and Field Notes**

Interviews were taped because the use of a tape recorder allows the interviewer to concentrate on and listen to the interviewee and eliminate the possibility of being distracted. Tape recording the interview ensures that the entire verbal communication is captured and it provides complete data for analysis. Interviews provide external data that give contextual information to confirm complement or reject introspectively generated data (Chang, 2008). Whatever cues are missed in the initial listening exercise of the taped interviews can be regained through a second and third listening. Transcriptions of these interviews are stored in a secure locked cabinet in the researcher’s residence for one year post-defence to avoid them being compromised. Only the researcher, transcriber, committee members and researcher’s supervisor have access to these materials. Additionally, field notes, which comprise the majority of the textual data, were taken through observations (Chang, 2008).
Consent Form

Participants were informed through consent forms that the interviews are confidential, and that their names will not be used in the transcription or thesis. The researcher assured the participants that the paid transcriber would only transcribe the interviews and assign pseudonyms in order to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. Detailed explanations about the participants' rights, limitations, confidentiality, anonymity and permission for audio recording were explained in the consent form for them to read and sign if they were willing to participate. Some AWAC women have limited literacy skills; thus the consent form was also read out loud to all of them.

Location

The interviews took place at different locations at AWAC. AWAC is in the "bad" area of downtown Prince George, on George Street, in British Columbia. The interviews were done in the activity room, and inside the staff office. Observations were made and field notes were taken in the activity room for the most part as well as in the surrounding rooms and environment. The activity room has many windows and two doors. One serves as an exit door and the second door connects the activity room to the main building. There are tables and chairs which are used for art workshops and other activities that take place in the room. Different kinds of art work created by the women at AWAC and previous art researchers are displayed on the wall of the activity room.

Procedure

The procedures for this research were multi-method collaborative autoethnography and semi-structured interviews with the women at AWAC. I explained some of my background to the participants because autoethnography involves shifting one's attention
back and forth between oneself and others (Chang, 2008). The women participated in art sessions while the researcher engaged them in discussions and interviews that centre around four core questions which organically developed more conversations.

1. What do women at AWAC know about the mother-daughter relationship?
2. How do they feel about being a mother or a daughter and how do they relate with their mothers and daughters?
3. What is it like to live at AWAC?
4. What do women at AWAC reach out for in terms of mother-daughter connection and bonding?

When deciding on what question to ask, we had not held the sessions and could not guess what themes would arise. My goal was to know participants thoughts and opinions of what they really think about the mother-daughter relationship. The question about life at AWAC was obvious, because it was their common factor and it was likely that they all experienced that reality in different ways. I wanted to engage them on the aspects of their housing situation that they thought were the most impactful on their lives, and no more specific question would give them the freedom to discuss anything from poverty to homelessness to diet to privacy, and whatever else I could not foresee having never lived in a shelter.

Nevertheless, we did our best to foster a genuine dialogue between all participants as equally knowing individuals, all cooperating to attain high levels of openness and transparency.

These women were invited to drop in at any time and stay for as long they felt comfortable, even if they decided not to participate in making art. Photos of the expressions of art work done by these women along with the researcher were taken as part of the research.
work. Together, we discovered ourselves and each other by shaping the discourse of
culturally meaningful autoethnography (Chang, 2008).

Finally, field notes were written by the researcher in regards to her observations
during art sessions and how these women responded to her verbal questions based on the
direction they chose, and the emotional expressions they displayed were all noted.
Observation was an excellent way to gather data to understand how these women see or
interpret their experiences. This method of data generation was an excellent strategy for
gaining an in-depth perspective for homeless women within the contexts and environments in
which these events occurred, because great meanings may frequently be concealed in
participant’s silences, body language and expressed emotions. Observation is particularly
useful when little is known about the participants (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Two women, one
staff and the researcher’s supervisor were interviewed on different days with an audio
recorder.

According to Chang (2008) artifacts in autoethnographic research are physical
representations of our lives and, therefore, should not be ignored because they represent
valuable autoethnographic data. Based on this statement, I have presented pictures of two
canvases that were created by me in this chapter. The pink color on the small canvas is
representative of my being a baby girl and a woman. The cradle and pin denotes what is
associated with being a baby. In the time and region in which I was born there were no
disposable diapers. Napkin and napkin pins were used in place of disposable diapers. The
heart and sparkles denote the joy that surrounds my birth. On the canvas, I added a small
note which says that I am a blessed daughter and I am glad to be part of my mother’s destiny.
This statement is made out of my own experiences as a daughter and future mother. My
mother has been a blessing to me by being a good example and nurturing me to be a good example for my own children.

Figure 4. Researcher’s canvas.

The second canvas is a drawing of an image of my mother and me. On that canvas, my mother was stretching out her arms to carry me. I added a little note on it which says that I long for her warm touch and a sticker in the middle of the two images that says my mother is the centre of my world. Indeed, she is the centre of my world as my world revolves around her. Below is a poem that speaks about how my mother affects the centre of my world.

You are the meaning of strength
at its highest peak.
You have courage
when the rest of us are weak.
You inspire me
to live for the now.

And to never give up
cuz’ you don’t know how.

When the road gets rocky
you seem to take each bump
and walk over them smoothly
hump after hump.

You have no idea
about the effect you’ve made
and with the lessons I’ve learned
my life’s made a change.

Not just a change
but also a growth.

From an immature child
to a young woman.

(Karp, 2006)
Figure 5. Researcher's mother-daughter canvas.

Transcription

Before any formal analysis of data began, the audio taped interviews were transcribed and saved on a computer hard drive. The transcription would not only include words spoken by participants but also pauses, exclamations and emotional remarks/reactions from participants. This approach to transcription, which attempts to reconstruct the interview experience, helps in the process of data analysis. Next, transcription also enables the researcher to shift focus from merely scavenging for bits of information to actively transforming these transcribed data into text with culturally meaningful explanations (Chang, 2008).
Data Analysis

According to Basit (2003) data analysis in a qualitative research is "a dynamic, intuitive and creative process of thinking and theorizing" (p. 143). Data gained from the research study from my participants were analyzed and observed. All responses were viewed critically without speculation and, eventually, analyzed data were put together to achieve positive results and a cogent account of the observed phenomena (Chang, 2008). Initially, I thought that making connections with the data would be an overwhelming task.

However, the organization of the data became the most natural phase of the qualitative process. I started by gathering the artifacts which were my weekly interactions with staff and participants, field notes, and pictures. I began to familiarize myself with the transcribed data that were gotten from the interviews, pictures and field notes by consistently reading the data as well as reflecting upon the shared experiences of my participants. During this process, I organized and compared all the information in the data and highlighted common words. It was a relief to discover similarities but the criteria for naming a concept a theme is if it appears repeatedly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These comparisons uncovered significant reoccurring words within the data which became the emerging themes of my research. The emerging theme uncovered during the data analytical process serves as trails of insight into the stories of these women as well as their experiences.

Ethics Approval

The ideology and values that were adopted for this study are privacy, confidentiality, freedom, equity, voluntary participation and justice. Participants were not put at any physical, economic, or psychological risk or harm by partaking in this research. Furthermore, to get an idea of how success was achieved through this strategy, participants were directly
involved in a feedback process. Participation was voluntary. Participants were made to understand the aim and purpose of the research as well as the prospective benefits of the research.

The researcher proceeded with the research because the ethics had been approved and the participants also consented to it. The research participants remained unidentified and data collected during research were protected. Furthermore, confidentiality issues are vital. For example, a research such as this, which discusses the expression of mother-daughter disconnection and homelessness in Prince George, is likely to involve very personal issues. Therefore, I made an effort to certify that outcomes will not be reported in an approach that would infringe on the rights and privacy of participants. In summary, the publication of the results would not cause any harm to the participants and community.
Chapter four: Findings

This study examines the expression of disconnections in the mother-daughter relationship as well as homelessness through in-depth face to face semi-structured interviews and observations during art workshops in the activity room at the women’s shelter at downtown Prince George. Questions were asked periodically as a way of engaging the women in the art workshop. The responses enabled me to gain knowledge and understand their stories as well as to acquire information about the challenges they encounter as mothers/daughters in their relationship and the issue of homelessness of which they are victims. The names of the participants used in this research are fictitious.

First Phase of the Art Workshop

The first phase of the workshop began on Sunday December 11, 2011, at precisely 1:00 pm. The workshop was held in the activity room of the Association Advocating for Women and Children (AWAC). Being the first day of the workshop, I was unsure about how many women would attend or accept to participate and engage with me. I was also concerned as to whether there would be enough artwork and conversation to create a thesis. The art workshop was carried out in two phases.

The first phase commenced on December 11, 2011, and I conducted only two sessions, and the second on the 18th of December. The first phase was mainly carried out to create awareness of the workshop prior to the commencement of the second phase in the New Year, as the previous art based Researcher, Ms. Reeanna Bradley, completed her workshop at AWAC using the same time frame. Moreover, this allowed for a situation where the time between my workshop and Ms. Reeanna Bradley’s workshop was short.
Dr Si Transken was always present during these workshops as she had been during all sessions co-facilitated by the previous master's students. Transken was a familiar and friendly face at AWAC. Many of the participants return again and again because they so valued her witty character. Transken has been involved in a decade of creative leading of art work with women groups and six years of continuing relationships from the iterations of UNBC graduate research projects and expanding these sessions to other marginalized indigenous women's settings. Her networking with these women has gone from professional to personal as their story-telling and community-building have developed. Transken supplied all the art materials for phase one of this research. This first phase was intended to develop my own knowledge and comfort with art-based research and with the rhythms and flows of AWAC.

Second Phase of Art Workshop

The second phase started after the approval of my research by the UNBC Ethics Board. The UNBC Ethics Board ensured that participants were not manipulated or harmed directly by me or indirectly by the research during or after the completion of the study. The second phase started on May 13th, 2012 on Mother's day at exactly 2:30pm. First, I discussed the study with the manager and the secretary at AWAC one week prior to the commencement of the workshop. The manager and the secretary liaised and hung posters on the notice board and informed the women through the support staff. Further, art workshop alerts and calls for participation were dropped at the Fire Pit drop-in center and New Hope, a drop-in center for women in survival sex work in downtown Prince George.

The purpose of putting the project alert outside was to ensure that women who might have left AWAC for these other places would have an opportunity to participate. However, i
made an assumption that beginning the second phase of the workshop on Mothers' Day would provide me with a good footing on which to engage my participants, as my project was centered on mother-daughter disconnection. I realized not long ago that this was not a smart idea, since most of the women went out to visit their mothers or daughters, even in cases where the relationship is not patchy. Moreover, the weather was really nice for the first time after a horrible winter, and most of the women went out to enjoy the weather.

Following the pattern of the previous researchers, the information and consent form was composed in simple language with every step of the process outlined (see: Appendix A). This document was provided to all the participants with the understanding that it only needed to be signed. Attendance after the initial session could be seen as consent unless otherwise indicated (Harding, 2010). Most of the participants signed after further explanation from my supervisor and me. Other ethical considerations were related to the freedom to oversee their own art and research. They are able to withdraw from any section of the workshop at any time and still continue to attend the sessions if they want. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected according to the wishes of each participant.

Participants were recruited on a drop-in basis with no obligation to stay for the duration of the sessions. There was no limitation, regardless of whether a participant was under the influence of drugs or alcohol, as long as the participant did not threaten the physical or emotional safety of the other participants. Barring those people would not only have reduced the study population, but it would have diminished our rapport, because it would have aligned us with the authorities who limit their options instead of upholding our intentions to broaden their options. However, art supplies were not offered to participants, who appeared to be under the influence of substances, but were not taken away from them if
they found their way to the supply containers and used them with some degree of
carefulness. Also, interviews were not conducted with such participants.

The art materials used for the second phase were jointly supplied (i.e., I bought most
of the art supplies, my supervisor bought some and some were donations from the Northern
Women's Centre, which they handed over to my supervisor). There was no funding from the
government, university, or shelter. This posed a significant economic burden, as we had to
provide all the materials (i.e., paper towels, styro-foam, paints, brushes, markers, canvases,
magazines, crayons, pastels, assorted stickers, glues, glitters, auto-parts, sparkles, stamps,
toys, scissors, alphabet letters, wrappings, jewelries, beads and scarves) for the research out-
of-pocket.

We proceeded to deal with this so the study could continue, particularly to encourage
all levels of participants to join in the workshop. That all of this was self-funded gave us the
freedom to conduct ourselves with the participants as we chose to. External funding might
have introduced more structure or administrative hassles. Apart from scissors and small
chunks of auto-parts, there were no other sharp objects. We ensured that potentially harmful
sharp objects were avoided by monitoring the use of these objects without the participant's
being aware of it. Moreover, there was enough material, which fostered sharing without
struggle among the participants.

Refreshments were provided by me and my supervisor. Participants were given the
option to tell us the kind of refreshments they wanted for each session. This choice of
refreshments by participants was introduced by my supervisor based on her experience of
working with this population. Furthermore, my study population in general may be at a high
risk of insufficient nourishment because of their choice of refreshment. I realized that my
participants preferred junk food to the healthy cookies I provided from the first day of the workshop.

**Pre-activities before the workshop**

The activity room at AWAC was the location for the workshop. This is a room the residents of AWAC are familiar with. Additionally, it provides them with a sense of safety and reduced stress since they do not have to worry about transportation to the workshop venue. There are two exit doors and many windows. Furthermore, it was also good for us, the facilitators, as there was no room for travel delays from the moment we arrived at AWAC. Also, we could walk through the shelter and invite everyone to come and join us in the art workshop. The sessions were three hours, from 1:30pm to 4:30pm as publicized; however, they were changed upon my request from 2:30pm to 5:30pm after the first phase, as it coincided with my church time on Sundays.

I was responsible for moving the art supplies to and from the workshop venue after each session. Thus, in an attempt to make my work lighter, I asked permission from the manager to keep the art supplies in one of the locked offices after each session and she obliged me. I personally made this request because neither I nor my supervisor has a vehicle to commute back and forth to AWAC with the art supplies for the workshop. I was happy and grateful when she agreed to my request because it saved me a considerable amount of time and effort, particularly the cost of taking cabs, and the energy required to load and offload the art supplies. I was the first researcher at AWAC who was granted such a request.

The first day, I arrived half an hour early to set up the activity room according to how the workshop would take place and remind the participants that it was the art workshop day. I opened the windows to let light in and to air out the room, as the last time the room was
used was likely the last time I was there in December. I lined up the canvases as they were used to celebrate our creativity and productivity (Harding, 2010). I lined up the Styrofoam head\(^1\), which were to be used by the women to express where their head is at the moment or what their thoughts were. I organized the various art supplies on the table in a way so that the women could access them easily without difficulty or bumping into each other. The manager of AWAC gave me a door prize to give to the first person who came to the activity room as part of the Mother’s Day package. I hung the prize on the wall in such a way that the participants could see it the moment they walked into the room, and refreshments, plates and paper towels were laid out on a corner of the table. After these preparations I was fully ready for the workshop to begin.

**Activities and events of the workshop.**

The workshop started at exactly 2:30pm, but nobody showed up until 3:50pm. I was so worried and was praying that the women should show up. I was not concerned about having full attendance; I just needed one person to show up. Finally, God heard my cry, and one woman showed up at 3:50pm. The woman who came in was the only person who was interested in doing art on the first day, though some of the women were still hanging around in other rooms in the building and never showed any interest. "Linda" is an Aboriginal woman who has two sons, one daughter, a disabled elderly mother and no husband. She won the door prize because she was the first and only person that day. She asked me if she was the first person because she wanted to win the door prize, and I responded by telling her yes, but she has to do some art work first before she gets to take the door prize. She asked me

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\(^1\) Styrofoam is a resilient polystyrene plastic (i.e., like a shape of mannequin, see Page 55).
what it was; I told her it was a surprise. She kept staring at it on the wall where I hung it, but
could not figure out what it was because it was wrapped.

Subsequently, I told her the theme of the workshop and explained a bit, and she sat
down to begin her art work. Linda made a golden head of a woman with a big tear in her
eyes and a scar on her neck. She also made two canvases, one for her disabled mother and
the other for herself. She said the golden head with the black scarf looks pretty on the outside
but inside of her is all "yucky" and that is why there was a big tear dropping out of her eyes.
Linda said she is the golden head with the scarf. On the outside, she looks pretty, but inside
she is filled with sadness because of what is going on in her life. She personally generalized
it by emphasizing that a lot of women find themselves in situations like this.

They look beautiful on the outside, but the reverse is the case on the inside. I picked a
head with a roughness that looks like a scar because I have a scar on my neck region. I use
makeup to hide the scar so people will not see it, but that does not mean the scar will go
away. Most women have been hurt in ways, which makes them walk with scars for the
rest of their lives. Consequently, they will be hiding it, just as I hide mine but we all
know, deep down, within us, that we have scars which may have healed but will never go
away.
Furthermore, Linda told me how she had been harassed and molested by hoodlums the day before, but she is happy to be alive to witness another Mother’s Day, even if the thought of the holiday makes her sad. However, she said she accepts the situation in good faith because her situation could have been worse than what it was. Based on that notion, she made this canvas for herself which looks like a frame with a “MOM” sticker boldly placed on it and another one for her disabled mother, which has many stickers with cheerful words on it.

Linda made a canvas for her mother, even though they do not have a good relationship as mother and daughter. Linda said she has always had a disconnected relationship with her mother because her mother could not show love for her children in a balanced proportion:
My mother loves the youngest child and daughter more than the rest of her children. The excuse she gives anytime the other children complain is that the last child is being favored because she is the baby of the house. I could not stand it because it was so obvious and irritating. My mother gives the last child everything she wants, and tells the other children that she does not have money to attend to their needs. This attitude continued until we all grew into adults.

According to Linda, her mother's attitude made her feel empty, unloved and uncared for. She could not relate to her mother and she says that she did not experience a mother daughter relationship because her mother did not establish one.

Figure 6b. Linda's canvas

For Linda, the issue of bonding as mother and daughter was closed. Moreover, her mother does not visit her and she does not visit her mother previously. Linda added that she only goes to see her mother now because she is old, sick and needs her attention as the first child/daughter. Linda said that, even now, her mother still favors the last child and spends a
significant amount of money on and time with her based on the argument that she is suffering from HIV. Interestingly, Linda thinks that things are not bad as her mother makes them look. Sadly, Linda added, “I’m also suffering from HIV but my mother does hand me the same preferential treatment as she does for my sister”.

Linda admitted that she has been battling with HIV alone internally. While it is hard, she has to be strong for her children, particularly for her twelve-year-old daughter. I asked what their relationship was like, and she told me it was superb and a lot better than her own relationship with her mother. The unpleasant experience of her own childhood motivates her to establish a positive and cordial relationship with her daughter.

Figure 6c. The canvas Linda made for her mother.

Further, she loves all of her children and cares for her mother because she is old, not necessarily because they are close. Thus, she made a canvas for her mother, in part because it was Mother’s Day. However, she did not make a nice canvas for her mother because they did not have a good relationship. The canvas was only made to honor her as a mother and a woman. The words on the canvas were kind words a daughter would say to her mother on
Mother’s Day, words which would be read to her mother because she is blind. Linda did put many stickers on the canvas for the mother to feel and appreciate her work, even if she could not see as a result of her blindness.

The second day of the workshop and subsequent days progressed well as more women attended the workshop. Some of the women came to admire other women’s art work, though others came simply because of the refreshments. One participant in particular refused to participate because of the “Mother-Daughter Relationship” theme of the workshop. The woman said she does not have a daughter and did not want to talk about her mother or do anything which is related to her mother because she is a “mean bitch” and is “right where she belongs, six feet below the ground”. She said the issue was too sensitive for her and she would rather leave it alone than discuss it or do art work that centers around it. I responded by saying that it was okay if she does not feel like working on this, but when I asked her to consider imagining what it would be like if she had a daughter, she said she was not interested and walked away. Interestingly, she came into the activity room periodically fascinated and curious about what the other women were doing.

After this display by the participant, my supervisor had to explain to the women in plain language why the theme of the workshop cannot be changed. We tried to make them understand that it was my thesis topic, and the process was as much for them as it was for my degree. This explanation became a constant reminder every day during the workshop because the women kept asking us to change the theme to something else or to a “non theme”. Nevertheless, that did not stop us from playfully moving around the room with our paint, glue, brushes, canvas, floater heads, fabric, stickers, glitters, scissors, etc. We moved about the room from the snack table to the art supplies, taking photographs with the participants
and their art, women washing brushes and women touching other women’s canvases and Styrofoam heads. Often times, the designated ending time went unnoticed, because we were all too occupied with our art, conversation and different interesting situations behind the art work that the women created. Most of these conversations and situations I pondered deeply in silence.

Below are two examples of the conversations I had with two of my participants who are very close friends with each other. The two participants completed working on their canvases, which portray happy moments with their daughters. I asked one of the women, Susan, what the canvas represents, and she told me it depicts the wonderful relationship she has with her daughter. Susan stressed the closeness with her daughter and her friend, the other woman, Annie, said that people often call mothers and daughters sisters because of the closeness they share. Susan has a daughter named Dora. Susan told me she loves her greatly, even if her relationship with her mother was not so good, because Dora is a miracle baby. According to her story:

....“the doctor thought that I would not be able to give birth as a result of health issues. Thus, I became so upset, sad and moody but had to live and deal with the issue because there was nothing I could really do about it. Fortunately, for me, I got pregnant without even knowing that I was pregnant. I was feeling sick but thought it was something mild that will just go away with time. However, it persisted and got worse, so I had to go see a doctor. A test was carried out and the doctor confirmed I was six weeks pregnant. I was so surprised and could not believe my ears, as it was contrary to my previous medical report which stated that I will not be able to conceive. I went home to tell my boyfriend, the baby’s father, the good news, and we were both excited, even if it was a bit shocking.
Subsequently, I started preparing for motherhood and could not wait to hold my baby in my bosom. I delivered a baby girl and named her Dora and Destiny because it was my destiny that I would eventually become a mother, and that was why God gave me a miracle baby, even if medical reports have concluded that I could not conceive....”

This was one of the reasons why she loved her so daughter much.

Consequently, I became very emotional and happy when Dora’s mother completed her story, as it is a story that touches the heart. I understood better why she made such a beautiful canvas, with lots of sparkles, glitter and stickers with words that expressed good feelings on it. Dora’s mother made a canvas with her daughter’s pet name, “Baby”, on it. Glitter and sparkles were on the used canvas because her daughter brings a sparkle to her life. She pasted stickers forming the word “precious” since that is what her daughter Dora is to her. Also, a heart shape is pasted on the canvas because their hearts beat as one.

Figure 7. Dora’s canvas.

However, I was very surprised when I heard what she did with the child whom she professed to love so much. I heard from a reliable source that she is involved in the sex trade and has also introduced her daughter Dora to this world. In fact, she is a pimp for her
daughter, and the daughter is now deeply involved in drugs and alcohol and has been in and out of jail several times. When I heard this part of the story, I was wondering what had happened to cause her to act this way after professing so much love for Dora. Considering her described circumstances surrounding the birth of Dora, I was wondering why a mother would want to pimp her own child. Was it for monetary gain and out of desperation? Did she stop loving her or did something prompt her to involve her daughter in the sex trade? These questions are something I think frequently, but I can find no final answers. Apparently it was due to the demons of addiction, desperation or poverty. These types of circumstances could make people take desperate measures and do unreasonable things. Dora's mother and her friend Annie came only on two occasions during the workshop and never came back again.

The second conversation/story is about Julia and her daughter, Jodi. Julia has been living at AWAC for a while now, though she sometimes hangs out somewhere else for a while and comes back to AWAC, when she is done spending the allowance she got from AWAC. She has two children, Jodi and her brother. Julia came to the workshop on three occasions, twice by herself and once with her daughter, Jodi. The first day she came to the workshop, she made a fancy canvas for her daughter and took it to her room. According to her, she was going to give it to her daughter when she comes to the shelter to spend some time with her. When I asked her about the story behind the canvas or what their mother/daughter relationship was like, she replied by saying it was excellent, but she said she does not want to answer any more questions about it. The second time she came to the workshop she came with her daughter, Jodi, and introduced her to me and my supervisor. The daughter appeared to be under the influence, and her body, hair and clothing
smelled of alcohol. Overall, she looked very unkempt and smelled like she had not showered in days.

Nevertheless, we did not use that as a reason for not allowing her to participate. She was excited about the theme of the workshop and said she was going to make a canvas for her son because she does not have a daughter, but she will also make a nice one for her mother. Next, the mother and daughter went to the art supplies on the table to pick out their choice of art materials, and settled down to begin their work. Jodi made a nice canvas for her son as well as a pretty one for her mother. On the canvas she made for her mother she wrote the date and year of when her mother was born and put stickers that denoted the pet names her mother and stepfather called her, and stickers which depicted her baby dress, bottle, and bib. Finally, she added a sticker with words that expressed how they have always been there for her. Jodi concluded by saying that her relationship with her mother is very stable and good, and they consistently bonded together as mother and daughter.

Figure 8a. The canvas Jodi made for Julia, her mother.
Julia, on the other hand, made a canvas for her daughter with stickers with adorable and kind words on them. She said Jodi has always been her sweet little girl, and her relationship with her is superb. Julia told me that they really get along and often go places together. In fact, they asked me to take pictures of them on several occasions while they were engaged in art and even when they were done with their art work. However, while engaging in art-making, Jodi mistakenly spilled paint on the jeans she was wearing, and her mother became angry with her because the jeans belong to her. Jodi, on the other hand, did not feel remorseful about the stained jeans; instead, she immediately replied to her mother in a rude tone, saying, "I will buy you another pair of jeans". Her mother interrupted her statement, saying "I do not want to hear you speak in such a manner because you say that whenever you borrow my clothes and spoil them but never replace them". This incident became a huge argument between mother and daughter. I began to suspect that there are complications and tensions in their mother and daughter relationship, even if Julia and Jodi do not want to disclose anything to me.

Figure 8b. This is the canvas Julia made for Jodi, her daughter.
Afterward, on Julia's third visit to the workshop, she came without her daughter. On this day, I noticed she appeared sober. I asked her before she settled down to begin if she was okay. She responded with a smile that she was fine. Subsequently, she told me she was going to make some art for her son today, and not her daughter, even if the workshop theme is on mother-daughter relationship. I responded by saying it was okay if that is what she really wants.

Furthermore, when she was done with her art work, she called me to describe the significance of the story behind the canvas, even though she did not let me take a picture of it because it was related to her son and not her daughter. However, in the process of describing the good relationship she had with her son, she opened up about the true relationship between her and her daughter:

previously, I have said that i have so much love and great connection between myself and Jodi, but today I want to tell you about the real situation. I love my daughter and care about her, but I have exaggerated about our mother-daughter relationship from the first day I stepped into this workshop. My son is the one that has always connected well with me. He respects me like a mother and shows me so much love and care. However, it appeared that the reverse is the case for Jodi. Jodi disrespects me in every manner; she does not care about how I feel; she wears my clothes and mishandles them. When I complain about her attitude, the response will be a rude reply with a grumpy facial expression..

Julia said Jodi is in an abusive relationship, and she has been telling her to end the relationship but Jodi bluntly refuses because she is in love with the man. Julia sees it as tough love because Jodi is going through a lot, even if she is in denial. Jodi, for the most part, does
not tell her mother her whereabouts, so the mother has decided to accept things the way they are. Julia also talked about how she slipped on a snowy day and fell on the floor, hitting the back of her head. As a result of that fall she is suffering from a concussion. Subsequently, she told me about the heartbreak that she has gone through as a result of a failed relationship. She had a common law partner whom she was together with for seven years. However, they broke up when she caught him cheating on her with her paternal cousin. She was heart broken and called off the relationship because it was too much for her to bear. Judy threw away all the material property they had acquired together and left the house to try to forget about him and start life all over again, but she could not. She was very unstable and went back and forth into the house, eventually getting involved with drugs and alcohol.

During those moments, according to her, “I stayed away from men and was scared to get into another relationship”. Although the man who cheated on her was not the father of her children, she still loves him very much because they have lived together for a long time and shared lots of beautiful moments that are important to her. Nevertheless, the ordeal has poisoned her heart towards relationships with other men because she does not trust them anymore. In her own words, “All they want to do is abuse me sexually and give me money.” “They are so controlling, and I do not want a controlling man in my life at all”. At one point, she decided that she was going to stay by herself and not date any men, but sometimes she cannot help but do so because she needs company. Julia is used to having someone around and, for this reason, has decided to start dating older men. Elderly men treat her with respect, but sometimes she is disgusted by their age and wonders what she is doing with men old enough to be her father. Subsequently, she told me in a shaky voice,
…“I get so confused, lost and do not really know what to do. Some of the traits Jodi, my daughter, displays are similar to mine. The unstableness, mental dysfunction, addiction to alcohol, addiction to drugs and the abuse we are both experiencing in our relationships....”

She concluded by saying that the abuse is intergenerational because her father was also abusive to her mother, and contributed to her mother’s early death. Nevertheless, she likes it at AWAC, even if it is not the best place in general because staying at the facility has prevented her from being depressed and cutting herself.

Consequently, from the two illustrated stories, we can see that some of the women at AWAC live in denial and the issue of intergenerational abuse, which is also known as the abuse circle has a huge effect on parenting. One possibility is that this circle of abuse occurs because survivors often do not have the motivation and potency to care for their own children (Hooper & Koprowska, 2004). Furthermore, damaging results have been demonstrated across the lifespan of individuals exposed to various forms of intergenerational abuse. The immediate consequences may include men who display aggression “i.e., externalizing behavior” and women who exhibit depression “i.e., internalizing behavior” (Finkelhor, 1990).

The long-term effects of these behaviors may include intimate adult relationships characterized by mistrust and sexual difficulties. Moreover, women who witness interparental violence as children are often associated with being victims of marital violence in adulthood. These women find it difficult to trust their male partners; they feel their partners are too controlling and uncaring. This is a clear example of what Julia experienced in her story.
This is the story of a lady that grabbed my attention the moment I saw her canvas. I could not help but walk up to her and ask her the reason why the word “ATTENTION” was written on the canvas. This canvas was made by a lady named Rebecca, who does not live at AWAC but has been coming to the art workshop since its inception. She has lived in places like AWAC in the recent past. Rebecca was not happy with the theme of the workshop because she did not really experience a mother-daughter relationship, but she saw it as an avenue to let people know her story. Rebecca explained to me that she was very angry at her mother because she died, leaving her when she was just eleven.

...“I saw myself as a lost child but had to accept it because I could not do anything about the situation. I face the challenges of life alone and feel like I’m in chains. That was why I put stickers in the form of chains on my canvas....”
Though she has stepsisters and brothers from her adoptive parents, there is still a sense of emptiness inside of her, which makes her feel less like herself, and that is why she is a black image on the canvas with a covered face. The word "ATTENTION" written in capital letters makes her canvas stand out and prompts people to ask her about her story.

Finally, she concluded by saying that the lost feelings she has felt have been lingering for a long time, and she thinks she feels that way because she has not been able to find herself ever since her mother died. The brief mother-daughter relationship she experienced was wonderful, but the relationship and connection were cut short by death, so she cannot remember any clear memories because she was still a child. Rebecca's mother died in the fall, and that is why the dry figs and dry leaves illustrated on her canvas are a constant reminder of sad memories. Conversely, she stated that making this canvas and talking about it makes her feel better. She has succeeded in expressing her emotions and feelings on the canvas through art. She has also communicated to her viewers the thoughts and anger she has carried inside of her.

Consequently, this is evidence that art has been used as a form of communication, recreation, therapy and a tool of self-expression (Barber, 2002). Sometimes art enables us to find ourselves and often gives the powerless a form of expression through metaphors, in this case, using visual art.

Discussion from recorded interviews

Daniela is a resident of AWAC but was born in a little town in Northern Alberta. She moved to BC when things turned upside down in her life due to drugs and alcohol. She left Northern Alberta to get herself cleaned up, but it has not been easy because of her addiction.
Daniela was raised by her aunt because her father died a year after she was born, and her mother was too unstable to take care of her. She said her mother had a difficult life and because of that she uses geographic boundaries to shield herself. Daniela never experienced a mother and daughter relationship and was never told by her mother that she loved her. Her mother did not even show it in her actions, as love is not just a word. This act caused Daniela to carry a lot of hatred in her heart towards her mother and most other people while growing up. However, when maturity set in, she realized that it was not the best way to live and she had to forgive everybody, including herself. Daniela made a simple canvas but said some very important things when I asked her the story behind her canvas.

Figure 10. Daniela’s canvas.

She said her canvas represents the universe, which contains everything you can ever imagine, but personally, she stands for excellence, even if she did not experience a mother-daughter relationship.
Daniela: My mother was unstable to establish a relationship, and I do not have any child to establish one with. However, I believe in excellence, and I'm a very positive person. Negative attitudes yield negative results, a positive attitude yields positive results, excellent attitudes yield excellent results. No matter how many times you get knocked down you have to find that inner strength to stand up again, dust yourself off and say it's part of life; it's part of learning. If you do not want it to happen again, then do not do it. If you have troubles, woes, anxiety and garbage going on in your life, then what you should do is look in the mirror and say how much of it are my causing.

Researcher: How often do you do that?

Daniela: I do that often, and that is why I do not blame anybody for my state. Lots of people like to blame. Figure out some discipline instead of hating, because whatever it is that has been robbed cannot be replaced, and that is how it goes. In the meantime, is still the adult's responsibility to say what they're going to do with their lives. I know that alcohol, drugs, the self abuse, the violence, financial, mental, and physical and whatever..........is not good because I have walked the walk. I can understand how people get caught up in it. That is why it is sad to watch some of the women here because they do not have a background for those tools to be able to get away from all of this.

Researcher: Would you say you have a background for those tools? If yes, how would you go about it?

Daniela: I have the background because I was properly raised by my aunt, even though I fell
along the way side. My tool box is top full. It’s just for me to use my tools again that are in my tool box and find my own direction. I will stop hiding behind my own garbage, you know, [laughing.] So it is what it is, start afresh and get going. Do not get stuck in the rotten.

Researcher: Do you like it at AWAC? What do you have to say about homelessness?

Daniela: Well, it’s all a relative question about that. Homelessness is not a good thing, but I’m extremely thankful about AWAC and I think it is a phenomenal facility. I prefer not to be here though. If I was going to be here, it should have been forty years ago, but my journey has not been smooth on my healing journey, and that’s what happened to me. I hit the bottom and allowed myself to strip myself of everything that I had, but I knew that I had the foundation and that’s all I need. You know, I have to have faith, trust and beliefs and keep going forward and learn to only clean up myself instead being addicted and trying to fix everybody else, when I have to look at the mirror and take care of my own thing so that I can move forward in my own journey and do what it is that the creator wants and for me to stop interfering with drugs all the time and everything will start falling into place.

Researcher: So what firm decision have you decided to take to come out of the addiction completely?

Daniela: I keep saying I will quit, but habits are hard to break........[sighing]

Researcher: What do you have to say about the women at AWAC?

Daniela: Most of them are addicts. It is only when we all come clean that we will be able to focus and stop doing shit. AWAC is not a great place to be, but it is a phenomenal facility, especially the upstairs suite. I stayed there for a while, and it was
awesome. However, the problem is that the women do not stick to the rules and always want to do whatever they want.

Researcher: What does the staff say concerning this?

Daniela: The staff cannot do anything. The best they can do is making sure rules are kept and the shelter is organized. But trust me, rules are meant to be obeyed, but they are broken as well, often times. Nevertheless, if we can stop doing a 360, that is moving in circles without no destination and do a 180, pause and do meaningful stuff with our life things will take better shape. However, the addiction, for the most part, is a major part of the problem.

Consequently, from this interview, we can see that addiction to drugs and alcohol is a huge problem for the women at AWAC, and this is a pathway to homelessness and a way of coping with street life (Hatty 1996; Mallett, Rosenthal & Keys, 2005). Most of the women at AWAC are homeless due to substance abuse, and they are categorized as underprivileged and vulnerable groups in society. These women, for the most part, have already developed problems with alcohol and other drugs before losing their homes. Conversely, for some of the women, substance use is a result of homelessness rather than a cause.

However, breaking an addiction is difficult for anyone, especially for substance abusers who are homeless. For the women at AWAC, survival is more important than personal growth and development, and finding food and shelter takes a higher priority than drug counseling. Most of them have also become estranged from their families and friends. Additionally, without a social support network, recovering from substance addiction is very difficult. Even if they do break their addictions, the women at AWAC may have difficulty
remaining sober while at the shelter or sometimes on the street, where substances are so
widely used (Fisher and Roget, 2009).

Consequently, difficulties in being sober due to addictions, being estranged with
families and friends, and lack of mother-daughter relationship have the potential of making
them irresponsible mothers or guardians. Moreover, since some of these women lack a strong
mother-daughter bonding, nurturing their own daughters will be challenging as they have
inadequate knowledge and experience to do so. The interview below between my supervisor
and an AWAC staff member gives us a vivid example of the women’s behavior and attitude
towards mothering following drug addictions and substance use.

**Supervisor’s interview with AWAC staff Member**

Supervisor: You’ve worked here for a long time?

Staff Member: Yeah, 9 ½ years

Supervisor: So you know of what you speak. So what would you say are some of the patterns
here in regards to the mother-daughter theme? Do you believe a lot of women
here were not mothered well or they were not taught how to mother? What are
your thoughts on all that?

Staff Member: I think they were kind of young when they first became moms, and they were
not trained on how to do it.

Supervisor: So a pattern you would say is many of the women here were born to very young
moms and/or they were very young themselves when they had children

Staff Member: Yes.

Supervisor: If you wanted to teach them to be a better mom or to think about their moms
differently, what would be some of your thoughts on that?
Staff Member: Ummm……. I would like to think about their parents differently. I myself did not have my parents. I grew up in a foster home. I lost my mom when I was young, about 11, and I lost my dad when I was 12, so I had no parents.

Supervisor: Okay, so a lot of these people here were kind of orphaned kids, whether physically orphaned or not, but they felt alone in the world, abandoned.

Staff Member: Yes, I myself was lucky to have had a strict foster mom, so no matter how hard she was on us, I learned something.

Supervisor: So could you comment on any of the connections for some of the women here, addiction and drug abuse and mother stuff.

Staff Member: Well, they cannot do their mothering right now because of their addictions. Their addictions are too strong for them to think about…. They like to think about their little ones, but just to step back and look.

Supervisor: Okay, out of all the women here, let’s say as a guess, out of 100 women who have used this place how many would you say are moms?

Staff Member: Ummm…. I would say about half, maybe.

Supervisor: And the women can only be here once they are 19, correct?

Staff Member: Yes.

Supervisor: So about half of the women here have had a child or more than one child at some point in their lives and the child is not with them at this time.

Staff Member: Yes.

Supervisor: Out of 100 women here, if you had to guess, how many of them do you think had that kind of story of being in a foster home or residential school or being an orphan or being abandoned?
Staff Member: I would say probably ¾, maybe.

Supervisor: So, the fact is that they have had mothers without skills, so how do you pass on something to a child, if you have never had it yourself? How do you give it?

Staff Member: It's pretty hard, very hard to do that.

Supervisor: One of the things we have been noticing with the art work is that, we have been asking them to paint about or express about their own mom or about being a mom, what kind of mom they are? What we are noticing is that a lot of the women do a lot of the sparkly, happy stuff like I love my mom so much, and my mom loves me so much, we have always had a beautiful magical relationship. And I think they might be trying to gloss that over a little bit.

Staff Member: They are delusional.

Supervisor: Hahahaha, I was trying not to go there, but yeah. It has seemed that way because with some of the women I actually know the mom and the daughter. And I know the mom has addiction issues, and I know the daughter does. I know they fight and yell at each other. I heard that one mother had pimped her daughter out when she was young, and yet the daughter was still saying they had a good relationship. So, how loving and caring and tender could you be if your mom sets you up.

Staff Member: Yeah, we heard that too. And we thought “WHAT?,” and we were all trying to find out, but we have to leave it back there, and if they want to bring it forward we will talk about it.

Supervisor: So would you say that the women so strongly wishes to have had the dreamy
mother-daughter relationship that they kind of pretend while doing art? Some of the pieces over there are beautiful and pink and sparkly and so on. My thought is that you probably would not be here at AWAC if you had that much love and that much comfort and affirmation.

Staff Member: If I did not get this job, I would still be out there. I used to be....uhh... wild.

So, now with my kids and grandkids and all that, I really try to be there......

Supervisor: To be emotionally present, you mean?

Staff Member: Yeah, instead of looking in from the side.

Supervisor: So that connection, that ability to have a really heartfelt connection, is one of the mother-daughter absences here. Aside from even mother-daughter stuff, the women do not know whom to love in a sincere way. They know how to do trades, barters and manipulations, a lot of stuff like that, but to unselfishly and maturely give in a way with boundaries with respect and dignity, a lot of them do not know that stuff at all.

Staff Member: Not really, no.

Supervisor: They have had harsh lives, so even in the mother-daughter relationship that harshness shows up. Mention one thing you would want to change if given the opportunity about these relationships. What would be one message you would want us to help daughters or mothers come to think about?

Staff Member: Ummm...more openness, more talking. Get it out, do not hold it in. If you got resentment against your mother or daughter speak about it. Do not hold it in.

Supervisor: Be sincere?
Staff Member: Yes.

Supervisor: And that takes courage.

Staff Member: Yes.

The interview between my supervisor and the AWAC staff member clearly shows that many of the women at AWAC live in delusion or denial because, although their relationships with their mothers/daughters are disconnected, they still pretend and act like it is a good relationship. In reality, however, it is a disconnected relationship because some of the mothers were too young when they had these children and, as a result, they were not mature enough to give them good guidance and establish an excellent relationship.

Consequently, their relationship with their children will have a lifelong influence on their personality, behavior and self-esteem. Next, the power of expression is very important, even though most mothers fail to express themselves, as was stated by the staff member in the interview. The mothers and daughters fail to explicitly communicate their feelings, and they seem to assume that the other person knows and understands how they feel, regardless of whether or not they have actively expressed those feelings. Additionally, some of the mothers were not good caregivers because their own mothers were not. However, you do not give what you do not have. Often you can only transfer good traits if they have been deposited inside of you (Transken, 2011).

A mother-daughter story.

This is a mother-daughter story from my co-facilitator. She was interviewed as part of this research because she wanted to tell her own mother-daughter story in a visual piece. This is in harmony with Chang’s collaborative ethnography and with Feminist ethics. Si made a visual piece of a woman’s purse. The purse was made of pinks and reds: pink being
the color of girls and feminine traits, while red represents anger, hurt, cuts, blood, and the menstrual cycle. Additionally, in terms of motherhood, the birthing process is associated with blood and red colors. The mother-daughter relationship is like this purse with baggages on both sides. One half is for the mother and the other half for the daughter. The middle part is what connects both women. Each half has little stickers that emphasize the similar attributes/characteristics, and the baggage the mother and daughter carry in their purse, "person."

Figure 11. Si’s purse

This piece was made to illustrate their mother-daughter relationship through art. Si wanted to tell us who her mother was, who she has been and what her feelings may have been. This is a graphic representation of a purse that signifies the baggage (i.e., hurt, pain, shame, depression, humiliation, sadness, and abuse) they both carry as mother and daughter, as shaped by the events that have happened in their lives.

Si grew up in an abusive home. Her father was physically, sexually and emotionally abusive, though he had his own pain and trauma in his past that drove him to inflict pain on his family. Subsequently, her mother shut down emotionally as a result of his actions; she
was hurt, and her heart ceased to feel. She lived daily with shame, loss and grief. Moreover, her children were not exempted. Si did not experience much happiness, goodness and connection in her childhood home. She was abused by her father from the time she was born to about age 15. Therefore, due to this circumstance, there was a complicated unnurturing mother-daughter relationship between her and her mother because she blamed her mother for not standing up to stop the cruel acts of her father.

Thus, she started thinking years later about how many of these things she could have done differently, what would have happened if her mother interfered; if her father had not been there or if her mother had married a different man, would her mother have been more generous, kinder and sweeter. It is hard to know why her mother is so cruel and emotionally absent. Maybe it is because of the terrible circumstances she experienced or it may be because she is a bad person. It is hard to know because it is impossible to extract experiences and memories in context. This is the reason why the piece has a space for the mother and a space for the child. The middle part is what connects them in their mother and daughter relationship - blood and cultural expectations. However, where does this connection begin and end between them in their relationship as mother and daughter?

Subsequently, the middle part of the piece has a veil that signifies the disconnection between Si and her mother. There are two teardrops in the middle of the piece, and a clock representing time that has been misted over. Si is connected to her mother through shared absence. An example would be on Mother’s Day. They both feel sad because their mother-daughter relationship did not work out well. Consequently, they are connected by this feeling of sadness, but they are completely disconnected because Si never wants to speak to her mother again.
Next, the word "togetherness" is attached to a cord and is hanging down the middle of the piece. Si and her mother are supposed to be together but her father, as a third party, comes in the middle and is always interfering in their mother-daughter relationship. Furthermore, she stitched the cord together with wires covered in a soft furry coating and covered it with glue to make it feel prickly, nasty and harsh because that is what the relationship between her and her mother feels like. They are two human beings from the same blood that are never connected.

Conversely, what is most intriguing is that, all her life, whenever she says these kinds of things to people, they say, "oh, you do not mean that, everybody loves their mother" or someone will say, "no, your mother loves you, mothers always love their children."

However, at this point, Si is telling her story so that this belief that all mothers and daughters are connected will be revised because it was never so in her own lived experience. Although there is the saying in our culture that blood is thicker than water and home is the where the heart is, neither was true for Si. Similarly, many women in a place like AWAC have had troubled mother/daughter experiences.

**Emerging themes/research findings from the workshop**

Following the turn of events during this eight-week workshop, I understood that the shelter demography is concurrently static and transient and is characterized by a disorganized intersection of mental health, addiction and chronic homelessness issues. Consequently, some groups of women for over one year and a half have made AWAC their primary space of habitation. It is also transient because the women come and go randomly to detox, go home to the reserve, to work camp jobs, to sleep by the river in the summer, go home to their families, live with a new boyfriend or sometimes to jail, and then back to AWAC when the
addiction has reared its head once again, often because the family is too dysfunctional or the boyfriend becomes violent again.

Additionally, there are individuals who are not locals, who may normally access other agencies, who slip through the cracks of the system or who call AWAC as an initial outreach, but who do not stay for longer than the duration of a meal because it is an agency that responds to women with all kinds of needs. The transience of the group very much characterizes the dynamics of the shelter itself and the chaos of the women's lives in general. The women who came to the workshop were all individuals who are fairly stable in their lives, and who have been long-term clients of AWAC. These women tend to come and stay for the duration, and then return to the reserve or to a job for a similar length of time.

Especially interesting at the workshop was the general lack of hoarding, which is often a trait of women who live in poverty. They will hoard food, clothes, beauty products, and almost anything imaginable. Maybe they did not see the art materials as valuable enough for them to hoard. However, they stole from the activity room during the workshop, displaying a attribute common to people living in shelters. As the women were empowered to create, to make choices, and to be decision makers, they developed a sense of ownership, responsibility and belonging. This was especially true for women who attended more than three sessions. These observations were consistent with the findings of previous studies (McNiff, 2004). The transformations in these women are created by the social environment in which they find themselves. The social environment involved flexible and open interaction, listening and sharing in decisions, learning from mistakes, trusting in people, and a pervasive sense that the process was more important than the goal.
This process became apparent during the workshop as the women adapted to and emulated the communication modeling done by the participant observers. Those who initially came to participate would watch and then tentatively join in, but after the first few sessions, most of the women engaged immediately in the process and freely asked questions about the materials or the project in general. We spoke of family histories and how family matters in both helpful and hurtful ways. We talked about life in the shelter, which some of the women said was not the best place to call home, but is a lot better than being homeless.

Figure 12. Taped mattresses at AWAC

Furthermore, as the researcher, I completely understood what the women meant when they said that AWAC is not a place to call home because the facility does not have a home setting. The facility is structured to accommodate women in need temporarily; thus the needed love, support, peace and comfort that a home offers is missing. An example of an ugly sight found in the shelter is the beds which the women sleep on. The mattresses are torn and need to be changed, but funding apparently is not available so they decided to tape the mattresses.
From the picture above, one can see that the shelter actually shields one from the outside world, but it is not always better, because the rooms are not cozy, the beds are not like that of a home, and the larger community environment where the shelter is located is a potentially hostile one. However, when a person does not have accommodations, living or staying in a place like this is a lot better than living on the street, particularly during the cold season. This happens to be the tragedy for most of the women at AWAC. Some of the reasons why women end up at AWAC or are homeless include drug addiction, poverty, failed relationships, etc.

**Homelessness**

The homeless women at AWAC are disadvantaged on the grounds of not having a home, being female, poor, a member of a minority group, and possibly being disabled, mentally ill or an addict. These intersections create unique experiences and challenges for those experiencing multiple forms of inequity. The women at AWAC, like homeless women elsewhere, seek shelter because they desire a safe and clean shelter environment and do not have the ability to protect themselves from possible assault on the streets (DeWard & Moe, 2010).

These women personally negotiate the cognitive and emotional baggage of coping with a deeply stigmatized social identity. Living at the shelter provides an ever-present personal reminder of their stigmatized position, forcing the undesirable position of the stigmatized identity to be highly salient (Craft 1987; Link & Phelan, 2001). These women are often embarrassed and ashamed of their status; however, living in the shelter does not mean a life of misery twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Many of the homeless women at AWAC may be miserable, but some of those who are homeless also have fun.
when they are spending their time on the street (Hodgetts, 2006). Like women everywhere, they have some contradictory and complex emotions and experiences. However, drug and alcohol addiction is one major factor contributing to their being homeless (Wright, 1997).

**Addiction to substance use and alcohol**

Substance use is an important health, economic, and social issue. Substance use refers to the use of any type of drug that the federal government categorizes as having a higher-than-average possibility to become addicted to (Health Canada, 2009). The use of substances is a demoralizing experience for women, families, and communities across Canada. The women at AWAC are not excluded from this demoralizing challenge due to the use of drugs and alcohol. The use of drugs and alcohol is a perpetual habit, and it has drained them emotionally, financially, and keeps their health unstable because of the negative effects that surround the use of drugs and alcohol.

Furthermore, substance use and alcohol have numerous consequences, including heightening the risk of violence, physical and mental health issues, and financial concerns (Varcoe & Dick, 2007). Financial concerns/declines have contributed immensely to the women’s present homeless state at AWAC. Next, some of the mothers at AWAC lost their children to foster care or lost custody rights because of these addictions. The government sees them as unstable caregivers and, as a result, many have lost custody of their children. Some of the mothers decide on their own to put the children up for adoption, not because they do not love them, but because they are not capable mentally to meet the challenges of care giving.

Moreover, most of the women are highly addicted to substances and alcohol. They cannot find stable jobs due to this situation, and they often spend their stipends on drugs and
alcohol instead of on more wholesome forms of self-care. Even when they are sent for rehabilitation, in some cases they still return to drugs. However, this gives those in power an opportunity to rule over a population of people who are traumatized and distracted due to dealing with alcohol, drug addiction, post traumatic stress disorder, and constant distress (Asein, 1993; Bishop, 1994; Haug, 1992). “Exploited and oppressed groups of women are usually encouraged by those in power to feel that their situation is hopeless, that they can do nothing to break the pattern of domination” (Hooks, 2000, p. 27-8).

**Family and partner violence**

This is one of the most commonly cited causes for homelessness among women. This cause has precipitated homelessness for many women and their children, ultimately leading them to live in emergency shelters like AWAC (City of Toronto, 2001). Some of the women at AWAC previously lived with a spouse or partner and may have left as a result of domestic abuse. These women may have experienced violence and abuse in different forms because of reasons ranging from household financial problems, social isolation, emotional problems, addiction and dependence. An example of this would be the story of Julia and Jodi which was mentioned earlier.

Women and daughters fleeing violent homes include those living in small and remote communities, such as many Aboriginal women, women without language skills or established social networks, women with limited education, without a recent employment history or with disabilities (Braun & Black, 2003; Cleo, 2007; Novac, 2006). These women are extraordinarily vulnerable when fleeing abuse from their homes and some of the women at AWAC fall into the categories mentioned above.
Parenting/disconnections in relationships

Parenting is a huge problem for most of the women at AWAC because of their addictions to substance use and alcohol. As a result, most of the women are too unstable to take care of themselves and their children. In addition, parenting within shelters may be hindered by shelter rules, regulations and conditions. Furthermore, concerns about the effects of overcrowding, having no suitable space for children to play, the absence of home-cooked meals, and a lack of culturally appropriate food or food that children are willing to eat are often mentioned as reasons for parental stress in a shelter environment.

Consequently, parents often display anger and coldness towards their children when they find themselves in such stressful and unstable situations. This may result in mistreating their children or not showing them love. Moreover, actions like that can lead to disconnection in a relationship. Sometimes, however, it could be that those women who are now mothers went through the same harsh treatment from their own mothers. Therefore, they duplicate this behavior with their children because it is all they know.

Mothers at AWAC who have had their children taken away or who have given a child away feel a sense of not belonging. They are particularly hard on themselves, feeling as though their failure in motherhood was the most painful emotion they have endured, and it often makes them delusional and depressed. However, there are still some mothers/daughters who are not remorseful when they lose custody of their children, partly because they had similar experiences as children or are mentally impaired. The issue of separation at a very tender age for some of these mothers/daughters creates a permanent disconnection between them in their mother-daughter relationship. Conversely, for some of these women, it was the attitude displayed by their unstable mothers or the abuse they experienced from their mother...
or father, which they sometimes blame the mother for because she may have kept silent. An example of this is the story of Si and her mother. Thus, disconnections occur in the future relationships of daughters/mothers who fall into this category.

**Health/death**

Health and homelessness are highly interrelated. Homelessness gives rise to many health problems, both mentally and physically. Unending homelessness leads to apparent and well-documented health problems. Women at AWAC and homeless individuals on the street are more likely than other Canadians to experience chronic health problems, ranging from mental health and substance abuse issues to respiratory problems, heart problems and other countless variables. Moreover, severe stress arising from the AWAC environment and the lifestyle of the women can also lead to widespread mental-health problems. Mental disorders such as depression, schizophrenia and personality disorders are often associated with unending homelessness.

The women at AWAC who are addicted to some sort of substance, whether it be drugs, alcohol or cigarettes, are exposed to health threats. These may be direct physical symptoms such as liver and heart damage or there may be indirect threats such as HIV or other diseases which are communicable through intravenous drug use. Some communicable diseases that are familiar in the close quarters of AWAC among the women are vomiting, coughing, sneezing, scabies, eczema and rashes (Bradley, 2013).

The insecure or unfit environmental factors related to ventilation, insulation, and damp and unsanitary conditions have a direct impact on the health of these women. Stress and a lack of stability are again among the many factors which weaken their mental well-being. What further compounds these severe health problems is the fact that some of these
women often have reduced or no access to good health services. This could be due to a variety of reasons. They may be lacking medical insurance or social security documents. This may particularly be the case when homelessness arises from displacement. The women at AWAC may not be able to undertake the procedures that would entitle them to healthcare. Consequently, a lack of health care and medical attention could result in death.

**Prostitution**

Prostitution has always been a controversial subject that makes many individuals feel uncomfortable. Historically and officially, prostitution is something that has been typically looked down upon and viewed as morally repugnant. For the most part, society classifies people who indulge in prostitution as having low self-esteem and low socioeconomic status. Furthermore, feminists recognize prostitution as a kind of sexual slavery supported actively by men. “A prostitute by definition is one who exchanges sex or sexual favors for money, drugs or other desirable commodities” (Dalla, 2000, p. 344). Most of the women at AWAC are streetwalkers who are forced to rent their bodies for money. These women, for the most part, get into the life of prostitution to support an alcohol or drug addiction. Conversely, some of them find themselves trapped in this lifestyle due to broken households and abusive relationships which they ran away from in order to escape abuse.

They run to the streets because they are escaping from the violence in their homes; however, it often continues to be inflicted on them by pimps, Johns, and the public (Scott, 2007). The women at AWAC are frequently forced to work as prostitutes to make money for men who, at best, offer them uncertain protection, buy them drugs or enhance their welfare allowance, which is usually far below all standard measures of poverty. “Theirs is not the glamorous life of happy hooker in the Hollywood’s depiction of prostitution. Besides
violence, the life involves risky sex, drugs, and degradation; the women become pariahs in a society that is quick to protect the men” (Scott, 2007, p.132).

Thus, men are more protected than women, and they also have the power to make women subservient because we live in a patriarchal society. Women have to fight hard to overcome the power that men have over them in various aspects of their lives. Women at AWAC who are involved in prostitution are not far from the labor process itself because they experience what the everyday laborer goes through on a daily basis. Both groups of individuals rent their bodies and whatever else they can offer to the highest bidder. Furthermore, because of the inequality that exists between men and women, women at AWAC may be more oppressed and susceptible to jobs and positions in society that are less than desirable.

Moreover, they are liable to have positions in lower paying and unsatisfying employment opportunities. Van DerVeen (2001) explains this by saying that “Women often worked as prostitutes when other lucrative employment alternatives were unavailable to them, given the gender discrimination and occupational segregation that funneled women into particular occupations” (P. 32). According to this perspective, many women are involved in prostitution as a means of living, in the context of finding work by selling sex for survival.

Poverty

People are considered to be poor if their income is so low as to be intolerable, but the problem lies in determining what can be considered tolerable. Poverty is defined as deprivation because a large number of people who experience poverty today have been deprived by the ruling class of a proper standard of living. Poverty is a major antecedent
factor to homelessness. Poverty and homelessness are inextricably linked because women who live in poverty have a higher risk of being homeless (Francis, 1987; Morrell-Bellai, 2000). Poverty is defined in terms of deprivation, as insufficiency in basic human needs such as food, housing, clothing, education, medical care and other items required to maintain a decent standard of living.

Consequently, the women at AWAC fall under this definition and their basis of poverty is greatly influenced by their individual background, experience and environment. This social problem reproduces itself from generation to generation among some of these women and their families. Some of them are from a wretched background due to poverty and the chances of becoming wealthy are very narrow. Therefore, poverty becomes a cycle and is more like a permanent situation, where these women are trapped and unable to escape.

Understanding the cycle of poverty, as per the casualties of society, such as inadequate parenting; children who suffer varying degrees of abuse at home resulting in emotional disturbance, socially and intellectually deprived people, and unskilled or unemployed persons that do not earn enough to move out of social deprivation; people trapped in unstable and unsatisfying marriages; and those living dysfunctional family lives. All these interact with various linkages to keep people trapped in poverty. Most of the women at AWAC find themselves in these causative webs of poverty.

Poverty contributes to physical weakness through a lack of food, to isolation due to the inability to have money to travel for job seeking and pay fees for education, to vulnerability due to a lack of assets to pay for a high amount of expenses and powerlessness due to a lack of wealth. Most of the women at AWAC cannot afford good food and only eat...
junk food. Thus, they prefer junk food and only eat nutritious meals when they are at the shelter.

Therefore, these women would be consistently dependent on the government, family and friends because they do not have the basic tools to lay the foundation to become independent. Moreover, with the problem of addiction, which we have seen earlier is a huge defect for these women and they have a slim chance of getting out of poverty because addiction, for the most part, does not let the addictive person save or manage money. The addictive person always wants to satisfy the urge when it comes and, at that moment, he/she is ready to do anything to get to the level where the addiction will be satisfied. Moreover, living at AWAC has a negative effect on the impacts of poverty because if the shelter was not available, most occupants of AWAC would be living on the street.

Nevertheless, most of the women still prefer to stay at AWAC, even if some of them confessed that it was not a great place to be, it is still a lot better than living on the street, especially during the cold season. The shelter might shield them from the cold and violence of the street, but it does not provide the cozy warmth of a home. The shelter has a limited amount of indoor space, and there is generally a lack of indoor, outdoor and private space; the beds are torn and taped, the pillows are very flat, and the sheets are old. A striking feature associated with privacy is the lack of doors to separate rooms. Internal doors are scarce because the structure of the shelter does not allow room for inner doors. The availability of adequate living space within the shelter is small, and overcrowding is a common phenomenon, especially during the winter season when there is a high number of intakes.
Summary

These are the findings from this research, from transcribed interviews, field notes and photos I took during the workshop series. The transcribed interviews were read, compiled, re-read, analyzed, read again, and thematically coded. They were compared to my field notes to sort out the occurrence of issues based upon the art works and discussions during the different sessions at the workshop.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Implications

Parental relationships have a significant effect on children. A positive parent-child relationship creates a heightened sense of well-being, and a negative relationship can result in emotional distress (Baruch & Pleck, 1991). Moreover, the relationship between a mother and daughter is related to the psychological growth and well-being of the daughter (Donovan, 1999; Kitamura & Muto, 2001; Baruch & Barnett, 1983). Mothers have an influence on their daughters' character and early interactions with their daughters shape their daughters' identity. Therefore, when the daughters have a good relationship with their mothers, they have an increased sense of well being, connectedness, trust and self-esteem. These attributes may reflect in their future relationships with their children/grand children and continue in that sequence throughout different generations.

The primary objective of this thesis was to understand some of the reasons for disconnection in the mother-daughter relationship and the causes of homelessness among women who live in a shelter. The objective was to gain a rich and deeper understanding of the contextual realities of the mother-daughter relationship and not the general concept or notion provided by society. The present study used multi-method collaborative autoethenography research methods to address my research objectives. The sample size of the current study is fourteen and participants were selected as a drop-in basis. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher probed into the aspects of the mother-daughter relationship and got some emerging themes from the findings in the research.

The emerging themes from the research include:

Theme 1: Homelessness

Homeless women at AWAC are disadvantaged on the grounds of not having a home, being female, poor, a member of a minority group, and possibly being disabled, mentally ill
or an addict. These intersections create unique experiences and challenges for those experiencing multiple forms of inequity. Homelessness makes AWAC women vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse, as well as challenges related to cleanliness. These challenges make these women employ informal strategies, such as staying with friends or engaging in relationships with housed men to feel safe and secure (Klodawsky, 2002).

Furthermore, the loss of children to the child welfare system is often the impetus for ‘fallout’ in many women’s lives. Moreover, for women who grew up in foster care, experiences within the child welfare system have long-lasting effect on their personality as well as their relationship with their children. Like women everywhere, homeless women at AWAC sometimes have some contradictory and complex emotions and experiences. Consequently, spending their time on the street has become fun for these homeless women at the shelter (Hodgetts, 2006).

Theme 2: Addiction to substance use and alcohol

The women at the shelter most often turn to alcohol and other drugs for a great many reasons (i.e., living in a discriminatory society, the daily struggles of life, lack of social roles, minimal education, abusive upbringing, or alcoholism). Further, as a result of continuous self-medication, many of these women experience numerous health risks, both physically and psychosocially.

Theme 3: Family and partner violence

This is one of the most commonly cited causes for homelessness among women. This has precipitated homelessness for many women and their children, ultimately leading them to live in emergency shelters like AWAC (City of Toronto, 2001). Some of the women at AWAC previously lived with a spouse or partner and may have left as a result of domestic abuse. These women may have experienced violence and abuse in different forms because of
reasons ranging from household financial problems, social isolation, emotional problems, addiction and dependence. Additionally, the society has positioned women to be subservient to their male partners; therefore, the men are being favored, while women and their children are discriminated. This promotes continued inequality within the operational norms of society, religion and the law (Turner, 1987).

Theme 4: Parenting/disconnections in relationships

Parenting is a huge problem for most of the women at AWAC because of their addictions to substance use and alcohol. As a result, most of the women are too unstable to take care of themselves and their children. Parenting within shelters may be hindered by shelter rules, regulations and conditions. Furthermore, concerns over the effects of overcrowding, having no suitable space for children to play, the absence of home-cooked meals, and a lack of culturally appropriate food or food that children are willing to eat are often mentioned as reasons for parental stress in a shelter environment. (Anstett, 1997; Neal, 2004). Stress and the unbearable living condition of the shelter may cause residents to be hostile and cold towards their children, resulting in a dysfunctional relationship between mothers and their daughters (Mullender et al 2002).

Theme 5: Health/death

Health and homelessness are highly interrelated. Homelessness gives rise to many health problems, both mentally and physically. Women at the shelter are more likely than other Canadians to experience chronic health problems, ranging from mental health and substance abuse issues to respiratory problems, heart problems and other countless variables. Moreover, addiction to substance use, whether it is drugs, alcohol or cigarettes, exposes the user to several health threats. These may be direct physical symptoms such as liver and heart damage or there may be indirect threats such as HIV or other diseases, which are
communicable through intravenous drug use. Some transmissible diseases that are familiar in the close quarters of AWAC among the women are vomiting, coughing, sneezing, scabies, eczema and rashes (Bradley, 2013).

Theme 6: Prostitution

Prostitution has always been a controversial subject that makes many individuals feel uncomfortable. Historically, and officially, prostitution is something that has been typically looked down upon and viewed as morally repugnant. For the most part, society classifies people that indulge in prostitution as having low self-esteem and socioeconomic status. Most of the women at the shelter are streetwalkers who are forced to rent their bodies for money. These women, for the most part, get into the life of prostitution to support an alcohol or drug addiction. Some women find themselves trapped in this lifestyle, due to broken households and abusive relationships, which they ran away from in order to escape abuse.

Theme 7: Poverty

Poverty among the women in the shelter was a recurring theme. Poverty among the women at AWAC was greatly influenced by their individual background, experience and environment. This social problem reproduces itself from generation to generation among some of these women and their families. Therefore, poverty becomes a cycle and is more like a permanent situation, where these women are trapped and unable to escape.

The research helps us to understand that not all stereotypes are true. For example, the general consensus is that mothers are kind and loving caregivers. However as seen from the present study motherhood is challenging, and not all mothers are loving care givers or have a good relationship with their daughters. While the verbal expression or the text displayed on the canvas portray a wonderful relationship, the subjective experience may not be congruent
with what the mother and daughter experience in their relationship. An ideal example is the
story of Dora and her mother which is mentioned above. Another example is the case of a
woman at AWAC that often called her mother a “bitch” and is happy that she is dead
because she was a cruel mother.

Due to the aforementioned issues (i.e., poverty, mental-health problem, illiteracy,
abuse, prostitution, homelessness etc.) experienced by the women at AWAC, complete
eradication of these disconnections in the mother-daughter relationship is challenging.
Moreover, these women are often marginalized and they are living on the margins of in our
society. Thus, the women at AWAC, need longtime care with a lot of love, as well as social
support from all stakeholders. Perhaps, the introduction of longtime care may gradually
transit these women to full recovery.

Implications

The results from this study would be beneficial to mothers, daughters, educators and
professionals in the field of psychology, such as counselors and psychiatrists, and will be
helpful for future studies. Counselors can help mothers who have disconnection problems
with their daughters through this study and also daughters can receive help from counselors
about their disconnected relationships to their mothers. Furthermore, a counselor can act as a
guide to improve women’s disconnected relationship to their daughters and mothers.
Counselors, by using this study, could bring the importance of the mother-daughter
relationship to mothers’ notice.

Subsequently, if a mother is uneducated or does not recognize the importance to this
relationship, considering this study, daughters should try to improve their relationships with
their mothers and try to have better relationships with their own daughters in the future when
they become mothers. Moreover, this study has listed some of the major causes of homelessness, which can now be addressed to reduce or eradicate homelessness in our society. Understanding the causes of homelessness for women is critical to improving homelessness prevention, ensuring an effective service delivery system to address their needs while they are homeless, and helping them return to housing stability after becoming homeless. Finally, the findings from this study will give insight into the factors associated with homelessness among women as well as expressions of the mother-daughter relationship.

The present study also highlighted the funding challenges of women's shelters like AWAC. Funding constraints severely hamper the services that shelters are able to offer to women and their children, particularly since these women arrive at the shelter with health and behavioural concerns and material needs. Most often, the women in the shelter have no income while living in the shelter. The inadequate funding notwithstanding, the shelters are required to provide for the needs of these women and their children (i.e., food, transport, and toiletries). The funding available to the shelter does not cater for all these costs; hence the shelter continues to seek new avenues to raise funds as well as strategies to stay in operation. Consequently, the shelter cannot meet all of the needs of their occupants.

The budget in times of austerity for the staff at AWAC is a daily concern that forces the rationing of basic necessities and a complete elimination of luxuries. One instance is that the shelter is shorthanded in terms of the number and variety of staff required to provide comprehensive services to residents (Bradley, 2013). This is a situation the frontline workers/social workers at AWAC have to deal with because they do not want to conflict with the system, but they conserve their strength for the actual work with clients (Haug, 1992). Furthermore, shelters such as AWAC are unable to pay market-level or competitive wages to
employees, making it difficult to retain and recruit experienced staffs. It takes extra strength and patience in an already strained workday to negotiate with funders to attest to the necessity of providing greater than basic survival (Bradley, 2013). Funders should try to increase funding for the daily running of these organizations. They should also increase the salary of employees because inflation in the economy is high. We have to let them know through whatever means necessary that their budget-slashing harms their constituents (Bradley, 2013).

**Limitation of the study**

Cross-race interviewing, with a black researcher interviewing Aboriginal participants can be seen as a limitation to this study, based on claims that interviewers may gain more accurate information from participants of the same race. Nonetheless, the participants' knowledge that I was conducting this research as a graduate student working towards a graduate degree made our interactions and communication flow in a good sequence and my rapport with the participants revealed knowledge that might not have been gained by a researcher with a different social status.

Further, during the art workshops, it was difficult to facilitate and still be receptive, but I was privileged and relieved to have Dr. Transken, my supervisor, who could take over the roles of co-facilitator. Our strong work relationship greatly impacted our success. Additionally, the research was limited to women from ages 19-40. Consequently the sample size was not large enough. The sample size was small because participation for workshop was voluntary and women above 41 years of age declined from the study. However, saturation was achieved with the available participants. The majority of participants were Aboriginal. I presume that if we had a larger sample size of different demographics, there
would be more lived experiences to explore in a greater dimension. Thus, future studies exploring mother-daughter disconnection should include women in their 40's and above, in addition to women of all races.

**Conclusion**

The findings from this research add to the evidence that mother-daughter relationship has tremendous influence on a mother/daughter overall development, psychological well-being or life in the shelter. A fragmentation in this relationship results in disconnection between the mothers' and their daughters.

Most importantly, this present study has broadened my scope and skill sets about issues associated with mother-daughter relationship and homelessness. Moreover, a disconnection between mothers and their daughter has the potential of becoming intergenerational if not adequately addressed on time. Additionally, being a new mother, I will strive to establish a close-knit relationship with my child stronger than what I experienced with my mother, as this would establish a solid persona in my child compared to what I had. I have noted that to understand my role as a mother, I have to examine my relationship with my mother to gain insight into my perspective of mothering. As both a mother and a daughter, I can identify with these social constructions.
Reference


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Expressions of Mother-Daughter Disconnections and Homelessness in Prince George

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the Expressions of Mother-Daughter Disconnections and homelessness in Prince George. This study is being conducted by Somina Kuruye-Alele, a student of University of Northern British Columbia. The study is being conducted as part of her graduate thesis in Gender Studies.

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study, nor are there any costs for participating. Support will be provided by my supervisor, Dr Si Transken, who has twenty years of working with women issues as well as crisis intervention. Additionally, there are always two other trained staff in the building on Sundays and AWAC is affiliated to “Elizabeth Fry” a counseling service, which we can always refer the women to if the need arises. Elizabeth Fry is a society in Prince George that gives counseling to women, youth and children. One of the benefits is that the information you provide will help me understand the reasons for disconnections between mothers and their daughter as well as homeless people in the community. Additionally, I will leave a copy of my thesis at AWAC. Your identity will be confidential, unless you give consent for me to use your real names.

Interviews will be semi-structured and will contain open-ended questions exploring your lived experiences. With your consent, the interview will be recorded, so that it can be transcribed. The interviews will be 20-60 minutes in length, and if at any time you appear to
be distressed by sharing your experience, the interview will be concluded. Your questions
should be directed to me or my supervisor Dr Si Transken, and your complaints should be
directed to the Office of Research (REB). Data’s collected during interviews with an audio
tape recorder will be stored in a password computer at my supervisor’s office. Subsequently,
I, my supervisor and the paid transcriber will be the only once that will have access to the
data. Next, data stored in the password computer will be destroyed after one year. The final
data may be used for publications and scholarly presentations.

Participants who are under the age of consent will not be part of this project.
Participation is voluntary. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do
not wish to answer or withdraw from the research at any time. If participants withdraw
during the process of data collection, data gotten from participants will be withdrawn and
destroyed. If you wish to participate, please sign this form.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact

Researcher, Somina Kuruye-Alele, kuruye@unbc.ca 250-617-6463

Supervisor, Dr Si Transken si@unbc.ca 250-564-4753

For complaints contact: office of Research at, rebe@unbc.ca 250-960-6735

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Participants Name and Signature Date

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Researchers Name and Signature Date