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How Does Love Grow? Attachment Processes in Older Adoptees and  
Foster Children as Illustrated by Fictional Stories

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of Psychological Foundations in Education

We accept this dissertation as conforming  
to the required standard

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### Abstract

Although there has been an abundance of research on attachment, few studies have researched the treatment of attachment difficulties or have used qualitative methods. This study explores how older adoptive/foster children with attachment difficulties form attachments with their adoptive/foster parents. The method of inquiry is fictional stories. I show how children in the context of new relationships with healthy attachment figures who do not abandon or hurt them, modify their inferred internal constructions of attachment figures.

This study has four parts: In the first part, I introduce the subject of attachment and the research method of fiction. In the second part, I discuss how I came to choose fiction as the method of inquiry. I explore the matter of the ethics of doing research with children, including the difficulty of gaining informed consent and the inherent dangers of a dual relationship of counsellor-researcher. I deconstruct the authority of the *Human Research Ethics Committee* and explore the relationship of fiction to truth in terms of the assumptions that there is no one true set of facts, but rather multiple constructed realities or "fictions".

In part 3, I present 5 fictional stories, featuring composites of various children with attachment difficulties I have worked with as a psychotherapist. They are all children who have been able to overcome many internal barriers to attach to their parents. There is a first person account of an 11 year old adoptive child who spent his infancy in a Romanian orphanage; a radio play of a 5 year old black child who spent part of his infancy in an orphanage in Haiti; a didactic-descriptive account of a foster parent as attachment figure with 4 hard-to-reach youth; a short story of a 15 year old adopted teenager who rejects her

adoptive parents and later, returns to them; and a fairy tale depicting a lonely, distancing 8 year old girl who connected with her rejecting mother.

Interspersed throughout these stories are my own poetry and prose that offer other perspectives on the topic of attachment.

Part 4 is the discussion and interpretation of the underlying issues raised by the text, presented in the multivocal style of a T.V. show. Topics include the adoptive/foster child's torturous ambivalence toward the attachment figure/parent; a period of rejection of the parent; the child's fear and pain associated with his/her own unfulfilled longing; and the child's re-enactment of the trauma. The implications for Child Welfare practice, training of child care workers and counsellors are discussed. The relevancy of these children's inner conflicts regarding attachment to our own struggles with love individually and as a society is mentioned.

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Dedicated to  
all the adopted and foster children I have known  
whose strength and hope  
never cease to amaze and inspire me

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### The Subject of the Study-- *Attachment*-- and the Need for the Study

In reading the literature on *attachment* and reflecting on my practice as a social worker and currently as a psychotherapist, I have constructed the following description of what constitutes an *attachment relationship* (usually referred to as simply an *attachment*):

An *attachment* is a reciprocal loving bond that develops over time between two people. This bond transcends time and place, enduring even when the two people are separated by circumstance, including death. This enduring quality comprises the assumption that children as young as preverbal infants (Tronik, 1993) develop intraorganizational structures which include internal representational working models of *self* and *attachment figures* (Bowlby, 1969/1984, p.373). (Compare to Anna Freud's [1965] stage of object constancy in infants.) In the presence of the loved *other*, or in some cases, conjuring up the *other* in fantasy, the *self* experiences a sense of safety, security, nourishment and specialness. Accordingly, the loss of an attachment figure is associated with profound psychic pain. In the young child, the loss of an attachment figure on whom he/she depends for nurturance and protection, leaves the child with unassuageable grief and often an inability to modulate his/her own physiological arousal (van der Kolk, 1994). The bond the *self* has formed with the loved *other* is unique and irreplaceable despite the availability of *others* to attach to or the fact that the *self* may also love or have loved *others*. Although *attachments* may develop between adults (Hazan & Shaver, 1987); between siblings (Bank & Kahn, 1979); between peers; between a therapist and a client; or between a loved pet and a child/adult (Masson, 1997), it is the *attachment* a child or youth forms with a loved caregiver that is the subject of this dissertation. I am convinced that it is only when a child experiences the *holding environment* (Winnicott, 1965) of a healthy

*attachment* relationship that the child can begin to heal from his/her history of trauma or neglect. This notion is further explored in my writing about *Sylvia* (pp.97-113) below.

I will briefly put my study in the context of attachment theory, as follows: (A detailed review of literature is available in *Appendix A* of this dissertation.)

Attachment theory was introduced over 30 years ago by John Bowlby, the eminent British psychiatrist, in the publication of the first volume of his seminal work, his trilogy, entitled *Attachment and loss* (1969/1984, 1973, 1980). Bowlby's theory arose out his own thoughtful observations as well as the observations of colleagues, such as James Robertson (1952), of the emotional reactions of young children who were hospitalized and suffered unwilling separations from their primary attachment figures, usually their mothers. Bowlby (1969/1984) described a predictable "deteriorative sequence" these temporarily 'abandoned' children went through, from vigorous *protest*, sometimes referred to as "coercive anger" or the "anger of hope"; to *despair*, encompassing grief and mourning, at which time the child remained preoccupied with the mother and vigilant for her return; to finally, emotional *detachment* where the child appeared to lose interest in the mother's return, presumably as a defence against the pain of separation (p.27-34).

In addition, Bowlby (1944) had previously studied juvenile thieves who were described as "hard-boiled" and "affectionless" by their caregivers and found that these children had all suffered prolonged early separations from their mothers. He believed that the children, determined to never be hurt again, had "become locked in a painful isolation that would imprison them forever, their hunger for love and their rage at its absence only showing itself in eruptions of meaningless sex, theft, and aggression" (Karen, 1994, p.58). Bowlby (1944) felt that behind the children's "mask of indifference" was a "bottomless misery and behind the callousness, despair" (p.39).

Closely allied with Bowlby, was Mary Ainsworth, in Baltimore, who provided empirical evidence of Bowlby's formulations in *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation* (1978). In a laboratory setting, Ainsworth and her colleagues developed the innovative *Strange Situation Procedure*, in order to study the quality of the affectional tie of an infant (of 12-18 months) to his or her mother.

Over this almost 30 year period of time, attachment theorists and researchers have made enormous contributions to our knowledge of child development. Contributions that are relevant to this study have been described in detail in *Appendix A: Review of the literature*.

However, despite the extensive research on patterns of attachment (usually of children up to the age of 6 and positivist in vein) and more recently, the relationships of disturbed attachment to various problems such as eating disorders (Kenny & Hart, 1992); depression (Hortacsu, Cesur, & Oral, 1993); teenage runaways (Stefanidis, Pennbridge, MacKenzie, & Pottharst, 1992), to name a few, there has been a dearth of studies of the treatment of children with attachment difficulties (Cf. McKelvey & Randolph, 1995).

Birginden (1994) concurs:

Despite a voluminous research literature on attachment, the clinical applicability of attachment theory and the utility of therapeutic interventions in which it is applied have yet to be explored (p.417).

In fact, it was only in 1994, that a direct relationship between the theory of attachment and a client's emotional health was formally acknowledged by the medical profession by the addition of the diagnosis of *reactive attachment disorder of infancy and early childhood* in the *DSM-IV* (American Psychiatric Association). Please see *Appendix B*.

Yet, in extreme cases, the long term effects of children *never* having had the experience of being emotionally connected to an adult caregiver, are presumed to be crippling and irreversible. For example, Michael Rutter in 1979, spoke of the child's

failure to form a bond with his or her caregiver as the root of "affectionless psychopathy". Today, these so-called "unattached children" are called by Magid and McKelvey (1987) the "trust bandits" of modern society for stealing others' trust. They express no remorse if caught in wrongdoings; they have no empathy for others' sufferings; they are considered "children without a conscience." If they are untreated in childhood, they are considered untreatable in adulthood.

Similarly, Fraiberg (1977) speaks pessimistically of the prognosis of children without early attachments:

Children who have been deprived of mothering, and who have formed no personal bonds during the first two years of life, show permanent impairment of the capacity to make human attachments in later childhood, even when substitute families are provided for them. The degree of impairment is roughly equivalent to the degree of deprivation (p.53).

In my view, these statements of Fraiberg (1977), Magid and McKelvey (1987), and Rutter (1979) about "unattached children" may hold true especially *if there is no early therapeutic intervention* or other mitigating factor, such as the internal construct often called *resilience* (that may be a function of temperament and that Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target [1994] tie to a capacity to *self-reflect* [p.250]).

However, most of the children and youth that appear in my office for psychotherapy for attachment difficulties, such as the older foster and adoptive children I work with, have experienced at least one attachment bond with a caregiver, usually an adult, but sometimes, an older sibling. In some cases, the child's innate propensity to attach (Bowlby, 1969/1984, p.178) is so strong, that when no parent figure is available, a powerful attachment forms with a sibling, who is often older (Bank & Kahn, 1979).

It is significant that even if the loved person has abandoned or abused the child, the child has *experienced* loving and being loved which the child internalizes as a belief, however faint, that he/she is *capable* of loving and being loved. This child suffers

emotional distress but does not have the emotional disability of the child who has formed *no* initial bond (Rutter, 1979,1981; Vaillant, 1985). It is indeed the case that "Tis better to have loved and lost / Than never to have loved at all" (Tennyson, 1809-1892, *In Memoriam*). The deeply hurt children I see are *capable* of overcoming barriers to love and be loved, *if* they have a suitable caregiver they can attach to. My role as a psychotherapist is to assist this attachment process.

In order to prevent older child adoptions or foster placements from *disrupting*, it is imperative that steps be taken to help families work successfully with attachment disturbed children. In my practice as a psychotherapist, I see loving, healthy parents; and children who are desperately fighting against accepting their love. Discouraged adoptive parents often find these children unrewarding as "they don't love back."

Yet I intuitively see in many of these children the longing for love that somehow could not close the "space within" the yearning for love and the embracing of that love. Sadly, these ultimately lonely children could not bridge the "space between " (Josselson, 1992) self and other. The esteemed poet, T.S. Eliot (1954) could be expressing this feeling of "attachment frustration" (Neufeld, personal communication, July 10, 1997), emptiness and despair in his poem, *The Hollow Men*: "Between the conception / And the creation / Between the emotion / And the response/ Falls the Shadow / Between the desire / And the spasm / Between the potency / And the existence / Between the essence / And the descent / Falls the Shadow."

In any event, when an adoption or foster placement disrupts, whatever the stated cause, the child interprets it, in my view, as another confirmation that he or she is essentially unlovable. A failed placement, usually not the first the child has experienced, is often referred to, in the field, as "another nail in the child's coffin." As the number of shattered placements pile up, so do the child's defences against caring and being cared about. There is an increasing likelihood that the child will choose an "I don't care"

loveless and isolated existence, perhaps punctuated with disconnected expressions of emotion, as illustrated in the following poem I wrote:

*The Whispers of Alice*

They rescued Alice  
 A left over, wrinkled baby  
 Of loose beginnings  
 (Red satin sheets, paid parts)  
 And no manners.

She shied away from the light  
 (Sharp teeth and long fingers)  
 Like a startled insect.  
 In dark corners her stares  
 And unheard thoughts  
 Made them uneasy.

They said she had a vicious streak--  
 Would scratch and bite you if she could.  
 They used hot water and the cold  
 Edges of instruments  
 Until stones grew like pearls  
 In her throat and her flesh  
 Turned to metal.

II

When she was older  
 She moved from their house  
 To occupy a rented room.  
 She felt no different there,  
 Forgotten wallpaper  
 (Faded but still),  
 Bed table chair  
 (Others left behind),  
 Stayed in their places.

Her tight blue suit  
 Clean and pressed,  
 Column of buttons  
 Neatly fastened,  
 Kept the insides

From falling out.  
Her small blonde wig  
Covered the cracks  
In her skull.  
Only her feet began to sweat  
And her eyes to flutter  
Like falling leaves.  
Soon she could not stop  
The whispers:

## III

"There is too much dirt  
The man next door  
Doesn't wash himself  
The baby died in her crib  
Do I speak to him?  
The cat wants in  
Get off my lap  
Don't come near me  
The forest is on fire  
All of us must go  
Underground  
Dig out our own  
Hollow  
Damp but they don't  
Leak.  
We will wait out  
The heat, it will pass  
Us by, we will come out  
When the bitter moon  
Drives the unclean ones  
Into the dry shadows.  
We will scratch  
For bugs in the brittle  
Bark of fallen trees  
They will never find us  
'Till the metal tubing breaks  
So bad it cannot be  
Tampered with  
And then..."

## IV

The earth accepts the dead  
As a matter of course.  
In time, the soil is enriched.

#### An Overview of this Inquiry

In this inquiry, I have chosen fiction as the vehicle to best describe attachment processes of older adoptees and foster children.

In the following overview of this inquiry, I will briefly speak about my choice of fiction, use of composite characters, and my voice throughout; the research question; the purposes of the inquiry; the form of the text-- a "layered account" (Ronai, 1995); and the organization, by chapters, of this dissertation.

#### Fiction: Composite Characters; and Voice

Choosing fiction as the vehicle for my study was a personally painful but thought provoking and transformative process for me, wherein the ethics of my practice as a researcher *and* a psychotherapist were challenged and, in time, resolved. Through this process I came to realize that fictional stories of attachment processes would give me the greatest freedom to speak and the greatest chance to be heard in the most ethical fashion possible in the answering of my research question. I will tell the story about how I came to choose fiction in chapter 2 of this dissertation.

The main characters I have developed are composite figures who derive from foster children and older adopted children I have met, who have a history of being marginalized and objectified by the Child Welfare systems that purport to care for them. Their stories deserve to be told with all the implications that the telling may have for political change in the ruling relations of the dominant Child Welfare social structures. Reinharz (1992) emphasizes the vital *demystification* framework of research, whereby "the very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness" (p.191).

Throughout this inquiry, *my* voice is overtly and unabashedly present. There is no doubt that it was I who authored the text-- my poetry and prose, the fictional stories, the theoretical commentary. My writing is informed by my ongoing reading and questioning of the literature on attachment; consulting with professionals who are knowledgeable about attachment issues; my 20 years of experience working (and reflecting on this work) as a social worker and psychotherapist with troubled children and their families; and my own attachment history.

I will now speak about my research question; the purposes of this inquiry; the form of the text, a "layered account" (Ronai, 1995) of theoretical commentary, fiction about *other*, and personal poetry and prose; and the organization of this dissertation.

#### Research Questions

"How do children break through barriers to love new parents and to be loved by them?" Phrased in constructivist terms, I ask, "How do children modify their constructions of attachment figures when their history has taught them that such figures will abuse or abandon them?" The question simply is, "How does love grow?"

Answering the above questions leads to answers to the following supplementary questions:

"How can we as psychotherapists assist children who associate confusion, pain and despair with attachment figures, to attach again to new parents?" "How can we guide and support adoptive parents in this process?"

#### Purposes of this Inquiry

The purposes of this inquiry are as follows:

First, it is "to show rather than tell" (Denison, 1996, p.352) by means of fictional stories, in genres that best suit the content, how attachment processes in older adoptees and foster children occur. Denzin (1994) calls this process inviting readers "to live their way into the experience" (p.511). Second, it is to advance knowledge or to generate

theories which are in themselves generative, about these attachment processes. Daly (1997) argues that "theories in the interpretive tradition are in essence *stories*" (p. 355). Third, it is to educate adoptive parents, foster parents and psychotherapists about these attachment processes. Fourth, it is to be (at least parts of this work) accessible to many readers, not just the elite members of the academy. Fifth, it is to reveal by means of personal poetry and prose the "authored nature" of this work (Agger, 1989, 1990), who I am not only as researcher, but as living, feeling person with my own attachment history. Sixth, the purpose of this inquiry is to raise awareness about "the silenced," that is, the older adoptee and foster child in order to change "those conditions [of Child Welfare practice] that seek to silence and marginalize" (Tierney, 1993, p.5). (Cf. Fine & Weiss, 1996, p.264; Le Compte, 1993, p.10.)

The Form of the Text: A "Layered Account" (Ronai, 1995) of Theoretical  
Commentary, Fiction about *Other*, and Personal Prose and Poetry

This dissertation is an unconventional "layered account" (Ronai, 1995), comprised of an intertextual dance of 3 interrelated kinds of writing--abstract theoretical commentary, fiction about *other*, and personal poetry and prose. Ronai describes the "layered account" as "an impressionistic sketch", "a narrative form designed to loosely represent to, as well as produce for, the reader as continuous dialectic of experience, emerging from the multitude of reflexive voices that simultaneously produce and interpret a text" (p.396). As well as writing about the growing attachment of the children and youth to their substitute parents by means of the fictional works and commentary, I have interspersed throughout this dissertation, poetry and prose relating to my own process of self-discovery through writing (Richardson, 1994) from the standpoint of a white woman of privilege, who is *familiar* with (in the sense of the Latin derivation of the word, *familia*, meaning family) and has *lived* my own struggles with attachment difficulties.

Although I have separated these three kinds of writing above, this separation is an artificial one. My personal writings could also be described as fictional as I continuously make up or compose my evolving life story. The fictions about *other*, as products of the imagination, are also inextricably about *my-self*. Krieger (1991) asserts that "when we discuss others, we are always talking about ourselves" (p.5). Ronai (1995), too, states that "sociology is a personal reflection of the sociologist creating it" (p.395). Even the line between fiction and academic commentary is fuzzy. Denzin (1989) states that fiction is not the opposite of truth, it is "fashioned out of something that was thought, imagined, acted out, or experienced" (p.137). Social science writing, also like fiction, tells stories, with the distinguishing features between them being "agreed upon stylistic conventions" (Ceglowski, 1997, p.194). Richardson (1994) states that "all disciplines have their own set of literary devices and rhetorical appeals, such as probability tables, archival records, and first person accounts" (p.519).

#### The Organization, by Chapters, of this Dissertation

I have organized the chapters as follows:

Chapter one is the introduction. I begin by placing this inquiry in its theoretical context of attachment theory. (A comprehensive review of the literature on attachment is contained in *Appendix A*.) Then, I discuss the need for this study and include a poem, *The Whispers of Alice* to illustrate the frightened and lifeless existence of someone who has no loving connection with anyone. I next present an overview of this study in which I briefly speak about my choice of fiction as a method of inquiry, use of composite characters, and the consistent speaking in my voice throughout. Also included in this overview are the research question; purposes of the inquiry; the form of the text, a "layered account" (Ronai, 1995); and this summary of how the text is organized.

Chapter two describes in detail the process of how I came to write a fictional study in terms of the interlocking matters of ethics, truth, fiction, and self.

In the first section of chapter two, I describe my original research plans to do a narrative study of an adoptive family that I was also working with as a psychotherapist and the subsequent lack of approval of my application to the University's *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)*. I include an excerpt from the final decision made by the *HREC*.

The second section of chapter two encompasses, in general, a discussion of the dominant discourse of the *HREC*, ethical considerations raised by the *HREC*, and other ethical viewpoints. Specifically, I consider the ethics of a dual relationship of psychotherapist and researcher; deconstruct and question the authority and power of the *HREC* (*deconstruct* means "to identify and evaluate the guiding themes or discourses that structure its current dominant forms" [Burman, 1994, p.1]); question whether my proposed research would be harmful in the way the *HREC* mentions; examine the silencing and oppressive effects of the *HREC*; bring forward other ethical standpoints; outline ethics of concern that the *HREC* did not mention or emphasize, such as the concern about methods rather than content, the possible harm to the participant when the research is written up (illustrated by a personal anecdote), and the difficulties surrounding informed consent in qualitative research; and finally, I describe the process of decision-making I went through which lead me to choose to abandon a narrative case study with participants/clients. Under this latter heading, I include the concern with the children/participants reading my writing about them, the concern about deserting my clients to do research on them, and the decision to *not* ask my clients/participants to see a "neutral" third party to sign consents to participate.

The third section in chapter two describes, in general, my turning to writing fiction as research and the interrelated matters of truth, subjectivity, knowledge, representation, and credibility. More specifically, I speak about my thoughts which lead me to turn to fiction

as a method of inquiry, particularly its freedom and evocative power; I examine fictional stories as research; and discuss considerations of subjectivity, truth, knowledge and representation in research. Under this latter heading, I discuss fiction writing as inquiry from a postmodern perspective; the self in inquiry, including why attachment theory resonates with me; the matters of fiction, truth, self, and representation; how fiction as research can be judged, including criticisms of fiction as research; and representation and language. The final discussion in this section is regarding my credibility in this inquiry and its ties to truth and authority including an anecdote entitled, *What does truth mean?*

Chapter three consists of five fictional writings: They are *Sandi, an adopted teenager, leaving home* (a short story); *Story of Mark, a Romanian Adoptee* (a simulated autobiographical account); *Didi, A lonely little tiger* (a fairy tale); *Sylvia: Foster parent as attachment figure: A descriptive and didactic account*; and *Sam's voices* (a radio play). Each fictional writing is preceded by an introductory piece, setting the story into its theoretical and cultural context. A commentary follows the fairytale, *A lonely little tiger*. Interspersed throughout these writings are my own poetry and prose to illustrate attachment issues in a personal context.

Chapter four contains the discussion of the underlying theoretical issues, interpretations, and questions raised by the text. I have chosen the dramatic multivocal mode of presentation of a T.V. show, in keeping with the fictional style of the body of this text. (Cf. Arvey, 1998). I have developed the following 7 players: a moderator; a Child Welfare social worker; a traditional Education professor and researcher; a skeptical psychologist; an adoptive parent who has been successful with attachment disturbed children; an English professor and writer with a sense of humour; and a Child and Youth Care professor who is a feminist and psychotherapist, and who is knowledgeable about attachment. Implications for future research, child welfare practice, practice as a psychotherapist and training issues for child and youth care are discussed.

## CHAPTER 2

### HOW I CAME TO WRITE A FICTIONAL STUDY: A MATTER OF ETHICS, TRUTH, FICTION, AND SELF

In this chapter, I will discuss the self-reflexive process by which I came to write a fictional study in terms of the underlying, intertwined subjects of ethics, truth, fiction, and self. In the first section of this chapter I discuss my original application to the *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)* and the withholding of a certificate of approval. In the second section of this chapter, I consider the research ethics of the original study in terms of the legitimate concerns of the *HREC*, the authority and power of the *HREC* as the dominant discourse, other ethical concerns raised by the *HREC*, the silencing and oppression of the *HREC*, other ethical viewpoints, ethics of concern not mentioned or emphasized by the *HREC*, and the decision-making process that lead to my choice to abandon a narrative case study with participants/clients. In the third section I describe my thoughts that lead me to turn to the writing of fiction and reflect about matters of truth, subjectivity, knowledge, representation, and credibility.

#### My Original Application to the *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)*: The Withholding of a *Certificate of Approval*

My original research proposal accepted by my doctoral committee on December 16, 1996, involved my employing a case study and narrative design to tell the remarkable stories of how a sibling group of 3 *older* adopted children became attached to their adoptive parents over a period of 6 years. (These children were all over 5 years old when they were adopted.) The research question was then what it is still: "How do children break through barriers to love adoptive parents and to be loved by them?"

I knew the adoptive family in question as a psychotherapist and had worked with this family in that capacity over this 6 year period of time, although I had not met with them for a number of months subsequent to my *Request for Ethical Review* on May 10, 1997. I had intended that my narrative account would be informed by my knowledge of attachment theory and its application in the field; my copious case notes with respect to this family that I had compiled over the years; *cultural artifacts* (Reinharz, 1992), such as written poems and stories of the adopted children; and 3 sets of narrative interviews of each child and parent (that had been audiotaped) that I made at 2 year intervals in the children's placement. These interviews had been audiotaped and transcribed as part of my case records, in order to help me understand this family.

I was on the verge of launching this inquiry, when, on July 02, 1997, I received a *Notice of Ethical Review* from the *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC)* that stated that they were withholding issuing a *Certificate of Approval*. (My *Request for Ethical Review* had been made 2 months earlier.)

During the subsequent 4 months I attempted to argue my case by correspondence to the *HREC* and received correspondence from the *HREC* in return, including a letter of opinion from the Board of Directors of the *College of Psychologists of British Columbia (CPBC)*. *Why* the *CPBC* became involved in this process will be queried later. *How* the *CPBC* became involved is as follows: On July 14, 1997, the chairman of the *HREC* wrote to the *CPBC* with the following request:

The specific question our Committee would like your group [*CPBC*] to consider is whether Ms. Haegert's application would meet the requirements of the Code of Ethics for a Registered Psychologist in the province of British Columbia. We would appreciate any comments, advice or direction your group could provide us that would assist us in the final decision making process. (*HREC*, letter of July 14, 1997 to the *CPBC*).

The final outcome of this process was that on October 21, 1997, almost 6 months from the date of my initial application for ethical review, I received a *Notice of Ethical Re-Review* again withholding issuing a *Certificate of Approval* until certain conditions could be met. After much thought and soul searching, I made the decision to abandon this proposed study because I decided that ironically, ethically I could not meet the conditions of the *HREC* without the risk of bringing harm to this family. These conditions that I ultimately found to be untenable were detailed to me in the following excerpt from the October 21, 1997 memo from the *HREC*:

Excerpt from Memo of October 21, 1997 from the *HREC* to Me

**First**, due to the risk this study poses to the individuals and the family, the Committee is concerned that the informed consent procedure carefully addresses issues of coercion and potential harm in a thorough way. To that end, we support your decision to use a neutral third party for gaining consent.

However, in addition to the elements of informed consent outlined in your re-submission, the Committee wants to see a detailed "script" used to guide the neutral third party's discussion with the family that would include:

1. A discussion of the voluntary nature of each individual's decision to participate that acknowledges the possibility that your long term involvement with the family as a therapist may make them feel an obligation to participate. This discussion should emphasize their individual and collective freedom to choose to participate or withdraw without any repercussions.
2. A discussion that makes it clear to the family that you are no longer their counsellor and that you are acting as a researcher.
3. A discussion that realistically describes harms that may result from a study of this type. These could include being made to feel uncomfortable emotionally, hearing things about oneself or others in the family that may be painful, disruption of family dynamics, etc. The protections or remedies for these potential harms should be described.
4. A discussion that realistically describes the possible benefits that participation in the study may have for participants.

**Second**, the process of gaining consent should include individual discussions of the above with each under-age child by the neutral third party followed by a family discussion. Consent should be received from each child and each parent.

**Third**, the Committee wants you to use a Registered Psychologist as the neutral third party (*HREC*, October 21, 1997, p.1).

*The Human Research Ethics Committee: The Dominant Discourse Prevails: A Questioning and Consideration of Research Ethics and Ethical Viewpoints*

A Dual Relationship: Should a Psychotherapist Do Research with Clients?  
Implications for Informed Consent

The most salient ethical issue that the *HREC* raised and that I accept as a legitimate matter of concern is that *if* I undertook research with participants who were also clients, I would be involved in a *dual relationship* of researcher and counsellor/ psychotherapist, dual roles which could potentially affect the prospective participants' freedom to consent to participate or not in this planned research. (Counsellor, psychotherapist, and therapist are terms used interchangeably in this dissertation.) A *dual relationship* with a client is generally mentioned with caution by various *Codes of Ethics* of psychologists, social workers, art therapists, etc. as there *is* the potential for harm to the client if the *other* role the therapist plays negatively interferes with the agreed upon parameters of the client-therapist relationship. (A key question is: Whose needs are being met, the therapist's or the client's?" [Corey, Corey & Callahan, 1993, p. 141]).

As there is admittedly an inherent power differential in the counsellor-client relationship, it follows that these family members who were long term clients of mine, *might* feel an obligation to participate (presumably to meet my needs to do research), affecting their freedom to voluntarily consent or not to consent initially and throughout the study. In a memo of July 03, 1997 to me, the chairman of the *HREC* contended that "consent must be given in a way that is unencumbered by feelings of patient (client) loyalty to the physician (counsellor)." He also contended that "because Ms. Haegert has been in an ongoing therapeutic relationship with this family over a six year period, it is

reasonable to assume that a significant degree of coercion, *while not intended*, exists" (italics mine)."

I would like to counter this position of the *HREC* on four counts. The first is the precedent of psychotherapists publishing case studies of clients. The second offers conditions under which research with clients could be undertaken. The third is philosophical--objectivity versus case by case examination; and the fourth is a critique of the neutral third party requirement by the *HREC*. These arguments will be discussed in turn.

First, in terms of precedent, the case study approach is a time honoured tradition that goes back to Freud. Similarly, Michael White (1990, 1995) and other psychotherapists in the narrative mode routinely make research with clients an integral part of their counselling practice. Mahoney (1991) advocates for this bridging of science and practice. He decries the unfortunate schism that occurred in the 1970's between clinical and research psychologists of the *American Psychological Association*. He asserts that "it is imperative that theory, research and practice be intimately connected and interactive" (p.63).

Second, there is less likelihood that such research will cause 'harm' to the client if certain conditions are met before the research occurs. A common guideline is that a specified number of months, perhaps years have to pass after the termination of treatment before research on a former client is considered ethical. For example, the psychoanalyst, Pirkko Graves (1996), claims to postpone publication of a case study for 2-4 years after the treatment of the patient has been terminated, in the tradition of Freud, who waited 4 years after his contacts with *Dora* ended before he published this well known case study (p.5).

Third, in philosophical terms, the HREC's decision implies a philosophy of objectivity, that any one case should be viewed in terms of the authority of general, all encompassing principles. This approach to ethics is known as "ethical objectivism which is centered on moral facts and principles that are posited to exist independently of individual beliefs and situations" (Kluge, 1997, cited in Stuart, 1998, p.8). My philosophy is that each case should be considered individually, paying close attention to the context. (Cf. Lather, 1995; Schwandt, 1997.) Objectivity is illusionary as "knowing the Self and knowing 'about' the subject are intertwined, partial, historical, local knowledges" (Richardson, 1994, p.518). I will now present an anecdote to illustrate the risks to one child of the philosophy of objectivity and its tie to fairness in the Child Welfare and Judicial Systems. I will set this anecdote off from the rest of the text by italics:

*The Sham of Objectivity and the Perception of Fairness*

*I had been working as a psychotherapist for over 2 years with a loud, fiercely committed and big hearted foster mother, Grace, and her blonde, cherubic-looking 7 year old foster child, Tim, whose behavior ranged from desperately clinging to Grace when she entertained company, to sneaking off to chop the legs off live chickens and to bury the chickens up to their necks in sand.*

*Prior to living with Grace, Tim had spent his infancy with drug addicted parents and various relatives who often left him unattended or routinely beat him for wetting his pants. Subsequently he had numerous foster placements interrupted by returns home to parents who were supposed to have changed. Finally, at age 5, his parents lost all their legal rights to care for him and he was placed in Grace's foster home.*

*Against all odds, at the age of 7, Tim had undoubtedly formed an attachment with Grace. Tim wanted to stay with Grace and Grace wished to adopt him. I observed a remarkable, loving attunement (Hughes, 1997) between this foster mother and child.*

*However, one of Tim's relatives who was a previous caregiver (with no legal standing) was adamant that she and not the foster mother, Grace, should adopt Tim. To me it was obvious that Tim should not be moved, especially not to a home who had previously provided inconsistent care. The decision regarding whether Grace would be allowed to adopt Tim or not rested with the area manager, Mr. Saul.*

*Mr. Saul told me he did not wish to know any particulars of the case from me or the foster mother as we both "were biased." Mr. Saul also said he did not wish to meet Tim; see a video of Tim interacting with his foster mother, Grace; or even see a photograph of Tim as such knowledge would affect his ability to be 'objective'.*

*A year passed and Mr. Saul still had not made his decision. This was another year that Tim lacked the safety and security of knowing he was in a permanent placement with a mother who loved him. Tim drew for me his fear of being moved as a threatening dark Shadow with a raised arm that followed him wherever he went. He told me that when his eyes were closed, he thought he could hear the Shadow's heartbeat, ticking like a clock.*

*Finally, the case went to Court and the Supreme Court Judge appointed a registered psychologist, Dr. Shaw, who had no knowledge of the case, to make an independent 'objective' assessment regarding placement.*

*Note that I am aware of the common legal practice of seeking an 'expert' 'objective' assessment, especially in child custody and access cases and that such assessments have power and authority in the Court's eyes. In addition, I am not against hearing from an outside professional a fresh perspective on a case in order to add to the existing knowledge of the case.*

*However, I am also cognizant of the fact that in Criminal Court, often the defense counsel and the prosecutor each solicit an independent assessment from an 'objective' 'expert' of his or her choosing. Not surprisingly, the ensuing 'objective' assessment is partial to the side who is paying for it.*

*Six more months passed while day to day the child did not know whether he was going to be staying or leaving his 'home' and the 'mother' he had bonded to.*

*The psychologist, Dr. Shaw, did his job by having an interview with each party--the child, Tim; the foster parent, Grace; the previous caregiver, and myself. However, Tim would not speak with Dr. Shaw-- Tim did not know him and there no time for a trusting relationship to develop. I told Dr. Shaw my views on the case, as did the other adults.*

*Fortunately, the final outcome was that Dr. Shaw made a written assessment recommending that Tim stay with his foster mother, Grace. Dr. Shaw justified this recommendation based on the reasons the foster parent and I had given him.*

*I found it curious that Dr. Shaw's final account portraying his knowledge of the case was accepted as more 'true' than mine because he 'knew' the child and foster parent less, enabling Dr. Shaw to be more 'objective' and thus 'fair' in his understanding of the case.*

*I was reminded of the words that this same area manager, Mr. Saul, once said to me, in the context of another case, "Sheila, what is important is not that we at Child Welfare make a 'fair' decision, but that others perceive us as making a 'fair' decision.*

Fourth, I do not agree with the HREC's position that current clients of the therapist/researcher be requested to visit a "neutral" third party in order to sign consent forms. Would not the client's rights of confidentiality and privacy be thus violated (Graves, 1996, p. 72)? How would seeing a third party that the client did not know increase the likelihood that the client would exercise his or her freedom of choice to consent or not to consent? *Would* the client indeed be more honest with a stranger than

his or her therapist? If the client felt a degree of coercion to consent, wouldn't this sense of coercion continue to influence the client and accordingly propel him or her to go to the trouble of seeing this third party? On a practical level, who would pay for the services of this third party? If the therapist did, how could the third party remain "neutral" if the therapist were buying his/her services? Is it indeed possible for anybody to be "neutral"? I would say "no" to this last question as "neutrality" implies objectivity which is an impossibility in my constructivist world view that assumes that self-organizing processes construe reality (Kelly, 1955; Mahoney, 1991; Neimeyer & Mahoney, 1996; Peavy, 1995, 1997).

#### A Deconstruction and Questioning of the Authority and Power of the HREC

The *HREC* writes and acts from within the limits of an ideology that is embedded within the hierarchical power structure of the University. The *HREC*, composed of faculty members who hail from various departments of the University, is by no means autonomous. The *HREC* is formally accountable to the Vice President of *Research* and informally accountable to the departmental colleagues of *HREC* committee members. These sites of ideological accountability "[impose] limits on what can or cannot be said" (Feldman, 1995, p.51) and ensure that the *HREC* follows 'correct' and 'proper' procedures.

The *HREC* is a structure of domination within the academy and has a fundamentally patriarchal and privileged character of ruling, excluding myself as *woman* and *student* (Smith, 1987, p. 4). It expresses the "apparently neutral and impersonal rationality of the ruling apparatus" (Smith, p. 4), which is "vested in and mediated by texts and documents, and constituted externally to particular individuals and their personal and familial relationships" (Smith, p. 3).

The *HREC's* attitude to me and to my clients/participants (who unlike me, did not *choose* to be doctoral students at a university) was patronizing. The message is that these

clients/participants cannot make choices about their own lives and thus need an outside force, that is, the *HREC*, to decide *for* them and to protect them from harm. This is a disenfranchising and marginalizing message. It also presumes that the clients/participants lack personal agency with the implication that either the clients/participants will be subtly coerced by me to participate or they must be denied the opportunity to participate by the *HREC*.

This assumption that the participants are incapable of free consent is all the more incongruous, given the "local terrain and the particularities" (Smith, 1987, p.5) of this case: The adoptive parents are intelligent, self-reflective individuals. They are also self-employed individuals who are leading an independent, largely self-sufficient "back to the land" lifestyle. The *HREC*, however, summarily dismissed these localized, personal "facts" in favour of a more "extralocal, impersonal, universalized form of action" (Smith, p.5) that dictated that these participants must consent in front of "neutral" third party.

When I relayed to the adoptive father that the *HREC* was concerned that he would not be consenting freely, his response was "Bullshit! Let me talk to them!" My reaction was immediate. Without hesitation I discounted the possibility of him speaking to the *HREC*. In retrospect, I realize that I did not give his speaking to the *HREC* even a moment of consideration because I, too, am embedded in the dominant discourse. I am as conditioned as the *HREC* to know who is allowed to speak and who isn't. I knew that the adoptive father was not a member of the university's discourses embedded in the relations of ruling. He had no authority to speak vested in him by the discourse of power in which I have a faint voice (as a doctoral student) and he has no voice.

In addition, the *HREC* ruled that this "neutral" third party (who must be a registered psychologist) must follow a detailed *prescription*, composed by the *HREC*, that outlines how this party should talk to the family members and what this party should talk about.

In sum, in this "discursively constituted" (Davies, 1992, p.62) process, the *HREC*, bound by the limits of an implicit ideology (Feldman, 1995), allowed no one, neither the researcher (myself), my clients, or the neutral third person much room to make his or her own decisions. Even my doctoral committee, made up of colleagues of the *HREC*, and who knew the particulars of the case, lacked authority to approve my research plans.

The *HREC's* decision had immediate professional and financial implications for me. Not approving my proposed study unless I met conditions which were unacceptable to me restricted my access to the higher levels of the academy (attaining my Ph.D.). Mitchell (1993) comments that informed consent requirements of human subject ethics committees could be seen as a power ploy of the "gatekeepers and elite to deny...access to the social settings they control" (p.28, cited in Price, 1996, p.211).

#### Could My Originally Proposed Research be Harmful in the Way the *HREC* Mentions?

The other major ethical concern raised by the *HREC* in the memo of October 21, 1997 to me is one that I don't accept. The *HREC's* concern is that my research could cause the participants possible harms in the following ways: "These [harms] could include being made to feel uncomfortable emotionally, *hearing* things about oneself or others in the family that might be painful, disruption of family dynamics, etc." (italics mine).

This latter issue is a curious one, as talking about and working through uncomfortable subjects is standard fare in psychotherapy and was a regular occurrence in my individual and family therapy with this family. Indeed, at times narrative research and therapy look much alike. The methods used with the client could be similar, especially if the therapist takes a "not knowing" approach to therapy and treats his or her client as an "expert" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992, p.28). Note that although both narrative research and therapy can look much alike, the intentions

of each are quite different. The purpose of therapy is to effect change; the purpose of research is to gain knowledge (Heshusius, personal communication, July, 1994).

The psychologist Gordon Neufeld, well known locally in the field of attachment, contrasted the world of the academy that the *HREC* represents on the one hand and the world of therapeutic intervention in which I work on the other: He commented that *disclosure* in which a person expresses uncomfortable, even painful emotions tends to be viewed in the academy with alarm as clouding or distracting from the rational argument, whereas in psychotherapy, it is extolled as part of taking risks to trust others and to develop intimacy (personal communication, July 10, 1997).

Ellis and Flaherty (1992) explain the cultural context of the association of discomfort, embarrassment or dismay with emotional experience. They state that "researchers and the colleagues who read their work, typically have been males from upper-middle-class, Anglo-American, professional backgrounds where emotions are suppressed or, at most, viewed as private experiences" (pp.3-4. Cf. Rosaldo, 1987).

### The Silencing and Oppression of the *HREC*

The *HREC* with its underlying philosophy of objectivity and the application of general principles to specific cases, dismissed any of the knowledge that I had gained or "constructed" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p.131) over the 6 years I had worked with this family. Nor did the *HREC* take into account any capacity I might have to judge the ethics of the situation. There was no place for consultative knowledge. In short, I found the process of seeking *HREC* review silencing and oppressive.

Not allowing me a voice and laying down strict rules, the implication was that without such checks on my behavior there was a likelihood that I would behave unethically. Is this a comment on the intrinsic nature of man/woman that without external social controls he/she would behave reprehensibly? Or, is this simply the modern image of the scientist:

"To put it bluntly, the scientific spirit is regarded as a Hobbesian menace, and the ethics of science are the restraining sovereign" (Rosenwald, 1996, p.253)?

Accordingly, without the direction of the *HREC*, would I quietly set up vulnerable others so I could bilk them out of their private thoughts and histories to win career advancement and self-aggrandizement? (Cf. Apter, 1996; Bakan, 1996; Josselson, 1996.)

The *HREC* likely would argue that the committee members didn't think I *intended* to be coercive, it's just that given the client-counsellor relationship "a significant degree of coercion...[does] exist." In this hierarchical structure it was not of interest to the *HREC* that I might also be struggling with these issues and be capable of cultivating "practical wisdom" and making "sound judgments" (Schwandt, 1997, p.20).

Whereas at first I thought I must be judged by the *HREC* as amoral or stupid, over time I came to accept the chairman of the *HREC's* statement to me that the decision of the *HREC* "was not a *personal* one." In the chairman's paradigm of objectivity my 'subjective' perspective was excluded from existence. Not dissimilarly to the *HREC*, I ignored the adoptive father's request to me to speak to the *HREC* as I also am paradoxically complicit in the subtle, invisible, and pervasive discursive mechanisms and structures that I at the same time critique (Davies, 1993, p.8; Lather, 1991, p.10).

Overall, my dealings with the *HREC* were disempowering. My subjective judgment, in its physical, political, and historical context (Ellis & Flaherty, 1993. p.1) of knowing this family through my relationships with the people in it, was not as "right" or as "good" as the 'objective' judgment of the *HREC*, who made inferences from my written application for *Ethical Review*. There was no room for consultation, for negotiation. Similarly to the adoptive parent, there was no discourse through which my views could be articulated, spoken or written into existence (Davies, 1993).

It is not surprising that the *HREC* turned to a conservative body, the *College of Psychologists of British Columbia (CPBC)* for an "external review" of my application for

*Ethical Review*-- Smith (1987) speaks about the linkages the university [has] to other bases of power in society ( p.46). The *CPBC* is undoubtedly one.

Other less conservative bodies the *HREC* could have contacted are the *Marital and Family Therapy Association*; the *B.C. Art Therapy Association*; or the *Association of Social Workers*. Another consultative source could have been ethics committees of various accredited universities that have strong qualitative research bases, such as the *University of Illinois*. (Norman Denzin [1997] teaches at the *University of Illinois* and is one of the editors of the journal, *Qualitative Inquiry*.)

Accordingly, the *CPBC's* report of August 28, 1997 seems to have been valued as a "expert opinion", consistent with the patriarchal notion and epistemological position that knowledge is "received from outside authorities" who are usually men (Belenky et al., 1986, p.45). Belenky and colleagues state that "studies repeatedly, but not always consistently, find that it is men who do the talking and the women who do the listening" (p.45). As a constructivist, on the contrary, my view is that "truth is seen as a process of construction in which the knower participates" (Belenky et al., p.140).

Furthermore, the report of the *CPBC* stems directly from the paradigm of quantitative research in contrast to my qualitative framework. The *CPBC's* and my ontological positions differ. For example, the authors of this report mention their concern about objectivity and experimental bias at least 11 times in this report. My philosophy is that there is no one objective, "single, tangible and fragmentable reality" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.36). Rather, there are multiple realities that are constructed and holistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.37).

The authors from *CPBC* also assessed the *value* of my research plans from the quantitative research paradigm. They expressed concern about "the degree to which the results might be *generalized*" (p.1, italics mine). The generalizability of the results of an experiment is an established measure of external validity in quantitative research that

infers that "the aim of an inquiry is to develop a nomothetic body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that are truth statements free from both time and context" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.38). On the other hand, qualitative research has different ways of conceptualizing "validity," as will be described later in this dissertation.

The authors of the *CPBC* report further commented that "A general concern is the degree to which [my] study contributes to psychological science and human welfare." In making such unsolicited negative remarks about the *value* of my research, that I experienced as hurtful, given that I am in the lesser power position as a *student*, did the *CPBC* not break ethical standards regarding the *principle of responsible caring*, that is, the ethics of *general caring* and *minimizing harm* to clients and students (*Canadian Psychological Association, Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists*, 1991, p.15)?

#### Other Ethical Standpoints

Schwandt (1997) debates the current uncertainty about the "moral and political meaning of social inquiry practices" (p. 4):

It is commonplace nowadays to argue against the dominant Kantian moral framework that emphasizes universal normative prescriptions for human action....Deductive approaches to ethics--applying general principles to specific cases--have largely given way to interest in various case-based approaches to ethical reasoning. (p. 6).

Schwandt states that there is a dichotomy between those who think "we have genuine, legitimate, universal ethical principles *or* it is all a matter of individual interpretations" (p. 6). He suggests a third alternative, which "recognizes that the common moral condition, the activity of being a moral self, is incurably, inherently ambivalent " (p. 6).

Schwandt presents a balanced approach:

Codes, principles, and general moral rules are indeed available to us, but they are secondary to and sensible only in light of the particulars of concrete cases, and

concrete cases are marked by ambiguity and finitude of understanding (p.7).

Similarly to Schwandt, a number of theorists in the area of ethics stress the importance of individual decision-making in particular cases. Punch (1994) states that "Each individual will have to trace his or her own path... because there is no consensus or unanimity on what is public and private, what constitutes harm, and what the benefits of knowledge are" (p.94).

Another perspective regarding how to resolve ethical dilemmas is the "ethic of care," a theory of morality that was introduced by Gilligan in 1982. Gilligan's theory is supplemental to Kohlberg's (1969, 1980, 1984) "ethic of justice" that had been the dominant discourse regarding morality for many years and was based on research done exclusively with men. Gilligan found in her research gender differences in the way women and men constructed a moral dilemma. Women tended to see the moral dilemma as a problem "of care and responsibility in relationships" (p. 73) whereas men tended to see it, consistent with Kohlberg's "ethic of justice", as a problem of "rights and responsibilities" (Gilligan, 1982, p.73).

The "ethic of justice" proceeds from the premises of equality, that everyone should be treated the same, and that any one case should be viewed in terms of general principles. The "ethic of care" rests on the premises of nonviolence, that no one should be hurt (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174) and that "sound judgment" comes from "being immersed in the particularities and emotional attachments of situations" (Schwandt, 1997, p.19).

In a similar vein, Noddings (1986) upholds "ethical caring" as "a faithful search for understanding of the subjective aspects of experience" (p. 501-502). In a care-based system, "the researcher [is asked] to see others' situations as they feel and see them." (Noddings, 1984, p.24; Ryan, 1995, p. 148, as cited in Denzin, 1997, p.273).

"Collaborative, reciprocal, trusting, nonoppressive relations between researchers and those studied [are encouraged]" (Ryan, 1995, p.147, as cited in Denzin, p.273).

Stuart (1998) introduces the "principle of care and concern" as fundamental to the ethic of care (p.17) as practiced in *Participatory Action Research*. Stuart states that "this principle holds that as a researcher, [she offers] through [her] relationship with participants, an empathetic understanding of their hopes and fears as well as active support for change in their circumstances in relation to those hopes and fears (p.17-18).

In simple terms, the "ethic of care" is a case-based approach rather than a rule-based one, promoting not hurting others and doing the best you can in situations. If it came to a choice that had to be made, the code of ethics would be considered more important than the law.

However, it should be noted that today, Gilligan herself would likely agree with Schwandt (1997), cited earlier, that moral principles are available for consideration *and* the particulars of cases must be felt and understood.

In short, there are other perspectives from which to view and resolve ethical dilemmas that are not the perspective of the *HREC*. Gilligan (1982), Noddings (1984), Punch (1994), Schwandt (1997) and Stuart (1998), all advocate paying attention to the context, immersing oneself in the particulars of concrete cases, and ultimately finding one's own ethical path rather than simply following general moral rules based on an ethic of justice dictated by the dominant discourse. If the *HREC* had included the "ethic of care" in its decision making, the members of the *HREC* would have had to "bother" to get to know the particular circumstances of this case by "getting down in the trenches with the people" (Frances Ricks, personal communication, July 12, 1998). They would have spoken to the adoptive father, listened to the adoptive parents' and my views of our relationship, talked to the family and examined closely the complexity of the context in which I proposed to do research. The approach would have been more what was in everyone's best interests

rather than how general rules could be applied to my specific case. Admittedly, such an immersion in the particularities of a case would be much more time consuming than the *HREC's* usual practice.

In sum, in contrast to including an "ethic of care" in the decision making process, the *HREC* moved further away from the specifics of the case to seek an "external review" from another conservative base of power, the *CPBC*, whose representatives, as described above, undoubtedly operated out of the dominant paradigm of quantitative research. Then, once this report was received, the *HREC* based their final decision on the authority of the *CPBC's* report as if the *CPBC* somehow had "a universal and general claim as the "right" or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (Richardson, 1994, p. 517). Although I "talked back," my words and the words of the adoptive parents who spoke about my relationship with them (by means of a 4 page letter that I had given to the *HREC*) were all discounted. My voice as researcher and knower of the prospective participants (6 years of knowing) was drowned out by the bigger, more privileged voice of the *HREC* and its power-link, the *CPBC*.

#### Ethical Concerns that the *HREC* Did not Mention or Emphasize

Ethical concerns that the *HREC* did not mention or emphasize include the overemphasis on ethical *methods* rather than *content* of the study; the possible *harm* to the participant when the study is written up; and the difficulty in gaining *informed consent* in qualitative research as it is often unknown as to what the participant is indeed consenting to. They will be discussed, in turn, as follows:

#### Too Much Ethical Concern about *Methods* Rather than *Content*

The first ethical concern is, as stated by Rosenwald (1996), that "to the lay public's astonishment, psychology attaches ethical significance to *methods*, but not to *topics*" (p.

251, *italics mine*). Rosenwald states further that committees that review ethical standards do not "recommend ethically relevant topics any more than do the canons of science direct us to worthwhile projects" (p. 251).

However, contrary to typical practice, in my case, both the *CPBC* and the *HREC* *did* comment briefly on the value of my proposed research. As stated above, the *CPBC* made a negative reference, posing " a general concern to the degree to which this study contributes to psychological science and human welfare" (letter of August 28, 1997, p.1) and the *HREC* made a positive reference stating that "a major benefit of [my] dissertation is the production of new knowledge for [my] discipline" (letter of October 21, 1997, p. 2).

Rosenwald posits that research in psychology should possess positive goals that will "improve the human condition" (p. 247). He decries the fact that "the ethical code, by its agnosticism about ordinary people's unmet needs, prevents only damaging acts of commission but not of omission" (p. 252).

Despite the *CPBC's* negative judgment about my proposed research, I contend that my research question is a crucial one--How do adoptive/foster children overcome barriers to love and be loved by their adoptive parents? When answered it has the potential to turn a child's life around, in terms of the child's attitude, thoughts and actions, and to influence positively all those around him or her--adoptive family, biological family, and friends. What better way to enhance the human condition than to find ways to help children who desperately need love, long for it, and deserve it; yet too often reject it or test over and over again whether they will be loved back.

#### The Possible Harm to the Participant When the Research is Written up

The second ethical point not mentioned at all by the *HREC* or *CPBC* and of serious concern to me is the harm that could come to the participant *not* from "*hearing* things

about oneself or others in the family that might be painful" (*HREC*, letter of October 21, 1997, p. 1, italics mine), as occurs in psychotherapy and family therapy, but from *reading* things written about himself or herself, in print, in static, black and white.

Reading about oneself and one's relationships is a qualitatively different experience than talking about oneself with another. One's words, when interpreted and written down, are now documented. They are "fixed, formulated, summed up, encapsulated in language, reduced in some way to what the words contain" (Josselson, 1996, p. 62). They cannot be taken back or erased, although they may be, at least temporarily, forgotten. The mind forgets but the written page doesn't. In narrative research, when the actual words of the participant are quoted and interpreted in writing, those words live on but do not grow, age or change. The words are not revised or replaced with other words as the self continues to evolve and recreate his or her story. A remark that is fleeting in conversation, when written about is caught and open to examination. Apter (1993) states that the words are no longer "passing remarks, but carved into the world" (p. 164).

Josselson (1996) relays how one of her participants, called "Jim", who was a former client, said he felt "haunted" by what she wrote about him. Jim told her his feeling was "that [she] had invaded him--and in a way that he had not felt about his analysis. [She] had *captured* him in a category that he could either explore or escape from, but it was a cell that bounded how he could think about himself" (p. 68). Josselson states further:

Although in psychotherapy "someone invites, even pays for, [her] interpretations," these "therapeutic interpretations are co-constructed in a very precise interpersonal context" as opposed to the narrative researcher that makes "interpretations of [the participant's] life" (p. 67).

For example; when a young person tells me how much he hates his adoptive parent and I record it for an audience of him, his adoptive parent, and who knows who else to read, am I making it harder for the young person to move out of this position? Does the

writing bind him in this position? Bar-On (1996) cautions us as researchers to be careful when we are making and writing interpretations, as it is a "delicate" task we are doing. Bar-On (1996) says further, "We hold the meaning of people's lives in our hands" (p.20).

Graves (1996) asserts that "the written word has a unique power that is different from spoken statements" (p. 76). The power and impact of the written word can be illustrated by an anecdote I remember from the time I was 16 years old. I will italicize it to set it off from the rest of the text:

*The Words She Wrote About Me*

*I remember by heart a line from a letter of reference a female teacher wrote for me when I was 16 years old. It said, "Sheila is quiet and shy and courteous always." When I first read it, I was confused. When my brother read it, he snickered. This did not seem like me at all. On the inside I was noisy and full of turmoil. I remember great anxiety at high school, sweating profusely under a thick blue sweater which I could not take off because of the sweat marks on my blouse. I argued constantly at home with my brother.*

*These words made me seem so bland and dull. Was that what I was really like? I lived in fear that people would see what was going on for me, inside. However, that line from the letter reassured me that I was "well brought up" and a "good girl" which meant that I blended in, and was acceptable, to others.*

*I liked reading about me. I remember keeping that white reference letter folded over, on top of our baby grand piano, made of mahogany, where important papers were kept; and I liked going back from time to time to read it. The letter helped me know that that outside part, that others saw, was secure. It came as a relief to me. I took solace in that.*

*Did the teacher's written words help bind me in this role/image/self where I was polite and voiceless? I don't know. Maybe I needed time to keep the world at bay. Today, I've long since forgotten the teacher and the job I was trying to get. The letter has gone somewhere else, too. But, those words, I've remembered them for over 30 years.*

For such reasons, I think we should be careful what we say about participants and how we say it, because of "the additional authority our words and ideas carry when transferred to the permanence of print" (Josselson, 1996, p.61). The participants, too, in narrative research, are rendered "more vulnerable to exposure than [by] conventional qualitative studies" (Chase, 1996, p.46). It is often easy to identify participants, given the "extensive use of individuals' stories in narrative research" (Chase, p.46). Moreover, it is likely that

our interpretations as researchers are helping to shape their self-perceptions and how they constitute themselves.

Similarly, Bar-on (1996) states:

We have to take into account how [our interviewees] are thinking of themselves, how this is changing over time with or without any connection to our interventions, and what our published interpretations may cause them [or *cost* them]" (p.19-20).

In my proposed research, when writing the narrative might entail describing the participants' personal accounts of difficulty, including abuse, in relationships, the effect on the participants *must* be considered. In my practice as a psychotherapist, I have witnessed young people reading, for the first time, their lives in print written by someone else, such as a psychologist, preparing a report for the Court. To see their private lives objectified in this way and exposed to public scrutiny, can be overwhelming and horrifying. If the author of the report is someone the client trusted and the report is, for instance, critical of people they care about, such as their biological parents, the sense of betrayal is profound.

Similarly, Bar-on (1996) speaks of a young participant feeling that "her words had been stolen" (p.31).

In the cases that have been mentioned-- the writer of a letter of reference, the writer of a report for Court, and the narrative researcher-- all must be sensitive to the impact of the writer's words on the one written about. However, this concern about the effects on the participant can be inhibiting for all these writers, including the researcher. The researcher may begin to censor what she or he wants to say because of concern for the participant's reactions. It is preferable if the participant and researcher, throughout the research process, are attempting to jointly construct the discourses, in order that the participant and researcher will "arrive at mutually shared understandings of the meanings of questions

and answers" (Mishler, 1986, p.ix). However, any narrative account the researcher makes will ultimately be his or her own construction, complete with his or her interpretations.

Graves (1996) presents his solution to the participant/client's reaction to the text the researcher has written:

My solution is to write thoughtfully, keeping the patient as my audience so that my description of his contribution is coloured by the same regard of his personality that I want to show in my treatment contacts. (p.78).

Another solution stated by Chase (1996) is to simply to not ask the participants to read her interpretations at all, thereby unashamedly claiming interpretive authority. However, if a dissertation is being written or the research published, any participant could have access to the finished product.

Josselson (1996) finds herself guilty about the intrusiveness of being a narrative researcher, but continues to do so, nonetheless:

My guilt, I think, comes from my knowing that I have taken myself out of relationship with my participants (with whom, during the interview, I was in intimate relationship) to be in relationship with my readers. I have, in a sense, been talking about them behind their backs and doing so publicly. Where in the interview I had been responsive to them, now I am using their lives in the service of something else, for my own purposes, to show something to others. I am guilty about being an intruder and then, to some extent, a betrayer (p.70).

Is it enough to publically confess your guilt as Josselson does, about being an "intruder" and a "betrayer" with participants, and perhaps, in the telling, seek absolution, but do nothing about the circumstances that created the guilt in the first place? Should business then carry on as usual? Josselson 's answer has been to say, "To be uncomfortable with this work, I think, protects us from going too far" (p.70) I do not agree that this is a satisfactory enough ethical solution to a serious concern--the possible harmful impact on the participant of what is written about him or her.

I strongly believe that not causing harm to the participant--the principle of *non-malificence*--is the most important consideration of all. It is more important than the advancement of knowledge in the field. Weighing the gains for knowledge with the potential of harm to a participant could lead one to believe or rationalize that the end (knowledge) justifies the means (potentially hurting a participant). To hurt even one person in the research process to my mind, is one too many. We as researchers must find creditable *and* safe ways to add to our knowledge. The role of the creative, flexible, self-reflexive, and trustworthy postmodern researcher who pays attention to the complexity of the contextualized self-in-relation to others, with all its mystery and ambiguity, has never been so important. (Cf. Peavy, 1993.)

Difficulties Surrounding Informed Consent in Qualitative Research: It is Unknown what the Participant is Consenting to; Informed Consent is a Process, not a Consent Form

Finally, as Josselson (1996) points out, "the concept of informed consent [in narrative research] is oxymoronic given that participants can, at the outset have only the vaguest idea of what they might be consenting to" (p.xii). For example, how the researcher interprets the research cannot be known in advance. Furthermore, Josselson states that as researchers, "our knowing or writing about participants' lives may expose them to consequences that neither we nor they could have foreseen" (p.xiii)

Stuart (1998) goes as far as to say that in *Participatory Action Research* where continual participant-researcher communication is required throughout the research process, "informed consent prior to participation is not only impossible, it could be considered unethical since it violates the principle of participant inclusion" (p.9). Stuart states further that "informed consent is a 'process' rather than a consent form listing predetermined procedures" (p.11).

I will turn now to why ethically I could not complete the original proposed study.

### The Decision-Making Process Leading to my Choice to Abandon a Narrative Case Study with Participants/Clients

My choice to abandon a narrative case study with participants/clients was based on three considerations that will be described below. They were my concern with the children/participants reading my writings about them; the concern about deserting my clients in order to do research on them; and the decision to *not* ask my clients/participants to see a "neutral third party to sign consents to participate.

#### The Concern with the Children/Participants Reading my Writings About Them

The first reason why I decided to abandon this case study was that I had a deep concern about the impact on the children/participants in this study of *reading* what I had written about them, as discussed above. At the same time, I did not wish to be constrained in my writing, as I anticipated I would be, by constantly worrying about how the participants would feel about how I wrote about them.

A recent incident that taught me about the power of the written word for these participants, was the distress I witnessed that the 3 adopted children experienced when one of them found, tucked away in an old file on the computer, a letter that the adoptive mother had written to her social worker over 5 years before. In this letter, the adoptive mother said that she "did not realize that the children would come with so much baggage." That was all that it said. Yet the children were terribly insulted. They undoubtedly felt betrayed that such things could have been said about them.

In talking to the children, I found that they did not know what the phrase "baggage" meant in this context (meaning *emotional* baggage), but they did know that it felt bad, like they weren't innocent, that they came to the adoption home accompanied by horrible things that they could not get rid of. It seemed to confirm for them that they hadn't left their cruel past behind, that they would never be free of it, thoughts that they were too

young and not ready to deal with. Despite the explanations I gave and the apologies the adoptive mother gave, the children remained unforgiving.

I knew, then, by their reactions to that one word, "baggage" in the above context, that if, in the course of my research, any of the children read what I had written about what they had told me or what my interpretations of their lives were, it would be most likely that they would find something I said to be upsetting. And so, their trust of me would diminish.

I seriously considered the idea of not showing the participants my interpretations (Chase's [1996] solution above), even though I had previously promised them that we would co-construct the discourse together. I also considered "taking my chances", that seemed in my favour, that none of them would enter my university library to read my dissertation.

In the end, I decided that ultimately, ethically, I could not go back on my word to show them the work in progress. Neither could I opt to *not* show them the work at all (if I was able to somehow convince them of the propriety of that), because I could not take the chance that even one family member, perhaps later in his or her life might read my dissertation and be offended.

Ethically, therefore, I could not complete this study, despite the work I had already put into it, because there always was a chance that one family member would read the dissertation, which, as stated, is a public document. I decided that I could not betray these children in this way. If I used their stories for my purposes, to complete my degree, to bring knowledge to others, and so hurt them in the process (even though the hurting was done inadvertently), I would have been, in their eyes, no different from their abusive older brothers, father and mother, whom they loved and once trusted, who used them for their own satisfaction, and in the process, hurt them and broke them irreparably.

### The Concern about Deserting my Clients to do Research on Them

Second, I could not ethically desert this family as clients, as required by the *HREC*, so that they could remain only as research participants. The *HREC* recommended that the family members see another therapist while I was engaged in research with them. I could not do that. It was *I* that this family knew. It was *I* that this family trusted. Can one therapist simply be substituted for another? This suggestion negates the importance of the therapeutic relationship, which provides safety and containment for the client, so the client as trauma survivor, "can speak of the unspeakable" (Herman, 1992, p.175). For a family like this one, where the relationship with the therapist is long term (6 years) and the children have biological parents who have failed them, the children often develop attachments with the therapist. The attachment literature has taught us that one attachment figure cannot be simply substituted for another, because there is, after all, an *attachment*, a specific and enduring bond, that transcends time and place.

### The Decision to *Not* Ask My Clients/Participants to See a "Neutral" Third Party to Sign Consents to Participate

Third, I decided to *not* ask my clients/participant to see a "neutral" third party, which had to be a registered psychologist, to consent to participate. This was another requirement of the *HREC*. As explored on page 20-21 above, the use of a "neutral" third party brings up many ethical questions-- of confidentiality and privacy; of freedom of choice; ontological questions of reality and neutrality; and finally, of protection from harm.

I decided that to ask the children to see a registered psychologist to sign consents to participate would be an unreasonable request for me to make, and would cause them unnecessary emotional stress or harm for the following reasons:

The children are not open with and trusting of people in general. It has taken them many years to develop trusting relationships with me. They certainly would not "enjoy" meeting a new person. In this case, as this family lives in an isolated location where there are no registered psychologists, they would have to travel a considerable distance to meet with one, who they did not know. Two of the older teenage children have left home, are living elsewhere, are struggling with places to live, to make ends meet, etc. How would they feel if I asked them to see a registered psychologist for my purposes? I couldn't do it. It would be too selfish. It would be meeting my needs, as researcher, and not theirs, as clients, especially at a time when they needed so much.

I wondered if they would agree to see this registered psychologist. If they did, I knew it would be *for me*, a further action they would take to help me with *my* study. As stated earlier, I did not believe that signing in front of a stranger who happened to be a registered psychologist, would ensure that their consent was voluntary. I suspected that I could convince them to attend, but what would they gain? Ultimately, in combination with my concerns about their reactions to what I would write about them; and my wish to not desert them as clients in their time of need, I decided to *not* even ask them to see this "neutral" third party.

As an *epilogue* to the above account, let me say the following:

Many months after I made the decision to abandon my original study, I saw the oldest adopted daughter on the street. She asked me how the study was going and I told her why I had abandoned it-- that among other reasons, I did not feel it was fair that I would ask the children to see this "neutral" third party in order to sign consents. Her response was immediate, "That's too bad! I would have gone!"

But why would she have gone? Would it have been to please me? Did she still hold onto the hope that by telling her story to me, I would be letting her voice be heard to help other adoptive parents and therapists? (This is what I had initially set out to do and why I

believe she was interested in participating.) Did she have any idea at all what she was getting into, what might be written about her, how I would be using her words for my own purposes? I thought all these things but said none of them, because she looked gaunt and strung out, as if she hadn't slept or eaten for a while and was coming down off a drug. Instead I asked her how she was doing and took her out for lunch.

I didn't want to write her story and put it in my terms. To do so, in a way, would be to take away some of her power and subjugate it to my authority. To do so could hurt her, because I sensed she was not ready yet to confront in stark black and white print, much of the pain from her past, which I would inevitably write about. She herself was a good writer. I hoped that perhaps one day, she would have the courage to write her own story, in her own words, from her own point of view.

#### Turning to Writing Fiction as Research: A Matter of Truth, Subjectivity, Knowledge, Representation, and Credibility

In this last section of chapter two, I speak about my thinking that lead me to turn to fiction as a method of inquiry, discuss fictional stories as research and the interlocking matters of subjectivity, truth, knowledge, and representation in fictional research. Under this latter heading, I reflect about fiction writing as a matter of inquiry from a postmodern perspective; the self in research, including why attachment theory resonates with me; the matters of fiction, truth, self, and representaion; how fiction as research can be judged including criticisms of this method of inquiry; and representation and language. In the final discussion in this section, I examine my credibility in this inquiry and its ties to truth and authority.

My Thinking which Lead me to Turn to Fiction as a Method of Inquiry:  
Its Freedom, its Evocative Power

The idea of writing a fictional account first came to me when I was talking with the adoptive mother of the family that I had originally planned to do a narrative study with. I was going over with her a sequence of events in the family, being particularly concerned about what happened first, then next, etc. and exactly what each child had said. Suddenly, she stopped and looked at me and said, "Why does it have to be *true*?"

I did not think too deeply about what *true* meant before my first delicious thought was, "Of course, I could just make the whole thing up! No one would ever know!" Then, I remembered that a few years before I had read *Qualitative research for Education* by Bogdan and Biklen (1992), and quoted them religiously in a research study as they admonished all neophyte researchers: "Tell the truth when you write up and report your findings" as "fabricating data or distorting data is the ultimate sin of the scientist" (p.54). At the time I had said to myself, "I have no problem with that! I'm an honest person!"

More recently, I thought about the difference between fabricating or lying on the one hand and making up stories or creating fiction on the other. Although writing fiction is unreservedly "fabrication", the intentions are not "to make up for the purpose of deception," which is one of the definitions of "fabrication" in *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary* (1993, p. 415). The intention of fiction essentially is to "invite the readers who are unfamiliar [with attachment difficulties] to live their way into the experience" (Ceglowski, 1997, p.199).

Then, when the restrictions of the *HREC* regarding my originally planned study prevented me, given my personal ethics, from going ahead, I began to consider what Marie Hoskins, a fellow student, and Antoinette Oberg, a member of my doctoral

committee, had suggested to me, "Sheila, since you like to write, why don't you do a fictional study?"

I thought, "Would I really be allowed to do this?" Not only would I protect the privacy of children, it would give me freedom to speak about attachment, as I knew I had a lot to say, in a form in which I could, in Denzin's (1997) words, "persuade and move the reader" by not explaining, but using "evoked emotion as the method for establishing its claims to authority" (1997, p.210). As Denison (1996) states, "With fiction I could avoid closure, enabling the reader to see that interpretation is never finished" (p.352).

I had read Richardson's (1994) "confession" in *Writing: A method of inquiry* where she stated that "for 30 years [she had] yawned her way through numerous supposedly exemplary qualitative studies" (p.516) because "[she found] the text boring" (p.517). I too, had put down dissertations on topics of interest to me, also half read, because there was no "human and passionate element" (Janesick, 1994, p.217). Anais Nin in *The novel of the future* (1986) could be talking about standard qualitative social sciences research when she refers to the "pseudo-objectivity" that occurs in writing, which resembles "the process of embalming. The humanity is drawn out and a fluid replaced which has no power to give life, only to preserve its semblance" (p. 70). Note that many qualitative researchers pay lip service to the notion of the richness of participants' stories and meaning-making, but when they "write up" these findings, the researchers put on a formal, "scientific" distant persona which is translated into pedantic, dry and lifeless writing, with their *selves* overtly missing.

I thought that with fiction, I would be able to reach a wider audience and do so on an experiential level. As one of my aims in this dissertation is to educate foster parents, adoptive parents and other psychotherapists, I thought that fiction would "[touch readers] where [they] live, in [their ] bodies, and [invite them] to experience reflexivity and the transformational process of self-creation" (Richardson, 1996, p. 8).

I recalled that lectures were the least effective form of teaching, and an unemotional, detached and alienating dissertation on a topic as vital and intense as *attachment processes* or *how love grows* would be just as ineffective. I was excited, but still cautious. I knew that such dissertation using fiction as research would be stretching the boundaries of acceptable research in my department of *Psychological Foundations in Education*.

I met with my supportive and adventurous doctoral committee on December 04, 1997 and received their approval to engage in a fictional study. However, my questions remained. How was fiction research? What was my authority to say what I wanted to say? Why would the reader believe me? How can we judge these fictional writings? Where am I in this research?

These questions lead me to examine in detail the writing of fiction as research and the matters of truth, subjectivity, and representation.

#### Fictional Stories as Research

Recently, educational researchers, such as Donmoyer (1996) and Eisner, (1993) have called for alternate styles of representation in social science research. Fiction, poetry, and drama, on their own or in mixed genre inquiries have all been used in the last 10 or so years to depict people's lived experiences. For example, Richardson (1992) "transgressed the boundaries of social science writing genres" (1994, p. 520) by condensing 36 pages of interview with an unmarried mother into a 3 page poem. Similarly, with regard to the adoptive family I originally proposed to study, I compressed and attempted to communicate what I had learned from 519 pages of interviews (3 sets of interviews taken at 2 year intervals over a 6 year period) into the 14 page *Story of Sandi: An adopted teenager leaving home* that is presented in chapter 3 of this dissertation,

Such a condensation is reminiscent of Anais Nin (1986) in *The novel of the future*, who advocated "the process of distillation, of reduction to the barest essential" (p. 25).

Nin advocated the "pursuit of essentialism" in composing characters. Instead of "too much individuality [which] " makes eccentric or unique characters", she depicted "the essence of the person" (p.55) [which] "makes for something beyond the personal" (p.67).

Another example of fiction as research is Denison (1996) who writes 3 short stories with composite characters, to express the retirement experiences of 12 New Zealand athletes. He felt he "could write about sports retirement in a more evocative way, employing such devices as flashback, alternative points of view, and dialogue, to open up the mystery that surrounds athletes' retirement experiences" (p.352). In a similar vein to Denison, "I did not want to bury [the children's] voices beneath layers of analysis" (p.352) but wanted to "produce for readers the feeling that they have experienced or could experience the events being described" (Denison, p.358.)

I also felt that in writing fiction, I could "unearth...the buried layers of complexity, repression or desire in everyday life" (Ellis, 1995, p.162). I could give voice to the "unspoken subtext" (Ochberg, 1996, p.111) or hidden parts of the children, to *show* rather than *tell* readers (Denison, p.352) the inner conflicts and turmoil these children were experiencing beneath the surface, beneath their words and behaviors of distancing, rejecting and provoking, that serve to protect the child from the pain of anticipated hurt and abandonment.

In addition, I felt that attachment is a complex and mysterious process and that its nuances could be best revealed through stylistic devices which bring coherence to the work (Cf. Eason, 1982). Therefore, I used dialogue, *duree* ("the stream of consciousness as experienced in everyday life" [Schutz, 1970, cited in Ronai, 1995]), and the omniscient narrator in the short story, *Story of Sandi, an adopted teenager leaves home*; used the dramatization, in a radio play, of Sam's internal dialogues with 4 voices plus a chorus, in *Sam's voices*; used archetypal symbolism in the fairy tale genre in *Didi: A lonely little tiger*; used the descriptive portrayal of Sylvia and the monologues of the youth in *Sylvia*:

*Foster parent as attachment figure*; and used the first person simulated autobiographical account in *Story of Mark, a Romanian Adoptee*.

Moreover, the forms I chose seemed to be inherent in the nature of the experience I wished to represent, rising naturally from it. As stated by Verma (1991), "it is the experience that chooses its form to make its presence felt" (p.6). Richardson (1994) states that "by writing in different ways we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable" (p.5:6). I speak about this process of choosing form in my introductions to each fictional writing later in this dissertation.

Other experimental texts are *performance* texts with "narrators, drama, action, and shifting points of view" (Denzin, 1997, p.91). They [merge] multiple voices and experiences (Conquergood, 1985, p.10). Denzin (1997) asserts that "the performance text is a lived experience in two senses. The performance doubles back on the experiences previously represented in the ethnographer's text. It then re-presents those experiences as embodied performance to the audience" (Denzin, 1997, p.95). The audience in turn, "[interprets and lives] through performances--they are performers of their own interpretations and witnesses of the performed text" (Denzin, p.101). Note that the play I wrote, *Sam's voices*, could be performed as a radio play.

In this way, the process of writing in itself is legitimized as a "method of inquiry" (Richardson, 1994, p.517). It also is an epistemological position, a way of knowing. Richardson explains that [she writes] because she wants to find something out. [She writes] in order to learn something that [she] didn't know before" (p.517).

Similar to Richardson, in writing the composite characters of children with attachment difficulties, I created/discovered a reality and developed an understanding about children that I did not consciously know before.

However, despite the increasing use of fiction in research, the critic may still wonder, "How can *fictional* studies be *acceptable* in the academy as research?" The answer to this

question involves considerations of subjectivity, truth, knowledge, and representation in research, which will be discussed below.

### Considerations of Subjectivity, Truth, Knowledge, and Representation in Research

I will now discuss a postmodern view of fiction writing as inquiry; the self in inquiry, including why attachment theory resonates with me; the matters of fiction, truth, self, and representation; how fiction as research can be judged, including criticisms of writing fiction as research; and representation and language.

### Fiction Writing as Inquiry: A Postmodern View

Fiction as a method of inquiry can be considered in terms of postmodern notions of knowledge and subjectivity or self. Richardson (1994) states that "the core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the 'right' or privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (p.517). Accordingly, no genre has privileged status. Fiction, unlike other genres, such as quantitative research in the social sciences, does not claim to have any universal or general claim to authority, but allows the reader to interpret and make meaning on his or her own. (Cf. Denison, 1996). Van Maanen (1988, as cited in Denison, 1996, p. 360) speaks of the traditional realist text, in contrast to the interpretive fiction I have written, as offering but one reading, thereby "closing off or nailing down an interpretation without allowing alternative views to creep into view" (p.53).

Furthermore, "postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational, and that our Self is always present, no matter how much we try to suppress it-- but only partially present for in our writing we repress parts of ourselves, too"

(Richardson, 1994, p. 520). "In some ways, knowing is easier," Richardson contends, "because postmodernism recognizes the situational limitations of the knower" (p.518). Therefore, although the self is written out of many studies, it is present covertly throughout, from the choice of topic to the analysis/interpretation of the data/findings to the writing up/representation of these data/findings.

### The Self in Inquiry

O'Connor (1996), too, says that "reflexivity is inherent but unacknowledged" (p.19) and goes as far as to say the following:

As psychologists, we are the objects of our own curiosity, and in self-exploration we construct abstractions, objectify our constructions, and then proceed to construct measures to assess the objectifications we have created.

For example, O'Connor's observation can be applied to the field of attachment theory and research:

In terms of attachment theory, made up of constructs by Bowlby (1969/1984), Robert Karen (1994) found evidence that Bowlby himself as a child, in an upper class family, had emotionally unavailable parents and was mostly cared for by a cold head nanny and a series of changing undernannies, who were students (p.30). Apparently, he became very attached to one of the undernannies and was heartbroken when she left. He was sent to boarding school at 8, and was not allowed to eat with his parents until he was aged 12, and then, only dessert. Clearly, when Bowlby was a young child, there appeared to be the absence of consistent nurturing from an attachment figure which may have spawned his interest in the mother-child bond and the devastating effects on the child of the separation and loss of the mother as attachment figure.

Although Bowlby did not construct measurements of the quality of attachment, other researchers attempted to quantify the attachment relationship. Ainsworth (1978), a

contemporary of Bowlby, created the *Strange Situation Procedure*, a well known measurement of the quality of attachment for infants approximately a year old. Other researchers have constructed measures to assess the quality of attachment in older children (Waters & Deane, 1985), in mothers (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985), and in adult romantic attachments (Shaver & Hazan, 1985).

### Why Attachment Theory Resonates With Me

The constructs of attachment theory resonate with me because of my own difficulties with attachment in childhood. My mother was often emotionally absent and my father, who was my primary attachment figure, was frequently physically absent because of "going to sea." Moreover, there always was the fear of losing my father because of his chronic asthma and the dangerous job he did. In addition, I had a brother, a few years older, who was brain damaged as a toddler and was unpredictably rageful and physically abusive, and at other times, kind, nurturing, and loving towards me. I developed what is now referred to as a *trauma bond* with this brother, whom I still love dearly.

As mentioned earlier, I approach the topic of attachment situated as a white woman, from an English speaking, highly educated family. Despite the comfortable world of privilege I come from, I believe I am able to span "the space between" (Josselson, 1992) myself and the children I work with, who are often from families who are poor and uneducated, and achieve a tacit knowing or attunement with them because of the intuitive or subjective knowing about attachment difficulties that I bring with me (Smith & Heshusius, 1994; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

### The Matters of Fiction, Truth, Self, and Representation

To return to the matter of fiction, I will further discuss the inextricably linked matters of fiction, truth, method, self, and representation. Daly (1997) speaks of the blurry

distinction between fiction and theory: Although in writing fiction, the author has admittedly "made the story up," theorizing is also "made up". Daly calls theories "second-order stories" (p.354) as they are once removed from the lived experience. They are "constructs of the constructs made by actors on the social scene, whose behavior the scientist observes and tries to explain in accordance with the procedural rules of his science" (Schultz, 1971, p.6). Theory is a "function of beliefs and priorities" (Daly, 1997, p.334-5).

So too "methods for making sense of experience are always personal" (Denzin, 1994, p.501). As the social scientist cannot detach himself from his own participation in his experiential world, representation always involves self-representation (Daly, 1997; Denzin, 1994).

The question of truth and fiction is tied to the creation of narrative. Doctorow, as quoted by Fishkin (1985, p.207), says that "There is no longer any such thing as fiction or nonfiction, there is only narrative." White (1992) called narratives or stories (narrative and story in this dissertation are used interchangeably) "frames that facilitate the interpretation of experience" (p.123). Denzin (1996) goes further to say that "facts are social constructions and all writing is narrative" (p.234). Denzin paraphrases Booth (1983) who says that "authors cannot choose whether to use rhetorical narrative strategies, including fictional accounts, the only choice is which ones will be used" (Booth, p.116, as cited in Denzin, 1996, p.235).

#### How can Fiction as Research be Judged?

Still, the question of critics remains: How can fiction as research be judged? Denzin (1996) answers as follows:

If as Doctorow (quoted in Hersey, 1980, p.207) asserts, there is no longer any such thing as a distinction between fiction and nonfiction, only narrative, then all narratives

assemble their respective versions of fact, fiction, and truth. Ethnographic writings are narratives. Every work constructs its version of what is truthful and factual, what could have happened, what did happen, or what will happen here. So truth is a social construct and narratives about the world are judged "according to their coherence and correspondence to a world we recognize...they do not correspond to the events themselves but to other narratives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1995, p.355; also Frus, 1994, p.xiv, cited in Denzin, 1996, p. 238.)

In addition, Denzin (1996) states that narratives are judged as "fictionally and factually correct, organized under the rule that if something did not happen, it could have happened (the principle of multiple fictional truths)" (p.239). This principle of multiple fictional truths is in opposition to the positivist paradigm, which I reject, that harbours the idea that there is an objective truth, a stable external world, and a reality independent of human thought.

Denzin (1997) declares that in the poststructuralist world, "the term *validity* has been replaced with the words *authority* and *legitimation*" (p.9, italics mine). (*Poststructuralism* contends that structures of power and domination as well as gender, class and ethnicity shape individual constructions of meaning. Culture also is a central organizer of meaning.) Regarding authority, within poststructuralist thought, no text has external claims to authority. "Every text must be taken on its own terms" (Denzin, p.9).

Moreover, Richardson (1994) judges fictional writings with the literary criteria of interest (engaging to the reader), coherence (parts are integrated, hold together) and *verisimilitude* (having the appearance of truth, probable) (p.521).

Denzin (1997) discusses *verisimilitude* further. He asserts that *verisimilitude* is "the text's ability to reproduce (simulate) and map the real" (p.10). Traditional validity "rests on the assumption that reality can be truthfully, faithfully, and accurately captured" (p.10). *Versimilitude* and its relationship to reality in the postmodern age is described by Denzin as follows:

[*Verisimilitude* is] the production of a text that "feels" truthful and real for the reader. In its most naive form, *verisimilitude* describes a text's relationship with reality. It asks, "Are the representations in a text consistent with the real? Is the text telling the truth?" Certain actions, for example, are said to lack *verisimilitude* "when they seem unable to occur in reality" (Todorov, 1977, p. 82, cited in Denzin, p.10, italics mine).

Accordingly, Denzin (1997) states that texts that have *verisimilitude* allow "readers to imaginatively feel their way into the experiences that are being described by the author"(p.12). Similarly, Ellis (1995) states that "in evocative storytelling, the story's 'validity' can be judged by whether it evokes in you, the reader, a feeling that the experience described is authentic, that is believable and possible" (p.318). Furthermore, Stake (1994) states that a text with high *verisimilitude* allows the reader to "[come] to know some things told, as if he or she had experienced them" (p.240).

An indication of this text's *verisimilitude* was the positive responses I received from foster parents, adoptive parents, and other helping professionals who test-read the fictional stories contained in this dissertation and described them as "true to life" and "moving". However, Denzin warns that "*verisimilitude* is textual" but "truth is political" (p.12). (Truth is used by Denzin in the sense of agreed-on, collective sense-making.) The text could have one and not the other. How credibility ties into truth will be considered later in this chapter.

### Criticisms of Writing Fiction as Research

There are a number of criticisms of writing fiction as research. These have been extrapolated from Denzin's (1997) comprehensive list of interpretive assumptions that structure the poetic, narrative text (p.207-215).

First, there is the questioning or lack of acceptance that fiction *is* research. The writing of fiction indeed pushes the boundaries of what is acceptable research. What is acceptable is socially constructed and becomes a matter of belief. Richardson (1996)

writes about the reaction of her colleagues about her use of poems to express what she had learned in research. They said, " You write well." *and* "Is it sociology?" (p.7). In traditional, conservative schools of thought, fiction would be dismissed and discounted as not research. A common outcry is, "This is not science. It is art" (Denzin, 1997, p.264).

Second, fiction privileges emotionality. Evoked emotion is the method for establishing authority. As Ellis (1995) says, " I felt that [the] evocative composite would be powerful enough that readers would put themselves into the experience"(p.315). To critics, there is an over emphasis on emotion in fiction as research.

Third, "the use of language breaks down the hierarchical barrier between writer and reader" (Denzin, p.211). Therefore, an illusion is created of direct access to reality. Yet, the writer is simply constructing his or her own reality, that *appears* to be "true". Recall that Denzin (1997) said, "The truth of a text cannot be established by its verisimilitude. Verisimilitude can always be challenged." (p.12). For instance, a text that appears to be true may not be. Even the most cynical reader is susceptible, under certain circumstances, to being conned or persuaded by evocative fiction writing.

Fourth, the person is *too much* present in the writings. "Works are filled with biographical and not disciplinary citations" (Shelton, 1995, p.84). The texts show sign of "narcissism and self-indulgence" (Nader, 1993). Ellis and Flaherty (1992) warn that researchers risk being seen by colleagues as "emotional exhibitionists." Marcus (1994) talks about "reflexive messy texts" (p.567) where the "self spills over into the world being inscribed" (Denzin, 1997, p.224). Basically, the inclusion of self is based on the assumption that "the writer's personal experiences are *worth sharing* with others" (Denzin, p.224, italics mine). The writer's personal experiences may *not* be worth sharing; they could be hackneyed and trivial.

Fifth, the writings are too literary, with fiction taking prevalence over facts (Snow & Morrill, 1995, p.361). (Of course, "facts" in my constructivist world view are also

considered to be fiction, having been socially constructed.) Furthermore, Richardson (1994) cautions, "Although writing up qualitative research as fiction frees the author from the constraints of science, competing with "real" fiction writers is chancy" (p.521). In other words, fiction writers are judged by literary criteria, up against other fiction writers. The likelihood of falling short is huge. Writing pathetic poetry or a simpering short story seems more shameful and hubristic than playing it safe and writing conventional and boring, but acceptable qualitative research.

Ultimately, the above criticisms belong to the reader to consider when reading and evaluating this dissertation. I await your judgments.

### Representation and Language

In terms of representation, I have used the artistic license of the genre of fiction that is more immediate, direct, and emotional. Richardson (1994) calls these experimental genres that "deploy literary devices to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses... *evocative representations*" (p.521).

O'Connor (1996), a New Zealand writer, speaks of her frustration in attempting to use "language to represent realities" (p.19). (Note that *modernism* emphasizes the use of language to represent reality; *postmodernism* considers language as creating and construing reality.) O'Connor wrote a 4 page poem entitled, *Glossary of the validities*, published in *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, to express her struggles regarding the issue of validity in writing up her interpretations of interviews she had with people regarding the "social construction of emotion" (p.19). She said that in the poem she was "emotional and immediate, and [she acted] out the dilemmas--[did] them rather than [just

wrote] about them" (p.19). She compares the distance created by representation by language in writing up her research, to the difference between having a relationship and relating, "We do not have a construction / we construct / cooperatively / collaboratively / despite ourselves / and the centuries of pressure / to separate conform obey. We do not have relationships / we relate / we do not have sex / we do" (p.17).

Ultimately, "lived texts are representations [of the worlds we study] that are themselves embodied representations of experience" (Denzin, 1997, p.33). In other words, there is no automatic link between lived experience and text. The fiction I have written stands on its own, must survive the test of *verisimilitude*, by validating itself (Richardson, 1994, p.522). In short, "the text [must *feel*] truthful and real for the reader" (Denzin, 1997, p.10). For the text to be "truthful", however, I as researcher, must also be credible.

#### My Credibility in this Inquiry and its Ties to Truth and Authority

I would now like to discuss the issue of my credibility in this inquiry (Why should the audience believe me?) in terms of the following anecdote that I remember (and re-construct in the telling) of 15 years ago. I will use italics to set it off from the rest of the text.

#### *What Does Truth Mean?*

*When I was a protection social worker for a Child Welfare Agency, I remember one Friday afternoon, sitting together in my office with a young police officer and a 4 year old dark haired boy, called "Jim". Jim's brown eyes were open wide in his chubby round face. Jim's chair was too big for him and he sat with his upper body stiff on the edge of his chair as his legs dangled, not touching the ground. Jim spoke with a lisp. The police officer was large and he leaned far back in his chair, his long legs stretched out in front of him. He and his legs seemed to take up a lot of the space in this rather small office. He had taken off his jacket and tie in an attempt, I supposed, at informality. I sat close to my desk, with an elbow on it and my head resting on one hand.*

*We were there because there had been an allegation that Jim had been sexually assaulted and our purpose was to interview Jim to determine if he had been.*

*The police officer took charge of the interview, asking Jim a series of specific questions, breaking from time to time to ask in a loud, challenging voice, "Jim, are you*

telling me the truth?" "Jim, is this the truth?" to which Jim answered by nodding his head up and down, which seemed to please the police officer, as then he went on to the next question.

Finally, when the interview was over, I quietly asked Jim, "Jim, now that we've finished asking our questions, do you have any questions to ask us?" Jim suddenly burst out crying and said, tearfully, "What does 'toof' mean?" I was taken aback and did not answer right away. However, the police officer did not waste any time in saying, "Truth means that you don't lie and you don't make up any stories!"

Reflecting on this anecdote, I, too, ask the question, "What does truth mean?" The answer to this question appears to be inseparable from the answers to questions of what is reality, credibility, and authority. For the police officer and the Criminal Justice System (who would be involved if there were sufficient evidence to presume that a crime had been committed *and* reasonable chance of a conviction), the ontological assumption is that there *is* a single tangible, objective reality, 'out there'; "there *is* one true set of events ('the facts') which is discoverable by reference to witnesses and material evidence" (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The epistemological assumption is that there is a separation of the observer from the observed; of the knower from the known. (Cf. Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.28.) Therefore, the witness that is "too emotional" on the stand in Court appears "not objective". Unless this witness is a victim of a crime where being upset (but only to a certain degree, and never angry) is acceptable, his or her credibility suffers.

A Crown Prosecutor once told me that you can tell if the witnesses are lying if "their stories are too consistent," pointing to a kind of "working knowledge" or "subtext" that there *are* multiple realities that are personally constructed.

The credibility of the child, Jim, would be suspect immediately on account of his young age. In fact, if Jim had disclosed, in this interview (he didn't) allegations of sexual assault against a specific person, who, in turn, denied those allegations, without strong corroborating evidence, there would, in my experience, simply be *no* likelihood of a criminal charge being laid. Jim would not make a credible witness to sustain cross-

examination in Court; he lacked authority; and his words lacked "trustworthiness" because he was only 4 years old.

Similarly, as a witness in Court, I gain authority with the level of degrees I possess. With a Ph.D., the authority of my opinions, will magically improve. If I was a male, given the patriarchal structure of the Court System, my credibility would probably improve even more.

My credibility in this dissertation is established similarly to how it is established when I am a witness in Court. In Court I cite my academic and practical experience, including the recent literature review in attachment that I have completed, and the numbers of attachment disturbed clients I have worked with as a social worker and psychotherapist over the last 20 years. Then, ironically, the evidence that I give is judged by largely literary standards--coherence (what I say hangs together; I don't contradict myself, at least not without explanation), verisimilitude (having the appearance of truth; what I say appears probable) and interest (the ability to engage the judge and/or jury emotionally as well as intellectually).

In Court and in the defence of this dissertation, I must be able to withstand cross-examination on all evidence I have given. In addition, having "good manners" and using the appropriate language of privilege in my oral defence and in the language I have used in this dissertation, enhances my credibility.

The answer to the question, "What does truth mean?" is that truth is contextual, political, based on values and beliefs. Unlike the realist view, there are "no firm and steady truths about the world" and "no accurate representations of the world can be produced" (Denzin, 1997, p.265). Each person constructs his or her own version of the truth. Essentially, "truth is always personal and subjective" (Denzin, p.266).

The one additional indication of credibility that I bring to this dissertation, which would not be appropriate in Court, given the current Justice System's emphasis on "objectivity" is my making *myself* overt in this dissertation, in the personal anecdotes I have written into the body of the text and in the personal prose and poetry I have included. I accepted A. Oberg's advice about the place of these personal writings in this dissertation is as follows:

[I have interspersed these personal writings] throughout the [dissertation], not to illustrate or exemplify any particular point [I] am making, but rather, each piece complete in itself, sitting there in the same way as the *lilies* to reveal how complicated the issue of attachment is, how intricate the process of therapy is, and to connect [me] to the work. This last is important for validity, for the *truth value* of the work. It shows how deeply the work is grounded in [my] own painful understanding of [my] topic (personal communication, March 25, 1995, italics mine).

## CHAPTER 3

### FICTIONAL WRITINGS

In this chapter I present the five fictional writings that I composed to illustrate attachment processes in older adopted or foster children. I also have included selected poetry and prose to give multiple perspectives on attachment. In the act of writing I bring to consciousness and translate into words my "somatic knowing" (Heshusius, 1994) or "tacit knowing" (Stake, 1978, cited in Lincon & Guba, 1985, p.195) about attachment processes. I think of my writing in the same way as Doerr (1995) does:

I think of what it is like to write stories. It is a completion. It is discovering something you didn't know you'd lost. It is finding an answer to a question you didn't ask (p.30).

At times I surprised myself by what I knew. One of my clients, who is the foster mother of a young attachment disturbed child whom I also work with, mirrored my surprise. This is what she said to me after she read *Sam's voices*:

I cried. It was powerful and moving for me. I was blown away to find that you truly do understand about attachment disorders, that you have heard everything that I've been saying. I didn't expect it. I didn't know how well you understood. You know what it is like. You are the only person I know that does. I don't feel so alone now.

In this case, an essential quality (Nin, 1986) of *Sam's voices* seems to have resonated with the foster mother, speaking to her of my *knowing* [the confusing and torturous ambivalence of attachment trauma] which she thought only she *knew*; a *knowledge* that defies succinct theoretical description, but calls out for expression in the subtleties and complexities of a literary genre. (Note that *attachment trauma* is a phrase I use to describe the chronic traumatization that children experience when abused or abandoned by their attachment figures.)

I construct worlds in the texts that I write but the readers, in their diverse interpretations, construct and re-construct their own multiple worlds. Ricoeur (1981)

quotes Gadamer in expressing that "the 'matter' of the text may escape from the finite intentional horizon of its [author. In] other words, thanks to the writing, the 'world' of the text may explode the world of the author" (p.139). .

The following fictional writings have their own autonomy for readers to "live their way into the experience" (Ceglowski, 1997, p.199). The characters/personae have their own ambiguities, contradictions and difficulties that reveal themselves. The characters also take risks, and their worlds have meaning and hope. As Jardine (1992) states:

The returning of life to its original difficulty is a returning of the possibility of the living Word. It is a return to the essential generativity of human life, a sense of life in which there is always something left to say, with all the difficulty, risk, and ambiguity that such generativity entails.

The writings are presented in the text in the following order. The titles in bold print are the writings about *other*. They have their own introductions. The titles not in bold print are personal poems and prose, which stand alone, without qualification.

<u>Titles</u>	<u>Genres</u>
<i>Words</i>	poem
<i>A Leaf</i>	poem
<b><i>Story of Mark, a Romanian Adoptee</i></b>	simulated autobiographical account, in 2 parts. The latter part takes place a year later.
<i>When You Tell Me You Love me</i>	poem
<b><i>Sam's Voices</i></b>	radio play
<i>My Father</i>	prose
<b><i>Sylvia: Foster Parent</i></b>	
<b><i>As Attachment Figure</i></b>	didactic and descriptive account
<i>Being There</i>	prose
<b><i>Sandi, An Adopted Teenager</i></b>	
<b><i>Leaving Home</i></b>	short story
<i>Being In Therapy</i>	prose
<b><i>Didi, A Lonely Little Tiger</i></b>	fairy tale
<i>Easter Lilies</i>	prose

*Words*

My words are like smooth pebbles  
Tossed out by the surf onto an empty beach.  
At first they glisten wet and expectantly.

I'd like to be noticed but there isn't much time.  
You'd have to listen carefully to hear  
The sound of my words  
Above so much ocean noise.

Is it possible someone could pick them up  
And hold them for a while?  
Or would he just throw them back into the sea  
To feel the movement of his arm, throwing,  
To hear the sound of the pebbles, splashing.

Soon the pebbles will dry out and become  
Just pebbles on a beach, like so many others.  
In time they will be pulled back by the incoming surf  
To be hidden under the weight  
Of the water above them.

Still they won't rest  
On the shifting ground they lie in.  
And still they give in  
To the rhythms of light and darkness  
That no one can control.

*A Leaf*

She lies like a dark red autumn leaf  
Outstretched like an open hand on the ground.  
The blood in her veins  
Is soaking into her skin.

In a wind  
She broke off from the mother tree and tried  
But could not right herself as she fell,  
Tossing and turning in the air.

She hit the ground softly.  
The lack of hurt surprised her.  
She forgot how light she was  
With so much blood lost.

Still, she feels the size of her wounds.  
It is cold, too, away from the mother tree.  
She is attached, now, to no one  
Though she lies with many others  
Who look like her.

Onlookers enjoy the beauty  
Of her passing.  
No one believes her heart  
Could still be beating  
After such a fall.

Perhaps a little girl will pick her up  
And hold her tightly in her hand.  
Maybe she will give the blood red leaf  
To her mother  
As a gift.

When the leaf is drying out  
And curling inward at the edges,  
I wonder how long  
The colour will last  
And how long  
The heart will keep beating.

### **Introduction to *Story of Mark, a Romanian Adoptee***

The following fictional story is written in the first person from the point of view of Mark. The choice of a first person is a genre which recently gained prominence in the study of autism, by Donna Williams (1992, 1994), who wrote a powerful autobiographical account of what she perceived her world to be as an autistic child growing up.

This remarkable ability to "construct an observing self that is not [attention deficit disorder] or obsessive-compulsive or dysthymic or whatever it is that we are" (Ratey & Johnson, 1997, p.24) was demonstrated by Williams in revealing what life was like in her "inner battle" within her "mental prison" (1992, p.19) or "cage" of autism (1994, p.5).

Similarly, Mark, in this story depicts that "irreconcilable contradiction" or "tension between being and observing oneself as an object" (Ronai (1995, p.419). In psychotherapy, I might nurture this plurality of selves so that the child develops a positive relationship with him or herself, to achieve such ends as better self-control, self-care, etc. (This metaphor of self as multiple, interactive and dialogical is prevalent in postmodern psychology [Cf. Hermans, Kempen, & Van Loon, 1992].)

Mark is a composite of the children I work with who have been physically, emotionally, and cognitively deprived, if not physically abused as infants in orphanages in third world countries as well as Romania.

The purpose of this account is to illustrate how Mark, with all the barriers he has against doing so, eventually begins forming an attachment to his foster mother.

I chose to make Mark an adoptee from Romania as the lack of social and physical stimulation, food, and general neglect of the infants in the Romanian orphanages has been well documented. The world was shocked in 1989 when after the overthrow of the

Romanian communist regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, T.V. cameras entered the orphanages in Romania and recorded the "rooms full of children who appeared to be starving and emotionless" (Ames, 1997, p. 1) in an atmosphere which was "colorless and quiet" (Ames, 1997, p.4).

I also chose to make Mark, in this story, 4 years old when he was adopted from the orphanage, as this puts him in the category of a child who unequivocally has suffered the price of severe deprivation as an infant and toddler. The signs that he was physically abused, too, were added to illustrate and open up for discussion the interface of early childhood trauma and attachment difficulties and its effects on later behavior.

This story purports to be Mark's construction of his life story, keeping in mind that memory, in my view, is reconstructive, as theorized by Barlett (1932) rather than reproductive, in the tradition of Ebbinghaus (Erdelyi & Kleinbarb, 1978). Therefore, in some cases when Mark talks about an event it is unknown to the listener and probably to Mark himself, whether his memory of the event is from experiencing it or someone telling him about it.

I also gave Mark only 3 words (in Romanian) when he was adopted, to emphasize his delayed formation of language that undoubtedly has affected his ability to process and talk about his experience. However, there is much evidence that such early experiences would have been indelibly encoded in memory, though at a sensory or iconic level, even though the person may not be able to speak about them or even deny all memory of them (van der Kolt, 1988). Terr (1988) found that although children had suffered documented traumatization before the age of 2 1/2 and could not talk about it, they often replayed the traumas in explicit form, in their play.

*Story of Mark, a Romanian Adoptee: Part I*

*I dream I'm in Romania. I enter a rich man's house. The air is golden and sparkling from crystal chandeliers. I see furniture covered in green velvet, a huge carved table set for dinner with white linen, lace, silver. I am met by people with dark hair and eyes, who look like me. They crowd around me. They want to touch me and talk to me. I see my mother on the outside of the crowd. She is beautiful, with pale, smooth skin, long curly black hair and a red dress with a crinoline that swishes when she moves. She is smiling and calling to me, and crying. She stretches her arms out toward me and I see her long red fingernails. She is trying to tell me something, but I can't understand what she is saying....*

Let me introduce myself. I'm called Mark. I am 11 years old; have light skin, dark eyes and wavy black hair. I was born in Romania but now I live in Canada. People tell me I am thin and smaller than other kids my age which is O.K. with me because I am in grade 4 and the kids my age are in grade 6. I lived in a Romanian orphanage until I was 4 years old. The orphanage is a very bad place with bad people and no *McDonald's*. I've been told I went right from the hospital to the orphanage so I didn't get to know my birth mother, though I still miss her.

When I was 4 years old, I was adopted by my mum and dad who came to Romania from Canada to get a new baby son. Instead, they ended up with me. They told me the orphanage smelled like urine and the rooms were all badly lit, large and empty. They didn't see any toys. There were 3 ladies who looked after all 40 of us little kids and babies. I remember the ladies leaning over my crib with their big faces, black eyes, and bad breath that smelled like rotten meat. I remember there was nowhere to hide but I always kept my eyes open. When I first came home, my mum said it gave her the creeps the way I would sleep with my eyes open, just the round whites of my eyes left, glistening and staring, sightless in the dark.

When mum and dad first met me, I could only speak 3 words, "water", "bread", and "bathroom", and they were all Romanian. I still don't talk very much. No one knows what I am thinking and I like that. Except my foster parents told me they think I'm a lot smarter than I let on. They also said that I know how to read people and find their sore points. I just wish they would stay out of my mind and mind their own business.

Wait a second. I am way ahead of myself. Let me explain about where I am living now. When I was 10, I was put in a foster home and I'm still here. I don't know why I was put here, but I think it was because I was bad or my parents didn't have enough money to keep me. I have been trying to get back home by being as bad as possible, but so far it hasn't worked. I went to an important meeting a little while ago. All those social worker and counsellor types that ask me questions were arranged in a circle in a room. My mum and dad were there too. They were all talking about me and looking at me. My mum and dad told me that I was never going home again. I don't know who made them say that and why they had to lie.

Did I tell you I had a twin brother? His name is Donald. He and I were adopted together and came to Canada. We slept together in the orphanage. We had only one blanket and one pillow, except that Donald always used to take the blanket and I had to fight with him to get it. I remember always being cold and hungry. The ladies at the orphanage used to feed us this yucky smushy stuff that is yellowy green. It makes me sick to think about it. Back then I would eat anything. I remember when I first came to live with my adoptive family I would scrape up chewing gum off the sidewalk and pick up apple cores people threw away and eat them. I even used to eat the skins of bananas until my mum told me not to.

Speaking of my brother, Donald, he is a bit bigger than I am and talks better. Every one likes him more than me. He knows how to talk to people and make them smile. Our

little sister, Theresa, who lives back in my adoption home, likes Donald better, too. But then I never liked her. She's 3 now and when she was born I told my mum I hated her. She is fat and wears frilly clothes and is always making noise and laughing. My mum and dad spoil her too much. My dad holds her on his lap right in front of me, just to make me jealous. I used to shut my eyes to try and not see them together but I couldn't stop myself. Before I knew it I would fall fast into that dark and empty place inside me that I call the museum of hopelessness.

I couldn't stand Theresa's sticky hands touching me and if she ever brushed up against me when she walked by, I would shove her away. If I could I would try and trip her. That's why my mum never left her alone with me. But I used to watch Theresa a lot, especially when she would stand and look out the long window that started close to the floor. Once when my mum couldn't see me because she was on the other side of the refrigerator, I saw the open window and Theresa's chubby little hands on the window ledge. She was only about a year old then. Before I knew it I smashed the window down on her fingers. I remember her whole face became red and contorted, her big mouth wide open, her breathing stopped, then that piercing cry came out that brought my mother flying over in a horrifying second to pull the window off her fingers. Her crying went on and on and it hurt my ears and I just wanted her to shut her up. Still, it felt good to see her cry. I knew I was in trouble and I tried to lie, to say it was an accident, but my mum didn't believe me. I couldn't fool my mum, though sometimes I can fool other adults.

Back to my brother, we no longer live together, he lives in another foster home, and I don't know why that is. We used to fight a lot and once I might even have tried to kill him. People think we hate each other. But he has always been there and without him, I don't always know where I am or what to do or how to feel. He used to speak for me, say what I thought, sometimes even before I thought it. I used to see him every week but I

don't now. I don't know why that is, either. I don't think about him much anyway, as I usually feel nothing inside. That is, except when I feel so angry I could burst or so afraid I can't stand it. I've been told that when people get mad at me, my shoulders hunch up and cover my neck; my legs go limp, and I walk on my toes. At these times I feel more like a puppet than a person. When everything is too much, I hoist up my pants real tight between my legs and around my middle. It makes me feel all sealed up and safe inside. Kids at school laugh at me when I do this to my pants, but I don't care because it's better than letting the pieces fall out.

My mum told me that when she got me from the orphanage, I had scars on my back from being hit many times. She saw the long sticks the ladies used to carry. I think I remember some of us being herded like cattle into different rooms. Mum said that I used to cringe and duck when she would lift her hand up to adjust the collar on my coat.

A weird counsellor I once saw told my mum that I learned not to cry when I was hurt because in the orphanage there was no point. No one cared then how I felt. Even now, when I am hurt, I don't want anyone to touch me. Grown ups get mad if I don't want to be comforted. They don't understand that I don't like people. I think they are going to hurt me or take something away from me. I'd much rather be left alone.

When I am afraid and terribly lonely, I have found ways to make myself feel better, such as making my arm into a person, a friend who talks to me. Or I like to rock back and forth, suck my thumb or make weird faces and howl. Grown ups tell me to stop because I am acting silly. I don't try to please grown ups that much, like Donald does. I don't really know how anyway.

Sometimes I feel so mixed up inside and outside. All the noise, colours, voices, feelings become too much for me and I can't stand it. I have to get it organized, by twirling, fidgeting, and making rhythm by waving my hand in front of my face like a fan

or turning the light on and off. It's like making my own rap music in my head that no one else can hear.

Other times, I feel nothing. When I feel nothing, I want to hurt myself because I hate myself. I used to ask my mum to slam the door on my hand or shut a drawer on my fingers, but she wouldn't. I have punched myself in the face but my mum didn't like it and told me to stop. One day I snuck one of my dad's razor blades and made nice long secret trails of dark red blood down my cold, white legs, like paths in the ice. I hid them under my pants, but sure enough, my mother found them. She didn't believe me when I said I fell in some prickly bushes. She just looked at me and looked away. I made her cry. She didn't understand what a relief it was to see my own blood seeping out of the crevices in the ice, like finding my way home in a blizzard.

Let me tell you more about my being bad. My brother, Donald, and I used to have fun when we lived with our family driving our older sister crazy. She's a teenager with blonde hair, the colour I'd like to have, and she thinks she is just so cool. We used to take turns kicking her under the table or making faces at her when no one else was looking. Just thinking about it makes me happy.

At school I am always doing something wrong these days. Yesterday I felt like cutting, so I took the scissors and cut up a book in the library. A lot of adults around me got upset. I had to go to *time out* for a very long time. I was supposed to think about what I had done. But whenever I thought about how I turned those big coloured pages into so many different, small, bright shapes, I just wanted to laugh. Sitting in that *time out* room for so long, though, made me madder and madder. When I finally went back to the classroom, the lady who is always following me (my *aid*, they call her) leaned so close to me, I had to push her away from me as hard as I could. She said I hurt her shoulder, so I

was suspended from school and got to go home early. I'm banned from using scissors now, even in my foster home, except when supervised.

Living in my new home (the foster home) sure was scary at first. For quite a long time, I watched and tried to figure out what I was supposed to do. If I wasn't careful, I could get beaten and probably killed. Maybe they would starve me or not give me enough blankets to keep me warm at night. So, I did just about everything my new parents said. They thought I was very good and they couldn't help wondering why my mum and dad (my adoptive parents) had so much trouble with me. Of course, now I feel safe with them and I can relax. I know they are good people. When I relax, I feel silly. My foster mother says that I must be feeling good, but I don't really know what feeling good means.

I don't know why I do bad things here. One day I turned on all the electric elements on the stove. What a charge that was, that round dial on the stove, more fun than an on and off light switch. I loved watching the rings of steel glow red hot and the red glow travel up the frying pan. That day I turned my insides into the outside. My insides, you know, sometimes feel like red hot lava in a volcano.

Sometimes I want everyone to go away and for it all to stop. Then, I refuse to do anything. Last week, I just wouldn't get out of the car. I was afraid. I don't want my foster mother to control me. If I'm controlled I will lose everything. I will have nothing of myself left. I might die. She might hurt me. There was nothing else I could do. It felt like it was nighttime and I was a stray dog on a road, frozen in the headlights of an oncoming car.

Wait, please don't misunderstand. It's true I'm afraid to be with others, especially adults, as they might try to kill me. But I'm also afraid to be alone. If I'm left alone, I might die. Deep inside me, I long for someone to love me, bad as I am, but how can I let anyone near me. I have ways to keep you away from me, but I also want you close to me, so one thing I do is this: I think I am really smart at knowing just the way to make you

mad -- not so mad that you'll leave me, but mad enough so you can't ignore me. But then, you won't get close to me either. I figure that if you care enough, you will understand, and not go away.

***Mark: Part II: A Year Later:***

I'm still here, in the same foster home, (Judy and David's), which is much better than my brother, Donald, who has already moved to another foster home. I have been here for 2 years now and I am 12 years old. Judy and David are always taking my quilt away (as a consequence) and I have to earn it back by trying hard. If I ask them when I'm going to get it back, I have to wait longer. They tell me not to fixate on things because it uses up all the space in my mind and then there is no room for anything else. But I like doing that. It makes me feel good. I fixate on pictures of girls, or bears, or on your ear or maybe your nose when you are talking to me. When I do this I laugh and Judy tells me I'm being silly and to cool it.

Judy and David also won't let me do the crazy behavior I used to do at home (my adoption home), like hurting myself, rocking, sucking my thumb, making weird faces, howling, and waving my hand in front of my face, so I stopped, well, at home anyways. At school I sometimes make strange noises and everyone gets upset. It's fun. I know they feel sorry for me because I was in an orphanage. That way I don't have to do school work, either. It gives me a break because some of the work at school I have to do is really hard.

I went to a counsellor for a while and it was lots of fun. He was an art therapist. I used to paint my fixations until Judy found out and decided he wasn't helping me, so I couldn't go anymore.

I really don't miss home (my adoption home) because there was too much fighting. My mum would put me in my room for hours and when dad came home he'd be really mad at me for being bad. Sometimes he would hit me with a belt. It was so scary. He was like a great big angry bear.

Judy really cares for me. I know this because she tries to help me. She helps me read by pointing at the words while I try and say them. She helps me learn how to pronounce words right. She tells me I'm a lot smarter than people think I am. She is teaching me

how to choose good thoughts over bad thoughts. She says I shouldn't go down the bad thoughts road, and if I start to, I should take the next exit off. That road always gets me in trouble.

Like last weekend I was in respite care, I went to church and I was getting real bored. The person beside me, whom I didn't know, wouldn't help me read the hymn book, so I had nothing to do. That person was mean. So, I started thinking about my face with blood oozing down one side of it and a big face in the window staring at me. It was scary.

Then, after church I went back to the respite home, took a stick I found lying around, broke it in two to make it sharp and started beating on an inner tube. Sure enough, I started to hear the sound of air coming out of it. What a great hissing sound! It was worth it just to hear that loud snake-like sound before it died, even though I got in trouble. I had to say I was sorry to the man who owned the inner tube and he said it was O.K. Lynn says that when the man said it was O.K. meant that he forgave me, not that it was O.K. for me to put a hole in the inner tube.

Back to Judy, sometimes I look at her and think she is so beautiful, though she won't let me fixate on her hair, which is long, dark, and wavy. Even when I do something wrong, she doesn't get mad at me but says that she is disappointed. Like the other night, I couldn't sleep and felt kind of scared and lonely, so I started taking pictures in my room in the dark, with the flash on. I loved the way the flash lit up the whole room with a big white light. Judy came in, took my camera away and said it was 4:00 in the morning and told me to go back to sleep. That's not so easy to do, because of the bad thoughts. Sometimes I think I am possessed by the devil. Oh, there I go again. I have to watch myself. I don't know where these bad thoughts come from.

I hate going to respite for the weekend (I go about once a month) because I miss home, that is, my foster home. I especially miss Judy. I now trust her, that she's not going to hurt me. I hope I can live here for a long time, because I don't want to think about living anywhere else. I already have 3 sets of parents, my birth parents in Romania, my adoptive parents and Judy and David. I don't need any more.

Judy and David believe in God and now I do too. When I visit mum and dad (my adoptive parents), they roll their eyes if I talk about the love of God filling me up with goodness. Judy said I don't have to pray out loud, I should just pray to myself. So, now that's what I do.

Something must be O.K. as I don't feel as angry as I used to. Judy says if I turn my anger into sadness, I will learn from my mistakes. I hardly ever get in trouble at school now. Except for a week ago, I told my aid, Sandra, that I wanted to put a knife in her back. I shouldn't have said that but she was making me do school work and it was too hard. (I guess I still have a few problems.) I had to apologize and even felt a little sad when Sandra said that I hurt her feelings. I'm starting to feel sad more lately and the other day I surprised myself by crying. It sounds weird, but I was crying because I miss my mother in Romania. I hope I can see her one day. I bet she is rich now.

You could say that sometimes I also feel happy which is different from feeling silly. *Happiness* is feeling like it's Spring and I'm a young cherry tree, with new green leaves and white blossoms. *Silly* is hanging aluminum plates with white strings on the branches of the tree to scare the birds away, so they won't eat the cherries.

And you know what else? I walk on my heels more now than on my toes, like I used to do. Judy says it keeps me more "grounded," like the cherry tree. That way the wind can blow, people can get mad at me, and there could be a big storm, but my branches would bend, and I'd still feel strong because I *would* be strong, because I have strong roots in the

ground. Judy has helped me with that, getting strong roots. Judy cares for me and loves me. I know that. And one day, I might love her back and even tell her so.

*When You Tell Me You Love Me*

## I

When you tell me you love me, I grow cold.  
I'm a little girl sitting alone  
In a garden in a bathing suit.  
The clouds have just covered the sun.  
Its round, white light is distant  
And shines like metal.  
I need to go inside to get more clothes on  
But I can't move.

When I suspect that you care  
I find that a well fed, brown slug  
Has entered my private room.  
I don't know how it came in,  
Leaving its trail of slime on the floor.  
I want to get rid of it  
But it's too soft and slippery to touch.  
When I try to flick it away with a stick  
It's too heavy; its ends curl up  
And it just rolls over.

When I feel my heart beating too quickly  
When I see you,  
I want to hide  
Like a green caterpillar crouched under a new leaf  
Afraid of the hungry birds who are looking for it.

Or I feel awkward and have difficulty standing  
Like a foal born on a Spring morning  
Long legged, still wet from the afterbirth  
Its mother too weak and in pain to be of an assistance.

Or I'm left dangling in the air upside down  
Like a spider whose web has just been  
Ripped open  
By a careless passerby  
Who did not see it.

## II

There once was a tall, perfect yellow daisy  
With a dark velvet centre  
That was picked in its prime  
From a field of purple and golden wild flowers  
That swayed back and forth in the wind.  
It was dried out  
By a special formula  
To last a long time.  
It could be mistaken  
For still being alive  
The chemical process was so well perfected.

There should be a warning on it  
For anyone who is fooled by the presentation.  
That if you try and reach for it and touch it  
You'd better be careful  
Because the flowerhead is so brittle  
It could break apart in your hands.  
And the petals  
Will float down  
In many, long, yellow strands  
To rest finally on the ground  
Where it all began.

### *Sam's Voices*

This narrative drama, suited for radio, has as its central character, *Sam*, and takes place over a two year period, when *Sam* was ages 4 to 6 while he is in the foster home of *Debbie*.

*Sam* is a composite of a young child who is in turmoil and ambivalent about making an attachment to his foster parent, *Debbie* (later called *mummy*). *Debbie* is committed to *Sam* and wants to adopt him. *Sam's* struggle is complicated by the fact that the *Child Welfare* agency may move him.

*Sam* is a black child, originally from Haiti, where he lived (not continuously) in an orphanage until age 2 1/2. He was then adopted by (white) adoptive parents, represented by *Sharon*. *Sharon* and her husband relinquished *Sam* a year later. At age 3 1/2, *Sam* moved to the foster home of *Debbie* who is a single parent (also white) where he continues to live.

*Sharon*, at first called *mummy* by *Sam*, is not supportive of *Debbie* adopting *Sam*, believing he should be adopted by a black family or a couple.

The *Child Welfare* agency, represented by *Trudy*, social worker, is undecided where *Sam* should be placed, until the end of the drama.

This drama is predominantly in *Sam's* voice, but over all, there are 4 voices plus a chorus which are listed in order of appearance and indicated as follows:

***Sharon's Voice: His previous adoptive parent:*** Her lines are indented and in bold.

*Sam's Voice:* When he speaks in 1st person, his lines are at the margin. When he refers to himself in 3rd person or when he is playing, making up stories, his lines are indented.

***Trudy's Voice: Child Welfare Agency:*** Her lines are indented, in bold, and underlined.

*Mummy's (Debbie's) Voice:* This is his foster parent who wishes to adopt him. Her lines are indented and in italics.

*Other Children's Voices:* Their lines are indented, in italics, and underlined.

**Setting:** The setting is the foster home of *Debbie* where *Sam* lives, except for 2 short scenes at a *Laundromat* and at a *McDonald's Restaurant*.

**Sharon (previous adoptive parent)**

to Trudy (social worker): **Sam peed on me  
He shit on me.  
He smeared shit  
on the walls.  
He gave me a black eye.  
He tried to choke  
his little sister.**

**Sam is a predatory  
opportunistic person.  
He should be institutionalized.**

**I love him so much.  
And I miss him.**

\* \* \*

Let me out of here.  
Help me.  
I want to go home.  
I don't want to live here.  
I don't pee my pants anymore.

The boy is all mad,  
all broken.  
Mummy won't keep him.  
Mummy doesn't want him.  
Mummy won't let him sleep.

I'm going home.  
I want my mummy.  
I want my daddy.

The airplane crashed.  
 The woman and guy are dead forever.  
 The father shot his son.  
 The father went to jail.  
 There is a hurt little boy in the water.  
 The helicopter will rescue him.  
 The helicopter is sinking.  
 The airplane is rescuing the helicopter.  
 The airplane is sinking.  
 Nobody's going to save you.

The power's broken  
 The guy fell in the hole.  
 I need an ambulance and a policeman.

The little boy doesn't have a home.  
 The rescue trucks,  
 the planes are drowning.  
 The ambulance is on its side,  
 People are crying, getting buried.

He's making a new home with cement,  
 and garbage.

Mom, dad, help me.  
 The truck runs over the home,  
 buries all the people inside.

When am I going home?

\* \* \*

**Trudy (social worker) to Sam:**      **Sam, you are going to have visits  
with your mummy, Sharon.**

\* \* \*

Rain, rain, go away.  
 Mummy wants to see you again.

I'm here because I'm bad.  
 If I pee my pants,  
 I'll come back here.

If I bite mummy,  
I'll come back here.  
If I'm nasty,  
I'll come back here.

Debbie, I've been thinking.  
I'm sorry I bit you, Debbie.  
I'm sorry I hurt you.  
I don't want to hurt you.  
I won't hurt you anymore.

You don't love me anymore.  
I'm sorry I hurt you.  
I can't love you anymore.

I'm a good boy, now,  
so I can go home.

I'm a bad boy.  
I peed my pants.  
I won't go home now.  
I'll share my lunch with you, Debbie.  
I can't live there  
because I peed my pants.

The trucks are angry  
because they are unhappy.  
The boy doesn't have a home.

I'm lonely.  
I don't have anybody.  
Please don't leave me.

Sooner or later, Debbie,  
you're going to be sad,  
because I'm leaving.

I'm so sad.  
I have an idea.  
Can mummy and daddy  
come here to live?

\* \* \*

**Setting: A Laundromat**

(*Sam* crawls onto the lap of a woman whom he has never seen before.)

I love her, Debbie, and (crying) I don't want to leave!

*Debbie (foster parent):*      *Honey, you just met her.  
We have to go now,  
because our laundry is ready.*

(Debbie leads him out crying. The lady looks puzzled.)

\*      \*      \*

**Setting: Foster Home of Debbie:**

Debbie, Sharon hit me on the butt.  
She locked me in the bathroom  
when I peed my pants.

Sharon locked me out.  
I was only a little boy.  
I was in my pajamas,  
only my socks on.

I was banging on the door.  
I was angry  
and I was sad  
and I was cold.

I don't like Sharon.  
She's a bad person.

Somebody is dead.  
He's in jail.  
The bad guys were sent to jail  
because they hurt people.  
The bad parents went to jail.  
The baby has a bad mother.  
Superman put her in jail.

I'm going to put the fire out  
in your eyes, with water.

When I grow up  
Am I going to jail?

\* \* \*

Debbie, can you be like my mummy?  
You're not my mummy.

I love you, mummy, (Sam now calls Debbie, 'mummy')  
but I don't want you  
as my mummy anymore.

I want a baby bottle  
Put milk in the bottle.  
I want you to feed me.

Mummy, you play baby and I'll feed you.

Mummy, will you go buy a baby?

\* \* \*

**Sharon (previous adoptive parent)  
to Trudy (social worker): Sam does not trust Debbie enough  
to crap on her.**

**I am opposed to Debbie  
adopting my son, Sam.  
Sam needs a 2 parent family  
and black siblings.**

**I want the best home  
there could be  
for my son.**

**I love him so much  
And I miss him.**

Mummy, I have something  
to tell you.  
I don't love you at all.  
I want to go to Haiti.  
I want to see my black mummy.  
She's my tummy mummy.  
I don't want to live here.

In Haiti, they never told me to shut up.  
I don't want to live here any more.  
I told my friends  
I don't like you anymore.

Don't talk to me.  
You disgust me.  
You're not my real mummy.  
You know what I mean.

I don't want you to fight  
for me any more.  
I don't want you any more.

If I came out of your tummy,  
would I be black?

I love you but at school  
I don't think of anybody.

My black mummy loved me,  
fed me, and rocked me,  
and I had to go away.

I know you are working to keep me  
forever and ever.  
I love you  
and I want to go back to Haiti.  
Are you going to love me forever?

*Debbie: Yes, Sam, I will always love you.*

I'm sad  
and I want to go back to Haiti.

It was a lie.  
 I think they did feed me.  
 I think I should go back.  
 I want to go back with you,  
 when I am older.  
 I want to stay  
 and I want you to stay too.

I have 2 hearts:  
 a heart for my mummy in Haiti  
 and a heart for you.

*Debbie (singing):*     *You are my sunshine,  
    my only sunshine.  
    You make me happy  
    when skies are grey.  
    You'll never know dear  
    how much I love you.  
    Please don't take  
    my sunshine away.*

*Debbie (speaking):*     *I love you, Sam.  
    You are my 'sun'.*

\*           \*           \*

*Children (in unison):*     *No one black can play this game.*  
    *No one black can be in this pool.*  
    *No one black can come in this back yard.*

\*           \*           \*

What are you doing, friend?  
I am not your friend.

It's not fair I'm black.  
All my friends are white.  
Everybody's white and I'm black.  
Can you do something to make my skin white?

Where I used to live,  
there were no cars and trucks.  
We lived by the boats.  
We bought fruits and vegetables.

I never want to go to Haiti.  
They were so mean to me there.  
They didn't feed me.  
They were mad at me and hit me  
When they gave me food,  
I clamped my mouth shut  
and turned my head away.

I never want to see Haiti again.  
They punched me and didn't like me.  
The boats are there and I like the boats.

\* \* \*

**Trudy (social worker)**

**to Sam:**

**Sam, there are other people  
besides Debbie  
who want to adopt you.  
We are looking for a new mummy  
and a new daddy for you.**

\* \* \*

Mummy, the people in the afternoon  
don't want me to live with you.  
I won't be happy with another home.  
I want the home I have.

I don't want to live any place else.  
 I don't want anybody else to love me.  
 I want to live here forever, until I am 7.

\* \* \*

Mummy, are you mad at me now?  
 You hurt me  
 when you are mad at me.  
 Are you mad at me?

*Debbie: I need to trust you, Sam,  
 not to leave the property.*

What is trust, mummy?

*Trusting is believing that  
 what someone says and does  
 is true.*

Mummy, I don't trust you.  
 Am I bad?  
 I trust you a little bit.

\* \* \*

I want to move to a new house,  
 So Trudy ( the social worker) won't be able to find me.

*Debbie: I'm working on you staying with me.*

Make up a lullaby for me.  
 Sing it all to me.

*Debbie sings Sam a lullaby.*

\* \* \*

I'm afraid of you dying.  
 I'm afraid of my friends dying.  
 I want to move away from here,  
 from this city.

Mummy, don't leave me.  
 Promise me you won't leave me.  
 I want to live here forever,  
 until I am 13.

It's really just *your* house, isn't it?

*Debbie:*        *I want you to be with me.*  
                   *I want you to stay with me.*  
                   *I want you with me.*

\*        \*        \*

**Setting: *McDonald's* Restaurant**

Sam is standing beside another table where a family is sitting and eating. He does not know them. Sam is standing very close to them and is staring at them. Debbie goes over, takes his arm and says:

*Debbie:*        *It is time to leave now, Sam.*

Sam (struggling with Debbie and yelling):

You are squeezing me, mummy!  
 You are hurting me!

*Debbie:*        *It is time to leave now*  
                   *I am just taking you by the arm*  
                   *to lead you out.*

*Sam (crying as Debbie leads him out):*

No mummy, I don't want you!  
 I want to live with them!  
 I want to live with those people!  
 I want to live with them, mummy!  
 I want them to be my family!

\*        \*        \*

**Setting: Foster Home of Debbie:**

Children (in unison): We're not going to touch you.  
We don't like that colour skin.

We're not going to touch him.  
Don't touch that colour skin.

\* \* \*

Mummy, you make me want to hide  
 in the closet.  
 You look ugly.

I'm going to kill myself.

I wish you weren't my mummy.  
 I wish you were my mummy  
 and you were black.

When I grow up I'm going to be white.

\* \* \*

**Sharon (previous adoptive parent)**

to Sam: **Sam, don't call Debbie your mummy!**  
**I don't want to hear you calling Debbie**  
**your mummy!**  
**Debbie is not your mummy!**  
**You are getting a new mummy and daddy!**

\* \* \*

Mummy, I had a bad dream.  
 I dreamt that you and me  
 were riding on a bike.  
 I fell off and  
 the wicked witch caught me.

I'm afraid of the head lights.  
 I'm afraid of the clown faces.  
 I'm afraid of the cartoons.  
 I don't want any more stories.

Sharon doesn't want you to be my mummy.  
I'm going to have to leave here, aren't I?

Batman, you lied to me.

\* \* \*

**Setting: Bathroom of Foster Home:**

*Debbie and Sam are in the bathroom. Debbie is drying Sam off with a towel.*

*Sam (screaming and crying):*

Ow, mummy! Ow, mummy!  
Stop hurting me! You hurt my arm!  
Don't touch me!  
Get away from me!

*Debbie: Honey, I'm just drying you off with a towel.  
I'll be more careful  
You're safe with mummy now.*

\* \* \*

**Setting: Foster Home (General Area):**

Mummy, can I pick the skin of your sunburn off?  
I'll be so gentle, mummy.  
I'm being very gentle.

It isn't a good idea to poo in my pants,  
is it, Mummy?

\* \* \*

*Children (in unison): Sam is a shit dip!  
Sam is a shit dip!  
Sam is brown because  
he covers himself in shit!*

\* \* \*

Don't talk to me.  
Leave me alone.

Cut off the man's head.  
Cut all the meat off him and eat it.  
He's a chicken, a bad man.

I don't want a black family.  
Black people are bad.

I'm not going to be happy anymore.  
I'm not going to sleep in my own bed  
until I have white skin like you.

\* \* \*

The house burnt down,  
but I can build it up,  
because I am a workman.  
But I'm making a different house  
with flowers outside it.  
The biggest helicopter in the whole world  
is guarding it.

I love you  
and want to live with you.  
When I kiss you  
I have stars in my eyes.

\* \* \*

I'm not going to eat that  
because you made it for me.  
I'm not going on any rides with you  
because I don't want to be near you.  
I don't want to live with you anymore.  
Don't touch me.  
Don't come near me.

(Sam is punching himself in the head with his fists.)

I'm a bad boy.

*Debbie: Honey, you're a good boy.  
Don't hit yourself in the head.  
I love you, Sam.*

\* \* \*

**Trudy (social worker)**

**to Sam): Sam, you can stay with Debbie  
forever.**

Mummy, I love you so much.  
This great big house is full of jewels..

I'm so glad I have a real family now.  
I want to live here forever.

I love you, mummy,  
from the bottom of the ground.

Thank you, God, for my mummy.

*My Father*

My father went to sea and came home again many times throughout my childhood. Yet I never remember him leaving or coming home. I remember looking into his upstairs bedroom from the doorway, seeing his hard brown suitcase closed and laid neatly on the table under the window. I knew that the surface of this suitcase was made out of tiny rough plastic pieces, cut to look like snake skin. There were times when I liked to trace these overlapping patterns with my fingers, when the suitcase first came out of the cupboard.

From the doorway, I could just see my father's back, bent over, dark and broad in his navy blue overcoat on the other side of the room. It was late afternoon and there was a stale yellow light coming in through the karki canvas blinds over the window. The air in the room was thick and still and seemed to weigh down my father in it, so that he moved in slow motion. There was no sound in this room. The lineoleum had big worn down orange flowers on it and was laid with a foot to spare between it and the walls. I knew that the bent over figure across the room was my father, but he seemed like a boarder to me.

Looking from the doorway, I could see where the blue painted ceiling slanted down over the bed. There was one area where the plaster on the ceiling had fallen off. My father had replastered it and painted it again blue but he'd left an inch indentation over the whole surface. "It's a map of Africa", my father said. My father used to lie on this bed and rest, especially when his asthma was bad. I would sit on a chair beside him and talk to him. Sometimes he used to tell me stories about a Doodle named 'Sheila' who lived up the Rowan Tree at the front of our house. This was the tree that had red berries that

would ripen at the end of every summer just before it was time to go back to school. I used to like just being near him, even if he was asleep. I could rest there too, near my father, sitting with him under the map of Africa.

I also liked to sit beside him when he fixed things. I watched him fix the radio, the toaster, various clocks and other broken items that he picked up in his "special department store" (that I later found out was the Jubilee Thrift Shop or the Goodwill Store). He would lay out the inner workings of the latest object for repair on the green oilcloth of the kitchen table and ask me to fetch things for him--pliers, screwdrivers, etc. always prefacing it by saying, "you have younger legs than I do". I thought my father could fix anything. After the radio or other item was put back together, he'd tell the others, "Sheila and I fixed this." and I'd feel like I, too, could make things work again that were broken.

Sometimes he would take me down town and often say, "who is the biggest horse in the world" and I knew that the answer was my oldest brother, Joseph, who used to argue with my father, but I never answered that question. He sometimes used to ask me to race him to next telephone pole and I was always surprised how fast such a big man with a bald head could run.

Although I don't remember ever saying "good-bye" to my father, I remember as a little girl, standing on the dock, my mother a distance away, looking up the huge dark sides of the hull of the boat my dad sailed on.

I also remember visiting my father on his boat when he was in port. He would take me into his cabin and lift me up to sit high on his bunk that had drawers underneath it. My legs would dangle down and he'd give me small white notepads that were held together at the top with red glue. I was warm and happy up there near the ceiling, looking down on my father's bald head with my notepad in my hands that I used to draw on. I don't remember ever feeling claustrophobic then, in a room that was so small.

When my father was away, I remember waiting by the phone in the hallway to hear my father's voice out at sea, coming in over the radio telephone. My mother would be talking to him, saying "over" in her high pitched voice, at the end of her side of the conversation. I also remember hearing him on the radio, giving the weather, though I didn't think it sounded like him. Every Sunday I used to write him letters and sometimes I got letters back from him, addressed to "dear pen-pal" as I had a pen-pal in Africa that I used to write to, after I put my name in a magazine. I realize now that when he told me he was my pen-pal too that he was trying to get me to write to him more often.

I remember the waiting and the not knowing when he was coming home. He didn't seem to have any schedule. When the boat came to port, he did too. I didn't trust the boats he worked on to bring him home again. Maybe it was because he was such a good story teller. We all grew quiet when he used to tell of the size of the waves off the coast in winter as compared to the size of his boat, how when there was a gale, he'd take the wheel and point the boat into the wind all night and not make any headway. Once he told us how in the middle of a storm he went down below and put his good suit on, in order to save it.

Once I remember waiting for him as a young child, in my bathing suit in the front garden. I sat on the lawn and kept looking up the street, hoping to see his dark shape moving side to side, like men do who go to sea, appearing out of the distance, coming down the street from the bus stop. I seemed to have been waiting a long time that day, the afternoon was moving on and it was growing cold. Still, I sat there, my skin prickling with goosebumps, not wanting to miss him. I sat so still the robins came and pulled worms out of the lawn right in front of me. I began to notice that the red breasts of the older robins seemed faded.

I don't remember him coming home that day or any other day. But in time, I began to draw the robins and other birds that kept me company. Sometimes I gave them red eyes. It made me happy when my older brother, David, told me I was a good drawer.

**Introduction to *Sylvia: Foster Parent as Attachment Figure:*  
A Descriptive and Didactic Account**

The Fiction-Non fiction Dance

The following writing is a departure from the usual literary genres. It is both fiction and non-fiction, in a kind of back and forth dance, as delineated chronologically below:

First, it is fiction as I describe pieces of the youth that assault my senses. It is fiction as I step back and describe how I met and came to know the foster parent, that I call Sylvia.

Second, this writing is non-fiction as I describe my theoretical standpoint regarding what children, particularly children of abuse and neglect, *need* from an attachment figure (usually a parent), and in turn, what this parent must provide. (In the interests of coherency and convenience, I refer only to a *foster parent* in this writing, but what I say is meant to be applicable to any attachment figure, be it a biological parent, foster parent or an adoptive parent.) I also describe the power of the attachment relationship to heal a child/youth. (*Child* in this writing usually indicates that I am talking about a general principle; *youth* usually indicates I am referring to the example I provide of the youth in Sylvia's home.) It continues to be non-fiction as I present a series of questions about what Sylvia gives to the youth in her care.

Third, I return to fiction as I describe my first meeting with Sylvia and how I experienced my relationship with her and witnessed her relationships with the youth develop over time: My respect and caring for Sylvia grew as I saw her confronting, comforting, supporting, fighting for, forgiving, and, in short, loving these hard to reach youth.

Fourth, I continue with fiction as I present short descriptive pieces or vignettes of 4 youth in Sylvia's care, including what such youth might say about what Sylvia gives them, if I interviewed them. These youth are composites of youth I have known.

Finally, I theorize about what essential qualities Sylvia has that enabled her to form attachment relationships with these youth when no one else had been able to.

#### Similarity of this Writing Style to Others

Writing in this style was suggested to me when I read *A narrow doorway: women's stories of escape from abuse* (Martin, 1996). The basis of the book was Martin's interviews with a number of women who came to a women's shelter in Ontario. Martin presented the women's stories in the first person *and also* provided short essays to describe life in a women's shelter including challenges facing the clients and the shelter workers.

Although my interviews are fictional, Martin and my intentions appear to be similar--to engage the reader with first person accounts *and* to provide theoretical material for contemplation.

#### The Similarity of this Form of Writing to Psychotherapy

This back and forth movement from fiction (describing people and events) to non-fiction (theorizing, raising theoretical questions) in this writing is a exercise that is almost second nature to me as it is analogous to how I work on a daily basis as a psychotherapist. (For the sake of consistency in this writing, I will refer to the client as a *youth*. However, I also work in similar ways with the children, adults, parents, etc. on my caseload.) As the client is in front of me, I not only listen to the youth tell his/her story, but I also am aware of other levels of my consciousness:

I note the immediacy of my personal reactions to the youth, reactions that range from being suddenly taken aback by a foul body odour; to confronting my own fear and loneliness reflected in the raised shoulders and slouch of a youth; to feeling sickened in sharing the burden of the youth's pain in his/her account of horrific events. (Cf. Herman, 1992.)

I also think about the theoretical assumptions and belief systems that influence my perceptions and organize my understanding of and connection with the youth. Theoretical questions about the youth often come to mind and I silently strategize how to try and answer them. To some extent, I share with the youth my reactions, theoretical suppositions, questions, and the steps I am taking to try and help him/her.

These multilevel responses are at once simultaneous and separate. One rises to the forefront, another recedes, in a kind of dance between the realms of the mind, bearing resemblance to the fiction-nonfiction dance of the following writing about *Sylvia*.

*Sylvia: Foster Parent as Attachment Figure:  
A Descriptive and Didactic Account*

A First Glimpse of the Youth in Sylvia's Care

When the youth in care first arrive at Sylvia's foster home, it is not always a pretty sight. Sometimes all you can see and hear are purple hair, a safety pin in an ear, and foul language. You might also be overtaken by that sour odour of clothes that have been slept in for a long time. Or, you might see bland looks, blank expressions, dead eyes and silence. It is often tough to just exchange a few civil words with these displaced youth. They may be mouthy and rude, or evasive and unresponsive. When approached, they might be superficially friendly or they turn away. It would seem like the last thing they wanted was to open up to and, God forbid, get close to another parent type. And no wonder. These youth have been sadly jaded by life. They have lost their belief in the goodness of the world and themselves. Their biological families did not want them, could not deal with them or it was not safe to live there. Many of these youth have been moved by social workers many times before and thought they were coming to "just another placement," no different from any other.

Something Wonderful Happened at Sylvia's

But at Sylvia's something wonderful, almost miraculous happened: Youth who had never attached before to a foster parent or adoptive parent, attached to Sylvia. What did Sylvia do to deserve the depth of their trust, this loyalty, this love? How did she awaken this primal, archetypal longing for closeness, for attachment?

The Purpose of Writing About Sylvia and the Format of the Writing

This writing is an attempt to describe what Sylvia gives to the youth in her care that enables them to form this attachment and irrevocably changes them.

The format of this writing begins with the quick glimpse of the youth given above. Next, I will describe how I know Sylvia and what my personal and theoretical standpoints are. Then, I will outline the questions I have had for many years about what Sylvia gives. The intentions of these questions are not only to reveal my own line of inquiry but to guide the reader in seeking his or her own answers in the text I subsequently provide. This text includes a short description of Sylvia followed by vignettes of 4 youth in care who have formed an attachment to Sylvia (and are composites of youth I have known). In conclusion, I will attempt to describe those intangible but essential qualities that Sylvia has that allows the youth in her care to attach to her.

#### How do I know Sylvia? What is my Standpoint Personally and Theoretically?

Let me start at the beginning, with myself: how I met Sylvia; what my beliefs are: I first met Sylvia over 10 years ago, when I was a high strung, perfectionistic protection social worker, working for a Child Welfare Agency. I placed particular children in care on my case load in her home; she cared for them; we talked together, vented, and strategized about how we could best help them. A fond memory of those times was sharing our outrageous opinions about the various counsellors in town, searching for the one who seemed that least shady and twisted, who, we hoped, could best help a particular traumatized youth. Back then, I thought that the right counsellor could do wonders for a child. Now I am convinced that what is most important of all is that the child is placed in a home where the parents or staff are intact, happy, and self-sufficient enough to not *need* the relationship with the child. The *needy* foster parent is but a cut above the malevolent foster parent who uses the child to satisfy his or her own prurient desires. The foster parent must also possess that unmistakable and sometimes unfathomable passion to want

to *know* the child and be capable of *being there with* and *for* the child, not only emotionally, but cognitively, and physically. In other words, the parent must be capable of intuitively knowing the child (which will be described later), cognitively understanding the child, caring deeply for the child, expressing this care at times physically with hugs, etc. and concretely, by taking visible steps to help the child.

In the case of children with a history of abuse or neglect, children who have been used, deceived, or abandoned by everyone they have ever loved, the parent must be capable of doing and giving much more: The parent must be capable of opening his/her heart to the child in an unselfish, giving, nurturing, and forgiving sense *and* be unwavering in his or her commitment to the child. I call it the unending maternal/paternal instinct to *love* and protect a child. One teenage girl (who had been sexually abused in her biological family) was joyful and relieved to tell me that her foster father loved her "as a child."

Over time, this love can melt the child's defenses against the vulnerability of loving back. In this way, an attachment of child to parent begins to grow. This is a two way bond of parent and child, an enduring tie, in which child and parent are not interchangeable with anyone else. For me, this attachment relationship is the *container* wherein the possibility of healing can occur. To the profoundly hurt child, the world *has been* and so, *is* (in his/her perception) a cruel and terrifying place. The bravados, the "I don't care", the "Fuck you" attitudes, are all historical remnants, false fronts, decoys, to fool, to protect. The good foster parent's love guides and *holds* the child, to give him/her the comfort, security, and safety of a home base, from which the child can more confidently and honestly explore himself and the world. Winnicott (1965) describes the mother as

providing the *holding environment* within which the infant who is integrating and organizing internal and external sensory input, can be *contained*.

Thus, *holding* helps *contain* the child, to keep the child from becoming overwhelmed, feeling like he/she is falling apart. In terms used by van der Kolt (1992), the traumatized young person's "self-regulatory system" very easily goes into a high state of arousal and "alarm mode". Within the attachment relationship, the parent soothes, relieves, and reassures the child that he/she is safe, thereby reducing his/her level of arousal. *Holding* is both a metaphorical and literal concept. Ashley Montagu (1986) states in his book, *Touching*, that when the mother *holds* her child, she helps her child develop a sense of self, as the child learns where he/she ends and where the world begins.

Eventually, with increased age, the healthy person achieves a balance of autonomy and attachment, a balance that is influenced by many factors besides trauma and attachment experiences, such as age, temperament, sex, and social-cultural expectations.

Josselson (1992) carries the metaphor of *holding* further, stating that in adulthood, "holding becomes a meaning system and as such becomes the container that orders and makes sense out of all other relationships" (p.39) Josselson gives as examples the institution of marriage and religious beliefs.

The counselling relationship forms another *container* (Cf. Kernberg, 1970) wherein change can occur, but without an attachment relationship, the child has no still point, no secure base to leave from and to check back to, to cry to, to receive comfort from, to be replenished by, to feel safe in, so he/she can integrate the frightening parts of her/himself discovered or uncovered during counselling. Without the safety of an attachment figure,

the child would be too afraid of disintegrating to take the risk of beginning the journey towards healing.

Today, I am a counsellor in private practice, having left my position as a social worker, 6 years ago. I am less harried now and I describe myself in less neurotic terms, as simply fervently committed to my work. I usually don't work with children in transition, between placements, because significant deep work, such as work on the child's traumatization and attachment terror cannot be done. The child is trying too hard to just survive in a world without boundaries and safety.

This is where I am today, with Sylvia. We are working together with Alice (a composite client) who is a youth in her home who has made an attachment to Sylvia and so feels safe enough to work with me on her recovery from the sexual assaults she sustained in her biological family.

#### Questions About What Sylvia Gives to the Youth in her Care

I have many questions based on my observations of Sylvia interacting with the youth in her care; listening to Sylvia and the youth; my reading of the literature on attachment and trauma, and my trying to figuring it all out over the years:

\*What *does* Sylvia give?

\*Why do many of her former children in care who are now young adults, phone her daily, weekly, for many years and call her day or night when they are upset or in trouble?

\*Why are they often fiercely loyal to Sylvia and stand up and defend her from any real or imagined verbal attack from others?

\*Why do they invite her to their graduations, weddings, parents' funerals?

\*Why do these older teens come back, pregnant or with one or two children of their own, and live with Sylvia for a time, paying minimal room and board or nothing at all?

\*Why does Sylvia *accept back* youth/young adults who once lived with her, who may now be just off the streets, or out of jail, who perhaps may be dangerous, and/or may be recovering alcoholics, who have lied to Sylvia and stolen money and jewelry from her in the past?

\*What do these young people who have lead troubled lives get from Sylvia that they need and (once this relationship is formed), no one else can give them?

\*How does Sylvia connect so deeply with these young people that an attachment relationship occurs?

In an attempt to answer these questions, let me first stop and look for a few moments at Sylvia:

#### Who is Sylvia? A Short Description From Here

When I first drove up, as a busy social worker, over 10 years ago, to Sylvia's home, I saw an ordinary looking stucco and wood 4 or 5 bedroom house on a small lot, in a middle class suburban neighbourhood. After I parked the car in the driveway, I wearily walked up the cracked cement walkway and tried the door bell, that didn't work. Then, I knocked on the door, wondering if anyone would hear me. For a moment, I hoped that no one was home and I could just go home myself. Suddenly, I heard a woman yell from upstairs, "Come in" and I opened the door, setting off the tinkling of wind chimes that hung on the door. I walked up the stairs, once carpeted in green, but worn in the middle of the steps, down to the wood. At the top of the stairs, I wandered through the living room, with its soft couches and other comfortable places to sit, and saw the brightly lit kitchen behind. Then, I saw Sylvia, sailing out of the kitchen, a tall, big boned, substantially built woman with bleached blonde hair that she wore back combed high on

top of her head. The hair gave her a late 1950's look, or perhaps it was her black stretch pants and gold lame blouse, with its puffed sleeves, an outfit I found out later that she liked to wear when she wanted to make a good impression. (Her blouse always reminded me of that glittering stage curtain, flecked with gold and silver threads, that proudly hung in our local movie theatre.)

Looking more closely, I saw Sylvia's small, intense blue eyes, outlined in black pencil, in a face of large features. She greeted me heartily, looked at me intently, as if she could see parts of me that others couldn't, and took my outstretched hand, which was a little cold and nervous, in a warm handshake. She offered me tea or coffee and when I sat down with her among the chairs at her long chrome and plastic kitchen table, I had no indication that this was a place where something extraordinary might be happening.

During those early visits to Sylvia's home, as a somewhat stressed-out social worker, I remember Sylvia sitting large and contented on her plush black couch, surrounded by many coloured photographs of her *family*, photographs plastered on the walls behind her, haphazard on the coffee table in front. I learned that she had been a single parent for many years and that her *family* was not only her biological children (3 adult daughters who are living elsewhere), but her foster children as well. Sylvia seemed to express love for all of her *kids*, without loving or favouring her own children any more.

Invariably, one of Sylvia's *kids* would interrupt us, if not by coming into the room to see her, by calling her on the telephone. Sylvia always had time to talk for at least a few minutes to one of her *kids*, who had something important to tell or ask her; was leaving or returning home; was in distress; or who just wanted to check in with Sylvia and perhaps needed to hear again Sylvia say that she loved her/him.

Over time, when I made my visits there, Sylvia remembered that I didn't drink coffee and always offered me tea or iced tea, depending on the weather. She would make sure the tea was hot and would serve it in a red or yellow mug; she would put in the milk for me ("calcium is good for you") and the sugar ("a little sugar won't hurt you"). The iced tea came with ice in a big frosted beer mug. Sylvia soon stopped wearing makeup when I came and usually wore an off white sweatshirt and faded black sweatpants, the products of many washings. For me, Sylvia's house came to be a place where I felt I could rest, if only briefly, knowing that while I was there, somehow Sylvia would take care of everything.

After many visits talking with Sylvia, seeing her interacting with her *kids*, I began forming my own picture of her that I will attempt to describe as follows:

Sylvia does not hesitate to voice her opinions; her feelings are big and visible. She seems to feel with her whole being. When she is angry, her face reddens and she snaps and snarls when she speaks. When she is disgusted, her lips curls up, her voice drips with contempt, her upper body moves distainfully to the side. When she is hurt, afraid, disappointed, saddened, she openly sobs as she speaks and her whole body shakes. When she is happy for a youth, she beams with joy. When she is comforting, protecting, caring and loving, she puts her big arms around the young person, puts her face against hers/his, squeezes tightly and does not let go, at least not right away.

Sylvia is not afraid to tell the young person in no uncertain terms how she feels. She does not use the watered down, 'correct', or understated language of privilege, so familiar to me, which serves to maintain a 'respectable' distance between people. Nor does she use cold, clinical terms that stem from medical and psychological models, also part of my repertoire, where people are objectified as pathological or abnormal. Sylvia uses street language, which is direct, to the point, and emotional, with the result that, as one youth

said, "It catches our attention." For example, while a 'professional' might use the third person neutral comment in describing the way a youth relates to a peer, such as, "It is not working out between you," Sylvia would emphatically state her opinion, "You are behaving like a fucking bitch to her!" Other times I've heard Sylvia shout, "Just listen to me for a moment! I'm talking to you! Answer me! You can do better than that! I love you, Goddamn it!"

I grew to understand that Sylvia is the draw, the still point in her home. It could be said the youth, the *kids* in her world grow outward, in concentric circles around her, exploring further and further from her, yet still returning to her, from time to time, to be re-affirmed by her, to be loved by her, to share their sorrows with her, when others have failed them or they fail themselves.

One day I asked Sylvia how she could keep on giving to *kids* when she got nothing back, at least not for a long time, if at all. She looked at me intently and said, "My giving is enough. This is the work that I do; this is what I do with my life. I don't usually talk about it, but I feel I have a calling from God, to do this work. She chuckled as she added, "So, I've got God on my side-- it's a damn good combination! Goddamn hard to beat!"

#### Who are These Youth in Sylvia's Care?

I would now like to say more about who these youth are who come into Sylvia's home. They vary in age from 12, 13 year olds to children who are in their twenties. They are, of course, all different. I have written four vignettes to illustrate how four young people have formed an attachment to Sylvia. They are composites of youth I have known.

#### *Jane: A Runner Stops Running*

I first met Jane when I was a social worker and she was 14. She had short, frizzy blonde hair, unashamedly black at the roots, with longer strands that hung over one eye. Only a sliver of her sweet and smooth young face was visible-- one shiny hazel eye, a turned up nose and chin that dared any one to stop her. She had a sleek, slim body, most

of which she liked to leave exposed or barely covered with halter tops, short skirts, and no underwear. Jane was elusive when she first was at Sylvia's. She used to run away a lot, sometimes returning in the dark, before dawn, giggling, stoned, climbing off the back of a guy in black leather on a motorcycle, whom she had just met hitchhiking. Sylvia would be incensed and scared by Jane's snotty, "I don't care" attitude toward herself and the household. Sylvia might yell, swear, or cry, but Sylvia always took Jane back. Sometimes Jane would let Sylvia hold her, briefly taking comfort. I thought that Jane would never live to see her twenties, that she would one day be found dead by the side of the highway, tossed out of a car that had finished with her, a car speeding away into the night.

When Jane got angry with Sylvia one day and left (and did not call or come back for a year), Sylvia ran out, barefoot, in the cold night, to the car Jane was leaving in, to say goodbye, to cry and tell Jane over and over again that she would always love her.

Now 20, Jane is living in her own apartment, is working, and engaged to be married. Jane starts off by remembering that in the year before Sylvia's she was in 7 or 8 foster homes:

*In some of those foster homes they would lock you out in the daytime until they came home at night. I had to find something to do all day and there really was nothing to do except get in trouble and get kicked out.*

*At home I was allowed to do whatever I wanted. They just didn't care. They just didn't pay me any attention and I was always running away.*

*At Sylvia's I was quite a problem, running away and stuff like that, but she never kicked me out. She kept giving me a chance and that was something I wasn't used to.*

*Sylvia was very loving as well as doing the discipline thing, which was loving at the same time. She always made me laugh, She'd use my attitude back on me, in a kind of reverse psychology, and it showed me what I was doing and it always made me smarten up.*

*Now I visit or phone Sylvia almost every day and stay with her for a few days when I'm having a hard time dealing with life or just when I need a family environment. Before*

*I get off the phone with Sylvia, I tell her "I love you" and she says that too. I never did that kind of stuff with my parents.*

*Jennifer: Tough on the Outside:*

Jennifer was 12 when she first came into care and went to Sylvia's. She had curly brown hair, a round, boyish face, with freckles. She had a large, block like body, weighing 200 well compacted pounds. Jennifer fought a lot with other girls in town and later was convicted of assault; she sat a lot, and most of what came out of her mouth was surrounded by "shit" and "fuck". Everything she said and did gave you the message to leave her alone or else she would make sure something bad (and probably physically painful) would happen to you.

Now, 18, Jennifer was staying with Sylvia for a few days. She looked similar to how she looked at 12, yet a little softer around the edges. Jennifer was living independently, on Welfare, in an apartment, in another town 4 hours away. She'd just had a fight with her boyfriend and was spending a few days with Sylvia, to recover. Jennifer spoke to me at Sylvia's. She started with why she came into care:

*I was put in care because my dad used to beat the shit out of me. My dad was a con who used to get the workers to take his side. Nobody believed me, except for Sylvia. She was really the only one who saw my dad for what he was and didn't want him around. He's now in jail for fraud.*

*I've been in 30 foster homes since I was 12. Sylvia's the only one I have maintained contact with all this time because I know that she's always there for me. She didn't bullshit me. She told me the truth about what was going on. A lot of foster parents tried to hide things from me and Sylvia was always up front and honest with me. The door was always open to me and it was a place that I was safe.*

*Sylvia was always there for me, through all the major things, like when I heard that my grandfather died, and I was out on the sundeck and I found out. She came running out there and put her arms around me and said it's going to be O.K.*

*You don't know what it felt like in all those foster homes. I was freaked out all the time because I thought I would never have a home or anything.*

*I know that Sylvia does love me and I know that she would do anything for me. I broke up with my boyfriend and called her at 11:00 at night and asked if I could come down and she said, "Yes. Get down here." I arrived at 3:00 in the morning. And that's why I am here now."*

*Alice: The Mute Speaks!*

Alice, now 18, was 15 when she came into care and was placed with Sylvia. Her older brother (who had been removed from the home) had sexually abused her; her father was a workaholic and her conflict with her stepmother was driving her more and more inward. She suffered insomnia and spoke to no one. Her stepmother wondered if Alice was going to become schizophrenic like Alice's biological mother, who had killed herself.

Alice is fairhaired, curvaceous, and pretty. At 15, she had acne and no one saw her large blue eyes as they usually looked at the floor. Then, her hair was cut too short, straight across, above her ears, making her big face, larger; and her clothes were too tight and short around her overweight body. At 15, Alice excelled academically and spent most of her time in her bedroom doing homework. She rarely spoke then, and did not seem to care about anything except her school work.

I began working as Alice's counsellor around the same time she entered Sylvia's home. Alice came from another counsellor where Alice never spoke--Alice and the counsellor wrote notes back and forth. With me, she slowly began to speak, punctuated at first with frequent bathroom breaks, sometimes 5 in a counselling session.

Three years later, I talked to Alice at Sylvia's home where she still lives. Alice looked beautiful, her fair hair was long, permed in soft curls around her face. Her skin was clear and she wore loosefitting and stylish clothes. She was attending first year college. She had developed a bizarre of humour and made frequent hilarious asides as she talked. However, when I asked her to speak about Sylvia, she looked straight at me and talked very seriously:

*When I was first at Sylvia's, it was hard to get used to. I was given a lot of affection here and I couldn't handle it because I never got hugged at home. But I got used to it and now I like it.*

*And Sylvia stuck with me. Nobody else has ever stuck with me, ever. There would always be a wall there. She is the only one in my life that confronts me. When I'm behaving like a bitch or nitpicking, she tells me so. I've screwed up so many times and Sylvia has given me lots of chances. She never gives up on anyone. She always takes kids back, even when they lie and rip her off. When I turn 19 and am out of care, I might stay and room and board with Sylvia, like Jane did.*

*Sylvia doesn't treat her own children any different than how she treats me. She believes that her kids do crap, too. If they do stupid things, they get shit, too. Nobody's any different than anybody else. When Sylvia went to the States to visit her daughter last Christmas, she took me with her, too. I didn't have to be put somewhere else while she was away. We're all part of her family and we all love her.*

*Sylvia is just the best mother I have ever known.*

*Sam: So Many Strikes Against Him*

Sam is aged 22, a fair haired, slim, bland looking young adult, of average height. Sam is the child of alcoholics and suffers fetal alcohol syndrome. As a child, he went through many foster homes before Sylvia's where he lived from ages 8 to 11, at which point he was adopted. His adoption home disrupted when he was 15. Now he is room and boarding at Sylvia's, and trying once again to get off alcohol. Sam has a habit of suddenly disappearing from Sylvia's (at the same time as money goes missing) for weeks at a time, but always he comes back, still hoping and trying to straighten out his life.

Sam had much to say about what Sylvia meant to him:

*I was in a lot of homes when I was young, but Sylvia's is the only one I didn't have to put on a different face. I could be me.*

*Lots of people have said I'm disabled and screwed beyond repair, but for some reason Sylvia didn't buy it--That reason was love. You have to remember, I was on the brink of destruction and because of her love and discipline, I have a life. Sylvia is a godsend. Very few people have the strength that she has to keep going and to wipe away their tears, clean their slates with us kids and do it all over again*

*We all called her a bitch and a bag, but in our hearts we knew that she gave discipline and freedom when we deserved it and that she really cared.*

*Sylvia has made my life a lot easier knowing that I always have a ma waiting for me when I come home. Sylvia is a mother, true and strong.*

How Was Sylvia Able to Form an Attachment Relationships  
with These Youth When Noone Else Could?

I will now attempt to describe those immeasurable but essential qualities that Sylvia has that enables her to reach through the layers of defences of profoundly hurt youth to touch that vulnerable and lost child within, to create a space for the attachment relationship to grow.

These are attributes that cannot be seen directly, but are inferred from the behavior, words, and interactions of Sylvia and the youth. All of these qualities are inextricably intertwined, but for convenience, I will delineate them as follows:

First, I believe that Sylvia works on an *intuitive* level with the youth in her care. Often without being able to articulate it, Sylvia usually *knows* what a youth needs and, if possible, wholeheartedly gives it to him/her. For example, I have seen Sylvia respond spontaneously to embrace a young person in psychic pain. I have seen a big, tough young person let herself melt in Sylvia's arms, cry and be comforted. I have seen Sylvia communicate genuine love for a youth at the same time as she confronts him/her. She seems to *know* how far to go to prevent the young person from feeling bombarded and overwhelmed.

This *intuitive* form of knowing has been described by feminist writers in *Women's ways of knowing* (1986) as "subjective knowing." It is a form of knowing that has been valued and cultivated for centuries by women and is considered just as authentic as the male dominated intellectual ethos of our time that emphasizes rationalism and scientific thought.

Second, I believe that Sylvia is remarkably able to make a life long *loving commitment* to the young person in her care. One of the requirements for forming an attachment to a parent is for the child/youth to believe that the parent won't one day (as has been his/her experience) abandon him or her. The evidence is in Sylvia's home for all to see. The youth may steal from Sylvia, leave her, bad-mouth or even lie about her to others, all of which distresses and hurts Sylvia. However, *if* the youth ever wants to come back, Sylvia invariably will say "yes". All the young people in her home have witnessed her staying power, her refusal to be rejected. They all speak of the many chances she has given them. She has an amazing capacity to commit and to forgive.

Sylvia indeed has an endless capacity to love. It seems that once Sylvia's heart opens to a youth, it just doesn't close again. It is a love that endures beyond receiving money for the youth's care. Young adults and former foster children often stay with her for a few days or months at a time, with her receiving minimal financial remuneration. Sylvia's love for her "kids" endures beyond personal hurt, disappointment and frustration with the youth. It endures beyond periods of separation from the youth. Her love just does not give up on the youth.

Furthermore, Sylvia's love for her "kids" is seen in how hard she advocates for them and protects them from harm. She will fight, cajole, and sweet-talk all and sundry if necessary, to get the youth what he needs. Sylvia also doesn't stand on protocol if one of her "kids" is being chastised unfairly, for instance, by another foster parent. Sylvia will rush to the youth's defence and chide the foster parent if she feels it is warranted. The experience of being protected in the world by a "good mother", that is, Sylvia, is disarming and wondrous for these youth.

Finally, Sylvia is who she is: There is nothing phoney or superficial about her. She is a real, living, breathing, feeling, thinking person, and, in a sense, she is larger than life. So, when the youth interacts with Sylvia, he/she comes up against *her*, which helps the

youth figure out who he/she is. Although she gives many chances, she could never be mistaken for a doormat. She tells the youth what she thinks in the plain, direct emotional language of the street. Her whole body shows him/her how she feels. She sets clear, reasonable limits. She is always upfront, real, and truthful with the youth. As the young person, *Jennifer* said, *Sylvia didn't bullshit me.*

Sylvia is gutsy; at times, brutally honest. When others might hold back, she enters into dialogue with the youth about areas where even "angels might fear to tread." Her love has earned her the right to meet the youth's demons face to face. The power of her love and the limits she sets create a safe haven for the youth within which the youth confronts him/herself. As the young person, *Sam* said, *I didn't have to put on a different face. I could be me.*

In each of these interactions when the youth is vulnerable, such as, when he is asking to come back, revealing his inner pain, or needing help or protection, Sylvia is understanding, comforting, and supporting. In other words, Sylvia is *there* for the youth, thereby satisfying the youth's inherent yearning for closeness. Over time, trust builds, and an attachment relationship is born.

In the process, the youth learns, too, that life is not just a series of broken relationships. They have found Sylvia, the "good mother" who loves them and whom they are not afraid to love back. They know that she won't desert them. She is precious and invaluable to them; and as a true attachment figure, she is not interchangeable with anyone else. They are loyal to her because they are desperate to not lose and to protect what has been missing and what they have longed for throughout most of their childhood years. They have many years of an absence of mothering to make up for. They have waited under layers of defiance, denial, and terrible loneliness. They have waited and hoped for a very long time.

*Being There*

When I was about 10 or 11 years old, my father took me on a trip to Vancouver and we went to the circus together. We were sitting in a crowd on bleachers in the dark. High above us, with the spotlight on them, were trapeze artists who were performing without nets. While the crowd's eyes looked up to the sleek beautiful women in tiny outfits and the powerful men doing impossible feats in the air, I saw, in the shadows on the ground, one strong looking man who was alert, poised underneath them. When I looked more closely, I saw that his eyes never left the movements of one woman. He anticipated where she'd be and moved quickly so he could be directly below her.

As she turned and flew through the air, I watched him move across the floor, his knees bent. As she reached out to grab onto the trapeze bars that dangled and swung as if attached by spider threads through space, he would sometimes flinch and thrust his arms upwards out from the shadows into the light, as if he were getting ready to catch her in case she fell.

I didn't know what his relationship was with her. I wondered if this was her first time flying through the air without a net. I wondered if she had fallen recently and now had just found the nerve to fly again. I wondered if she had a sore leg or arm that hindered her. What I did know was that during her flight, the man on the ground did not care that the crowd saw him or care what the crowd thought of him. All he cared about at that time was being there underneath her in case she fell.

I imagined she felt more confident, could fly freer, knowing he was there. Maybe she could take more risks, for instance, could try adding that extra somersault that she had done in practice. Knowing he was there, I wondered if sometimes she felt almost protected from falling, as if those arms far below her could magically reach her and hold

her up. I imagined she knew that if she did fall, he couldn't really catch her, but she would know that her fall would be broken and she wouldn't fall so hard.

### **Introduction to *Story of Sandi, An Adopted Teenager, Leaving Home***

This story is within the traditional short story genre. The main character in the story, Sandi, is a composite of many youth, adopted or not adopted, that I have worked with as a psychotherapist. However, Sandi is also typical of the adopted teenagers (most adopted after infancy) I see, who rebel against and often reject their adopted parents in adolescence. As a composite, I had the freedom to allow Sandi to demonstrate and speak about most of what I've learned about children who are adopted and children who are adopted with other siblings. In this way, I sought "to compress considerable amounts of documentary evidence from a variety of sources into a vivid and unified telling of the story" (Hollowell, 1977, p. 31, cited in Denzin, 1996, p.235).

One source of this knowledge was the interviews I had with all members of an adoptive family who had adopted a sibling group. I followed this family over 6 years and interviewed the children and parents at approximately 2 year intervals in the development of their relationships. This potential study was abandoned for ethical reasons, as described in the introduction to this dissertation, but in the process I gained much knowledge about how the adopted child/ youth perceives his/her world and the intense feelings he or she experiences.

Other sources of knowledge are my experience with clients who have attachment disturbances, my survey of the literature on attachment theory and treatment, my consultation with colleagues about the subject and my personal attachment history.

## *Story of Sandi, An Adopted Teenager Leaving Home*

### Chapter 1: Leaving Home

*Oh, shut up! Just shut the fuck up! I hate you! Blah, Blah, Blah, Blah! Get out of my life!* Sandi couldn't get her last conversation with her damm adopted parents out of her head. Her head did this to her sometimes, went over and over things until she felt she was going crazy.

Sandi was 15 years old, tall, slim and muscular. She had long, shiny chestnut brown hair and a dazzling smile. She loved to ride horses bareback, feel the horse's body under her, her hair and the horse's mane and tail flying out behind them. She liked to imagine herself riding beside her mother, though her mother was a young woman, dark and beautiful, and looked like her. They were riding free and fast in the Prairie wind, kicking up dust, racing tumbleweed. They were on a Cree reservation. That would have been a long time ago, before her mother's mother gave it all up for alcohol.

Now Sandi walked slowly along the side of the gravel road, in the dark. Her baggy jeans and jacket made her look even thinner. Her eyes were looking down, watching her step because there was no moon. Again and again she replayed it. She saw her mom standing on one foot leaning against the doorway, with her open, moon-like face, reddened by the sun, with her fair skin and hair shining too brightly under the porch light. Mom was talking quietly. Beside her mom, she saw her dad, a stocky man, with his bushy black hair and beard. He was wearing his coveralls; he had just come back from tending the cows who were calving. Dad was talking quickly, on the verge of losing it and yelling, though he didn't. Her parents pleaded with her not to leave. She couldn't remember who said what. They usually ganged up on her anyway, or worked as a team, depending on how you looked at it:

"But we are worried about you. It's 11 o'clock at night!"

She shouted back to them sometimes in her head, sometimes out loud. She couldn't remember which:

*God, I hate that word, 'worry'. You are such control freaks!*

"But we want to help you."

*I don't want your stupid help. Don't you understand?*

"Are you going to walk out on us, just like that? After being with us for 6 years?"

*I don't owe you anything. You have no right to me!*

"We're your legal adoptive parents."

*You guys don't own me! I never asked to be adopted by you!*

"Where are you going?"

*Somewhere and don't try to find me!*

"What's your sister going to think? She's only 10 and looks up to you. She loves you."

*Leave her out of this! When she is old enough, she's going to leave too.*

"But where are you going to sleep?"

*Who cares!*

"But we're still your parents!"

*You guys don't know nothing about being parents. You're whacked! I wish you'd left me in foster care. At least there I would have been able to see my dad!*

"But we love you."

*Yeah, sure. You make me puke.*

"We adopted you because when we met you we fell in love with you."

*Yuck. Puke. I don't want your love! It stinks! You wasted your time! You made a big mistake! You're just not my kind of people, you're psychos!*

"I know we're not perfect, but...."

*You can say that again!*

"Sandi, just listen to me. Tell us 'why'? What should we do? Say something!"

*O.K. I'm no longer under your rules and regulations. I'm out of here!*

"Sandi, You're only 15. It's a cruel world out there!"

*Don't tell me it's a cruel world.*

"Sandi, please...."

*Don't suck up to me now, it's too late!*

*God, that conversation went on and on. As if they know what cruel is. They just don't have a clue. Do they know what its like to live in danger of being killed? Or night after night to lie in bed waiting for that quiet step to stop at your bedroom door? To hear that breathing come closer and louder? And not a thing I could do about it. If mom (that's my birth mom) had found out, it would have killed her. God I don't know why I just didn't kill*

*myself back then. I don't blame mom for killing herself. At least she died not knowing. All those nights, sleeping with my eyes open. How I ever sat in my desk all day at school, I'll never know. I was so sore.*

*And you know what? I even miss my dad. I cried when the stupid Judge gave him 18 months. And when he got out, early, for good behavior, I just wanted to see him. But my dumb parents wouldn't let me. "Maybe when you're older," they said. They don't realize that he's all I've got! Except of course, for my Goody Two-shoes sister, Sara, who is such a suck hole. Well at least she didn't get what I got from dad, his gifts of love to me. At least he fucked me and not her. She is so innocent. She doesn't even swear. When I was her age I had already had sex a hundred times, at least, maybe even a thousand.*

Sandi kept walking, wondering if her parents would come after her. If they did, she'd probably just tell them to get lost. In a way she wished they would. Maybe her mom would cry. Her mom looked so stupid and ugly when she cried. It made Sandi laugh:

*It actually would be fun to have them follow me, and to tell them to 'fuck off', see that hurt and confused look in dad's eyes. (Dad likes everything to be logical.) He'd probably give me a lecture and tell me I should be wearing a thicker coat. But maybe he would yell at me and then I'd be gone. My head quite often goes blank, you know, when dad and I fight and I forget everything. I get so afraid, of what I don't know.*

*But no, they won't come, they have their own kid now, a biological child, called Ivan, who has white blonde hair and looks like mom. They spoil him rotten. Like when I was Ivan's age (he's 3), I never cried as much as he does, because if I did, nobody would hear me or else they'd push me around until I shut up.*

*So I'm really leaving, yeah, I really am. Well I can adjust to any place I go, so I don't care; I can go anywhere. Being moved around so much in foster care got me used to leaving. I might suddenly remember being in a foster home but forget how I got there. I learned how to hold my feelings in and not get close to anybody. It was like I was there for the time being until I was able to leave.*

*Oh, I almost forgot to tell you about my older brother, Jared. Jared used to get his kicks from beating up on me. I hate him. He's the opposite of me. He's always says and does exactly what he wants. It's gotten him into a lot of trouble. He's in and out of jail. And I never see him. I don't know if I even want to. Last time I saw him he wanted to borrow money from me, and I was only 12! Of course I gave him all I had. After all, he is my brother.*

*My parents don't understand how much my family means to me. I really don't know whether I love my adoptive parents or not. But I know that I love my birth family. Being adopted with my little sister, Sara, is a pain at times. She is always yacking her mouth off, a real tattle tale. But I'm glad we were together because we can share memories that we would have forgotten. She's been with me my whole life. We're close because we know what each other has been through and know that everybody is not together for long. If she ever got in trouble and needed me, I'd be there in a flash. And my dad (my birth dad), I miss him so much. He used to sing to me when I was a kid. He loved me, I know that. Even Jared, I love him, too, even if he is a con artist. I guess he had to be. Nobody else was going to take care of him. I wish our family were back together and mom (my birth mom) were still alive.*

*Mom and dad say they love me but they don't realize what I think about love. When others talk about the beauty of love, I know only its ugliness. For me, love hurts, love hides, so don't talk to me about love, love sucks.*

*Oh, what's the point of it all, anyway? Was I put here to be abused or what? Life is such a black slime pit. Is anyone going to help me climb out, covered with mud, or would the guy just push me back in, like all the rest have? I'd like to run away from here, go to the past and erase all the mistakes.*

Sandi wished she could find someone who would understand. She talked to a counsellor at school once, a short, busy, kind woman, old, with grey hair, who listened and seemed to care. Then the counsellor phoned her parents and told them everything. Sandi would never talk to her again.

Another time, while helping her mom make dinner, in a careless moment, she let slip that she wanted to become a prostitute. Sandi could tell that her mom freaked out by the flush of her face and the fear in her eyes, though she pretended not to, saying quietly, "Oh, how long have you wanted that?" Which Sandi wouldn't answer. Sandi couldn't answer as it has just always been there, ever since she can remember. Soon Sandi was signed up to see another counsellor, a private one, a male, situated in a big office building:

*His office had oriental rugs and a roomdivider made of camphorwood and jade, or so he said. It could have been fake for all I knew. A stuck up son of a bitch. He had dark hair and skin so white it looked bleached. His dark brown eyes kept staring at me and out*

*of his small mouth came murmurs, "Ah, yes. Ah, yes." and the occasional sentence, "How did you feel about that?" until he ended with, "Your time is up."*

*He did seem to try hard, wrote a lot on his notepad that he balanced on his knees, though I don't know what he wrote about because I hardly ever said anything. But thank God he didn't talk all the time. I spent most of the time losing myself in the pattern of birds and branches in his dark red rug on the floor because I couldn't look at him either. How could I? I was afraid that he would look in my eyes and read down into my past. He looked so clean and well fed. I know he's never been through anything like I have. Once I said a bit about what Jared did to me, you know, how he liked to pound on me, but never on the face or arms, so it wouldn't show. The guy looked totally horrified. So I thought, if he can't handle that, he's sure as hell can't handle the rest! And his life was so perfect. One day his wife was waiting outside in their car for him, with two squirming, giggling blonde haired children in the back. I think she was driving a white BMW or maybe it was a white Mercedes. She was checking her blonde head in the mirror, her round wholesome face concentrating on her chin, probably looking for some imaginary pimple which wouldn't dare cross her perfect, white face.*

*So why aren't there any native counsellors anyway? Do they only work with alcoholics and drug addicts (which I'm not)? At least not yet, anyway.*

## Chapter 2: Travelling

Sandi walked up and down the hills, most of the night, seeing no cars, enjoying the cool night air of early spring. Although she hated living in such an isolated spot (it wasn't her idea of fun to live on a farm way out in the middle of nowhere), she loved the earth. The earth, after all, had never hurt her. As she walked, she liked smelling the new soft green leaves on the trees, watching the black trees etched against the sky grow lighter and greener as dawn came.

Finally, she arrived at her friend, Forrest's place. Forrest was in her class, one of the few kids at the boring school she went to that she could relate to. He lived with his mom on a wooden sailboat in a small bay. This was one of the places where she felt she could rest. The water was still, a light mist was rising, and the trees along the edge and the boats at the dock were mirrored in the water, which was golden. As she stepped on the boat, the boat leaned into her and the water gently rippled the reflections of the trees and boat.

A mop of frizzy brown hair popped out of the cabin. It was Forrest, his chest bare, in his jeans, his blue eyes still glazed over from a too early awakening. He saw Sandi and said, "What's up?"

Sandi said, *I left home. I'm out of there for good.*

"Oh come in. Come in."

Sandi felt the warmth from the oil stove as she entered the cabin. By then, Forrest's mother, Judy, was up. She was smiling, "Have some tea with us." Judy was a small woman, compact, wearing jeans. She had long, frizzy grey hair which she laughingly called her 'aged hippie' look. She also had those deep hollows around the eyes of someone who had suffered too much. Sitting around the small teak table in the cabin, drinking camomile tea, Forrest and his mom listened as Sandi told them why she left:

*You know, they wanted me and Sara to be worker kids. Well, I'm fed up with it! There's too many chores. I never get any time to myself. I can't see my friends. They are always on my case. We're always fighting. I just can't hack it any more. To tell the truth, it is driving me crazy. I'd rather starve and have no shelter than live there and put up with that!*

Forrest and his mom didn't question her or try and change her mind. Judy just poured her more tea and Forrest took Sandi's cold hand in his and held it.

Judy let Sandi stay there on the settee for a few days until Sandi felt too crowded by the confined space and Judy's long talks to her, which reminded her of her dad's lectures. Do all adults say the same thing? Get your education now or you will regret it later. Stay away from drugs; they'll take over your life. Doesn't she know that toking up is the only way I can get through the day? How can I go to school and support myself too?

For a while, Sandi stayed in school. She was able to borrow a tent from someone and set it up in someone else's barn, in case it rained. But after a time, it was too hard to get herself up every morning and keep going, especially waking up hung over.

Her parents didn't have to search too long to find her, it was such a small community. They tried talking her back into coming home, but it didn't work. Sandi was determined to make it on her own, to not need anybody. Once they took her out for dinner, she ate a lot and made pleasant conversation while they were in the restaurant: *Is Sara still taking voice lessons? Does she still talk on the phone all the time? Did Daisy (Sandi's cow) have her calf yet?* But when it was time to go and her mom hugged her and asked her in that small, timid voice again to come home, Sandi immediately became incensed and told them they would never learn, that she was never coming back.

Sandi had a few phone calls to them, too, mostly to try and get some of her stuff. Often the calls ended up being fights, especially if she talked to her dad. One time he yelled at her that she was just going to turn out like her mother and this disturbed Sandi. Before long, Sandi caught a ride to the big city to begin to work.

### Chapter 3: Working in the Big City

*I haven't heard from my parents for a while. I guess my parents got tired of being rejected. Though they deserved it. Dad comparing me to my mom (birth mom). He had no right to do that. He doesn't know her. Sure he apologized afterwards, but what's said was said. I'll never trust him again. He's a loser. He's pathetic. I know it's crazy but I used to look forward to receiving mom and dad's letters, just so I could tear them up or send them back with "fuck off" written all over them, enclosed in a nice, new envelope. I guess that's why I made sure they had my address. I would imagine the pain in my mom's face as she opened my letters and found just hers inside. It makes me laugh to think about it. Once I called and my dad answered. I said, "Thanks for the touching letter." At first my dad sounded surprised and pleased and said, "I'm glad you liked it." Then I told him I was being sarcastic and it felt good to hear him suddenly shut up and say, "Oh."*

*About my work: Sure it's about sex, but I like sex. I've been giving blow jobs since I was 6 years old, so I'm pretty good at it. And the money. The money is great. It's nice for a change to get paid for it. I'm proud of myself, that I've got a job. I'm going to get just enough money to fix up my apartment, buy an entertainment centre, a VCR, a 36 inch colour TV with surround sound, etc. etc. I need new couches, chairs, a spare bed for guests. When Sara, my little sister is older, I want her to come live with me. Get her out of mom and dad's who brainwash her with all that Christian religion shit. Though I wouldn't want her to get into this business. You guessed it: I'm working for an Escort Service. I lied about my age. They want to think I am 19 because, like I said, I'm good at what I do, a natural, if you know what I mean. The agency pretty much protects me from the weirdos, though some of the johns insult me because of my small breasts. Or, if they are on cocaine or uppers they want to go on and on and it's a real drag. I'd like Sara to finish school, get a career and be a real person when she grows up.*

*No, I don't have a boyfriend. Who would want to go out with a hooker and what would we do for recreation. I sure wouldn't want to fuck.*

*About drugs: I'm still with the pot. Not yet into the heavier stuff, but believe me, it's tempting.*

\* \* \*

About a year later, Sandi's world fell apart. She picked up the phone while she was still lying on her back on an old brown stuffed couch, a present from a john who wanted to get rid of some junk or may have felt sorry for her. It was summer and hot. She was

in shorts and a long black t-shirt. She had just washed her hair, but still her head hurt. She had no make up on and looked more like a big gangling tired out kid than some fancy lady of the night. This was her home, now, a basement suite, not much in it, the outside world barely visible through the small barred windows at the top of her walls. The windows were open but there was no air moving through the apartment, just traffic noise. As usual, she was recovering from the night before, which she spent most of her days doing. She was using better drugs now to keep up the pace, to hold herself together, and not crack up. She still hadn't got her Entertainment Centre, or all of the other stuff. She had no idea where all the money went. She knew she gave Jared, her brother, a lot. But the phone call. It floored her. It was her doctor. The doctor told her she was pregnant. So there she was, pregnant at 16, with no idea at all who the father was or even what colour he was.

Sandi did her evening shift, did what she had to do, but stayed preoccupied with the unasked for life growing inside her. She considered an abortion, how easy that would be, but knew she wouldn't be able to go through with it. She didn't use drugs that night because of the life inside her. And suddenly without wanting to, after months of feeling nothing, just doing, performing, getting through the days, she started to have feelings. She couldn't control them any more. It was scary.

*One of my clients asked me if I was nervous as I guess I was shaking and I said, "No, I'm just excited." And you know what? I was. Though it had nothing to do with him and his sexual fantasies. It probably was the coming down off the drugs, but I thought to myself, "I can create a child!" I felt like I was somebody, that God hadn't deserted me after all. I began thinking about how finally I could now have my own family. I knew that I wanted my kid to have it better than I had. I wanted her (I was sure it was a girl) to have all the good food, the fruit and vegetables, all the hip clothes I didn't have as a kid. I wanted her to live in a home where she didn't get the abuse I got. I wanted her to have the pure love of a parent without the strings of sexual abuse attached. I didn't want her to have to worry about her mom every day, like I did, whether she'd still be alive when she got home from the store, from day care, from school. Or to have to call the ambulance like I did when my mom O.D. ed that day, the needle still in her arm.*

*But I also started feeling disgusted by the men and their need to have sex with a prostitute, for the positions they demanded, for the grossness of their bodies, the body hair, the rolls of fat, loose skin, wrinkled genitals, old man smells, the fact that they would pay so much for it when most of them had wives and kids with no idea at all. I started to think too much: Maybe the men were spending all the food money, maybe they hated women, maybe they were planning to kill me.*

*Then, it got worse. I started to cry even before the sex was over. I tried my usual--talking dirty or moaning loudly, but nothing helped. Some of the johns gave me bigger tips, because I suppose it turned them on or they felt tinges of guilt. Others got angry, but most said nothing as I wasn't really a person to them anyway.*

So, after days of trying to drag herself to work at night, feeling sick to her stomach all the time and crying too much, Sandi made a decision. She knew what she had to do. Her hands shaking, she picked up the telephone and dialed her parents. Her mom answered. Sandi gulped as she heard herself say, *Mom, I'm pregnant, can you help me?* A pause. Her mom didn't answer right away and Sandi fretted to herself: *Please mom, please. I mean it this time. Do you know how hard it is for me to ask for anything? I don't want to owe anybody anything. But this is a life inside me. I want her to live!*

Her mom answered in the way Sandi knew she would: "Yes, dear. I'm glad you called. Do you want to come home now?"

Sandi cried: *Yes, mom, I want to come home.*

Sandi never thought she would be caught dead saying that, that she actually wanted to come home. It felt strange, weird, but in a way it felt good, like the world was in balance again, that she wasn't alone in the world, that there was someone there for her that really cared and had cared for 7 years, in fact the longest time she had ever experienced caring.

#### Chapter 4: Going Home

Within a few days, Sandi had packed up the few possessions she had and made her way home. She hitched a ride to the bottom of their long gravel driveway and began her walk to the house. She walked beside the second growth forest of fir and pine trees where thick green ferns covered the ground. As she climbed up the hill, she caught the light scent of wild pink roses blooming in the heat on bushes at the edge of the road. When she reached the crest of the hill, overlooking the farm, she stopped.

Below her, she could see beds of lush green vegetables , fields of tall sweet corn, and dad in his blue coveralls riding his tractor. She saw the log house that she had lived in longer than any other place she had lived. She felt proud that she had helped peel the logs, made from the fir trees that grew on the land, remembering, too, that at the time, she had complained bitterly about doing so. She saw the blue of the lake behind, where she spent many summers-- diving and swimming, and flying off the Tarzan swing into the water. As she walked down the hill towards the house, the sheep dog, Wolfie, wagged his tail and jumped up excitedly and seemed to have forgiven her for teasing him so much. She passed a yearling black and white calf in the field and wondered if it came from her cow, Daisy.

As she walked up the front stairs to the house, she saw her mom leaning against the doorway, in the same position as Sandi had last seen her over a year ago. Mom looked a little older, the sun had given her a few more wrinkles, and this time she was smiling and her arms were open. Sandi slipped into her mother's arms and let herself be hugged for a very long time. Her mom said softly, "I prayed that this day would come." Sandi realized she was crying and mom laughed and said, "You're making me cry, too." Her father appeared, laughing and gave her one of his quick, respectful hugs and said "Welcome home, Sandi."

Sandi found it hard to take how kind her parents were to her. It didn't seem to bother them that the baby's father was unknown. For Sandi, he was one of many nameless bodies she had serviced. They didn't ask her about how she made a living in the big city. Maybe they had figured it out for themselves or perhaps they didn't want to know. They seemed to just let her be and though she was glad to be there, she felt uneasy and didn't know why. She began to think about what her parents were getting out of her being there. What did they want her for? What were they going to do with her? She knew she was costing them money to feed and they surely weren't getting off on her. She found it very troubling.

One day when she was helping her mom clean off the eggs, Sandi suddenly asked her mom, *Why did you let me come back and why are you doing all this for me?*

Her mom completely stopped what she was doing, which was unusual for her, because she almost always kept her hands busy doing something. She looked straight at Sandi. Sandi wondered if her mom was going to cry. Her mom answered quietly, "You needed us, Sandi. I wanted to be there for you. I love you, Sandi. Whether you like it or not, you're my daughter and I am your mother. I will never stop loving you and that is just the way it is." Sandi didn't understand it at all. She suddenly felt like hugging her mom, rather than just letting her mom hug her. While she and her mom hugged each other, and a few tears were shed, right there and then, Sandi decided that love was pretty mysterious.

*I wish I could say that it all went smoothly, but it didn't. I was happy to see my sister, Sara, but her life was so busy with her friends, her voice lessons, and her sports, she had no time for me. It made me mad. I guess I was jealous, too. And sad, sad for myself, for what I missed out on, because I never was as carefree and happy as Sara was at her age.*

*Ivan, the biological kid, was now 4, and still was a spoiled little brat who cried too much. I still fought a lot with my dad. I still hated being told what to do. I quite often resented helping around the farm, though my parents gave me a bit of a break because I was pregnant. They still didn't really understand why I do the things I do, such as fill my top chest of drawers in my bedroom with bread and candy; lock my bedroom door every*

*night and still wake up at the slightest noise; hide in the bathroom when strange men came to the house; or not want to go out of the house or wash for days at a time.*

\* \* \*

*One day mom took me to another counsellor in another big office building. I guess she believed in counsellors. This time the counsellor was a woman. When I first met her, I thought she was flakey and bizarre. She always played rock music in her office and she wore black a lot. I guess most counsellors are pretty weird. She was tall, dyed her hair blonde and had her own trouble with eye contact. But I liked that because then she didn't stare at me. I used to like to get her off topic, which was easy to do. I don't know if she knew what I was doing or not but I always found it easier to talk about the bad stuff after a bit of a break. I liked to bug her about her hair, I always knew when she'd just dyed it and used to tell her so. She didn't mind though, and would laugh.*

*After a while, sitting across from her, I started telling her what Jared did to me, what dad (my birth dad) did to me, what they all did to me. It felt horrible and good at the same time to finally tell someone. And she didn't write it all down, she just listened. Her eyes would fill with tears and even I would cry a little.*

*One time I started telling her about when I was 6 or 7, how Jared, his eyes black and wild, took his hunting knife out, the silver blade gleaming, and put it up to my throat. Then, suddenly, I just seized up and couldn't speak. I started shaking all over and couldn't stop. She asked me if I wanted to wear her black suit jacket. I said, "No", and hoped for a moment that I was shivering because of the cold pop I had just drunk. She took off her suit jacket, got up and put it gently around my shoulders, and just sat down again. She sat across from me for 20 minutes while I gradually stopped shaking and neither of us said anything. I felt safe there, like an scared bird who had been rescued from a cat's mouth and needed a place to calm down and recuperate. I liked the way she could understand without saying anything.*

\* \* \*

*At home, I started to have some moments when I felt at peace. Perhaps I could say that these moments were 'happy'. They came at odd times, like when I sat on the wharf in the middle of the day and dangled my legs in the water, to cool off. When I splashed my legs in the water, the droplets would sparkle as they danced like clear crystal beads on my legs. I felt protected there, sitting on the wharf, in the warm sun, on our private lake that was surrounded by tall fir and cedar trees. At times the silence would suddenly be broken by laughter coming from the house, that was my home now. I could identify dad with his deep, hearty laugh, mom with her giggles and Ivan with his high pitched squeal.*

*This also was a place for me to think, as I had a lot of thinking to catch up on. When I watched the water bugs walk across the surface of the water, I thought about Forrest and his mom, who were there for me that day, over a year ago now, when I first left home and came to their boat in the early morning mist and drank camomile tea with them. I heard that he and his mom had sailed away somewhere and I wondered if I would ever see them again. So many people have come and gone through my life, but in a way the ones I have cared about are still with me, in my memories of them.*

*I wondered how different my life would have been if I had been born to my adopted family rather than my own family. Would I have run away from home, done a lot of drugs and joined an Escort Service? I don't really know. People said I was smart, that I could go to University if I wanted to. Who knows what I'll do when I'm older. Right now, if I can stay healthy, have my baby and be a good mom, I think that there is nothing more important in the world for me to do.*

*Being in Therapy*

Being in therapy is like taking a long lonely journey through a snowstorm, without being properly dressed or adequately prepared for it. The therapist's words, gaze, and movements are at first the same as the snow that is falling. They are quiet, steady, and unrelenting. When the first snowflakes fall, they touch my clothes softly and I admire their beauty. Soon the snow begins to cling to my clothing and I cannot shake it off as there is more that follows. Gradually it soaks through my thin clothing and the damp seeps into my body underneath. I grow cold and begin to shiver. I just want to go home to warm up. Then I realize that I can't find my way back. My familiar path is covered up. The world I used to know is so white, it hurts my eyes. It feels overexposed.

In the snow, my world becomes only contours of what it once was. I'm afraid that if I passed me home, I would no longer even recognize it. Now there are objects hidden under the snow and I don't know what they are. I have to keep moving to keep warm but I don't know where I am going. I'm lost, the snow swirls around me and I just want the world to look the way it used to, even though it was often grey. It was the greyness of the sky before the snows came. Or of the clay at the edge of a river bank that I used to dig out as a child. (I used to press the clay into crude bowls that held out so much promise when they were wet, but they always dried out and fell apart. When I grew up I found out that there was an essential bonding substance that was missing in the raw clay and that it had to be added later.)

With so much snowfall, the therapist can easily lose sight of me. And on my part, I either forget he is there or I'm suspicious about what he might want from me. I'm not used to someone trying to walk beside me in such bad weather and I don't know what to do about it. Sometimes I throw compacted snowballs in his direction to see if he is just an image I've created to fill the empty spaces between the snowflakes. I hope he will

retaliate, so I will know, but I also fear that he'll hit back too straight and too hard. Other times, I hope he will go away on his own as he is a nuisance, but again, I'm also afraid that he will go, although I don't know why. In any event, he is hard to completely ignore, as out of the corner of my eye I catch glimpses of his red coat billowing out in the howling wind. Sometimes I think I hear him trudging through the snow, struggling to keep up and stopping frequently to catch his breath.

I have found that this journey in the snow seems to go on and on. Sometimes the therapist tells me he has other work to do and he must leave for awhile. I have grown used to him trailing me, usually at a safe distance away, and I wonder if he'll be back.

It is always surprising to me when he comes back, considering how deep the snow is. There are times he comes back riding a huge machine that blows the snow away, to make the path clearer and wider. It is big and noisy and, as the snow is being blasted away, he doesn't always see me and I have to move quickly to avoid being run over. At these times, I mostly try to just keep out of his way.

During breaks in the storm, he brings out his pad of yellow paper, as part of his job is to record the current snow levels and weather conditions in order to keep one day separate from the next. He uses a special pencil and works hard to keep his papers dry. After all, he too is new to this part of the world and he hasn't travelled this road before. It's taken him a while to get used to how wet and heavy the snow is and how much wandering there is in me. He gets really excited when he finds beautiful patterns in the snowdrifts that connect this day with the ones that have gone before. He especially likes discovering the heavily crystalized layers that run deep and lie close to the earth. (I can tell when he's excited because he rustles his papers and writes more furiously than before. Then, when he finally speaks, his voice has a rich and well fed sound.) He likes to point these patterns out to me. I suppose he wants to help me learn how to read them myself, so one day I can find my own way, but I often don't want to see them. For one thing, I don't

always hear him as his machine is too loud. For another, my ears are still full of the echoes of the wind's moaning. Mostly, I'm just too busy keeping warm, trying not to fall too hard and keeping track of the time so I'm still not here after nightfall.

There are times during these breaks in the weather when I see this different world that I am travelling in as a softer and more peaceful place. There are no jarring edges and the landscape is alive and flowing like a gently moving river. The blood rushes back to my cheeks and hands and I begin to believe that I can last until Spring, when the snow will melt, the earth will loosen up and the green shoots will push back up through the surface again.

### **Introduction to *Didi: A Lonely Little Tiger***

The following story is written in the genre of a fairytale, with my purpose being to illustrate aspects of the attachment process between mother and daughter by means of archetypal symbols such as a journey, a wise old woman (elephant), sleep, and the process of transformation (from polar bear to tiger). Such symbols, according to Carl Jung, emanate from the *collective unconscious*.

To digress for a moment, an explanation of the terms *fairytale*, *archetype*, *symbol*, and *collective unconscious* is in order:

Jung (1953) postulated the existence of a primitive level of consciousness, deeper than the *personal unconscious* proposed by Freud, that is innate and universal. Jung called this level the *collective unconscious* and contended that it contained the whole spiritual heritage of mankind's evolution. The contents of the *collective unconscious* he termed *archetypes*. Jung explained that *archetypes* were "instinctive tendencies" that exist and have existed in the psyche of every individual of every culture. Jung also maintained that *archetypes* were both images (called *primordial images*) and emotions; and that when they were made conscious, archetypes manifested themselves in the form of symbols. To Jung, *symbols* were images that stood for a complexity of inner experiences and feelings that could not be expressed as accurately or as concisely (Fromm, 1951; Heuscher, 1974). Furthermore, Jung (1959) stated that "the symbols of fairytales concretize the archetypes" (p.100). (Cf. Haegert, 1980.)

In this way, fairytales are seen as "mankind's store of archetypal patterns" (Whitmont, 1969, p.101), and the figures and events of the fairytale as external personifications and illustrations of man and woman's universal and internal conflicts. For example, universal sources of problems such as family relationships, particularly mother-daughter relationships, developmental tasks, sibling rivalry are all themes that could be

extrapolated from the following story. (Haegert, 1980; Luthi, 1976; Bettelheim, 1975; Heuscher, 1974.)

Chetwyn (1982) summarizes that "fairytale speak directly from the unconscious and appeal directly to it: anything in life that can't be grasped by the intellect strives for realization through symbolism, and fairytales are one outlet for this symbolism."(p.147).

The goal of this writing, then, is to stimulate the reader's primitive, intuitive, image-making faculty that constitutes prelogical, preverbal thinking (Heuscher, 1974) in order to bring to awareness previously untapped sources of wisdom pertaining to the self in relationship to other, in particular the mother-daughter relationship (Fromm, 1975). Jung maintains that "the unconscious is capable of assuming an intelligence and purpose which are superior to actual conscious insight" (1938, p.45.)

Some of the specific archetypal symbols I have used in the story and possible interpretations of them are as follows:

The symbol of journey implies the "search for something elusive that exists beyond the edge of the world, [the jungle] i. e. an elusive part of the self lost in consciousness" (Chetwyn, 1982, p.229). The wise old woman, (elephant) represents a more complete person, the potential self, the fulfilled psyche. The wise old woman (and man) is experienced as separate and other in the child and youth. However, in adulthood the child may grow into that figure (Chetwyn, 1982, p.193). The elephant could also be seen as the nurturing psychotherapist (giving milk), who encourages the client (young tiger) to find the answers within, by going to sleep, representing exploring the unconscious (Chetwyn, 1982, p.292). The act of transforming/changing and remaining stable/changeless are recurring symbolic themes that reflect processes of growth and transformation within the psyche at the same time as the child (tiger) and mother (tiger) essentially stay the same.

This fairytale was written to appeal to adults and children. Note that in the not so distant past, fairytale telling was a chief form of wintertime entertainment or an essential

spiritual occupation (Von Franz, 1970), narrated by adults for adults. It has only been over the last two centuries that fairytales in Western, non-aboriginal society have been relegated more and more to the children's world. Increasingly, however, over the last 25 years, fairytales have found their way into the realm of psychotherapy as a significant treatment strategy for children and adults. An example is Lee Wallas (1985) who has developed "stories for the third ear" to use in combination with hypnosis in treating a range of mental disorders from paranoid personality to anorexia nervosa.

The fairytale, as mentioned, presents the full range of life's problems in symbolic form that convey both personal and universal meanings. As in all good art, it imparts a meaning that is different for each person and different for the same person at various moments in this life.

In general, the overriding tone of the fairytale is one of optimism and reassurance. It reminds one of life's positive possibilities (Von Franz, 1975). With its happy ending, the fairytale gives the reader hope for the future, that the impasse will be broken, that the relationship will indeed improve. Despite the difficulties the hero or heroine encounters, with courage, cunning, and often luck, even the little boy or girl can break spells (as in the following fairytale) or overcome giants (Haegert, 1980; Bettelheim, 1975).

The fairytale I have written, as stated, is applicable to adults as well as children and youth. However, primary school children would best understand the simpler version of the basic tale. The more detailed version would be more suitable for intermediate school children, especially those who have been adopted.

Following the two versions, I have written a general commentary and specific comments about the second version.

*Didi: A Lonely Little Tiger: Basic Version*

Once upon a time there was a little girl tiger called Didi. She had large brown eyes and a striped golden and black coat. She lived in the hot jungle where the green trees and vines grew tall, with huge leaves and the jungle was so thick, it was hard for anyone to travel through it, except for animals like her, who knew the way. The jungle was full of brightly coloured birds that were always singing. She especially liked to listen to the yellow and green parrots sing and watch the butterflies that were orange, yellow and red. Sometimes, if she stood very still, a butterfly would alight softly on her back and stop there for a moment. Once a yellow butterfly stopped on her little tiger nose and made her nose tickle so much that she sneezed and the butterfly fluttered away.

Didi loved to swim in the cool jungle pools with her best friend, Tessa, who also was a little tiger. Didi and Tessa used to lie on their backs and do the tiger backstroke. This would make them laugh so hard that they would forget to keep their backs straight and would start to sink. Then they would get water up their noses and have to snort and cough, which would make them laugh even harder.

Didi was mostly a happy tiger, especially when she was with Tessa. Didi would play with Tessa all day. Then, before dark, she would go home to her family of tigers who all had golden and black stripes, like her. In her family, there were four tigers: two big tigers--her mom, and her mom's partner, Candice; and two small tigers-- her brother, Sinclair and herself, who was the smallest of all. While Didi had been playing all day with Tessa, her mom and Candice had hunted for food and they usually brought back tender zebra meat for all of them to share. Didi loved to eat and eat until her stomach was so round and full she couldn't eat any longer. Then she would lie down in the corner of the cool den the family lived in, and have a long, long sleep.

### Didi Felt Something Was Wrong; Something Was Missing

But, although Didi felt safe and got enough to eat and had so much fun playing with her friend, Tessa, Didi felt that something was wrong, that something was missing. Didi also knew that soon Tessa would be leaving her as she'd been told that Tessa's family was moving to a new territory on the other side of the jungle.

When Didi woke up in the den in the early morning before anyone else was awake, she got a lonely feeling deep inside her. She could look over and see her mom close to Candice, and see her brother, Sinclair, sleeping nearby with a smile on his face. But Didi didn't feel like smiling; she felt sad.

Sometimes Didi would look at her mom and her mom would disappear and in her place was a big polar bear who was sitting on a piece of ice far, far, away. When her mom would turn into a polar bear, Didi was afraid to get close to her. Once Didi tried to hug her mom but Didi became so cold, she started to shiver and her teeth started to chatter. Didi didn't know if anybody else in the family except her could see this, and it made her feel very sad. Didi was a smart little tiger and knew that polar bears lived in cold places like the North Pole where there was lots of ice, and didn't belong in the jungle, so she knew that sooner or later her mom would have to leave her.

Didi didn't know what to do and felt weird because she could not even hug her own mom. Her brother, Sinclair, and Candice, acted like nothing was wrong, they kept hugging mom, so Didi felt even more different.

### The Meeting With the Wise Old Woman Elephant

Early one morning, when Didi felt terribly lonely because every one else in her family seemed happy and she didn't, she realized she must find someone to help her. She remembered that there was a wise old woman elephant that lived on the edge of the jungle. So, Didi packed herself a lunch of leftover zebra meat, put it in a little pack sack she strung it around her middle, and off she went to see the old woman elephant.

After a long walk through the jungle, which made her very tired, she finally reached the place where the old elephant lived, under a banyan tree. The elephant had been lying down and got up very slowly to greet her. She had never seen an elephant before, but knew she was very old, because she was so big, wrinkled and grey. Didi was weary from her trip and before anything was said, the elephant put her trunk around a big pitcher of elephant milk and poured Didi a warm bowl to drink. Didi lapped it up quickly and became very sleepy. Didi started to ask the elephant for help, but the elephant stopped her. The wise elephant, who had lived a long time, said to Didi, "You are tired, now, so go to sleep, and let yourself dream. When you wake up, you will know what to do." Didi immediately fell into a deep sleep.

Didi dreamed that she saw her mom and Didi was so happy and surprised to see her that she bounded up to her mom and kissed her, forgetting for a moment that she looked like a polar bear. Suddenly, the polar bear skin parted down her mom's back and Didi was excited to see the warm and cuddly tiger skin underneath. Her mom stepped out of the polar bear skin, turned to Didi, grabbed her and hugged her tightly with her four soft and loving arms. Didi felt tears of joy on her face and didn't know if they were hers or her mom's.

A moment later, Didi woke up and found she was back in her family tiger's den, with her packsack beside her. Her mom, Candice, and Sinclair, were all sitting around her, smiling. Her mom said they had all been worried because Didi had been away for so long. Even her brother, Sinclair, whom she sometimes fought with, said that he had missed her. Her mom lay close to Didi, stroked the fur on her head, and said to her, "I'm so happy you are no longer a polar bear cub. We all used to freeze when we were around you. That's why we left you alone. Someone put a spell on you but now the spell is broken." Didi looked at her mom and wanted to say, "No, mom, it was you who were the polar bear" but Didi was so happy to be close to her mom again and to feel like she belonged in the family, that she didn't say anything. She just giggled and snuggled a little closer to her mom, her brother and to Candice.

***Didi: A Lonely Little Tiger: More Detailed Version***

Once upon a time there was a little girl tiger called Didi. She had large brown eyes and a soft, striped golden and black coat. She lived in the hot jungle where the trees grew tall, had huge green leaves and were covered with flowering red and purple vines. Where she lived, the jungle was so thick, it was hard for anyone to travel through it, except for animals like her, who knew the way. The jungle was full of brightly coloured birds that were always singing and talking to anyone who would listen. If she stopped to lie down under the banana tree where yellow-headed parrots made their nests, she would hear stories about faraway places. She loved to hear about the giant elephants who had big ears and long memories, that roamed on the plains outside her jungle world. She heard that the older elephants were very wise and used to teach the younger elephants about important things. Sometimes, if Didi lay very still, she would see orange, red, and blue butterflies come lazily out of the shadows and alight softly on her back or on the top of her head. Once a yellow butterfly stopped on her little nose for a moment and made her nose tickle so much that she sneezed and the butterfly fluttered away. Who would have thought that in these restful moments, listening to birds sing and watching butterflies, that Didi would learn something that one day would help her and end up changing her life.

Didi loved to swim in the cool jungle pools with her best friend, Tessa, who also was a little tiger. Didi and Tessa used to lie on their backs and do the tiger backstroke. This would make them laugh so hard that they would forget to keep their backs straight and would start to sink. Then they would get water up their noses and have to snort and cough, which would make them laugh even harder.

Didi was mostly a happy tiger, especially when she was with Tessa. Didi would play with Tessa all day. Then, before dark, she would go home to her family of tigers who all had golden and black stripes, like her. In her family, there were four tigers: two big tigers-

-her mom, and her mom's partner, Candice; and two small tigers-- her brother, Sinclair and herself, who was the smallest of all. While Didi had been playing all day with Tessa, her mom and Candice had hunted for food and they usually brought back tender zebra meat for all of them to share. Didi loved to eat and eat until her stomach was so round and full she couldn't eat any longer. Then she would lie down in the corner of the cool den the family lived in, and have a long, long sleep.

### Didi Felt Something Was Wrong: Something Was Missing

But, although Didi felt safe and got enough to eat and had so much fun playing with her friend, Tessa, Didi felt that something was wrong, that something was missing. Didi also knew that soon Tessa would be leaving her as she'd been told that Tessa's family was moving to a new territory on the other side of the jungle.

When Didi woke up in the den in the early morning before anyone else was awake, she got a lonely feeling deep inside her. She could look over and see her mom close to Candice, and see her brother, Sinclair, sleeping nearby with a smile on his face. But Didi didn't feel like smiling; she felt sad.

Sometimes Didi would look at her mom and her mom would disappear and in her place was a big polar bear who was sitting on a piece of ice far, far, away. When her mom would turn into a polar bear, Didi was afraid to get close to her. Once Didi tried to hug her mom but Didi became so cold, she started to shiver and her teeth started to chatter. Didi didn't know if anybody else in the family except her could see this, and it made her feel very sad. Didi was a smart little tiger and knew that polar bears lived in cold places like the North Pole where there was lots of ice, and didn't belong in the jungle, so she knew that sooner or later her mom would have to leave her.

Didi didn't know what to do and felt different from everybody else in her family. Sometimes Didi wondered if she would ever feel she belonged to them. After all, she had

been adopted by this family when she was only a few weeks old because her mom who gave birth to her, had been killed by a hunter. Or, so she was told. Maybe it wasn't true. Maybe she had been stolen and her mom was waiting for her somewhere. To think about all this, made Didi feel hungry inside even though she knew she was still full from all she ate the night before. She felt mixed up, because she missed her first mom even though she didn't even remember her. To make matters worse, her brother, Sinclair, and her mom's partner, Candice, acted like nothing was wrong with mom. They kept hugging mom; mom didn't seem to give them chills, so Didi felt even more different.

#### The Meeting With the Wise Old Woman Elephant

Early one morning, before anyone else was awake, when Didi was feeling terribly lonely because every one else in her family seemed happy and she didn't, she decided that she must do something about it. She thought and thought and just before dawn, she suddenly remembered what the yellow-headed parrots had told her: There was an old woman elephant that lived on the edge of the jungle, who was known to be very wise. Didi decided then and there that she would go right to see her. So, Didi packed herself a lunch of leftover zebra meat, put it in a little pack sack made of vines and palm leaves, and strung it around her middle. Then, off she went on her long trip to see the old woman elephant.

Didi scampered through the jungle all day long, taking only very short rests, hidden in the crooks and branches of large trees. She napped a little and munched on pieces of the yummy zebra meat she had carried with her from home. Finally, when the sun was almost setting and the air was cooling down, Didi reached the edge of the jungle. She could hardly drag her short, weary legs over to the place where the old elephant lived, under the biggest tree she had ever seen, a banyan tree, that looked like 10 trees all joined together. The old elephant had been lying down on her side, on a bed of leaves, and it

took her 3 tries to get up on her feet to greet Didi. Didi had never seen an elephant before, but knew this one was very old because she was so big, grey, and wrinkled.

Didi was so tired from her journey that she flopped right down on the ground, feeling very small in front of this magnificent elephant. Before anything was said, the elephant lifted up her trunk, which was the longest nose that Didi had ever seen, and curled her trunk around a huge pitcher of elephant milk. Before Didi knew it, the elephant had poured a big warm bowl of milk for her, that was so warm it was steaming. As Didi was too tired to move, the elephant carefully cradled the full bowl in her trunk and put it right in front of Didi. Without even getting up, Didi lapped the milk up quickly and became very sleepy. Didi started to ask the elephant for help, but the elephant stopped her. The wise elephant, who had lived a long time, said to Didi, "Hush, my dear, you are tired, now, so go to sleep, and let yourself dream. When you wake up, you will know what to do." Didi immediately fell into a deep sleep.

Didi dreamed that she saw her mom and Didi was so happy and surprised to see her that she bounded up to her mom and kissed her, forgetting for a moment that she looked like a polar bear. Suddenly, the polar bear skin parted down her mom's back and Didi was excited to see the warm and cuddly tiger skin underneath. Her mom stepped out of the polar bear skin, turned to Didi, grabbed her and hugged her tightly with her four soft and loving arms. Didi felt tears of joy on her face and didn't know if they were hers or her mom's.

A moment later, Didi woke up and found she was back in her family tiger's den, with her packsack beside her. Her mom, Candice, and Sinclair, were all sitting around her, smiling. Her mom said they had all been worried because Didi had been away for so long. Even her brother, Sinclair, whom she sometimes fought with, said that he had missed her. Her mom lay close to Didi and stroked the fur on her head, and said to her, "I'm so happy

you are no longer a polar bear cub. We all used to freeze when we were around you. That's why we left you alone. Someone put a spell on you but now the spell is broken and you're my little darling tiger daughter again." Didi looked at her mom and wanted to say, "No, mom, it was you who were the polar bear" but Didi was so happy to be close to her mom again and to feel like she belonged in the family, that she didn't say anything. She just giggled and snuggled a little closer to her mom, her brother and to Candice.

### **Commentary: *Didi: A Lonely Little Tiger* (Two Versions)**

#### Introduction: Two Versions of *Didi: A Lonely Little Tiger*

Although both versions are written for adults and children, the first version is the more basic, unadorned fairy tale, which makes it more suitable for the primary school child who has attachment problems. It is shorter in length, consistent with the shorter attention span of this age group. It also was written to have wider appeal to all children, not just adopted children.

The second version is still within the fairytale genre, but with greater detail and with specific appeal for the audience of intermediate school adopted children, who are coping with the loss of their biological parents, especially their biological mother.

In both versions, as is consistent with the classic style of the fairytale, I have tended to provide brief, clear cut descriptions of the characters in order to give the reader unburdened universal symbols that he or she can respond to personally (Heuscher, 1974).

#### General Commentary

In my role as therapist, I am often referred children with attachment problems, ranging from age 3 and up. *Didi* represents the young (usually adopted) children I work with who have attachment problems, or in other words, have trouble being open and loving to their (usually adoptive) parents, particularly, their mothers. For convenience, in this commentary, I have used the term *mother* and made the child *female*, but the attachment figure or child could, of course, be either gender.

The imagery in the story came from a play therapy session with an adoptive mother and her 8 year old girl who had been identified as having attachment problems. When there are attachment problems, as it is essentially a *relationship* problem, I usually work with the adoptive mother and child in the session together. I did indeed observe the child being cold and rejecting toward her mother, but I also saw the mother being cold, jealous, and intrusive with her child. This 8 year old girl spontaneously made up a play and

directed it: She played a baby tiger in the jungle and told her mother to be a big polar bear who lived far, far away in the ice of the North Pole.

The following questions drive the story I made up: Why are such children so closed toward their adoptive mothers? Is it because they perceive their adoptive mothers to be like their biological mothers who abandoned them? (This is the paradigm introduced by Bowlby (1969, 1988a, 1988b) of the child's *internal working model* of *self* and *other* formed at a young age, that is resistant to change.) Do the adoptive mothers by the nature of the reciprocity that exists between mother and child, respond to the child's rejection by being rejecting also? Does a circular pattern develop making it immaterial who rejected whom first? What if the adoptive mother has her own history of being rejected by her own mother? Does this factor make the adoptive mother more prone to perceive rejection from her child and respond in kind in order to protect herself from the imagined hurt she would experience? (In this case it could be argued that the mother's own *internal working model* of *self* and *world* comes into play.)

For an adoptive parent to refuse to be rejected by her child involves amazing strength of character and belief that she (the parent) *will* be able to get through to the child. Staying loving in the face of frequent rejection is not easy. The adoptive parent, in my experience, benefits from the encouragement of a therapist who can point out the small positive changes the therapist sees in the relationship of mother-child. The spiritual beliefs of the adoptive parents can also be sustaining. In addition, there is some research to suggest that a nurturing husband helps an adoption be successful (Westhues & Cohen, 1990).

On the other hand, I find that if the adoptive mother has attachment difficulties with her own mother such as, a cold, critical and rejecting mother that she could not get close to as a child, she has great difficulty tolerating the child's rejection of her. It is too painful and the adoptive mother either withdraws or becomes angry and intrusive with her child

as the adoptive mother's need for love, unsatisfied in childhood, is so intense and overwhelming.

How can these self-defeating, generational, patterns be broken? It depends on many factors: The mother's/child's desire to heal and motivating reason to heal, such as, if there is no change, the child will have to be placed elsewhere; the stability of the family's life circumstances, in the areas of marriage, friends, relatives, housing, finances, physical health, etc.; and the availability of an ethical therapist who is knowledgeable about attachment problems, etc.

In terms of the therapist, he/she must be kind, supportive, and nurturing, and be aware of and have resolved his/her own attachment issues. In some cases the therapist, in a sense, nurtures the mother in order that she can develop the inner resources to nurture her child. Within the therapeutic relationship, the therapist, like the elephant in the story, helps one member of the dyad (usually the mother, but in this fairytale, the child) overcome what is stopping her from expressing her need and love for the other.

An example of working through what is stopping the mother from lovingly embracing her child is as follows:

It is not unusual for mothers I've worked with to admit that they are jealous and resentful of their child when their child reaches the age when the mother herself was traumatized as a child. The statement I hear from the mothers is "She (her child) does not know how good she's got it" followed by variations of "She makes such a big deal about not being allowed to ride in the front seat of the car, when at her age, I was being molested every night!" In addition, seeing her child's happiness about little things can trigger the memory of the mother's psychic pain regarding what she as a child longed for but did not receive. Both scenarios can lead to the mother rejecting her child in order to control her anger or to suppress the anguish she feels.

The first step in the mother changing this seeming *fait accompli* is acknowledging her own psychic pain regarding her childhood. Some therapists, such as the psychiatrist, Judith Herman (1992), advocate that the client needs to reconstruct her trauma story and mourn the loss that trauma inevitably brings. This process of recovery, Herman maintains, leads to the client reconciling with herself and ultimately reconnecting with others. It is at this latter stage of therapy that the mother can more easily empathize with her child's underlying needs and be loving to her child.

Examples of the child overcoming what is stopping her from expressing love for her mother are as follows:

The child, with the help of a therapist, can first be helped to express her anger at her biological/adoptive mother for rejecting her. (It is not necessary for these feelings to be expressed directly to the source of the distress.) Usually, after the anger is expressed, the child experiences sadness and loss. It is at this point that the child is more able to feel her need for her mother and more likely to reach out for her. I have also seen a child (with a therapist's support) simply decide she wants a better relationship with her mother. Then, when the mother presents an opening or appears vulnerable, the child makes an overture toward her.

### The Second Version

The second version includes an additional element, common to adopted children, that is, the inevitable questioning of how I got to be with this adopted family. You will note that these questions are not answered in the story. This is true to life: Although giving the child concrete information, suitable for her age, about why she was adopted is important, often the *why* questions express more profound feelings. These feelings are in the vein of "Why did this have to happen to me?" "How could this have happened to me?" "How could God have let this happen to me?" and "I can't believe it" which often express an

inconsolable sadness, a sense of deep loss and at times, despair. It reaches in many cases to an existential sense of the unfathomable nature of the universe. This sense of loss of the biological mother for adopted children is described in the literature as "the primal wound." (Verrier, 1991). Some authors feel that all adopted children suffer this wound (Watson, 1995).

*Easter Lilies*

## I

Every Spring, as a young child, I'd run across the road from my house, climb up the mossy rocks, run through the fresh green grass until I entered the world of the snowberry bushes. At this time of year, the branches were thick with new small, soft green leaves. The bushes were much taller than I was and there were secret paths through them that I was sure only I knew about. Though I remember the paths being dark, especially in the late afternoon, I never remember being frightened there. In the early mornings, the spider webs glistened across the bushes and I had to be careful not to break any.

I would skip down these grassy paths and search at the edges, under the bushes, for the beginnings of one speckled green leaf, that meant that the Easter lily was coming. When I first saw one, I'd be so happy. I would stop and crouch beside it and touch its shiny, smooth green leaf that curled inward around my finger. It was as if that leaf was sent up first, to test if it was still safe to grow there. Soon another leaf would come up from the same centre, opposite the first. Together, the two leaves were like small arms, holding the promise of the lily that might emerge quietly from under the earth.

Usually but not always, in the heart of the leaves, the long, slim flower bud would appear, closed up, not yet ready to open. The thin pale green stem that I could almost see through, would be holding it up, and slowly carrying it upwards. Although I'd get anxious to see the flower open, I never opened it by hand as I had once done with the big red poppy buds that grew in my parents' garden. (I liked to break open the tough flower head, find the tightly packed bright pink petals in its case, unfold them and try to smooth out their wrinkles. Unfortunately, they usually wouldn't survive my tries to hurry up their blooming.) I knew I had to handle the lily more gently and wait for it. If I touched it, I knew there was a risk that the bud would fall off in my hands. Every day I would come

back, just to check on the lilies' growth. Always, without fail, there would be one joyful day that I would find that the first flower bud had opened by itself.

When the flower opened, it held its head up on its long neck, almost defiantly, its long, delicate white petals tinged with pink, hanging down and flaring back up on the edges. In the centre were long black pistils, laden with gold dust. I imagined that at night the gold shone like lights under a lantern and the fairies danced beneath them.

I don't believe that any one else but me saw these lilies, then, so hidden and complete in themselves. It makes me sad, to think of their loneliness, but I admired their bravery to push up through the earth every year, when no one else but me (not counting the fairies) seemed to care about them. I did not think about why they kept growing or whether the growing would ever stop. In a way, I thought they grew for me and that was enough. All that mattered to me then was that every Spring I could count on the lilies to appear to me.

Sometimes, in the early morning mist, the lilies seemed to arise out of the dark and cold earth like some rare white spirits that somehow gave me hope for the future, though I could not understand it then.

Once I picked some lilies to take back to my parents' house. I don't remember giving them to any one, but I remember they seemed out of place, stuck in a jar of water in the clutter and dust of the kitchen window sill, and never lasted long. I believed they didn't feel at home there or very safe there either, away from the fresh smells of the bushes that they grew under and the earth that nourished them. Perhaps, too, they missed the fairies that needed them on dark nights, to light up their dancing ring, especially when the moon was new.

## II

Those snowberry bushes are gone now, houses have been built there and have covered up the lilies of my childhood. I am living in a different town now and have grown older. One day, on a public trail beside the Tsolum River, I thought I saw some lilies that looked

like those I knew as a child, growing in abundance among the salal, the trilliums and the purple shooting stars. I was excited to see them, but also a little frightened. I felt small and clumsy as I knelt down to look at them and touch them. I saw that they were taller and stronger than the lilies I used to know and they were growing much more out in the open. There were also so many of them that in places people had stepped on and crushed a few, here and there, as if it didn't matter. However, I know, too, that these lilies are now protected by a law. No one is supposed to pick them, because it is written down that they are wild and endangered.

Every Spring I go down to this curve in the Tsolum River where the wild flowers grow and I think about the lilies I used to know. For a long time, I used to wonder why the lilies I knew as a child kept growing when no one else could see them. Now I've come to believe that they simply grew for their own sake. Even if they wanted to, they couldn't stop themselves. It was in them to grow, for each of them to create a beautiful flower and not really die, but just to go back into the ground for a while to get some more strength to come back up again.

Still, on a Spring morning, walking on a wide open path by the edge of the fast flowing Tsolum River, my shoes wet with dew, and the tender smell of new green growth in the air, I sometimes cry for the Easter lily of my childhood, that lonely spirit that kept growing, hidden under a bush, so strong and fragile at the same time, with only one little girl to notice.

## CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION: A T.V. SHOW:  
*UNIVERSITY WEEK IN REVIEW*

## Introduction to the Interpretation and Discussion

I am presenting the interpretation and discussion of my research as a multivoiced fictional T.V. Show in order to illustrate the inherent complexity, ambiguities and contradictions of attachment processes. By creating conflictual and collaborative voices, my intention is to demonstrate that the theoretical notions that I, as a story/theory teller (Daly, 1997, p.360) am bringing to the foreground, as the final chapter of this interpretive inquiry, are debatable and generative.

It will be no doubt soon be apparent to the reader that my heart lies with the points of view of the characters, *Sara*, the articulate and vibrant Child and Youth Care Professor and psychotherapist; and *Sally*, the nondescript but committed social worker. *Sara* and *Sally* in a way are speaking for me, although, given the boundless protection of fiction, they speak with more freedom than I am accustomed to.

It should be noted that although I have considered in turn various underlying issues in the fictional stories in this dissertation, these issues are interconnected and at times consist of shifts in language and perspective of the same material.

I have included subject headings throughout to aid the reader in navigating his or her way through this discussion and cited references in the text to inform the reader about further sources. Such headings and bracketed citations would be omitted if this discussion were read aloud or performed.

I begin with Part I-- the moderator, David's brief introduction to the form and content of the research. Next, Part II is a discussion of the the form of the research-- fictional stories. Issues raised are opposing views of the use of fiction as research; the underlying

assumptions regarding ontology, epistemology, and methodology in this research; the theory/story as limited and local; the postmodern narrative self; the validity or truth value of fiction; the self in the research; a parallel research study utilizing a quantitative design; the *AAI* and the categorization and oversimplification of human relationships; myself as an *insider*; large samples versus *thick* description; and subjective and intuitive knowing: devalued by the patriarchy.

Part III is a discussion of the content of this dissertation. Topics include the adoptive/foster child's ambivalence toward the attachment figure(s); the period of rejection of the adoptive/foster parents; the child's fear of his own longing; the agony of the unfulfilled longing as the child is triggered by the attachment in the present; coping with the flood of feelings by denying the need with anorexia and running away from home; the setting up of a time worn scenario by the child to fit the his/her internal working models of *self* and *other*; the acting out of ambivalent attachment in adolescence; the vulnerability of showing need, of asking for anything; the repetition compulsion or the re-enactment of the trauma, and how internal constructions of attachment figures change; the child consciously choosing to risk changing his/her models of *self* and *other*; the strength that spiritual beliefs give the adoptive/foster parent; the noisy brain of *Sam* and *Mark*, *Sam's* ambivalence; too many mothers; the child's need for permanency and the implications for Child Welfare practice and counselling (post-adoptive services); indiscriminately affectionate behavior; and the interface of trauma and attachment.

Part IV is a summary of and final answers to the research questions. It also includes implications for training of child and youth workers; implications for future research, and the relevance of *How love grows* in our lives.

*University Week in Review*

The Characters

David: moderator, a former Psychology major, now a T.V. host.

Larry: a professor in Education.

Don: a registered psychologist

Sally: a Child Welfare social worker

Betty: an adoptive and foster parent

Sara: a professor in Child and Youth Care; a researcher; a psychotherapist; and a feminist

Ross: a professor of English; a poet; and a short story writer

Setting: The characters are all seated in a semi circle around a big table, in a T.V. show, *University week in review* with David, the moderator, at the head of the table. The topic is this dissertation.

Part I: David, the Moderator's Introduction to *University Week in Review*

*David is a large, jolly man; he is balding, wears a sports coat and speaks with gusto, is not afraid to interrupt, likes to set up a good argument, holds the audience's attention, much as what you would expect from a T.V. personality.*

An Introduction to Research as Fiction; the Topic of Attachment; and Harlow's (1951) Experiment With Infant Monkeys and the Terry Cloth Surrogate Mothers

David (Moderator):

We are here to talk about a new kind of research that is becoming either dangerously or wonderfully prevalent in our University these days, depending on how you look at it. The topic for this week is the dissertation, *How does love grow? Attachment processes in older adoptees and foster children as illustrated by fictional stories*. Did you hear that? Fictional stories is the research method. It's a form of research that I frankly lack experience with. My degree was in Psychology and I was brought up in the old school when Science was close to God and the scientific method was the path to true knowledge. As students, we started out with a research hypothesis that we all hoped to confirm. After a little manipulation of variables, what you see (for results) is what you get. The findings were easy to see, because they were in numbers or observable facts (although I never was able to achieve significant results and frankly was always a little sceptical of others who could.)

Personally, I've always been interested in topic of attachment. In first year psychology I recall reading some of Harlow's (1961) experimental studies of those poor deprived infant monkeys that he subjected to all sorts of abuse in the interests

of science. (Harlow obviously was not worried about gaining informed consent from *these* participants!) What I remember were those infant rhesus monkeys that Harlow raised from birth with two surrogate mothers, one of terrycloth and one of wire mesh. The monkeys apparently became 'attached' to the terry cloth mother, cuddling it, running to it when frightened, and using it as a base for explorations even when the bare wire mother was the only one providing food. So, if I remember correctly, it was contended that there was a need *within the infant* to form a strong tie to his or her mother was over and above the infant's physiological drive for food.

Now, the 'unattached child, *that* is scary, if one believes Magid and McKelvey in their book about children without a conscience (1987). These children would kill their own mothers without remorse. We'll talk more about that later in this show.

Back to Ms. Haegert's research, I must say I felt captivated reading her stories and even shed a few tears, but, let me put it this way, Are fictional stories really research? How far has the University sunk into unscientific do-anything-kind-of-research-practice? Or, is this groundbreaking work?

I'll turn now to my guests who all are wearing nametags with their professions written below. Let's start with Larry, who is a professor of Education at the University. What do you think Larry?

## Part II: Fiction as a Research Method

### Fiction as a Research Method: Opposing Views

*Larry (Education Professor) is an handsome, distinguished looking older man who is near retirement. He is wearing an expensive, dark suit and has silvery grey hair. His chin has that slight upward tilt of someone who has attended only the best schools and universities; his skin has the pallor of someone who spends much of his time indoors, reading and writing. He begins in a deep rich voice, that becomes higher and higher as he speaks, at the same time as his face grows redder and redder, until at the end of his first speech, his face has a purple hue and he is shaking slightly.*

Larry (Education Professor):

This kind of so-called research makes me very uncomfortable. What is this university coming to? It grieves me to think that these fabrications can pass as research. Research should be systematic, experiments should be carefully and thoughtfully designed. How can the results of Ms. Haegert's writings be used? Indeed, where *are* the results? Granted the stories were well written, but research? No, it's not research, in my world, it's art. What government body is going to fund

this? The *Canada Council* maybe, they fund the arts. Are tax payers helping to fund this? You know, you may think this is a little hotbed of qualitative research we have here, in this department, but to mix metaphors, it is but a tiny side channel in the mainstream of educational research. We need good, solid, research studies generating objective data and results that are generalizable. In my opinion, Ms. Haegert's research demeans this university and demeans me, and the research I have done here!

Assumptions Underlying Ms. Haegert's Research in Contrast to Quantitative Research  
Re: Reality, Knowledge, and Standpoint

*Sara (Child and Youth Professor) is an attractive middleaged woman with dark brown hair and large bright brown eyes. She wears red and while Larry was speaking, she was squirming in her chair and opened her mouth a few times, saying "Wait... wait..." She speaks with conviction, in an ingratiating melodic voice that leaves no spaces for interruptions.*

Sara (Child and Youth Professor):

Larry, this little side channel of qualitative research that you speak of is growing by the minute, to the point of flooding and mixing with the mainstream!

Let's look at the assumptions that underlie qualitative research, Larry, as practiced by Ms. Haegert and compare it to quantitative research. What Ms. Haegert states as her beliefs and values are consistent with and evident in the method of fictional writing she has chosen. She clearly takes the stance that there are multiple constructed realities, not one objective reality; that the knower (Ms. Haegert) cannot be separated from the known (what she perceives, writes about, constructs) and to paraphrase Denzin and Lincoln (1994), that any gaze (that is, anything she perceives) is always filtered through the lenses of language, social class, race, and ethnicity.

Fictional Method and Theory/Story as Limited and Local

*Ross (Professor of English) is a rotund middleaged man with shoulder length dark frizzy hair and a partiality for lime green shirts. He has silver rings, sometimes with bits of red or blue jewels on every finger, a toothy smile, a hearty laugh, and is flamboyantly eccentric. His top half of his body twists out of sync with the bottom half, as if he is not entirely comfortable in his earthly body. He often looks dreamy and remains somewhat disconnected from the others when he speaks. His voice has rich, beautifully cultured timbers. He often comments enigmatically, at times esoterically, on the subject matter, usually without engaging in the argument,*

*unless he is asked a direct question. The others view him tolerantly and usually don't reply to his cryptic remarks.*

Ross (Professor of English): *Interrupting Sara:*

I'm reminded of T.S. Eliot in *Ash Wednesday*, who says, "Because I know that time is always time / And place is always and only place / And what is actual is actual only for one time / And only for one place...."

Sara (Child and Youth Professor): *Ignores Ross and continues:*

In the social sciences, generalizations, especially concerning relationships, are "indeterminate, relative, and time and context bound" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.116). This stance of Ms. Haegert's intimates that there are no objective observations, only observations situated in the worlds of the observer and the observed. Similarly, in this discussion she presents "theory not as objective truth but as a located and limited story" (Daly, 1997, p. 361)

To quote Denzin (1994), Ms. Haegert is "working outward from her own biography to the worlds of experience that surround [her]" (p.512).

I applaud her for her courage, for bringing her research alive, for captivating our attention. In presenting "the truth of life's fictions... experiences are evoked, not represented or explained" (Denzin, 1997, p.266).

This inquiry is vital. It's not just another boring study that only graduate students will read to seize her references. I could see *Sam's voices* being performed on our national radio station, the *CBC*. As a psychotherapist who also works with these older adoptees and foster kids, I could see the parents and the older teens reading these stories, especially *The story of Sandi, an adopted teenager leaving home*. It would give them hope, that attachments do form, that parents shouldn't throw in the towel because their child is rejecting them. The rejecting child is part and parcel of the torturous ambivalence these children feel.

*Larry looks unconvinced but does not answer.*

David (moderator) *to Sara:*

So you're saying that Larry's views about the nature of reality, of knowledge and research methodology differ from Ms. Haegert's?

#### No Method is Privileged Vs. the Privileging of the Scientific Method

Sara:

Yes, yes. Ms. Haegert, as Richardson (1994) would say, "doubts that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal claim as the 'right' or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge" (p.517).

Larry:

I stand by the rigour of the scientific method, and the verifiable and generalizable knowledge it produces.

Ross:

In the world of human relationships and social behavior, "generalizations decay" and "science eventually becomes history" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.115).

Larry: *Ignoring Ross, continues:*

I have a caveat for Ms. Haegert and her colleagues: As social scientists doing this kind of airy fairy research, we are fast losing our status as scientists.

#### The Postmodern Self as Exemplified by this Research

Sara:

I disagree, Larry. I think that Ms. Haegert's research is timely. It is consistent with what is called the postmodern narrative self that must be flexible, creative, and complex in order to survive a world economy of multinational globalization and rapid and rampant technological change, where more and more people are in temporary contact, either electronically or in person. (Cf. Peavy, 1997.) The static, inflexible self is becoming increasingly marginalized.

The scientific method that is staid, measured and infers that knowledge corresponds to reality is outdated, no longer relevant in this fast paced cinematic, televisual world. It is simplistic to expect that some grand narrative will be revealed in a time when we live in "a mass mediated world in which the symbol of reality (hyperreality) has replaced the real" (Denzin, 1997, p.263).

Traditional belief systems have lost their meaning. What used to count as truth has shifted and the life of individuals is characterized by uncertainty, anxiety, and conflict both within the self and between the self and others.

Larry: As Reagan would have said, "I'm tired of all you doom and gloom soothsayers."

Ross: Not to mention Sara's youth and inexperience. *Ross chuckles.*

Sara: No. No. It's an exciting time to live. The possibilities to be creative are unlimited.

David: *Interrupting:*

Yes, let's hear from you, Ross. Ross, as a professor of English, how would you judge Ms. Haegert's fictional stories? Are there literary criteria you would use?

How to Judge Ms. Haegert's Fiction: The Validity or Truth Value of Fiction

Literary Criteria: The Validity of the "Quality of Craftmanship" (Kvale, 1996, p.241)

Ross:

Well, judging her work by literary standards, I think her writings *worked* rather well--She showed *versatility* in writing in various genres. The particular *forms* of the stories seemed to be natural expressions of their *contents*; the stories were internally consistent (the *coherence* criterion); and the stories felt believable and possible (the *verisimilitude* criterion).

However, most importantly, her writings were engaging and evocative. She skillfully enticed me into the worlds of experience she created and I felt that for a time that I, too, was viscerally co-inhabiting these turbulent and at times desperate inner worlds of the children and youth as they struggled to connect with others. (Cf. Rinehart, 1998, p.204.)

Sara: *Interrupting:*

As Kvale (1996) would say, Ms. Haegert achieved "validity" in terms of the "quality of craftsmanship" (p. 241). The stories she created were "so powerful and convincing in their own right that they, so to say, carry the validation [of their knowledge claims] with them...." (p.252).

David: Are there other ways to judge Ms. Haegert's fiction?

The Validity of Pragmatism; Writing For Diverse Audiences

Sara:

Yes. Integral to Ms Haegert's research is its utilitarian value, referred to by Kvale (1996) as "pragmatic validation" (p.248-251) or by Barone (1994) as the "neopragmatist criterion of *critical usefulness*" (p.99). It is this criterion that helps us judge the value or "truth" of the experiences of a reader in his/her "dynamic transactions" with the text (paraphrased from Barone, 1992, p.31-32).

David:

What do you mean by its "utilitarian value"? Are you referring to "the 'cash value' " of the research or "the expediency of 'whatever works' " (Barone, 1992, p.32)?

Sara:

No. That would be the narrow, conventional kind of utilitarianism that Cherryholmes (1988) calls "vulgar pragmatism" (p.151, cited in Barone, 1992,

p.32). "Critical pragmatism," on the other hand, is achieved when the research provokes "a sense of crisis...to our choices, when it is accepted that our standards, beliefs, values, and guiding texts themselves require evaluation and reappraisal" (Barone, 1992, p.32). In this process of disturbing or "[unsettling] the places where we are uncomfortable" (Bannerji, Carty, Dehli, Heald, & McKenna, 1991, p.7), I believe that Ms. Haegert accomplishes this vital goal of research--to "instigate actual changes in behavior" (Kvale, 1996, p.249) or in social structures.

David: *Sardonically*: Sara, you wouldn't be a feminist by any chance would you?

Sara: *Laughing*:

Yes! To effect social and political change is certainly one of the guiding tenets of feminist research. Some feminists, such as Patti Lather (1988) maintain that "research is feminist *only if* it is linked to action" (Reinharz, 1992, p.175). (Cf. Lather, 1991, 1993; Worell & Etaugh, 1994.) Similarly, Denzin (1997), presents a "feminist communitarian ethical model" for doing research that "contends that community is ontologically and morally prior to persons" (p.274).

David:

So how does Ms. Haegert's fiction possess "pragmatic validity" (Kvale, 1996, p.248-251)?

Sara:

First of all, foster children are a silent, shamed, and oppressed group who have been stigmatized and marginalized by the very school systems and child welfare systems that purport to respectively teach and care for them. There is a paucity of research about foster children which in itself "accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness" (Reinharz, 1992, p.191). Ms Haegert *demythifies* this oppressed group by bringing their voices (in fictional form) to our awareness. In this speaking, the spell of silence and invisibility is broken. Reinharz (1992) states that "the very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change" (p.191). (Cf. Tierney, 1996, p.383.)

David:

I notice that Ms. Haegert uses a number of different styles of writing in this dissertation. Is there any relationship between these narrative styles and the usefulness of the research?

Sara:

Yes indeed. If nobody (except perhaps her doctoral committee members and the external examiner) reads what she has written, then the text has very limited usefulness!

If one does not write in order to communicate to others then the text is but an

exercise in "navel gazing" and "intellectual narcissism" (Tierney, 1995, p.382-383). The writer must always pay attention to whom he or she is writing for, and when necessary, adjust the narrative style according to the age and education level of the audience.

One of Ms. Haegert's stated purposes of this research was "to educate adoptive parents, foster parents and psychotherapists about the attachment processes [of older adoptees and foster children]" (p.10). Therefore, she writes the 5 fictional stories in lay language as opposed to the *academese* of the other sections of the dissertation.

David:

Isn't this a *feminist* notion to create texts that are accessible to the wider community?

Sara:

Yes. Feminists advocate that researchers write their texts in a reader-friendly manner to make them understandable, palatable, and *useful* to a more diverse audience than simply the exclusive, privileged members of the academy. (Cf. Tierney, 1995; Ellis, 1995.) For example, most foster/adoptive parents and psychotherapists for whom Ms. Haegert professes to write, would simply lack the proficiency to decipher the specialized "academic" language of most texts.

Undoubtedly language is a socially constructed practice, possessing the power to determine, control, restrict, but also open up our worlds. We need to be wary of the "tremendous inertia of language" and our tendency to "compulsively cling to it" (Barone, 1994, p.101). Our language can serve to keep the power and knowledge with an elite few or we can dare to break new ground by using creative, evocative language with more universal appeal, as Ms. Haegert did, and so imagine new worlds to share with the larger community.

David:

Sara, can you say briefly how Ms. Haegert's research is useful to her proposed audiences?

Sara:

Yes. I believe her stories have important implications for systemic changes in child welfare practice and for behavioral or perceptual changes for counsellors/child care workers and adoptive/foster parents who work with these children.

David:

O.K. Let's leave it there for now. I'll ask you for details later in the content section of this discussion.

Acceptability of Fiction as Research: The Truth in Fiction

David: But is fiction *really* acceptable as research?

Sara:

As Ms. Haegert herself said, what is acceptable in the academy is socially constructed, context bound, and historically situated. Scientific discourse is still dominant in the academy but in many social science departments in Universities across North America, such as Sociology, Women Studies, and Education, to name a few, there is an increasing acceptance of qualitative studies of *lived experience* including fictional portrayals of this experience. (Cf. Barone, 1997; Ceglowski, 1997; Denison, 1996; Ellis, 1995; Jago, 1996; Kiesinger, 1998; O'Connor, 1996; Richardson, 1992, 1995, 1996; Ronai, 1995.)

Ross: *Interrupting:*

To my mind, what is acceptable as research all comes down to a matter of truth, what *is* truth, which, again as Ms. Haegert herself said, is simply a matter of politics, values, and beliefs.

I have just read an astonishingly well written "non-fiction" autobiographical account by the British novelist, Jenny Diski (1997). She juxtaposes an account of her horrendous childhood, with her travelling in the present by boat to Antarctica to seek "a place of safety, a white oblivion" (p.2) in the "white and ice as far as the eye can see" (p.5). Diski states rather wisely that, "There are infinite ways of telling the truth, including fiction, and infinite ways of evading the truth, including non-fiction" (p.229).

Of course, there is that lovely post-impressionist statement on art and truth by Picasso (1965):

We all know that art is not truth. Art is a lie to make us realize the truth. The artist must know the manner whereby to convince others of the truthfulness of his lies (p. 25, as cited in Richardson, 1998, p.47).

I'll end my monologue with that cryptic line from one of Ms. Haegert's earlier poems (not in this dissertation) that said, "I'd like to believe in myself but I know how I lie." *He finishes by chuckling and grinning.*

The Self in Ms. Haegert's Research

David:

Are there any more comments about the way Ms. Haegert wrote herself into the research. Was anyone embarrassed for her, appalled, perhaps pleased?

Ross:

Her personal writings, as she called them, used her experiences of self as a framework for the stories and poems; and I thought that neither her prose *or* her poetry degenerated, thank God, into confessional drivel.

Don: *Don is a registered psychologist, with a traditional practice, where he stays aloof from clients. He is well respected for his detailed critical forensic assessments of clients for Court purposes. Don is tall, blonde, of German descent. He speaks with a booming voice.*

Don:

Well I found it distasteful to hear Ms. Haegert allude to her personal problems with attachment or to read some of her poetry, which I found depressing. These days everyone seems to be disclosing that one person or another abused them when they were children. For example, statistically, it is said that up to 4 out of 5 females have been sexually assaulted prior to the age of 18. It's hardly a discriminatory fact then, is it, if 80 % of the populace have experienced it? Who cares?

Don's Suggestion That Ms. Haegert Use a Quantitative Design and That Attachment be Operationally Defined by Use of the AAI

Don *Continues:*

I'm more interested in substance, what Ms. Haegert found out, how by her study, our knowledge of attachment processes has increased. Admittedly, she chose a complex topic. It is difficult to operationally define a relationship, but it could be done, by means of one of the standardized measurements of attachment. Accordingly, her research question would need to be modified, from the amorphous and abstract one it is now, to one that is more concrete and quantifiable.

David: Don, how could Ms. Haegert's research question be quantified?

Don: *Pleased to answer; he gathers momentum as he talks:*

*An example would be the question, How do attachment styles (as defined by a certain attachment measurement) of older foster/adoptive children change, after a specific intervention strategy is applied?*

David:

But *are* there any measurements of attachment styles that would be appropriate in attempting to answer this kind of question?

Don:

Yes, there are some very good reliable and valid measurements. As Ms. Haegert seems to have a partiality for the narrative construction of events, she could have used the *Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)* which is also applicable to adolescents. (Did you know it is used for assessment purposes at the *Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre* in Burnaby, B.C.?)--Now *that* would be an appropriate test to give when a large number of teenagers enter their adoption/foster homes. Then, Ms. Haegert could employ her intervention strategy and 2 or more years later, administer the test again, to see if significant changes in attachment style have occurred. In this way the results would be generalizable.

David: Don, would you mind telling us briefly what the *AAI* is?

Don:

This is a semi-structured interview devised by one of Ainsworth's former students, Mary Main and her colleagues, Kaplan and Cassidy in California in 1984. It was originally designed for use with mothers of infants, to examine the relationship of the mother's attachment style with her infant's. (The mother's and infant's attachment styles were predictably parallel.) In brief, the subject is asked to reconstruct his story of *self* and *other*, in particular, his/her early attachment experiences and the context of the discourse regarding attachment is analyzed. The subject is then categorized in terms of one of 3 or 4 attachment styles which could be viewed as externalizations of the subjects' *internal working models* of attachment. These adult/adolescent attachment styles correspond to Ainsworth's patterns of attachment for infants.

#### The *AAI*: The Categorization and Oversimplification of the Complexity of Human Relationships

Sara:

Well, I think that measurements such as the *AAI*, that carry with them the presumption of objectivity, are in fact, themselves open to interpretation.

I agree though, that the *AAI* is indeed, interesting. For example, the adult or adolescent who is classified as *securely attached* will have access to early childhood memories even if they are painful, and show evidence of having cognitively integrated these memories into a positive sense of self. However, the *AAI* is a long, open ended interview and the scoring is complex. I also am wary of accepting a mere 3 or 4 attachment styles in which to fit attachment relationships.

To my mind, categorization oversimplifies the ambiguous, contradictory, multifaceted and multiple meanings of lived experience (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992, p.8). On the other hand, I feel that Ms. Haegert captures the rich complexity of human relationships and alludes to their unfathomable aspects in both her stories and the discussion of them in this dissertation.

Ross:

To paraphrase Diski (1997), categories, styles, patterns, or catchall phrases or words, wrap up the complicated and deny the texture of experience (p.193).

Ms. Haegert Presenting the Insider's Point of view

Sara:

As for Ms. Haegert's personal disclosures, I think they added to our knowledge of attachment processes, from an *insider's* point of view. The feminist writer, bell hooks, talks about the *insider*. Too much research is done by *outsiders*, people who have never experienced the phenomenon they purport to study. Accordingly, they don't know what questions to ask, they often miss pertinent information, and their research lacks depth.

Why Should We Care About Ms. Haegert's View? Large Samples Vs. Fictional Case Studies

Don: *Quickly:*

I don't agree that one must experience a phenomenon before it is researched. No, that's my point. Too much subjectivity taints the data, leads to research that is all opinion rather than fact. I don't want to be rude, because Ms. Haegert obviously put a lot of time into her dissertation, but who cares what Ms. Haegert thinks? Wouldn't you rather hear from 30 people how they feel on a variety of attachment related topics than only one person, Ms. Haegert?

Sara:

While I care what she thinks, because she made me care, by the power of her writing. I like her rich, *thick* description that requires an intensive and thorough examination of the phenomenon (*attachment*) that was studied. Besides I don't agree with your distinction, Larry, between opinion and fact. I agree with Daly's (1997) and Schutz's (1970) views that all knowledge involves constructs and "there are no facts as all facts are selected from the universal context by the activities of our minds. Because of this selectivity, all facts are interpreted facts" (Daly, 1997, p.348).

Ross: *Rolls about in his chair as he speaks.*

Maybe her writing was a scam, a scam. Perhaps she's but a common 'con artist' who convinces her target (us) of the 'truth' of her account, with the payoff being a degree is granted. End of story. *Ross chuckles.*

### Subjective and Intuitive Knowing: Devalued by the Patriarchy

Sara *Ignoring Ross*:

Again, it comes down to your beliefs about reality and how we come to know what we know. Received knowledge is overemphasized in the patriarchal view of reality as something objective, out there and separate from the observer. Subjective knowing and intuitive knowing, cultivated by women through the centuries, are devalued by the patriarchy and the "dominant intellectual ethos of our time" (Belenky et al., 1987). This *contaminant* view of self, as Krieger (1991) calls it, ought to be altered. Whether we like it or not, "our studies are reflections of our inner lives," (p.1) so why don't we just acknowledge that fact and get on with it?

Sally: *Ignoring Ross: Sally, a social worker, is a tired looking, nondescript middleaged woman who becomes surprisingly animated as she talks*

As a protection social worker, I work with these kids with attachment problems every day and what Ms. Haegert said made sense to me, helped me understand them more. It helped me see what these kids are going through, how hard it is for them to connect, to be open, to give and receive love. I can understand it now, not just in my mind, but on a somatic level (Heshusius, 1994). This knowing feels different, it's a sad kind of knowing but hopeful, too. I won't be so quick to label a kid a little shithead when he seems to "destroy" or "burn out" a placement when I know how desperate the kid is for love and yet so terrified to get it.

### Part III: The Content of the Study

#### Writing as a Method of Discovery: What Did Ms. Haegert Discover?

David:

Thank you, Sally. After reading Ms. Haegert's dissertation, I bet it would be safe to say that most kids in care have attachment problems. What you said, Sally, is a good lead in to a dicussion to the content of the dissertation. What *are* the issues underlying Ms. Haegert's fictional stories? What *did* Ms. Haegert say? Didn't the feminist researchers, Kirby and McKenna (1989) say that "researching is like embarking on a "voyage of discovery." Help me out here, feminists among you, is this right?

Sara: Yes. yes. And writing itself is a method of discovery (Richardson, 1994).

David:

Well then, what did Ms. Haegert discover? What do we, the reader, know now that we didn't know before? Betty, we haven't heard from you yet. What do you as a foster and adoptive parent, think?

The Adoptive/Foster Child's Ambivalence Toward the Attachment Figure(s); a Period of Rejection of Adoptive/Foster Parents; The Child/Youth's Fear of His/Her Own Longing:

*Betty is a foster and adoptive parent. Her life is taking care of difficult children and youth. She is a large, warm woman with a commanding presence. She has a fair complexion and lively blue eyes.*

Betty (adoptive/foster parent):

Ms. Haegert said a lot; some things I knew but I hadn't verbalized yet. She really understands these kids. Like the kid, *Sandi*, who said she wished her parents had never adopted her, and she never wanted to see them again. I've been there. As a parent I've been hurt so badly that at first I felt like I must have been the worst parent in the world.

It was with Ingrid, my adopted daughter--such a lovely girl, tall, beautiful dark red hair, smart, could be so generous. I cried every night for months for her. When she was 14, like Sandi, Ingrid took off, rejected my husband and me totally. She changed her name back to her surname before she was adopted and wouldn't call us 'mom' and 'dad' any more, called us Mr. and Mrs. Parker, not even Betty and Ian. Every time Ingrid phoned us (to get some of her stuff or to talk to her younger sister) it was to tell us how we had ruined her life. It was brutal. And when she tried to turn her younger sister, who is just grooving along, against us, too, we just wanted to scream bloody murder! Yet we *knew* that although we certainly weren't perfect parents, we hadn't done anything particularly wrong. In our hearts we *knew* that underneath the surface belligerence and bullshit, Ingrid *did* care, that we were all she had, that she needed us, but that she was fighting tooth and nail to not feel that need, that she was terrified that we would take advantage of that need and hurt her and leave her.

The Agony of the Unfulfilled Longing for Love as the Child/Youth is Triggered by the Attachment Relationship in the Present. The Flood of Feelings are Coped with by Denial of Need (Anorexia); by Running Away From Home

Ross: *Interrupting, excited:*

"Don't let me be alone," he says "Don't leave me all alone with my love." That was a quote from Kathryn Harrison (1997) from her memoir, *The Kiss*, (p.131). The pain of that unfulfilled longing for love is excruciating. Harrison calls it "our suffering, the anguish of the unrequited" (p.79).

Sara:

Klein (1987) states that as attachment behavior is based on biological predispositions, when there is the loss of an attachment figure, the loneliness and lack of support is experienced as agonizing a deprivation as hunger (p.100).

Ross: *Still excited:*

Think of anorexia as "the dizzy rapture of starving. The power of needing nothing" (p.41). Thus Kathryn Harrison (1997) describes how she copes with unrequited love.

David:

Correct me if I'm wrong. Are you, Ross, Betty and Sara all saying that the young person who has been abandoned as a child still feels the pain about the loss of his/her attachment figure even 5 or 6 years later when he/she has someone to attach to?

Sara:

Yes, whether we are talking about Betty's adopted daughter, Ingrid, or *Sandi* in Ms. Haegert's story, when the young person feels loved and feels herself loving back, all the pain associated with being hurt by love, being used by love, being left alone with that unfulfilled longing for love, as Ross says, can flood the person and become too much to bear. (Van der Kolk [1994] talks about the adult who was abused as a child lacking the ability to modulate his/her emotional state.)

If as a young child, the child coped with too much feeling by emotionally leaving his/her body (what is called dissociation), in the teenage years when too much feeling occurs, the young person physically wants to leave and often does..

### The Teenager Sets Up a Scenario to Fit His/Her Internal Working Model or Construction of Self and Attachment Figure

Sally (social worker) *warming up to the discussion:*

When children become teenagers in this culture, they usually become aware of their power, what parents can or can't make them do, who they are and who they are going to become like. Adoptive youth often see two dichotomous choices-- Become like their biological family who are screwed up *or* become like their adoptive family who are goody-goodies. When inevitable conflicts with parents take place, they are often interpreted by the teenage adopted child according to what van der Kolk (1989) would call "negative cognitive schemata" (p.392). Bowlby (1969/1984) likely would call them negative internal working models of the world.

Sara:

Oh, yes. A typical scenario is the adopted youth acting out what seems to be an internal model of the world from an earlier time, that is, that "nobody cares for him." (It's like an old schemata from long ago that suddenly re-appears.) It's a no-win situation for parents! I've seen teenagers come to the conclusion that "nobody cares" no matter what the parents do, whether they are strict (translated into "they don't care how I feel") or permissive (translated into "they don't care what happens

to me"). If the teenager is determined to find evidence that their adoptive parent doesn't care, she will find it! The story of *Sandi leaving home* was a good example. Whatever the adoptive parents said or did, it felt like *Sandi* was determined to reject them.

Sally (social worker)

I know that the well known pediatrician and psychotherapist, Vera Fahlberg, whose specialty is attachment with difficult children and youth said that adoptive children who *don't* work through the balance between dependence and autonomy as toddlers (according to Eric Ericson, 1959/1980) or connection and separation or self-in relation (as Josselson, 1992, would say), attempt to *re-work* it through as adolescents. So, adoptive kids who seem to have fitted in, been "part of the adoptive family" up to the age 10 or 11, when they are 12, 13, and 14, they revert to older models of the world, consistent with their early life experiences, and question everything in terms of these models. There's hell to pay in adolescence with these kids.

David:

In the story of *Sandi*, *Sandi* reunited with her adoptive family. Betty, what happened to Ingrid?

Sara:

You know, a year later Ingrid came back and it was as if nothing had happened. She was sensitive, caring. Of course, during the time she was so horrible to us, we didn't reject her back. God (and some good friends) helped us through it, gave us the strength to keep on loving her, to turn the other cheek....

David: *puzzled*: Sorry, but I don't understand. If a person such as *Sandi* or, (*looking at Betty*) *your* daughter, Ingrid, wants love so badly, why does she reject it?

#### Ambivalent Attachment Acted Out in Adolescence

Sara:

This is my take on it. *Sandi* wants love at the same time as she rejects and disparages her attachment figure (her adoptive mother) because that is her inner conflict, projected onto her mother. She is ambivalent about loving. Ainsworth (1978) identifies an *anxious-ambivalent* quality of attachment in her research with 12-18 month old infants. Not much differently than the ambivalently attached child, such as *Sam* in *Sam's voices*, the teenager is terrified to want, to ask for love. Based on their past experiences which seem to be encoded in memory and somewhat resistant to change, being hurt by a loved one is more than just a risk-- it is all he or she has ever known.

The Vulnerability of Showing Need, Of Asking For Anything

Ross: *Waxing Poetic:*

I could feel *Sandi* trembling, feeling the size of her wounds (see Haegert's poem, *A Leaf*) when *Sandi* asks her adoptive mother if she can come back home....

Sara:

Yes, it was very, very hard for *Sandi* to ask for help, especially from someone who genuinely loved her, like her adoptive parent.

Ross: The vulnerability *Sandi* must feel is like being naked in a cold wind....

Repetition Compulsion: The Child Attempts to Re-enact the Trauma; How Internal Constructions of Attachment Figures Change

David:

Let's turn now to a different perspective from which to view these scenarios. Didn't Freud speak about the 'repetition compulsion'? Do children/youth try and repeat in the present, traumas they suffered with attachment figures at an earlier age? If so, why do they do this and what does it look like? Are there examples in Ms. Haegert's stories?

Don:

For Freud the term 'repetition compulsion' meant that the individual attempts "to relive and master the overwhelming feelings of the traumatic moment" (Herman, 1992, p.42).

Sara:

I do agree "that many traumatized people expose themselves, seemingly compulsively, to situations reminiscent of the original trauma" (van der Kolk, 1989, p.389) though I prefer van der Kolk's term, *trauma re-enactment* as it is more precise than *repetition compulsion*. I don't agree, however, with Freud that mastery is always the motivation. The particulars of each case need to be examined. This is another example of simplifying the complexity of experience by a general statement.

For example, one could say that 15 year old *Sandi* who as a young child was sexually abused by her father (who was also an attachment figure), is *re-enacting the trauma* by becoming a prostitute. When she first joins the escort service it appears that she is indeed seeking mastery over the trauma.-- She talks about "it's nice for a change to get paid for [sex]" and plans how she will spend the money. She conveys a sense that this time, in contrast to the sexual abuse by her father, *she* is getting something out of sex, that is, money; and that now *she* is in control.

However, a year later when she was still working, doing drugs, and giving her money away to her con-artist brother, Jared, it seems that she was simply being re-victimized. Van der Kolt (1989), who is the Director of the Trauma Center at Harvard Medical School states that as a clinician, he rarely sees repetition leading to mastery and resolution. He states that "instead, repetition causes further suffering for the victims or for people in their surroundings" (p. 390).

Don:

Of course van der Kolk's population is probably skewed, as he likely sees only those who have not integrated their traumas.

Sara continues:

Yes, I'll have to concede to you on that point, Don.

To continue, though, about *Sandi*, and how she *reenacts her traumas*, I would like to talk about how *Sandi* (like Betty's adoptive daughter, Ingrid, and many other children in foster care), set up a scenario in which most parents would reject her, by the child/young person being rejecting herself. This would be a re-play of her parents' abandonment of her-- her father, by going to jail; and her mother by death (though probably as a drug addict, her mother had been emotionally absent for some time).

However, *Sandi's* adoptive parents, like Betty and her husband, despite *Sandi's* expectations, *did not* reject *Sandi*. In a sense, *Sandi* did achieve mastery, as Freud would say. This was a profound experience for *Sandi* and probably also for Ingrid. It could be inferred that *Sandi's* parents like Ingrid's parents, enabled their daughter to change her construction of *self* and *other*, to a more positive construction, that is, that this *other* or *attachment figure* is *not* rejecting and abandoning (despite what personal experience has taught her) and that she, *Sandi*, like Ingrid, is *not* essentially unlovable, that the *other*, that is, her *attachment figure*, *will* love her no matter what.

Ross:

As T. S. Eliot (1954) said in *Ash Wednesday*, "Teach us to care and not to care." How are we taught? Listen to Francois Mauriac (1949) who, in *the Desert of Love* says, "We are, all of us, molded and remolded by those who have loved us, and though that love may pass, we remain none the less *their* work--a work that very likely they do not recognize, and which is never exactly what they intended."

David:

You are saying, Sara, aren't you, unlike Ross, that although the adoptive child has been cast into a mold by past abusive or neglectful attachment figures, he or she *can* resist or overcome this mold?

Sara:

Yes, that is, *if* his/her adoptive parents refuse to allow the adoptive child's mold to *mold* them! But let me say, as I'm sure Betty would tell you too, that it's very hard to resist responding in kind. Some foster parents who have never been abusive before, find themselves on the verge of losing control and becoming abusive in reaction to the child's provoking behavior.

Betty:

In retrospect, I see it as a kind of test Ingrid (our daughter) gave us of how enduring our love of her is. Even if she *is* obnoxious and horrible to us, will we still love her? The answer is "Yes." We love her and nothing can change that. It helps if we separate *her* from her *behavior* by saying that we might dislike her *behavior*, but will always love *her*.

The Child Consciously Takes the Risk To Change His/Her Internal Molds/Models/Constructions

Sara:

In some cases, the child him or herself makes a conscious decision that he/she wants a better relationship with the attachment figure (for convenience, referred to as 'mother'). Then, when the mother presents an opening, the child makes an overture to her.

In the fairy tale, *Didi, the lonely little tiger*, it is *Didi* that travels a great distance to get help to overcome the distance between her and her mother. *Didi* was a determined little girl (tiger).

This was a hopeful story with a resourceful, resilient child and a mother and family who warmly welcomed the more open and vulnerable child.

David:

Yes, it was a 'nice' story. but tell me, how realistic is it? Do children change apart from the family system they live in?

Sally:

Perhaps it is enough that the story gives the child hope that the relationship with her mother could be different.

Sara:

Sometimes, sadly, the child's hope and the child's attempts are not enough. If the child is open and tries to connect with his or her mother and the mother does not notice, ignores the child or rejects the child, the child will soon retreat to his or her usual modus operandi. The child's stable internal models or constructions of the world, the molds he or she is accustomed to, will very quickly become dominant again. The child's unsuccessful overture and retreat thus confirms to the

child that his or her typical view of *self* as alone and uncared for and *other* as uncaring and unreachable should not be altered.

Betty:

On the side of hope, about the *kid* making the choice, I'd like to tell you about Bill. He's 17, now, a quiet, big gangling fair haired foster kid we had for 6 years, who left us at 15 because he just *had* to live on his own. There was no stopping him. I knew he was a sensitive kid, felt things deeply, but was pretty closed up, didn't like to talk about his past, wanted to forget about it. We always told him he was welcome back, but wondered if we would ever see him again. He didn't reply to our letters or phonecalls.

About 6 months ago, out of the blue, he called us up, wanted to come for a visit. So, he came back for New Year's Eve with his girlfriend, spent the evening with Ian and me and our gang of kids. He was working full time, apprenticing as a mechanic. Later in the evening, when just he, his girlfriend, Ian and I were sitting alone together, he told us in his softspoken way that when he left us he didn't want to have parents, didn't think he needed anybody, didn't think he'd miss us. He said one day it just hit him. He realized that if he didn't open up to people, he might as well be dead, so he really had nothing to lose. He got pretty choked up talking to us, his girlfriend beside him, leaning into him. He asked us to be his parents again, said he needed us and cried a little. I was in tears myself, but then I cry easily. Of course we said yes! And then we tried to have a group hug and we fell all over each other. It was so good to have Bill back that I didn't even care that I banged my knee against the coffee table.

That night we had such a good time. We played *Hearts* all night (Ian [my husband] kept going for *control* and losing). We watched the New Year come in, took a crunchy walk in the remains of the snow. That night the sky was clear and cold, but filled up with so many stars and a bright new moon. I felt blessed!

Ross:

Hear Anais Nin:

then the day came / when the risk to remain / tight in a bud / was more painful / than the risk it took / to blossom

Herein lies the human dilemma: staying within our own bounds of *self* that tighten around us or bursting forth into an unknown and less protected world of *others*.

### The Strength Spiritual Beliefs Give the Adoptive/Foster Parent

David:

Betty mentioned how her spiritual beliefs sustained her in doing what was right. Sara and Sally, have you found that spiritual beliefs played an important role in your work with older adoptees and foster children?

Sara:

Yes. Certainly. I have found, as Hughes (1997) says in his book, *Facilitating developmental attachment*, that many of the parents that are able to raise a child with attachment difficulties have "a deep religious conviction" and a belief that they have been called to make a difference (p.45.) I've seen the power of prayer helping parents not give up on the child, giving the parent strength to view the child with compassion and still be firm about limits.

Although not a dominant theme in *The story of Sandi*, I noticed that *Sandi's* parents were referred to as Christians and *Sandi's* adoptive mother told *Sandi*, when she came home, that she (the adoptive mother) had prayed that *Sandi* would come home one day. *Mark's* foster parents, too, were teaching Mark about God. Recall that the foster parent, *Sylvia*, believes she received a calling from God to do the work she does. As *Sylvia* said, she and God "made a damn good combination! Goddamn hard to beat!"

Sally (social worker):

Some of our most committed foster parents have spiritual beliefs that give them that reason to keep on caring when nothing but negativity and rejection come back from the child.

#### The Noisy Brain: The Child, Sam, Expresses His Ambivalence

David:

Turning to Ms. Haegert's radio play, *Sam's voices*, what is wrong with this little boy? He sounds crazy. Is he?

Sara:

I'd say "No, *Sam's* not crazy." He talks incessantly; there is always an internal noisy dialogue in his head that he externalizes. (Cf. Ratey and Johnson, 1997) Compare *Mark*, (another orphanage adoptee) with a similar "noisy brain". "*Sam's* ambivalence between longing for love and protecting himself from the expectant pain that accompanies love is like *Sandi's* in some ways, though we can hear the *torturous* quality of the ambivalence. He alternately clings to and adores his attachment figure *and* distances from and rejects her. As a young child, his words and behavior express his ambivalence more directly than *Sandi* would.

#### Too Many Mothers:

Betty:

Also Sam expresses his confusion about who his attachment figure, or mother is--his previous adoptive mother; his present foster/adoptive mother; his birth mother-- and whom he belongs to. I've had a 5 year old say to me, I have 4

mothers--my birth mother, my foster mother, my oldest sister and now my new adoptive mother, "Who am I supposed to love?"

Sara:

And it is too much to expect a young child to make sense of and integrate his past attachment figures cognitively.

The Child's Need for Permanency: Implications For Child Welfare Practice and Counselling (Post-Adoption Services)

Sara:

Yes, Sam desperately needs a *permanent* mother. I was relieved that by the end of the play, the foster/adoptive mother received permission to adopt him. How can a child be expected to open up, be vulnerable to a parent and form an attachment, hard as that is (given abuse and abandonment by previous attachment figures), when it is possible that any day the child will be moved?

Sally (social worker):

That children need a permanent home in order to thrive is a basic Child Welfare principle. Yet I know that permanent wards of the province move from home to home in *serial* foster placements; young adoptable children who have the right to a permanent adoption home, languish in foster care limbo, while harried social workers, like myself, grapple with ever increasing caseloads and expanding responsibilities for detailed documentation, such as 10 page risk assessments, etc. It's crazy! We no longer have time to work with foster parents and children to make these placements work. It is much easier to move the child on to somewhere else until, for many children, *nowhere* becomes home (Cf. Wees, 1993.)

Sara:

Whatever the reason for the child to move, the child/youth feels it as another failure, a silent confirmation that he or she is essentially unlovable. Recall that in the writing about *Sylvia*, the young person, *Jennifer*, who had been through 30 foster homes, said:

*You don't know what it felt like in all those homes [except Sylvia's]. I was freaked out all the time because I thought I would never have a home or anything.*

We *don't* know what it's like for these kids. We can only imagine. I can hear how terrified *Jennifer* was that she would never be loved.

Why are Children Moved So Frequently in The Child Welfare System? The Temporary Nature of Foster Care Vs. the Permanency of Adoption

David:

Sally, as a social worker, and Sara, as a psychotherapist who both work with foster children, why *are* these children moved so frequently? Should we blame too busy social workers and inadequate staffing, or are there other reasons?

Sally (social worker):

There are many reasons. Basically, foster care is a temporary placement. True, there's not enough Child Welfare staff to support foster parents, but there is also not enough money for counselling to help the kids. The children today are more and more disturbed and difficult to handle than ever before. Certain kids "burn out" placements-- they are demanding, require constant supervision or they will do something terrible to catch your attention, etc. Also, they don't give anything back--not love, definitely not gratitude or an apology for wrong doings as all of these would make them too vulnerable and thus liable to be hurt. They are "defended against vulnerability" as Neufeld (personal communication, July, 1997) would say, very hard to connect with and to love.

In contrast, adoption is usually the preferred placement for children as both adoptive parents and their adopted children perceive their placement as permanent. These children need committed parents and the parents need support from professionals who are knowledgeable about older child adoption.

Sara:

As discussed earlier, these children are ambivalent about becoming attached to any parent. Talk about setting it up to be rejected, to reinforce old negative internal schemata of the world! I worked with one 14 year old boy, Doug, who was a very appealing child, artistic, brooding, had a quiet intensity to him. Foster parents were drawn to him. (Doug had been abandoned by his birth mother at about 2 years old and then abandoned by his stepmother at aged 10.) Doug was able for the first 18 months of any placement, to express a genuine desire to be close to the family. However, invariably, whenever Doug felt himself becoming attached and so, getting close to feeling the pain of his early abandonment, he was a master at finding the unspoken bottom line in each home that, if he crossed, he would be kicked out. With one family it was sugar in the gas tank; in another, it was a fire in the basement....

How To Help Ambivalently Attached Children Who Set Up Parents to Reject Them: Committed Parents; *Attachment Relationship Therapy*

David:

How can anyone help a kid like Doug?

Sara:

In order to heal, I believe that every child/youth needs a secure attachment. (Cf. van der Kolk, 1989, p.403). Doug needed the parents in one of those homes to say, "Yes, What you did was wrong and there are consequences, but No, we won't reject you. We will stick by you, no matter what." Nobody did that for Doug. To be fair, Doug made it very difficult for anybody to stick with him. I believe that Doug was so afraid of not receiving the love he needed that he made sure he would never put himself again in that vulnerable position of caring and needing anybody. Ironically, therefore, he ensured that he never would get the love he so desperately wanted.

Therapy with the child and his or her new parent on the *attachment relationship* can help as well, to head off the child's inevitable attempt(s) to sabotage the relationship before he expects to be hurt.

Multiple Placements; Psychopaths; Unattached Children and the Internalization of Loved Ones to Sustain the Child, to Provide a Continuity of Relationships

Sally:

As a social worker I am part of the Child Welfare System and I'm not proud of it. With these serial placements in foster care, we are creating psychopaths.

Doug: Wait a second. Could any one define a *psychopath* for me?

Don:

A *psychopath* or *sociopath* refers to a person with a personality disorder whose behavior is extremely anti-social, including pathological lying. (Such a diagnosis is properly only applied to an adult.) In the Judicial System, forensic psychologists may refer to a youth as a psychopath who has been charged with a heinous crime and raised to adult Court. The implications are that the child or youth seems to lack a conscience or any empathy for those he or she inflicts suffering on.

David:

Don't Magid and McKelvey (1987) consider psychopaths to be *unattached* children? Do multiple placements cause this kind of 'psychopathic' youth who, for instance, coldly plans and executes his own mother's murder for the insurance money?

Sara:

Again, generalizations and cause and effect thinking tend to simplify the complexity of human experience.

I have known children who have *survived* multiple placements, who have perhaps survived because they have "internalized those whom [they] have loved"

(Vaillant, 1985, p.59). Do these loved ones live within the child and sustain him or her? *Sandi* talks about how "many people have come and gone through [her] life, but in a way the ones [she has] cared about are still with [her], in [her] memories of them" (p.132). *Sandi* also talks about the memories she shares with her biological sister who was adopted with her. Her sister's presence helps provide a continuity of relationships for her, linking the past with the present.

Note that the young person, *Jennifer: tough on the outside* in *Sylvia*, who had been through 30 foster homes, defied usual expectations by being able to form an attachment with *Sylvia*. It happens. Every case is different.

The Danger of the Child Fantasizing About an Internalized Loved One: Divided Loyalties and the Importance of Visits to Past Attachment figures to Prevent Magical Thinking

Sally:

Is there also a danger if the child fantasizes too much about internalized loved ones, such as biological parents, it may interfere with a child forming an attachment with a caregiver who is present and available to attach to?

Sara:

Yes, definitely. The child also may feel torn by divided loyalties to a past attachment figure; and thus feel too guilty to love the new parent in case of hurting the old; or feel too afraid of losing the past parent's love. In addition, the child may also fantasize about the old attachment figure and make him or her so idealistic that the new parent couldn't possibly measure up. The power of such fantasy attachments needs to be addressed by arranging visits for the child with past attachment figures, to decrease magical thinking (Fahlberg, 1991). Therapy with the child is also important as the child's false hope of reunion protects the child from feeling the pain of the loss.

The child who has *never* attached to anybody, the so-called unattached child, of whom Magid and McKelvey speak, to my mind is rare. (Cf. Fahlberg, personal communication, 1994)-- The innate propensity to attach is so strong (Bowlby, 1969/1984) the child will attach to an older sibling in the emotional or physical absence of parents.

Could it be that the attachment figures the *psychopath* has experienced and internalized are so noxious that they are no comfort to the child, especially the male child, so become figures to identify with to render innocuous?

Green (1950) and van der Kolk (1989) link gender differences with the way the compulsion to re-enact the trauma is expressed: The male tends to identify with his aggressor and victimizes others, thereby relacing fear and helplessness with a sense of omnipotence (p.392); the female tends to identify with the victim, herself, and choose males partners who continue to abuse her and the children.

Such gender differenced in playing out one's childhood experiences in adulthood are undoubtedly related to the social construction of maleness and femaleness.

#### Attachment and Loss: How Past Losses Are Worked Through

David:

Bowlby (1969/1984) speaks of the relationship between attachment and loss. Isn't it often said in the field that a child can't attach to a new parent until the child has grieved the loss of past attachment figures?

Sara:

Actually, it is difficult (but not impossible) for the child to grieve past losses until the child is in a secure placement with a sense of permanency and an attachment begins to form with a committed parent. For example, *Sam* in *Sam's voices* feels safe enough with *Debbie*, his foster/adoptive mother, to work through his feelings about the losses of his previous adoptive mother and his birth mother.

The child can be encouraged to grieve these past losses by the present caregiver and a therapist. Visits to the past attachment figures can help bring up feelings for the child so they can be worked through. (Cf. Fahlberg, 1990, 1991)

#### The Need For Specialized Post Adoption Services

Sara:

Adoptive parents need much support by counsellors who are knowledgeable about adoption. The ignorant counsellor can easily be conned by these kids and too often joins the child in blaming the parents. (See Keck & Kupecky, 1995.)

Betty (adoptive and foster parent):

Post-Adoption services are crucial. Appropriate counselling to help these families is needed to prevent disruptions.

Sally (social worker):

Such services are cost-effective. If the adoptions don't disrupt, the children don't come back into the system and need to be paid for. Also, when adoptions disrupt, everyone who has lived with or tried to help that child, including of course, the child himself, suffer. That's a lot of psychic pain. The child may never recover, may never bond again. How many times does a child make himself/herself vulnerable to love and receive love, only to get burned, before he/she gives up trying? The child, Doug, described above, probably gave up not long after his second mother left him.

### Indiscriminately Affectionate Behavior

David:

To change the subject, I would like to know why Sam suddenly "loves" the woman he met at the laundromat; or wants to go home with the family he meets in McDonald's.

Sara:

This is called *indiscriminately affectionate* behavior. It is defined in terms of how the child relates to new adults as follows:

"[The child] is always very friendly; never shy; typically approaches [the new adult]; wanders away from the caregiver and is not distressed when finds [him or her] self with strangers; would be willing to go home with a stranger" (Ames, 1997, p.8)

The message the child gives his or her mother is that no one in the child's life is any more important to the child than anyone else. It could be seen as a self-protective behavior, not to allow oneself to care more for one person than anyone else. Such behavior is common among children who have spent considerable amounts of time in orphanages. It is considered by Ames (1997) to be "adaptations to the conditions of the orphanage" (p.6). Perhaps the orphanage children, so starved for affection, have learned to take whatever bit of human contact they can get from any source.

Ross Slyly:

Would females who are promiscuous fit into an *indiscriminately affectionate* category?

Sara Sharply:

Don't forget that males can be promiscuous also, though there are more flattering names for males, such as a "ladies man", a "Don Juan", etc.

David:

Would *Sandi's* behavior as a prostitute for an escort service be considered *indiscriminately affectionate* behavior?

Sara:

In a way, "Yes." She has a form of intimate contact (sex) with anyone the agency sends her. Nobody means any more than anybody else to her. In time she describes her clients as body parts and smells--"rolls of fat, loose skin, wrinkled genitals, old man smells" and believes "[she] wasn't really a person to them" either.

## The Interface of Trauma and Attachment

David:

Let's look at the three fictional characters Ms. Haegert has developed--The 5 year old child, *Sam*, the 11-12 year old *Mark*, and the 15 year old, *Sandi*. They all presumably have attachment problems and have suffered traumatization. Ms. Haegert talks about the "interface of childhood trauma and attachment" in her introduction to *Sam's voices*. What do these concepts mean in relation to these characters?

### Attachment Trauma and the Child *Not Knowing* About the Abuse, Blaming Self to Keep the Attachment Figure as *Good*

Sara:

Ms. Haegert uses the term *attachment trauma* (James, 1994, p. 8) to emphasize that being abandoned or abused by an attachment figure is especially traumatic. When the child is abandoned, the source of the child's safety, comfort, and well being is gone and the child's terror, grief, and rage is unassuageable. *Sam* suffered a least 2 losses of attachment figures; *Mark* suffered the loss of his adoptive parents.

When the attachment figure is abusive, the child must blame him or her self in order to continue to see the parent as *good*. (Cf. Miller, 1990.) When "the child's source of safety and nurturance become simultaneously the sources of danger against which protection is needed...[instead] of turning on their caregivers and losing hope for protection, they blame themselves" (van der Kolk, 1989, p.392). Both *Sam* and *Mark* blamed themselves and re-enacted their physical abuse. *Sam* beat himself in the head, frequently said he was bad, and said he wanted to kill himself or wished he was dead. *Mark* referred to himself as bad, said he wanted to hurt himself because he hated himself. While with his adoptive parents he made long cuts in his legs with a razor blade and tried to get his adoptive mother to hit him or slam his fingers in the door.

Sally (social worker):

The child may also suppress knowing about the abuse. Anne-Louise Brooks (1992) in *Feminist pedagogy: An autobiographical approach*, talks about her sexual abuse as a child that had been forgotten in childhood and remembered in adulthood. In exploring this autobiographical reflection, Brooks said, "I was motivated by a desire to *know* how I had learned not to *know* something as significant as my own experiences of abuse."

Don:

Sally, your last statement assumes that memories can be 'repressed' and when indeed they are 'remembered', that they are credible. Both assumptions are

debatable. I think that Ms. Haegert has certainly said that memory is constructed, according to Bartlett (1932), and stories are reconstructed in the telling.

David:

We are now getting perilously close to the repressed memory debate. Let's leave that one out in this program.

Why would Anyone Want to Know How Much He or She Suffered in the Past?

Ross:

First, let me ask this: Why would anyone want to *know* how much he or she has suffered in the past anyway? I like what Diski (1997) says, "What makes anguished awareness of the kind our unconscious seeks to prevent, so very desirable? Is it Puritanism or sadism (p.22)"?

Sally (social worker):

To answer your question, Ross, let me quote a line from a self-help group for adult children of alcoholics:

"No pain is as devastating as the pain a person refuses to face and no suffering is so lasting as suffering left unacknowledged" (Cernak & Brown, 1982).

Sara:

More specifically, Ross, there is quite a bit of evidence that people are unconsciously driven rather compulsively to re-enact their traumas and in so doing, are re-victimized (van der Kolk, 1989). There often seems to be, without therapeutic intervention, no cognitive integration of the person's traumas and the person may suffer frightening symptoms of *posttraumatic stress*, such as intrusive flashbacks of the trauma, nightmares, panic attacks, dissociation, etc. *Sam* provides a vivid example when he has nightmares and becomes afraid of everything--the headlights, clown faces, cartoons, storybooks, etc. *Sandi* indicates that feeling memories of her childhood sexual abuse are triggered when she begins crying during sex with her clients.

David:

Sara, back to the interface of trauma and attachment, how would you compare the impact on the recipient of abuse by an attachment figure with the same abuse by a stranger?

Traumatic Bonding as a Child: Reenacted in Adulthood, Such as, in Battering Relationships

Sara:

It is well established in the field that being the recipient of physical, sexual or emotional abuse by an attachment figure is more traumatic for the recipient than similar abuse by someone the recipient is not attached to. The severity of the abuse and the age of the survivor of the abuse (usually the younger the survivor is, the more serious the impact) also influences the impact of the abuse on the victim

When the abuser is an attachment figure that the child turns to for protection, a *traumatic bond* or *trauma bond* is formed. It is a bond based on terror and is based on the principle that in the face of external danger, people, especially children, seek increased attachment. As early as 1979 Rutter concluded that anxiety increased attachment, regardless of the response of the attachment object. When there is no other source of comfort available, people turn towards their tormentors (van der Kolk, 1989, p.394).

Examples of trauma bonds are *Sandi* and her sexually abusive father whom she is desperate to see when he is discharged from jail; and *Sandi* and her physically abusive older brother whom she "hates" but to whom she gives all her money. (*Sandi's* mother was undoubtedly a non-protective parent.)

In adulthood, the original trauma bond with the attachment figure is reenacted by women with abusive attachment figures, for example, in battering relationships. Without the therapeutic help *Sandi* received in the context of her secure attachment with her adoptive mother, *Sandi* would have been a good candidate for re-enacting the abuse in a battering relationship.

David:

Could you explain this trauma bond in adulthood, such as a battering relationship?

Sara:

Yes, I will describe the typical cycle of abuse by combining Walker (1979) and Painter and Dutton's (1985) model with van der Kolk's (1989) findings in studying the abused woman's physiologic hyperarousal to stimuli reminiscent of the original trauma.

In the recurring cycle of abuse there is *phase 1*: a build up of stress up to the "*arousal jag* or excitement before the violence" then, *phase 2*: the abuse, then, *phase 3*: the "peace of surrender" afterwards. Both the excitement before the abuse and the peace afterwards are considered powerful sources of reinforcement. During *phase 3*, intense emotional scenes, reconciliation, and physical contact occur. The memory of the abuse is often dissociated and the longing for love overcomes the fear.

David:

Back to those rhesus monkeys of Harlow's. I recall that the monkeys who were blasted repeatedly with compressed air when clinging to their surrogate mothers, clung more tightly than the monkeys who weren't blasted.

Sara:

Yes, as James says, "Adults and children cling to those who abuse them, be they assaultive parents, adult partners, cult leaders, or hostage takers in war or peace" (p.24-25)

### Why do Women Have Difficulty Leaving Trauma Bonds?

David:

But why do the women cling to their abusers? For the excitement and the peace described by van der Kolk?

Ross: The abused are excitement junkies...

Sara:

Why do woman stay with abusive men? The same reason why little girls cling to their abusive fathers. It either *is* home or feels like home. It is familiar. Stress or fear is a function of the abusive relationship *and* instigates a return to the familiar, abusive relationship.

### Men's Dominance Over Women

Sara:

Well I don't know about the women being excitement junkies, remember that men in this society are discursively constituted as dominant over women. Physical violence is but the next step. Often the women are controlled by their spouses financially, socially, psychologically, etc.

### The Judicial System: Abuse by a Stranger Garners a More Severe Sentence than Abuse by an Attachment Figure

David:

Don, with your experience with the Judicial System, have you found that it is reflected in sentencing that assault by an attachment figure, such as a family member is treated more severely than an assault to the child by a stranger?

Don:

On the contrary, in cases of sexual assault, if a stranger assaults a child, he or she is likely to be sentenced to 5 to 10 years, jail time. However, if the same act is

committed by a trusted caretaker, he or she is likely to be sentenced from 90 days with weekends in jail to 18 months on average.

David: Why such a light sentence for a crime so devastating for the survivor?

Don:

Well, if you see sentencing as a punishment related to the impact on the victim, such a discrepancy isn't, of course, fair. However, the sentencing reflects the fact that this trusted caretaker is usually a father figure and that the victim invariably loves him. The father may also be the economic support for the family, so a longer sentencing may cause the family increased suffering, etc. The survivor may suffer guilt, etc. It is very complicated. It is preferable for all, if the offender receive specialized counselling for sex offenders and the family receive counselling separately. At some point down the road, if accountability and reconciliation is planned, joint counselling may be indicated.

#### Part IV: A Summary of and Final Answers to Ms. Haegert's Research Questions

David:

Back to Ms. Haegert's research: We have commented on many of the underlying issues regarding attachment relationships inferred from the fictional stories--the *Story of Sandi, an adopted teenager leaving home*; *Sam's voices*; *Didi: A lonely little tiger*; and the *Story of Mark, a Romanian adoptee*. I'd like to be more specific now and see if and how Ms. Haegert has answered her research questions.

I've put her research questions up on the display monitor in front of you as follows:

*How do children break through barriers to love new parents and to be loved by them?* Phrased in constructivist terms, Ms. Haegert asks, *How do children modify their constructions of attachment figures when their history has taught them that such figures will abuse or abandon them?* The question simply is, *How does love grow?*

Answering the above questions leads to answers to the following supplementary questions:

*How can we as psychotherapists assist children who associate confusion, pain and despair with attachment figures, to attach again to new parents? How can we guide and support adoptive parents in this process?*

Summary of How Children Modify Their Constructions of Attachment Figures and Break Through Barriers to Love Their Attachment Figures and to Be Loved By Them

Sara:

To summarize this *Discussion and interpretation: A T.V. show*, we have examined how children modify their constructions of attachment figures in the context of new, healthy relationships with attachment figures (adoptive or foster parents) who do not abandon or hurt them. Despite the efforts the children made to sabotage their growing attachments with their new parents, the new parents refused to abandon them. The children attempted to re-enact their past traumas with their new parents and again, their efforts were foiled by their new parents who stayed loving and committed to them. Over time the children's negative constructions of attachment figures changed in the light of their new positive experiences.

*The story of Sandi leaving home* was a vivid example of a youth who was struggling with loving her adoptive parents and allowing herself to accept being loved by them. She was ambivalent toward her adoptive parents and went through a period where she rejected her parents and re-enacted her old traumas of sexual abuse and abandonment in the process. This repetition compulsion of *Sandi's* to recreate past traumas served to be a barrier of distance that kept *Sandi* physically in another city, in a drugged state, working as a prostitute, being *indiscriminately affectionate* with clients that she objectified and who objectified her.

Some of the basic barriers to letting oneself love and be loved that were common to *Sandi* as well as *Sam* in *Sam's voices* and *Mark* in *The Story of Mark* were fears the children had of the their own longing for love that brought up the pain of abandonment, the agony of the unfulfilled need for love; and the vulnerability of showing that need. It also was excruciating hard for *Sandi* to ask her parents for anything, in particular, help.

*Sam*, similarly to *Sandi*, expressed at times torturous ambivalence towards his foster/adoptive parent, Debbie,--being loving toward her, then suddenly rejecting her and refusing to sit with her, to go on a ride with her, etc.

His *posttraumatic stress disorder* (see Appendix C) symptoms were a barrier too, as it appeared that he was triggered in situations with Debbie to re-experience past traumas when he had been physically abused. Examples were when he began screaming and crying as if he was being hurt when Debbie was drying him off with a towel after a bath or when Debbie was leading him out of the laundromat and a McDonald's restaurant.

*Mark* and *Sam* had cognitively based barriers to attachment. Both had spent time in orphanages--*Sam* in Haiti (not continuously) until the age of 2 1/2; *Mark* in Romania (continuously) until the age of 4 1/2. Both children suffered cognitive delays. *Mark* retained many self-stimulating behaviors such as fixating on various ideas, objects, body parts, to the point of obsession. Both children had a constant chatter in their head or "noisy brains" (Ratey & Johnson, 1997).

In a different vein, *Didi* in *Didi: A lonely little tiger* exemplified those children who consciously take those overt, risk-filled steps, such as seeking help, or deciding to make overtures to their attachment figures, in order to change their internal molds/models/ constructions of *self* and their *attachment figures*.

In all cases described in this inquiry, there were strong indications that the children's internal self-constructed barriers against loving and being loved were being overcome and the children were forming attachments with their new parents.

David:

Let's turn to how psychotherapists can help children and parents in this attachment process.

#### How Can Psychotherapists Facilitate This Attachment Process Between Children and Their New Parents

Sara:

The answer to this question is first of all, that I don't believe in giving parents prescriptions of how to emotionally connect with the child in their care. As James (1994) says, "we cannot create recipes for treating children with emotional disturbances. Each child and family situation brings its own unique combination of ingredients" (p.50).

Don:

Oh, that's disappointing. I'm interested in techniques, something practical that I can use in my practice.

Sara:

I bristle, Don, when psychotherapists focus on the superficial, on techniques to accomplish this or that. In this kind of *attachment relationship* work, what is important is the *relationship* the therapist forms with his or her clients. It is within the limits, safety and nourishment of this professional relationship that I, as the therapist can help children be more open to their adoptive/foster parents and help the parents stay committed, loving, and understanding. Note that the therapist *Sandi* saw in *Sandi: An adopted teenager leaving home* "sat across from her for 20 minutes while [Sandi] gradually stopped shaking" (p.131). *Sandi* comments that "[she] liked the way [the therapist] could understand without saying anything" (p.131).

David:

Sara, can you be more concrete about what the parents must do to connect with these children?

Sara:

"Yes and no." "Yes", I can say to the parent, "Refuse to be rejected by the child, think about and feel if you can what the child is struggling with beneath the surface behaviors which may be provoking, frustrating, violent and self-destructive. Try to respond to the underlying need. Let me help you see what the child is feeling under his/her diversionary, self-protective, distancing behaviors."

Some parents need more experience to believe that the angry belligerent child who tells his or her parent to go away at the same time wants the parent to *not* go away. Some parents need more self-awareness about their own family of origin issues to not get hooked by the child's inevitable attempts to be rejecting; or some parents need help to trust their intuition about the child's hidden needs.

Fahlberg (1991), too, presents 3 general ways in which attachment processes can be facilitated. One is *initiating positive interactions* with the child, in which pleasure is experienced by the child in relationship to the parent; another is paying attention to the *arousal-relaxation cycle*, in which the parent responds to the child's expression of need, so that the child experiences the quiescence that comes with a need that was aroused being satisfied. The third way is *claiming behaviors* in which the parent and the extended family claim the child as his or her own, giving the parent a sense of entitlement and the child a sense of belonging (p.32-37). All these ways are important in deepening the attachment relationship, leaving the specific applications up to the parent to work out with the child.

To continue my response to your question, David, I have a cautionary "no" regarding being too concrete with how attachment might be facilitated. The uniqueness of each child and each parent's values and beliefs must always be considered and respected. For example, a parent who philosophically does not believe in the parent's right to employ as intrusive a method as *holding therapy* should not be talked into engaging in it, even as the last resort. The child's consent, too, to engage in the sessions and any of the exercises in the sessions must also be sought. The parent must feel comfortable about what the therapist is suggesting before the parent follows the therapist's lead.

Finally, ultimately, I believe that each parent must delve deep within himself/herself to find his/her own way to make connections with the child he/she wants to love or already does love.

### The Intentions of the Stories and the Role of the Psychotherapy

David:

Sara, briefly, for our audience, now, what would you say Ms. Haegert's intentions were in creating these stories? What was she illustrating?

Sara:

Well, I cannot of course know what *Ms. Haegert* was intending, but I *can* tell you what *I* experienced. For me, the stories brought to the surface, to be noticed and respected, those deep, painful issues that the child lives with--his/her

anguished ambivalence, terror, longing, and confusion that he/she feels in engaging in an attachment relationship with his/her new parent. Given the child's traumatic history of abuse and neglect by previous attachment figures, this inner turmoil is understandable.

David: Can psychotherapists help these children? What role does a psychotherapist play?

Sara:

I see the role of the psychotherapist as educator and nurturer for the parent and as a catalyst for deeper connections to be made between child and parent. There is no quick fix, prescription to heal old emotional wounds. These are wounds that occurred when the child was young and could not heal from before the child reached the parent where there was the possibility that an attachment could occur, where finally, there was the likelihood of a permanent home.

In my role as educator, I explain the child's behavior to the parent in terms of the child's attachment difficulties and the trauma the child has suffered. I find that once the parent *knows* how the child feels, the parent usually can figure out what to do. If the parent doesn't know what to do, I encourage him/her to imagine what the child needs and how he/she might provide it.

As nurturer of the parent, I also give the parent support to help him/her when the parent is feeling hurt and frustrated by the child's distancing and rejecting behaviors. Such behaviors can be an expression of the ambivalence of the attachment disturbed child and designed to hurt, provoke, and in this way to keep the parent negatively engaged with him/her. The vulnerability a child feels in a positive connection with the parent is frightening for the child. Often, the more terrified and desperate the child is, the more he/she wants the parent to withdraw so that the child can be alone where he/she feels safer and more in control. The child may want to reject the parent first before the child's expectation of being rejected occurs. Many of these behaviors are habituated, automatic and the child is not consciously aware of why he/she acts this way.

I most often see the child and parent together. The sessions are very child-centred with the parent and I, in a sense, working together as co-therapists (Hughes, 1997) to help the child be more open and honest with his/her parent, when the child *feels* heard and cared about. The aim is for the parent and child to be engaged "at the level of *preverbal attunement* rather than a setting of rational discussions" (Hughes, p.6). It is only *within a relationship* that the child can learn how to have a healthy one.

### The Most Desirable Qualities in an Adoptive/Foster Parent

David:

Can you tell us what qualities in an adoptive/foster parent are most desirable?

Sara:

As Ms. Haegert, put forward in *Sylvia: Foster parent as attachment figure* (p.113-115), the qualities she found that were essential in a successful foster/adoptive parent of these difficult children were as follows:

The first quality is *the ability to work on an intuitive level with these children*. This is a *subjective knowing* in which the parent *knows* what the child needs and, if possible, wholeheartedly gives it to the child. As stated above, as the parent increases in self-awareness, this quality can be developed. Similarly, Chisholm and colleagues (1995) state that parents of Romanian adoptees may require "a greater ability to read children's cues" as children who have been so deprived don't let their needs be known (p.292).

The second quality is *the capacity to make a life long loving commitment to the child, despite the child's behavior*. Note that this commitment does not necessarily entail having the child live continuously with the parent. (Compare Chisholm and colleagues who state that Romanian adoptees over 8 months require "a higher level of parental commitment" [p.292].)

The third quality is *the ability to honestly, lovingly, and at times, forcefully speak directly to the child*, in terms the child can understand (even at certain times when the child indicates that he/she is not interested in listening), thereby bypassing the child's defences. At times the parents must pursue or "woo" the child (Neufeld, personal communication, July,1994), using every ounce of loving energy he or she can muster.

Note that anger is a secondary feeling that the parent may indeed express, but the parent needs to self-reflect about what his/her primary feelings are (such as hurt or sadness) that underlie the anger. The parent should be aware that many adoptive/foster children associate anger with being physically abused and as *Sandi* said, "my head quite often goes blank, you know, when dad and I fight and I forget everything. I get so afraid, of what I don't know" (p.121).

David:

Can you tell us of any implications this research has for the training of child and youth care workers or counsellors to work with attachment disturbed children/youth?

Implications for Training of Child and Youth Care Workers and Counsellors: The Necessity of Self-Reflection, Education, and Advice for Counsellors Working With Attachment Disturbed Children

Self-Reflexivity

Sara:

Yes. To start with an assumption, I would suspect that many child and youth care workers or counsellors (whom I will call either 'students' or 'counsellors') are attracted to this profession because of their own difficult experiences as children in their family of origin. Perhaps they feel that their own experiences will give them an extra intuitive edge in understanding what the children may be suffering or they want to *be there* for the troubled child in the way possibly someone had been there for them or they *wished* someone had been there for them. (Note that the term 'children' also includes 'youth'.)

It is essential that if this is indeed the case, that the student self-reflect about his/her childhood and perhaps seek professional psychotherapy. If a difficult childhood is *not* a part of the student's history, self-reflection is still necessary to help the student understand what he/she received from caregivers that children the student is working with may have lacked.

All the student's relationships with important attachment figures in his/her life should be explored in depth from the perspective of how these experiences shaped his/her *representational working models* or constructs of *self* and *other*. How have these organizing constructs or dominant narratives (Sarbin, 1986; Stern, 1995; White & Epston, 1990) evolved throughout the student's life?

Also, how did the student cope with abuses by or losses and separations from attachment figures? What are the student's typical coping mechanisms, defenses? How did difficult and positive childhood events impact on him/her in childhood? Are they impacting on him/her in the present?

When a counsellor is unaware of his/her own models of *self* and *other*, (especially if they are negative) the counsellor may unconsciously project a parent or sibling figure onto the child and behave accordingly (the concept of *counter-transference*). For example, when a child is angry and out of control, the counsellor may freeze with fear because unconsciously he/she is being triggered to remember and react emotionally to his/her father who had alcoholic rages. The counsellor's emotional reactions can also be a rich source of information about what the child himself may have lived through and be re-enacting.

Especially in the case of children with attachment disturbances, the child will tend to project his/her model of *other* on the counsellor (the concept of *transference*). The aware counsellor will work with these projections so the child can have a more positive experience in a relationship. Over time the counsellor's relationship with the child can help the child alter his/her constructions or internal models of *self* and *others*.

In addition, the burden of psychic pain these children endure is profound. For the counsellor to "bear witness to" (Hermans, 1992) this depth of sorrow may feel emotionally overwhelming, usually for two reasons:

First, the counsellor may simply lack personal and professional experience with this much human suffering. With time, the counsellor will become "desensitized" which does not mean he/she cares any less. Second, the counsellor may not have worked through his/her own childhood traumas and may be triggered by the child's behavior to re-experience his/her own pain. Recall van der Kolk's (1994) concept of the relationship of childhood abuse and neglect to the "inability to modulate emotions" or to "self-regulate" "physiological arousal" (p.145).

If the counsellor overreacts in this way, he/she may need to look after his/her own needs which can be done in appropriate ways, such as taking a short break, debriefing with a supervisor, colleague, etc.

As the counsellor knows that the primary focus for any interaction with the child should be to meet the child's needs (including the child's needs for limits) *not* the counsellor's, it is important that the counsellor's own therapeutic issues regarding attachment and trauma are worked through to a level of personal acceptance. This "working through" can be a life long process and supportive supervision and when necessary, personal therapy, are advisable.

### Education on Attachment

In combination with self-reflexivity, reading the literature on attachment is important for the student to learn about the effects of early trauma and deprivation by attachment figures or absence of attachment figures on the cognitive, emotional, physical, and social growth of the child in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

The crucial concept of the child's development of *internal representational working models* of the *self* and *other* needs to be understood, especially since the child with attachment difficulties tends to be locked into outdated negative models that interfere with his ability to trust others, to be vulnerable with others and to form new attachments.

Attachment patterns (Ainsworth et al. 1978) and the generational transmission of attachment styles (Main et al. 1984) should also be reviewed and discussed.

Please refer to the review of literature on attachment in Appendix A.

### Advice For Counsellors Working With Attachment Disturbed Children

I have selected the following pieces of advice for counsellors working with attachment disturbed children (the term, 'children' includes youth). This list is not meant to be comprehensive, but rather, thought provoking and at times, light hearted. I have picked symptoms that I will interpret from an attachment perspective.

If any of the following behaviors occur, be *glad*, as it is difficult to help a child if he/she does not show any symptoms! Remember too, that much of this behavior could be seen as an expression of the child's longing for closeness (that I [and Bowlby] believe is innate) and terror of it. The terror of course stems from the child's experiences of abuse or abandonment by attachment figures that the child has internalized as *representational working models* of *self* and *other*. The terror of a repeat performance of his unassuageable past suffering underlies the child's protective behaviors that serve to keep others at a distance.

Note that the development of this list owes much to training workshops I have attended over the years with Dr. Vera Fahlberg, her publications [1990, 1991] as well as my 20 years of practice as a social worker and psychotherapist.

#### **1. Beware if the child appears to be a little angel or appears to have formed a close relationship with you very quickly!**

Don't trust it! The child is probably in a *honeymoon* phase. It won't last! I have found that the length of the *honeymoon* period when the child is on his best behavior is proportional to the amount of fear the child lives with. (Even some children with low impulse control can hold it together for quite some time!). The child may also be *indiscriminately affectionate* to let the world know that no one matters any more than any body else.

#### **2. Expect to be 'conned' even if the child appears to like you!**

The child may indeed like you and be testing you to see if you will reject him. Or the child may simply be operating as he/she habitually does. The child who has been neglected at a young age, such as the child of drug or alcohol dependent parents, often develops quite early in life an *internal working model of the world* that no one is ever going to freely and unconditionally meet his/her needs so the child must manipulate and *use* others to meet his/her own. The child is still operating at a primitive survival level (though his/her manipulations may be quite sophisticated). A sense of desperation may be evident, accompanied by the feeling that if the child doesn't get what he/she wants, he/she will die.

**3. Don't give the child the opportunity to steal your money or valuables!**

Stealing is common with attachment disturbed children as a reaction to deprivation and the sense of *entitlement*, a conviction by the child that he/she has a right to have what he/she wants. It is as if the child is stuck at an infant stage of development, when the infant cried when he/she was hungry, uncomfortable, lonely, etc. and mother/father *should* have been responsive to the infant's need but almost *never* was. Again, the inferred *internal construct of the other* is that 'noone will give it to me, so I have to take it'. Some children have explained to me why they continue to steal--"I needed it"; "I don't know why"; "When I'm unhappy, I feel better when I steal." (Stealing, like 'conning' can become habitual, an addiction, and again is acceptable behavior in certain cultural groups.)

**4. Beware of being pulled into power struggles with the child, especially in areas that you can't win! Use humour; be unpredictable; catch him/her off guard to upset his usual perceptions of you.**

A very common behavior of children with attachment disturbances is constant fighting for control, even over seemingly inconsequential matters. The child's *internal model of significant others*, usually previous caregivers or attachment figures, is that they will hurt, abuse or abandon him. The child cannot let himself trust others to have control over him or he/she will be hurt. The child may dig himself deep into a position and have amazing staying power. He/she will outlast you! (He/she is also used to suffering.) The fighting for control may have a frantic quality. For the child to give up and to comply appears to have connotations for the child of loss of self or even death.

Keeping in control can be viewed as a *freeze* survival tactic, akin to *fight or flight*. It also serves to keep everyone around the child fighting with him/her, so the child can have people close, but without risk of intimacy or vulnerability. In this way, this behavior expresses the child's ambivalence about intimacy with others.

The child will typically get into power struggles with the parent over chores in the home and as trust builds, he/she will be more able to let go of some of his/her control.

Whenever possible, use humour and be unpredictable to catch the child off guard to disrupt his established (negative) patterns of relating to the world!

**6. Don't get pulled into arguing with the child over what is 'true'. Crazy lying will happen! The child may also seem phony, in giving affection, in talking.**

A common distancing behavior of the child is not to be honest about certain things, again things of seemingly no importance. (This is not lying to get out of trouble.) The child may also appear phony, to be play acting, for example,

when he/she shows affection or simply talks to you. In this way, you cannot emotionally connect with him and he is protected from being hurt.

**7. Beware of believing, on the child's word, that other members of the team working with the child, are idiots or do awful things!**

The child will tend to project his or her ambivalence or splits about the *self* and *other* on his/her professional helpers and caregivers--making at least one bad and one good, which can disrupt the team working together. (This tends to be a regression to young, concrete thinking in which the world is split into good and bad mother/good and bad father.)

**8. Beware of believing on the child's word, that his/her foster/adoptive parents are cruel, heartless, slavedrivers, etc!**

The child likely will try and have the counsellor take his/her side against his/her foster/adoptive parents, to gain fuel in his rejection and blaming of them. This is a common pitfall of new counsellors who are uninformed about the difficulties attachment disturbed children have in developing relationships with stable attachment figures. The counsellor's involvement can contribute to increasing the gulf between youth and parent. A more naive counsellor tends to blame the adoptive/foster parents who may be at their wit's end and don't present well. On the other hand, the child may present as being quite open and rather innocent *in the short term*. (Cf. Keck & Kupecky, 1995.)

The counsellor must never undermine the parent's authority or complain about the parent to the child. Remember, the child can only learn how to have relationships in the context of an attachment relationship, such as the long term relationship of adoptive/foster parent and the child. In some cases, when there is no chance of such a healthy parent-child relationship, as a second choice, the child can learn how to be open and practice being vulnerable within a long term relationship with a counsellor. (It is difficult of course, to find long term funding for such an enterprise.)

**9. Beware of believing that your short term relationship with the child is an "attachment relationship!" Don't use the child to fulfill your own dependency needs but do connect emotionally with the child.**

For the child to be able to relate to a counsellor whom the child is not living with or living with as a resident in a staffed resource, is a qualitatively different, less threatening relationship than the relationship of a committed adoptive/foster parent and a child. The child can be superficially charming in the short term outside the home, though eventually in residential care, the *honeymoon* period ends. The long term relationship of child and foster/adoptive parent, especially one that shows signs of the parent's commitment and love (the child/youth associates love with pain), brings up much more terror and thus the need to sabotage and run from it.

**10. Beware of the child "molding" you into his/her *internal model of other!***

The child will try and make you fit his/her *internal model of other* who abused or abandoned him/her. The child will constantly seek ways to judge you as unreliable, untrustworthy, uncaring, and abusive. Don't give the child any reason to mistrust you! Always follow through on what you say you will do. Make sure he/she understands what you have agreed to do or not do, as the child will tend to distort what you've said to keep intact his/her view of the *other* as uncaring and his/her view of *self* as unimportant and unlovable. For example, if you have to change an appointment, if possible, talk to the child directly about it.

The child who has been physically/emotionally abused will usually provoke you to see if you will be abusive to him/her. He/she will likely be resistant to giving up, will escalate, and be quite astute in finding your weak points. It's best to 'call it' (say what is happening) and to reassure him/her that he/she is safe with you. (If you feel very provoked, you may need to debrief with a colleague or supervisor.)

**11. Beware of the attachment disturbed child's relationship with groups of peers wearing 'colours'.**

The attachment disturbed child who has given up trying to create a long term relationship with an attachment figure, would be a likely candidate for choosing peer attachment instead. He/she might join a gang, in order that his/her needs for belonging and attachment would be met. Many of these gangs demand loyalty and have a hierarchical structure, in some ways like a family. Therefore, the counsellor needs to be wary of the child's proclivity for intense relationships with peers, especially peers in a group where excessive power is held by some members and obedience is demanded.

### Implications For Future Research: Feasibility of Fiction as a Research Method

David:

Is fiction really feasible as a research method? What are the implications for future research using this fictional method?

Sara:

The use of fiction as a method of inquiry is in its infancy. I would suggest that more research be undertaken using this method, especially in studying attachment relationships that don't hold still. Fiction gives the researcher such freedom to explore and convey the complexity and mysterious quality of relationships in a more condensed, evocative and compelling way. Too often in traditional narrative research, stories on interesting topics ramble and say very little. The once vivid colour and intensity of lived experience, when transferred to print, somehow becomes washed out, diluted, made bland and tasteless.

Writing fiction, the author draws on everything he/she *knows* and may or may not be conscious of. This is a reservoir of fertile ideas, images, feelings from the author's lifetime of interactions, observations, reflections, readings, all stored in the psyche as naturally as the rain falls. The author does not necessarily know beforehand what new story will arise like mist from the depths of his/her psyche....

I think that fiction works well when the researcher, as Ms. Haegert does, has a breadth of experience with the topic to draw on.

The successful writer creates characters that live in the imaginations of his/her reader and resonate in the body. In reading fiction, "the reader may viscerally inhabit a world" (Rinehart, 1998, p.204) and achieve an understanding that is "more than visual knowledge. Understanding is visceral" (Denzin, 1997, p.46).

As a side benefit, fiction also is a suitable method in an inquiry that involves children who may be too young to understand the ramifications and subtleties of giving informed consent.

In addition, a study such as this one that serves multiple audiences brings scholarly investigation into the community--Parts of this dissertation can be read by adoptive/foster parents, adopted/foster youth, psychotherapists in the field as well as academics. The division between research and clinical practice has been bridged.

Future research could consist of fictional stories of successful attachment relationships forming with attachment disturbed children, but this time, from multiple points of view--the views of adoptive parents/foster parents, adoptive siblings (in the case of siblings group adoption), and biological siblings. (Ms. Haegert's research, in contrast, was predominantly from the points of view of the children.)

Other possibilities are stories in which attachments develop with children of different ages from the children in this study; or with siblings adopted in a group (including the interrelationships between the siblings). Another is one longitudinal story that follows the growth of the attachment relationships in a fictional adoptive

family over time, with attentions paid to hundreds, perhaps thousands of moments of connection that may or may not have involved words.

To turn to another type of family, that is, blended families, the stories of how older stepchildren form attachments with their stepparents would be an interesting inquiry.

### Closing the Discussion: The Relevance of *How Love Grows* in Our own Lives

David:

Thank you Sara. In closing this discussion, I wanted to give you the opportunity, Larry, to speak a few words as we haven't heard from you since we began talking about the content of Ms., Haegert's dissertation.

Larry:

Well I found that the content of this dissertation had little relevance for me. Ms. Haegert is working with an abnormal population of children that I have no experience with and don't expect to have any experience with.

Sara:

Oh, Larry, I beg to differ. I think that by examining these particular though admittedly extreme cases, we can learn a lot about love, how love grows in a relationship, how all of us protect ourselves from being hurt, how sometimes we become imprisoned by our own defences against vulnerability (Neufeld, 1996).

I think that our North American culture as a whole has attachment problems. We live in a time when half of marriages end in divorce with all the pain that creates for children regarding separation from and sometimes loss of loved attachment figures. Increasingly, kids and adults live on the street literally homeless, alienated from their families, uncared for, living from moment to moment. More and more people continue to dull the pain of life with illegal drugs and alcohol.

Yet being accepted and belonging to a happy, healthy group of people, being liked and admired by others, having the good looking girl notice the average looking guy all sell products from beer to trucks. Yes, I think that personal relationships *are* important and when we study any relationships with the rich, thick description Ms Haegert has accomplished here, there is some transferability to our own lives, our own loves, our own relationships. Who has not at one time in his/her life been ambivalent about or afraid to love?

To me I know of no more important venture than to inquire how love can grow in our relationships with family members. Life is much sweeter, richer, when a person has someone else to love and be loved by. As a psychotherapist myself, if I can help children overcome barriers to love and be loved by their adoptive/foster parents, so the children can experience, often for the first time, secure and loving attachments, I feel that I am helping not only the children's

present relationships but everybody the children becomes involved with later in their lives.

David:

I will end with a short piece Ms. Haegert wrote about a homeless child she saw on the street in the beautiful city of Victoria:

*Lying With Her Back Against the Door*

*An image that rose out of the cool, misty air, early one winter morning was the glimpse of a soft young face of a fair haired female, who looked no more than 13. She lay on her side, sleeping alone, huddled with her back against the heavy wooden doorway between the huge grey pillars of the stately entrance way to Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria. She was bundled up with layers of dark coloured clothes and a blanket wrapped around her body and over her head. There was a dog of mixed breed, curled up against her middle and she was stretched out loosely around the dog. Her eyes were closed, her arms were bent at the elbow, held closely together, tightly against her chest. One hand was close to her face and I could see that she was sucking her thumb.*

*I knew that the inside of this church was the place where people gathered to hold baptisms, weddings and funerals. This morning there was no light or organ music.*

*I wondered if this young female person-child had ever been baptized and if she had, whether that made her feel safe there and made her feel that if she leaned hard enough against the door, perhaps she could regain some of that warmth she had lost a long time ago.*

Epilogue: *University Week in Review* (Written 3 Months Later)

In re-reading *University week in review* 3 months after I had finished writing it, I recognized, with some surprise, the voices of many parts of myself. In a postmodern sense, one could say that the characters were externalizations of my "multiplicity of dialogically interacting selves" (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992).

For example, I could express the more orthodox parts of myself, embodied by Don, the registered psychologist, and Larry, the Education professor, that are nostalgic for the positivist paradigm, the scientific method, and the 'absolute certainty' of the knowledge I would have gained if I had used this method. These parts also expressed my desire for the unquestioned acceptance I would have received by the ruling relations in the academy if my study were of a quantitative nature.

The characters of Don and Larry differed in that although Don held onto his positivist view of reality and research methodology, he was tolerant of and respectful of other qualitative viewpoints. Larry, on the other hand, was more narrow minded in his beliefs and had little use for my research and the population it drew from. Larry harshly expressed my introjected fears of censure in doing the unconventional research I did in this dissertation.

Sara, the child and youth professor and psychotherapist, represented my thoughtful, committed, psychotherapist and academic self who enjoys exploring ideas and developing theories. She was a dominant voice in this discussion section and I stand behind her beliefs.

Sally is a caring, but tired social worker. She reminds me of myself before I left social work, seeing the problems in child protection and foster care resources, but feeling rather dwarfed and controlled by the imposing social structure of the Child Welfare system that is self-perpetuating and resistant to change.

Sara is a good hearted soul who is loving, nurturing, patient and determined to not give up on these kids, even if she suffers a lot in the process. The rewards of seeing 'love grow' are worth it. I have part of her in me.

In the persona of Ross, the English professor, whom I grew quite fond of during the course of the T.V. Show, I could express the poetic, iconoclastic, enigmatic part of myself who sees the pathos of life as well as lives by the Yiddish maxim, 'Man plans, God laughs.'

But why was I so surprised to perceive parts of myself in these characters I created? After all, as Malone Dies has said, "I wonder if I am not talking yet again about myself. Shall I be incapable, to the end, of lying on any other subject?" (cited in Diski, 1997).

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## Appendices

## APPENDIX A: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

First I will discuss the status of theoretical views and supporting research regarding attachment; second, the current status of the research on attachment; third, this inquiry in the context of current trends and future directions in attachment research; fourth, this inquiry in terms of the current status of qualitative research in attachment; and fifth, the terminology used in this inquiry.

### The Status of the Theoretical Views and Supporting Research Regarding Attachment

The contributions made by attachment theorists and researchers to the knowledge of child development have been enormous over the last 25 years since the publication of John Bowlby's first volume of his trilogy entitled *Attachment and Loss* (1969/1982, 1973, 1980). Bowlby's theory emerged out of his own thoughtful observations, as a psychiatrist, in London, England, of the emotional effects on children of temporary or permanent separations from their attachment figures.

Providing empirical evidence of Bowlby's formulations was the research of Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues on the quality of the affectional tie of an infant (of 12-18 months) to his or her mother, entitled *Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation* (1978). Ainsworth's research arose out of extensive naturalistic observations of infants and their mothers in villages near Kampala, Uganda (Ainsworth, 1967;1977) and in middle class white homes in Baltimore (as well as the *Strange Situation Procedure [SSP]* set up in the laboratory).

To digress for a moment, the *SSP* (which became *the measurement* for a prolific amount of research studies) consisted of 8 episodes, each of 3 minutes or less, in which events of separation and reunion of mother were staged in the presence or absence of a stranger. Observers rated the infant's interaction with the mother and stranger on 4 dimensions; proximity and contact-seeking behavior; contact-on-maintaining behavior; avoidance; and resistance. Ainsworth and colleagues then devised 3 categories of patterns of attachment based on these behavior ratings.

Well accepted are the following basic tenets of attachment theory as it pertains to normal development;

Innate Nature of Child's Tie to Attachment Figure:

Since birth the normal infant has an innate propensity to keep proximity to his or her caregiver who is seen as stronger or wiser (Bowlby, 1984). This interpersonal tie served a protective function over and above the infant's drive for food (as claimed by psychoanalysts). If this caregiver (who could be male but traditionally has been the biological or a surrogate *mother*), is sufficiently responsive to the child's needs, or in Winnicott's terms, a *good enough mother*, the child deeply loves her and a *secure attachment* (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978) is formed. (Of Ainsworth's three categories of patterns of attachment derived from the SSP, *Secure Attachment* is *Group B*.)

Other Properties of Normal Childhood Attachment:

Secure Base

"The presence of the attachment figure fosters security in the child" (Weiss, 1991, p.66). As the child grows older, this figure ideally continues to serve as a *secure base* (Ainsworth's term) for the child, while the child increasingly explores his or her environment. Ainsworth's SSP put particular emphasis on the balance that the normal child maintains between his or her proximity to his or her *secure base* and his or her exploration of the environment.

Elicitation by Threat:

When the child suffers discomfort or feels threatened, proximity seeking attachment behaviors are displayed by the child.

Specificity of Attachment Figure:

The attachment figure is specific and cannot be substituted for any other.

Persistence:

The child's attachment feelings and separation protest persist "despite recognition that there can be no rejoining, as after the death of the attachment figure" or "when an attachment figure has become inaccessible and adequate alternative figures are available" (Weiss, 1991, p. 67).

Separation Protest:

Any "threat to the accessibility of the attachment figure gives rise to protest and active attempts to ward off the separation" (Weiss, 1991, p. 66).

Internal Working Model of *Self* and *Other*:

Children develop *internal* representational models of their attachment figures and themselves, based on repeated, habitual interactions. Bowlby (1973) stated that "in the *working model* of the world that anyone builds, a key feature is his notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they will be expected to respond" (p.203). Bowlby (1988) also described these models of *self* and *other* as "tendencies to impose earlier patterns onto new relationships and in some measure to persist in doing so despite absence of fit" (p.6).

Furthermore, Bowlby asserted that a person could operate simultaneously with two or more working models of both *self* and *other*. He added that a more primitive model, constructed in the early years, could be operative and that person might be relatively unaware of it (1973, p.205).

Insecure Attachments of Children of Inadequate Parents:

My research interests lie with less fortunate children whose inadequate attachment figures have been so unavailable and/or abusive that the rights of biological parents for custody have been severed; or, for various reasons, including poverty, children in other countries have been "given up" by their biological parents and placed in orphanages (and subsequently, some of these children have been adopted by Canadians). Even when

the children have been abused by their biological parents, the attachment feelings of these children usually endure (Weiss, 1991), because, as Crittenden (1988) explains, "instances of abuse are brief and infrequent compared to the infant's constant need for protection and nurturance" (p.144). As a result, the child may develop an *insecure* pattern of attachment, Ainsworth and colleagues (1978) classify as *Group C: Anxious-Resistant/Ambivalent*. This child is characterized by conflictual, even torturous feelings of longing for *and* anger towards/fear of the attachment figure. In more typical cases where the infant still remains in the care of his or her biological mother, the *insecurely attached* infant is whiny, irritable, and clingy, in concert with the mother's inconsistent responsivity to his or her needs.

Many older adoptive children could be considered *ambivalently attached*. These children who *in the past* have experienced very inadequate parenting and *in the present* have responsive and adequate adoptive parents, often *still* behave as if they are being parented abusively or neglectfully. Without outside intervention and education, with pressure from the child to fulfill his or her expectations within the attachment system he or she has *organized internally*, the adoptive parents may fall prey to reacting similarly to the child's abusive previous caregiver(s).

The third category delineated by Ainsworth and her colleagues (1978) is *Group A: Avoidant Attached* children. These children are too often rejected by their mothers when needs are expressed or alternately intruded upon when at rest. This pattern is characterized by the child's avoidance of his or her mother when experiencing most needs, such as, the need for comfort when distressed, knowing that satisfaction is unlikely. Older adoptees, too, are often described as not crying out in pain when hurt, or seeking solace or help when needed from their adopted parents, unaccustomed as they are to anyone "being there" for them. Interestingly, Bowlby (1988) reported that when

*avoidant* infants "[engaged] in direct communication [with their mothers, they] did so only when they were content' (p.132).

Extreme examples of *avoidantly attached* children are those who have been severely deprived emotionally, cognitively, and physically, so that only their minimal needs for survival were met. These could be the children described by Ames (1997) who have lived at least 8 months in conditions such as exist in the orphanages of Romania. In some cases, caring but unsuspecting adoptive parents often find they have brought a cute and superficially charming, but indiscriminately affectionate and rageful child into their home. (Ames [1997] found that "the longer that RO [Romanian adopted] children had lived in the orphanage, the more behavioral problems they had" [p.7]).

### Traumatic Bonding

Recently, there has been renewed interest in the phenomenon of the child/adult who is both attached to and abused by the attachment figure. Just as Harlow and his colleagues in 1964 demonstrated that infant monkeys clung tightly to cloth models which repeatedly blasted them with compressed air, so Rutter (1979) surmised that anxiety seems to increase attachment, regardless of the response of the attachment object.

Painter and Dutton (1985) present a social-psychological framework called *traumatic bonding* to define the strength of the emotional ties between a woman and her battering partner. Such a strong emotional tie, according to Painter and Dutton, stems from the alternating aversive and pleasant conditions of abuse and affection that parallels the woman's experience in childhood with a parent/attachment figure. The intermittent nature of the affection creates, in terms of learning theory, a schedule of partial reinforcement known to be extremely difficult to extinguish. Many adoptive children and foster children have such trauma bonds with members of their biological families, whom the children are fiercely loyal and attached to despite the abuses these older siblings or parents have perpetuated.

Although research on the effects of the child's ability to attach has been closely studied, the effects of violence or abuse on the process has received scant attention. (Crittenden, 1988, and Weiss, 1991,- are some exceptions.) Sack and Dale (1981) are some of the few researchers to examine the area of the combined traumas of abuse and neglect by attachment figures. They examined 12 adoption placements of older children who had a history of parental abuse and neglect in the first two years of life. These children exhibited behavioral patterns that were intermittently provocative and punishment-seeking towards the adoptive parents. Such behaviors were viewed by Sack and Dale as having attachment seeking components. It could be surmised that the children were attempting to reenact with their adoptive parents the traumas they had sustained with past attachment figures. This "repetition compulsion" first identified by Freud, according to Russell (1990), is "an attempt to relive and master the overwhelming feelings of the traumatic moment" (cited in Herman, 1992, p.42). Unfortunately, the children's behaviors were typically met by a sense of betrayal and bewilderment by the adoptive parents. Despite therapeutic interventions, only 4 of the 12 placements were salvaged.

Similarly, van der Kolk (1989), in describing abusive relationships, speaks of the "two powerful sources of reinforcement: the 'arousal-jag' or excitement before the violence and the peace of surrender afterwards. Both of these responses, placed at appropriate intervals, reinforce the traumatic bond between victim and abuser" (p.389).

James (1994) who has written the *Handbook for treatment of attachment-trauma problems in children* describes a secure attachment as "a love relationship that is caring, is reciprocal, and develops over time" whereas "trauma-bonding is a relationship built on terror" (p.24). Not dissimilar to Harlow's monkeys who clung tightly when blasted repeatedly with compressed air, traumatically bonded "adults and children cling to those who abuse them, be they assaultive parents, adult partners, cult leaders, or hostage takers

in war or peace" (p.24-25). Symonds (1982) calls this process "an enforced regression to 'psychological infantilism' which compels victims to cling to the very person who is endangering their life"

Furthermore, James states that the "coercive techniques" (p.93) of *holding therapy*, an intrusive, controversial therapy using "prolonged restraint" with the attachment disordered child (cf. Hughes, 1997; Keck & Kupecky, 1995) creates a trauma bond with the child.

James urges the reader to take a stand against the use of such coercive techniques:

Coercive techniques are antithetical to all we know about helping survivors of trauma. Trauma treatment is intended to empower survivors--not to frighten them, have them give up control, and make them assume a submissive posture. Coercive techniques foster the development of trauma bonds based in terror; they do not facilitate healthy attachment" (p.94).

In more popular psychology, a recent book by Carnes (1997) refers to the "mind-numbing, highly addictive attachment to the people who have hurt you" (p.xvi) as a "betrayal bond". This betrayal bond is characterized by being exploitive, terrifying, and dangerous.

#### Early Development of Internalized Working Model of Attachment Figure:

##### Normal Children

By the age of about 6 or 7 months, the normal child's attachment to what may be called his or her *attachment figure* becomes obvious (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1988).

However, ample evidence from an increasing body of research which entails the microanalysis of infant-mother interactions, points to this tie developing during the social-emotional reciprocal exchange (by facial expressions, tracking, vocalizations, and gestures) of mother and infant since the infant's birth (perhaps even in utero).

There is strong recent evidence of very early organizational and regulatory abilities of infants to build expectations and *internalizations* of interactions with their caregivers (Beebe, 1993; Beebe & Lachman, 1994; Tronik, 1989; 1993; Tronik & Cohn, 1989).

In other words, the infant isn't "simply under the control of the immediate stimulus situation" with his or her environment and parent, but "events have lasting effects, that is, they are *"internally represented"* (Beebe & Lachman, 1994).

Tronik (1993) further maintains that as the normal infant accumulates successful "interactive repairs" with his or her caretaker, he or she develops "pre-representations of *himself* or *herself* as effective, of his or her interactions as positive and repairable, and of the caretaker [*other*] as reliable and trustworthy" (p.21, italics are mine).

#### Psychologically Abnormal Children:

It has also been discovered that deviations *within the child* in attachment or affective disturbances are observable in early infancy (Fraiberg, 1980; Greenspan, 1988). For example, Field, Healy, Goldstein, Perry, and Bendell (1988) found that 3-6 month old infants of *depressed* mothers showed *depressed* behavior even with nondepressed adults.

#### Relevance of Internal Working Model to My Research

The theoretical construct postulated by Bowlby that the child develops *representational working models* of relationships with attachment figures at a young age is a central component in my research with older adoptees.

The existing research in the area of attachment classification has put forward the view that not only are such *internal models* utilized by the individual as a framework for organizing and interpreting new experiences, (Hamilton, 1994, p.17) but they tend to be resistant to change and to persist over the life span.

More recently, research with parent attachment patterns with infants (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) have explored the intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns. Similarly, research with adult attachment styles (Hazan and Shaver, 1987, 1990; Weiss, 1991) "have translated Ainsworth's infant patterns of attachment into adult styles of

interpersonal relating and compared these styles with childhood antecedents" (Bretherton, 1991, p.27).

As my interest as a therapist and a researcher is with change processes, my belief is that these models can and do shift. Bowlby (1988), himself, in his later writings re-emphasized that the individual formed a *working* model of *self* and *other* that had some flexibility. On the one hand, I believe that insecure attachments (which I conceptualize are expressions of negative working models) *are* more resistant to change than secure models of attachment "because of the defensive processes that operate to maintain these models" (Hamilton, 1994, p.17). On the other hand, I also ascribe to Crittenden's (1990) view that *internal working models* are "dynamic, complex representations of early relationships, operating at different levels of the individual's memory system including the semantic, episodic, and procedural" (Crittenden, 1990, cited in Biringen, 1994, p.410). What I have found, and what is exciting and rewarding as a therapist and researcher, is that the many of the adopted and foster children I work with, given the appropriate opportunities and therapeutic interventions, appear to positively change their models of *self* and *other* as inferred from their actions and self-narratives.

#### Current Status of the Research on Attachment:

##### Ainsworth and the *Strange Situation Procedure (SSP)*:

The bulk of the research in attachment to date has concerned children up to the age of six. The research has usually utilized the *Strange Situation Procedure (SSP)* (Ainsworth et al., 1978). (The SSP measures the pattern of the security of attachment of infants approximately 9 to 18 months old with respect to their attachment figure, usually mother.) The results of this measurement have been correlated with many other child attributes and recently have been translated into adult attachment styles.

The SSP has impressive predictability when correlated with various measures of peer relationships, school competence, behavioral problems, etc. of mostly pre-schoolers (Park & Waters, 1989; Sroufe, 1985; Troy & Sroufe, 1987; etc.). There is also evidence of stability of classification such as when children assessed with the SSP at 12 months were seen again in a modified *Strange Situation* setting at age 6 (Main & Cassidy, 1988).

In addition, cross cultural studies have, in general, revealed greater within culture than between culture variability of attachment classification. (See review by Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988.) The study of Japanese infants whose classification was predominantly *insecure*, was an exception. (See Markus & Kitayama, 1991; and Takahashi, 1990, who comment on the inappropriateness of the use of the SSP, given the cultural differences of Japanese child rearing practices.)

Ainsworth and colleagues' research has increased clinicians' understanding of the etiology of attachment security and problems in terms of the sensitivity and shortcomings of the caregiver, respectively. Thus avenues for treatment of insecure attachment have become clearer, such as teaching parents to be more responsive and sensitive to their infants. Van den Boom (1990) reports gains in maternal sensitivity associated with a reduction in patterns of insecurity in high risk Dutch mothers.

However, there are limitations to the SSP and the underlying construct of security of attachment that it purports to measure. As much of the research on attachment builds on this measure of attachment security, several unresolved questions remain.

A major one is a function of the coding procedure itself that results in discrete categories. Researchers have complained that many children don't easily fit into one category or the other or even any category. An additional *disorganized* category has been accepted. A combined *avoidant/ambivalent* category and an *unclassified* category are other suggestions (Crittenden, 1988; Main & Weston, 1981). Rutter's (1995) view is that

infants vary in *degree* of security, so the measurement system should quantify these variations in a continuous distribution (p.553).

My stance is both that categories create boundary problems and that quantification of a construct such as security would be simplistic and contrary to my belief in the interactive effects of many factors in the development of an attachment relationship. In the same way, for instance, I believe it would be futile to attempt to translate a complex construct such as *internal working model* into a testable hypothesis (Cf. Rutter, 1995, p.554). The fictional writings that I have done regarding attachment processes in older adoptees encompasses many themes (on many levels) that are influential in the development of an attachment relationship.

Another limitation in existing research is the overemphasis on the feature of security, again leading to a simplification of a complex relationship when other dimensions such as shared feelings, intimacy, connectedness, and shared humour are also important in the development of attachment (Dunn, 1993).

In addition, proximity seeking behavior of the child to the mother, which is coded in the SSP, decreases dramatically with age, leading to difficulties in adapting the SSP to older age children. Very few other measurements of attachment in young children have been devised. Examples are Main and Cassidy's (1988) classification of attachment at age 6 and Waters and Dean's (1985) *Attachment Q-Sort* for infants and pre-schoolers. Finally, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1977), the developmental psychologist, questions the relevance of results from experiments, such as the *Strange Situation Procedure*, that take place in controlled laboratory situations as follows:

This emphasis on rigor has led to experiments that are elegantly designed but often limited in scope. This limitation derives from the fact that many of these experiments involve situations that are unfamiliar, artificial, and short-lived and that call for unusual settings that are difficult to generalize to other settings. From this

perspective, it can be said that much of contemporary developmental psychology is *the science of the strange behavior of children in strange situations with strange adults for the briefest possible periods of time.* (emphases in original) (p.513).

#### Bias in Research:

As stated above, Ainsworth and colleagues have made admirable contributions to the knowledge of attachment, especially in terms of the emphasis on the child's propensity to organize secure or insecure attachment patterns. In addition, they presented empirical evidence of the predictability of attachment patterns with other measures of behavior and of the stability of these patterns from infancy to early childhood.

However, there appears to be some evidence of the repetitive bias of select academic psychologists conducting copious numbers of experiments in the 1980's and early 1990's, building on Ainsworth's notion of attachment security, especially as depicted by the SSP. Examples are Bretherton, Crittenden, Main, Sroufe, and Waters who all, not incidentally, at one time were students of Ainsworth (Karen, 1990). (Ainsworth herself was a protege of Bowlby's in the early 1950's in London at the Tavistock Clinic.) These researchers (and their students) are all well known, publish frequently, and seem invested in the construct of attachment security.

#### Research on Attachment in Adolescence:

Research in adolescence in the area of attachment is limited for various reasons. What attachment behavior looks like in adolescence is unclear, leading to definitional problems and the necessity of other methods being found to measure or capture this relationship. Hamilton (1994) contends that adolescents seek *psychological* proximity to attachment figures, not *physical* proximity (p.11, italics mine). Similarly, Josselson (1992) suggests that attachment after infancy has a different quality:

It appears that attachment after infancy grows beyond its initial, biological basis; it moves from seeking proximity for protection toward psychological proximity for emotional survival (p. 57).

The lack of attention to *relationship* in adolescence occurs within the Western social context in which, as Josselson contends, the "predilection for individuality has tended to disown the collective aspects of our identity, valuing personal autonomy and self-realization over notions of place in group" (p. 187). Eric Ericson's (1959/1980) progressive stages of development with *identity formation* versus *identity diffusion* as the psycho-sexual task of adolescence illustrates this cultural value.

Therefore, in experimental psychology, the thrust has been to develop measurements that used the adolescent's own self-reflection rather than observable behavior to assess his or her attachment relationship. Examples are Armsden and Greenberg's (1987) *Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA)* which is a paper and pencil self-report, 60 item questionnaire for adolescents; and George, Kaplan, and Main's (1985) *Adult Attachment Interview (AAI)*, which is a semi-structured interview that has been modified for use with adolescents.

There are less than a handful of studies regarding research on attachment in adolescence. One exception is Kobak, Ferenz-Gillies, Everhart, and Seabrook's (1994) study that examines the relation between mother's attachment strategies as measured by the *AAI* and their abilities to respond to their adolescents in emotionally challenging situations. *Preoccupied* classified mothers had difficulty regulating emotion as compared to *secure* classified mothers.

The other studies utilize the *IPPA*. Armsden and Greenberg (1987) found that "adolescents classified as highly securely attached [on the *IPPA*] reported greater satisfaction with themselves, a higher likelihood of seeking social support, and less symptomatic response to stressful life events" (p.427).

A New Zealand study by Paterson, Field, and Pryor (1994) researched adolescents' perceptions of their attachment relationships with their mothers, fathers, and friends. A

*Support Seeking Proximity Seeking Scale* was also devised. Findings of interest were the gender differences as follows:

"Males and females remained stable in the *quality* of affect toward their mothers. With increasing age, females utilized their mothers for support and proximity more, whereas males utilized their mothers for support and proximity less. With increasing age, males and females rated their *quality* of affect toward their fathers as lower and utilized their fathers for support and proximity less" (p.579 italics are mine).

This latter study points to the factor of gender which undoubtedly is significant in biological families in Western society. However, in my experience with adoptive and foster children, regardless of the child's gender, the *mother* figure throughout the foster and adoption placement is the key person the child acts out on, is ambivalent toward, etc. Fahlberg (1994) concurs. Future research is indicated in this area.

Another study regarding adolescent attachment is the unpublished doctoral dissertation of Claire E. Hamilton (1994), entitled *Continuity and discontinuity of attachment from infancy through adolescence*. This was a longitudinal study utilizing the early attachment classifications (by means of the SPP) of adolescents who had been assessed at the UCLA Family Lifestyles Project as infants. In the first sample, infant classification of attachment (by the SSP) had no predictive ability with adolescent attachment classification (by the IPPA). In the second sample, using a different measurement of adolescent attachment, it was found that infancy classification of attachment (by the SSP) predicted adolescent classification of attachment (by the *Adult Attachment Interview [AAI]*).

Hamilton (1994) postulated that there might be difficulties in the IPPA itself as a measure of attachment, as follows:

The IPPA may measure attachment behaviors [rather than quality of attachment], ...but as previous research has demonstrated attachment behaviors themselves are not stable; stability exists in the organization of these behaviors [Waters, 1983] (p.68).

Moreover, the question of validity is raised regarding what construct(s) a contrived test such as the IPPA (that claims to measure the complex concept of attachment) *is* indeed measuring. The answer, of course, is only a matter of belief or collective agreement.

Research on Temperament with Relation to Attachment:

How much influence endogenous properties have on quality of attachment is debatable. Kagan (1984) purports that inherent qualities such as vulnerability to anxiety and irritability affect the infant's response to the SSP. Until recently, research findings have been consistent that temperament measures do *not* predict attachment security (Vaughn, Lefever, Seifer, Barlow, 1989). Mangelsdorf, Gunnar, Kestenbaum, Lang, and Anrea (1990) found that prone-to-distress temperament at 9 months did *not* predict attachment classification 4 months later. Rather, "attachment security could be predicted from an *interaction* between infant and mother characteristics and maternal personality" (p.829).

Similarly, Calkins and Fox (1992) examined in infants the interrelationship between temperament and attachment at 14 months in the development of inhibited behavior at 24 months. They found that the development of inhibited behavior was a complex process that likely involves the *interaction* of endogenous traits and caretaking style.

However, recently, dimensions such as inhibited behavior (Calkins & Fox, 1992) and negative emotionality (Thompson, Cornell, & Bridges, 1988; Vaughn, Goldberg, Atkinson, Marcovitch, MacGregor & Seiger, 1994) have been found to be associated with insecure attachment.

My view is that undoubtedly there are temperamental differences and other inherent qualities that affect expression of attachment behavior. For instance, Greenspan and Weider (1993) theorized that there were four types of innate regulatory disorders that affect attachment behaviors. Indeed, my choice of fictional writings reflects my

conviction that it is the interdependence of many factors, from temperament to life experiences to self reflection on these experiences that come into play in the growth of a child's attachment to a parent.

This Inquiry in the Context of Current Trends and Future  
Research in Attachment

Attachment Patterns Beyond Childhood:

There has been a trend to examine attachment relationships beyond childhood. An example of both an emphasis on research beyond childhood and *internal representations* of attachment is the research of Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) by means of the *AAI*, in which Ainsworth's infant attachment patterns were translated into corresponding parental attachment styles, indicating an intergenerational transmission of attachment relationships.

Similarly, Hazen & Shaver (1987) developed a 3 category measurement of adult attachment styles that was an adult analogue of Ainsworth's (1978) infant patterns of attachment. In addition, Bartholomew (1990), based on Bowlby's concept of *internal working model* of *self* and *other*, and closely allied with Main and colleagues (1985), devised a four category classification of adult attachment "defined in terms of the intersection of two underlying dimensions--the positivity of a person's model of the self and the positivity of the person's model of hypothetical others" (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

Research in attachment in adolescence, as was discussed earlier, is limited and none of it is qualitative in vein. To my mind, it is not appropriate to use a positivist method to translate a complex construct such as an individual's internal representation of attachment figures, into combinations of 'objective' single variables. By so doing, the experimenter artificially suspends and fragments the experience of relationships which "do not stand still" (Josselson, 1992, p. 17). Josselson states further:

Relationships are recursive: people in relationships modify each other. Our theories have tended to behave as though either the self or the other were static. We have, for example, only recently been able to contain theoretically the fact that "mother" is not a fixed entity--in other words, that the mother is in part, shaped by her child's responses"(p.17). (Cf. Winnicott, 1965; Tronik, 1993.)

#### Self Theory: Narrative Self and Attachment Theory:

As stated above, in recent years, there has been a trend toward exploring attachment in terms of the "psychological, internal, or representational aspects" (Bretherton, 1991, p.26).

Building on Bowlby's notion of internal *working models* of *self* and *other*, and consistent with postmodern formulations of the *self* as a *process* (Kegan, 1982; Carlsen, 1988; Mahoney, 1991), theorists and researchers in the field of attachment have begun to conceptualize the *self* as a dynamic evolving process, in particular, a *narrative process*. This conceptual shift, owing much to Bruner (1990, 1987); Gergen and Gergen (1986); Howard (1991); Mishler (1986); Reissman (1993); Sarbin (1986); White and Epston (1990); to name few; moves away from the more static and rather dismal prediction that has tended to pervade the literature in attachment, namely that the pattern of attachment that the child internalizes in infancy will have continuity and stability throughout the life span.

This concept of the *story telling* nature of *self* in relation to attachment is apparent in a number of areas, such as the microanalysis of parent-infant interactions by Tronik (1989,1993) and Tronik & Cohn, (1989); in the developmental theory of Daniel Stern (1985, 1995); and in the structuring and analysis, in terms of coherence and incoherence of narration, of the *Adult Attachment Interview* devised by George, Kaplan, & Main (1984). These areas will be considered in turn, as follows:

### Parent-Infant Interactions:

As mentioned, there has been a resurgence of interest in parent-infant interactions on the microanalytical level, particularly in terms of the subjective experience of the infant and his or her inferred ability to encode inner representations of this experience even at a preverbal age.

Tronik (1993), however, underlines that these representations take time to develop and cautions against linear thinking that entails "the simplistic idea that what happens early determines what happens later" (p.22).

Tronik (1993) describes his view of development as follows:

Adults are not normal or pathological because at age 6 months their mother as a particular way. Rather a person's present status represents the cumulation of all their unique encounters and how their engagement with those encounters structured their body, their brain and their representation up until the moment when we encounter them. And when we encounter them, if we engage them in a relationship they continue to change in unique ways. Thus our challenge in therapy is to understand the patient's narrative accounting of their unique pathway to the current moment. Or, better still, for us to relate to them and to create with them a jointly constructed narrative (p. 23, italics are mine).

### Daniel Stern's Concept of Narrative Self:

Stern (1985; 1995), who also has a background in the microanalysis of parent-infant interactions, proposed that an individual has four senses of *self* that form at different ages. They are an *emergent self* (birth to 2 months), a *core self* (2-6 months), and a *subjective self* (7-9 months) that all are formed prior to language acquisition; and finally, there is a *verbal self* (15-18 months). These senses of self, once formed, all grow and co-exist throughout life. (Stern 1985, p.11). When the *verbal self* emerges in the child's second year with the advent of language, "experience in the domains of emergent,

core, and intersubjective relatedness" continue at the same time as the child begins to construct a *narrative* of his own life (p.162).

Stern, commented on the split that occurs in the experience of the self, between "the two simultaneous forms of interpersonal experience: as it is lived and as it is verbally represented" (p.162). Recognizing and working with this split with clients who have a problematic dominant story, the therapist can help the client find the "narrative origin of the problem" (p.259), or, in other words, "the key metaphor" (p.262), deconstruct the external influences that have become internalized, and help him or her re-construct a new metaphor and a new story.

Similarly, I assume that when the children I work with are relating to me their life stories, they will also be re-constructing and co-constructing them with me as the psychotherapist.

Stern conceptualizes narrative similarly to Sarbin (1986) who opposes the mechanistic world view that is the province of positivism and proposes narrative as the root metaphor for psychology, because "human beings think, perceive, imagine, and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (p.8). Stern (1985) himself proclaimed that "narrative-making may prove to be a universal human phenomenon reflecting the design of the human mind" (p.174).

Main and Colleagues' Adult Attachment Interview (AAI): Analysis of the Discourse of the Narration:

In the formulation of the *AAI*, Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) developed an innovative methodology and analysis that are consistent with the concept of *self* as a *narrative* process. More specifically, they devised a semi-structured interview that focuses on the parent's history--in particular, her early attachment experiences. The end result was that the parent was classified in terms of three categories of parental

attachment styles that correspond with Ainsworth's three groups of infant patterns of attachment.

What is of interest to me is the possibility of change in the construction of self and other that is indicated by the parent's story. The parent is asked to *re-construct* her *story* and the analysis of this *story* is based, not on the content or the concrete events, but on the *form* and *context* of the *discourse* regarding attachment, such as *coherence*, *cohesiveness*, and *plausibility*; and *access to memories* (Main, 1991). In other words, what is significant is "the way the individual has integrated these events and feelings into a *representation of attachment relationships*" (Hamilton, 1994, p.7). For instance, a person classified as *securely attached* will have access to memories even if they are painful, in order to resolve them and integrate them into a positive sense of self (Rutter, 1995, p.555).

Main's research did indicate that attachment classification in infancy is not necessarily static, that an *insecure internal working model* may well be changed into a *secure* one. The findings of the adult attachment interviews suggest that the following are mediating events in the reversibility of negative to positive attachment relationships: *psychotherapy*, illness, supportive spouses, and emotionally significant others (Fremmer-Bombik, 1987, italics mine). Such findings confirm to me the importance and power of timely therapeutic intervention.

Note that Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, and Target (1994) in their investigation of *resilience*, noticed the strong relationship that was found between *narrative coherence* and the *reflective-self* scale in the analysis of the *AAI*. They commented on the powerful and pervasive protective effect" served by this *reflective self* function (p. 245.).

### Research with Attachment Disturbed Children:

There is an absence of research in general about the change processes that occur during psychotherapy. Recall Mahoney (1991) who "believes it is imperative that theory, research, and practice be intimately connected and interactive" (p.63). (See p. 16 in this dissertation.)

Accordingly, there are few studies regarding the clinical applications of attachment theory and none pertaining to attachment disturbed children. This deficiency is ironic, considering that the origins of attachment theory stemmed from Bowlby's clinical observations of children who had suffered maternal deprivation, separation, and loss.

It follows, then, that there are few studies that examine change in attachment relationships following therapeutic interventions. An exception is the increase found, after treatment, in mothers' sensitivity to their infants (Van den Boom, 1990). Of interest, too, is a case example that illustrated the application of attachment research to the understanding of and interventions with a teenage mother who was classified as *disorganized-disoriented attached* (Fish & Condon, 1994). Note that this is a fourth classification of attachment patterns that is one of the *extra* categories that other researchers (Crittenden, 1985; Main & Weston, 1981; Radke-Yarrow, Cummings, Kuczynski, & Chapman, 1988;) have added to Ainsworth and colleagues' (1978) three groups.

Although *holding therapy* (Allen, 1977; Magid & McKelvey 1987; Welch, 1988; Zaslav, 1975;) is a popular, though controversial therapeutic strategy used with attachment disturbed children and youth (See James [1994] pp. 220-221 in this review of literature), there are, to date, no studies of the effects of this strategy.

### Studies of Attachment in Older Adopted Children:

There are also few studies of older children placed with adoptive parents. The first significant study was fifty years ago when Goldfarb (1945) found grave and lasting cognitive and affective deficits in children who spent their first few years raised in institutions. Goldberg came to the dismal conclusion that such children were incapable of forming an attachment with substitute caregivers.

On the other hand, a more hopeful study in terms of the child's capacity to attach, is Tizard and Hodges' (1978) British study of 51 children who had spent their first 2-7 years in residential nurseries in Britain. (Parents and teachers were interviewed.) 25% of these children were *adopted*; 13% were *restored* [returned home] and 7% were still *institutional*. These British institutions, unlike the present day institutions in Romania (as reported by Elinor Ames, 1997), or in many third world countries, were of high quality. They are described by Tizard and Hodges as follows:

...the staff-child ratio was generous, and toys and books were plentiful. However, close personal relationships between adults and children were discouraged, and the care of the children had passed through many hands--on an average 24 different nurses had worked with the children for at least a week in their first 2 years of life, and by the time the children were 4 1/2, the figure had increased to 50 (p.99).

These children were assessed at the age of 8, having previously been assessed at the age of 4 1/2, as follows: Of interest is that 21 out of 25 of the adoptive mothers felt that their child was closely attached to them as compared with only half of the natural parents. Similarly, a much larger proportion of adoptive than restored mothers felt closely attached to their child. A half of the restored group and a third of the adopted group were considered by their parents to be overly friendly to strangers (known in the field, as *indiscriminately affectionate*) and attention seeking. However, teachers rated both groups difficult in the areas of peer relations, attention seeking and restlessness.

Tizard and Hodges make a critical point regarding the impact of the children's attachment to their adopting parents' on the success of the adoption:

For the adopting parents, the crucial aspect of the adoption was the development of a mutual attachment--if this was present, they were prepared to tolerate difficult behavior or educational backwardness (p.116).

Similarly, Singer, Brodzinski, Ramsay, Steir, and Waters (1985) found no relationship between age of placement and attachment security in non institutionalized adoptees.

A final study of importance is of Canadian children adopted from Romanian orphanages (Chisholm, Carter, Ames, & Morison, 1995). Chisholm and colleagues compared adoptees who had spent at least 8 months in a Romanian orphanage (RO) to Canadian-born, non adopted children (CB); and adoptees who had been adopted from Romania before 4 months (RC). Parent reports were used on 23 items of Water and Deane (1985) Attachment Q-sort; on 5 questions designed to test indiscriminate behavior; and the parent attachment subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1990).

Note that in contrast to the more stimulating and caring environment of the residential nurseries in the Tizard and Hodges study (1978), the ratios of child to caregiver in Romanian institutions ranged from 10:1 for infants to as high as 20:1 for children over 3 years of age (McMullan & Fisher, 1992). Furthermore, Ames and Carter (1992) reported conditions of extreme neglect in most Romanian orphanages, such as children spending 20 hours a day in their cribs, little human interaction, shortage of food and medical supplies, etc. Consequently, these children lacked 'pre-attachment' behaviors such as smiling, making eye contact, crying, etc. which enable them to promote and maintain proximity with an attachment figure (Chisholm et al., 1995). (The play, *Sam's voices*, captures the long term effects of such deprivation.)

Chisholm and colleagues found, as predicted, that adoptees who had spent at least 8 months in a Romanian orphanage (RO) scored significantly lower on security of attachment than both Canadian born, non-adopted children (CB) and adoptees who had spent less than 4 months in Romanian orphanages (RC).

Chisholm and colleagues also found that RO's children's security of attachment scores were unrelated to age at adoption and length of time spent in their adoptive homes.

That age is *not* pivotal in the capacity to attach is a finding that is consistent with the conclusions of Tizard and Hodges (1978), as described above, and Bowlby (1988) who later postulated that the sensitive period for attachment extended into adolescence.

However, Chisholm and colleagues theorize that the prolonged experiences of severe neglect sustained by the adoptees who spent over 8 months in Romanian orphanages affected their ability to attach for three reasons:

(a) the attachment is developing later than is typical, (b) many orphanage children did not display preattachment behaviors at the time of their adoption, and (c) it is likely that orphanage children have developed working models of distrust... (p.285)

Of interest to therapists is that many of the children from Romanian orphanages, as reported by parents, did not appear to show pain, signal when they were awake, or in other words, let their needs be known. Chisholm and colleagues theorized that the more difficult Romanian adoptees who had spent more than 8 months in orphanages "may require a higher level of parental commitment, in the form of more emotional warmth and a greater ability to read children's cues" (p.292). One of the roles of helping professionals could be to help adoptive parents respond to subtle cues in their children and to help the parents teach their children how to *ask* their parents to satisfy

their needs. This behavior of *not asking for needs to be met* is common among older adoptees, in general, and is evident in the children of adoption and foster care that I work with.

Also, the *indiscriminately friendly* behavior (responding with an *as if* loving and friendly behavior to anyone who is responsive) of many of this group of Romanian adoptees, which is disturbing to many parents, could be re-interpreted to adoptive parents as not unlike the behavior of a 4 month old and could be seen as "an adaptive function for children developing an attachment later than is usual" (p.293). (See the radio play, *Sam's voices* pp.73-87 in this dissertation.)

#### Literature and Research Regarding Sibling Attachment:

Most of the literature and research on siblings pertains to siblings in 'normal families'. There is scanty research on sibling group placement in Child Welfare, reflecting the lack of attention paid to this practice. (The research findings regarding the significance of sibling group placement in the disruption of an adoption are inconclusive.) There is *no* research on sibling group adoption and attachment. There is some research, however, on biological families where unusually strong sibling bonds formed. This research is relevant to the siblings in my original study-- the 412 pages of interviews I compiled which were compressed in the short story, *The story of Sandi, an adopted Teenager, leaving home*

Bank and Kahn (1979) studied families where unusually strong bonds formed and found three recurring, predictable conditions: first, high access between siblings; second, the need for meaningful personal identity; and third, insufficient parental influence (p.18).

As stated earlier, a tenet of attachment theory is that the child has a biological predisposition to attach. Consequently, when there is a loss of the attachment figure, as expressed by Klein (1987), the loneliness and lack of support is experienced as agonizing a deprivation as hunger. Therefore, Bank and Kahn (1982) assert that human infants "will take whatever contact they can get--cold, lukewarm, inconsistent, abusive--so long as they

have no better alternatives"(p.28). Accordingly, some siblings attach themselves to each other as often there is no other. These are the children of neglect who often come to the attention of the Child Welfare System--they, in a sense, parent each other.

A classic case of children who attached to each other and not adults is the orphans of Terezin. This case is similar to many sibling groups that are placed for adoption.

Bank and Kahn (1982) describe and analyse this case as an example of intense sibling loyalty, as follows:

Anna Freud and Sophie Dann in 1945, studied six children, ranging in age from three years to three years and ten months, whose parents had been murdered by the Nazis. Four of these children had lost their mothers immediately after birth; the other two probably before the twelveth month. They were not siblings but from birth were forced to grow up together in an environment devoid of adult caregiving. They were not only emotionally dependent on each other (and became upset when removed from one another), but they were fiercely loyal and sensitive to each other's needs. they were mutually co-operative; they celebrated each other's identities and they were protective of each other from physical and psychological attacks from outsiders. In addition, they had a secret language that set them apart from the others;

Bank and Kahn underline that such deep sibling loyalty can only thrive when there is a parental vacuum and no surrogate parents are available (p.120-123).

Once the Child Welfare System becomes involved, if there are a large number of siblings, the younger ones are often placed in foster care and the older teenagers, especially if they don't want to leave, are left in the home. If there is an older teenager who has been the caretaker of the younger children, the grief she will experience in being separated from her younger siblings will be profound and unassuageable.

On the other hand, Dunn (1983) points out that not many siblings, including 'caretaker' siblings are sensitively attuned to each other or mature enough to parent.

Bank and Kahn (1979) also describe some unhealthy sibling relationships as follows: Siblings may lose themselves in each other, surrender their own identities, fail to make friends or healthy contacts with the outside world. They may become 'enmeshed' or acutely sensitive to and entangled in each other's feelings (Minuchin, 1974). They may even take part in sibling incest.

Furthermore, many of the family characteristics that Bank and Kahn (1979) outlined are applicable to many of the sibling groups that are adopted, such as the one represented by *The story of Sandi, an adopted teenager leaving home*: Parents were emotionally unavailable and unresponsive, brothers and sisters sought from each other solace, nurturance and identity. Bank and Kahn describe how one or more sibling will seek emotional gratification and an artificial omnipotence through the closeness, involvement, and excitement that sex provides. Bank and Kahn state that "the children--lacking a satisfying alternative--hungrily and angrily use sex to substitute for the emptiness and pain that characterize their relations with their parents"(p.196).

#### This Inquiry in Terms of the Current Status of Qualitative Research in Attachment

As indicated earlier, there has been little qualitative research in attachment. An interpretive inquiry, unlike the traditional experimental approach, with its reliance on discrete categories, searches for *understanding* or *Verstehen* of "the complex world of lived experience [of attachment] from the point of view of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994, p.118). Moreover, various scholars have commented on this omission. For example, Stern (1985) faults attachment theorists, with their "grounding in academic psychology", for not paying attention to "the subjective experience of the infant in the form of the working model of the mother" (p.25). Josselson (1992) also implies that positivist research is not appropriate for concepts such as attachment:

Relatedness and love may be to psychology what chaos is to physics--a new but necessary frontier where the phenomena will not hold still for analysis (p.248).

Furthermore, Ainsworth (1989) does not directly recommend a qualitative design, but she does advocate for more research on the topic of this inquiry, namely, the formation of new and later attachments by older children. So, too, Eagle (1994) points out the need for research regarding:

...the experience of prolonged or permanent separation from attachment figures in [older foster/adoptive children] (Cicchetti, 1990), their ways of coping with the separation, and, if new ties are formed, the process by which they come about and the factors affecting this process. ...research in this domain must involve clinical interventions that will yield material regarding the child's inner world ( p. 430-431).

Finally, Grossman and Grossman (1990) state that "attachment lends itself well to qualitative research" (p.93) because "it is the context and the history which reveals the motivation and function of [attachment] behavior" (p.109).

### Terminology

I will now define the frequently used terms in this study and what meanings I ascribe to them as follows:

#### Attachment

Bowlby (1988) defines *attachment* as:

To say of a child (or older person) that he is attached to, or has an attachment to, someone means that he is strongly disposed to seek proximity to and contact with that individual and to do so especially in certain specified conditions [notably when he is frightened, tired, or ill, 1984, p.371]. The disposition to behave in this way is an *attribute of the attached person*, a persisting attribute which changes only slowly over time and which is unaffected by the situation of the moment. *Attachment behavior*, by contrast, refers to any of the various forms of behavior that the person engages in from time to time to obtain and/or maintain a desired proximity (p. 28, italics mine).

Note that the *child's attachment to the parent* is considered an *attribute of the child*.

Ainsworth (1989) adds to this definition by stating as follows:

An "attachment" is an affectional bond, and hence an attachment figure is never wholly interchangeable with or replaceable by another, even though there may be others to whom one is also attached (p.711).

Ainsworth also coined the term, a "secure base," which Bowlby (1988) explains thus:

[The attachment figure provides] a secure base from which a child or adolescent can make sorties into the outside world and to which he can return knowing for sure that he will be welcomed when he gets there, nourished physically and emotionally, comforted if distressed, reassured if frightened (p.11)

In *adolescence*, Hamilton (1994) and Josselson (1992) maintain that individuals move "from seeking *proximity for protection* toward [seeking] *psychological proximity for emotional survival*" (Josselson, p. 57, italics mine).

#### Attachment Difficulties/Attachment Disturbances

These terms are used interchangeably to describe the inferred negative effects on the child of abnormal attachment experiences such as loss of or prolonged separation from biological parents; multiple placements; and abuse or neglect by attachment figures.

#### Constructivism:

This inquiry is set in a constructivist paradigm. Constructivism is described by Michael Mahoney (1991) as follows:

...*constructivism* refers to a family of theories about mind and mentation that (1) emphasize the active and proactive nature of all perception, learning, and knowing; (2) acknowledge the structural and functional primacy of abstract (*tacit*) over concrete (explicit) processes in all sentient and sapient experience; and (3) view learning, knowing, and *memory* as phenomena that reflect the ongoing attempts of body and brain to organize (and endlessly reorganize) their own patterns of action and experience--patterns that are, of course, related to changing and highly mediated engagements with their momentary worlds (p. 95, italics mine)

The construction of knowledge is interpretive and naturalistic (in the natural world). It is "naturalistic" because the phenomena of study "*take their meaning as much from their contexts as they do from themselves*...No phenomenon can be understood out of relationship to the time and context that spawned, harbored, and supported it" (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985, p.189). This is a relativist ontology, that I assume, meaning that there are "multiple constructed realities that can be studied holistically (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.37).

Note that, as stated above, Mahoney emphasizes the premises I uphold that human behavior is purposive (Cf. Bruner, 1990; Schwandt, 1994); human beings are autonomous, active, intentional "agents rather than passive organisms or disembodied intellects that process information" (Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994, p.2; Schwandt, 1994, p. 120); and as social agents, they "construe, construct, and interpret their own behavior and that of their fellow agents" (Schwandt, p. 120).

Furthermore, Mahoney's statement of the quality of "*tacit... sentient and sapient experience*" is a form of *knowing* that is closely allied with the *somatic knowing* mentioned by Heshusius (1994). Stake (1978) defines tacit knowledge as follows:

Tacit knowledge is all that is remembered somehow, minus that which is remembered in the form of words, symbols, or other rhetorical forms. It is that which permits us to recognize faces, to comprehend metaphors, and to "know ourselves." Tacit knowledge includes a multitude of unexpressible associations which give rise to new meanings, new ideas, and new applications of the old (p.6, cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.195-6).

### Deconstructionism

One of the prime developers of deconstructionism is the philosopher, Jacques Derrida (born in 1930), who is opposed to Western rationalism and logocentrism and the essentialist belief in the certainty of meaning, where words are construed as literally representing the "truth" of the world and anything different, uncertain, or that does not fit in is relegated to the position of *other*. Feldman (1995) defines a deconstructionist and deconstructionism:

A deconstructionist looks for the *multiple meanings* implicit in a text, conversation, or event. A deconstruction points out both the *dominant ideology* in the text, conversation or event and some of the alternative frames that could be used to

interpret the text, conversation or event. Taken-for-granted categories (often in the form of dichotomies) and silences or gaps are elements that support the dominant ideology (p.5, italics mine).

A deconstructionist peels away the layers of constructed meaning, questions the dominant discourse, notices who is allowed to speak, who is silent; who benefits from the speaking, and how the speakers are situated (Hartscock, 1987; Hoskins, 1998; Spivak & Rooney, 1989).

### Discourse

*Discourse* was used by the French philosopher and critic, Michel Foucault (1926-1984) to depict

an entire vocabulary that is created and empowered to support certain forms of social dominance... It is a complex combination of habits, professional credentials, customs, and actions that enforce systems of social control. (Kohl, 1992, p.59).

For example, the power and control of psychiatrists, social workers, academics, etc. is invested in their systems of thought or discourses, with its privileged knowledge, vocabulary, rules, and contexts, whose language legitimizes and institutionalizes their authority and excludes others. Society is made up of many different discourse communities, some of which "represent the dominant ideology...that is, the image of what is socially right and good in society as conceived of by those in power" (Kohl, p.60).

However, since people live embedded in and controlled by *dominant discourses*, it is difficult (but not impossible) to expose the constructs that constitute them to determine how they influence our personal constructions. (Cf. Davies, 1993; Hoskins, 1998; Weedon, 1987).

### Genre

Genre is a form or type of literary writing. Reissman (1993) comments on the effects of different genres:

Genres of narrative, with their distinctive styles and structures, are modes of representation that tellers choose.... Different genres persuade differently; they make us care about a situation to varying degrees as they pull us into the teller's point of view (p.18).

### Indiscriminate Affection

Ames (1997) defines indiscriminately affectionate behavior in terms of how the child relates to new adults:

[The child is] always very friendly; never shy; typically approaches [the new adult]; wanders away from caregiver and is not distressed when finds [him or her]self with strangers; would be willing to go home with a stranger (p.8).

Indiscriminately affectionate behavior is common among children who have spent time in orphanages and is generally seen as not "signs of brain damage or emotionally-produced pathology, but rather as adaptations to the conditions of the orphanage" (Ames, p.6). Such behavior, however, is also seen in older adopted children who have lacked a consistent attachment figure. Fahlberg states that this behavior is a way of the child telling his or her adoptive mother that no one is more important than anyone else (personal communication, October, 1994). In the radio play in this dissertation, *Sam's voices*, Sam, who spent a number of months in an orphanage, displays such indiscriminately friendly behavior with a stranger in the laundromat and in McDonald's Restaurant.

### Love

Although psychotherapists who work with attachment disturbed children hesitate to use the word *love* when referring to attachment (Cline, 1995, p.2), it is a word that children, youth, and non-professionals readily use. If *love* is used in the context of the *reciprocal love* or experience of *loving and being loved* that develops or *grows* between a *child* and a *parental figure*, it is considered (for the purposes of this inquiry) another way of saying an *attachment* has been formed.

### Older Adoptive Child

I use this term to refer to any child who was not an infant when he or she was adopted.

### Positivism

Positivism is "a family of philosophies characterized by an extremely positive evaluation of science and scientific method" (Reese, 1980, p.450, as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.19).

Flew (1979) explains that

the term 'positive' has here the sense of that which is given or laid down, that which has to be accepted as we find it and is not further explicable; the word is intended to convey a warning against the attempts of theology and metaphysics to go beyond the world given to observation in order to enquire into first causes and ultimate ends (p.283).

Lincoln and Guba note the lack of agreement by philosophers and scientists regarding what positivism implied. Stanley and Wise (1983) describe positivism this way:

...a way of seeing and constructing the world, which insists that 'physical' and 'social' worlds are in all essentials the same. Positivism claims that in any occurrence there is one true set of events ('the facts') which is discoverable by reference to witnesses and material evidence of other kinds.... It describes social reality as 'objectivity constituted' and so insists that there is one true 'real' reality. And it suggests that researchers can find out this reality because they remove themselves from involvement in what they study (p.193-194).

Kohl (1992) sums up positivism:

[It] claims that all true knowledge is scientific--that is, in accordance with demonstrable laws of science, established by experiment, and verified by the evidence of the senses" ( p. 70).

## Postmodernism

Postmodernism is described by Denzin (1997) as:

a movement in the arts; new forms of social theory; historical transformations that have occurred since World War II; cultural life under late capitalism; life in a mass mediated world in which the symbol of reality (hyperreality) has replaced the real; and a conservative historical moment characterized by a backlash against the political activities of many marginalized voices and communities (racial minorities, gays, elderly, and women)" (p.263).

Although "the postmodern turn" has implications for feminism, as seen in Denzin's last statement about the "backlash against...marginalized voices and communities [such as]...women", that discussion is beyond the scope of this inquiry. I refer the reader to *Feminism/postmodernism*, edited by Nicholson (1990): In this volume of essays by a number of feminist scholars, issues are raised such as the "dangers" of postmodernism, that is, "relativism" and the "abandonment of theory" and the replacement of the "modernist *view from nowhere*" with the "equally problematic *view from everywhere*" (p.9). For instance, feminists question, "Are coherent theory and politics possible within a postmodern position" (p.9)? "If postmodernism entails the abandonment of all generalizations [thereby invoking the ideal of endless difference] would not the end result be a nominalist ontology and an individualist politics" (p.8)?

In Kohl's (1992) view, "Postmodernism grew out of disillusionment with modernism's failure to produce a perfect, rational, planned, and compassionate world" (p.119). Accordingly, it "mocks linearity, rationality, and the idea that technology produces progress" (Kohl, p.120). Richardson (1994) describes postmodernism as follows:

The core of postmodernism is the *doubt* that any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the 'right' or the privileged form of authoritative knowledge (p.517).

Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe postmodernism as questioning modernity (and positivism) for its propensity for making nomothetic statements. These

lawlike generalizations or "grand narratives" (Lyotard, 1984) when they are applied to particular cases, in Lincoln and Guba's view, are always "underdetermined" and "probabilistic" statements ( p.216).

In contrast, the postmodern researcher advocates "ideographic interpretation" implying that what is discovered in a context only has meaning for "*that context at that time*" (Lincoln & Guba, p.216).

Furthermore, the postmodern critique focuses on the modernist pursuit of theories of knowledge, justice, and beauty which are based on the conception of reason as "transcendent," "a reason able to separate itself from the body and from historical time and place" (Nicholson, 1990, p.4). Postmodernists view these theories as containing political agendas, and being "immanent to a specific historical time and geographical region" (Nicholson, p.4). Other postmodern concepts in opposition to modernism and positivism, are summarized by Lather (1991) as follows:

Postmodernism advocates "participatory, dialogic and pluralistic structures of authority" and "multiple sites from which the world is spoken;" whereas modernism pays homage to the "ideological state apparatuses [as] central dispensers of codified knowledge: schools and science especially." Moreover, postmodernism is posthumanistic, valorizes the unconscious and depicts a "culturally inscribed/constructed, contradictory, relational... subject [or self]-in-process," "capable of agency," with "foreground limits." On the other hand, modernism is humanistic, views the autonomous [stable] individual as capable of being fully conscious (p.5), "self-directive", "shapeable," with the "refusal to accept limits." (p.160-161).

In brief, ontologically and epistemologically, the postmodern researcher accepts that he or she is "biologically situated" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and considers the world to be made up of multiple constructed realities in which the knower/researcher cannot be separated from the known; whereas the modern researcher claims to be 'objective' and

considers the world in a positivist sense to be made up of one true reality that *is* separate from and *can be known* separately from the knower/researcher. This positivist illusionary separation of researcher and researched is supported by the *authority* of "certain sets of techniques [that are] epistemologically privileged" (Smith & Heshusius, 1994, p.9).

Validity in the modern sense is the accuracy of the correspondence of the findings to reality. However, in the postmodern sense, validity has been replaced by the words *authority and legitimation* (Denzin, 1997, p.9). I also suggest that the criterion of *verisimilitude* (Denzin, 1997) is appropriate to judge the fictional writings in this study, as discussed on p. 46-47 in this dissertation.

### Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism and postmodernism are terms sometimes used interchangeably. Lather (1991) states that she uses "*postmodern* to mean the larger cultural shifts of a post-industrial, post-colonial era and *poststructural* to mean the working out of those shifts [for example,] within the arenas of academic theory " (p.4).

Poststructuralism follows structuralism, both building on it and critiquing it.

Structuralists "posit the existence of [fixed] structures and rules that generate and maintain the coherence of social systems" (whether people who function within them are aware of them or not) (Kohl, 1992, p.139). The structuralist, Levi-Strauss (born 1908), "believed that there are underlying oppositions, rules of exchanges, and equivalences embedded within social structures" (Kohl, 1992, p.140).

In reaction to structuralism, the post-structuralist, Derrida (born 1930), criticizes the totalitarian arrogance of reason and certainty of meaning implicit in the structuralist view that there is "a *fixed* structure underlying and determining the nature of a text or social phenomenon (Kohl, 1992, p.133, italics mine). Derrida challenges the structuralist assertion that meaning (the signified) is arbitrarily chosen and is not inherent in the language signs (or signifiers) or in what they refer to, but lies in the relationships between

signs. Derrida also challenged the structuralist tenet that the signified and the signifier can be studied separately as put forward by Saussure (1857-1913). Opposed to the scientific detachment of structuralists, Derrida stresses that any structure of meaning includes the observer or meaning maker who interacts with the observed. Whereas structuralism is *synchronic*, ignoring history and in a sense, frozen in time; poststructuralism proposes that any meaning that is reasoned is a cultural, linguistic, or historical construct, provisional and relative, rather than universal, timeless, and stable.

Poststructuralists disavow the *fixed* nature of structures underlying and determining the nature of a text or social phenomenon. Rather, texts have internal contradictions; hermeneutic readings of texts or social activities expose many hidden and inconsistent meanings (paraphrased from Kohl, 1992, p.133-134).

Poststructuralists analyze the constitutive force of social structures and discourse, such as how some discourses are dominant and others subordinate; and the positioning of culture as a central organizer of meaning (Hoskins, 1998, p.96). For example, Davies (1993) studies gender, how it is "constituted through the discourses with which we speak and write ourselves into existence" (p.1). Davies asserts that "as a speaking subject, [the individual] can also invent, invert, and break old structures and patterns and discourses and thus speak/write into existence other ways of being" (p.xviii).

### Ruling Apparatus or Relations of Ruling

Dorothy Smith (1987) coined these terms for the following reasons:

to [bring] into view the intersection of the institutions organizing and regulating society with their gender subtext and their basis in a gender division of labor. "Relations of ruling" is a concept that grasps power, organization, direction, and regulation as more pervasively structured than can be expressed in traditional concepts provided by the discourses of power (p.3).

Smith uses *ruling* to mean:

a complex of organized practices, including government, law, business and financial management, professional organization, and educational institutions as well as the discourses in texts that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power. A mode of ruling has become dominant that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular actualities of our lives into abstracted and generalized forms (p.3).

Self and Other (Bowlby, 1988); Selfother (Berman, 1981); Self-in-Relation (Miller, 1976; Gilligan, 1977; Josselson, 1992)

These terms are used interchangeably to express the view that development is neither simply one of greater and deeper individuation (Ericson, 1959/1980) or self-awareness (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975); or one of greater and more differentiated connection with others. Rather, the story of development is a complex process of growth of the *self* in *context* with the *other*. In this way, *self* and relational capacity, separation and connection, are seen as recursive, interdependent, and interpenetrating processes. (Josselson, p.18; Cf. Kegan, 1982).

#### Narrative Self

The *self* is perceived as a dynamic, evolving process (Kegan, 1982), in particular, a *narrative process*. Bruner (1990) speaks of the individual's "readiness or predisposition to organize experience into a narrative form, into plot structures and the rest" (p.45). The *self* is conceived of as the author of his or her own unique personal story, within a context of external influences such as socio-cultural structures, historical assumptions, family experiences, etc. This notion of *self-narrative* expands on Bowlby's notion of *internal working models of self and other*. As described by White (1995), these *self-narratives* create a "frame of intelligibility, one that provides a context for our experience, one that makes the attribution of meaning possible" (p.13). Furthermore, White states:

it is the *story* of lived experience that determines which aspects of our lived experience get expressed, and...that determines the shape of the expression of our lived experience" (p.13, italics mine).

References are made to storying, authoring, creating, composing, and re-authoring and re-telling, thereby depicting the *self* as constructing and re-constructing him or herself as a continuously evolving *narrative*. (Cf. Bateson, 1990; Bruner, 1987, 1990; Carlsen, 1988; George, Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Gergen & Gergen, 1986; Hoskins, 1996; Howard, 1991; Kaplan, & Main, 1985; Mahoney, 1991; Mishler, 1986; Reissman, 1993; Sarbin, 1986; Stern, 1985; Tronik, 1993; White and Epston, 1990.)

### Social Constructionism

Lyddon (1995) states that social constructions are "shared language and meaning systems that develop, persist, and evolve over time" (p.77). Meanings are co-constructed in social contexts such as interactive practices and conversations and "orient our efforts at knowing, communicating, and becoming" (Peavy, 1993, p.4). Such collectively accepted meaning structures or constructions influence and at times restrict personal constructions. They also serve as instruments of social control, including some people in certain social groups and excluding others. An example is the social construction of mental illness which is a subjective categorization of social difference, propagated by the psychiatric profession and institutions for the mentally ill. The language used to describe those who are 'deviant' keeps them excluded from society, to the extent of confinement. The assumption of the social constructionist is that there is no objective reality in which mental illness is an authentic disease. Rather, mental illness is culturally defined. (Cf. Foucault, 1976.)

### Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is described by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) as "a field of inquiry in itself...[crosscutting] disciplines, fields, and subject matter" (p.1). They define it as follows:

A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term *qualitative research*. These include the traditions associated with positivism, poststructuralism, and the many qualitative research perspectives or methods, connected to cultural and interpretive studies (p.1)

Denzin and Lincoln add that "qualitative research implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (p.4). Qualitative research is often portrayed in contrast to quantitative methods. Denzin and Lincoln specify five points of difference as follows:

(1) Uses of positivism: Some qualitative researchers may use quantification, but they "use statistical measures, methods, and documents as a way of locating a group of subjects within a larger population and they seldom report their findings in terms of complex statistical measures"(p.5). (2) Acceptance of postmodern sensibilities. (3) Capturing the individual's point of view. (4) Examining the constraints of everyday life. (5) Securing rich descriptions (pp. 5-6)

The reader may wish to refer to my earlier explanations in this dissertation of positivism (p. 257); postmodernism (pp. 258-260); poststructuralism (pp. 260-261).

Appendix B: Diagnostic Criteria for 313.89 Reactive Attachment Disorder of Infancy or Early Childhood (From Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed., American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

- A. Markedly disturbed and developmentally inappropriate social relatedness in most contexts, beginning before age 5 years, as evidenced by either (1) or (2):
- (1) persistent failure to initiate or respond in a developmentally appropriate fashion to most social situations, as manifest by excessively inhibited, hypervigilant, or highly ambivalent and contradictory responses (e.g. the child may respond to caregivers with a mixture of approach, avoidance, and resistance to comforting, or may exhibit frozen watchfulness)
  - (2) diffuse attachments as manifest by indiscriminate sociability with marked inability to exhibit appropriate selective attachments (e.g., excessive familiarity with relative strangers or lack of selectivity in choice of attachment figures)
- B. The disturbance in Criterion A is not accounted for solely by developmental delay (as in Mental Retardation) and does not meet criteria for a Pervasive Developmental disorder.
- C. Pathogenic care as evidenced by at least one of the following:
- (1) persistent disregard of the child's basic emotional needs for comfort, stimulation, and affection
  - (2) persistent disregard of the child's basic physical needs
  - (3) repeated changes of primary caregiver that prevent formation of stable attachments (e.g., frequent changes in foster care)
- D. There is a presumption that the care in Criterion C is responsible for the disturbed behavior in Criterion A (e.g., the disturbances in Criterion A began following the pathogenic care in Criterion C).

*Specify type:*

**Inhibited Type:** if Criterion A1 predominates in the clinical presentation

**Disinhibited Type:** if Criterion A2 predominates in the clinical presentation

Appendix C: Diagnostic Criteria for 309.81 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (From Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed., American Psychiatric Association, 1994)

- A. The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:
- (1) the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others.
  - (2) the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.  
Note: In children, this may be expressed instead by disorganized or agitated behavior
- B. The traumatic event is persistently reexperienced in one (or more) of the following ways:
- (1) recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts, or perceptions. Note: In young children, repetitive play may occur in which themes or aspects of the trauma are expressed.
  - (2) recurrent distressing dreams of the event, Note: In children, there may be frightening dreams without recognizable content,
  - (3) acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations, and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur on awakening or when intoxicated). Note: In young children, trauma-specific reenactment may occur.
  - (4) intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
  - (5) physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event
- C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by three or more of the following:
- (1) efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma
  - (2) efforts to avoid activities, places, or people that arouse recollections of the trauma
  - (3) inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
  - (4) markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities
  - (5) feeling of detachment or estrangement from others
  - (6) restricted range of affect (e.g., unable to have loving feelings)

Appendix C: Diagnostic Criteria for 309.81 Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (From  
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed., American Psychiatric  
Association, 1994) (Continued)

- (7) sense of foreshortened future (e.g., does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)
- D. Persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), as indicated by two (or more) of the following:
- (1) difficulty falling or staying asleep
  - (2) irritability or outbursts of anger
  - (3) difficulty concentrating
  - (4) hypervigilance
  - (5) exaggerated startle response
- E. Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, and D) is more than 1 month.
- F. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

*Specify if:*

- Acute: if duration of symptoms is less than 3 months  
Chronic: if duration of symptoms is 3 months or more

*Specify if:*

- With Delayed Onset: If onset of symptoms is at least 6 months after the stressor