

MILESTONES WITHOUT MOTHERS:  
HOW YOUNG JEWISH WOMEN RE-GRIEVE  
WHILE CELEBRATING

by

JULIE FRIEDMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. Elizabeth Ann Danto

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair of Examining Committee

Dr. Michael Fabricant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Executive Officer

Dr. Michael J. Smith

Dr. Anthony Sainz  
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

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by

Julie Friedman

Advisor: Dr. Elizabeth Ann Danto

This study details the affective upheavals experienced by young adult Jewish women experienced after the death of their mother and during moments of personal celebration. These major life-changing events produce shame and guilt in the young woman who wants to be happy, yet is not because she is still grieving her mother's death. This dissertation has attempted to explore a seeming paradox in human behavior: the contradiction implicit between the experiences of grief and of celebration. To resolve this, I have developed a new clinical concept which I call re-grieving, the clinical experience that emerges from seemingly contradictory affective impulses such as mixing sadness with joy, attachment with loss, vulnerability with strength, and dependence with independence. This study was grounded in a review of the literature, as well as quantitative and qualitative investigations of Jewish young adult women undergoing major life event milestones after their mothers' have died. This study has determined that re-grieving is the by-product of the convergence of the following four variables, that when linked, create temporary feelings of despair, anxiety and vulnerability: 1) young adulthood, 2) a strong pre-death mother-daughter attachment bond, 3) milestone celebrations, and 4) Jewish mourning ritual practices.

The study examined the phenomenology of re-grieving: what it is; how it is experienced; who experienced these behaviors and emotions; when re-grieving is activated; and what are the implications for social work practice.

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## *INTRODUCTION*

### **The Impetus**

Years have past since I danced at Nina's wedding and I still recall the image of Nina, seated on the coatroom floor in a pouf of white satin, sobbing almost in rhythm to the distant sounds of trumpets playing the Jewish Horah. She whispered that she had to "take a few minutes out of her wedding celebration to mourn [her] mom." Nina's mother had succumbed to breast cancer four months earlier after much suffering. The wedding had left Nina torn between feelings of elation and deep feelings of grief. I again bore witness to the uneasy coexistence of grief and celebration, when Samantha called with news of her engagement. She alternated between crying tears of laughter and tears of upset. "How can I get married without my mother?" Samantha said. I remembered Nina's words in the coatroom. Jill's graduation bash to celebrate her long awaited Ph.D. jolted my memory of Nina again. In spite of the overwhelming love and support of friends and family Jill tearfully said she was sorry her mother "didn't live to see the day that her daughter became a doctor." The words of Nina, Samantha, and Jill played in my mind. What was their significance?

## ***PURPOSE OF THE STUDY***

*Milestones without Mothers* emerged from my courtroom encounter with Nina and later conversations with Samantha and Jill. I undertook this study in order to explore what young adult Jewish women experience after the death of their mother during moments of achievement or celebration in their personal and professional lives. This qualitative dissertation was developed in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the Ph.D. in Social Welfare. It resulted in a deeper understanding of the effects of mother-loss and “re-grieving” often experienced by young Jewish women as they celebrate their life-cycle milestones of engagement, wedding nuptials, pregnancy, childbirth, and new motherhood shortly after their mothers have died. Paradoxically, these major life-changing events produce shame and guilt in the young woman who wants to be happy, yet is not because she is still grieving her mother’s death. Re-grieving, I concluded, is a clinical experience that emerges from seemingly contradictory affective impulses such as mixing sadness with joy, attachment with loss, vulnerability with strength and dependence with independence.

During young adulthood the majority of the women in my study population took steps towards autonomy and, eventually, reached adulthood. During these significant years of development, each one of the subjects passed through a succession of similar events and phases as they became increasingly independent and mature adults. For this population, these experiences usually include living outside of the parental home for the first time, completion of education, full-time employment, engagement, marriage, first pregnancy, childbirth, and new motherhood. As young adults, the subjects also had to make decisions regarding relationships,

religion, profession, lifestyle, and place of residence. I refer to these events and choices as *milestones*. It is my contention that these often-joyous incidences trigger a host of difficult emotions, including renewed grief, despair, and anxiety for the examined population. I have termed this renewed sense of loss *re-grieving*. I believe that re-grieving is experienced during milestones as a result of the *need* for the deceased other during a period of “self” oriented trial and vulnerability.

Although I believe this study will have implications for the treatment of women of all backgrounds who have lost mothers during young adulthood, my focus here is on Jewish women. Burial customs and the process of grieving vary among different cultures and are often rooted in tradition. The distinct cultural quality of burial and mourning affect the experience of grief. Therefore, to describe re-grieving it is necessary to both perform a culturally contingent study and to provide an overview of Jewish mourning, the later of which contains qualities and elements which translate into re-grieving.

Under the above conditions, when a mother dies during the young adulthood of her daughter the opportunity to develop this close, mature relationship is thwarted. The daughter experiences a double loss: the mother of her childhood, and the potential for a close adult relationship. The normally stressful developmental period of young adulthood thus becomes a time of intense anxiety. The daughter feels unable to follow the course of “normal” ego differentiation and gradual formation of an autonomous identity. Finally, moments of achievement are characterized by re-grieving, or a return to a state of mourning, as the daughter advances without the mother’s support and approval. The purpose of this study is to examine the

experience of re-grieving and investigate this concept in the literature as it relates to being a young adult Jewish woman going through significant life-cycle milestones.

As the subjects of this study struggle to make major life decisions, they experience anxiety attributed to the lack of their mother's encouragement and validation. This lack also denies them the opportunity to successfully resolve conflicts that might have been generated by new and adult choices. Such a resolution is often an important facet in the transition to adulthood that helps the family redefine mother-daughter roles and boundaries. When a woman experiences mother-loss while passing through the milestones of young adulthood, she not only loses a potential source of guidance and support, but also the experience of becoming an adult in the eyes of her primary female role model. This dual loss intensifies the difficult emotions that come, for these women, when passing through even the most joyous of life changing events. The purpose of this study was, therefore, to examine and define the experience of "re-grieving" and to investigate what evidence there is for this concept in the literature. To fill the gap in the existing knowledge on the subject, this study was supported by a series of qualitative interviews rooted in Grounded Theory methodology.

Although my study may have larger implications, I placed several limitations on the population surveyed. First, in an effort to identify a group with a relatively homogenous social and traditional context, I limited my survey to American-born, heterosexual Jewish women who grew up in middle to upper middle class milieu. Second, I defined young adulthood to fall between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Third, I dealt exclusively with daughters who have lost mothers to sudden or expected death. Finally, I limited my subjects to those whose mothers have

died during their young adult years, and who self-reported as having had a close, positive, and healthy relationship with their deceased mother. Despite the boundaries of this study, the results may be useful as a guideline for the care of women who have experienced other types of mother-loss, i.e., physical and/or emotional abandonment, maternal addiction/alcoholism, or maternal death by suicide.

## ***SIGNIFICANT AREAS OF STUDY***

There are two components to the body of this paper. First, I reviewed the existing literature on re-grieving, the clinical issue of study. To place re-grieving in proper context, I reviewed an additional three key developmental issues underlying the clinical issue of re-grieving: young adulthood, mother-loss and attachment, and milestones. I also reviewed Jewish burial and mourning practices. Through an analysis of the existing literature, I attempted to describe and define what makes the experience of re-grieving at milestones particularly painful for young Jewish women who have lost their mothers. I explained the phenomenon largely through an exploration of psychoanalytic and psychosocial ideas. This study is largely dependent on developmental, feminist, and attachment theory. Second, in a series of qualitative interviews, I explored the psychological ramifications of these components and I analyzed these interviews using the clinical and developmental four key concepts of: re-grieving, young adulthood, mother-loss and milestones.

### **#1. Clinical Issue:**

#### Re-grieving

Re-grieving, the first and perhaps, most pivotal, of the key concepts of the literature review is the renewed feelings of despair, anger, and an elevated anxiety level often erupting at important moments in a young woman's life. Although re-grieving is not addressed or named as such in the literature, the awaking of grief-related emotions, is minimally discuss and often under very different events and circumstances. Of note, Theresa Rando (1993) has described the STUG reaction, "subsequent temporary upsurges of grief" which occur long after the death of a loved one. Fine detailed work has already been done on grief, bereavement and mourning (Parkes,

1972). This study is, however, focused on the process of re-grieving so existing related writings must be reinterpreted for this context. Attachment Theory is revisited from a grief and bereavement perspective. This section also reviews the very brief literature on mother-loss/parent loss during young adulthood. The limited literature on re-grieving is also reviewed to demonstrate the depth and scope of this populations' loss and to define the meaning of healthy grief applied in this study. Finally, the text analysis interprets research findings in ways that will be useful for social work practitioners working with mother-loss and the psychological/emotional health of motherless women.

## **#2. Developmental Issues:**

### Young Adulthood

Young adulthood, one of the most significant developmental issues influencing the clinical re-grieving issue, is the second key concept discussed in this section of the literature review and provides background theory on young adulthood, defined in this paper as the period between eighteen and thirty years of age. Included in this section is a review of several theories of the developmental stages that, according to selected theorists, occur during adulthood. Views from the various schools of thought, including traditional ego psychology (Erikson, 1963; White, 1975; Vaillant, 1972; Levinson, 1978; Gould, 1980; Havighurst, 1953; Loevinger, 1976), provided insight into the emotional life of young adults. As this study focuses on female subjects, the feminist models are an important rebuttal and addendum to the more traditional views. In general, feminists theorists discuss the more positive influence a mother can have and the central role she can play in her young adult daughter's emotional health (Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976; Steele, 1985). It is necessary to understand the

developmental stage of young adulthood and the type of relationship young adult daughters share with their mothers in order to understand the experience of the young adult woman who is left motherless and why she re-grieves. By forming a picture of psychologically normative young adulthood and mother-daughter relationships, there is a place from which to examine the woman who faces a life stage without her mother and her re-grieving.

Young adulthood was also examined through the lens of Attachment Theory. This body of literature supports the feminist theories in their dispute of what was traditionally perceived as “the need” to differentiate from the mother during young adulthood. A look at attachment theory also provided the tools for understanding of the close relationship that some mothers and daughters share prior to the mother's death. Along with the Attachment Theory literature is the research conducted on positive mother-daughter relationships. The Mother-Daughter literature portrays what motherless young women have lost, and the vital role a mother can play in her daughter's life during young adulthood.

### Mother-loss

The third key concept of the literature review addressed the current literature on mother-loss. These works largely discuss mother-loss as it impacts children, adolescents, and mature (50 years+) women, providing little text specifically on the young adult age group represented by the subjects of this survey. Generally, the grievers are separated into two age groups categories: those who become motherless as children, adolescents, or early teens (Spira & Kenemore, 2000; Edelman, 1994; Charmaz, 1980; Davidman, 2000) and those who become motherless after the death of aged mothers (Weizman & Kamm, 1985; Moss & Moss, 1983; Edelman, 1994;

Donnelly, 1987; Secunda, 2000; Leick & Davidsen-Nielson, 1991; Kalish, 1985; Bassoff, 1988). One notable exception is Hope Edelman who discusses mother-loss for women in their twenties (Motherless Daughters, 1994, pp. 54-56). Cynthia Wilcox-Rittgers' also examines young adults. However, her feminist-oriented dissertation (1997) on mother-loss in late adolescence/early adulthood (ages sixteen to twenty-eight years of age) concentrates on the daughter's psychological health as it relates to her own degree of functioning and psychological development.

The existing writings tend not to delineate between mother-loss and father loss (Brooke, 2001; Secunda, 2000; Fair Donnelly, 1987; Parkes & Weiss, 1983). Rather, the topic focuses on the "generic" death of a parent. The merging of mothers and fathers in death literature seems odd given the distinct role each parent plays while alive. Social norms prescribe gender specific roles for mothers and fathers that often affect how men and women are trained to respond to their children. The Western construction of an ideal mother is nurturing and understanding; while fathers are powerful and deserving of respect (Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995, p. 540). Yet, most death literature does not distinguish between mother and father loss, discussing both under the rubric of "parent loss." In addition, the existing literature on mother-loss, *even* by some of the feminist oriented researchers, mostly portrays the relationship between the daughter and deceased mother as conflicting and problematic (Edelman, 1999). These works often focus on an older motherless population and some claim that the death of the mother releases the daughter, leaving her free at last to become her own woman (Friday, 1977; Deutsch, 1945; Stiver, 1991). These theories play into the trop that the mother must die to liberate the daughter from her enmeshed, dependent relationship. For other feminist researchers, this pathological portrayal

of mother- daughter relationships is not consistent with the experiences of this study's population, nor supported by the literature reviewed. Some of the more recent feminist oriented researchers reclaim the relationship between mother and daughter as one of positive interdependence, connectedness and mutuality (Chodrow, 1978; Fisher, 1981; Jordan, 1991).

### Milestones

The fourth key concept of the literature review, the catalyst or "trigger" for the clinical re-grieving issue, explores written works on "milestones." It is my contention that facing these milestones, or periods of punctuated transition, are significant and painful periods in the life of a young adult who has lost her mother. For these young women, the imposed self-reliance, coupled with the acute awareness that they now lack maternal support, makes milestone changes seem threatening and frightening. The trauma of these experiences leaves the women in an unusually vulnerable state (Nydegger, 1991; Aquilino, 1997). Women who lose their mothers in their twenties, writes Hope Edelman in Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss (1994), do not have a maternal figure to validate their life decisions, and lose a sense of security during a stressful period. Particular emphasis is given in this section to the study's targeted milestones: graduation from college/first full-time employment, engagement/wedding day/newlywed, and pregnancy/childbirth/new motherhood. This section of the literature review attempts to conceptually unite young adulthood, mother-daughter relationships in young adulthood, mother-loss, and milestones typical of young adulthood. Mother-loss complicates young adulthood and young adulthood complicates mother-loss. Under the "best" circumstances, most young adults experience some degree of anxiety that often accompanies the passage of milestones. A mother's death during this phase compounds the young adult's sense of peril and heightens the anxiety

level. This can leave the motherless daughter with a gaping and irreplaceable void of emotional support. This void is most keenly felt during milestone transitions, the times when support is most needed.

## ***CLARIFICATION OF TERMS***

### Re-grieving

As defined by the literature: Re-grieving is a term, coined by the researcher, to describe the reawakening of grief-related emotions some motherless young adult women experience while transitioning through a milestone. Re-grieving is the rekindling feelings of sadness, despair, anxiety, and other grief/bereavement/mourning emotions. Though the term re-grieving may be new in its usage, there is some acknowledgement of the phenomena in the existing literature. When behavior here defined as re-grieving is mentioned, it refers almost exclusively to an emotional reaction to a symbolic event such as a birthday, death anniversary, or when a meaningful possession (i.e., a scarf, brooch, or picture) of the deceased is rediscovered. These experiences are described in the literature as “STUG-subsequent temporary upsurges of grief” (Rando, 1993), “episodic depression” (Attig, 1996) and “successive depressions” (Leick & Nielson, 1991). All represent the short-term, normal emotional response of sadness that grievers may experience. The context for grief reawakening experiences in the literature is external to the mourner; the impetus is about the memory of the deceased. Little reference (Edelman, 1994) is made to the re-grieving whose impetus is a milestone event such as those addressed within this study.

As defined by this study: Re-grieving, as examined in this study, is psychological - the milestone event pushes the loss once again to the forefront of the young woman’s life because of a present-tense *need* for the deceased during a time of deeply “self” oriented trial and vulnerability.

### Young Adulthood

As defined by the literature: The developmental period of young adulthood has been defined to

include individuals as young as age fifteen to as old as age thirty-five. Young adulthood is described as a phase filled with change, transition and maturation (Erikson, 1968, 1980; Bocknek, 1980; Gould, 1980, 1978, & 1972; Havinghurst, 1953; Lewis, Ross & Mirowsky, 1999). In the existing literature, the period of young adulthood is wedged between the developmental stages of late adolescence and adulthood and receives insufficient specific attention.

As defined by this study: This study defines young adulthood as the period between the ages of eighteen to thirty. It is a time of significant psychological development when the subjects emerge from childhood as autonomous adults by making the decisions that initially shape their personal, romantic, familial, and professional existence. Young Adulthood is also the time that the subjects redefine their primary relationships and assume adult roles. The importance of the transitions made during young adulthood, and the stress these changes can produce requires further examination. It is imperative to understand normative young adulthood development, at least within Western cultures, in order to ultimately examine the young adult woman who is grieving her mother's death.

#### Mother-loss

As defined by the literature: The literature largely discusses mother-loss as it impacts children, teens and women over the age of fifty. Few researchers have investigated the death of a mother during her daughter's young adulthood years.

As defined by this study: Death includes both deaths that are sudden or unexpected and deaths that are prolonged or expected. Loss of the mother during this developmental period of young

adulthood often results in extreme stress and anxiety and the by-product, vulnerability. In this review, young adult women are not separating to seek autonomy, nor are they connecting to facilitate mutuality and independence. The young adult women in this study have experienced what they consider the harshest forced separation of all: the death of their mother. These young adult women have struggled with varying degrees of grief and mourning issues while concurrently making progress toward full adulthood. Their challenges are set against the backdrop of an already tumultuous period as they too battle issues of identity confusion, career indecision, and mate selection. The question of "who am I" is exacerbated when the young woman feels deprived of role of being her mother's daughter. The daughter feels that she has lost her emotional anchor and in the midst of this, must adjust to all the other demands upon her to mature and grow up.

### Milestones

As defined by literature: Milestones are moments that punctuate the significant transitions and changes. Milestones may be viewed from a developmental perspective of normative age-graded influences of change across the life span. These changes emphasize the interaction effect of internal and external factors (Thurnher, 1983). Consensus in the literature portrays young adulthood as *the* period for multiple milestones and, as such, it is viewed as a time of enormous stress (Thurnher, 1983; Stewart, Lokol, Healy, & Niahne, 1986; Rindfuss, 1991; Settlage & Galenson, 1976; Ward & Spitze, 1992; Datan, 1986). In young adulthood, these normative and “positive” milestones may include, but are not limited to: leaving home, going to college/university, graduation from college/university, first full-time employment, living autonomously, engagement to a partner, having a wedding or ceremony, becoming pregnant,

giving birth to children and becoming a parent (Bocknek, 1980; Nydegger, 1991; Colman, 1972; Aquilino, 1997; Littwin, 1986; Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995).

As defined by this study: This study will explore several of the milestones as experienced by motherless women during young adulthood. As milestones frequently occur in rapid succession, they have been grouped into several periods of abrupt change: engagement; marriage; newlywed; pregnancy; childbirth; new motherhood.

### Jewish Burial and Mourning Practices

As defined by the literature: Contemporary Jewish burial and mourning practice are informed by both biblical texts and Rabbinic literature up to and including the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. They have been disseminated in the twentieth century by popular manuals written for mass publication, and by handbooks distributed by the Chevrah Kadisha, the Holy Burial Society. These more recent works are largely based on traditions handed down from biblical times. The mandated observant traditions fulfill two functions. First, they protect the mourners from all decisions regarding the burial. Second, they ensure that the mourners are surrounded and comforted by their community, and only slowly reintegrated into everyday life over the span of nearly a year. Specific mandates and regulations are discussed.

As defined by this study: This study concentrates on re-grieving, not on the initial bereavement and grief young women experience immediately after maternal death. However, for context of re-grieving, it is important to establish Jewish mourning practices in order to understand Jewish re-grieving as evidenced in the study. Judaism is a critical and instrumental tool which helped the study's subjects initially cope and manage in their initial, difficult grief. Judaism's symbols,

traditions and rituals also have a keen affect on the process of re-grieving. Jewish observance of the milestones noted above seem to trigger regrieving. When treating young Jewish women, it is important to keep this community relationship in mind particularly as she passes through milestones that are almost always community experiences.

## *LITERATURE REVIEW*

The purpose of this study was, therefore, to examine and define the experience of “re-grieving” and to investigate what evidence there is for this concept in the literature. To fill the gap in the existing knowledge on the subject, this study was supported by a series of qualitative interviews.

### **Section One:**

#### Re-grieving

*“Typically, too little attention is given to the serious impact these resurgent events have on the griever. They are often accompanied by panic, hopelessness, and despair.” (Louis LaGrand, 1986)*

The literature briefly acknowledges that even in so-called healthy grief resolution the survivor may at times feel sad. “Episodes” of sadness may reappear when the survivor is reminded of those she has lost, even long after the death (Attig, 1996). The smallest reminder, an old shirt or a scarf, for example, can evoke “a memory causing us pain” which can be incapacitating (Donnelly, 1987). The literature defines these sad moments as “normal mini-mourning periods” (Weizman & Kamm, 1985), “difficult periods of yearning pains” (Kalish, 1985), “cyclical triggers” which resurrect grief responses (Edelman 1994, 1999), “STUG Reactions (subsequent temporary upsurges of grief)” (Rando, 1993), and “normal reactive sporadic depressions” that LaGrand (1986) refers to as temporary setbacks.

For this study, re-grieving characteristically takes place at pivotal milestones that remind the motherless young woman of her profound loss, and that trigger temporary, short-termed feelings of longing, despair, anxiety, stress, low-self-esteem, and other grief and bereavement

characteristics. According to the literature, re-grieving is a healthy, normal response and process which helps retain the bond between the deceased mother and her daughter manifesting particularly at times of heightened stress and vulnerability (Rando, 1993; Kalish, 1985; Attig, 1996). Re-grieving, in a sense, affords the daughter an opportunity to revive her mother's memory and regain her equilibrium in order to cope with her new role (Stroebe, Schut, & Stroebe, 2005).

Though mentioned in the literature, little attention is focused on the seriousness of the impact of these resurgent events on the griever (LaGrand, 1986). These "episodes" or "periods of depression" (read: re-grieving) are often accompanied by panic, heightened anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness and despair. They are energy draining events that can be characterized by exhaustive crying (Rando, 1993; Attig, 1996; Perschy, 1997; Kalish, 1985; Weizman & Kamm, 1985; Glick, 1974; Wilcox-Rittgers, 1997). During these re-grieving moments, the griever is in an active, though temporary, stage of grief as the loss is brought into sharp focus once again. Re-grieving experiences can occur as the daughter is reminded that her mother is no longer present to uphold her part in the creation of identity. These reaction periods seem to share, even mirror, the physical and emotional symptoms of acute, pathological and/or chronic grief (Deutsch, 1945; Lindemann, 1944; Parkes & Weiss, 1983). These brief periods are also "normal" healthy expressions of sorrow and are common among even those who have completed so-called grief recovery or grief resolution (Cleiren, 1993).

Certain occasions or specific dates may elicit re-grieving. The literature notes anniversaries, parent birthdays, griever birthdays, death anniversaries, and holidays as the dates

most associated with the phenomena (Donnelly, 1987; Leick & Nielson, 1991; LaGrand, 1986). Less discussed in literature is the re-grieving that takes place during developmental milestones. Lieck and Nielson (1991) call the sadness and emotional emptiness experienced on important occasions that ought to cause happiness: “success depressions.” Secunda (2000) attributes this duality of emotion to the poignant awareness of the parent’s absence each time something wonderful or dreadful happens. The child not only feels sadness when they long for a parent’s solace in a time of loss or failure, but also when a parent is not present at the moment of an accomplishment or a rite of passage (Perschy, 1997). She re-grieves for the loss of praise, shared pride, ego enrichment, and the companionship of the one person who could fully appreciate the magnitude of the milestone event.

Job promotions, weddings, and childbirth are all events that can produce a sense of shame and guilt in the motherless young woman. She recognizes that she should be happy yet is not (Leick & Nielson, 1991). From a psychoanalytic perspective, graduation, marriage and childbirth are powerful times of loss of object constancy: loss of one’s childhood, fantasies and earlier sense of identity. Concurrently, new, serious, and sometimes overwhelming responsibilities must be taken on (Edelman, 1994, Neugarten, 1979; Weizman & Kamm, 1985). In addition to the psychological losses and added responsibilities, these transitional periods are characterized by anxiety. The future is a frightening indeterminate (Kastenbaum & Aisenberg, 1976). There is a “connection between change and loss” that causes feelings of disappointment in moments when satisfaction is expected (Leick & Nielson, 1991). Marriage and new motherhood are just two examples of change that causes psychological losses, the stress of new responsibility and anxiety. Paradoxically, both of these events are often marked by celebration. For motherless

young women, these days are not only terrifying for the reasons discussed above, but also because these dates are poignant and painful reminders of mother-loss. Shapiro (1994) wrote, “Mourners approach those dates with fear and dread, worrying they won’t make it through the day” (p. 55).

Social work researchers have been criticized for being preoccupied by the unmet needs of the grieving elderly while ignoring the needs of the grieving young (Neugarten, 1979). “Death is a normal and expectable event for the old. Death is tragic only when it occurs at too young an age” (Neugarten, p. 899). When death hits early or out of expected synchrony, young adults’ coping strategies are jeopardized. Neugarten developed a descriptive series of stages from early childhood into middle and late-adulthood. Each stage is marked off by specific chronological ages and events. He writes that the death of a parent makes the balance between “losses and victories” difficult to define as young adults face new jobs, new relationships, new spouses, and new children. Victories refer to the ego-satisfying accomplishments and acknowledgements a young adult may experience such as a professional promotion. The achievement of milestones and the accompanying stress/anxiety that are inherent in the process of risk and reward, is a common subject matter for young adult daughters who have close relationships with their mothers. These conversations allow the daughter to examine her strategies and express her autonomy to her mother while still savoring (however privately and internally) a sense of “watch me, mom!” leftover from childhood. This sensibility is an unspoken secret shared by both parties: many mothers revel in the achievements of their grown children and young adults learn to trust their mother’s continued attention to their accomplishments.

## Section Two:

### Young Adulthood

*"This is a crucial time of life for young women. It is now that they will undertake important reverberating decisions regarding their lives. Decisions, at least initially, which will impact her life's course of career, relationship, and behavior." (Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991)*

#### (A) Developmental Theory

Young adulthood is a period filled with ongoing biological, psychological and social changes and challenges. It has been described as the "passageway to maturity," a journey for which many are unprepared (Littwin, 1986). It is the traditional phase for optimism, idealism, enthusiasm, and feelings of immortality (Bocknek, 1980). For the subjects of this study it is often a time characterized by a *sens de pouvoir*-strength and vigor (Loevinger, 1976). Finally, some theorists believe that this is a developmental juncture to be lived to the fullest (LaGrand, 1986), where infinite possibilities are joined by endless major life decisions (Lifton & Olson, 1974). Each of these choices seems pivotal in the establishment of identity (O'Conner, Allen, Bell, & Hauser, 1996). This constant demand for self-definition, coupled with a lack of firm identity, can lead to a confusion of rapid role changes (Greene & Boxer, 1986). The combination can create a crisis of confused expectations (Littwin, 1986). Young adults find themselves with "transition proneness" (Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1991), without firm ground or equilibrium (Fenchel, 1998) and in a frenzy to decide and define.

Post Adolescence (Wittenberg, 1968); the "Novice Phase" (Levinson, 1978); the Child to Adult Transition (Sherrod, 1996); the "Intermediary Period" (Erikson, 1980); "The Dramatic Stage" (Gould, 1972); "The Fluid Years" (Rindfuss, Cooksey & Sutterlin, 1999), and "The

Bridge Stage" (Greene & Boxer, 1986) are terms employed to describe what this study refers to as young adulthood. Each of these terms labels young adulthood as a transition (Havighurst, 1952; Fingerman, 2000; Graber & Dubas, 1996). The chronological definition of young adulthood varies. Some theorists create the boundaries at eighteen and thirty years of age (Havighurst, 1952), while others use twenty to forty-five (Buhler and Massarik, 1968); sixteen to twenty-eight (Gould, 1978); sixteen to twenty-five (Bocknek, 1980); or twenty to thirty years of age (Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991) as the bookends.

While realizing that no exact age denotes the onset or termination of young adulthood, *Milestones without Mothers* defines the period as falling between the ages of eighteen and thirty years. United States law recognizes an eighteen-year-old as a legal adult who is eligible and responsible for many of our society's options and obligations. At eighteen, United States citizens can drive, cast a ballot in public elections, sit on a jury, be drafted (or volunteer without parental consent) into military service, enter binding contracts, and marry. In middle-class society, college-bound young adults often leave their parents' home for the first time at eighteen, and others find full-time employment after completing high school. Thirty years of age has been selected as the outer limit in this study as it seems to represent the end of the young adult years (Rindfuss, 1991). By thirty, individuals have either assumed or are expected to have assumed "adult-type" roles and behaviors. These include financial autonomy and residence outside of the parental home. Many have also started to make long-term decisions concerning career, commitment to a partner, family planning, child rearing, and religious observance (Bocknek, 1980; Greene & Boxer, 1986; Sugar, 1979).

There is consensus in the literature about the delay between physical maturity and the assumption of adult roles (Booth, Crouter & Shanahan, 1999). There is a "blurring of the lines between true adulthood and adolescence" (Littwin, 1986). Extended schooling, continued economic dependency, and labored career decisions are viewed as some of the causes that may contribute to the developmental lag (Greene & Boxer, 1986). A common and additional cause is prolonged residence in the parental home (Greene & Boxer, 1986). This extension of child-like dependency and lack of adult responsibility has extended the boundaries of young adulthood. In turn, adult behavior, such as economic autonomy and marriage, have been chronologically pushed back (Rindfuss, 1991; Ward & Spitze, 1992; Littwin, 1986; Sherrod, 1996; Booth, Crouter & Shanahan, 1999) making thirty-years-old, an age that was several generations ago well into adulthood, now fall into the period of "young adulthood."

Young adulthood is wedged between the developmental psychology constructs of late adolescence and adulthood. Some theorists are "unaware of any distinction between young adult and the established stage" of adulthood (*Bocknek*, 1980). Although this period is dense with upheaval, turmoil, and transition, relatively little is known about this stage and surprisingly little research has been conducted. There is a lacuna in knowledge about young adulthood, especially when compared with the other stages of human life (Gould, 1972; Jessor, Donovan & Costa 1991; Bocknek, 1980; Coleman, 1972; Sugar, 1979; Green & Boxer, 1986; Rindfuss, 1991). Erik Erikson (1963) was perhaps one of the first researchers to sub-divide the stage of adulthood.

Until Erikson, classic theorists such as Sigmund Freud, tended to divided childhood into infancy, childhood, and adolescence. Erikson expanded and elaborated upon these stages, and

believed that "young adults" (aged nineteen to twenty-five) differed psychologically from mature and old-aged adults. Although not as elaborately developed as the other life stages he defined, Erikson's psychosocial model of young adulthood highlights the periods of uniqueness. Developmentally, young adulthood arrives when resolution of adolescent identity crisis has occurred. Young adulthood, Erikson's sixth stage of development, presents the conflict between "intimacy and isolation" (Erikson, 1963). According to Erikson, it is in this stage that young adults must risk intimacy or else suffer from feelings of isolation. Intimacy is predicated upon the young adult feeling secure about his/her ego boundaries. Strong ego development allows the young adult to relate with another without fear of jeopardizing or losing his/her own identity. For Erikson, the development of identity requires that the young adult emotionally and physically separate from the family of origin (read: mother) in order to develop autonomous and healthy intimate relationships.

George Vaillant (1977) and Edgar Levinson (1978), following in the wake of Erikson, studied the path of adult development. Like Erikson, Vaillant took a sequential view of life stages, theorizing that one task must be mastered before the next could be confronted. In Vaillant's "intimacy" stage, young adults face the primary developmental task of forging an autonomous existence and sense of self that is strong enough to enter relationships with others. It is during this stage that conflicts regarding career and relationships surface. Vaillant believed that young adults in the "novice phase" between that age of seventeen and thirty-three need to emotionally and physically separate from their parents, what he calls "old familial relationships," in order to achieve marriage and career--the tasks of the following stage. Levinson supports the idea that separation is the major component in transitioning to Early Adulthood: "numerous

separations, losses and transformations are required...to make a step into the adult world” (Levinson, p. 73).

Roger Gould's *Phases of Adult Life: a Study in Developmental Psychology* (1972) expanded on Erikson's young adult stage of “Intimacy versus Isolation” (Erikson, *Identity, Youth and Crisis*, 1968). Gould refers to “Intimacy and Distantiation versus Self-Absorption.” Like his predecessors, Gould's theme is that individuals must develop their sense of self in order to relate on an intimate level with others and achieve the coveted by-product, trust. Unlike his predecessors, Gould's research examined both men *and* women. Gould's own study of young adults, (ages twenty to forty) led him to build a theory of development as marked by transformations. Gould proposed, with humor, two stages of young adulthood. Gould calls his earlier stage, between eighteen and twenty-two years of age, the “Get Away From Parent Years.” The young adult breaks from their parents in search of autonomy while suffering from temporary and occasional bouts of homesickness. Young adults live away from home while attending school, may have jobs, relationships, and some financial responsibility. They are, however, still only partially independent emotionally. As Gould wrote, young adults think, “Real living is right around the corner.” Gould's second stage, “I'm Nobody's Baby,” occurs between twenty-two and twenty-eight years of age. Young adults in this period demonstrate a strong sense of confidence and competence. The young adults feel that they are engaged in the work of being adults but still look to a parent for approval. Great emphasis is placed on modulating emotions to prevent the disappointing cycle of what Gould calls “high-highs soon followed by low-lows.” This stage alone, without any other complicating issues, is trying but when coupled with a mother's death, can be severely debilitating for the young adult motherless women who are the subjects of this study.

Havighurst's *Concept of Developmental Tasks* (1953) offers a sequential theory of development from a 1950's traditional gender role approach. For him, achievement of autonomy is a slow process that occurs during a period of rapid change. Young adulthood is stressful because of its varied and important tasks: selecting a mate and learning to live together, starting a career, and raising a family. Augmenting the stress is the knowledge that social expectations demand successful completion of developmental tasks.

Similarly, Robert White's "Growth Trends" (1975) also highlights young adults' emotional development. In White's first stage, "Stabilizing of Ego Identity," young adults realize their developing capacity to influence the world around them. Then in the second stage, which he calls "Freeing," young adults begin to develop their own preferences and tastes free from parental influence. This "Freeing" process may be useful to understand what facilitates the Havighurst developments. The selection of a career and mate requires a large degree of "Freeing." In White's third stage, "Humanizing of Values," young adults continue to develop individual morals, ideals, and values. These decisions become incorporated into the young adults' identity. In the fourth and final stage, "Expansion of Caring," young adults, now mostly autonomous, have an extended social conscience evident in their social action and global concerns. In addition, they now possess their own sense of nurturing. Despite the increasing separation from their parents, this newfound development of care and concern allows young adults to be emotionally connected to their parents. Put another way, the young adult child has her own spontaneous empathic reactions and can communicate that empathy in a constructive manner. For example, in an earlier phase of development the young adult might have only a vague awareness that her parents are close to paying off their mortgage. Individuals in White's

fourth stage of development, who have already made developmental progress, (i.e., the young adult paying their own monthly rent or mortgage) can celebrate such a feat with them. A similar phenomenon will be discussed later in this chapter in the section on literature about mother-young adult daughter relationships.

Rudolph Wittenburg's psychoanalytic theory further profiles the emotional activity of young adults (Postadolescence,1968). Wittenburg's first stage, "Move Toward Autonomy," elicits a self-image crisis as the ego-ideal develops and the young adult becomes her own authority. During this volatile process, the young adult may feel temporarily isolated as she experiences a brief loss of her sense of self. It is at this stage that the young adult's *Weltanschauung* (philosophy of life) emerges replete with ideals, values, and beliefs. Wittenburg notes that this temporary loss of identity may drive young adults to join a social, political, or religious group. In his second stage, "Awareness of Time," young adults focus their new ability to make long-term plans. Because the young adult can now consider the past, present, and future, she is better able to divide her energies. (With this differentiated awareness of time, and her vision of its best use for her goals or needs, the young adult woman can make behavioral choices that support her near and long term plans.) Wittenburg's final stage is characterized by the search for a partner for "Permanent Affiliation." In this phase young adults actively seek replacement for love objects now that separation from their parents is complete from an intra-psycho perspective, partnering represents the ultimate integration of ego. It should be noted, that these aforementioned theories derived largely from studies limited to middle-class, heterosexual, Western culture male participants. In an effort to further counter-balance the male dominated theorists, it is imperative to give audience to the Feminist voice.

## (B) Feminist Theory

*"Comparing women's capacities, experiences, and growth to these models has led to a deficiency or deviancy model of female psychology". (Steele, 1985, p. 281)*

Erikson, Vaillant, and Levinson have made a considerable contribution to the study of lifecycle development. Feminist theorists, such as Marilyn Steele and her colleagues, Jean Baker Miller (1976), and Nancy Chodrow (1978), however, claim that the developmental theories of these authors are marked by male bias and inherent promotion of the patriarchy. The ideas of these three male theorists were developed from the experiences of white male subjects, and then applied to the rest of society. Carol Gilligan demonstrates how this subjugation of the female experience is inherent in Erikson's language. For example, he describes "eight ages of *man*" rather than the "eight ages of *humans*" (1968). This exclusion marginalizes the experience of women and minorities.

In their writings, feminist authors challenge the basic assumption that developing young women must separate from their mothers in order to gain autonomy, and demanded that the bias of the earlier models be confronted when female psychology is explored (Krieger, 1997; Dinnerstein, 1976; Rossi, 1980; Gilligan, 1982; Chodorow, 1978). Feminist theorists believe that men and women are reared and socialized differently resulting in distinct emotional development (Chodorow, 1978). Men are raised believing that autonomy is the ultimate ideal and separation from one's mother is the vehicle to accomplish that goal. The ideal for women, however, is intimacy (Gilligan, 1982; Fox, 1979). Due to this distinction, feminist thinkers believe that the continuation of the bond between mother and daughter and the persistence of

maternal encouragement helps, rather than hinders, the development of mature independence. This distinction profoundly effects development and causes a fundamental difference in male and female psychology.

Feminist writers have claimed that developmental theory is not only based on male psychology (making it, therefore, not necessarily accurate for women), but also biased against the female developmental process. Attachment has been described by male developmental researchers as having a needy, invasive quality that is a mark of continued immaturity (Krieger, 1997). By devaluing and dysfunctionalizing the young adult daughter-mother attachment, the developmental psychologists such as Valliant (1977), Erickson (1963; 1968; 1980), and Levinson (1978) have ignored the meaningful, empathetic, and intimate qualities of the relationship. To rectify this oversight, feminist-oriented attachment theory researchers have de-emphasized "separation and autonomy from mothers" in favor of "attachment, mutuality and interdependence" (Fischer, 1981, 1986; Baruch & Barnett, 1983).

Feminist-oriented theorists suggest that women can reach psychological maturity while maintaining emotional ties their mothers (Friedman, 1980; Sutor, 1987; Young, 1962). Young writes, "The fact is that to be dependent on a mother figure and to be attached to her are very different things" (Young, 1962). Moreover, it is these ties that facilitate and enrich young women's separation-individuation process (Thompson & Walker, 1984; Walker & Thompson, 1983; Sutor, 1987; Bassoff, 1988). Feminist-oriented theorists take issue with the way developmental psychologists make the mother-daughter relationship pathological and question why the primary goal of young adulthood is necessarily separation. They view the mother-

daughter bond as a "side-by-side, close relationship" and not as an "enmeshed or encumbered" attachment (Bassoff, 1988).

Gloria Friedman's *The Mother-Daughter Bond* (1980), employing a feminist-psychoanalytic approach, differentiates between attachment bonds and dependency. She writes that the attachment bond should not be considered a form of unhealthy or abnormal dependency; rather it is something unrelated and different. Moreover, this bond should be fostered as it permits separation to result and endows the daughter with feelings of security and acceptance. Whereas, dependency yields remorse, regret, guilt and feeling of insecurity.

Young adulthood, in the context of this study, is arguably one of the most stressful times of a woman's life. Rapid role changes in quick succession, coupled with the lack of a firm identity, can wreak havoc on her emotional stability and well-being. The traditional theorists like Erikson, Vaillant, Levinson and Gould essentially require that the young woman separate from her mother in order to achieve adulthood. For them, the consequences of not separating from mother may jeopardize the daughter's ability to trust in another person (read: marry). In contrast, the feminist theorists like Chodorow, Gilligan, Dinnerstein, Miller, Steele and Krieger resist maternal separation and appreciate that healthy mother daughter relationship can actually facilitate, not stymie, maturation.

According to the more traditional developmental models, death of a parent during young adulthood is a problematic interruption of the process of separation and individuation. The feminist model, however, dictates that death during this stage disrupts the positive intimacy and

connectedness between mother and daughter causing a profound loss that threatens the emotional stability and developmental progress of the daughter (Jordan, 1991). Wilcox-Ritgers writes that, “women know themselves through their relationship to others” (Wilcox-Ritgers, p. 67). These ideas suggest that sudden loss of an important other during the tumultuous period of young adulthood can cause extreme anxiety over decision-making and difficulty in the formation of the adult self. If a close mother-daughter bond fosters the process of young adult development, death of a mother does not free the daughter from an impediment, but rather sets her adrift without support and before she has redefined her role in relationship to her primary female model. The above ideas are predicated on the belief that the daughter internalized the mother object through the process of Attachment, as outlined in the following section.

### (C) Attachment Theory

*“The history of the bond is enduring and active.” (Bowlby, 1969)*

*Milestones without Mothers* concentrates on young adult women who self-reported close positive relationships with their mothers. Central to every relationship, but especially pronounced in the mother-daughter relationship, is the issue of maternal attachment. Bowlby's (1958, 1969) observations on the attachments between the child and her caregiver paved the way for later attachment theory. According to Bowlby, attachment is an enduring and affectionate bond a person has with a specific person. Separation from this person will cause distress once an infant has developed some capacity for object permanence and has formed her inner representation of the person. At this point, attachment to her caregiver has been established, as have her “internal working models.” Her mental picture of how the infant understands her

behavior in relation to that of her caregivers has been developed (Carranza & Kilmann, 2000). It is this understanding that enables an older child to tolerate separation from her caregiver for longer periods with less distress. This internal working model can be employed throughout the life cycle. The tie between mother and daughter has been reported as the strongest and most persistent connection made between two persons throughout life (Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Boyd, 1989; Friedman, 1980; Edelman, 1999; Strimling, 1994; Thompson & Walker, 1984; Groh, 1994; Rossi & Rossi, 1991) and clearly portrays the accuracy and value of Attachment Theory.

Building on Bowlby's work, Ainsworth (1989) appreciated attachment behavior as a mechanism of survival. Certain infant attachment behaviors are most guaranteed to produce a specific response in the caregiver/mother. This guarantee of response puts the infant in a more secure position for continued survival. A crying infant demonstrates this point well. The infant cries and the caregiver/mother draws closer and offers to the infant necessary food, warmth, or attention. As the caregiver/mother continues to offer attention over time, the infant gradually begins to discern between people and learns to direct different attachment behaviors accordingly (Ainsworth, 1989). This style of attachment continues to hold its shape through adolescence, as the young woman begins to develop a host of additional attachments to peers of both sexes. The pressing need and push for autonomy in young adulthood changes, but does not eliminate a young woman's attachment to her mother. As a young adult woman begins to establish her own identity, the nature of her attachment is adjusted (Fischer, 1986; Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Edelman, 1999).

#### (D) Mother-Daughter Relationships

*“...women who are mentally healthy and functioning effectively concomitantly demonstrate high levels of attachment.” (Davis and Jones, 1992)*

Attachment theorists, as previously noted, demonstrate that attachment is an enduring and life-long affective bond. Yet, less attention has been given to the nature and quality of mother-daughter relationship as it evolves into young adulthood. The literature that has investigated this dynamic relationship tends to focus on extremes of the lifespan: daughters as children (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1989) or daughters as adult women (Bromberg, 1983). Of the few studies conducted on this bond, even fewer researchers have examined the relationship between mothers and young adult daughters (Fingerman, 2000; Thompson & Walker, 1984). Of these researchers, there is an even smaller group that represents and characterizes the relationship in this stage as positive, healthy and productive.

Although mixed in their ultimate conclusions, some researchers prefer to highlight the initially strained and conflicted nature of the mother-young adult daughter relationship. For these researchers, the mother-young adult daughter bond inhibits or restricts true separation and individuation thereby preventing the maturation of the daughter. Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983), Friday (1977), and Deutsch (1945) seem to at least superficially agree with Erikson's model that the conflicting bond is marked by dependency, enmeshment and over-involvement. These researchers maintain that some degree of physical and emotional separation is fundamental for the daughters' emotional growth. Unlike Erikson, however, once separation has been achieved, the mother-daughter relationship may resume. In this spirit of classical

psychoanalytic theory, Eichenbaum and Orbach (1983) suggest that the mother-daughter relationship can only be rekindled after the daughter becomes a mother herself. It is then that the daughter is able to realize how much she is like her mother.

Other researchers use less pathologizing language to describe a close mother-daughter relationship. They believe that these bonds of attachment represent enhanced self-esteem and higher levels of psychological well-being (Barnett, 1988; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). These specific mother-young adult daughter studies have been factually substantiated: young adult daughters who are emotionally close with their mothers have been noted to have higher levels of empathy (Spira & Kenemore, 2000); Groh, 1994; Jordan, 1991), sense of connectedness (Fisher, 1981), feelings of security (Chodorow, 1978), feelings of empowerment (Jordan & Surrey, 1986), feelings of support (Baruch & Barnett, 1983), feelings of trust and affection (Fox, 1979), and lower levels of anxiety, distress, and sense of helplessness (Baruch & Barnett, 1983). The achievement of a woman's independent adult status that is inclusive of maternal attachment represents the ultimate integration of self and other, past and future, and autonomy absent isolation. An independent young adult woman with strong mother attachment may be emotionally stronger than her peers who have separated and renounced their mothers.

Central to this study is the idea that the strong mother-daughter attachment bond affects the experience of losing that relationship to death. Despite the general belief in the psychoanalytic field in the necessity of mother-child bonding, Attachment Theory rarely discusses positive, healthy mother-young adult daughter relationships. The few studies that recognize positive mother-young adult daughter bonds have examined the issue in the context of

geographic proximity (Fischer, 1981; Davis & Jones, 1992), frequency of contact (Fingerman, 2000; Walker & Thompson, 1983; Davis & Jones, 1992), mutual exchange of goods and services (Fenchel, 1998; Sutor, 1987; Rossi & Rossi, 1991), and value orientation (Strimling, 1994). Studies have also examined enjoyment of the mother-daughter relationship (Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995), psychological benefits for the daughter (Amato, 1994), trans-generational communication, i.e., young adult daughter-mother-grandmother (Thompson & Walker, 1984), the mother's perspective (Gross, 1985), the daughter's care-giving role (Bromberg, 1983; Baruch & Barnett, 1983), the daughter's developmental transitions (Fischer, 1981, 1986), a voluntary relationship between mother and daughter (Welleford, 1998; Krieger, 1997), and the young adult daughter's sense of being understood and respected by their mother (Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995).

As Settlege and Galenson (1976) wrote, "adult women need mothering, too." Though most of the literature appears to denigrate mother-young adult daughter attachments, it seems that the few researchers who endeavored documenting positive attachment relationships as healthy, are informative and substantial. A further examination of the mother-young-adult daughter bond will demonstrate how the loss of a mother in this development period can put the daughter's emotional functioning at risk.

### Section Three:

#### Mother-loss

*Motherless Daughters : The Legacy of Loss* (Edelman, 1994) is the most frequently cited book on mother-loss. Edelman in many ways pioneered mother-loss literature, articulating its impact on the surviving daughter. She explores the grief process of motherless daughters through interviewing 146 adult women of all ages whose mothers had died about their recollections. Edelman largely focuses on daughters who lose their mothers as children or as mature adults. However, she does underscore the importance of loss in young adulthood, calling that group “the most overlooked and misunderstood daughter of all” (page 54). Edelman maintains that an erroneous assumption is often made that the daughter, as a young adult, no longer needs her mother as the “Traditionalist Theorists” assert. Edelman also appreciates the attachment bond at this stage between mother and adult daughter. She notes, accordingly, that mother-loss during this stage causes the daughter to suffer “secondary losses.” Not only does she lose a mother, but a supportive friend as well. For Edelman, this secondary loss denies the daughter a mother to spoil her grandchildren. The associated losses that are mourned along side the major loss of death (LaGrand, 1986) demonstrates the total depth of loss the young woman feels. It is the discussion of these “secondary losses” that is paramount to the investigation performed in *Milestones without Mothers*.

Additional literature can be applied to the study of mother-loss that addresses the experience of young adult grief in a broader sense. For example, Louis La Grand states, “For young adults, first death experiences are a double tragedy-it forces the grievers to not only

realize the depth of their own personal loss but also challenges their view of the world and recognize how little control they have over their environment” (LaGrand, 1986). The experience of first death is a harsh reality at any age, but for it to strike during young adulthood can be especially devastating. LaGrand maintains that young adults attempt to mourn alone. From their perspective, seeking support would indicate their dependency, need, and immaturity. Their struggle for autonomy places them at risk to become “hidden mourners,” leaving them bereft of emotional support. Further complicating the grief process for young adult women is their newly actualized sense of responsibility and fully internalized empathy.

According to *Stress Theory*, the death of a parent can disrupt the family organization and force a redefinition of family member roles (Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 1996). People tend to think of themselves in relation to the people around them (Wong, 1995). When a mother dies, her daughter experiences the loss of numerous familial roles and others are assumed. She is no longer her mother’s daughter, helper, and friend. Nor is she the recipient of her mother’s support. “Who is she now?” Her very entity and being is thrown into chaos. In addition, in the absence of their mothers, young adult female children are sometimes thrust into the role of caretaker for their grieving siblings and widowed fathers.

Moreover, for most young adults, parents remain a primary source of support. This support can be pivotal in all areas of the young adult’s life: emotional/affective, practical, and informational (Cleiren, 1993). Death of a parent means the loss of these emotionally sustaining structures (Cicirelli, 1991). Young adults, often in a phase of constant transition, rely on these types of parental support. When such support is lost, the individual is left in a state of

vulnerability (Lifton & Olson, 1974). Important decisions are made in forced isolation from a trusted source, the deceased parent. These decisions are often made alone electively, due to the changed nature of relationships with surviving family members and social isolation from a peer group that is unable to easily identify with the newly complicated decision-making process.

Supporting this social isolation factor, Richard Kalish in *Death, Grief and Caring Relationships* (1985) adds that young adult grievers are unlikely to have the level of support typical of a young or fully matured child or a widowed adult. Young adults often grieve alone. For this reason, the young adult's continued attachment—even after the death of the attachment figure—should be fostered as it can provide the griever with a sense of security (Bretherton, Biringen, & Ridgeway, 1991). This continued bond eases the transition of separation anxiety and severe emotional upset.

With little exception, the literature on mother-loss during young adulthood is limited and few researchers have explored the bereavement of young adults as it relates to mother-loss (Wilcox-Rittgers, 1997; Edelman, 1994, 1999; Fleming & Adolph, 1985). Wilcox-Rittgers' *Maternal Death in Late Adolescence/Early Adulthood and Psychological Development in Women* (1997), explored the psychological impact of mother-loss on the development of young women between ages nineteen and twenty-eight. A control group of eighteen young women with living mothers makes this study unique. The development of these young women was assessed in comparison to the twelve young female subjects with deceased mothers. Wilcox-Rittgers found that the motherless young adult women, already in the process of redefining and reshaping their identity, may experience an arrest in their personality development. Wilcox-

Rittgers concluded that for the young women to regain healthy functioning, they needed to develop a new identity that incorporated both the loss of their relationship with their mothers and the loss of aspects of themselves that existed in connection to their mother. Although modified, this is consistent with earlier findings on the necessity of integration and Cognitive Theory (Thorton, et al., 1995; Bretherton, 1991; Cleiren, 1993; Parkes, 1972).

Although Fleming and Adolph (1985) studied largely adolescent grief, some of their participants were as old as twenty-one; their conclusions are noteworthy for this study. Their Erikson-oriented study concluded that young adults have a harsher struggle with mother-loss than mature adults who lose elderly parents. This struggle, the researchers contend, is tied to the developmental disruption of separation-individuation. The death of a mother forces her child to mourn a permanent loss. Making an emotional-psychological separation from the mother is a trying developmental task even without performing the work of mourning. Experience of loss compounds the difficulty of separation from the mother.

The theory of attachment, though originating from studies of mother-infant/child relationships, has a great deal to offer when applied to young adult motherloss. Parkes (1972) and his colleagues (Stevenson-Hine, Marris, Weiss, Glick), employing an intrapsychic-medical model, linked Bowlby and Ainsworth's concept of separation anxiety to grief. Death is a crisis event that fills the griever with feelings of extreme anxiety, fear, and confusion, which evade usual/standard coping mechanisms (Weizman & Kamm, 1985; Donnelly, 1987). Parkes' model relies on a cognitive restructuring and cathartic process and was designed to facilitate emotional recovery. Cognitive theory requires that the individual integrate new information with old,

previous, or existing information until current cognitive schemata are in congruence with it (Cleiren, 1993). Mother-loss in young adulthood interrupts cognitive development. As a young adult woman is integrating her ever-increasing autonomy with the lessons and behaviors of childhood, her mother-loss eliminates one-half of a critical dialogue that would normally lead to optimal integration of her new and changing roles.

Applying Parkes' grief recovery model to young adult women mourning their mothers, their "recoveries" are predicated on each of their individual construction of new coping models to restore and regain his/her function and control. This can only be achieved if the young woman brings feeling to (cognition) consciousness, and then expresses the ideas and emotions associated with those feelings. In this sense, Parkes' conception of grief recovery is highly task oriented. Grief, much like disease, is something to be cured (Bowlby 1958; Charmaz 1980; Lindemann, 1944; Jordan, Kraus & Ware, 1993). Recovery is something the mourner must achieve, and this achievement can only be realized if emotions are verbalized and understood by the griever. Grief recovery is a process of realization-of making the death real from the "inside" and being able to acknowledge the reality and articulate the loss (Lindemann, 1944; Glick, Weiss & Parkes, 1974; Exline, Dorrity & Wortman, 1996). "Talking leads to eventual relief" and helps to release the acute sorrow (Weizman & Kamm, 1985).

Grief recovery paves the way for a new and independent level of functioning, an adjustment the griever must make if she is to go on. Recovery implies a return to the griever's pre-trauma state of functioning (Cleiren, 1993). Resolution helps some griever's reclaim former levels of functionality and well-being as suggested by Parkes (1972). Other griever's, however,

simply cannot return to former levels of functioning or need more time to grieve, especially if the loss was sudden or traumatic (Exline, Dorrity & Wartman, 1996; Jordan, Kraus & Ware, 1993). Sudden death is one variable that seems to contribute to a protracted “normal” grief period. Lindemann’s observations during the aftermath of Boston’s Coconut Grove Nightclub Fire (1944) helped to lay the groundwork on acute, delayed, and distorted grief that later gave rise to “post-traumatic stress disorder.” Lindemann also recognized that sudden and traumatic deaths can make the fact of the death intensely difficult to fully realize. It takes time for griever to integrate the loss and its impact into their lives. As such, the process is not necessarily one that can be viewed as “recovery”, per se, but a new (and potentially long lasting) integration of the death event. This integration seems to align with the feminist theorists who recommend that the female mourner reconnect with the deceased, not separate and sever ties to their deceased love one (Rando, 1993).

Should recovery fail to occur, the grief reaction may be assessed as “abnormal” (Parkes & Weiss, 1983). “Abnormal” grief typically stems from repression of emotion and avoidance of expression of emotion when it does surface. Pathological reactions can follow, impairing the griever’s level of functioning (Lindemann, 1944; Deutsch, 1945; Leick Davidsen-Neilson, 1991). “Old Sergeant’s Syndrome,” (Parkes & Weiss, 1983) a phrase coined by Janis, refers to a soldier who, after losing numerous friends in war, can no longer forge new friendships or relationships for fear of another loss. Janis’s theory attests to the necessity of articulating loss: by blocking their pain, these soldiers not only lost their ability to feel sorrow but their capacity for pleasure and enjoyment as well. The feminist theorists who consider grief reaction to be gender-specific embrace Janis’ “talk-it-out” approach. Rando (1993) suggests that most women allow

themselves to cry and often share their grief feelings with other family members or friends, whereas men tend to withhold expression and internalize their grief, perhaps making separation for them easier. These “talk-it-out approaches” seem to be out of reach for the young adult woman, as LaGrand (1986) points out that grieving, young adults are particularly vulnerable to isolation because their peers cannot relate to death experiences. Because these young adults are “out of synch” with their cohorts (who still have living parents), they are experientially isolated from an important source of support.

The implications of normal grief are not only psychological, but are expressed socially, behaviorally and physically as well (Rando, 1993; Parkes & Weiss, 1983). Psychologically, the two most common symptoms of grief are depression and anxiety (Parkes, Stevenson-Hine & Marris, 1993; Lindemann, 1944). The behavioral reactions can include crying, sighing, and seeking out or avoiding things associated with the deceased (Glick, Weiss & Parkes, 1974). Physical symptoms can include fatigue, excessive sleep, and appetite disorders. Socially, the griever may become isolated from her friends and family, which in turn can limit opportunities for processing or verbalizing her grief (Parkes, 1972). Without social support, the grief process is often hindered.

One can conclude from this section of the literature review that, after the death of a close and loved relative, the sadness of mourning is often accompanied by feelings of anxiety, fear, confusion, and depression. These feelings are frequently intense for young adult mourners who face instability and rapid change in their own lives. The tendency for young adults to mourn alone is compounded by the permanent loss caused by the death of a mother. This isolation not

only makes the task of grieving more difficult, but leaves the daughter in a vulnerable position when dealing with challenges in her own life. Loss of a mother during young adulthood also disrupts the separation-individuation process, perhaps prematurely forcing the daughter into an autonomous existence. She does not have the opportunity to slowly reshape her relationship to her mother from that of a dependent child to an independent woman. Instead the bond with the mother is suddenly broken, and often a new familial role is thrust upon the daughter. As will be demonstrated in the following sections of this paper, the intense emotions experienced by the young adult during the initial period of mourning are reawakened during moments of achievement and stress.

## Section Four:

### The Jewish Burial and Mourning Practices

*We each come to death with a deep history of family traditions and cultural expectations which are ingrained from early childhood...”*

To Honor the Dead & Comfort the Mourners: Traditions in Judaism (Cyron, 1993)

Jewish death literature is informed by the 3,000 year old Testament text that was codified in the Rabbinic (Hebrew) literature of *Torat Ha'Adam* (Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman, 1194-1270), *Maavar Yabok* (Berechaya Ben Moses 1638), and *Yoreh De'ah* (Shulchan Aruch, YD, 342-403, Circa 1575). It was further expanded and elaborated upon by more recent Rabbinic texts composed in English, including *The Book of Life* (Rabbi Benjamin Ascher, 1847), *The Handbook of Life* (The Buriel Society and Chevrah Kadisha of London, 1909), and *On the Laws of Mourning Avelut* (Rabbi Leopold Greenwald, 1947).

Contemporary Jewish death and mourning literature, written largely in English, can be characterized as philosophical, theological, or practical in nature (Katz, 1993; Weiss, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Rabinowicz, 1989; Goldberg, 1991). This review will focus on the practical or instructive Jewish literature as that is the body of work that most closely relates to the rituals and practices of Jews today. This summary will demonstrate the unique qualities of Jewish burial and mourning practices that make young adult Jewish women, the population for the study, distinctly different in their approach to grief. It is in this distinctiveness, that regrieving takes

shape and thus, it is important to establish Jewish mourning practices in order to understand Jewish regrieving.

Feminist writers have made advancements in this field. Their literature on death, however, does not receive focused attention. Rather, it is usually covered in discussions of Jewish law and tradition in chapters that also discuss birth, marriage, divorce, dietary practice, and holiday celebrations (Greenberg, 1983; Diamant and Cooper, 1991; Drucker, 1984; Millen, 2003). Only Anne Brener's 2004 work, *Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner's Path through Grief to Healing*, concentrates strictly on burial and bereavement. Her volume, simple in approach, presents an overview of the topic in guidebook-self-help format with accompanying exercises. Anita Diamant's *Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort The Dying, Bury The Dead & Mourn As A Jew*, published in 1998, stays close to the burial and bereavement topic, but also includes a section on Jewish thoughts for "end-of-life" and "dying" issues.

Just as the Feminist writers are gaining voice in this area, it should also be noted that writers from the non- Orthodox or what the literature describes as "liberal" Judaism too is gaining momentum (Diamant & Cooper, 1991; Diamant, 1998; Wolfson, 1993; Bank, 2005; Brener, 2004). These authors write from an inclusive, even pluralistic perspective, speaking to both the Orthodox and non-Orthodox communities, and noting various expressions of more liberal customs performed today that use traditions in a way that both reflect and conform to their individuality. The majority of the extensive literature, however, still stems mostly from the (Modern) Orthodox denomination. These works are often penned by Rabbis and/or Orthodox scholars (Lamm, 1969; Rabinowicz, 1989; Goldberg, 1991; Weinberger & Schacter, 2003). This

perhaps creates a bias in the findings. Alternatively, it suggests that current Jewish tradition, even among the affiliated, but less observant Jew is rooted in Orthodox tradition. None-the-less, irrespective of observancy and denomination, there does seem to be a consensus among the writers about the most basic tenets of Jewish burial and mourning (Goldman; 2003; Katz, 1993). Almost all texts refer to the practice of burial in a plain pine box without nails, engraving, or adornment (Cohen, 2004; Katz, 1993; Goldberg, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Kraemer, 2000; Weinberger & Schacter 1995; Weiss, 1991; Weinberger & Schacter, 2003). In addition, it is frequently mentioned that embalming and cremation go against Jewish law and custom (Rabinowicz, 1989).

The 1985 “Study on Attitudes and Importance of Jewish Practice,” performed by the Institute for Jewish & Community Research, demonstrates with statistical data that the burial practices mentioned in the literature retain their importance for Jews today across denominations. The participants included Jews who self-identified as unaffiliated, Reconstructionist, Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. The study indicates that fifty-five percent of those interviewed felt that having a Jewish funeral and burial was “very important” to them (Tobin, Tobin, and Rubin). An additional twenty-two percent felt that having a Jewish funeral and burial was “somewhat important” to them. This survey therefore, demonstrates that seventy-seven percent stress the significance of a Jewish burial.

Jewish literature on death and grieving rituals provides extensively detailed and highly descriptive information on burial and mourning practices. The literature categorizes death and mourning into chronological periods, each defined by its own set of Jewish laws (Goldberg,

1991; Lamm 1969; Wolfson, 1993). Anita Diamant (1998) describes these stages as the Jewish “blueprint” for the mourner. These blueprints describe at length the initial shock, the mourner’s anguish, the process of grieving, and then the slow resumption of everyday life without the deceased (Katz, 1993; Cyron, 1993; Goldberg, 1991). Weiss (1991), Diamant (1991) Katz (1993) and others, describes five generally accepted phases of Jewish mourning: “Aninut” (from death until burial completion), “Shivah” (a period lasting seven days from the burial), “Shloshim” (a period lasting thirty days from burial), “Yud Bet” (the period lasting from the end of “Shloshim” until the one year anniversary of the burial), and Yizkor/Yahrzeit (days of remembrance that occur several times a year annually). Some authors expand these five basic mourning events into seven periods, including funeral service and the unveiling of the tombstone (Rabinowicz, 1989; Weinberger & Schacter, 2003).

Understanding the distinct nature of Jewish death custom is necessary to contend with the unique quality of Jewish mourning and grief, the underpinnings of regrieving and of this dissertation. To enhance this understanding, the following discussion will provide additional detail about the five stages of Jewish mourning described by Weiss and colleagues.

### *Aninut*

The first stage, “Aninut,” is the period immediately after death lasting through burial, including the funeral service and graveside prayers. Brener translates the Hebrew root word of “An” to mean “complain, wail or be sorry” (1993). The literature describes a mourner in this initial period as numb with disbelief and paralyzed with shock (Lamm, 1969; Goldberg, 1991). The mourner is at their most vulnerable, and is unable to make important decisions (Diamant, 1998). Jewish law and custom protect the mourner, alleviating extra anxiety and confusing

choices. Several authors have theorized that the reason Jewish law dictates the rituals for burial in such detail is to compensate for the mourner's inability to make decisions (Weiss, 1991; Goldberg, 1991).

From the instant of death, Jewish law mandates that an assigned "shomer," (a watcher) guard over the body so that it is never left alone. Knowing that the deceased is protected from disrespect and cared for according to Jewish tradition relieves the mourners' anxiety (Cyron, 1993). Preparation of the body for burial is also taken out of the mourner's hands. The *Hevrah Kaddisha*, the holy burial society, in many regions assumes this responsibility. Their preparation includes a ritual washing, after which the deceased is clothed in a simple, white linen shroud and placed in a plain wood coffin (Cohen, 2004). (If the *Hevrah Kaddisha* is not available the Jewish funeral home is prepared to undertake this responsibility.) The description of the role of the burial society in the literature is often incredibly detailed including not only the prayers said during the preparatory rituals, but also practical details, such as the volume of water required for cleansing, the proper manner of shrouding the body, and the position the body should assume in the coffin (Lamm, 1969, Cohen, 2004). As the garb for the body and the type of coffin are prescribed, and embalming, open casket funerals, and flowers are strictly prohibited, Jewish law protects the mourners from overwhelming decisions (Katz, 1993; Weinberger, 1995).

The funeral service laws, rituals, and practices are elaborately detailed by the literature. A significant Jewish law, practiced by many denominations of Judaism, is "Kri'ah" (to rend or rip). The mourner recites the *Kri'ah* blessing, *Dayan Hamet*, recognizing G-d's judgement (Shulchan Aruch, YD, 340) and the mourner tears his/her garment just before to the funeral

service to represent that the relationship with the deceased has been cut-off by death (Drucker, 1984). If they are mourning a parent, the law dictates that their outer garment on the left side, closest to the heart, is torn. “Kri’ah,” the literature explains, is to “arouse weeping and increase the mourner’s grief” as the Rabbis understood that crying brings relief” (Goldberg, 1991). This ripped garment may be laundered, but should be worn continuously by the mourner for seven days (Lamm, 1969; Weinberger & Schacter, 2003). Current practice among the more liberal allows for a black ribbon, pinned on the left side of the chest, to be worn in lieu of ripped garments (Diamant, 1998).

The manner in which the coffin is buried is also mandated. Distinct from the usual modern practice, Jewish law prohibit burial by cemetery workers or machinery. Rather, those present at the funeral service are commanded to take a shovel and fill in the hole with earth until the casket is completely covered (Goldberg, 1991; Bank, 2005). Family and friends place the shovel in the mound of dirt after they have placed dirt on the coffin and do not pass the shovel to one another until the earth completely fills in the hole (Lamm, 1969). This, according to the literature, ensures that the body is guarded until the final moments.

### *Shiv’ah*

The “Shiv’ah,” the second stage, begins immediately after burial and is also uniquely Jewish. Often translated into “seven days of formal mourning,” it is during this period that the mourner sits low to the ground on a bench, cushion-less couch, or on the floor to demonstrate that they are “struck down by grief” (Diamant, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Weinberger, 1995). This period is designated for grieving and reflecting about one’s loss. The mourner again is commanded to “weep over his deceased and to light a candle to honor the deceased which burns

for seven days” (Karo, 1500: 377). Although customs and adherence to Jewish law vary, in some communities it is traditional to cover all the mirrors in the mourner’s house so that you do not see your own sadness (Rabinowicz, 1989). Alternatively, covering of the mirrors could symbolize grieving without vanity (Moed Katan Talmud, 3). Daily routine stops and work, in almost all instances, is prohibited (Weinberger, 1995). The mourner is forbidden to isolate himself (Weiss, 1991). Part of this demands participation in a condolence meal prepared by someone from the community: “G-d commands others to bring him their food and to see to it that he eats” (Moed Katan Talmud, 3). The act of preparing this meal demonstrates that there are people who are concerned for the mourners’ well-being.

With Shiv’ah begins the most long term obligation for the mourner, to recite the memorial prayer, Kaddish during the three-times daily prayer services. The recitation of the Kaddish gives “voice to the mourner’s suffering, thus disabling repression” (Katz, p. 204). Crying is encouraged and accepted. Ari Goldman (2003) has maintained that the product of saying Kaddish is equal to the “work” of mourning. Jewish law requires a group of ten to be assembled for Kaddish to be recited (Goldman, 2003; Katz, 1993). In the Orthodox tradition, this must be ten men, while the Conservative and Reform movements count ten individuals irrespective of gender (Diamant, 1998). The gathering of ten people provides the mourners again with on-going communal support and solace.

Religious tradition also promotes communal support in the form of Shiv’ah calls, or visits to the mourners’ home. It is considered a “Mitzvah” (good act or kind deed) to pay such a call: “It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting” (Ecclesiastes,

7:2). Community members pay a Shiva call to the mourner to show concern, join in prayer, or to help prepare food. The Shiva visit encourages conversation about the deceased, and helps enable even the most stoic to receive solace, embrace and comfort (Goldberg, 1991).

### *Shloshim*

“Shloshim,” the third segment of mourning, literally means “thirty.” After the initial seven days of Shiv’ah, during the thirty day period after burial, the mourner recommences their obligations and daily affairs. This includes returning to work, caring for and playing with children, marital relations, and family meals. The mourner, however, continues to recite the Kaddish during the three times a day prayers, and refrains from cutting hair, beards, or nails, listening to music, and attending celebrations (Lamm, 1969; Rabinowicz, 1989; Weinberger, 1995). The literature defines this stage as a “transition period.” Although the mourner begins to resume daily obligations, their fragile state is accounted for by Jewish law. Jewish law, according to Diamant (1998), sets up “a protective fence” to keep the mourners “sheltered” from the outside world. The mandated continuation of Kaddish recitation ensures that the griever join in quorum of at least ten people three times a day to protect them from being alienated in their sorrow (Goldman, 2003; Witztum, 2001).

At the end of Shloshim, formal mourning for a spouse, sibling, half sibling or child concludes. All “outward” expressions of mourning now cease, Kaddish recitation terminates, hair, beards and nails may now be cut, and the mourner may attend a celebration (Lamm, 1969; Rabinowicz, 1989; Wolfson, 1993). If the surviving party is mourning a parent, however, Jewish law requires an additional eleven months of restrictions and prohibitions (Katz, 1993; Goldberg, 1991; Diamant, 1998). The mourner is required to continue reciting the Kaddish three times a

day, forcing him/her to continue to be within the “protective confines” of the community (Diamant, 1998). According to Jewish law they are in an active, though less intense, stage of grief. During this time, they are restricted from attending any functions or celebratory events, and from cutting their hair, beards or nails until a respected friend or family member insists they do so (Weinberger & Schacter, 2003). It is customary to visit the grave of the deceased at the end of Shloshim, as the literature finds that at this stage, the mourner understands that separation is final and that the normalization process can slowly begin to resume (Lamm, 1969).

### *Yud Bet Chodesh*

Yud Bet Chodesh, the twelfth month, is the fourth and concluding segment of the formal mourning period for a parent. It occurs at the one year anniversary of the death as Jewish law maintains that it may take a full year of mourning to come to terms with the separation and loss (Diamant, 1998). Some communities terminate Kaddish and mourning obligations at the eleventh month (Drucker, 1984; Goldberg, 1991; Goldman, 2003). The Yud Bet marks the end of the “firsts” for the mourners. The full circle of the calendar year, filled with birthdays, wedding anniversaries, holidays, and perhaps other happy milestones of bar mitzvahs, weddings and births have been experienced without the deceased (Diamant & Cooper, 1991; Millen, 2003).

Yud Bet can be commemorated in several ways. First, it is Jewish tradition to give charity in memory of the dead, as the contribution is considered a way of keeping the memory alive (Lamm, 1969). Often, the unveiling of the tomb or foot stone is held near the date of the one year anniversary. The literature describes this final act as a “closure that allows the psyche to prepare” for a new life without the deceased (Kidorf, 1966). Goldberg references Genesis 35,

“It is an obligation to erect a monument as Jacob placed a Monument upon her grave” (1991, p. 382).

### *Yizkor /Yarzheit*

*Yizkor* is Hebrew for “rememberence”, and *Yarzheit* is Yiddish for “a year’s time”. These mark the fifth stage of grief, one which is remembered periodically in perpetuity. The literature notes that the Jewish calendar mandates four times in the year when the mourner, now survivor, recites a *Yizkor*, a special memorial prayer, and lights a memorial candle. The literature notes that as the months and years go on, sometimes the survivor may need to reconnect to the deceased, especially during the holidays of Passover, Sukkot, Yom Kippur and Shavuot (Lamm, 1969; Goldberg, 1991). It is during these designated times that a special memorial remembrance prayer, *Yizkor*, is recited (Rabinowicz, 1989). The *Yarzheit* is individual and recited on the anniversary of a death. Abner Weiss writes, “anniversaries are a natural occasion for remembrance as they evoke bittersweet emotions” (p. 163). The mourner lights a memorial candle, recites the Kaddish prayer three times throughout the day in memory of their loved one, and may visit the grave where they place a stone on the tomb, showing that the deceased had visitors (Weinberger, 1995).

The meaning of loss differs not only from person to person, but also from culture to culture (Cyron, 1993). In treatment, the cultural and religious backgrounds of the patient must be considered. The unique aspects of Jewish mourning discussed here can help the therapist to take an integrative, culturally sensitive approach. It is important for the clinician to appreciate that Jewish death rituals not only honor the departed or G-d, but also aim to help the mourner grieve while supported by the community. As mentioned, customs vary among the different

sects and with differing levels of observancy. The practices, outlined here, however, are essential for those affiliated Jews and make Jewish mourning unique. It is, therefore, essential to understand the distinct quality of Jewish mourning in order to help the young adult Jewish women of this study.

## **Section Five:**

### Milestones

When major alterations in normative developmental roles collide with a young adult woman's recent maternal loss, re-grieving may ensue. This experience may be acutely felt if maternal loss precedes a milestone. What are milestones and why do they seem to be precipitators of re-grieving? The following section details the characteristics, hardships, and vulnerability that often accompany milestones in normative, middle-class scenarios.

The transition into adulthood often brings with it numerous changes including leaving the parental home, the end of student status and the beginning of full-time employment, marriage, and parenthood (Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995; Rindfuss, 1991; Ward & Spitz, 1992; Littwin, 1986; Sherrod, 1996; Sherrod, Haggerty & Featherman, 1993; Thurner, 1983). The literature acknowledges that stress accompanies these changes, and that the person experiencing the milestone event is in a vulnerable position (Stewart, Sokol, Healy & Hihane, 1986; Ridfuss, 1991; Ward & Spitze, 1992; Littwin, 1986; Sherrod, 1996; Sherron, Haggerty & Featherman, 1993; Wittenberg 1968; Levinson, 1978; Erikson, 1980; Gould, 1972; Rindfuss, Cooksey & Sutterlin, 1999; Green & Boxer, 1986; Havighurst, 1952; Fingerman, 2000; Graber & Dubas, 1996; Graber & Gunn, 1996; Buhler & Massarik, 1968; Bocknek, 1980; Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991). These major, normative milestones are viewed from a situational change perspective. The individual's daily routine and/or interpersonal/environmental world is disturbed, throwing emotional balance off-kilter. Not unlike Parke's grief process that allows the griever time to incorporate the reality of death into everyday life, young adults must become accustomed to milestones changes or situational transformations. The young adult must

experience the integration of old knowledge and skills with new tasks, roles and responsibilities (Stewart, Sokol, Healy, & Niahane, 1986). Milestones can interfere with young adults' emotional orientation and adaptation because of the lag between the actual transition and the acquisition of skills to effectively match the transition.

*The Chicago Study of Life Events and Adaptation in Adulthood* (Turner, 1983) discussed life events as the representation of major turning points. The study observed fifty-two high school seniors transitioning to college and first job or marriage, fifty newlyweds facing parenthood, fifty-four empty-nesters learning to live without their children, and sixty retirees adjusting to life without work. The study concluded, in accord with other literature, that early adulthood had the greatest frequency of life events, sources of stress, and significantly more turning points than all other stages. By understanding the sources of stress that accompany normative change in the life of a young adult, clinicians can better realize the precarious and vulnerable state of the young adult woman who experiences mother-loss. The stress of these milestones under normal conditions must be analyzed before exploring the effect of mother-loss during this period of development. The following section of this chapter will outline the emotional, physical, and social changes associated with the young adult's milestones of leaving home, college graduation/full time employment, engagement /wedding day/ new bride, pregnancy and motherhood.

### #1. Leaving Home

Young adulthood is the common marker for certain life-cycle events and represents a period of multiple transitions (Rindfuss, 1991; Chiriboga, 1984). In Western cultures, leaving the parental home is typically the first of many distinctions between late adolescence and the

onset of young adulthood. Leaving home serves as an important marker for the transition to adulthood and steps toward autonomy (Kobrin Goldscheider & Davanzo, 1986; Dubas & Peterson, 1996; O'Conner, Allen, Bell & Hauser, 1996). It represents the assumption of adult roles (Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 1996) and places the young adult (often for the first time) in a vulnerable state (Blos, 1979).

Young collegians are in a semi-autonomous position (Green & Boxer, 1986). They continue to rely on their parents for financial and emotional support, yet live away from their direct supervision. This may cause a heightened sense of stress. This move from the childhood home into a new and different environment can raise feelings of isolation, estrangement from the family, and anxiety as existing assumptions about strangers and new experiences are challenged (Bocknek, 1980). The daughter may move physically away from her mother but often returns to her and the family home during winter and summer semester breaks and holidays, giving the daughter the comfort of semi-autonomy and an ability to “re-launch” and “re-establish” the mother-daughter relationship (Goldscheider & Davonzo, 1986). This semi-autonomy offers the daughter the “luxury of continued maternal support” during her critical steps into maturity (Sherrod, 1996). While leaving home for college is unsettling, leaving college for the uncertain future of the “real world” adds significantly more stress related to new, different, and substantially more self-directed responsibilities.

## #2. Graduation from College/Full-time Employment

With the completion of school, many young adult women face choosing a vocation and then entering into the full-time labor force (Graber & Dubas, 1996; Bocknek, 1980). This first major milestone forces the young adult woman to face the challenge of making decisions that in

many cases will determine her financial stability (Graber & Gunn, 1996). This is a pivotal time for the “establishment and embellishment of a career and identity” (O’Connor, Allen, Bell & Hauser, 1996). Career counselors O’Brien and Fessinger (1993) studied young women’s career choices and personal relationships. The variable in their study was the young women’s relationship to their mothers. They concluded that mothers have significant impact in the development of work attitudes of their daughters, and that, “mothers contribute to the development of robust career” decisions.

Pearson’s 1983 study related similar of maternal influence on daughters’ career choice, and found that the mother’s occupational status was “positively associated” with that of her daughters (Boyd, 1989). Counseling psychologists Palladino, Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi and Glasscock (2001) also note the impact of the mother on daughters’ career choice and discuss the strong connection between mother-daughter attachment and career planning. Using qualitative data-analytic procedures to understand relational influences on career decisions, they determined that “mother” is the greatest source of emotional and esteem support. Additionally, she is more often turned to in a time of crisis. These researchers found numerous causes for mother’s influence on daughters’ career choice: mothers and daughters tend to share common interests, personality characteristics, and ideologies.

Mothers are often admired role models. From the available literature, it seems clear that mother’s occupation, work orientation, and guidance influence her daughter’s career decisions and instill in her a sense of self-confidence. This self-confidence enables the daughter to be an achiever in the professional sphere (Gross, 1985). These initial career decisions and movement

towards self-sufficiency, however, even with a living mother, can be harrowing (Dubas & Peterson, 1996). Graduating college students have anxiety about going out into the adult world. The fear, compounded with the increase in freedom and economic autonomy, creates a sense of personal isolation and responsibility (Webb & Widseth, 1988; Bocknek, 1980). Young adults struggle for autonomy but also strive to maintain a stabilizing link with their past (Fenchel, 1998).

### #3. Engagement/Wedding Day/New Bride

*“The wedding ceremony is pervaded by symbols and images designed to provoke sentiment.”*

*Preventing Crying Through Desensitization* (Field, 1970)

Given the interrelatedness of engagement and marriage, it follows that the literature fails to distinguish between the two events. However, it appears that most young women experience these events separately, often with This study anticipates that each of these events will resurrect “Success Depressions” (Leick & Nielson, 1991) causing emotional havoc in the young woman’s life. For young women, specifically motherless women, these milestones are occasions for re-grieving. many months in between.

Engagement to marry is the designated time intended to help emotionally prepare for permanent partnership (Fischer, 1986). In the professional and popular literatures, the idea of marriage can prompt questions weighted with identity conflict and anxiety: Am I doing the right thing? Am I ready to be committed? Am I ready to be committed to this person? (Moonie, 2005). Exacerbating these unknowns is the feeling of permanence: the wedding vows which commit the couple until “death us do part” (Fischer, 1986; Zabriskie, 2000). From a

psychological orientation, Erikson's crisis of "intimacy" may force the young woman to reexamine her ego integrity, sexual identity, and her ability to love, share and acknowledge another person's feelings and needs (Bocknek, 1980). Zabriskie encapsulated the frightening emotions a young woman may experience as she approaches her marriage: "As she celebrated her new intimacy, she feared the loss of, and separation from, the individuality she had achieved while being alone" (2000, p. 30).

The engagement can also be explored from a psychosocial perspective. Engagement may represent a bridge between mother and daughter. When the daughter becomes a wife, she-for the first time-is sharing a social role, emotionally and physically, with her mother (Friday, 1977). A daughter's marriage gives her a greater understanding of the role she shares with her mother, making them closer and more connected (Walker & Thompson, 1987). Fisher (1981) points out that in addition to the complementary mother-daughter relationship, a married young woman shares a collegial wife-wife relationship with her mother. This can further strengthen the mother-young adult daughter bond. From a practical, middle-class perspective, the engagement period is one of planning for the actual nuptial celebration, arranging the post-celebration honeymoon, and organizing the home the newly married couple will share. In *And You Thought It Was All Over: Mothers and Their Adult Children* (1985), Zenith Henkin Gross' examined "second stage mothering" from the mother's perspective. Mothers noted their enthusiasm in helping daughters plan their weddings. One mother commented that upon seeing her daughter try on a wedding dress, "I felt for a moment that I really understood what life is all about." While the mother in Henkin Gross' study seems to have assumed a traditional gender role, the quote reflects the depth with which mothers and daughters experience this milestone.

Post-marital let-down is a common occurrence once the planning and ceremonies are over. The “bride” finds herself no longer the center of attention, and must shift roles once the reality of marriage sets in (Lowenthal, 1977). This transition from single young adult woman to overnight spouse can leave the young adult woman struggling with an identity crisis. “We don't know who to be...we abandoned our names, said goodbye to our old single friends, and suddenly stand by the stove cooking...” wrote Nancy Friday about her new marriage (1977). Once married, the young woman begins to de-idealize the new husband, perhaps fearful of what and whom she married. (Holmes & Boon, 1990). The young newly married woman is trying to establish an emotional and sexual bond with her new husband that is socially expected to last a life-time (Lurie, 1974). The new marriage needs and investment by both parties and a sacrifice of self-interested needs to strengthen the bond (Bocknek, 1980). “Marriages are most susceptible to divorce in the early years of marriage,” (Kreider & Fields, p.18, 2002). Twenty percent of all marriages end in divorce within the first ten years of marriage (Kreider & Fields, 2002) and nearly fifty percent of all marriages ultimately end in divorce (Shapiro, Gottman & Careere, 2000); statistics depicting that marriage can be filled with conflict and stress. The beginning of marriage is a time when a young woman may look to her collegial mother for ongoing support and affirmation of her identity.

#### #4. Pregnancy and Motherhood

As with engagement and marriage, pregnancy and motherhood seem packaged together in the literature. As more than 85% of all adult women become mothers (Francis-Connolly, 2000), this topic has been extensively explored from countless angles. The literature review focuses specifically upon a young mother's psychological orientation as she first undertakes the role of mother. Also emphasized will be the mother-young adult daughter's relationship during and after pregnancy.

The powerful dual events of pregnancy and motherhood can wreak emotional havoc on any woman, regardless of her age or mother's living status. Motherhood elicits acute and extraordinary stress (Mebert, 1991; Fischer, 1981; Johnson & Huston, 1998; Bailey, 1999). Motherhood is fraught with uncertainties and is irreversible (Mebert, 1991). Feelings of "fear" mark the entire pregnancy: fear for the baby's health and for her own health; fear of the pain and risk of labor and delivery; fear of financial changes; anxiety about her competence at day-to-day mothering. Motherhood calls on the young woman to serve in a new role, one with unfamiliar and serious responsibilities that cannot be ignored. Pregnancy psychologically disables the young woman (Bailey, 1999; Bocknek, 1980). She must renegotiate her problem-solving skills, redesign her coping skills, reintegrate her "internal working model," and reevaluate her priorities and values to handle the new experience of mothering (Mebert, 1991; Johnson & Huston, 1998). Shapiro, Gottman & Careere's 2000 study, *The Baby in Marriage*, maintains that with the arrival of the baby comes a decrease in positive marital discourse and an increase in marital conflict. This six year longitudinal study concluded that the transition to parenthood is particularly

stressful for women, and that after the arrival of the first baby, her marital satisfaction decreases drastically. “Lack of marital reciprocity, non-fulfillment of role expectations, non-acceptance of one’s self by spouse, are some of the wide array of problems that have been identified as “top” life-strains post-partum (Pearlin & Lieberman, 1979).

Lucy Bailey (1999) conducted a case study of pregnant, middle-class women between twenty-five and thirty-nine years of age. Every woman sampled experienced a “refraction of self.” According to Bailey's study, pregnancy is a time of introspection, review, and psychological adjustment. This newfound awareness impacted the expectant mothers’ lives in both positive and negative ways. In some cases, the negative effects were so profound as to jeopardize the pregnant woman’s emotional well-being. Bailey discovered (as did Bocknek, 1980) that pregnant women began to behave more responsibly which, in turn, made them feel more "adult-like," mature, and self-satisfied. However, the pregnancy brought with it body weight issues, first-trimester illness or fatigue, a disconnection with non-mother friends, a reappraisal of career and marriage, and general feelings of dependency and vulnerability.

Waite, Haggstrom, and Kanouse (1986) in their work, *The Effects of Parenthood on the Career Orientation and Job Characteristics of Young Adults*, concluded that new mothers who work will generally choose jobs that allow them to combine work and parenting, even if that decision demands a career change. Career changes have two major negative effects: a decrease in earning capacity and the loss of supportive and established work friends (Waite, Haggstrom, & Kanouse, 1986; Mebert, 1991). This career-change-related stress is added onto the already overwhelming demand to balance and juggling parenting and work (Hanson, Hanson &

Pollycove, 2002). Being a mother/wife/ companion/housekeeper/ chef / laundress/nurturer may leave a woman bombarded by too many physical obligations and an overabundance of emotional pulls. This parent-work dance can leave even "superwoman" weary and drained.

In Fischer's often-cited 1981 study, *Transitions in the Mother-Daughter Relationship*, she notes that 78% of her young adult respondents with children "had a pattern of daily checking-in with their own mothers." While marriage signifies an intensification of many mother-daughter relationships, childbirth is an even more intensive period of mother-daughter communion (Fischer, 1981). The mother and her young adult daughter are truly now role colleagues. As such, each one knows and appreciates what the other experienced (Fischer, 1981; Boyd, 1989). Even Friday, despite her less than favorable opinion of the mother-daughter bond, thought that it was "reassuring" to have her mother around to quell the overwhelming feelings caused by new motherhood (1977). Lurie (1974) reported that mothers serve as referents for their new mother/daughters and that mothers can be looked to for emotional support and concrete advice. Fischer confirms that daughters turn to their mothers for advice concerning childrearing. Fischer's 1983 study, *Mothers and Mothers-in-law*, reflects the intimate and carefully crafted relationship between mothers and adult daughters. This relationship cannot be simulated or replicated with the mother-in-law, even if a good relationship is established.

Francis-Connolly's (2000) study, *Understanding Mother*, reported that mothers of married daughters with children provided "instrumental" support of meals and baby-sitting in addition to the emotional support of listening to complaints, struggles, and feelings. As with many other researchers (Fenchel, 1998; Sutor, 1987; Rossi & Rossi, 1991; Bromberg, 1983; Fisher, 1986,

Fox, 1979; Bassoff, 1988), this study concluded that despite the goods and services mothers gave to their daughters, the relationship's reciprocal quality was based upon common identity and deep attachment. The young adult daughter eagerly wants to continue the ties with her mother for herself and for her children.

The literature supports what many women already know: marriage, pregnancy, and new motherhood can elicit acute and extraordinary stress (Mebert, 1991; Fischer, 1981; Johnson & Huston, 1998; Bailey, 1999). Transition into these new roles takes time and often women in these states turn to their own mothers to help ease the adjustment. Perhaps the mother and young adult daughter bond deepens, as Friday posited, because of their shared familial role. When the young adult daughter must face these milestones after the death of her mother the loss is deeply felt. This compounds the feelings of stress normally experienced at important life junctures. The stress of these moments is then, for the subjects of this study, combined with the sadness, confusion, anxiety, and depression normally associated with loss of a parent. It is these moments of reawakened mourning that I have identified as re-grieving.

### **Summary and Conclusions of Literature Review**

The death of a mother during the difficult developmental period of young adulthood can be a devastating experience that makes the daughter vulnerable not only in her initial period of mourning, but at punctuated moments as she continues the work of maturation without the support of her mother. In the proceeding chapters I have reviewed the literature that describes re-grieving, young adulthood, mother-loss, milestones, and Jewish burial and mourning practices. Several chronological definitions and psychological descriptions of young adulthood

have been summarized to paint a picture of the normative development and challenges of this period in life. It is in this psychological landscape that the event of mother-loss must be examined.

Three main bodies of theory have emerged from this review. First there is the perhaps more traditional notion that the death of the mother interrupts the process of separation and individuation that is necessary for the daughter to develop into a functioning, independent adult. The truncation of this process by death leaves emotional scars on the daughter that can affect her assumption of adult roles and responsibilities. The second school of thought, perpetuated first by feminist writers of the 1970s, emphasizes the strong bond between mother and daughter over the necessity of autonomy. These thinkers do not find separation to be a necessary component of maturation. Rather they emphasize the importance of the mother-daughter relationship. In light of this argument, loss of the supportive bond with the mother during the tumultuous period of young adulthood can leave the daughter unstable and vulnerable.

Thirdly, experiences of mourning echo for the young adult daughter long after the months following her mother's death. The anxiety, depression, fear, and confusion often felt by the daughter during the period of mourning are the emotions that frequently accompany pivotal moments throughout her young adult years. These milestones can be stressful even for developing adults who have not lost a parent. They are moments when the self must be redefined and reestablished. Facing these challenges without the support of the mother causes the daughter to re-grieve, experiencing feelings not unlike those felt just after her mother's death. It is clear that these feelings occur, however the bulk of the literature thus far has failed to explore the precise components of the re-grieving process.

To remedy this significant gap in the research and clinical literature, this study set out to identify, as precisely and correctly as possible, what the young women are feeling while they re-grieve and why they feel it. The long-term goal of this study is to define and describe the nature of re-grieving so clinicians may act more skillfully, without risk to the client, and help the client recover. As a step toward this goal, the study seeks to unfold the underlying clinical components of the re-grieving process for young adult Jewish women through exploration of the following research statements:

- There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to the Developmental Stage of Young Adulthood.

The Young Adulthood life stage, filled with multiple life transitions and role-identity shifts, make young adult women extremely susceptible to re-grieving. This study defines young adulthood as the period between the ages of eighteen to thirty. It is a time of significant psychological development when the subjects emerge from childhood as autonomous adults by making the decisions that initially shape their personal, romantic, familial, and professional existence. Young Adulthood is also the time that the subjects redefine their primary relationships and assume adult roles. The importance of the transitions made during young adulthood, and the stress these changes can produce requires further examination. It is imperative to understand normative young adulthood development, at least within Western cultures, in order to ultimately examine the young adult woman who is re-grieving her mother's death.

- There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to Measures of Mother-Daughter Attachment.

The degree of mother-daughter closeness and the attachment bond experienced between the mother and the young adult daughter heavily influences the intensity of the daughter's re-grieving. Central to this study is the idea that the strong mother-daughter attachment bond affects the experience of losing that relationship to death. A further examination of the mother-young-adult daughter bond will demonstrate how the loss of a mother in this development period can put the daughter's emotional functioning at risk.

- There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and the specific Milestones experienced post-maternal death.

When major alterations in normative developmental roles collide with a young adult woman's recent maternal loss, re-grieving may ensue. This experience may be acutely felt when maternal loss precedes a milestone. What are milestones and why do they seem to be precipitators of re-grieving? This study anticipates that each of these events will resurrect "Success Depressions" (Leick & Nielson, 1991) causing emotional havoc in the young woman's life. For young women, specifically motherless women, these milestones are occasions for re-grieving. The following specific milestones are explored in depth in the upcoming chapters: Engagement to marry, Wedding day, Pregnancy and New Motherhood are all laden with re-grieving.

- There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and Jewish Mourning Practices.

Given the unique qualities of Jewish burial and mourning practices, young adult Jewish women have a distinctly different approach to grief from others. It is in this distinctiveness, that re-grieving takes shape and thus, it is important to establish Jewish mourning practices in order to

understand Jewish re-grieving. Moreover, as most of these women celebrate their milestones in a communal setting, observance of the Jewish Laws seem to be a catalyst and provide a greater opportunity for the young Jewish woman to re-grieve.

These four aforementioned research statements facilitate the exploration of re-grieving and inform the methodological choices for *Milestones Without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Re-grieve While Celebrating*. The upcoming methodology section outlines the study's research design and its justifications selected to investigate the above research statements.

## ***RESEARCH METHODOLOGY***

### **Introduction**

This research begins to establish a body of knowledge regarding the experience of re-grieving as it occurs during milestone celebrations. The duality of emotions experienced at these times, heart-felt loss with simultaneous euphoria, can leave young women vulnerable to emotional distress. This study seeks to confirm that young motherless women do encounter these milestones in distress and with an additional burden, re-grieving and grief related anxiety. Specifically, the study's objective is to investigate the following four research statements:

- #1. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to the Developmental Stage of Young Adulthood.
- #2. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to Measures of Mother-Daughter Attachment.
- #3. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and the specific Milestones experienced post-maternal death.
- #4. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and Jewish Mourning Practices.

In this chapter, the methods and procedures used to conduct the study are discussed, including (a) overview of research design, (b) rationale for quantitative and qualitative research design, (c) unit of analysis (d) theoretical frameworks of Phenomonology utilizing the approach of Grounded Theory and trade-offs (e) Epistemology, (f) data collection decisions, (g) sampling and sampling rationale, (h) techniques of analysis, and (i) reliability and validity.

## A) OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a qualitative, descriptive research design within a sample of 30 young adult women to determine if they experienced re-grieving symptoms or behaviors during their milestones. They were interviewed using a semi-structured guide. Re-grieving characteristics of the research subjects were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Various strategies were used to identify categories and themes for the data collected to help organize these findings. The following sections elaborate on all these aspects.

This inquiry began at foundation level. Before any significant investigation commenced, the study needed to confirm the cornerstone of the research statements – re-grieving. Do young Jewish women re-grieve while celebrating? Does re-grieving exist and if so, what are the re-grieving characteristics?

In the initial component of the study, a limited quantitative methodology was employed through the use of retrospective, exploratory surveys. This pre-screening survey (Appendix C) sought to gather information about the target population and to establish the occurrence of re-grieving, during social milestones or periods of massive personal change and role transition. The study's initial core question was meant to inform, not to generalize and thus this inductive, formative quantitative approach served only as a springboard to the major, qualitative inquiry.

Given the strength of the evidence linking re-grieving to milestones, the next level of the inquiry's methodology was implemented. This second tier, consisting of three more quantitative

instruments (Appendix D, E, F) attempted to operationalize the “How” in “Milestones Without Mothers: HOW young Jewish women re-grieve while celebrating”. Once the “HOW” was understood, the four research statements were investigated by conducting direct, face-to-face interviews. The researcher ultimately hoped to use the data from these sessions to portray the phenomena in narrative style, in the target populations’ own words.

Dual methodology strengthened this investigation’s purpose by 1) quantitatively providing documentation that the phenomena of re-grieving during milestones is a real occurrence, not to be negated or demeaned and; 2) qualitatively providing clinicians with informative data that can reshape their treatment approaches when working with this population. By employing dual methodology to facilitate outcome, the study’s credibility, validity, and accuracy (Janesick, 1994; Jick, 1983) are enriched while still embracing a holistic, humanistic balance (Campbell, 1979).

## B) RATIONALE FOR A QUANTITATIVE DESIGN

The study’s questionnaire was used primarily to determine whether or not the inquiry has merit- do young Jewish women re-grieve while celebrating? Or, stated differently, was the independent variable of milestones linked with the dependent variable of a re-grieving? The questionnaire’s secondary function was one of prescreening to determine which of the candidates, if any, is suitable for the sample. The survey aimed to yield facts about the target population’s attitudes, opinions and reported changes in behavior, if any, regarding re-grieving at the time of milestone celebrations (Yin, 1994). This survey-type method offered simple

descriptive facts quickly, allowing the researcher to determine whether or not to proceed with the remainder of the inquiry.

Respondents answered a mixture of dichotomous and ordinal-type questions organized around the targeted milestone events to ascertain whether the phenomena is real (Weiss, 1998). This controlled, structured questionnaire was designed to link and measure “re-grieving” and the variable “milestone celebrations” in a causal fashion (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1983). This limiting but integral use of a quantitative questionnaire is helpful in as much as they are time efficient and can provide numerical validation of the phenomena. From a pragmatic perspective, the questionnaire facilitated rapid data collection in a relatively limited time and helped the researcher rethink the research question and its’ related problem. Although the questionnaire helps satisfy and resolve the issue of whether the phenomena exist, it was a starting point and the inherent limitations necessitated the employment of alternative methodology.

Since the hypothesis captured positive evidence between re-grieving and milestones, the remaining inquiry and research statements rested solely on qualitative methodology. The study’s initial quantitative strategy was designed to obtain meaningful, substantial answers regarding the phenomena’s presence. Once that was achieved, the next step was to then qualitatively examine the breadth, depth and dynamic of the established phenomena.

### C) RATIONALE FOR A QUALITATIVE DESIGN

Discovery was a crucial component of this study's methodology. As the literature review has already suggested, little research exists to confirm whether or not young women re-grieve while celebrating. "No new experience, no new insight" (Patton, 1990, p. 7). Given this inquiry's exploratory nature, an inductive, creative-oriented qualitative research process lends itself towards this discovery quest. Whereas the quantitative methodology component is geared towards verification, this qualitative component emphasizes and promotes "understanding". This "understanding" can only be gleaned through capturing the phenomena as the participants' see it and experience it (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983; Mintzberg, 1983). As the inquiry is treading in uncharted waters, flexibility in data collection and its subsequent analyses allows for spontaneity in dialogue, deeper penetration and exploration into the phenomena's meaning, a reassessment and reevaluation of the data as it is being compiled, an integration of new and emerging ideas while still maintaining design structure and shape (Shatzman & Strauss, 1973; Janesick, 1994). The qualitative process of probes and follow-ups was able to tease-out nuances unreachable with the quantitative survey method. Moreover, given the "charged" and sensitive nature of the grief-related topic, ethical considerations mandate that the researcher maintain face-to-face direct contact with the respondents. The researcher's clinical experience and empathy can help offset any potential emotional reactions the participants may experience. Qualitative methodology offers a humanistic and empathic voice (Campbell, 1979). Through the use of narrative, this study was able to characterize and describe the phenomena of re-grieving. Milestones Without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Re-grieve While Celebrating investigated the variables of

young adulthood, the mother-daughter attachment bond, adherence to Jewish mourning and social milestones.

#### D) UNIT OF ANALYSIS: COLLECTIVE UNIT TYPE

The interplay between the individual and the phenomena is represented through the study's unit of analysis. This inquiry's sample was comprised of an aggregate of young Jewish women who have shared a specific phenomena, the death of their mothers (See Sample Selection Criteria Section). Grouping the individual women collectively by "cause" allows for the emergence of basic understanding of the phenomena, and a richness of information perhaps, ultimately yielding generalizations for clinical insight (Stake, 1994). By working with individual cases and then attempting to link them to a larger, more complex context, allows the researcher to let the experiences dictate, rather than subordinate, the exploration (Yin, 1994). This type of analysis is also the most basic method to employ because the researcher has severely limited information about the phenomena and the respondents.

Other unit types were considered but discounted. Typology-typing variables such as associating the degree of the young woman's religious observance conjoined with her level of re-grieving at milestones could yield rich and informative data. But, discovery about the phenomena must first take place to determine if these are worthy variables. Alternatively, the study could have numerically track the "reoccurrence" and "frequency" of re-grieving or the phenomena's "ordered cycles" of milestone events but these would have derailed the inquiry's focus by placing importance on frequency, and not on its targeted goal, gathering meaning and understanding (Kirk & Miller, 1986 ).

## E) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH UTILIZING GROUNDED THEORY AND TRADE-OFFS

Social work practice wisdom dictates that the clinician (1) start where the client is, (2) focus on clients' perspectives using a natural setting, and (3) modify and adjust questions and treatment plans as new information is gleaned. Practice wisdom in mind, the selection of a phenomenological style that utilized the research procedures of Grounded Theory was based primarily in keeping with these social work principles. Grounded Theory method is useful for investigating relatively unexplored phenomena. It was developed largely by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and is a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data which is systematically collected, analyzed and later used to describe, explain or predict phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

A Grounded Theory approach uses descriptive accounts, encourages interpretation of their meanings and patterns, and attempts to either generate or link these to possible theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). A phenomenological approach utilizing Grounded Theory investigation strives to extract the diversity of these dynamic experiences, as well as their related nuances and essences, through probing participant interviews and data analysis. For verification purposes, Grounded Theory emphasizes thorough and meticulous data collection and theoretical analysis throughout the course of the investigation. Concept development, specifically in this study, regrieving, rests heavily on observation, data collection and the systematic analysis of the data and researcher reflection.

Using this theoretical perspective helped the researcher think conceptually about the inquiry's strategy and offered a framework for the methodology required to capture the nuances of grieving, the phenomena being investigated. Grounded Theory, from a discovery-oriented perspective, was the most appropriate choice although the following qualitative research orientations were examined and ultimately ruled out.

Patton's (1990) Orientational approach requires that the inquiry be formulated around an ideological stance that includes the use of variables to orient the study's focus. Although this investigation names and operationalizes a myriad of theories ranging from theories of grief and bereavement to theories of young adulthood development to theories of attachment in mother-daughter relationships, the study was too open to be held to strict variables and an ideological perspective. An Orientational approach would seemingly stymie the wide-angle lens of exploration, perhaps losing valuable information in its wake.

As the researcher has familiarity and shares many of the same characteristics, experiences and qualifications as the participants in the study, it was a natural outgrowth to very briefly consider using a Heuristic model (Patton, 1990). The researcher quickly determined that she lacked the ability to detach herself fully from the data and that the information would be neither objective nor valid, defeating the purpose of this scientific undertaking.

Considering that Symbolic Interaction profiles varying accounts of an experience from two or more perspectives, this was a hard-pressed fit to this inquiry's quest for understanding. The inquiry is still new and not enough is known about the participants to encourage the use of

deviating viewpoints and the symbolic meanings and contexts they bring with them. However, this frame of reference would make an interesting framework if the study were about Milestones WITH Mothers, looking at the mother-daughter relationship from the mother's perspective and then compared to that of her daughter's.

Ascertaining knowledge directly from the population who is experiencing the phenomena is fundamental to this inquiry. For any discovery to result, the participants must detail the phenomena from their own perspective by describing the phenomena's "feel", "look" and "essence". The researcher should strive to capture the "verstehen", Patton's (1990, p. 57) terminology for appreciating special meanings, motives and feelings. A phenomenological inquiry rooted in Grounded Theory encapsulates these very elements and is a dynamic paradigm for encouraging participants' meaning and sense (Bogdan & Biklin 1983; Patton, 1990). Grounded Theory incorporates the tools of descriptive and interpretive devices to extract from the participants' their core experiences and meanings. Grounded Theory is also collaborative in nature in that the researcher and participants work jointly in the exploration. Collaboration is witnessed in the study's data collection section where it is determined that the researcher is also a participant in the process.

#### F) NATURE OF THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL PARADIGM: EPISTEMOLOGY

The underlying foundations of epistemology, with its central value of constructivism, established that knowledge is time-bound, subjective, and is contingent on how the informers construct their own meaning, correspond well with the inquiry's discovery-oriented phenomenological approach (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Epistemology is rooted in questioning the

relationship between “knower”, in this model the participants comprising the sample, and “what can be known”, the study’s emerging data about re-grieving.

Relative to this study, are the two socially constructed concepts of milestones and re-grieving. Through the use of direct interviewing, the aforementioned social constructs can be understood and deconstructed from the respondents’ perspective and how they interpret their reality at that moment.

### G) DATA COLLECTION DECISIONS

Data collection should be cost effective, simple to use, easily integrated into the overall study and culturally appropriate (Schensul, 1990). Although the dual methodology approach is time consuming, this researcher appreciates that without both the quantitative and qualitative components the inquiry would be incomplete. Knowing this, the design decisions reflected the different facets required to illuminate the phenomena. The design itself was used as a road map to chart-out the investigation’s most viable route. The following chapter discusses the inquiry’s course of data collection modes, tools, process and trade-offs. To stay on track, the researcher frequently reassessed the benefits of each of the steps in order to maximize their efficiencies and usefulness.

### **MODES OF DATA COLLECTION: RESEARCHER AS ACTIVE OBSERVER**

Conditions of sampling access, researcher interests, the nature of the phenomena being explored, and the required degree of researcher detachment, all influenced the key decision to

serve as active observer during the data collection process. In this inquiry, the researcher served primarily as an active observer during the interviews, with the concomitant and supplementary role of observer only when attending milestone celebrations such as weddings or bris/baby namings.

As an active observer, the researcher conducted face-to-face interviews to generate anecdotal information in a holistic and dynamic setting. This allowed the researcher to continually clarify confusion, deconstruct statements, pursue thoughts, and interact and respond to data as it emerges. The researcher would frequently say “I take this to mean” in order to be clear about the subjects’ narratives. This researcher activity also enabled the use of the researcher’s empathic connections and experiences, thereby helping build better rapport and trust with the respondents, to often yield richer quality data. Moreover, the researcher’s personal experiences directed her towards spontaneous reframing and refining of questions and probes also resulting in more substantive data.

Acting as an active observer could also be a hindrance. This study is cognizant that the researcher-participant role carries the potential for contamination and bias, potentially jeopardizing the study’s validity (Kirk & Miller, 1986; Bogdan & Biklen, 1983). The researcher is aware of this and acknowledges that balancing detachment and empathy was an on-going struggle. This grave limitation did not outweigh the need to gather data in its best possible form, that of active observer.

Although supplemental, the role of active observer offers the researcher opportunity to witness the unstated. Through active observation, the researcher is privy to pursue follow-up questions and engage in a more complex, dynamic exchange (Shatzman & Strauss, 1973). Similar to clinical practitioners, the research observer must pay heed to the respondent's body language and other non-verbal cues of voice level, tone, and degree of animation, in order to fully appreciate what is transpiring. The observer's perspective further enriches the data as it widens the angle of scope and emphasizes important though unarticulated information. By going beneath the stated, the observer goes to the phenomena's "deep structures" (Light, 1983, p. 59). When the opportunity presented, the researcher utilized direct observation while attending a milestone event of a respondent. Then the researcher observed the respondent's re-grieving "in action".

The data culled from the role of observer can strengthen and add yet another dimension to the researcher's ability to discern meaning. Yet, as with the role of active observer, the role of observer can too be flawed. Adler & Adler's (1994) offer three observation-related concerns. The first problem is that observation relies on the researcher's own perceptions, bias and subjectivity thus possibly endangering the study's validity. To remedy the validity issue, Adler & Adler recommend using direct quotes to "cross-check" the observational data with the verbal data attained through the interview. Reliability is the second issue noted which could be addressed through the researcher's use of "systematic" observation. If the researcher repeatedly conducts observation over differing conditions and the findings are similar, reliability is confirmed. The last problem, the "observer effect" or "reactive effect," (Adler & Adler, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1983) occurs when the researcher's presence or very behavior influences the

participants' responses. The researcher can reduce this dilemma by being natural, comfortable and as least directive as possible. This researcher is aware of the observer role related deficits and will employ the aforementioned techniques to minimize them.

Active observation techniques were used in this study to generate inductive analysis, enabled the researcher to tap into valuable stated and "inaudible" information. Moreover, this technique fostered qualitative analysis' ideal stages of immersion, incubation, illumination, explication and data synthesis (Janesick, 1994). Remembering these five dynamic phases while conducting interviews allows the researcher to systematically collect, later support the interview data, and ultimately make the "creative leap" toward new theory (Stake, 1994; Mintzberg, 1983).

## ***DATA COLLECTION TOOL: RATIONALE FOR USE OF A PRELIMINARY SURVEY***

In the attempt to determine the phenomena's existence, the study utilized a pre-screening questionnaire. The use of this type of standardized instrument allowed the researcher to amass knowledge quickly and inexpensively (Weiss, 1998).

The pre-screening survey (Appendix C) was a quantitative technique for documenting the following three items: whether or not these young women re-grieve during their milestone celebrations, whether or not these young women self-identify as Jews (and their degree of Jewish mourning observance), and for exploring the variables and degrees of mother-daughter closeness. This 18 question survey was strictly concerned with verification: Did the phenomena of re-grieving during milestones exist for these young women? Did these young Jewish women identify as Jews mourn in Jewish tradition? Was there a close relationship between mother and daughter? The pre-screening survey was later used to determine sampling eligibility.

The questionnaire was mailed or e-mailed to thirty pre-selected women with a self-addressed envelope enclosed for return. The package also included a confidentiality consent form stating their right to privacy and that the researcher will protect them from harm (Appendix H) making the respondents aware of the later potential for another three surveys and a face-to-face interview (Fontana & Frey, 1994).

All the survey's measures were exhaustive. The prearranged categories attempted to cover all potential areas of milestones that, according to the literature, strike during young

adulthood. The questions were mutually exclusive, with topics fitting into only one category and then broken down into subsections to elicit more information without being double-barreled. Some of the prescreening questions were nominal in nature to keep the respondent focused, help the researcher categorize the answers and also to avoid the introduction of non-relevant data (Weiss, 1998). These value answers of “yes/no/not applicable” maximize focus on the specified variables of re-grieving and milestones. Other prescreening questions were ordinal-type measures, requiring the respondent to rank or rate their attitudes as witnessed in “not good, sometimes good, often good, very good”. Although the respondents have all graduated from high school, the survey language is deliberately simple to avoid ambiguity, increase the survey’s “face validity” and is also culturally sensitive- catering to both the religious and non-religious young Jewish women.

The “Personal History” section attempted to tease-out on paper as much information about the respondent as possible. The researcher could appreciate the respondent’s personal scenario through her answers about her “age at the time of mother’s death”, “mother’s age at time of death”, “type of death”, “closeness of mother-daughter relationship prior to death” and whether or not respondent “attended grief counseling after mother’s death”.

The “Milestones” section consisted of questions regarding the passage and nature of the respondents’ milestones and attempt to flush-out the inquiry’s core issues of re-grieving while celebrating. Questions revolved around the milestones frequent in young adulthood and profile engagement, wedding, pregnancy and childbirth. These measures attempted to secure the respondents’ opinions and attitudes regarding their own milestones and whether or not their

mothers' deaths impacted and influenced these occasions. In this "milestones" section of the questionnaire, the researcher attempted to establish the causal relationship between re-grieving, the dependent variable and the milestone itself, the independent variable.

Questionnaire usage has significant, but manageable deficits. The information compiled from the survey will reflect the opinion of only those participants who chose to volunteer, not those that did not respond, making the data skewed (Becker, 1986). To better counter-act this, some researchers include a "drop-out" rate and note the percentage of women who did not respond to the questionnaire. This study had no drop outs and all thirty pre-selected women participated. Generalizability was also a concern as the researcher currently has limited sample access. With Human Review Board approval received initially in February 2007, the researcher attempted to locate more potential candidates through websites such as Motherless Daughters and Oxygen and flyers in various synagogues such as Kehilath Jeshrun, Adereth El, Central and Park Avenue synagogues and their nursery schools, and other "Mommy and Me" type programs at the 14<sup>th</sup> and 92<sup>nd</sup> Street Ys, thereby increasing the number of participants and the study's generalizability. The questionnaire, as stated prior, was a starting point. Its simple mission was to identify and measure the existence and perhaps, extent of the problem. As such, this quantitative device was extremely limiting, requiring a qualitative approach to then address the nature and essence of the phenomena.

## ***SURVEY DATA COLLECTION TOOLS: RATIONALE FOR USING THREE FOLLOW-UP SURVEYS***

After the data had been analyzed from the preliminary pre-screening survey and a positive connection had been found between re-grieving and celebrating milestones, the researcher sent-out to the subjects (who consented to follow-up) three self-administered instruments- Mother Daughter Attachment Scale, Relationship to Mother Inventory and Grief Resolution Scale.

The first survey, a modified version of the Thompson and Walker (1984) “Mother Daughter Attachment and Intimacy Scale,” (Appendix D) is designed to measure degree of mother-daughter intimacy and closeness. The research statement, “There is a strong connection between Mother-Daughter Attachment and Re-grieving” will initially be explored through use of this scale.

This “Mother Daughter Intimacy Scale” was used to measure the degree of closeness in mother-daughter relationships. This modified 17-item scale was summed-up and averaged to reflect the level of perceived intimacy and has a possible range of 1 to 7. The higher the score, the greater the intimacy and closeness between mother and daughter. Questions include: “We were honest with each other”, “We wanted to spend time together”, “I was lucky to have as my mother”. The language has been modified to past tense as this scale’s original version is in present tense and was not designed for post-maternal death reflections.

Conrad Schwarz’s “The Quality of Relationship With Mother Inventory” was the second survey tool (Appendix E). This 6-item scale measures the emotional attachment of a daughter

for her living mother and refers to feelings of affection, respect and closeness the daughter expresses for her mother. Items are rated on a Likert scale ranging from, for example (1) not at all to (4) always and (1) very untrue to (4) very true. The totals were summed and averaged, with the highest numbers reflecting a very close relationship. Again, language has been modified to past tense as the scale's original version is in present tense and was not designed for post-maternal death reflections. Questions included: "I depend on your mother for advice", "How much do you want to be like your mother?" and, "My mother and I had a great deal of mutual respect". These items depicted the level of closeness and intimacy the daughter feels characterized her relationship with her mother. Like the Thompson Walker Scale, this measured the closeness of the relationship from a normative and healthy lens, free of enmeshment or conflict as reported.

The third tool, Murphy's 1986 Mourning Behavior Checklist (Appendix F) was used to measure behaviors considered important in facilitating the mourning process. The scale helped the researcher differentiate respondents' normative grieving from pathological grieving. This modified 12-item scale with its nominal type "yes/no/not applicable" responses helped measure grief reactions and behaviors. The "yes" category represents healthy, normative behaviors. The "no" category represents inhibited or repressed mourning. Questions included: "Did you attend all or most of your mother's funeral?" and, "Did you freely talk with your father about the circumstances of your mother's death?" and, "Did you keep any of your mother's belongings (e.g. jewelry, handbag, scarf, photo)?" and "Did you ask questions about your mother to her friends or older relatives (What kinds of activities did you enjoy together? What was she like as a teenager? What would she think about her own death?)" This scale was particularly helpful in

this study as it helped ensure that the respondent is re-grieving, not experiencing delayed or complicated grief.

## ***INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION TOOL: RATIONALE FOR USING AN INTERVIEW GUIDE (APPENDIX I)***

There are many compelling reasons for a researcher to amass data through use of a semi-structured interview guide. At its most rudimentary level, the guide helps ensure the coverage of specific material. The researcher has a strategic map of what needs to be accomplished and the guide helps maintain that focus. On a more sophisticated level, the interview guide's questions help advance the researcher's ideas by promoting data discovery and the generation of new knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). However, the ultimate *raison d'être* of the guide and its subsequent probes is to obtain narrative---to capture and understand the subtlety, nuance, and complexity of the phenomena from the respondents' own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983). This purpose can only be realized through direct, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews that readjust and flexibly respond to emerging data and emphasize data analysis "in-process" (Janesick, 1994). This "in-process" analysis fits well into the Grounded Theory approach where the interview guide is not static and changes with each emerging theory.

The Grounded Theory based guide's flexible, semi-structured framework was designed to target discovery of detail, meaning and theory. The guide's specific dimensions and probes were used to deconstruct the phenomena's core question of "How young women re-grieve while celebrating" and attempted to capture the essence of the problem from the respondents' perspectives. The interview guide's questions were created and shaped through contemplation of the problem's confusion. In many ways, the guide reflects the intersection between researcher and the phenomena's puzzlement, re-grieving while celebrating.

The guide was constructed and reconstructed multiple times. Perfecting the guide entailed re-framing questions to better capture nuance and to simplify language, to clarify ideas and to continually incorporate emerging information into the guide itself. While question rewrites were time-consuming, reinventing the probes was debilitating and exhausting. Cognizant of the important role probe questions play, it became an on-going challenge in the guide construction process to get them perfected. The researcher against all hopes kept employing “leading” and “suggestive” probes unaware of how else to access crucial information. After rewording the probes, the researcher often sought advice from peers and professors to better get to the ideal, neutral wording. Sometimes, the researcher received conflicting advice where a peer would label the probe subjective and the professor would deem it appropriate.

This final draft edition of the guide may not be so final. This version may be seen as an ever-evolving instrument that will be revised throughout the data collection process contingent on new emerging data (Patton, 1990).

## ***DATA COLLECTION TRADE-OFFS: RATIONAL FOR NOT USING FOCUS GROUPS***

The use of focus groups during the data collection stage can assist the researcher in multiple ways. From a time-saving perspective, the researcher can easily observe major respondent interaction on a topic in limited time. A plethora of questions can be asked and answered in a relatively brief period of time. From an exploratory perspective, respondents can unearth a wide range of ideas and experiences previously unknown or ignored by the researcher, further widening the scope of the study. Focus group outcomes may help the researcher re-direct and re-examine the study's focus, thereby sharpening the inquiry's domain and effective wording (Morgan, 1997). However, what the researcher acquires in breadth, she then loses in depth. Focus group settings are an inappropriate forum for eliciting substantive, complete, detailed responses. Moreover, the group synergy that stimulates the generation of new ideas can also contaminate respondents' answers and even quell a respondents' ability to "speak freely" (Morgan, 1997). While focus groups can be an effective form of data collection, the crux of the inquiry rests on open dialogue designed to secure data for completeness of narrative (Morgan, 1997) which is better achieved through one-on-one interviews.

## ***SURVEY DATA COLLECTION PROCESS***

### **The Pre-screening Survey and the follow-up Surveys (Mother Daughter Attachment, Relationship to Mother Inventory and Grief Resolution Scales)**

After the investigator established telephone contact with the potential respondents and secured their verbal agreement to participate, the preliminary prescreening survey and consent forms were be sent to them either by traditional mail or e-mail.

With most respondents pressured for time, the survey and consent form did not require more than ten minutes to activate. For the respondents who opted to receive the consent form and survey via traditional mail, a pre-addressed and stamped envelope was included. The “hard” mailed consent and survey form responses was removed from their envelopes and tracked according to the research code on the top of the form. The e-mailed responses were re-formatted to remove the sender’s name or other identifying language and then tracked by a pre-given code. This process was repeated with the second set of survey materials in precisely the same fashion.

## ***INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION PROCESS: THE INTERVIEW***

With a positive connection between re-grieving and milestones, the researcher re-contacted the survey participants who agreed to be interviewed in-person and a fifty-minute time interval was scheduled at mutual convenience. As most of the participants work, attend school and/or are caregivers to their young children, the researcher offered them choices of where to meet. One option was to meet in their own home to avoid further inconvenience and not to add to their burden. This option also afforded the researcher to observe the participant in their own settings of choice and help build further rapport and trust between researcher and participant. Option two was to meet in the participant's neighborhood synagogue, coffee house or other suitable location. The location or interview site however must be suitable and conducive to discussion (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Participants were also given option three of being interviewed in the researcher's home office should they not wish to do so anywhere else.

Interviews, with the subjects permission, were audio-taped and logged simultaneously. Although intrusive, tape recording the interviews releases the researcher from writing verbatim, thereby freeing her to listen more attentively and facilitates easier feedback/dialogue. The researcher's written notes documented both verbal and non-verbal observations. Although difficult, the researcher tried to be discrete and sensitive to the needs of the participant as she notes, logs and codes data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1983). Participants were asked at the interview's conclusion if the researcher can contact them again by telephone for clarification or verification.

Within twenty-four hours post-interview, the researcher transcribed the logged data. Timing is crucial so that the researcher's recollection of the interview is still fresh and accurate.

Moreover, as subsequent interviews occurred within weeks of the first ones, it was imperative that the researcher conducted immediate post-data analysis looking for themes, ideas or concepts in time to incorporate them into the next interview. To promote systematic analysis and research awareness, both open and axial coding was utilized to identify core categories, sub-categories and dimensions (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987).

During the data analysis, researcher notes were repeatedly read and re-read where breaking down information generated. Each piece of information was given a code. For example, “my mother was my best friend” and “I was just getting to know her as my real, true friend” became coded into “Liked Mother”. After several interviews, categories became apparent and were then unified into clusters. For example, “Liked Mother” codes became “Friendships”. These discovered similarities were again put back together following the axial coding process outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1990). Emerging theories were reduced into concepts based on similarities. For example, “Friendships” seemed to then fall into mother-daughter attachment theory espoused by feminists such as Fischer (1981) and Baruch & Barnett (1983) which capture the positive mutuality between some mothers and daughters.

## ***SAMPLING AND SAMPLING RATIONALES***

Given the study's exploratory nature, the sample size was kept to a minimum in order to produce a meaningful understanding and depth of the phenomena (Patton, 1990). Although the small sample size lost breadth, the thirty young female participants' information provided ample coverage of the phenomena under study.

The sample reflected the inquiry's primary objective of understanding the duality of re-grieving while celebrating. The sample's depth revealed the phenomena and the layers of nuance and dimensions of the experience. The secondary objective focused on theory building. Through data analysis of identifying shared patterns, the study aimed to discover alternative theories about re-grieving when combined with young adulthood, different milestone celebrations, close mother-daughter attachment, and Jewish mourning practices. As such, the sample required that each one of the subjects must:

1. Be of "young adulthood" age currently (18-30 years old) and,
2. Be of "young adulthood" age at time of mothers' death and,
3. Have experienced at least one of the designated milestones motherless and,
4. Self-reported "close relationship" or "very close relationship" with mother and,
5. Consider herself Jewish

The following sections offer the rationale for the inquiry's sample selection criteria, sample strategy and sample size and how these aspects helped achieve the study's two objectives.

## ***SAMPLE SELECTION CRITERIA:***

### **Rationale for Young Adulthood**

As established in the literature review section, much of the research attention regarding mother-loss and its subsequent impact has focused on children and adolescents, and on the middle-aged, adult child. Very little research has noted mother-loss impact on the young adult child ages 18-30. This void in the research is particularly notable given the dynamics which characterize this stage. Multiple, frequent and successive role transitions or “milestones” often mark this life-stage phase, leaving even the strongest of young adults feeling “overwhelmed”, “overburdened” and vulnerable. Further compounding this sense of vulnerability is that this strikes just when the young adult woman strives for independence and autonomy. According to the research, it is during these periods of transition that young adults seek comfort and nurturing from their family members, specifically from their mothers (Fischer, 1986; Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Edelman, 1999). When transitions occur and the mother is deceased, the already pronounced feelings of stress and vulnerability are intensified.

Young adulthood also represents a time when daughters may also become friends with their mothers (Eichenbaum and Orbach, 1983). A daughter can begin to regard her mother beyond her mothering skills and can see her as an individual women who posses attitudes, ideals, capabilities and personality. This important insight of the maturational process reflects a more sophisticated maturity level perhaps than that of an adolescent, adding further complexity to transitional role stress and the re-grieving process.

From a mother-loss perspective, selecting young adulthood as the designated age for this study, addressed the research lacuna. Mental health practitioners can begin to incorporate into treatment design the client's re-grieving as related to issues of young adulthood milestones.

### **Rationale for Experiencing At Least One Milestone Motherless**

As the study's objective was to investigate re-grieving while celebrating a milestone, it seems obvious that the subjects must have experienced at least one of the designated milestones motherless. The milestones under exploration were: engagement to wed, getting married, pregnancy, child-birth/ new motherhood (the post-partum period of a year). These seem to be the "major" transitional milestones experienced during young adulthood. The subjects need not have experienced all these milestones; any one of the four, experienced in any chronological order was sufficient. Although not anticipated in this study, if a subject first experienced child-birth and later experienced engagement, they were still considered eligible for interviewing. Also, not anticipated but to be clear for the study, adoption of a baby falls under the "new motherhood" milestone.

## **Rationale for “Close” or “Very Close” Relationship With Mother Prior To Death**

The researcher decided to define the sample by how the young women characterized their relationship with their mother prior to her death. Subjects who noted that the relationship was “not close” were excluded from the study. Unresolved issues of conflict, enmeshment and other related mother-daughter attachment issues seem to cloud the study and deflect attention away from the focus of re-grieving during milestones.

## **Rationale for Self-Identifying As A Jew**

To further restrict the sample, it was decided to include only young adult self-identified Jewish women in this study. The rationale for sampling only self-identified Jewish women is two-fold: Firstly, the restriction both helped reduce the amount of potential variability in the subject pool while also trying to control as many variables as possible thereby limiting the “wash-out effect”. And secondly, Judaism for the self-identified Jew seems to be a present and valuable, influential variable in the grieving/loss/bereavement process as well as in the milestone celebration process. The cultural influence of Judaism, at these extreme occurrences, is prevalent amongst the most assimilated, secular Jews as well as for those observant, religious Jews. Dr. Samuel Klagsbrun, a psychiatrist who incorporates his patients’ religion into his psychiatric treatment plan, notes “religion and religious values and backgrounds are extremely important to people’s dynamics” and can even be seen as an organizing force in their lives (NY Times, April 26, 2002)

The sample aimed to describe a population that is fairly representative of the New York area's middle class Jewish community. The sample strived to include most of the middle class socioeconomic bracket – from lower-middle to upper-middle class young women. All ends of the religious spectrum were included from the *sheitel* wearing Orthodox to the female *yalmulka* wearing Reform Jew. However, most young women identified as Modern Orthodox and then Reform. Although the study's focus is on re-grieving while celebrating and not on the subjects' monetary conditions per say, the study however noted socio-economic class brackets.

## *SAMPLE STRATEGY*

The inquiry's objectives can best be satisfied with the richness and depth offered by non-probability, purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). The participants were purposely and strategically selected in order to illuminate the study's objectives and, also, profiled the study's fundamental question of how young women re-grieve while celebrating. Although the by-product of non-probability, purposeful sampling is one of discovery, and the power of the sample's generalizability is greatly reduced. This trade-off is acceptable to the researcher as the sample still offers utility and credibility based on its logic, purpose and probability size.

Through the researcher's extensive network of relatives, friends and colleagues in both the Orthodox and secular Jewish world, initial access to potential participants originated from a "convenience"-type sampling. These key-informants directed the researcher to other suitable candidates, who in turn referred additional candidates as predicted by Patton, 1990. Ultimately, the inquiry was a "snowball"-type of sampling trying to target a diverse group of young Jewish women. The sample of young women was collapsed into the anticipated four categories- those who are observant Jews and come from lower-middle income homes, those who are observant Jews and come from middle or upper-middle class homes, those who are more culturally Jewish than religiously observant and come from lower middle class income homes and those who are more culturally Jewish than religiously observant and come from middle or upper-middle class homes. Although these categories may mimic the characteristics of stratified purposeful sampling, the researcher did access the young women through a snowball sample approach and not by reaching these variations directly.

Once again, these financial distinctions were not the focus of this study. The findings *generated by a socioeconomic lens were used to portray the subjects' demographic data* in the background section of the study.

## ***SAMPLE SIZE***

The researcher was never wedded to a specific number of subjects and adjusted the sample number according to factors of access, availability, and the quality of emerging data (Patton, 1990). The obtained sample size of thirty seemed sufficient to include breadth, richness and scope of the phenomena. Although thirty subjects may pale when compared to the numbers ordinarily produced by quantitative studies, it was nevertheless a significant undertaking and time-consuming endeavor. It was always understood that, if the researcher needed the perspective of additional subjects, she would add them to the subject pool. But given the potential of redundancy to strike and the lack of new insightful information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the researcher terminated the interview process after thirty subjects.

## ***TECHNIQUES OF DATA ANALYSIS***

In the spirit of Grounded Theory, building new theory can only result from data collection and analysis, which often come out of the researcher's own notes. These notes come directly from the informal notes the researcher took during the interviews with the subjects. With each interview, the researcher conceptualized new data and incorporated these statements into emergent theory. The theory emerges directly from the analysis of each interview note and with the process of coding of the analysis, data selection and new data generated, emerging concepts begin to get categorized. Using a Grounded Theory approach for analysis, this study looked "inside" the data, attempted to remove researcher bias and judgment to achieve better rigor, and began to organize the emerging data in clusters, and then began to capture the phenomena's essence through meta-ethnography as indicated by Patton (1990).

Line-by-line coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) helped the researcher place the emerging data into the above mentioned categories and clusters. These clusters, or categorical themes, were re-addressed and re-named through the on-going meta-ethnography process which also yielded rich sub-categories. As the ideas were dynamic, categories were reshaped and supported by anecdotal data. The findings were integrated and synthesized into patterns to help the researcher make "creative leaps" and contribute to theory building and our current knowledge (Mintzberg, 1983).

## ***SUMMARY OF RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION***

The study's objective was to use Grounded Theory to investigate whether or not young motherless Jewish women re-grieve while celebrating their milestones. Dual methodology was employed to quantitatively confirm that re-grieving while celebrating is a real occurrence while qualitatively providing data useful to clinicians' treatment approaches for this population.

The quantitative pre-screening survey and its three respective follow-up self-administered instruments –The Mother Daughter Attachment Scale, Relationship to Mother Inventory and Grief Resolution Scale- helped the researcher secure subjects appropriate for the study and ensured compliance with the study's objectives.

The qualitative interview process was framed in the exploratory nature of Grounded Theory and was able to tease-out and capture the re-grieving phenomena. Through the use of narrative, this study was able to characterize and describe re-grieving during milestones and investigated the variables of young adult women, their relationships with their mothers and how they experienced their milestones motherless.

It was anticipated that with the use of Grounded Theory method, a new substantial theory about re-grieving would be discovered. This new theory was expected to provide description and explanation about re-grieving and its connectedness to the four research questions of re-grieving and young adulthood, re-grieving and mother-daughter attachment, re-grieving and milestones, and re-grieving and Jewish tradition. This Grounded Theory inquiry incorporated descriptive and interpretive devices to extract from the participants their core re-grieving experiences during

the face-to-face interviews, gain anecdotal information in a holistic setting and helped the active participant researcher build trust with the respondents. The intent was to both quantitatively confirm the existence of re-grieving and also to develop new theory once re-grieving was established. These objectives fit well with Grounded Theory method.

The initial convenience-type sample ultimately became a snow-ball-type sample as key-informants directed the researcher to suitable candidates who then continued to direct the researcher to other suitable candidates. The sample size of thirty was kept to a minimum in order to produce a meaningful understanding and depth of the re-grieving phenomena. The sample reflected the inquiry's primary objective of understanding the duality of re-grieving while celebrating. This depth revealed the layers and dimensions of the re-grieving experience. The secondary objective focused on theory building. The study aimed to discover alternative theories about re-grieving when combined with young adulthood, milestones, close mother-daughter attachment and Jewish mourning customs. As such, the sample criteria required that each participant must:

1. Be of "young adulthood" age currently (18-30 years old) and,
2. Be of "young adulthood" age at the time of mothers' death and,
3. Have experienced at least one of the designated milestones motherless and,
4. Self-reported "close relationship" or "very close relationship" with mother and,
5. Consider herself Jewish.

Through the aforementioned sample criteria, the study undertook to discover and define the phenomena of re-grieving during milestones. In the following "Results" section, the four research questions are outlined and their various correlations are addressed.

## ***RESULTS***

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was three-fold:

1. to examine and define the experience of “re-grieving”;
2. to assess what evidence exists for this concept in the literature and;
3. to fill the gap in the existing clinical knowledge on the subject.

*Milestones without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Re-grieve While Celebrating* profiles actual experiences and effects of re-grieving typically experienced by young Jewish women as they celebrate their life-cycle milestones shortly after their mothers have died. For the purpose of this study, the investigated milestones were engagement, wedding nuptials, pregnancy, childbirth, and new motherhood. These major life-changing events seemed to produce contradictory emotions: shame and guilt as the young woman wants to be happy. This contradiction arose because the young woman is still grieving her mother’s death. This is the re-grieving process which, in conjunction with the developmental milestones, contains the paradoxical affective components of sadness and joy, attachment and loss, vulnerability and strength, and dependence and independence.

The study validates a new theory of “re-grieving”. In the following sections, a demographic description of the sample is presented, followed by the findings of the three scales: The Quality of Relationship With Mother Inventory, The Mother-Daughter Attachment and Intimacy Survey and The Mourning Behavior Checklist. Four specific research questions are addressed and their various correlations are determined and integrated.

## A) RESULTS OF THE PRESCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE (APPENDIX J)

### **Description of the Sample**

The inquiry was a snowball-type sample which targeted a diverse group of young Jewish women. All participants satisfied the following sample criteria:

1. Subjects were all female.
2. Subjects were between the ages of eighteen and thirty at the time of their mother's death.
3. Subjects were currently between the ages of eighteen and thirty-three at the time of their mother's deaths and at time of interview.
4. Subjects lost their mothers to death (as opposed to abandonment, jail, etc.).
5. Subjects experienced at least one of the study's designated milestones (i.e. engagement, wedding, pregnancy, childbirth, new motherhood) after the death of their mothers.
6. Subjects self-describe as "Jewish".
7. Subjects self-describe as having had a "good" relationship with their mother before her death.
8. Subjects had to have experienced "normal grief", free of non-normative, pathological grief.

### **Subjects Age**

The sample consisted of thirty young adult women between 18-33 years old (Average= 26.3). Each participant was a young adult between the ages of 18-30 years old at the time of her mother's death (Average= 22.2).

### **Mother's Death**

The majority of mothers were under the age of fifty-two at the time of their deaths (Average= 51.26 ). Eight of the mothers (27%) died suddenly, without any history of illness or overt symptoms. Three of these sudden deaths were due to accident. Twenty-two mothers (73%) died expectedly from illness.

### **Family Of Origin Characteristics**

Twenty-nine (93%) of the participants still have living biological fathers. Most of the participants (97%) have at least one sibling. Twenty of the participants (66%) have at least one sister and twelve of these participants (60%) have an older sister.

### **Jewish Identification**

Each participant considers herself "Jewish". The largest number self-identified as Modern Orthodox (37%), followed by Reform (27%), Orthodox (17%), and Conservative (10%). The smallest number of subjects identified as Conservadox (3%), Hasid(isha) (3%) or Egalitarian (3%). Each of the thirty participants attended her mother's funeral. Twenty-nine participants (97%) sat either a full or modified version of Shiva (the seven days of formal mourning). Each of the thirty participants recited Kaddish at least once. Each of the participants attended the unveiling of their mothers' grave. Each of the participants lights a memorial candle at least once a year.

### **Relationship with Mother**

Each of the daughters viewed their mother as her most trusted confidant and reported that

they had a good relationship prior to her death. Twenty-seven of the subjects (90%) stated that the mother-daughter relationship was “very good” and three women (10%) rated the relationship as “often good”. Twenty-eight of the women (93%) had either telephone or physical contact with their mothers four or more times week, with two women (7%) reporting weekly contact with their mothers.

### **Milestones with Living Mother**

Nine participants (30%) experienced engagement before their mothers’ death. Seven of these women also experienced their weddings with their mothers. Three of these women experienced pregnancy with their mothers and only one of the study’s participants experienced both childbirth and their own new-motherhood with her own mother.

### **Milestones with Deceased Mother**

Post-maternal death, all participants reportedly undertook one of the study’s designated milestones without their mothers. Twenty-one participants (70%) experienced engagements without their mothers. Sixteen of these women experienced their wedding and pregnancy without their mothers. Eleven of these participants then experienced child-birth without their mothers, and nine are currently experiencing new motherhood without their mothers (several of the participants were pregnant at time of participation in this study). Each young woman experienced a strong level of re-grieving during her milestone event with three or more presenting symptoms (feelings of sadness, despair, longing, vulnerability, anxiety, loss of appetite, insomnia, crying).

## **General Information**

Nineteen of the participants (63%) sought grief counseling post-maternal death. All of the participants identified with the middle-income-socioeconomic bracket. The majority of the participants reported that they were from either upper-middle-income families (63%) or from middle-income families (33%). Only one participant identified as lower-middle class (3%).

## **B) RESULTS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER INVENTORY (APPENDIX J)**

### **Degree of Closeness Findings**

All the participants felt they had a harmonious relationship with their mothers which was also filled with mutual respect. The participants also hoped to be like their mothers and relied on their mother's advice. The participants also felt that they were important to their mothers. The following affections measured the emotional closeness between the daughter and her living mother and referred specifically to the daughter's feelings of affection and respect.

### **Depend on Mother's Advice**

Twenty-six of the women (87%) reported that they "always" depended on their mothers for advice, and four of the woman (13%) reported that they would "often" depend on their mothers for advice.

### **Emulate Mother**

When asked to respond to the following statement "You want to be a mother like your mother",

the majority of respondents (97%) reported that they hope to be a “great deal” like their mothers, with one woman reporting that she would “somewhat” like to be like her mother.

### **Harmonious Relationship with Mother**

Each of the candidates reported that they shared a “harmonious” relationship with their mothers.

### **Daughter felt Important in Mother’s Life**

When asked to respond to the following statement “I was one of the most important people in my mother’s life” each participant answered “definitely true.” This indicated that 100% of the participants felt they were an important part of their mother’s life.

### **Happy in my Relationship**

When asked to respond to the following statement: “I was happy with my mother-daughter relationship”, twenty-eight of the women (93%) stated that this was “definitely true” and two stated that it was “mostly true”.

### **Mutual Respect between Daughter and Mother**

When asked to respond to the following statement: “We had a great deal of mutual respect and faith in one another,” twenty-nine young women (97%) responded “definitely true” and one responded “mostly true”.

## C) RESULTS OF MOTHER-DAUGHTER ATTACHMENT SCALE (APPENDIX J)

### **Degree of Emotional Attachment Findings**

The Mother Daughter Attachment and Intimacy Scale,” (Appendix D) measured the degree of mother-daughter intimacy and emotional attachment as perceived by the daughter after her mother’s death.

### **Time together, showed love, cared, nurtured, liked, best times, felt lucky**

100% of the young women reported they wanted to spend time together and that her mother had “expressed love” towards her and had “cared about” her feelings. In addition, they all felt “nurtured” by their mothers, and “genuinely liked” their mothers. Each also reported that she thought her “best times were with” her mother, and that she was “lucky” to have had her as a parent.

### **Good mother, closest relationship, and emotionally dependent**

All of the participants also noted that their mothers had been a “good mother”. Similarly, all respondents felt “closest” to their mothers when compared with the relationship to their fathers, siblings, other relatives or friends. 93% of the women reported that they and their mother-daughter relationships had been mutually “emotionally dependent”.

### **Mother-Grandmother relationship**

The majority of the daughters (93%) reported that their “mother and grandmother also had a close relationship,” and that *their* own mother-daughter relationship “was similar to” that

of the prior generation.

### **Daughter-Mother respect**

80% of the young women felt that their relationship with their mothers was “honest” and that both mother and daughter were “able to accept criticism” from one another. The same twenty-four young participants also felt that their mothers shared their “points of view” and that they “respected each other’s opinions”. However, only 67% of the women felt they were “able to share private things”.

## D) RESULTS OF MOURNING BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST (APPENDIX J)

### **Grief Findings**

The Mourning Behavior Checklist (Appendix F) was used to measure behaviors considered important in facilitating the mourning process (i.e. openly expressing grief, able to talk about the deceased). The scale helped the researcher differentiate respondents' normative grieving from pathological grieving.

### **Funeral and Burial**

100% of the study's participants attended both the funeral and burial of their mothers.

### **Express Grief**

100% of the participating young women was able to express sorrow and anger about the loss of her mother in the days following her mother's death, and she was able to talk/question freely a friend, relative or co-worker who also knew the mother. 80% of the young women reported being able to freely talk with their fathers about the circumstances of maternal death. 100% of participants reported seeing their fathers openly express grief over the loss of their wives.

### **Keepsake**

100% of participant were able to keep or was given a keepsake (s) or belonging(s) of her mother. 100% of participant reported that photos of her mother were displayed publicly in her

home. 10% of the women, however, noted their inability to actually look at the photos in the days following maternal death.

### **Visit Grave**

Nineteen participants (63%) visit their mother's graves at least on an annual basis. Each young woman reported that she still currently feel some degree of sadness at the mention of her mother's names.

## ***FINDINGS***

### **Introduction**

This chapter examined the four research statements linked to re-grieving namely: young adulthood; mother-daughter attachment; milestones of engagement to wed, wedding day, pregnancy and new motherhood; and lastly, Jewish mourning and tradition. Alongside each research statement, findings were presented with descriptive information, immediately followed by a discussion section providing detailed examples of concepts and categories related to the emergent theory of re-grieving. Participants' excerpts and narratives were interwoven throughout the discussion sections to illustrate evidence linking re-grieving to each of its related variables. When possible, consideration of the literature was presented to support the narrative and to integrate theory with the subjects' personal experiences.

**Research Statement #1:** #1. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to the Developmental Stage of Young Adulthood.

**Findings:** The sample population consisted of thirty young adult women between the ages of eighteen and thirty (Average = 26.3). Each participants was a young adult, between the ages of eighteen to thirty years old, at the time of her mother's death (Average = 22.2). Each participant reported a strong level of re-grieving, presenting as short-term feelings of longing for her mother, feelings of vulnerability and anxiety, low self-esteem, sadness, loss of appetite, crying and feelings of despair. 63% of the young women sought grief counseling within three years of maternal death, and all the participants experienced re-grieving during their motherless milestone events.

## A. DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE LINKING THE EXPERIENCE OF RE-GRIEVING TO THE STAGE OF YOUNG ADULthood

In this study, young adult women are not separating from their mother to seek autonomy as suggested by classical theorists, such as Erikson (1963), Sherrod (1996), Havinghurst (1953), and Vaillant (1972). Nor are young adult women connecting to their mothers to facilitate mutuality and independence as suggested by Feminist theorists like Steele (1985), Miller (1976), Chodrow (1978) and Gillian (1982). Rather, each young adult woman in this study has experienced what she considered a harsh, forced, and permanent separation: the death of her mother. These young adult women struggled with varying degrees of grief and mourning issues while concurrently making progress toward full adulthood. They faced a tumultuous life period, battling issues of identity confusion, career indecision, and mate selection, while re-grieving for their mothers. These typical young-adult issues had to be faced without a mother as an emotional anchor. At the same time, the young women contended with the idea that she can no longer be her mother's daughter. Mother-loss complicated young adulthood and young adulthood complicated mother-loss.

Theorists describe young adulthood as filled with "optimism, idealism and feelings of immortality" (Bockneck, 1980; Littwin, 1986; Loevinger, 1976). Yet for the young adult women of this study, these positive emotions were, at times, replaced by anxiety, sadness and feelings of despair. Loss of the mother, the figure who had the most influential role in the participants' early development, during a vital later phase of differentiation and maturation, created emotional chaos. Many of these young women were at the cusp of discovering their identities and busy trying to figure out where they are going when mother-loss threw their emotional and physical

worlds off-kilter.

The experience of first death is difficult at any age, but for it to strike during young adulthood is especially devastating. Young adults tend to mourn alone (LaGrand,1986). Because these young adult women are “out of synch” with their peers who still have living mothers, they are isolated from their social support network. These young women are particularly vulnerable to isolation because their peers cannot relate to death experiences on any level, let alone maternal death. This perhaps accounts for why 63% of the participants sought grief-related counseling following maternal death.

For all of the young women who participated in the study, re-grieving is an active part of their lives. Each, after the death of her mother, experienced rekindled periods of (A) intense longing for mother, (B) feelings of anxiety and vulnerability, (C) low-self-esteem, and (D) sadness with loss of appetite, crying and feelings of despair. When normative young adulthood issues of instability and rapid change combine with re-grieving, the result can be both vulnerability and debilitating anxiety.

Certain occasions and specific dates may provoke re-grieving. The literature notes that anniversaries, parent birthdays, griever's birthdays, death anniversaries, and holidays can arouse feelings of grief and loss (Donnelly, 1987; Leick & Nielson, 1991; LaGrand, 1986). The literature, however, does not address re-grieving associated with developmental milestones.

During re-grieving moments, the griever is in an active, though temporary, stage of grief

as the loss is repeatedly brought into sharp focus. As reported by the subjects of this study, re-grieving often mirrors the physical and emotional symptoms of acute grief. Each participant reported short-term feelings of (A) longing for mother, (B) vulnerability and anxiety, (C) low self-esteem, and, (D) sadness with loss of appetite, crying, and feelings of despair.

**(A) Longing for Mother: Emotional**

In *Phases of Adult Life*, Roger Gould (1980) concluded that young adults are engaged in the work of being adults but still look to a parent for approval and support. Each of the young women interviewed for the re-grieving phenomena, reported that her mother was her primary source of support, and that she felt a void and an irreconcilable sense of loss post maternal death. These young women describe that friends, spouse and family member could not “*fill-the-shoes*” of their mothers to “*replicate*” their unwavering and lavish support.

Margo was twenty-four years-old when her mother died. After her mother’s death, she felt “*gone went my biggest cheerleader*”. Margo knows that her husband, father and two sisters want her to succeed, but feels that only her mother’s encouragement was “*selfless*” and “*genuine*” because it was derived from “*pure love*”. Margo feels “*a hole in her heart*” that makes her “*ache*” for her mother.

Tobi also mentioned losing her “*biggest fan*” when her forty-eight year-old mother suffered a fatal stroke. Tobi was twenty at the time of her mother’s death, and reported that although she feels loved by many, she also feels feeling somewhat alone in her achievements, “*...My mother celebrated even the smallest of accomplishments. She’d leave Post-Its all over*

*the fridge saying ‘ I’m so proud of you’ or ‘You’re the most beautiful middle girl ever!’ or my favorite was, ‘way to go Slim, you lost three pounds, hip-hip-go-away’ ...”*

Rachel echoes this nostalgia for endless, unconditional maternal support. She reflected, *“It was rare that I didn’t get acknowledgement. She even celebrated when I finished last at a swim meet. My mother always made me feel capable- capable of anything I wanted. She encouraged me to apply Harvard when my grades suggested otherwise. I knew it was a joke but it was the tenderness behind the idea that she thought I was smart enough to even apply.”* Rachel, who is twenty-nine years old, describes periods of “severe yearning” for her mother in the seven years since her mother died of a sudden heart-attack.

Margo, Tobi and Rachel are re-grieving the loss of their praise, shared pride, ego-enrichment and companionship that their mothers always provided. These young adult daughters miss the sense of being understood and respected by their mothers (Thorton, Orbuch & Axinn, 1995). Inside, the participants retained their childhood desire to yell, “watch me, mom!” Many mothers revel in the achievements of their grown children, and young adults learn to trust and depend on their mother’s continued attention to their accomplishments. These young women long for their mothers emotional support, but also miss the physicality of their mother-daughter relationship.

### **Longing for Mother: Physical**

*“Sometimes on Friday afternoon as I walk into my father’s house, if I close my eyes real hard and concentrate, I can still smell my mom’s cinnamon challahs and I start to cry as if my*

*mother died yesterday,” Sara described. “No one else hugs good-shabbos like my mother either. She was barely five-foot so she hugged all us kids at the hips or waist.”* Sara, twenty-two years old, has been motherless for three years, but she reported that she can still “*feel*” her mother’s touch, “*smell*” her skin and “*hear*” her voice.

Like Sara, twenty-one year old Julia also tries to retain the sound of her mother’s voice. Julia still replays daily her home answering machine to hear her mother’s voice captured for eternity on the recordings. Julia needs that human connection to her mother to quell her longing. Julia said, “*As soon as I hear my mother’s voice, I start to cry but I play it over and over and over so I can cling to how I used to feel when she’d telephone me. It kind of embraces me. The voice reconnects me to her in a way photos can’t.*”

Touch plays an important role for thirty year old Kate whose longing takes shape in hands. Kate misses her mother’s caress. “*We always held hands- on the street, in the movies, over a dinner-out. Our hands fit well together. We never had the awkwardness some people have of whose hand would go over and whose would go under. I hold my own hands sometimes just to try to resurrect the feel of her hand.*”

It is a commonly reported phenomenon among the motherless daughters in the study who reported being able to recall physical details of their mothers. It is imperative for these young women to retain memories of the sensory experiences of being WITH their mothers. Perhaps, re-grieving affords the daughter an opportunity to revive her mother’s memory and regain her equilibrium in order to cope (Stroebe, Schut & Stroebe, 2005). In reviving her mother’s presence

and attributes, the daughters may help allay and abate her own anxiety.

**(B) Feelings of Anxiety and Vulnerability:**

Young adulthood has been described in the literature as the traditional phase for optimism, idealism, enthusiasm and feelings of immortality (Bocknek, 1980). It is often a time characterized by a *sens de pouvoir* ---strength and vigor (Loevinger, 1976). The period of young adulthood for the women of this study, however, found this transition-prone stage of development filled with a sense of peril and heightened anxiety.

Lack of Ability to Control Environment

By illustration, Cindy, whose mother died when she was nineteen, quit downhill, non-competitive skiing. Although she had enjoyed the sport for twelve years prior to her mother's death, she became increasingly fearful as her engagement loomed. Cindy explained that she had, *"heard too many ski accident stories and I didn't want to become another statistic- my mom was a statistic, a breast cancer statistic."* Her mother's death made Cindy aware of her own mortality. Because of her fear, she avoided an activity that had previously brought her enjoyment. Until her mother's death, Cindy had never had a moment of ski worry or concern. With her mother's death, she became aware of life's fragility.

Other participants shared Cindy's feelings of impending danger as they approached milestones and subsequently modified, changed and/or terminated what had been routine activities. Lois LaGrand writes, "For young adults, first death experiences are a double tragedy- it forces the grievors to not only realize the depth of their own personal loss but also challenges

their view of the world and they recognize how little control they have over their environment” (1986). Once aware of the fragility of life, the young grievors modify their behavior in an attempt to control the course of their existence as their uncertainties mount. Cindy attempts to control her environment and perhaps her future relationship as a wife by terminating her hobby, skiing.

Similarly, Renee had been driving for nine years when her mother died, but a few weeks after her mother’s death, she decided to give-up driving after dark. At six months pregnant, she felt panic behind the wheel at night and insisted, “*its hard to see the road at night ... with the drunk drivers...*” She came to rely on public transportation, when someone else was not available to drive her. Renee wanted to be proactive and feel that she was able to “*protect*” herself from potential harm. Before her mother’s death, Renee had “*enjoyed driving*” and had often driven long-distances to visit relatives. Renee, like Cindy, exemplifies what LaGrand describes as an effort to bring her environment under her control.

### Lacking Confidence

After losing their maternal support, many of the participants reported varying states of vulnerability. At thirty years old, Ruth, motherless for seven years and in a self described difficult marriage for over nine years, still instinctively reaches for the phone to call her mother each time she has had an argument with her husband and feels the marriage is at risk for divorce. She knew her mother “*would call an ace-an ace and tell me to stop being nervous and I should just leave him. She always supported me. I know if I left him my mother would be there for me.*” Ruth’s behavior suggests that her mother-loss in young adulthood interrupts cognitive

development as the daughter struggles to reach independence without her trusted confidante.

Cynthia Wilcox Rittgers explored the connection between mother-loss and the psychological health of young adult women. As a young adult woman is integrating her ever-increasing autonomy with the lessons and behaviors of childhood, her mother-loss eliminates one-half of a critical dialogue that would normally lead to optimal integration of her new and changing role (Rando, 1993). Seven years later, Ruth still searches for that missing half of the dialogue. It takes time for grievors to integrate loss into their lives. Ruth's instinct to reach out for her mother, particularly when under stress, can be explained by feminist theorists like Chodrow, Fisher and Jordan who describe how female mourners benefit by staying connected with the deceased, rather than forcing the complete separation that is advocated in traditional theories on coping with grief from Vallant and Erikson.

Desire for real contact with a deceased mother can be triggered not only by relationship difficulties, but also when faced with a decision or the decision making process. Motherless for over a year, Julia reports feeling loved by her father, older brother and fiancée of two moths yet often elected to make important decisions alone. Taking a feminist stance, Julia felt that only her mother shared her perspective on women in the work-force, femininity and motherhood. She explained, *"Its not that I don't trust them (father, brother, fiancée) to help me decide which job to take... what to wear to an important meeting... or how to handle a difficult boss...but they do not get the importance of these issues- they minimize them, making me feel completely girlish and my girlfriends don't always share my values- these are the times when I am torn, nervous, can't sleep, feel stressed and miss my mom's insight."*

Robert White (1975) maintains that young adults are still in the process of developing their individual morals, ideals and values. During this development, they still require their parent's involvement and guidance. Julia's anxiety and distress about decision making demonstrates that her values were still developing. This stage, already rife with anxiety, was magnified when an engaged to wed Julia felt that she needed her mother to help mitigate her vulnerability. Julia felt "cut off", especially at a time of emotionally growth and physical change.

Similarly, twenty-nine year old Rebecca observed, "*In my head I know I am a grown woman who makes stable, even good decisions but in my heart I always wonder if my mom would have helped me make better ones. Then I begin to question or second-guess my original decision. Then, I get frustrated. Then angry. Then sad.*" Rebecca, whose mother died suddenly of a staph infection when she was fifty, demonstrates a strange paradox of vulnerability with strength struggle. Rebecca's mother has been dead for five years, but Rebecca longs for the reassurance their relationship provided. Although Rebecca had been married for two years at the time of this study, she did not yet have complete confidence in her competence as a wife. She needs her deceased mother as authority for reassurance. Rebecca, like Ruth and Julia, has not yet fully become her own authority. This can perhaps be attributed to the abridged mother-daughter relationship. Their lack of confidence fuels their vulnerability.

The interviews conducted for this study with Rebecca, Ruth, Julia, Renee and the other young women support the researchers' position that there is a connection between loss of maternal support and feelings of vulnerability. For many young adults, their mothers are a

primary source of support. This support can be pivotal in all areas of the young adult woman's life. Mothers provide emotional, practical and informational support (Cleiren, 1993). The death of a mother means the loss of these emotionally sustaining structures (Cicirelli, 1991). When such support is lost, the individual is left in a state of vulnerability (Lifton & Olson, 1974).

According to *Stress Theory*, the death of a parent can disrupt the family organization and force a redefinition of familial roles (Hill, Yeung, & Duncan, 1996). Individuals tend to form their identities in relation to the people around them (Wong, 1995). When a mother dies, the child loses her role as a daughter and, often, must assume new role. She is no longer her mother's daughter, helper, and friend. Nor is she the recipient of her mother's support. "Who is she now?" Her identity, as she has known it, is thrown into doubt further compounding the milestones and vulnerability scenario.

Heidi's thoughts lend support to Stress Theory. Twenty-nine year old Heidi used to refer to herself in the bakery, library, local restaurants, synagogue and even when volunteering as "*Selma's daughter*". Her mother, Selma, was popular and out-going and it made Heidi feel secure to identify herself as her mother's daughter- in being - "*Selma's daughter*". Upon her mother's sudden death at age fifty-five, six years before this study was conducted, Heidi lost this aspect of her self-identifying tag. She made the conscious decision to still refer to herself as "*Selma's daughter*." It comforted her to retain this identity and to see herself through this lens. She reported, "*My mom died. But I am still alive and I AM Selma's daughter. Her death did not change who I am but I still somehow feel lost.*"

Cognitive Theorists, such as Parkes, Cleiren, Thorton and Wilcox-Rittgers, would conclude that in order for Heidi to regain healthy functioning, she would need to develop a new identity that incorporated both the loss of her mother and the loss of the parts of herself that existed only in that relationship.

### ( C ) Low Self-Esteem

The literature reviewed for this study shows that young adults attempt to mourn alone largely because their young adult peers can't yet relate to death, especially a maternal death. From young adult women's perspective, seeking support would indicate their on-going dependency, neediness, and immaturity so they hide their grief. Thus, their struggle for autonomy makes it more likely that they will become "hidden mourners," leaving them bereft of peer emotional support. Richard Kalish in *Death, Grief and Caring Relationships* (1985), writes that young adult grievors are also unlikely to have the level of support typical of a child or that of a widowed adult. Young adults make their grief worse by isolating themselves with their emotions. They tend to grieve alone, further exacerbating their already severe emotional upset and separation anxiety issues.

### Cut-Off From Friends

Twenty-one year old Shayna demonstrates Kalish's theory. Shayna shared how she always "*tried to always put a smile on my face so my friends wouldn't think of me as a bore or worse, depressed. Why burden them with my mother's death? They all loved her and miss her too, but they have good things to celebrate and don't need me as a reminder of bad things. I cry*

*by myself every morning and cry myself to sleep every night. I miss my mom but my friends don't need to know this.*" At twenty-one, Shayna's motherless position has made her out-of-touch from her life-long friends. By needing to hide her real feelings from her cherished friends, Shayna's self-confidence eroded, leaving her with lowered self-esteem.

Abigail at twenty-six years old and motherless for three years had similar experiences. Her mother died at age forty-nine within three months of being diagnosed with stage four ovarian cancer. Abigail recalled a friend's innocent, but "*callous remarks*", one of her closest friends from childhood, who had known and liked Abigail's mother, had made while Abigail was sitting Shiva. She told Abigail with excitement how her toddler-age daughter was toilet trained, she was then disappointed when Abigail did not share her enthusiasm. This experience left Abigail feeling "*cut-off*" and "*different*" from her friends. It made her realize that although her friend always inquired about her mental health and well-being in the months following her mother's death, she knew her friend "*couldn't relate*" to her motherless status. Abigail's other close friend confided in her flippantly "*I don't know what I'd do without my mother*". As much love as both Abigail and Shayna felt for their friends, they understood they could get sympathy, but not empathy. The premature maternal deaths seem to make friends anxious about their own mother's mortality and leave them feeling exposed to early mother-loss too.

Feeling the need to minimize or even hide their distress and grief, Shayna and Abigail chose to mourn without their friends, further exacerbating their already low self-esteem. Various studies on the relationship between mothers and their young adult daughter have demonstrated that emotional closeness relates to a daughter's feelings of security, empowerment, trust and

affection. In addition, close mother-daughter relationships have been related to lower levels of anxiety, distress and a sense of helplessness (Baruch & Barnett, 1983). Researchers believe that mother-daughter bonds of attachment can stimulate enhanced self-esteem and higher levels of psychological well-being (Barnett, 1988; Kenny & Donaldson, 1991). Conversely, the premature loss of this closeness can leave the daughter with increased feelings of anxiety and helplessness, lower-self esteem, and an acute sense of vulnerability.

(D) **Sadness with loss of appetite, crying, and feelings of despair**

For all of these young women who participated in this study, the most significant aspect of mother-loss is the loss of maternal guidance and support. For example, to mark Leah's twenty-first birthday and college graduation, she celebrated with her first "legal" drinking-age bottle of champagne. She explained that when her friends, family and fiancée toasted her, she felt "*sickened and nauseous.*" Leah had cried for days prior to graduation, she was unable to sleep and she was worried because she had no idea what she was "*going to do*" with her life. She felt "*adrift*". She "*needed*" her mother to discuss her career ideas and life plans as she approached "*real womanhood*". Leah had a strong support system, including her friends, family and fiancé, yet still feels intense longing for her mother and missed her guidance. It was a void that Leah describes as "*unfillable*". Every time Leah thought of her graduation, she 'sobbed'.

*"I somehow manage to hold it together on the outside,"* said thirty year old Emma. *"I function well at work, try to keep my marriage a priority but there are moments out of nowhere that I sob."* Emma has "*cried*" almost every day for two years since her mother died of complications from Parkinson's Disease at age sixty. She knows its small things that bring her

sense of loss over her mother's death to her attention. She ties her scarf, crying, for example, as she nostalgically remembers how her mother taught her "*the French center knot technique*". But it was Emma's engagement and wedding that triggered the 'real sobs'. Emma felt "*overwhelmed with panic*" at the thought of experiencing these significant events without her mother by her side. Although self-described as a happy person most of the time, Emma has lost significant weight since her mother's death. She explains, "*Sometimes I just don't have an appetite. I think of my mom's death and have no desire to eat. Thinking about her death makes me crazed that I have to live the rest of my life without her. It makes me so unbelievably sad.*"

The participants in this study, such as Leah and Emma, are still struggling to reach maturity; are at life's crossroads of decisions; and are experiencing low self-esteem, vulnerability and sadness from the loss of their mothers - their primary sources of support. Important decisions had to be made without their most trusted advisor and supporter. The subjects often found themselves in partial isolation, due to the changed nature of their relationships with surviving family members and social discomfort with their peers, who are unable to identify or understand the newly complicated decision-making process.

As each of the subjects struggled to make major life decisions, she experienced anxiety that can be attributed to the lack of her mother's encouragement and validation. When a mother dies before the maturation of her daughter, they are not able to successfully resolve conflicts that might have been generated by new and adult choices. Nor can the daughter redefine her boundaries and relationship as mother and adult daughter. This development is often an important facet in the transition to adulthood. When a woman experiences mother-loss while

passing through young adulthood, she not only loses a potential source of guidance and support, but also the experience of becoming an adult in the eyes of her primary female role model. Therefore, maternal death during young adulthood can threaten the emotional stability and developmental progress of the daughter (Jordan, 1991).

**Research Statement #2** There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to Measures of Mother-Daughter Attachment.

**Findings:** The Relationship with Mother Inventory measured the quality of the (prior) emotional closeness the daughter shared with her living mother and assessed the daughter's feelings of affection and respect. The Mother-Daughter Attachment Scale measured the degree of mother-daughter intimacy and emotional attachment as perceived by the daughter post-maternal death.

All the participants perceived their mother-daughter relationship as a harmonious one and were happy with the relationship. Each of the participants felt that she was an important person in her mother's life and knew that she could depend on her for advice. All of the participants felt that the mother-daughter relationship was filled with mutual respect, concern and faith in one another. Each participant aspires to "mother" her children as she had been mothered. All but two participants hoped to be a "great deal" like their mothers and the balance hoped to be "somewhat or sometimes -like" their mothers. Each participant felt "lucky" to have her mother as her mother. All the participants expressed symptoms of re-grieving.

## B. DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE THAT LINKS THE EXPERIENCE OF RE-GRIEVING TO MOTHER-DAUGHTER ATTACHMENT

Attachment has often been described by traditional developmental researchers as having a needy, invasive quality that is a mark of continued immaturity (Kreiger, 1997). By devaluing the mother-young adult daughter attachment and describing it as dysfunctional, developmental psychologists, such as Valliant (1977), Erikson (1963), and Levinson (1978), have the ignored positive feelings of empathy and intimacy in that special relationship. To rectify this oversight, feminist-oriented attachment theorists have deemphasized “separation and autonomy from mother” in favor of “attachment, mutuality and interdependence” (Fischer, 1981; Baruch & Barnett, 1983). Responses from participants this study reflect the later feminist vision that describes positive and meaningful core mother-young adult daughter relationships.

### **My Mother, My Friend**

Yehudis, a twenty-nine year old mother of two, one year after her mother’s death, reported missing her “*friendship*”. She explained, “*I was just getting the opportunity to know her as my real, true friend and she died. I was old enough to know she was a kind woman with interesting thoughts; a caring wife, a quality educator and teacher; a good neighbor and a wonderful, joyful mother. She had all the qualities that I would want in a friend and I myself want to be.*” Yehudis, like the other twenty-nine participants, lost not just a mother but also a trusted confidant, friend and supporter. Yehudis’ reflections relate closely to the attachment theories espoused by feminist writers Baruch & Barnett, (1983); Boyd, (1989); Friedman, (1980); Edelman, (1999); Strimling, (1994); Thompson & Walker, (1984); Groh, (1994); and

Rossi & Rossi, (1991) who have all maintained that the tie between mother and daughter is the strongest and most persistent connection that can be made between two people. The feminist-oriented theorists view the mother-daughter bond as a “side-by-side, close relationship” rather than the “enmeshed or encumbered attachment” the male, classic theorists describe (Bassoff, 1988). All but one participant in this study agreed with the statement, “We had a great deal of mutual respect, faith and confided in each other, ” demonstrating the type of “side-by-side mutuality” described by the feminist theorists.

The young women miss their mothers’ *“thoughts, opinions, views and friendship.”* Rebecca *“adored”* her mother’s *“ability to assess situations.”* She explained, *“my mother, me, and my younger sister were once stranded in an airport. My mother calmly thought about all our different options on how to get home or where we should go. Everyone else was screaming into their cell phones or yelling at the airline representatives. But my mom talked to us kids like we were part of the solution and she was so practical about it. She was smart and her ideas were always on-the-mark”.* Like Rebecca, Margo also described her mother as smart and capable, *“a New York Times, well-read mom who was also well-traveled and well-rounded. You could ask my mom almost anything and either she knew the answer or knew how to get the answer. She also had a nice way about her. She was an optimist, even dying she was positive. She would make her hospital roommates smile between their moans of pain. I admire that hopefulness and am grateful I inherited her sunny disposition.”* Rebecca and Margo saw their mothers as women with good character and admirable qualities, not only as good mothers.

Kate’s words demonstrate the total depth of her loss, *“We were like two peas in a pod.*

*We held hands while walking...hugged hello and goodbye... laughed at the same jokes at the exact same moments...selected the same shoes and hats each time we shopped ...liked the same relatives...gave to the same charities...read the same books...rolled our eyes when we were disgusted by my father's old world ideas...chose to spend our free time together...felt sad for each other when someone was rude to one of us. We really understood each other. I feel like I am missing a limb and get paralyzed sometimes by my own sadness.*" At thirty years old, Kate is "happy" with her life, but thinks of her mother several times a day and feels a profound sadness at each of those moments. According to the limited literature, re-grieving is a healthy, normal response and process that helps a daughter, like Katie, retain her mother-daughter bond. Kate shared that she *"continues to talk to my mom as if I am waiting for her to react or respond. I know she is dead but sometimes I need to hear her wisdom and advice."* For Kate and others, their mother-loss eliminates one-half of a critical dialogue that would normally lead to optimal integration of the daughter's challenging and changing roles.

For these young women, their mothers were among their dearest friends. Thus it is necessary to understand the type of attachment they shared with their mothers in order to understand the re-grieving component. They each lost their primary nurturer, mother and a supportive best friend. As such, as the young-adult daughters begin to establish their own identities and encounter stressful periods of uncertainty, their separation anxiety often gets resurrected, and re-grieving gets triggered.

**Research Statement #3.** There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and the specific Milestones experienced post-maternal death. (Appendix J)

## **Findings:**

**Milestones With Mother:** 30% of the participants experienced at least one of the designated milestones with their mother. Each of the nine women marked their engagements with their mother. Seven had their wedding day with their mother present. Three experienced pregnancy with their mother and one experienced child-birth and new-motherhood with her mother. None reported any symptoms of re-grieving.

**Milestones Without Mother:** 100% of the participant experienced a milestone motherless reported strong levels of re-grieving during these events. 100% re-grieving was noted with three or more severe of the following symptoms: anxiety, crying, feelings of longing for deceased mother, loss of appetite, despair and insomnia.

**Engagement:** For 70% of the young women, it was their engagement which triggered these re-grieving emotions.

**Wedding:** For 53% of the young women, weddings triggered their re-grieving emotions.

**Pregnancy:** For 53% pregnancy was the catalyst for their re-grieving.

**Child-birth:** For 37% child-birth elicited re-grieving (of which 30% were first-time mothers and just continued re-grieving through several months of their new-motherhood status).

### C. DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE THAT LINKS THE EXPERIENCE BETWEEN RE-GRIEVING AND THE SPECIFIC MILESTONES EXPERIENCED POST-MATERNAL DEATH

Young adulthood, in the context of this study, is arguably one of the most stressful times of a woman's life. Rapid role changes in quick succession, coupled with the lack of a firm identity, can wreak havoc on her emotional stability and well-being. It is my contention that the

death of a mother makes the milestone events, or periods of punctuated transition, that are frequent and typical of young adulthood, painful and frightening. For these young women, the imposed self-reliance, coupled with the acute awareness that they now lack maternal support, makes milestone changes seem threatening. The trauma of these experiences can leave a young woman in an unusually vulnerable state (Nydegger, 1991; Aquilino, 1997). Renewed feelings of despair, anger, and heightened anxiety often accompany important moments for the subjects of this study. A milestone event renews feelings of grief for the past loss of the mother because a current need for maternal attention, during periods of deeply self-oriented trial and vulnerability. Re-grieving, as examined in this study, is psychological and physical. The women of this study, often in a phase of constant transition, relied on and now lack their maternal support and feel symptoms mirroring acute grief (sadness, despair, anxiety, and lack of appetite).

The literature acknowledges that stress accompanies these life transitions, and the person experiencing the milestone is in a state of vulnerability (Stewart, Sokol, Healy & Hithane, 1986; Ward & Spitze, 1992; Littwin, 1986; Sherrod, 1996, Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991). Significant, normative milestones are viewed from a situational change perspective. During a milestone event, a young woman's daily routine, interpersonal relationships and physical environment are changed. These new circumstances disturb their emotional balance and throw them off-kilter. Parke describes how the normative grief process helps the griever to incorporate the reality of death into everyday life. Similarly, the young adult motherless woman in this study must also acclimate to milestone changes and situational transformations while re-grieving her mother's death. The average, ordinary stress of the engagement, wedding, pregnancy and new-motherhood milestones is further exacerbated and intensifies when coupled with mother-loss.

The following section of this chapter will outline the emotional, physical and social perspectives of the re-grieving young women.

### **Engagement for Marriage**

The subjects of this study were socialized from the time they were young to believe in the importance of marriage and children. The families of my subjects expected their off-spring to form life-long, heterosexual relationships contracted with legal marriage and some form of religious ceremony. Between engagement and marriage, the young woman had to emotionally prepare for a permanent partnership and to plan their nuptial celebrations. These preparations can provoke anxiety, but the period of engagement is also filled with happiness and excitement. Between the engagement gifts and good luck phone calls, many recently engaged young women of the study describe that they are “walking on air.”

A large industry has grown to support, encourage and capitalize on enthusiastic brides. An array of bridal magazines seemingly concentrate on weight loss, bride’s maid dresses and floral center pieces. But, when flipping through the pages of bridal magazines, de rigueur reading for young brides, the women addressed by this study did not find advice on the issue that is most profound to them: how to wed without the mother of the bride. These young women do not have mothers to help them find a wedding dress, to offer advice on marriage, or to help them make innumerable little decisions that go into planning a middle class wedding. For 70% of the young women in my target demographic, the excitement of engagement was compounded by the stressful process of planning a wedding. The study’s young adult motherless women are excluded from these normal experiences of their peers and make them feel isolated, further

intensifying and renewing their feelings of loss- the feeling of re-grieving. They struggle daily with balancing engagement happiness and their grieving for their mother

### **Engagement Ring Re-grieving**

For the subjects of this study, the engagement ring is not only a physical symbol of a new life ahead, but also a daily reminder that they must begin this life without a mother's guidance.

Leslie's engagement story demonstrates the coexistence of happiness and grief that characterizes the engagement period of a young woman whose mother has died. Leslie became engaged at twenty-six, four years after the death of her mother. She described this experience gently crying:

*“My mother discussed my wedding with me since my Confirmation. She'd save business cards from affairs she attended and had enjoyed the meals. She saved wedding invitations if she liked the wording or style. She had the details all worked-out. The logistics all planned from the twelve piece band to the hydrangeas centerpieces. The groom was an afterthought and she died never having the chance to see me even date. As soon as I got the ring, I knew I was in for a lot of crying. Each time I looked down at my finger, my mother's wedding plans swirled in my head. I was celebrating this huge, huge life-turning event without her. I was so sad and yet, so happy at the same time. People told me to 'BE happy, it's what your mother would want' . What they didn't understand is that I was happy- happy for my engagement but sad about my mom”.*

Leslie and others reported feeling “*torn*” between feelings of elation about their engagement and feelings of sadness that their mothers were not there to share in their happiness. They simultaneously rejoiced over their upcoming unions while re-grieving the loss of their mothers. These polarized emotions often left the women feeling vulnerable and emotionally spent.

For these women, the actual engagement ring itself stimulated feelings I have associated with re-grieving, causing some, even, hysteria. Tamar described her experience:

*“The ring was exquisite. My mother would have loved it, especially since my father never bought her one. I am sure she’d have tried it on a thousand times. But each time I look down [at the ring on my finger] all I can think about was my mother’s death. She’d never meet my husband- the very man who will provide for me financially, physically and emotionally. My fiancée used to roll his eyes as if praying to god each time someone in the community would compliment me or him on the ring. I would cry each and every time while he would give me a look of sympathy. I know he was also hurt – he was so carefree and truly felt blessed to be engaged while I just smiled and cried.”*

All the motherless, engaged young women who participated in this study, experienced re-grieving and feelings of extreme vulnerability. Pending marriage, with its implications of permanence, often prompts questions weighted with identity conflict and anxiety (Zabriskie, 2000). Am I doing the right thing? Am I ready to be commit? Am I ready to be commit to this person?

Many young women turn to their mothers-their primary model of a mature woman, a wife, and a mother-for advice during the period of engagement. The loss of the mother also represents the loss of a trusted confidante and with their mother's death, the loss of their ability to talk freely. Leah put it succinctly, "*Who else could I turn to with my trepidations and not feel as if I am betraying my fiancé? Only my mother would have understood, without judging, AND would never raise or repeat our conversation.*" Like Leah, many of the women who participated in this study felt guilty that they were experiencing anxiety over their future partnership when it was assumed by their family and friends that their life should be full of bliss and romance.

Cindy, Julia, Shayna and Renee described feeling "pulled" and "torn" alternating between crying over the deaths of their mothers, feeling overwhelmed by the "unknowns of life" and "picking out flowers," "registering," and "house shopping". Julia explained that her engagement felt "hormonal". She said,

*"All of a sudden I remember that my mother never met my future husband and I start to feel palpitations, sweat and get filled with anxiety. It would have been comforting to just have her give me final approval---sort of a yes, dear- HE is the right man for you. Her insight into my marriage choice would have soothed my concerns. Then, within a few minutes, I am so consumed with happiness."*

### **Wedding Dress Re-grieving**

The wedding dress purchase seems to be one of the most emotionally devastating aspects of an engagement without mother for my subjects. It raises a myriad of complications for the daughter. Some concerns are emotional, based on a longing for her mother "*see her*" in her dress,

“*be with her*” and “*help her*”. Others expressed practical concerns, such as “*who will tell me which dress flatters me?*” or, “*who will accompany me to go dress shopping?*” Emma said,

*“My mother had style and would have loved, loved, loved to have taken me wedding dress shopping. Although I inherited her fashion flair, I know she would have given wonderful input. I went alone, as sad as that sounds, to a beautiful bridal boutique and alternated between ooh and ahh-ing at the gowns and crying for me and my mom. Even the sales woman and the tailor were crying for us.”*

The concept of shopping for a wedding dress is often based on the idealized image of a luxurious day with lunch, makeovers, and shopping with mom. Hollywood promotes this ideal in television’s The Learning Channel reality show “Say Yes to the Dress” where mothers of the bride and their engaged-to-wed daughters spend hours trying on wedding dresses at Kleinfeld’s, the wedding dress department store, in search of their perfect gown. “Bridezilla,” another bride-based reality television program featured on WE TV, profiles difficult and demanding brides, and their accommodating and indulgent mothers at their side. Movies such as *Father of the Bride*, *Private Benjamin* and *27 Dresses* also perpetuate the specialness of the mother-bride daughter relationship. Bridal magazines and bridal stores advertise catering to mother/daughter shopping teams. For example, “mother of the bride” dresses have become a niche market in a standard wedding consideration. The mother/daughter nuptial shopping is a fun ritual for those in a socio-economic milieu of my subjects. The descriptions of shopping for a wedding dress by Leslie, Cindy, Julia, Margo, and other participants, however, approached wedding dress shopping as one typically approaches a dentist appointment. “*I just wanted to get it done. I didn’t even really look. I tried one on and said, ‘fine’*,” reported Leslie whose mother died eight

years before. She said, *“I didn’t love the dress but needed to get it over with. I kept thinking why did I have to be the one to lose her mother when I was the one who never fought with her and always loved her?”* In light of the cultural pressures for the purchase of the wedding dress to be a special mother/daughter experience, it is clear why a young bride whose mother has died would look on the event with dread. Each of my subjects expressed that they did not find a friend, an aunt, or even a mother-in-law to be a good substitute for replacing their mothers. These alternates were not only an unsatisfactory replacement for their mothers, but the idea of having another woman fill the role designed for her mother raised re-grieving issues of isolation, loss, loneliness, anxiety and sadness in the participants of the study.

This distress is witnessed in the following statements made by Shayna:

*“I spent the first eight weeks of my six month engagement crying first when I looked down at the ring and was so upset my mom wasn’t here to see me get engaged. Then, I spent the next eight weeks tormented over who would help me select a wedding dress. I lost so much weight from the stress of thinking about the fahshunkina (Yiddish:ridiculous) dress. My mother-in-law – to-be was really kind and offered to come with me but that felt wrong. My two sister-in- laws and even one of my brothers volunteered to accompany but that felt wrong too. So, in the end, I went to a big department store where everyone was impersonal and no one questioned why I kept crying”.*

These feelings of anxiety and loss were present even in cases in which the engaged young woman believed that the wedding dress purchase would have created friction between herself and her mother. As Tamar stated,

*“My mother would have taken me, with my three sisters, and my baby nieces to the ‘simple’ bridal shop. She was careful with money, since every dollar counted, but would have felt joy in buying me my dress. She would have chosen a dress with beads, poofy sleeves, high shoulders, a crown-type veil and old-lady soft shoes so I could dance all night. She was very practical.”* With tears flowing, Tamar said she elected to go to shopping alone. Similarly, Hope felt she and her mother would have diverged on dress style but she would have shopped with her anyway:

*“My mother would have taken me to the Sears of bridal stores. She cared about family and friendship and wore Yoga pants and sneakers most of the time. I know she would have selected a satin, straight dress with lace and flowers every wear. I, on the other hand, would have made an appointment with Vera Wang, the socialites choice on Madison Avenue, and gone sleek, high-fashion and stunning.”* Just like Tamar, Hope was crying as she continued,

*“We were night and day in clothes but at least I would have had her see me in a wedding dress- even a hippie wedding dress. In the end, I went alone to Bergdorf Goodman and bought a variation of what I think we would have both liked----a stunning, yet subdued gown.”*

The stereotype of mother-daughter wedding dress shopping holds up even under potentially diverse circumstances like Hope’s. The story reminds the reader that even at risk of conflict, mothers and daughters who had harmonious relationships wedding dress shop together at all costs.

The engagement can also be explored from a psychoanalytic perspective. Engagement may represent a bridge between mother and daughter. When the daughter becomes a wife, she

usually, for the first time--- is sharing a social role with her mother (Friday, 1977; Walker & Thompson, 1987). Many of the participants noted that they felt, “*robbed or gyped*”. They felt cheated that they couldn’t have their mothers with them for such a happy event. These feelings are what clinicians describe as “secondary losses” that occur when a griever leaps ahead to imagine what will never be (LaGrand, 1986; Edelman, 1994). Each of the participants in this study envisioned, or even projected, how her mother would have reacted to her engagement, to her ring, and most importantly, to her future spouse. This projection is a recurrent theme interwoven into the fabric of this study.

### **Wedding Day Re-grieving**

For the motherless brides, the emotional hurdles of engagement are almost over----the engagement ring has been worn and admired and wedding dresses have been purchased and the wedding day itself arrives often presenting the young woman with a new and different set of urgent pressing issues. These hardships transcend the standard wedding dilemmas of seating arrangements, weather forecasts and food quality delivery. Motherless brides confront two real and painful processes. First she must consider whether or not to recognize her mother’s absence. If she decides to incorporate the memory of her mother into the ceremony or celebration, she must determine how to do so. The bride must also learn to balance the joy of her wedding with her experience of re-grieving, which, as I have demonstrated, can include anxiety, sadness, loss of appetite, and despair. Although these issues are presented separately, they often come together in tandem and overlap.

## Remembering Mom During Wedding

It was important for twenty-one year old Julia to include her mother's memory into the wedding. She had trouble, however, determining at what point in the ceremony or celebration to inject her mother's name.

*"I wrote a poem in honor of my mother's memory and how much I miss her. But to recite it under the Chuppa (wedding canopy) would have diverted attention off of my marriage vows and that wouldn't have been fair to my husband. But, to have recited it at the reception would have cast a morbid and somber pale over the excitement of the reception."*

Julia decided to include the elegy in the wedding program that listed the members of the wedding party and the names of the officiating Rabbi and Cantor. The wedding guests were made aware or reminded of Julia's mother's death silently, allowing Julia to concentrate on her happiness.

The struggle to find a balance between re-grieving and celebrating was different for each of the participants. Each young woman arrives at a choice that is right for her. For example, Nina confronted this dilemma differently. Nina's mother succumbed to breast cancer just three months before Nina's wedding and her twentieth birthday. Nina knew she wasn't, *"strong enough to hear my mother's name mentioned out loud. I was afraid that if I started to cry, I wouldn't be able to stop. I was so very unhappy but knew it was my wedding and needed to be happy."* Nina opted to have a memorial candle lit under the *Chuppah* to include her mother's memory in her wedding day and to remind the guests that a mourner is present. She also wore her mother's pearl necklace, earrings and *"anything else of my mother's that feel so I could feel*

*her presence.*” Nina chose a more subtle representation of her mother than Julia had, to lessen her anxieties. Nina cried on and off during her wedding but felt *“lucky that I didn’t collapse”*. She did take a few moments during the reception, found a quiet place in the coatroom and sobbed until she felt strong enough to return to the dancing.

Rachel also followed Jewish custom of placing a memorial candle under her wedding canopy to show respect for her deceased mother and to somehow include her in the wedding. *“Although sad, I was really holding myself together well. In fact it was the first day since my engagement that I hadn’t cried at all, not a tear. When I began to walk down the aisle with my father, everything changed fast. Maybe it was the very elegant atmosphere with the harps and violins. Maybe it was the reality that I was actually getting married. Or, maybe it was the candle burning under the Chuppah that I kept staring at and wondering if my mom was watching me from the heavens. My father practically had to carry me down the aisle.”* Rachel’s dad stayed with her for several minutes until she could regain her demeanor and greet her groom.

For other participants, a public mention of their mothers’ names was more appropriate. Formally introducing a mother’s memory into a wedding, though often infused with tears, was not only wanted by many of the participants but *“needed”*. Emotions ran intense and all respondents gasped or cried just at hearing their mother’s name aloud. Regardless of how many months or years since their mom’s died did not influence the degree of pain the participants reported. Whether their mothers were dead ten years or three months, the women mourned and re-grieved their mothers’ deaths all over again. The loss felt *“fresh”*, as if they had lost their

mothers the week before, making the women vulnerable and opened to powerful emotions on an already stressful day.

Renee succumbed to this heart-breaking re-grieving process, even though she had planned and even anticipated it. She felt “*comfortable*” and “*ready*” for the prearranged moment of silence she had asked her Rabbi to conduct in her mother’s memory. But when the Rabbi spoke and discuss Renee’s mother’s virtues and beautiful character, Renee “*cried uncontrollably until her Aunt got up from her seat, five rows back from the Chuppah*” and held her until she recovered her composure. Renee said it was such a devastating moment that even her husband, who had never met her mother, “*shook with tears*”. Despite her pre-organized plans, Renee heard her mother’s name and she re-grieved instantly and was debilitated with sadness. Although the outburst may seem extreme, other participants share similar stories, indicating that these episodes of sobbing are neither rare nor out of place.

Inclusion of the dead may be the by-product of nostalgia, or may be out of a longing and desire for comfort. Or, perhaps like Julia who seemed to have needed the additional psychological bridge of “having them there” to abate feelings of distress. For Renee, the inclusion of her mother’s memory was rooted in her need to know that other people, not just herself, thought of her mom too. Renee needed confirmation that her mother meant something to others as well. “*When the Rabbi talked about her kindness, everyone wept right along with me.*” By having others cry with her was some form of proof that her mother was indeed remembered, validating her own emotions.

## **PREGNANCY RE-GRIEVING**

With exception of Yehudis, Bonnie and Dressie whose mother excitedly watched as their waistlines expanded and held their hands during sonograms and prenatal visits, each of the other participants' mothers died prior to her daughters' first pregnancy. For these young motherless women, their nine-months of pregnancy was filled with on-going, rather than punctuated, re-grieving. All of these participants missed their mothers intensely while they experienced new physical and emotional changes and challenges caused by pregnancy. Pregnancy is a period of transition and adjustment, during which women's roles in their families and society often changes. It is common for young adult women at this milestone to turn to their own mothers as role models and sources of comfort to help ease the adjustments (Friday, 1977; Fischer, 1981; Lurie, 1974). Going through pregnancy without a mother, intensifies the experience of re-grieving.

### **Pregnancy Fears; Only My Mother Would Understand**

*Tamar stated, "I just now understand this being a wife thing. I just got comfortable with the fact that I am married for, please Gd, the next seventy years to a man I only knew for thirteen months. I got into a routine where I actually understand my husband's moods and preferences. I now turn-around when people address me as MRS. Gold. It now comes natural to say 'we' or 'us'. While I am delighted by being fortunate to have a baby, my whole life is upset again. I feel like my footing is off and I need to re-learn what to be. It's really very scary to be pregnant and I am glad I have nine to adjust. I don't want to complain about things because I am so lucky and*

*don't want people to think I am ungrateful. Only my mother would know I am afraid and not unhappy. I wonder if she felt this way too?"*

The introspection, anxieties and mental shifts Tamar described are common during pregnancy. Bailey (1999) described pregnancy as a time when women experience “a refraction of self” and undergo serious reflection. During this time, women report feeling isolated from childless friends and find themselves reappraising their marriages and careers. Pregnancy also causes many women to face issues about their bodies caused by weight gain, morning sickness, pregnancy-related medical illness, fatigue, and general discomfort. This combination of physical and emotional upheaval often creates feelings of vulnerability and dependence.

Leslie was hospitalized several times for dehydration throughout her pregnancy. She reported,

*“For several months I experienced violent vomiting. I was losing weight. My face was sunken and my cheeks were hollow. Everyone was worried about the baby. My kind but rather thoughtless mother-in-law kept reassuring me that the baby would be fine and we are in the finest of medical facilities. As I lay in bed with dried vomit in my hair, I am an afterthought. I have taken so many days off from work because I am sick that my work colleagues were annoyed with me. My friends are mostly single and don't understand that I feel so drained and my thoughts are cloudy. My husband thinks I shouldn't worry about anything but feeling better.*

*Only my mother would have understood that my job is at-risk, my friends and husband are out-of-touch, and more than anything, she would have dry-shampooed my hair, held my hand*

*and made me feel confident that this was not abnormal and would pass soon. Everyone one else has an angle and only my mother would have put ME first.”*

## **BABY NAMING**

For young women who go through the experience without their mothers, the feelings of vulnerability and isolation can be intensified. It was common among the participants to speculate about what role their mothers would have played during their pregnancies. They “wondered” how their mothers would have felt about becoming grandmothers. Each young woman expressed sadness at the thought of naming a baby in memory of her mother and “wondered” what it would be like to call their own child after their mother. These projections tightly correlate with Hope Edelman’s theories on secondary losses. Edelman notes accordingly, that mother-loss during this stage causes the daughter to suffer “secondary losses.” Not only does she lose a mother, but a supportive friend as well. For Edelman, this secondary loss denies the daughter a mother to spoil her grandchildren.

Jenny’s mother died within several months of receiving her diagnosis of pancreatic cancer at age fifty. Jenny was twenty-four years old and an only child. From the beginning of her pregnancy, Jenny knew that she wanted to name her first child for her mother. She cried each time she said the name aloud. Jenny shared,

*“Boy or girl, this baby was being named for my mother. If it was a boy, we would use the first letter of my mother’s name. If it was a girl, we would use her exact name and add the middle name “Ahava” which means beloved. When we did the sonogram and the technician told us we were expecting a girl, I instinctively held my belly, murmured over and over and over ‘ Sophie*

*Ahava'. I was crying so hard, the baby on the sonogram screen was doing all kinds of kicks and flips."*

Like most future mothers, these women often had fears during pregnancy about their health and that of their baby, about the pain and risk of labor and delivery, about financial changes, and about their future abilities as a mother. Pregnancy disarmed these mothers of their ordinary coping skills and mandated them to employ new ones. Facing changes in their social roles and interpersonal relationships, these expectant mothers must develop new mechanisms for handling stress and anxiety. As demonstrated, Jenny, Leslie and Tamar struggled with this process.

### **New Motherhood Re-grieving**

Although they did not have the benefit of their mothers' experiences, like most new parents, the study's participants eventually learned to diaper, feed, and nurture their children. They managed to handle day-to-day activities and problems with the aid of books, friends, doctors, relatives, and, occasionally, even strangers. Despite their ability to manage infant care in a practical sense, each of the participants experienced new-motherhood emotionally lost and hurt. They all expressed feelings of (a) anxiety, (b) anger and (c) envy, during the early period of new motherhood.

#### **(A) Anxiety: How to Mother Without a Mother**

Francis-Connolly's (2000) study, Understanding Mother, described how mothers often provide "instrumental" support to married daughters with meals and babysitting. She writes that

mothers can also serve as an outlet for complaints, struggles and emotions. The subjects of this study, who face this milestone without a mother, mourn not only the woman they have lost, but also the support they would have had while “learning” to be a parent. For the motherless new mothers of this study, re-grieving maybe tantamount to mourning their loss of “instrumental” support. Katie recalled that she would often “talk” with her mom while holding her new-born late at night.

*“I would walk Jake up and down the hallway and literally have an entire conversation with my mother-mostly in my head but sometimes out-loud too. I’d wonder how she’d teach me to bathe and feed Jake. In my head I’d hear her wisdom. Then , to prevent me from sobbing, I would tell two-week old Jake a story about his Nana. I would just cry the rest of the night wondering how I am going to raise Jake without HIS Nana.”*

Suzanne also felt vulnerable and anxious when she thought about being a mother without her mother. Suzanne said:

*“I was always my own thinker and very much independent. I knew what I wanted and how to get them accomplished. Much of my confidence though came from being supported and loved by my mother. I spoke with her everyday, sometimes several times a day. Now I have the hardest job I have ever undertaken---being a mommy and I am overwhelmed, exhausted and feel that I can’t do anything right. I used to think I could handle any situation, now just getting myself showered and dressed is a major ordeal. I feel grossly incompetent. I blew up the bottles while sterilizing them in the microwave. I expressed milk so hard from the breast pump that I am bruised and now I need to use formula until the tenderness goes away. The baby pees on me all the time because I am so slow with diapering. And then I think, its only going to get harder as the baby gets older. I remind myself to breathe yoga-style to keep the panic from setting –in. The*

*worst part is, if my mother was here, none of this- really, none of this-would be happening because she'd be here to support me mentally and physically.”*

Both Suzanne and Katie, among others, are missing what Lurie (1974) refers to as “referents”, a mother who offers emotional support and concrete, practical advice. Suzanne and Katie felt the vulnerability and anxiety of new motherhood exacerbated by not having a mother to depend on when fragile.

### **(B) Anger directed at Mother-in-laws**

New-motherhood was a bittersweet time for these motherless women as they celebrated their newborns while simultaneously experiencing re-grieving, or feelings of extreme sadness triggered by the absence of a deceased mother and the lack of maternal guide, assistance, and love. Feelings of loneliness are often replaced with hostility when someone tries to fill the role of new grandmother. Masha candidly stated:

*“I was so hormonal and overwhelmed when we brought our son home from the hospital. I missed my mother desperately and was feeling sort of lonely. That in, and of, itself would have been difficult, but add to this that my husband’s entire family came from the hospital home with us to plan the bris ---oy, a recipe for disaster. I knew how to diaper and take care of infants because I have younger siblings and nephews and nieces and babysat my whole life. I didn’t need my mother-in-laws suggestions on how to swaddle or burp. I resisted the urge to scream at her. I simply handed her the baby and took a shower. I didn’t want my mother-in-law telling me how to parent but I knew she really wasn’t the problem. I knew the problem was me---I miss my mother and feel sorry for myself that she’s not here to see such a beautiful grandson.”*

Masha has solid rapport with her mother-in-law, yet resented her input and advice about infant care. Masha was fortunate in that she was aware of her feelings and able to keep self-control, main her even temper and resisted the urge to instigate a fight. Rejection of or hostility towards a perceived surrogate may be a defense mechanism for Masha and others in the study. They likely suffer feelings of injustice that their own mother is dead and their mother-in-law is alive and going to be the baby's only grandmother.

### **( C ) Envious of Other New Mothers**

New motherhood also elicited feelings of envy and jealousy in each of the subjects of this study when she was faced with situations that reminded her of her mother-loss. The participants did not covet their neighbors' cars, peers' jewelry, or begrudge their "stay-at-home-mother" counterparts while they resumed their careers. Their envy was activated by walking on the street, overhearing a conversation, or by watching TV. These seemingly benign activities can, and often did, initialize re-grieving for these motherless young mothers. Yehudis, whose mother died shortly after her son was born, had an acute understanding of the affect her mother's death had on her new motherhood. As she spoke, her jealousy towards other young mothers became apparent:

*"Some of my friends resent that their mothers interfere with their child-rearing decisions. In our community, you suppress the urge to be disrespectful to one's parents so you quietly seethe instead. I tell them to enjoy the meddling, the interference and the nudging while it lasts. I would embrace my own mother's intrusions any day!"*

Lucy more directly verbalized her feelings of jealousy, *“I am jealous of the women who have their mothers. When I see these mothers pushing a carriage alongside her daughter, I just lose it. It seems like they are everywhere so I lose it a lot.”* When these young women see mother-daughter-newborn baby teams, they are reminded of the depth of their loss and what they will never have.

Bonnie, who was pregnant when her mother died said,

*“I recently overheard some lady telling the cashier at Toys R Us that she was buying gifts for her grandkids. She told the cashier all about the twin seven year-olds, and the two-day-old granddaughters. She knew their preferences, dislikes and fears. She was kvelling (taking joy) in talking about them. She knew every inch of their short-lives, but my mother- may she rest in peace-won’t know even the tiniest amount about my kids. At that moment, I cried at how lucky that lady and her granddaughters are to have each other.”*

Katie expressed similar thoughts of envy,

*“When I see intact generations, I miss her [mother] getting the pleasure that all the other grandmothers seem to get when they see their grandchildren. Jake will never know what a nice person she was except through my stories and that always makes me cry. My mother was deprived of getting to love and hold Jake and Jake is deprived of getting to have that extra special bond between maternal grandmother-grandson.”*

## Missing Knowledge

Katie's words lend insight into another dimension of envious longing:

*“When I see mothers and daughters with their baby strollers, I realize yet again that it is just me, alone. I lost a piece of my own history. I don't know if I was colicky or nursed or gentle tempered? How old I was when I began to walk, talk, independently feed? I guess having a child makes you wonder about your own childhood.”*

Many of the participants feel the missing link and realize their historian is gone and with that loss, there is a gap in their own legacy. They do not have the example of their own childhoods to guide them. Suzanne articulated her envy as follows:

*“ When I see moms with their daughters and grandkids, I realize over and over again that it is just me, alone. I lost a piece of my own history when my mom died. Was I nursed? How old was I when I began to walk? To talk? Toilet trained? Did I have a sweet or funny personality? I guess having a child makes you wonder about your own childhood a bit more.”*

This notion of missing information is extremely important. Motherhood is often a time when young women's own identities emerge, and if they lack significant knowledge of their own young achievements and accomplishments, their development may be stymied. Cognitive theory requires that the individual integrate new information with old, previous, or existing information until current cognitive schemata are in congruence with it (Cleiren, 1993). Mother-loss in young adulthood interrupts cognitive development. As a young adult woman is integrating her ever-increasing autonomy with the lessons and behaviors of childhood, her mother-loss eliminates

one-half of a critical dialogue that would normally lead to optimal integration of her new and changing roles. Motherless young women have no readily available narratives in which to fit the details of their life stories.

### **Missing the Future**

Envy is also stirred by fantasies about the future. Ruth recounted the following story:

*“ I’ve been celebrating a lot of Bar Mitzvahs this year where the grandmother is mentioned by the Rabbi, and she lights a candle of honor at the reception, and dances the Hora with her grandson. My son has never seen my mother smile, laugh, dance...he’s really lost out on a wonderful woman’s love. He will never have that extra support and adoration.”*

**Research Statement #4** There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and Jewish Mourning Practices.

**Findings:** 100% of the participants attended all of her mother’s funeral and burial. 100% of the participant sat a full, modified and/or abbreviated *Shiva* period. 100% of the participants recited *Kaddish* at least once. 100% of the participants attended the unveiling of her mother’s grave. 100% of the participants had lit a memorial candle on the first anniversary of her mother’s death and 93% continued to light a memorial thereafter.

#### D. DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE THAT LINKS THE EXPERIENCE BETWEEN RE-GRIEVING AND JEWISH MOURNING PRACTICES

The cultural influence of Judaism, at these extreme occurrences, is prevalent amongst the most assimilated, secular Jews as well as for those observant, religious Jews of this study. These traditions have persisted for centuries attract practitioners from each of the denominations of Judaism. By freeing surviving family members from the burden of decisions, Jewish Law offered to these women a reliable and approved course of behavior and action in their initial grief. The Jewish mourning practices, although based in ritual, have a practical and pragmatic purpose. The laws surrounding death, burial, and mourning prescribed a series of tasks that give direction to the bereaved, during a time when many feel lost, sad, and vulnerable.

Judaism guided each of the young women who participated in this study through the grief process in a prescribed manner that helped pave the route for normative grieving. Normative grief made this study distinctive as it addressed re-grieving from a healthy, therapeutic evolution and not from a complicated grief process.

The following narratives, by subjects of this study, are arranged to correspond to Anita Diamant's (2004) "blueprint" of Jewish process of mourning. The stages of *Aninut*, *Shiv'ah*, and *Shloshim* narratives are mostly comprised of participants' **initial** grief reactions and experiences whereas *Yud Bet Chodesh* and *Yizkor/Yarzeit* focus on the **re-grieving** experience and demonstrate the influence Jewish tradition has on these young motherless women.

## ANINUT

The first stage in the Jewish mourning ritual is *Aninut*. This begins immediately after death and lasts through burial. The literature describes a mourner in this initial period as “numb with disbelief” (Lamm, 1969) and “paralyzed with shock” (Goldberg, 1991). The experiences of this study’s participants are in keeping with the emotional, helpless states described in the literature. Each subject described her uncharacteristic inability to think, act, or plan, in the hours and first days following her mother’s death. In the face of feeling immobilized, vulnerable, and helpless, the dictates of Jewish burial law provided a relief. Although Jackie had not “*seen the inside of a synagogue since Bat Mitzvah at thirteen,*” she was relieved that the burial plans and decisions were already established. She described her experience:

### **Relieved of Decision-Making**

*“My mother died so suddenly at fifty-seven years old. She was on her way to buy frozen yogurt with my nine year old niece and literally just collapsed. She was dead before the ambulance even arrived. My father was traveling in Asia on business, seriously, on the other side of the world. My older sister was freaked out and dealing with her traumatized nine year old daughter who watched her grandmother die. My other sister was only 15 years old and had no experience with death. My brother and I were left to figure out the arrangements on how to get my mother buried while our father was busy just trying to get home. We called our maternal grandparents for their advice. They each sobbed, ‘Bury her as a Jew is meant to be buried.’ So we did. We didn’t coffin shop because a plain pine box is Jewish tradition. We didn’t flower shop because flowers are not permitted. We hired a rabbi who specializes in Jewish burial and we just*

*followed 5,000 years of Jewish history. Tradition was a gift because it reduced our need to think at a time when we couldn't think at all."*

After her sudden loss, following the step-by-step outlined rules prescribed by Jewish law prevented Jackie and her family from feeling overwhelmed, reducing extra emotional pressures. Heidi articulated feeling "*utterly lost*" when her mom died suddenly while she was in graduate school, "*I had no clue, like absolutely no idea how to respond, how to act, what to do. It was like a wave of paralysis struck and I was turned into mush.*" Her father brought the family together, and together with his Conservative Rabbi, discussed funeral and burial plans. Heidi felt "*immediate relief*" knowing that decisions were being made and within the confines of tradition. She also remembered feeling that "*the Jewish funeral seemed so no-frills but that this allowed me, even freed me, to think about my mother and not on a floral arrangement.*"

Jewish law and custom seem to protect the mourner, alleviating additional anxiety and the confusing decision making choices. Cindy said succinctly,

*"We knew to bury our mother as soon as possible. We knew to call the Jewish Funeral Parlor and they would do what they were suppose to do. We knew to use a plain pine box. We knew no flowers. We just knew. That was helpful because none of us could concentrate on details because our world had just fallen apart."*

Even the steps of of Kri'ah, the ripping of a garment representing the relationship that is rended by death- that the relationship with the deceased has been cut-off, helps to facilitate grief work. Jenny said:

*“The act of ripping my shirt was strangely a relief since all I really wanted to do was to rip out my hair, scream my lungs–out or kick a wall. Kri’ya provided a safe and respectable way for me to show my anguish.”* Being in an environment which fosters and encourages grief expression helped each of these young women articulate their loss even before words were available.

### **Communal Support**

Regardless of denomination, family and friends play an important role in a Jewish burial. Each of the study’s participants described feeling “communal support and concern,” following the death of her mother. The subjects provided similar descriptions of this experience: *“wrapped in a cocoon of love,” “surrounded by warmth and concern,”* and *“the embrace of people who actually worried about our welfare”*. Abigail expanded on this subject. At her mother’s funeral, her friends and family began to cover the coffin with dirt, each taking turns in the pouring rain and mud, struggling with the heavy wet soil:

*“At first I was totally disgusted and freaked when my father handed ME the shovel. How could I put dirt on my own mother coffin? It seemed cruel. But the Rabbi explained to us the importance of staying with the deceased until the entire grave was filled-in out of respect, to know that my mother was supervised and treated with the utmost care up to the very last second. It broke my heart but it was also very moving. It was the last good deed I could do for her. I then handed the shovel to my mother’s best friend who had gestured for it.”*

Abigail was aware that the other mourners wished to help and to participate. She said, *“These people filled in an entire grave, in horrible weather, to honor my mother. How can I repay their kindness?”*

Following the funeral, community continued to play an integral and significant role in the mourners’ lives. The community is commanded to care for the mourners and is obligated to bring food to the family. It is considered a *“Mitzvah”* (good act or kind deed) to prepare the post-funeral meal: *“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting”* (Ecclesiastes, 7:2). Community members pay a *Shiva* call to the mourner to show concern, join in prayer, or to help prepare food (Goldberg, 1991). In some cases, it is the synagogue who provides the meal. More often, it is family or friends of the deceased. Like Abigail, Nina initially found the Jewish rituals upsetting but carrying out the traditions became comforting:

*“Coming home after the funeral to a home filled with food was the very last thing I wanted. How could people eat, seriously platefuls of food when my mom just died? I was suffering and they were eating. I mean really eating and complimenting the food! Then it dawned on me- their lives didn’t come to a halt just because ours did. They were nice enough to be supportive, to demonstrate their love by taking the day off from work to be with us. They weren’t being social- they were being human. It was such a normal thing to do in such an abnormal situation. That’s Judaism- trying to always make people aware of the living, even while remembering the dead.”* Nina ultimately appreciated that her mother’s friends prepared the post-funeral out of love and that there a community who continued to care for the surviving family members.

## **Shivah**

The *Shivah*, the second stage, often translated as “seven days of formal mourning,” begins immediately after burial. During this period, the mourner sits low to the ground either on a bench or on the floor to demonstrate that they are “struck down with grief” (Diamant, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Weinberger, 1995). All of the participants in this study sat either a full (seven day) or modified form of *Shivah*. In different ways, they each explained that the *Shivah* enabled them to get “*lost in their pain*”, “*forget about all responsibilities*”, and “*think and think about mom with nothing to distract me*”.

Although Abigail is not observant of Jewish law, she elected to sit a modified *Shivah*, having attended wakes held by non-Jewish friends after the loss of a parent or grandparent or sibling. Abigail said:

*“The Wakes put the family in an awkward position. They were told to ‘be brave’ and to ‘hold strong’. They just lost someone they loved so why put on a mask of bravery? Friends later toasted the deceased and were boisterous. I respect that it is the traditional Irish way to pay tribute to the dead but I found it disconcerting. I knew when my mother died that a week of reflection was both a tribute to her and a helpful period for me and the family.”*

## **Encouraged to Cry**

As *Shivah* symbolically means “being struck down with grief” it provided an opportunity for these young women to grieve without embarrassment. Julia said:

*“Shivah gave me the legitimate time to begin to understand the depth of my loss. For one week people came over, out of their way, to make time to comfort me. I learned a lot about my*

*mom from her friends and relatives. It felt strange at first to sob in front of these people but they were sobbing too so it was definitely acceptable.”*

*Shivah* also provided Heidi the sense of having a “guide book”. Although her mother’s death made her feel completely lost, *Shivah* gave her purpose and direction:

*“ I sat low on a milk carton not to be uncomfortable but to show my profound loss and each day receiving guests, looking through photo albums, not needing to dress for guests helped give me fluidity. Shivah in a strange way helped my equilibrium return so that by day seven, I was able to think about how I WAS going to survive my mom’s death.”*

Grief recovery is a process of realization-of making the death real from the “inside” and being able to acknowledge the reality and articulate the loss (Lindemann, 1944; Glick, Weiss & Parkes, 1974; Exline, Dorrity & Wortman, 1996). For Heidi, *Shivah* was the start of her grief recovery.

*Shivah* also encourages conversation about the deceased, and helps enable even the most stoic to receive solace (Goldberg, 1991). Goldie was concerned that her father had not really cried during her mother’s funeral. He was “*sort of defeated with his shoulders hunched over and a glazed look in his eyes,*” Goldie noted. But during *Shivah*, “*his friends lifted him out of his shock and got him talking about my mother. It was so sad to watch him shake with tears but healthier than keeping it in.*” “Talking leads to eventual relief” and helps to release the acute sorrow (Weizman & Kamm, 1985).

During *Shivah*, daily routine stops. Cindy welcomed the break. “*I couldn’t image having to worry about the mundane. Friends answered our phone calls. Dealt with deliveries. No one worried about money, school or work. We were simply left to cry in peace.*” This pause from wordly and daily obligations seems to allow the mourners to mourn without interference which helps facilitate normative grief.

### **Saying Kaddish**

*Shivah* marks the onset of the recitation of *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. Typically, *Kaddish* is said in the mourner’s homes, during *Shivah*, but after the seven days the mourner, according to Jewish Law, begins going to synagogue on a daily basis to recite the *Kaddish*. The tradition, therefore, requires a mourner to leave her home, her comfort zone, and resumes public life, to rejoin the world. For those few participants who participated in saying *Kaddish* beyond their *Shivah* period, it was both sad and soothing. Recitation of *Kaddish* in the synagogue became a practiced routine and allowed them to join the community of other mourners, offering consolation to those who were new to bereavement.

Margo included *Kaddish* recitation in her daily routine each morning as often as her schedule permitted. She shared her experience:

*“When I met other girls saying Kaddish, it was normal to ask who they were saying it for? How long they had been saying it? These questions were kind of like ice-breakers and given the circumstances, were truly socially acceptable. Where else can you ask a total stranger who died and when? It also gets reciprocated so I found myself telling someone almost every day that*

*my mom died at 49 years old and that I was saying Kaddish to honor her memory. Not one girl ever judged me or thought I may be depressed because they were in similar situations.”*

Other participants also mentioned a feeling of community and the comfort they found in space where it is acceptable, even encouraged, to talk about the dead. Julia said:

*“After morning service was finished, each day for months and months, congregants that I called the Minyaners (group of 10), would always make it a point to express condolences and offer a supportive comment or friendly gesture. Very subtly, Kaddish gave me a routine which forced me to go out, even when I really didn’t want to.”*

Rachel described the group with whom she occasionally recited *Kaddish* as a “*Jewish bereavement group*”. She continued, “*Each person has a loved one in mind when they say Kaddish. Death links and connects each of us and it is comforting to hear others sniffles or get choked-up when saying it. Everyone empathizes.*”

Suzanne felt that her occasional participation in *Kaddish* gave her grief a verbal expression: “*The first time I stumbled my way through the transliteration of Kaddish, I felt as if I had been punched and couldn’t breathe. By the end of the Shivah week, I knew the words by heart and found comfort that I could say something beautiful to elevate my mother’s soul. Kaddish gave me reason to get up each morning (knowing that I had to get to synagogue at exactly 6:45am) after a l-o-n-g night of sobbing. It gave me a public forum for my private grief and made me feel that I was doing something positive, saying something helpful.*”

## **SHLOSHIM**

*Shloshim*, the third segment of mourning, literally means “thirty”. After the *Shivah*, mourners begin to recommence most of their daily affairs of life. The participants returned to work or school, caring for their children and, if applicable, marital relations. By tradition, however, for the thirty days of *Shloshim*, the mourner continues to refrain from listening to music, attending celebrations, and cutting hair and nails. After *Shloshim*, on the thirtieth day, it is customary to visit the grave of the deceased. At this stage, the mourner understands that separation is final and that normalization can resume (Lamm, 1969). In this respect, confirming Lamm’s position, *Shloshim* serves as a segway or transition period to normalization. Many of the participants noted that *Shloshim* helped them transition back into living, and were surprised that a full month had already elapsed since their mother’s funeral.

The more religiously observant subjects visited the grave site in keeping with Jewish Law. For Tamar, this was a calm, but very sad moment. She said:

*“All of a sudden I realized that thirty days past since I last touched and kissed my mother. I had been in such a haze these last thirty days that to suddenly realize a whole month had already past was a real blow. I went to the cemetery with two of my sisters and several of their children and no one spoke, not even the kids. We knew she had died but looking at the pile of fresh dirt, we all understand then that she was gone forever. On the way home we took turns telling the children funny things about their Bubbe (grandmother).”*

Although *Shloshim* begins the process of returning to “living”, Judaism mandates the continuation of *Kaddish* for another eleven months, appreciating that bereavement cannot be satisfied in a thirty day window.

## **YUD BET CHODESH**

*Yud Bet Chodesh*, the twelfth month, is the fourth and concluding segment of the formal mourning period for a parent in Jewish tradition. It marks the one year anniversary of the death, and it is traditionally commemorated by giving charity and by unveiling the tomb or footstone. The literature describes these final acts as a “closure that allows the psyche to prepare” for a new life without the deceased (Kidorf, 1966). As seen in the upcoming narratives, *Yud Bet Chodesh* and re-grieving went in tandem.

### **An Entire Year Without Mom**

Katie felt that *Yud Bet* was a pivotal moment in her year of mourning. She gently cried, smiled, and said:

*“The unveiling was a turning-point for me. For one year, I cried till my eyes were small slits and the skin so puffy ---I looked a mess. At the unveiling, I realized I had marked my 26<sup>th</sup> birthday without my mother. [I] got a promotion without my mother. [I] moved without my mother. I lived an entire 12 months without my best friend, my advisor, my favorite person. And, life went on and I had reason to celebrate. I am standing at the footstone and understood that I have a hole in my heart that will never go away but I have to live my life, and she’d want me to enjoy it.”*

Other participants expressed that *YUD BET CHODESH* was a year of first experiences motherless. Each mentioned that the unveiling helped her take note of all the life-cycle activities

she encountered since the death of her mother. Like Katie, the other participants often mentioned birthdays. Jewish holidays were also hard for these young women. Several mentioned dreading the actual holiday day arrival itself and chose to note the festival in a more subdued manner. Parents' anniversaries were particularly difficult for several participants, and it was common for each of these subjects to try to make her father feel special on these important dates.

### **Marriage during First Year of Mourning**

For Nina and Sara, both of whom married during their year-long mourning periods, the unveilings were extremely painful. Nina described the unveiling as “*another painful reminder that Eymah [mother] would never be there to celebrate,*” and felt acutely alone despite being surrounded by her loving family”. Sara noted:

*“Standing at the tombstone I understood that we both got the short-end of the stick. She didn't get to see me at my wedding and as a wife. And, I don't have my mother and best friend. I felt a lump in my throat and couldn't swallow. Everyone gathered around me silently. They knew too.”*

### **Birth during First Year of Mourning**

Dressie and Bonnie both gave birth during their year-long mourning periods. Dressie said: “*the baby cried less than we did. He must think all grown-ups cry because we were all crying for a year.*” Dressie felt overwhelmed with sadness at the unveiling, but said her eight-month-old son gave her strength. Each time a mourner completed a eulogy Dressie whispered in her son's ear, “*your grandmother was a good woman.*” Bonnie also brought her five-month-old daughter, who she had named after her deceased mother, to the unveiling. Bonnie said she had

worked hard to raise her daughter in the spirit of her namesake, and that the unveiling flooded her with good memories that she would convey to her daughter. Bonnie said:

*“It’s been a hard, long year of filled with sad things and happy things. My mother’s illness and then her death, left me, my brothers and father sort of spiritless. We moped and struggled for a long time. Then Rivka was born and suddenly we had reason to smile again. I tell Rivka all the time about her grandma and the unveiling made me even more determined to continue sharing about grandma Rivka.”*

Lucy, Emma, Rebecca, Yehudis, Nina, Tobi and Shayna discussed feelings of gratitude at the unveiling. Each had spent twelve months reflecting positively on her mother and the lessons she had been able to instill before her death. Shayna said that she and her brothers “*wrote the footstone trying to capture*” their mother’s essence. They settled on the inscription “*a woman possessing the finest examples of Midos [good deeds], Sneeyout [modesty], and love for Hashem [g-d].*” Shayna said she would strive to emulate those qualities for her children, because they were what had made her feel loved, protected and special as a child and young adult.

### **YIZKOR/YARZHEIT**

*Yizkor* is Hebrew for “rememberence”. It is a special memorial prayer recited by all those who have lost a parent, spouse, child or other close person on the holidays of Passover, Sukkot, Yom Kippur and Shavuot recited. *Yarzheit*, Yiddish for “a year’s time”, is a yearly marking of a death anniversary. Traditionally, at these junctures, it is customary to visit the cemetery, light of a memorial candle that burns for twenty-four hours, attend synagogue, and recite *Kaddish*. *Yizkor* and *Yarzheit* mark the fifth stage of grief in Jewish mourning tradition and are for perpetuity.

Leslie noted the distress caused by *Yizkor* and *Yarzheit*:

*“Yarzheit sucks! I am so profoundly aware that yet another holiday has arrived and I am forced to celebrate motherless. The extra memorial prayer is just another reminder that I make the menu, cook, prepare and shop without my wonderful mother. Seven years without my mother and I still miss her. Then I give charity, in her memory, to my mother’s favorite organization and recite the special prayers and somehow I do feel better.”*

### **The *Yarzheit/Yizkor* Candle**

Other participants share Leslie’s upset. Emma said, *“ I always know I am motherless. I don’t need a calendar to tell me so. But I light the tall memorial candle, say the prayers for the dead, write a check to charity and smile as I perform each act because it’s a tribute to my mom.”*

Yehudis uses these occasions to take time out of her busy schedule to talk about her mom:

*“My children help me light the Yizkor candle and hand me the tissue box because although it is now a different pain, the tears never go away. I tell the children Bubbe stories. The little ones are fascinated. Days or weeks later the older one will innocently recall one of the stories and comment as if he knew her personally --I laughed when he said, ‘ that lady drives the way Bubbe did...she is in both lanes of the road.’ It’s so bitter-sweet.”*

The way the young women who participated in this study experienced death, burial, grief and mourning to Jewish Laws and customs. Each of the participants felt that following Jewish tradition facilitated their grieving process, and each appreciated having a prescribed outline of

behavior and activities to follow in the aftermath of their loss. Understanding the distinct nature of Jewish burial and mourning traditions enhanced the researcher's ability to empathize with and analyze the attitudes of the young women of this study.

## *SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS*

### **Introduction**

Many years ago I started to piece together a clinical trend. I was either hearing or witnessing first-hand the polarized expressions of emotions that young adult women whose mothers had recently died were encountering during life-transitions. Engagements, weddings, pregnancies and new-motherhood seemed to generate an upsurge of grief. In fact, these women were reliving their own maternal loss.

The upsurge of this grief-type behavior was the catalyst for this study. I set out to explore the clinical phenomenon that I called re-grieving. The study effectively examined the phenomenology of re-grieving: what it is; how it is experienced; who experiences these behaviors and emotions; when re-grieving is activated; and what are the implications for social work practice.

This study detailed the affective upheavals by young adult Jewish women experienced after the death of their mother and during moments of achievement or celebration in their personal lives. As a result, we now have a deeper understanding of the effects of mother-loss and the re-grieving often experienced by young Jewish women as they celebrate their life-cycle milestones of engagement, wedding nuptials, pregnancy, childbirth, and new motherhood. Paradoxically, these major life-changing events produce shame and guilt in the young woman who wants to be happy, yet is not because she is still grieving her mother's death. Re-grieving, I concluded, is a clinical experience that emerges from seemingly contradictory affective impulses such as mixing sadness with joy, attachment with loss, vulnerability with strength and dependence with independence.

Nina, in her pouf of white satin, crying at her own wedding on the coatroom floor exemplifies re-grieving. Emma, crying with saleswomen and tailors, as she shopped alone for her wedding gown exemplifies re-grieving. Rachel, immobilized with sadness that her mother was not alive to see her get married, practically got carried down the aisle exemplifies re-grieving. Katie's envy and anger at seeing happy grandmothers pushing their grandchildren in strollers exemplifies re-grieving. Temporary anxiety, despair, and longing for the deceased mother during personal celebrations exemplify re-grieving.

#### A. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This endeavor began with the intent to investigate re-grieving while celebrating. The significant area of study was comprised of the clinical issue of re-grieving, and its correlated developmental issues of young adulthood, motherloss, and milestones. An investigation of the literature review centered on re-grieving and was supported by the theories of correlated developmental issues noted above.

The first section of the literature review profiled the existing literature on re-grieving. Re-grieving literature, extrapolated from grief and bereavement literature, rested its attention on the renewed feelings of despair, sadness anxiety and other grief/bereavement/death expressions. Although never noted as "re-grieving", the literature acknowledges "episodes" of sadness (Attig, 1996), "mini-mourning periods" (Weizman & Kamm, 1985) and STUG- subsequent temporary upsurges of grief- (Rando, 1993 to refer to temporary sadness that survivors may feel at times when reminded of what she has lost. These brief periods share, even mirror, the physical and emotional symptoms of acute grief (Deutsch, 1945; Lindemann, 1994; Parkes & Weiss, 1983).

The second section of the literature review provided background theory on young adulthood from the traditional developmental theorists, the feminist theorists and from the Attachment Theory perspective mourning-related emotions exhibited at important integrals since a loved one's death. The literature addresses the psychological chaos experienced at this young adult stage of life, with its population prone to frequent emotional shifts, transitions and its by-products of anxiety and stress. Lack of firm identity, rapid role changes and demand for major life decisions leave young adults without firm ground and with confused expectations (Lifton & Olson, 1974; Greene & Boxer, 1986; Littwin, 1986; Jessor, Donovan & Costa, 1991; Fenchel, 1998). Erikson (1963, 1968) believed that young adults must emotionally and physically separate from the family of origin (read: mother) in order to develop autonomous and healthy intimate relationships. Valliant (1977) and Levinson (1978) also supported the idea that separation and autonomy from mother is the major component of transitioning into adulthood. The classic theorists maintain that maternal death during the daughter's young adulthood interrupts the process of separation and ultimately, although not discussed in this study, may jepordize her ability to become intimate.

On the opposite extreme, in their writings, feminist authors such as Gilligan (1982), Chodrow (1978), Dinnerstein (1976) and others challenge the assumption that developing young women must separate from their mothers in order to gain autonomy. These feminist-oriented theorists viewed intimacy, not separation from mother, as the goal for this stage of young adulthood. When maternal death strikes during this stage, the feminist model of intimacy is disrupted, threatening the daughter's emotional stability (Jordan, 1991; Wilcox-Ritgers, 1997).

In keeping with the feminist model, Bowlby's (1969) Attachment Theory appreciated the supportive maternal (attachment) bond and its ability to sustain a daughter throughout her life. Ainsworth (1989) added that the push for autonomy does not eliminate a young woman's attachment to her mother. This life-long affective attachment bond characterizes the positive, healthy relationship between mothers and daughters in this study.

Section two profiled the existing literature on mother-loss and the dearth of literature on mother-loss in young adulthood. With exception of Hope Edelman (1994), most authors write either about death of parent, not mother specific or concentrate on mother-loss in children or grown, adult women. Loss of a mother during young adulthood forces the daughter to separate prematurely from her mother. This section also highlighted the bonds of mother-daughter relationships and the significance they may offer for the young adult daughters ranging from guidance and support to role modeling and gender identification. Once the attachment bond is severed by maternal death, the daughter is left vulnerable during moments of stress and transition.

Section three profiled the existing literature on Jewish burial and mourning. The majority of the extensive Jewish death literature stems largely from the Orthodox community. The literature categorizes death and mourning into chronological periods, each defined by its own set of Jewish laws (Goldberg, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Wolfson, 1993; Diamant, 1998). These categories describe the phases of Jewish mourning: Aninut, Shivah, Shloshim, Yud Bet, and Yizkor/Yurzheit. Understanding the distinct nature of Jewish death customs is necessary to contend with the unique quality of Jewish mourning and grief, the basis of this dissertation.

Lastly, section four concentrated on "milestones", the often stressful and frightening transitions into adulthood that are often accompanied by maturational changes such as the ending of student status and on-set of full-time employment, engagement, pregnancy, marriage, and new motherhood. This section outlined the emotional, physical, and social changes associated with the young adult daughter's milestones of leaving home, full-time employment, engagement, wedding, new bride, pregnancy and motherhood.

The stress of the young adulthood and milestones, under normal conditions, were analyzed and investigated first in order to explore the effects of mother-loss on the daughter during these periods of development and transition. Several research statements emerged from this exploration:

- There is a strong link between re-grieving and young adulthood.
- There is a strong link between re-grieving and mother-daughter attachment.
- There is a strong link between re-grieving and the types of milestones experienced post-maternal death.
- There is a strong link between re-grieving and Jewish mourning practices.

These four research statements informed the phenomenological and grounded theory methodological choices for *Milestones without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Re-grieve While Celebrating*. The methodology section detailed the study's design decisions and gave rationale for employing dual methodology. The first component of the methodology quantitatively confirmed that re-grieving occurred. A prescreening instrument was used to quantitatively determine whether or not re-grieving existed. Three additional instruments, *Mother-Daughter Attachment Questionnaire*---*Relationship with Mother Inventory*---and the

Grief Behavior Checklist—furthered determined accurate suitability in matching the study's criteria. Rationale was then offered for qualitative design and each suitable subject was then interviewed in person following a protocol guide. Their answers were used in narrative style to characterize and describe the phenomena of re-grieving it relates to the four research questions.

The Unit of Analysis of an aggregate of young Jewish women was discussed and reasons supporting the Phenomenological and Grounded Theory approach for the theoretical framework and Epistemological phenomenological paradigm was explored.

The next section highlights the design decisions and the trade-off and benefits of serving as an active observer. Data collection included a preliminary prescreening survey and was designed to tease out as much personal information as possible. Questions were exhaustive and the prearranged categories attempted to cover all potential areas of milestones that the literature outlined. Questions were mutually exclusive, ordinal measures requiring ranking attitudes (good, very good, not good) and attempted to flush-out the inquiry's core clinical issue of re-grieving while celebrating.

Rationale for using the three follow-up questionnaires (after consent was procured) helped further identify future subjects. The Mother-Daughter Intimacy Scale measured the degree of closeness in the mother-daughter relationship prior to mother's death and helped the researcher explore the research statement: There is a strong correlation between Mother-Daughter Attachment and Re-grieving. The Quality of Relationship with Mother Inventory was the second survey tool and measured the emotional attachment the daughter had for her living

mother. These questions helped depict level of closeness and intimacy the daughter feels characterized her relationship to her mother. The third tool, The Mourning Behavior Checklist measured behaviors considered important in facilitating the mourning process and helped the researcher differentiate between normative and pathological grieving.

The next section provided the rationale for using an interview guide and its benefits for obtaining rich data for a narrative discussion. Data collection trade-offs, survey data collection process, and the interview data collection process are the following brief but important sections.

Sampling and Sample Selection Criteria offer the rationale for choosing 30 young adult Jewish women who were between the ages of 18-30 at the time of their mother's death, self reported close relationship to mother, considered herself Jewish and experienced at least one designated milestone motherless. Sample strategy began as a convenience type study but ultimately emerged as a snow-ball type sample trying to target a diverse group of women who matched the sample criteria.

Techniques of data analysis and the use of line-by-line coding was detailed in the following section. The section concludes with an introduction of the Results section.

The Results chapter validated a new theory of "re-grieving" and subsequently detailed responses to each of the quantitative questionnaires. Each of the four research statements were addressed as hypotheses and findings were used to confirm their connections. Narratives helped further elaborate these strong connections with the study's participants' experiences supporting

the research statements. Although each young woman has a unique narrative, characterized by specific circumstances of her own life history, the basic reason they re-grieve is consistent with the study's inter-related categories of young adulthood, mother-loss, milestones and Jewish mourning. Further research is required to continue to investigate the re-grieving phenomena. Potential topics can include: interview a greater variety of woman of other races, religions, ethnicities, to determine consistency in re-grieving behaviors across cultures; continue to explore non-celebratory milestones of divorce, miscarriage and premature death of spouse or child to see if these elicit re-grieving; expand re-grieving to see whether it is gender specific; and does religious identification and practice facilitate reconciliation of re-grieving.

#### B. CLINICAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE STUDY: PHENOMENA OF RE-GRIEVING

As the subjects of this study struggled to make major decisions of life partners and procreation, they experienced feelings of anxiety, vulnerability, and despair all attributed to the lack of their mother's encouragement and validation. Re-grieving characteristically took place at pivotal milestones that reminded the motherless young woman of her profound loss, and triggered these temporary, short-termed feelings of longing, despair, anxiety, stress, low-self-esteem, and other grief and bereavement characteristics. These women, although adults, had relied on their mothers for un-wavering support and were left bereft at making choices without their mother's input. I believe that the underlying clinical issue of re-grieving results from motherloss when: (1) a prior close mother-daughter friendship existed *and* when (2) the young adult daughter is experiencing significant role transitions and milestones.

Re-grieving is constructed from four fundamentals, that when linked, create temporary

feelings of despair, anxiety and vulnerability. The purpose of this study was to explore these four fundamentals of re-grieving: 1) developmental stages of young adulthood, 2) a strong pre-death mother-daughter attachment bond, 3) milestone celebrations, and 4) Jewish mourning rituals. The goal of the study was to remedy significant gaps in the existing research and clinical literature on motherloss and young adult Jewish daughter, and to offer to clinicians a comprehensive understanding of these young women who re-grieve while celebrating. It is my hope that this new information on re-grieving can provide social workers with the knowledge and tools support their work with their clients by identifying more specifically what these young women are feeling while they re-grieve.

### **Re-grieving Research Statements**

To best understand re-grieving, I developed a set of research statements that encapsulate the variables which seem to characterize re-grieving:

- #1. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to the Developmental Stage of Young Adulthood.
- #2. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience of Re-grieving to Measures of Mother-Daughter Attachment.
- #3. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and the specific Milestones experienced post-maternal death.
- #4. There is quantitative and qualitative evidence that links the experience between Re-grieving and Jewish Mourning Practices.

## Compliance

To investigate the aforementioned research statements, I undertook an IRB approved qualitative study and interviewed 30 participants using a semi-structured interview guide rooted in Grounded Theory to elicit narrative and examples of the participants' experiences with milestones without mothers.

## C. FINDINGS

What I found was that re-grieving does exist. It's a valid term and concept in which many pieces come together at the same time to create the re-grieving experience. When the following four variables co-exist with motherloss, they combine to trigger the re-grieving experience: 1) young adulthood, 2) a pre-death strong mother-daughter attachment bond, 3) milestones and 4) Jewish mourning practices.

### 1. The first variable: Re-grieving and Young Adulthood

#### *Mother-loss complicated young adulthood and young adulthood complicated mother-loss.*

During the developmental stage of young adulthood the majority of the women in my study took steps towards autonomy and, eventually, reached mature adulthood. During these significant years of development, each one of the subjects passed through a succession of similar events and phases as they became increasingly independent and mature adults. Women who lose their mothers in their twenties, writes Hope Edelman in Motherless Daughters: The Legacy of Loss (1994), do not have a maternal figure to validate their life decisions, and lose a sense of security during a stressful period.

In this study, young adult women are not separating from their mother to seek autonomy as suggested by the classical theorists, such as Erikson (1968), Sherrod (1996), Havinghurst,(1953) and Vaillant (1977). Nor are young adult women connecting to their mothers to facilitate mutuality and independence as suggested by feminist theorists like Steele (1985), Miller (1976), Chodorow (1978) and Gillian (1982). Rather, each young adult woman in this study has experienced what she considered a harsh, forced, and permanent separation: the death of her mother. These young adult women struggled with varying degrees of grief and mourning issues while concurrently making progress toward full adulthood. They faced a tumultuous life period, battling issues of identity confusion, career indecision, and mate selection, while re-grieving for their mothers. These typical young-adult issues had to be faced without a mother as an emotional anchor. At the same time, the young women contended with the idea that she can no longer be her mother's daughter.

Theorists describe young adulthood as filled with “optimism, idealism and feelings of immortality” (Bockneck, 1980; Littwin, 1986; Loevinger, 1976). Yet for the young adult women of this study, these positive emotions were, at times, replaced by anxiety, sadness and feelings of despair. Loss of the mother, the figure who had the most influential role in the participants' early development, during a vital later phase of differentiation and maturation, created emotional chaos. Many of these young women were at the cusp of discovering their identities and busy trying to figure out where they are going when mother-loss threw their emotional and physical worlds off-kilter.

The experience of first death is difficult at any age, but for it to strike during young

adulthood was especially devastating. Young adults tend to mourn alone (LaGrand,1986). Because these young adult women are “out of synch” with their peers who still have living mothers, they are emotionally isolated from their social support network. These young women are particularly vulnerable to this emotional isolation because their peers cannot relate to death experiences on any level, let alone maternal death. This perhaps accounts for why 63% of the participants sought grief-related counseling following maternal death.

For all of the young women who participated in the study, re-grieving is a cyclical, active part of their lives. Each, after the death of her mother, experienced rekindled periods of (A) intense longing for mother, (B) feelings of anxiety and vulnerability, (C) low-self-esteem, and (D) sadness with loss of appetite, crying and feelings of despair. When normative young adulthood issues of instability and rapid change combine with re-grieving, the result can be both vulnerability and debilitating anxiety.

During re-grieving moments, the griever is in an active, though temporary, stage of grief as the loss is repeatedly brought into sharp focus. As reported by the subjects of this study, re-grieving often mirrors the physical and emotional symptoms of acute grief. Each participant reported short-term feelings of (A) longing for mother, (B) vulnerability and anxiety, (C) low self-esteem, and, (D) sadness with loss of appetite, crying, and feelings of despair. The participants in this study are still struggling to reach maturity; are at life’s crossroads of decisions; and are experiencing low self-esteem, vulnerability and sadness from the loss of their mothers - their primary sources of support. Important decisions had to be made without their most trusted advisor and supporter. The subjects often found themselves in partial isolation, due

to the changed nature of their relationships with surviving family members and social discomfort with their peers, who are unable to identify or understand the newly complicated decision-making process.

As each of the subjects struggled to make major life decisions, she experienced anxiety that can be attributed to the lack of her mother's encouragement and validation. When a mother died before the maturation of her daughter, they were not able to successfully resolve conflicts that might have been generated by new and adult choices. Nor could the daughter redefine her boundaries and relationship as mother and adult daughter. This development was often an important facet in the transition to adulthood. When a woman experienced mother-loss while passing through young adulthood, she not only lost a potential source of guidance and support, but also the experience of becoming an adult in the eyes of her primary female role model.

## 2. The second variable: Re-grieving and a strong pre-death mother-daughter attachment bond

*Milestones without Mothers* concentrated on young adult women who self-reported close positive relationships with their mothers. Central to every relationship, but especially pronounced in the mother-daughter relationship, is the issue of maternal attachment. Central to this study is the idea that the strong mother-daughter attachment bond affects the experience of losing that relationship to death. Moreover, for each of the young adult women, her mother remained a primary source of support until death. This support was pivotal in all areas of the daughter's life: emotional/affective, practical, and informational (Cleiren, 1993). Death of her mother meant the loss of these emotionally sustaining structures (Cicirelli, 1991).

All the participants felt they had a harmonious relationship with their mothers that were also filled with mutual respect. The participants hoped to be like their mothers and relied on their mother's advice. In addition, they all felt "nurtured" by, wanted to "spend time" with, and "genuinely liked" their mothers. Each also reported that she thought her "best times were with" her mother, and that she was "lucky" to have had her as a parent. All of the participants also noted that their mothers had been a "good mother". Similarly, all respondents felt "closest" to their mothers when compared with other relationships and shared a mutually "emotionally dependent" relationship. Each of the daughters viewed their mother as her most trusted confidant and reported that they had a good relationship prior to her death. Loss of their best friend and confidante was compounded by the young adulthood stage of role pile-ups and significant changes.

The study's participants, often in a phase of constant transition, relied extensively on their maternal support. When such support was lost, the young adult woman was left in a state of vulnerability. Important decisions were made in forced isolation from a trusted source, the deceased mother. These decisions were often made alone electively, due to the changed nature of relationships with surviving family members and emotional social isolation from her peer group that was unable to easily identify with the newly complicated decision-making process.

For these young adult women, the sadness of mourning was often accompanied by feelings of anxiety, fear, confusion, and crying. These feelings were frequently intense for young adult mourners who faced the instability and rapid changes in their own lives apart from their mothers. The tendency for young adults to mourn alone is compounded by the permanent loss caused by

the death of a mother. This isolation not only made the task of grieving more difficult, but left the daughter in a vulnerable position when dealing with challenges in her own life. Loss of a mother during young adulthood also disrupted the separation-individuation process, prematurely forcing the daughter into an autonomous existence. She did not have the opportunity to slowly reshape her relationship to her mother from that of a dependent child to an independent woman. Instead the bond with the mother is suddenly broken, and often a new familial role is thrust upon the daughter.

### 3. The third variable: Re-grieving and Milestones of Engagement to Wed, Wedding Day, Pregnancy and Childbirth and New Motherhood

Re-grieving, as examined in this study, is psychological --- the milestone events of engagement, wedding, pregnancy and/or new motherhood pushed the loss of mother once again to the forefront of the young woman's life because of her *need* for the deceased during a time of deeply "self" oriented trial and vulnerability. These milestone achievements were characterized by pronounced re-grieving---these young women returned to a state of mourning as they matured and transitioned into new, frightening roles without their mother's support and approval, at a period in their lives when mother was most needed. These milestones were the catalyst or "trigger" for the clinical re-grieving issue.

It is my contention that facing the psychological chaos of milestones, or periods of punctuated transition, are significant and painful periods in the life of a young adult who has lost her mother. For these young women, the imposed self-reliance, coupled with the acute awareness that they now lack maternal support, made milestone changes seem threatening and frightening.

Although they did not have the benefit of their mothers' experiences, the study's participants eventually learned to diaper, feed, and nurture their children. They managed to handle day-to-day activities and problems with the aid of books, friends, doctors, relatives, and, occasionally, even strangers. Despite their ability to manage infant care in a practical sense, each of the participants experienced new-motherhood emotionally lost and hurt. They all expressed feelings of (a) anxiety, (b) anger and (c) envy, during the early period of new motherhood. Renewed feelings of despair, anger, and heightened anxiety often accompany important moments for the subjects of this study. A milestone event renews feelings of grief for the past loss of the mother because a current need for maternal attention, during periods of deeply self-oriented trial and vulnerability. Re-grieving, as examined in this study, is psychological and physical. The women of this study, often in a phase of constant transition, relied on and now lack their maternal support and feel symptoms mirroring acute grief (sadness, despair, anxiety, and anger).

These young women do not have mothers to help them find a wedding dress, to offer advice on marriage, or to help them make innumerable little decisions that go into planning a middle class wedding. For the subjects of this study, the engagement ring is not only a physical symbol of a new life ahead, but also a daily reminder that they must begin this life without a mother's guidance. All the motherless engaged young women who participated in this study, experienced re-grieving and feelings of extreme vulnerability. Pending marriage, with its implications of permanence, often prompts questions weighted with identity conflict and anxiety (Zabriskie, 2000). Am I doing the right thing? Am I ready to be commit? Am I ready to be

commit to this person? These questions resurrect the longing for the comfort and support of their deceased advisor, friend, confidante and mother.

Wedding dress purchase also seemed to be a cataclysmic emotionally devastating aspect of the engagement process. It raised a myriad of complications for the motherless daughter. Some concerns were emotional, based on a longing for her mother “see her” in her dress, “be with her” and “*help her*”. Others expressed practical concerns, such as “*who will tell me which dress flatters me?*” or, “*who will accompany me to go dress shopping?*”

Coupled with the emotional hurdles of engagement, the wedding day itself presented the young woman with a new and different set of urgent, pressing issues. These hardships transcend the standard wedding dilemmas of seating arrangements, weather forecasts and food quality delivery. Motherless brides confronted two real and painful processes. First she had to consider whether or not to recognize her mother’s absence. If she decided to incorporate the memory of her mother into the ceremony or celebration, she had to determine when, how, and where this should take place. The bride also learned to balance the joy of her wedding with her experiences of re-grieving, which, as I have demonstrated, can include anxiety, sadness, loss of appetite, and despair.

### **Pregnancy and Child Birth and New Motherhood**

Although these events are separated for the purposes of this study, they overlap in reality. With exception of Yehudis, Bonnie and Dressie whose mother excitedly watched as their waistlines expanded and held their hands during sonograms and prenatal visits, each of the other

participants' mothers died prior to her daughters' first pregnancy. For these young motherless women, their nine-months of pregnancy was filled with on-going, rather than punctuated, re-grieving. All of these participants missed their mothers intensely while they experienced new physical and emotional changes and challenges caused by pregnancy. Pregnancy was a period of transition and adjustment, during which these women's roles in their families, and in society, often changed. It is common for young adult women at this milestone to turn to their own mothers as role models and sources of comfort to help ease the adjustments (Friday, 1977; Fischer, 1981; Lurie, 1974). Going through pregnancy without a mother, intensified the experience of re-grieving. For young women who go through the pregnancy experience without their mothers, the feelings of vulnerability and isolation can be intensified.

It was common among the participants to speculate about what role their mothers would have played during their pregnancies. They "wondered" how their mothers would have felt about becoming grandmothers. They "wondered" how their mothers would have helped them emotionally and physically. They "wondered" how their mothers would have evaluated and assessed their own mothering. These projections tightly correlate with Hope Edelman's (1994) theories on secondary losses. Edelman notes accordingly, that mother-loss during this stage causes the daughter to suffer "secondary losses." Not only does she lose a mother, but a supportive friend as well. For Edelman, this secondary loss denies the daughter a mother to spoil her grandchildren.

Anxiety, envy and anger characterized these women's pregnancies and new-motherhood. While most new mothers may have periods of vulnerability and anxiety, these motherless young

women were also filled with jealousy and rage. They were envious of other new mothers who had what they themselves were missing, a mother. They were envious of their fellow pregnant women's support and guidance. They were angry that well-intentioned mother-in-laws were alive and present and may have tried to serve as replacements for their own mothers' absences. These harsh feelings were then internalized and the women felt guilt instead of joy early in their new motherhood days.

#### 4. The fourth variable: Re-grieving and Jewish Mourning and Burial

Religion, in this study specifically Judaism, seemed to be both a trigger and a comfort for re-grieving. As milestones for this population were very much housed in a social context with emphasis on religious association, Judaism was a significant factor in how these women re-grieve. Religious symbols and traditions are generally entrenched in moments of life-cycle transition. The cultural influence of Judaism during death and mourning and milestone celebrations of life-cycle events was prevalent amongst the most assimilated, secular Jewish women in the study as well as for those observant, religious Jews.

The traditions of burial helped free the surviving family members from the burden of decisions at a time of numbing and overwhelming grief. Jewish Law offered to these women a reliable and approved course of behavior and action in their initial grief. For them, Jewish mourning practices had both practical and pragmatic purposes. The laws surrounding death, burial, and mourning prescribed a series of tasks that give direction to the bereaved, during a time when many feel lost, sad, and vulnerable.

Judaism guided each of the young women who participated in this study through the grief process in a prescribed manner that helped pave the route for normative grieving. Normative grief made this study distinctive as it addressed re-grieving from a healthy, therapeutic evolution and not from a complicated grief process.

The stages of *Aninut*, *Shiv'ah*, and *Shloshim*, as they relate to this study, mostly comprise the participants' **initial** grief reactions and experiences whereas *Yud Bet Chodesh* and *Yizkor/Yarzeit* focus on the **re-grieving** experience and demonstrate the influence Jewish tradition has on these young motherless women.

### ANINUT

The first stage in the Jewish mourning ritual is *Aninut*. This begins immediately after death and lasts through burial. The literature describes a mourner in this initial period as “numb with disbelief” (Lamm, 1969) and “paralyzed with shock” (Goldberg, 1991). The experiences of this study’s participants are in keeping with the emotional, helpless states described in the literature. Each subject described her uncharacteristic inability to think, act, or plan, in the hours and first days following her mother’s death. In the face of feeling immobilized, vulnerable, and helpless, the dictates of Jewish burial law provided a relief to these young women as they were able to focus on the actual death, not on the planning for the funeral and burial.

Following the step-by-step outlined rules prescribed by Jewish law helped many of the subjects from feeling overwhelmed, reducing extra emotional pressures. Jewish law and custom seem to protect the mourner, alleviating additional anxiety and the confusing decision making

choices. Even the steps of Kri'ah, the ripping of a garment representing the relationship that is rended by death- that the relationship with the deceased has been cut-off, helps to facilitate grief work. Being in an environment which fosters and encourages grief expression helped each of these young women articulate their loss even before words were available.

Regardless of denomination, family and friends play an important role in a Jewish burial. Each of the study's participants described feeling "communal support and concern," following the death of her mother. Following the funeral, community continued to play an integral and significant role in the mourners' lives. The community is commanded to care for the mourners and is obligated to bring food to the family. It is considered a "*Mitzvah*" (good act or kind deed) to prepare the post-funeral meal: "It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting" (Ecclesiastes, 7:2).

### **Shivah and Kaddish**

Although both Shivah and Kaddish were presented separately in the proceeding chapters, they go hand-in-hand and happen near simultaneously. *Shivah*, the second stage, often translated as "seven days of formal mourning," begins immediately after burial. During this period, the mourner sits low to the ground either on a bench or on the floor to demonstrate that they are "struck down with grief" (Diamant, 1991; Lamm, 1969; Weinberger, 1995). All of the participants in this study sat either a full (seven day) or modified form of *Shivah*. In different ways, they each explained that the *Shivah* enabled them to get "lost in their pain", "forget about all responsibilities", and "think and think about mom with nothing to distract me".

*Shivah* marks the onset of the recitation of *Kaddish*, the prayer for the dead. For those few participants who participated in saying *Kaddish* beyond their *Shivah* period, it was both sad and soothing. Recitation of *Kaddish* in the synagogue became a practiced routine and allowed them to join the community of other mourners, offering consolation to those who were new to bereavement.

Grief recovery is a process of realization-of making the death real from the “inside” and being able to acknowledge the reality and articulate the loss (Lindemann, 1944; Glick, Weiss & Parkes, 1974; Exline, Dorrity & Wortman, 1996). *Shivah* and *Kaddish* also encourages conversation about the deceased, and helps enable even the most stoic to receive solace (Goldberg, 1991). During *Shivah* and later *Kaddish*, daily routine stops. This pause from wordly and daily obligations seems to allow the mourners to mourn without interference which helps facilitate normative grief. It is this normative grief that later gets resurrected into re-grieving.

### **SHLOSHIM**

*Shloshim*, the third segment of mourning, literally means “thirty”. After the *Shivah*, mourners begin to recommence most of their daily affairs of life. The participants returned to work or school, caring for their children and, if applicable, marital relations. By tradition, however, for the thirty days of *Shloshim*, the mourner continues to refrain from listening to music, attending celebrations, and cutting hair and nails. After *Shloshim*, on the thirtieth day, it is customary to visit the grave of the deceased. At this stage, the mourner understands that separation is final and that normalization can resume (Lamm, 1969). In this respect, confirming Lamm’s position, *Shloshim* serves as a segway or transition period to normalization. Many of the

participants noted that *Shloshim* helped them transition back into living, and were surprised that a full month had already elapsed since their mother's funeral.

### **YUD BET CHODESH**

*Yud Bet Chodesh*, the twelfth month, is the fourth and concluding segment of the formal mourning period for a parent in Jewish tradition. It marks the one year anniversary of the death, and it is traditionally commemorated by giving charity and by unveiling the tomb or footstone. The literature describes these final acts as a "closure that allows the psyche to prepare" for a new life without the deceased (Kidorf, 1966).

Participants expressed that *YUD BET CHODESH* was a year of first experiences motherless. Each mentioned that the unveiling helped her take note of all the life-cycle activities she encountered since the death of her mother. They often mentioned birthdays, Jewish holidays, parents' anniversaries as difficult. Two of the participants married during their year-long mourning periods which made the unveilings for them extremely painful. Two other participants gave birth during their year-long mourning periods. They felt overwhelmed with sadness at the unveilings and expressed the mix of joy at their baby's births but sadness their mothers were dead--in essence, they were re-grieving.

### **YIZKOR/YARZHEIT**

*Yizkor* is Hebrew for "rememberance". It is a special memorial prayer recited by all those who have lost a parent, spouse, child or other close person on the holidays of Passover, Sukkot,

Yom Kippur and Shavuot recited. *Yarzheit*, Yiddish for “a year’s time”, is a yearly marking of a death anniversary. Traditionally, at these junctures, it is customary to visit the cemetery, light of a memorial candle that burns for twenty-four hours, attend synagogue, and recite *Kaddish*. *Yizkor* and *Yarzheit* mark the fifth stage of grief in Jewish mourning tradition and are for perpetuity. These are hard moments for the women of this study. Although they have not forgotten their mothers, these days rekindle and resurrect sadness, not re-grieving but a profound sense of loss.

By mourning within the Jewish burial tradition, each of the study’s participants received a framework for successful, normative grief which laid the foundation for re-grieving. Each of the participants felt that following Jewish tradition facilitated their grieving process, and each appreciated having a prescribed outline of behavior and activities to follow in the aftermath of their loss. Understanding the distinct nature of Jewish burial and mourning traditions enhanced the researcher’s ability to empathize with and analyze the attitudes of the young women of this study.

This study has determined that re-grieving is the by-product of the convergence of four variables: young adulthood, motherloss, milestones and Jewish burial and mourning traditions. This established, the next section will discuss the study’s implications of milestones for social work practice.

## D. IMPLICATION FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

### **Research**

Social work researchers have been criticized for being preoccupied by the unmet needs of the grieving elderly while ignoring the needs of the grieving young (Neugarten, 1979). “Death is a normal and expectable event for the old. Death is tragic only when it occurs at too young an age” (Neugarten, p. 899). When death hits early or out of expected synchrony, young adults’ coping strategies are jeopardized. Social work researchers need to expand their grief-work focus to include research on the coping and resilience effects as it impacts young adult bereavement. Going beyond this study of mother-loss in young adult Jewish women, additional young adult-based research should include: father-loss, young adult men, siblings and other faith-based studies.

### **Direct Clinical Practice**

For clinicians in direct practice, it is important to be informed about re-grieving and its’ presenting symptoms to best meet the client’s needs. The push / pull of independence, with general, routine anxieties often found in young adulthood, is not re-grieving. Motherloss, in and of itself, even in young adulthood, is not a variable for re-grieving. Dependency, enmeshment, conflict and over-involvement in the mother-daughter relationship does not induce re-grieving. Milestones and its role transition pile-ups and identity changes, does not trigger re-grieving. Jewish mourning rituals designed to stimulate normative grief does not exclusively resurrect re-grieving either. Clinicians can anticipate symptomatic re-grieving in young Jewish adult motherless women who have had a strong bond with their mother and who are at the cusp of pending a designated life-cycle milestone of engagement, wedding, pregnancy, childbirth and

new-motherhood. It is also important for the clinician to note that re-grieving is –at least for this population- uncomplicated and can serve as a bridge between the daughter and her bond with her deceased mother. Whether the clinician is serving the individual or the group, it is imperative s/he remember that it is the confluence of young adulthood, motherloss, strong mother-daughter attachment, milestones and Jewish mourning, which creates the re-grieving phenomenon.

#### E. A NEW TERM: RE-GRIEVING

This study has attempted to explore a seeming paradox in human behavior: the contradiction implicit between the experiences of grief and of celebration. To resolve this, I have developed a new clinical concept which I call re-grieving and have grounded it in a review of the literature, as well as quantitative and qualitative investigations and analyses.

The concept of re-grieving has emerged in part by drawing on personal observations, and in part from an extensive reading of findings in attachment theory, grief theory, and epigenetic models of milestones in human development. The concept also suggests new avenues of research, which, even if they prove the theory to be flawed, are likely to provide new insights of use to clinical social workers.

The idea of re-grieving is straightforward. I proposed that a sort of tug of war between sadness and the memory of the mother, when combined with the social norms of elation expected at a celebration can, in effect, pull affect in two ways at once. Attachment to the deceased mother pushes a young woman along the grief spectrum. Present-centered behavior during a celebration moves the young woman along post-recovery spectrum, toward hypersensitivity. This, according

to the research, increases a young woman's risk of developing unexpected symptoms of depression. In sum, grief and joy represent opposite ends of a spectrum that includes most, if not all, human emotions. At the moment of celebration, the two poles seem irreconcilable and yet they have to be managed: this is the process I call re-grieving.

## ***APPENDIX A - RECRUITMENT SCRIPT***

### Initial Statement to Enlist Participation

My name is Julie Friedman and I am a Ph. D. student at the Graduate Center's Hunter School of Social Work. I am calling you on the suggestion of xx to ask for your participation in a study that will be used in partial fulfillment for my doctoral degree. This research will describe how young Jewish women got through their major life-changing events motherless. Specifically, how young Jewish women re-grieve while celebrating.

XX recommended you because she seemed to think you are a close match to my study. She told me your mother died # number of years ago and that you also recently had a (Wedding? Engagement? Baby?). I would be interested in interviewing you in person to learn more about your personal experiences of losing your mother and marking a major life event. Your identity will remain completely confidential. I will not attribute any specific responses to you and I will report all findings in aggregate form and in such a way that I can mask any characteristics that may identify you. Please know, your participation in this study is up to you – it is 100% voluntary. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions and you can chose to end the interview early should you wish. You can withdraw from the study for any reason and you will not have let me down.

The study will involve a structured 50 minute interview, with a possible follow up interview if you give me permission. I will meet you wherever it is most convenient for you. With your permission, I will audiotape the interview and I will be the only person listening to the tape. Your name or any other identifying feature will **not** appear on the tape.

If you are willing to participate, I can set up an appointment for an interview and send you more information – an informal consent form for you to review and sign. Do you have any questions? Also, since I am seeking more participants to increase my sample size, I am wondering if you know of anyone else who may fit the study and wish to know about the interview process?

## ***APPENDIX B - RECOMMENDATION SCRIPTS TO GATHER POTENTIAL SUBJECTS***

My name is Julie Friedman and I am a Ph. D. student at the Graduate Center's Hunter School of Social Work. I am calling you on the suggestion of xx to ask if you could recommend participants for a study that will be used in partial fulfillment for my degree. This dissertation will describe how young Jewish women balance their happiness of major life events such as engagements, weddings, child-births with the sadness of grieving their mother's deaths.

It is thus far entitled: Milestones without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Re-grieve While Celebrating. Milestones are described as major life-cycle events such as getting engaged, married, becoming pregnant or new motherhood.

Any recommendations you may have for this study is wholly voluntary. I am looking for young women between 18-33 years old whose mother's died when they were between 18-33 years old. These young women must have had a major milestone occur AFTER their mother died. They must self identify as being Jewish.

## APPENDIX C - PRE-SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

*Thank you for participating in this study on motherless. All information and answers will be kept confidential. The surveys will be coded to safeguard your identity. Should you feel uncomfortable with any questions, please leave it blank.*

1. What is your current age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you consider yourself Jewish? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
If yes, which of the groups below best describes your affiliation? Reform \_\_\_\_  
Reconstructionist \_\_\_\_ Egalitarian \_\_\_\_ Conservative \_\_\_\_ Conservadox \_\_\_\_  
Modern Orthodox \_\_\_\_ Orthodox \_\_\_\_ Hasidische \_\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Which socioeconomic group best describes your current status?  
Lower-Middle Income \_\_\_\_ Middle Income \_\_\_\_  
Upper-Middle Income \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ (please specify)
4. Do you have siblings? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_  
If yes, please list their first names and ages \_\_\_\_\_
5. Is your father currently living? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
6. How old were you at the time of your mother's death? \_\_\_\_\_
7. How old was your mother at the time of her death? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What was your mother's name? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was your mother's death? Expected \_\_\_\_ Sudden \_\_\_\_
10. What was the cause of your mother's death? (Physical Illness/Accident/Suicide)
11. Did you attend your mother's funeral? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
12. Did you "Sit Shiv'ah" for your mother? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
13. Was your relationship with your mother prior to her death?  
Not Good \_\_\_\_  
Sometimes Good \_\_\_\_  
Often Good \_\_\_\_  
Very Good \_\_\_\_
14. How often did you speak or see your mother prior to her death?  
Once a month \_\_\_\_  
Twice a month \_\_\_\_  
Once a week \_\_\_\_  
Four or more times a week \_\_\_\_
15. Did you consider your mother a trusted confidant (someone with whom you shared your true feelings)? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_
16. Which of the following events have you experienced while your mother was ALIVE?  
Please check all that apply: Engagement \_\_\_\_ Wedding \_\_\_\_ Pregnancy \_\_\_\_  
Childbirth \_\_\_\_ New Motherhood \_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_
17. Which of the following events have you experienced AFTER your mother died? Please check all that apply: Engagement \_\_\_\_ Wedding \_\_\_\_ Pregnancy \_\_\_\_  
Childbirth \_\_\_\_ New Motherhood \_\_\_\_ None \_\_\_\_
18. Did you go to a counselor or therapist after your mother's death for grief related counseling? No \_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_

*Please return this, together with the Informed Consent Form, in the provided envelope. Thank you again for sharing your experiences.*

**APPENDIX D - MOTHER-DAUGHTER ATTACHMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please Rate the following items according to how you honestly remember your mother/daughter relationship. All information will be kept confidential. Please leave any answers blank if they make you uncomfortable.

| Scale: 1=strongly disagree   | 7=strongly agree |
|--|------------------|
| 1) We wanted to spend time together  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 2) My mother always showed me that she loved me  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 3) We were honest with one another   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 4) We accepted each other's criticism of our mistakes and shortcomings                     | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 5) We genuinely liked each other   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 6) We respected each other's opinions  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 7) I was lucky to have her as my mother  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 8) She cared about the way I felt  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 9) My mother was a good mother   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 10) My mother and grandmother had a close relationship                                     | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 11) My relationship with my mother was similar to the relationship she had with her mother | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 12) We nurtured each other   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 13) She was closer to me than others were  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 14) We were emotionally dependent on each other  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 15) Our best times were with each other  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 16) My mother saw things from my point of view   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |
| 17) We were able to share private things face to face                                      | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7    |

Please return all three questionnaires back to me in the provided envelope and thank you again for participating in this study.

## ***APPENDIX E - RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER INVENTORY***

Please select the answer according to how you honestly remember your mother/daughter relationship. Your answers will be kept confidential. Please leave blank any questions which make you uncomfortable.

- 1) How much did you depend on your mother for advice?  
Not at all \_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_  
Often \_\_\_\_\_ Always \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 2) How much do you want to be like your mother?  
Not like her \_\_\_\_ Somewhat like her \_\_\_\_\_  
A great deal like her \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 3) How would you characterize your relationship with your mother?  
Conflicted \_\_\_\_\_ Neutral \_\_\_\_\_ Harmonious \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 4) I was one of the most important people in my mother's life?  
Not true \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat true \_\_\_\_\_  
Mostly true \_\_\_\_\_ Definitely true \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 5) I was very happy with my relationship with my mother.  
Not True \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat true \_\_\_\_\_  
Mostly true \_\_\_\_\_ Definitely true \_\_\_\_\_
  
- 6) My mother and I had a great deal of mutual respect, faith and confidence in one another.  
Not true \_\_\_\_\_ Somewhat true \_\_\_\_\_  
Mostly true \_\_\_\_\_ Definitely true \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX F - GRIEF BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST**

The following questions are about behavior you may or may not have done in the days, months or years after your mother's death. Please answer the questions to the best of your recollection. Please leave blank any questions that make you uncomfortable. Please check either "Yes" "No" or "N/A" (not applicable or you don't remember).

- 1) Did you attend all or most of your mother's funeral?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 2) Did you attend all or most of your mother's burial?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 3) Did you openly express your sorrow in words or actions?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 4) Did you openly express anger about your mother's death?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 5) Did you keep or were you given any of your mother's belongings  
( A piece of jewelry? A handbag? A scarf? A framed photo?)  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 6) Did you freely talk with your father about the circumstances  
of your mother's death? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 7) Did you see your father openly cry in the days following your mother's death?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 8) Do you display a photo of your mother in your own house or room?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 9) Did you ask questions about your mother with one of her siblings, friends or co-workers  
(What did you like to do together? What was she like at work? What was she like as a  
teenager? What would she think about her own death?) ?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 10) After burial, did you visit your mother's grave site?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_  
If yes, do you still visit the grave site? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- 11) Did you look at family photos in the days, weeks and months following her death?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_
- 12) Do you cry at the current mention of your mother's name in general conversation?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ N/A \_\_\_

***APPENDIX G - RECRUITMENT FLYER***

**Study on Mother Loss and  
Major Life Events  
Jewish Volunteers Needed**

**Volunteers should**

**Currently be between 18-33 years old.....**

**and**

**Were between 18-33 years old when mother died....**

**and**

**At Least One of the following:**

**Engaged, Married, Recently Pregnant and /or a new  
Mother?**

Please contact Julie Friedman, a student at the Graduate Center's Hunter  
School of Social Work for more information

212-517-9100 x211 – all call information will be confidential

## ***APPENDIX H - INFORMED CONSENT FORM***

My name is Julie Friedman and I am the student in the Social Welfare Ph.D. Program at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York (CUNY), and Principal Investigator who called you regarding my project, entitled “Milestones Without Mothers: How Young Jewish Women Regrieve While Celebrating.” This is a research study of how young Jewish women experience major life events when their mother’s have died. The study is expected to help clinicians better understand the idea of “regrieving”. I would like permission to interview you about your experiences, and would like you to fill out three separate questionnaires. The first questionnaire, a prescreening questionnaire, should take about 10 minutes and asks questions about your age, your mother’s age at the time of her death and other personal questions. The second questionnaire is a grief resolution questionnaire and should take less then 15 minutes to complete. This questionnaire will help me better understand your mourning process. Lastly, the third questionnaire should take less then 10 minutes to complete and is a mother-daughter attachment questionnaire to help measure the relationship you had with your mother.

This interview will take under 50 minutes and the questionnaires should take approximately 35 minutes to complete. With your permission, I would like to audio-tape this interview so I can record the details accurately. The tapes will only be heard by me and my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Danto. All information gathered including tapes, questionnaires and any other documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet, to which only I, and my advisor, will have access. At any time you can refuse to answer any questions or end the interview. Please be confident that should you choose to withdraw from this study at any time for whatever reason you will not have let me down.

The risks from participating in this study should be no more than encountered in everyday life. The benefits of your participation are that through your experiences we can learn about regrieving while celebrating. Your involvement will build empirical knowledge for social work practice, and to assist other young women in this position. There will be approximately 30 participants taking part in this study.

I may publish results of the study, but names of people, or any other identifying characteristics, will not be used in any of the publications. If you would like a copy of the study please provide me with your email address and I will send you a copy in the future.

If you have any questions about this research, you can contact me at 917-620-0354 or email [Jfriedman@bellmarc.com](mailto:Jfriedman@bellmarc.com), or my advisor Dr. Elizabeth Danto 212-452-7032 or email her at [edanto@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:edanto@hunter.cuny.edu). If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you can contact Kay Powell, IRB Administrator, The Graduate Center/City University of New York, 212-817-7525, [kpowell@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:kpowell@gc.cuny.edu).

Thank you for your participation in the study. I will give you a copy of this form.

I agree to have this interview audio-taped: [please circle one]

Yes                      No

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator’s Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## ***APPENDIX I - INTERVIEW GUIDE***

### **OPENING STATEMENT:**

With the goal of self-reflection in mind, I want to interview you about your experiences of being recently motherless while undergoing your major life-cycle milestones. Major life-cycle milestones are defined as getting engaged, married, being pregnant, child-birth, and new motherhood.

It is the purpose of this research to describe and report what young Jewish women may feel as they experience one or several of the aforementioned milestones after their mothers have died. It will be most helpful to the researcher, if you as the volunteer, try to recall your experiences, feelings, emotions and thoughts about what it was like for you to have a milestone without your mother. All your responses will be kept confidential and your anonymity will be protected from everyone. As previously requested, I will tape record our interview.

### **Topic: Milestones that candidate experienced**

#### **1) Were/Are you engaged to marry? Was your mother alive when you got engaged?**

**IF Yes,** How did she respond to your announcement? Did she plan or organize a party? What was her general attitude towards this milestone? Did she discuss with you her own engagement and experiences?

**IF No,** What was it like for you not having your mother there for this news? Did you imagine how or what she would have done? What was the hardest part of not having your mother be there for your engagement...i.e....what did you miss the most? Who “took” you wedding dress shopping?

#### **2) Were/are you married? Was your mother alive when you got married?**

**IF Yes,** Was your mother alive (if ill, also present) at your wedding?

PROMPT...please describe her emotional reaction to you dressed in your wedding dress...walking down the aisle...did she dance at your wedding?

PROMPT...what role did she play in your wedding...did she help arrange anything? Pick-out your dress? Did she share with you what it was like for her as a bride?

**IF NO,** please describe how you felt on your wedding day celebrating without her? Did you think of her at all? Did you cry? Were you numb? Sad? Scared?

PROMPT...in what way, if any, did you include her memory and how did this add to your wedding day experience?

PROMPT...Did anyone else feel the pain and sadness of your mother not being there? Did you talk with them about what kind of loss it was for you to not have her there?

**3) Were/Are you pregnant? Was your mother alive to see you pregnant?**

**If YES-** In what ways, if any, did your mother help you through your pregnancy? Were you anxious during your pregnancy? Did your mother offer advice or emotional support to you? Did she relate stories to you of when she was pregnant?

**IF NO-** what did you think when you discovered you were pregnant? How did these feelings change, if at all, when you thought of your mother? PROMPT....Were you concerned about pregnancy? Who did you turn to for emotional support?

**4) Did/Do you have children? Was your mother alive to see the new-born baby? The Bris? The Baby-naming?**

**If Yes,** What was her reaction to your newborn? Did she exhibit any emotions? How did she make you feel?

PROMPT... what type, if any, help did she offer you after birth? Did she help pick-out or buy furniture, clothes, diapers, baby sit, cook, clean, make phone calls?

**IF NOT ALIVE,** did you name your child after your mother? If yes, out of obligation or out of desire? How is it for you to call out loud your newborn's name –do you immediately think of your mother? Does it make you happy or sad? How will you describe your mother to your child?

- 5)** Since your mother's death, what do you feel has been the most significant milestone of your life? How has your mother's death impacted that event? How have you "included" her memory into this day?
- 6)** What kind, if any, counseling did you attend after your mom died? (Probe did it help you?)
- 7)** Around the time you experienced these milestones, was specific motherless-milestone counseling available to you? (Probe: Did you go to counseling to discuss mother loss and milestone? Was it Helpful?)
- 8)** Do you think specific milestone counseling is needed? (Would this type of service have helped you through your milestone? Should it be group? Individual?)

Many thanks for participating in this project. It is my hope that other women whose mothers have died can benefit from the experiences you shared with me in this survey.

## APPENDIX J - RESULTS TABLES

### PRE-SCREENING SURVEY

|                                   | 1         | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7       | 8      | 9       | 10    | 11    | 12      | 13          | 14      | 15      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------|-------|-------|-------|---------|--------|---------|-------|-------|---------|-------------|---------|---------|
| current age                       | 22        | 27       | 30      | 30    | 29    | 21    | 21      | 24     | 27      | 28    | 30    | 27      | 28          | 26      | 22      |
| consider yourself Jewish          | y         | y        | y       | y     | y     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | y     | y       | y           | y       | y       |
| branch of Judaism                 | orth      | mo       | con     | re    | re    | mo    | orth    | mo     | consdx  | re    | re    | mo      | mo          | re      | orth    |
| Socioeconomic group               | mi        | umi      | umi     | mi    | umi   | mi    | mi      | mi     | umi     | umi   | umi   | umi     | umi         | umi     | mi      |
| have siblings                     | y         | y        | y       | y     | y     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | y     | y       | n           | y       | y       |
| brother or sister                 | sbsb      | bbb      | bs      | b     | sb    | b     | bb      | b      | ss      | s     | ssb   | bs      |             | b       | sssbbbs |
| older or younger                  | oooy      | ooo      | oy      | o     | oo    | y     | oo      | y      | oy      | y     | yoy   | oy      |             | o       | ooooooy |
| father living                     | y         | y        | y       | y     | n     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | y     | y       | y           | y       | y       |
| age at time of mother's death     | 19        | 26       | 28      | 22    | 19    | 19    | 18      | 22     | 24      | 21    | 28    | 20      | 24          | 23      | 21      |
| mother's age at time of her death | 49        | 57       | 61      | 55    | 54    | 43    | 57      | 49     | 49      | 46    | 57    | 48      | 50          | 49      | 58      |
| type of death                     | s         | e        | e       | e     | e     | e     | s       | e      | e       | e     | s     | s       | e           | e       | e       |
| cause of death                    | I         | I        | I       | I     | I     | I     | I       | I      | I       | I     | I     | I       | I           | I       | I       |
| attend funeral                    | y         | y        | y       | y     | y     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | y     | y       | y           | y       | y       |
| sit shiva                         | y         | y        | y       | y     | y     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | n     | y       | y           | y       | y       |
| relationship with mother          | vg        | vg       | vg      | vg    | vg    | vg    | vg      | vg     | vg      | vg    | vg    | vg      | vg          | vg      | vg      |
| frequency of contact w/ mother    | 4+        | 4+       | 4+      | 4+    | 4+    | 4+    | 4+      | 4+     | 4+      | 1w    | 4+    | 4+      | 4+          | 4+      | 4+      |
| most trusted confidant            | y         | y        | y       | y     | y     | y     | y       | y      | y       | y     | y     | y       | y           | y       | y       |
| milestone experienced while ALIVE | e         | e w p    | e w     | n     | n     | n     | n       | n      | n       | n     | n     | n       | n           | n       | e w     |
| milestone experienced while DEAD* | w p       | cb nm cb | p cb nm | e w   | e w p | e     | e       | e      | e w     | e w p | e     | e w     | e w p cb nm | e       | p       |
| go to counseling                  | y         | n        | y       | y     | y     | y     | n       | n      | y       | n     | n     | y       | n           | n       | n       |
| Regrieve during milestone**       | y-l/a/c/d | y-l/c    | y-a/l/c | y-c/d | y-l/c | y-a/c | y-s/l/c | y-ls/c | y-d/l/c | y-a/l | y-l/c | y-a/l/c | y-l/c       | y-a/l/c | y-l/c   |

I=Longing, a=anxiety/vulnerability,ls=Low Self-Esteem, c=Crying, d=Despair)

orth=Orthodox, mo=Modern Orthodox, con=Conservative, re=Reform, consdx=Conservadox, egal=Egalitarian, Hasid=Hasidic

mi=Middle Class, umi=Upper Middle Class, lmi=Lower Middle Class

s=Sister, b=Brother, o=Older, y=Younger

e=Engagement, w=Wedding, p=Pregnancy, n=No, cb=Childbirth, nm=New Motherhood

|                                   | 16    | 17      | 18          | 19        | 20    | 21      | 22      | 23    | 24      | 25      | 26      | 27        | 28          | 29          | 30      |
|-----------------------------------|-------|---------|-------------|-----------|-------|---------|---------|-------|---------|---------|---------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| current age                       | 28    | 29      | 30          | 29        | 29    | 25      | 28      | 24    | 30      | 29      | 28      | 29        | 31          | 29          | 30      |
| consider yourself Jewish          | y     | y       | y           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| branch of Judaism                 | mo    | mo      | mo          | orth      | cons  | cons    | re      | mo    | mo      | egal    | re      | Hasid     | orth        | mo          | re      |
| Socioeconomic group               | umi   | umi     | mi          | umi       | umi   | umi     | umi     | mi    | umi     | umi     | umi     | umi       | Lmi         | umi         | mi      |
| have siblings                     | y     | y       | y           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| brother or sister                 | sb    | s       | bs          | sssbs     | bs    | b       | b       | sbbb  | ss      | s       | bs      | bbbsbbb   | bbbsbsbb    | sbss        | b       |
| older or younger                  | oy    | y       | oo          | ooyyy     | oy    | o       | o       | oooy  | oo      | y       | oy      | oyyyyyy   | oooyyyyy    | oyyy        | o       |
| father living                     | y     | y       | n           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| age at time of mother's death     | 19    | 22      | 25          | 25        | 23    | 24      | 27      | 20    | 23      | 25      | 25      | 24        | 20          | 28          | 28      |
| mother's age at time of her death | 51    | 45      | 52          | 50        | 55    | 52      | 58      | 48    | 46      | 50      | 51      | 44        | 45          | 49          | 60      |
| type of death                     | e     | s       | e           | e         | s     | e       | e       | e     | e       | s       | e       | e         | s           | e           | e       |
| cause of death                    | I     | I       | I           | I         | a     | I       | I       | I     | I       | I       | I       | I         | a           | I           | I       |
| attend funeral                    | y     | y       | y           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| sit shiva                         | y     | y       | y           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| relationship with mother          | vg    | vg      | vg          | vg        | vg    | vg      | og      | vg    | vg      | og      | vg      | vg        | vg          | vg          | og      |
| frequency of contact w/ mother    | 4+    | 4+      | 4+          | 4+        | 4+    | 4+      | 4+      | 4+    | 4+      | 4+      | 4+      | 4+        | 4+          | 4+          | 1W      |
| most trusted confidant            | y     | y       | y           | y         | y     | y       | y       | y     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | y           | y       |
| milestone experienced while ALIVE | n     | n       | n           | e         | n     | n       | e w     | n     | e w     | n       | n       | e w p     | n           | e w p cb nm | n       |
| milestone experienced while DEAD* | e w   | e w p   | e w p cb nm | w p cb nm | e w p | e       | p cb nm | e     | p cb nm | e w     | e w p   | cb nm     | e w p cb nm | p cb        | e w     |
| go to counseling                  | y     | y       | y           | n         | n     | y       | y       | n     | y       | y       | y       | y         | y           | n           | y       |
| Regrieve during milestone**       | y-l/c | y-a/l/c | y-a/l/c     | y-a/l/c   | y-l/c | y-a/l/c | y-a/l/c | y-l/c | y-a/c   | y-a/l/c | y-l/d/c | y-a/l/c/d | y-a/l/c/d   | y-a/l/c/d   | y-a/l/c |

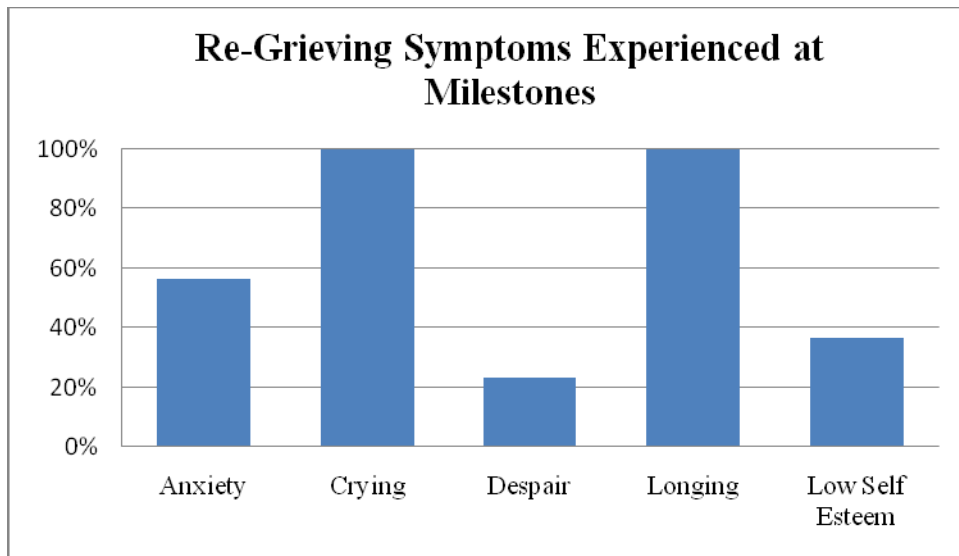
\* See Chart I

\*\* See Chart II

CHART 1

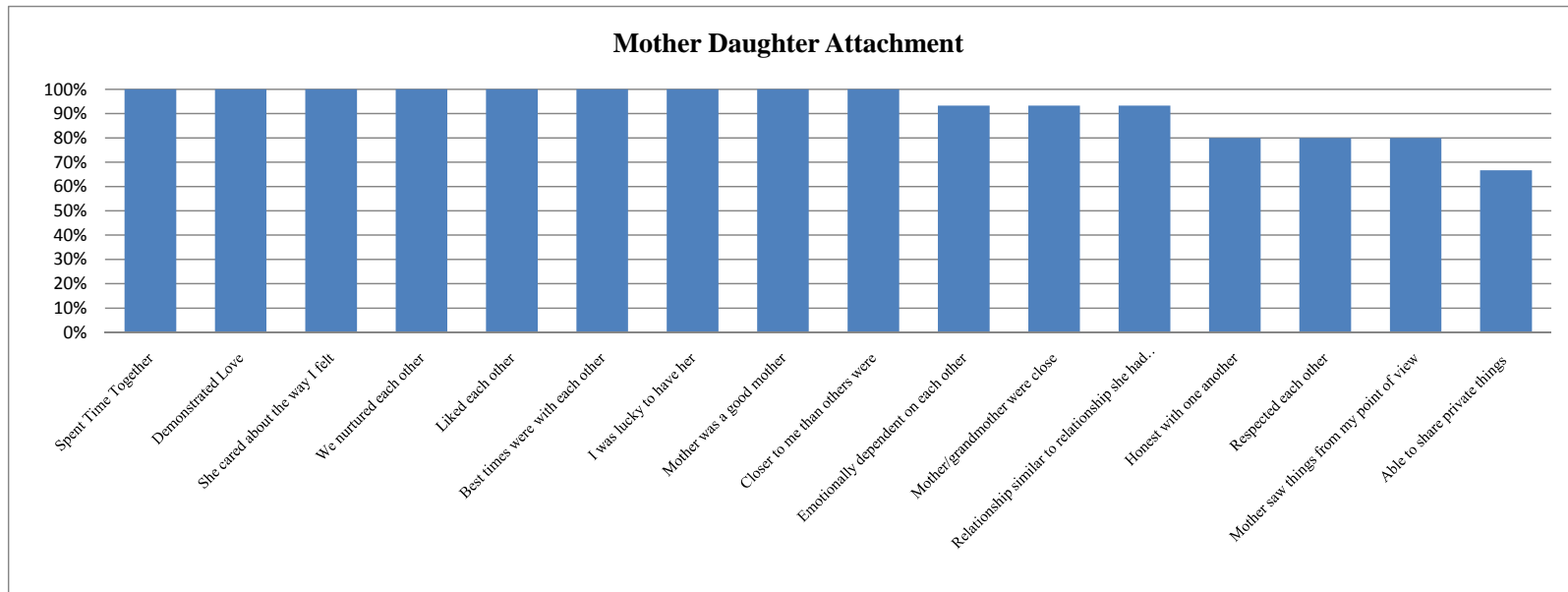


CHART 2



## MOTHER DAUGHTER ATTACHMENT

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| We wanted to spend time together   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| My mother always showed me that she loved me   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| She cared about the way I felt   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| We nurtured each other.  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| We genuinely liked each other  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| Our best times were with each other  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| I was lucky to have her as my mother   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| My mother was a good mother  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| She was closer to me than others were  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| We were emotionally dependent on each other.   | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| My mother and grandmother had a close relationship                                     | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| My relationship with my mother was similar to the relationship she had with her mother | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |
| We were honest with one another accepted each other's criticism of our mistakes        | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  |
| We respected each other's opinions   | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  |
| Mother saw things from my point of view  | Y | N | Y | Y | N | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  |
| Able to share private things   | Y | N | Y | Y | N | N | Y | Y | N | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  |

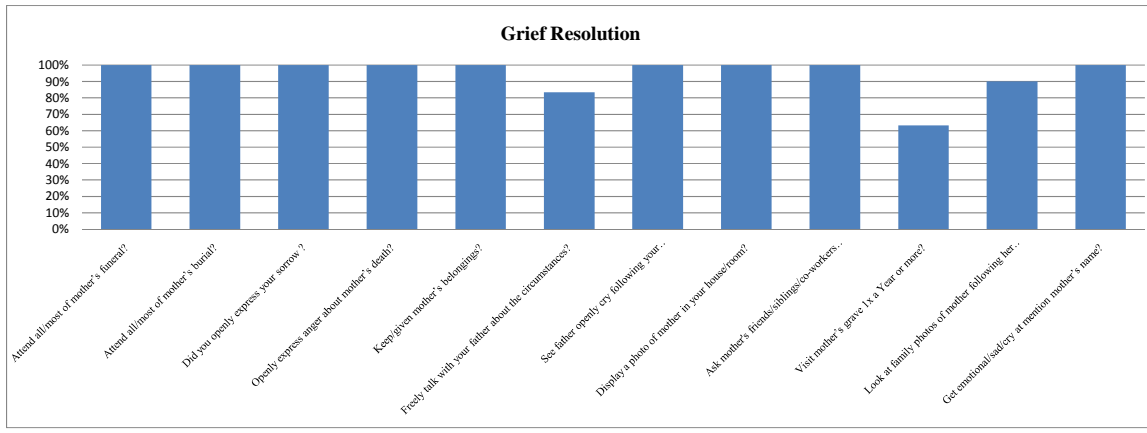


## RELATIONSHIP WITH MOTHER INVENTORY

|                          |                 |      |
|--------------------------|-----------------|------|
| Depend on Mothers Advice | Always          | 87%  |
|                          | Often           | 13%  |
| Emulate Mother           | Great Deal      | 97%  |
|                          | Somewhat        | 3%   |
| Harmonious Relationship  | Yes             | 100% |
|                          | No              | 0%   |
| Felt Important           | Yes             | 100% |
|                          | No              | 0%   |
| Happy with Relationship  | Definitely True | 93%  |
|                          | Mostly True     | 7%   |
| Mutual Respect           | Definitely True | 97%  |
|                          | Mostly True     | 3%   |

## GRIEF RESOLUTION

|  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Did you attend all or most of your mother's funeral?                           | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you attend all or most of your mother's burial?                            | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you openly express your sorrow ?   | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you openly express anger about your mother's death?                        | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you keep or were you given any of your mother's belongings?                | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you freely talk with your father about the circumstances?                  | Y | Y | Y | Y | N | N | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you see your father openly cry in the days following your mother's death?  | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Did you display a photo of your mother in your own house or room?              | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Ask your mother's friends, siblings or co-workers questions about your mother? | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |
| Do you visit your mother's grave 1x a Year or more?                            | Y | N | Y | Y | N | Y | N | Y | Y | N  | N  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | N  | N  | Y  |   |
| Look at family photos of your mother following her death?                      | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | N  | Y  | N  | Y |
| Get emotional, sad or cry at current mention mother's name in conversation?    | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  | Y  |   |



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