The Tricky Transition: Communication in the Mother and Adolescent-Daughter Relationship

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There is a tricky transition that a mother and daughter typically experience within their relationship as daughters mature into adolescents. Daughters go from being the “little baby girl” to a young adult who is striving to find herself. The power and importance of the mother-daughter relationship has been the focus of extensive writing for the last two decades. Adolescence is a time of transformation and reorganization in family relationships. Research literature gives evidence that adolescence is a period of heightened tension between young persons and their parents. The period of pubertal maturation leads to diminished levels of positive interaction and a modest increase in distance in the parent-adolescent relationship. Daughters sometimes feel smothered and resent their mothers over protectiveness because it threatens the autonomy they desire (Penington, 2003). Yet, mothers and adolescent daughters can be close and confide in each other more than other parent-child dyads.

This study begins by summarizing scholarly journals concerning the mother and adolescent-daughter relationship. Aspects such as listening behavior, autonomy and connection, conflict, and how the daughters’ peer groups affect their relationships within the family will be discussed. The personal cases of teen daughters and mothers (seventh grade girls/mothers and junior girls in high school and their mothers) will be examined to see how the scholarly literature and real life stories compare.
Listening is very crucial to any relationship, but listening is one aspect which helps us understand why the mother-daughter bond is so common and strong. According to Brownell (2006), one’s most intense emotions are expressed toward those who are closest to them. The home tends to be the place where someone can let their defenses down and can take frustrations out. Mothers and daughters have the highest amount of mutual disclosure in parent-adolescent family relationships. Mothers serve as their daughters’ first teachers, counselors, and they provide vital sources of material and emotional support. When parents demonstrate a willingness to listen to their child, the child in turn, may demonstrate a willingness to listen in other interpersonal situations (Penington, 2003).

It’s important to limit distractions as mothers and daughters communicate and listen. Parents should be available when their adolescent really needs to talk. Dr. Penington suggests that the most common places for mothers and daughters to talk occur within the car, the bedroom, and the kitchen (Penington, 2003). In these settings, daughters are more free and apt to talk. Barker and Watson (2000), for example, referred to an article in USA Today which documented the effectiveness of car chats between parents and teenagers. The article provided evidence that talking while in the car was helpful when it came to discussing sensitive subjects like sex and drugs. The reason this is effective is due to the fact that teens are able to look straight forward and feel less awkward, as opposed to a face to face interaction across from a kitchen table. Car time is important because parents have fewer distractions. However, it is also in the car (such as
car-pools), where parents can eaves drop on their teens conversations with their peers, and gain some knowledge about what is going on in their adolescent’s life (Barker & Watson, 2000).

Due to personalities, values, opinions, attitudes, past-goals, and events; mothers and daughters bring different meaning into their interactions. Thus, they hold different perceptions of listening behavior within the relationship. Mothers and daughters who have experienced emotional, expressive, and stressful conflict during a period of intense personal changes are more likely to have more positive views among the relationship (Penington, 2003). Daughters usually see their mothers to be better listeners than themselves. Poor listening on a mother’s part can result in the daughter closing herself off to her mother, and becoming unwilling to self-disclose at all. Daughters admit to pseudo listening (fake listening) when their mothers are talking to them. Teens tend to tune into distractions and act like they are listening. In doing so it’s evident that they listen only when they want to listen. As mothers listen to their daughters, it’s crucial to read between the lines and notice the non-verbal cues. Daughters are willing to listen, but often hesitant to talk as they learn they have the freedom to share a lot or nothing at all. Mothers need to realize that they should not force conversations, yet still ask questions (Penington, 2003).

**Disclosure**

To maintain close, personal relationships, the ability to develop a supportive (rather than a defensive) climate is crucial. When put in a supportive environment people are more likely to open up than they would set in a defensive climate. Mothers and daughters have the closest bond, and it’s typically because they interact on a regular basis
and within time share personal information about themselves. Dilemmas arise within the parent-child relationship because parents face the challenge of having to choose between whether or not to give their children free and candid interaction or respectful and quiet interaction. With being candid there is free expression and a close relationship can be formed, but it can also result in being disrespected at times. Respectful and quiet interactions can be less emotional, can be very uncomfortable, and may not form a close bond. Families grow strong as they struggle through their dilemmas with teens (Ruebush, 1994).

Teens mature as they work though their alternatives with their families. This provides a sense of direction. Adolescents may not really mature in the sense of respecting their parents until they leave for college, leaving their family and what they know behind. Parents want the best for their children and develop into the best adults they can possibly be. This may mean that growing up, the teenagers were not always allowed to roam wild and free. Structure and rules creates a basis and forms direction for the future. When the adolescent is off living their own freedoms, they reflect back to how they were raised and start reflecting upon what their parents truly did for them. After they come to see this, they gain a much deeper respect for their parents (Ruebush, 1994).

*Distance vs. Closeness*

Mothers often get labeled as controlling or bad, but when daughters accuse their mothers of making excessive demands, they avoid their own anger and anxiety. Both mothers and daughters are involved in a struggle which will last for their entire lives.
Mothers need to organize a personal development separate from their children, and daughters need to learn to accept the “woman” in her mother (Mens-Verhulst, 1995).

Dialectal tension is a key factor when explaining the interdependence-autonomy in mother-adolescent relationships. A person wants to be connected to another person and share activities, but they also want their own individuality and separateness. According to Brownell (2000), one learns styles of attachment from parents, and these typically will remain the same throughout the years. A person also has expectations about the quality or closeness of relationships with parents due to societal expectations. For example, mass media portrayals of what are good and bad relationships lead to an adolescent daughter’s social comparisons with others who may have better or worse relationships with their parents than what they themselves have.

According to Barker and Watson (2000), teens strive to be independent and often close off communication with authority figures, such as parents. Adolescent daughters provoke arguments as a way of connecting and distancing themselves at the same time. Daughters struggle with the love for their mothers and their desire to be different from their mothers (Penington, 2003). The daughter remains an extension of the mother’s self. The daughter must separate her representation of the self from that of the mother. The mother must also do the same. A mother’s ability to relate to their daughter empathically, rather than through identification, enhances and facilitates the adolescent refinement of separation-identification. As a result, this allows for a healthy transition to the adult world (Ruebush, 1994).

A study was performed by Van-Wel (1994) from the University of Utrecht. It analyzed the bond between youth and parents (ages 12-20 years old). The relations
between youth and parents that was seen, was that a quarter of participants distanced themselves from their parents’ opinions, criticisms, or approach to childrearing. The youth were most critical of the tastes and lifestyles of their parents. Two-fifths felt that they didn’t share their parent’s tastes, and about thirty-seven percent failed to see their parent’s lifestyle as an example they wanted to follow. Only twelve percent of youth experienced weak to very weak bonds with their parents. Thirty-six percent enjoyed strong to very strong bonds, and the other fifty-one percent were intermediate in their position. Parental bond scores were significantly higher among the youth in early ages (12-14 years old) as opposed to older ages (15-20 years of age). Another vital part to this study was seeing that relations are currently based less on authority than on negotiation. Youths are raised more freely than in the past. This may explain weak ties among mothers and daughters because daughters tend to orient themselves more strongly to their best same-sex friend. Teens seem to be closest to their best friends, but parents still appear to exert a great deal of influence on their children (Van-Wel, 1994).

As adolescents seek to break away and establish their own lives, their peer groups help them to form close relationships and help them gain a sense of security. This also enables them to perceive their own and other’s personhood. In the context of close relationships within the family, the adolescent may learn crucial skills that are central for successful peer relations. Adolescents learn to recognize and produce emotional cues and regulate emotional arousal. Parents monitor, supervise, or intervene in teen’s ongoing interactions with peers (Shulman, 2001). In other words, they teach their kids how to establish relationships with other people by the way of their own parenting style.
Parents may try to control their children in order to establish family stability and protecting the family name. By giving children too much freedom, teens tend to become confused, may engage in rebellious acts, or experience the feeling of alienation. It is not a matter of parents not trusting their adolescent children, but rather encouraging responsibilities and still being there when teens do make mistakes. Teens do make mistakes and need the competence that develops with experience (Duvall, 1965).

Teens pride themselves on independence but still see their mothers as important confidants who provide advice, support, and encouragement. Even as teenagers grow and mature, there is a constant connectedness to parents as adolescents move toward and establish autonomy. Adolescents do not suddenly move away from parental influence into making decisions all by themselves (Penington, 2004). Autonomy differs for both mothers and daughters. For mothers, their autonomy includes their work, school, volunteer time, activities with friends, or other family members. For daughters, their autonomy consists of school, music, theater, sports, and friends (activities encouraged to have daughters grow from their outside experience). Although separate activities are embraced, their time together (regardless of activity), are welcomed as opportunities to develop a stronger bond. Mothers and daughters act like friends but more than often do not label one another as such. Typically, mothers do not like taking on the “best friend” label because it undermines the parental role. Although adolescent teen daughters tend to be more verbally assertive, they still understand their mothers are in charge (Penington, 2004).
Conflict

Conflict is inevitable in any relationship, especially those in families. Family life characterized by conflict, low cohesion, and low respect for individuality will push the adolescents to look for compensatory close relationships to compensate for the decrease in closeness of family. Starting from early adolescence, extensive changes in parent-child relationships are witnessed. There is a decrease in frequency of parent-child interaction and shifts in the focus of these interactions (Shulman, 2001). Parents need to recognize that they are the trustees of their children, not their owners. The problem of communication between parents and teenagers is crucial for both parties. Arguments between parents and teens reflect dissatisfaction and emotional distress. According to Trish (1991), fifteen to twenty percent of adolescents have a serious conflict with their parents. Sixty to seventy percent of adolescents disagree with their parents. The common categories that bought up disagreements include clothing, schoolwork, chores, disobedience, and general irritations. However there are large discrepancies between perceptions of parents and teens regarding conflicts. Adolescents tend to over estimate negative features of families, and more conflict with mothers than what mothers tend to perceive (Trish, 1991).

Conflict between adolescents and their parents is an ongoing process of negotiation during a transitional stage of their relationship. Teens tend to exaggerate their differences from their parents while their parents seem to underestimate their difference in values (Fischer, 1981). Conflict arises when there is disobeying, ignoring, and sarcasm. “The relationship between a mother and daughter may be viewed as having a “life cycle” which is marked by several periods of transition, including the daughter’s
adolescent years, the daughter’s transitions to marriage and motherhood, and the mother’s old age and infirmity. All these periods may be characterized as transitional in that they bring a more or less sudden major change in state not just for mothers and daughters as individuals, but also for their relationship” (Fischer, 1981). Adolescents seek to break away and establish their own independence while their parents strive for a sense of continuity and connectiveness with them.

Given this research on mothers and adolescent daughters, I developed the following research question: How do the dialectical tensions of openness and closedness and autonomy-connection, play out in the relationship of mothers and daughters?

**Methodology**

This research was qualitative in that it asked for the participants’ descriptions of their mother-daughter relationship. The participants of the focus groups were invited to participate and consented to being recorded. There were a total of four focus groups. One focus group consisted of seventh grade daughters, another one consisted of the seventh grade mothers. The third group was made up of sophomores and juniors in high school. The final focus group was comprised of their mothers. Both groups were recorded (with consent) and were asked the same questions concerning their relationships (see appendices A and B). I transcribed the audio tapes. The transcripts were then analyzed to discover how the dialectical tensions impacted the mother and adolescent daughter relationship.

**Results and Discussion**

The result will be presented using the two dialectical tensions identified and explained earlier: openness and closedness and autonomy and connection. Excerpts
from the focus groups will be used to illustrate how these factors “played out” in the mother-adolescent daughter relationship.

**Openness/Closedness: Seventh Grade Daughter/Mother Focus Groups**

The openness/closedness dialectal tension focuses on the amount of self disclosure in a relationship. In the seventh grade mother-daughter focus groups that were analyzed, the daughters might try to self disclose, but hated it when their mothers don’t listen because they’re working on bills or on the phone. “Sometimes I will be talking to my mom and she’ll be adding up bills or she’s reading at night and I’m talking to her, I’ll ask her something, and it just seems like she’s too busy.” Thus, daughters may be attempting to open up, but if they’re being ignored it may lead to them closing themselves off because they feel that their mothers are too busy. However, when they do listen, they give great advice and made the daughters feel better. “I think my mom listens well and then she gives me good advice and I just feel better because I told her.” When mothers are willing to listen and engage with their daughters, it will lead to more openness through disclosure.

Mothers listening seemed to promote even more openness in daughters. Times that the teen daughters felt the closest to their mothers was in the car when they would talk, as they both got ready to prepare dinner, and when sharing a common interest in a television show. “Me and my mom go in the car and we just talk about everything that’s going on like in school, and with friends, and boys, but if I have a question or something I feel that in the car there’s so much time to ask questions and talk about life.” The car is a place where distractions are limited and more openness is shared. The daughters claimed that the most common time to talk was after school, dinner, before bed, and
again, the car. “Sometimes at night my brother will be with friends and my dad won’t be home from work yet, and I’ll help her get ready for dinner or bake cookies. We just talk a lot when we do that.” The mothers felt closest to their daughters when they would approach them to talk. “I feel close to my daughter when she approaches me to talk, like if something happened at school she asks me what I would have done in that situation. It’s just her needing me that’s neat.” When daughters approach their mothers, they show they are being open and the closer they become. They said it’s nice to be needed and to give advice. The mothers also made the comment that it’s nice when it was just the two of them, either in the car or before bed. “We talk after school, and sitting down for dinner is great because we always have a time to talk. We also watch the same soap opera that we both like that connects us.” Common interests and one-on-one time enhances disclosure and openness. “At night time we talk when we’re cleaning up or eating dinner, I think when we get away by ourselves and it’s just us, we are close. When I put my kids to bed we just chat and it’s just a good way to share the end of the day.” Spending time together and talking to one another brings openness into the mother-daughter relationship.

Daughters can also be closed or quiet with mothers. The focus group of seventh grade mothers realized that the daughters wanted some alone time just to relax after school, but mothers still will ask their daughters about how their day at school went. “I noticed with my daughter that she needs to let some steam out after school, so if I just let it go she makes a transition and is fine. If I tried to argue with her it’s a bad idea.” Adolescents need some space at the end of their day. This is a tension between wanting to be separated from their mothers and be their own person. Sometimes daughters will
not come to their mothers, but let their problems by being silent. “My daughter just started her period and she didn’t come to me the first day and waited a day and it sort of hurt me because she tried to handle it by her own.” Daughters may try to be independent and learn things by doing it themselves. They may feel they are old enough to take on certain responsibilities and no longer need their mothers. Also, there are certain subjects that daughters will go to their friends with before their mothers, such as, the boy situation or if something bad occurs that they don’t feel comfortable telling their mothers.

“Sometimes if something bad happens or something, sometimes its easier to go to friends because they know who you’re talking about and your parents don’t really understand and understand why it’s a problem.” This tension shows that adolescent daughters are more likely to disclose to their peers than their parents about certain areas of their life.

**Autonomy/Connection: Seventh Grade Daughter/Mother Focus Groups**

By talking to one another, mothers and daughters connect. When a daughter is open in conversation with her mom, they both felt more connected. However, when daughters are more closed with their mothers, autonomy is most strong. Autonomy is when a person is independent and their own person. The seventh grade mother-daughter focus group revealed that they are most distant with their mothers during their arguments, and the daughters feel that their mothers usually overreact. “Sometimes I get mad about little things and they just blow up and my mom takes it the wrong way. The other day I came to the room and said yea the wrong way and she accused me of sounding snotty but I didn’t mean it and even if I’m joking she takes it the wrong way.” Adolescent daughters try to separate themselves from their mothers, and really doesn’t understand why their mothers react the way they do sometimes. “My mom doesn’t let me do stuff, like I’m not
old enough like its wrong to do it at certain ages. Like if I wanted to go to McDonalds or a movie she wants to know where I’m at, but it seems like she doesn’t want me to, she’s worried and stuff, but nothing happens. Like I always need someone to walk me home and stuff, please! I just don’t see the point.” Again, adolescent daughters are trying to be their own person, and may not understand why their mothers act the way they do.

They also get angry when they have to do family obligations over things that they would rather be doing at that time. “There was an activity night and I had to miss it because I had to go to a camp place with a group of people, so I was mad at me mom because I had to miss something I wanted to do for what she wanted to do and it wasn’t any fun.” Again, daughters are trying to separate their lives from their mothers. The daughters also were hesitant to admit to looking and acting like their mothers, and listed more differences than similarities. “I don’t think my mom’s like me!” Differences included fighting about clothes due to different tastes, difference of opinions because the daughters felt that their mothers thought they are too young to do things. “My mom doesn’t like know what I like and she doesn’t like the clothes that I like so when we go shopping we always fight about what I do and don’t like.” They also referred to their mothers as worrying too much, and they also said they fight about chores around the house. The mothers discussed how the daughters can be messy at times and it bothers them because of their excellent organization skills. “I’m real neat and my daughters room is just a mess, total disaster, she’s not organized at all and I am so organized. She loves to be socially involved outside of the home, and I am more of a family kind of person.” Another difference that mothers reported about their daughters was the
vocabulary that they use, such as “duh” or “whatever.” Along with this would include the “sass” that the young adolescent exhibits.

“She swears she didn’t say something and if I just say that if she did something wrong and I say its okay she makes a mountain out of a molehill, so she reads what I say wrong and then gets so mad. It’s just a battle. It’s the hardest thing for us, I just make her think about it and she gets so sassy with me. It’s getting hard. And the language they use like duh or stupid idiot, there is just a language barrier.”

Adolescent daughters try to separate themselves from their mothers, and the language barrier between the two of them is a sign of autonomy. The mothers also said it was impossible to show their daughters anything because they felt their way was better.

“I can’t show her anything, it’s just impossible she just doesn’t take directions and it’s frustrating. She will take directions from teachers and stuff.” Adolescent daughters pride themselves on being their own person, so if their mother steps in and tries to fix their ways, then they adolescents may feel that their independence is in threat. The mothers also found most arguments stemming from chores, clothing, and hair.

**Summary: Seventh Grade Daughter/Mother Focus Groups**

The seventh grade mother-daughter focus group realized the changes that occurred from elementary school to teenage years. There is more to talk about with their moms because they are much more involved in life, and they feel closer to their mothers now because they go more places and do more things. There are more disagreements now also, however, due to the fact that they want to do more, and they wouldn’t always get their way. However, coming from the mother’s point of view, it wasn’t her daughter that she didn’t trust; it was the environment and her being all alone. Teenagers tend to not understand the intentions behind their mother’s actions. The teens think their mothers
are “out to get them,” but in reality they are just trying to look out for their daughter’s best interest.

The seventh grade mother-daughter focus group made reference to what it was like when the mothers were teenagers. Surprisingly, they all tended to be wild, rebellious, and never had close relationships with their mothers. Therefore, their autonomy seemed to be highlighted. This is probably why some of these women were stricter because they didn’t want their daughters to rebel. Mothers also try to be more open with their daughters as well because they never were pushed by or shared things with their parents.

“My mother never asked me about school, or pushed me or anything. But whatever my mom did tell me, like don’t do this, I just went and did the complete opposite. I think I just wanted to show her that there was nothing wrong with it. I don’t know we just didn’t care much about our relationship.” This too is a prime example of autonomy, but there is little openness and connection talked about.

Mothers stated that it’s hard to be a good parent all of the time because of their hectic lifestyle. They learn from mistakes (good and bad days), they try to manage time, and after a long day at work they come home to having to tolerate the children.

“I live such a hectic lifestyle and I take one day at a time. You learn from your mistakes and hope the next day goes better. I mean I have my good and horrible days with my kids but hopefully I learn from the situations. In today’s society it’s just hard to get together and do the kinds of things you want to do because of time.”

However, the daughters realized that it may be hard to be the perfect parent because they (teens) can be sassy, their mothers have a lot of responsibilities with their careers and the house demands.

“Sometimes I act like a jerk because sometimes I’m tired or something and I may not even mean it but I’m just tired and mad. Moms also have a lot of responsibility like
their job and money and then they have to come home and take care of us, and then deal with the fights.”

Openness/Closedness: High School Daughter/Mother Focus Group

The focus group of the high school daughters had slightly different attitudes about communicating with moms when compared to the seventh grade daughters. These girls felt more comfortable telling there mothers almost anything. They were comfortable going to their mothers. A main issue that came up that they were very comfortable with was their intimate relationships and birth control.

“A lot of my friends went behind their mother’s backs and went to planned parenthood by themselves, but I didn’t want to hide this from my mom, and we have the sort of relationship where I felt comfortable going to her. It was stressful but it felt good to go to her.”

The high school girls felt that some of their mothers were actually one of their best friends, and if they did fight, it was discussed as mature adults. “In middle school I thought my mom was so mean when she wouldn’t let me do things, however, I noticed if I actually talk with my mom instead of throwing a fit, the solutions are much better.” The girls in high school realized that they had responsibilities and respected their mothers at a high level. They still had disputes with their mothers, but were mature enough to put themselves in their mother’s shoes and see both sides.

Autonomy/Connection: High School Daughter/Mother Focus Group

Autonomy and connection differed from the seventh graders. High school girls seemed to learn some important lessons about getting along with their mothers through the middle school years and early years of high school. Among the high school focus group, the girls felt that their mothers could be unreasonable at times when it came to things such as driving the car with friends, curfews, going to school events as well as
outside of school events, chores, and clothing as well. “All my friends have curfews that are later than me and it drives me nuts, and my mom just says it’s for your own good.” The daughters felt that their mothers were being unreasonable and not allowing them to be their own person, and do their own thing. “I usually have to do house chores before I want to go to sporting event or something and it annoys me sometimes.” These girls realized that if they reacted in a negative way to their mother’s decisions, then they would have less of a chance for the next time. Thus, they tried to be mature about the situation in hopes that their mothers saw maturity in them. “I use to cry if they wouldn’t let me go somewhere with the car, and my mom would get mad at me, then I realized if I acted mature and just said okay, then they would see I was mature and let me have more lead way.” The mothers of this group talked about how their daughters use to pout if they didn’t get their way, but once they got older and more mature, they realized that if they acted like a child, they would be treated like a child.

Within the focus group, the daughters emphasized how much stress they receive from school due to getting good grades and being involved. They also made the comment that their moms just don’t understand this because when they were in school it was a lot different. This was common for both focus groups. Today’s adolescents face multiple pressures, more than what their parents probably faced. This may be a reason as to why there is a difference of opinions. Teens are given so much responsibility at school, and when they’re accomplishing so much they feel like they’re an adult. However, the parents see their teens as their “little kids,” and may not always be aware of how much weight is actually upon their children’s shoulders.
Connection is being emphasized because daughters will be going away to school. The daughters in this group noted that they felt their relationship was important with their mothers, and most of the time got along with them. The mothers in this focus group felt that their daughters displayed a lot of responsibility for their age, and were sad to think that they would be leaving for college the following year. “I think kids are a lot more stressed and there is so much more competitiveness with high expectations like going to college. The expectation level is so high compared to what it was like when I was growing up.”

Mother and daughters also connected “ritual” type things with their daughters. For example, one mother and daughter went grocery shopping together every Sunday morning which was followed by getting coffee at Starbucks. “I love going grocery shopping with my mom, we go every Sunday morning and it’s fun. Then sometimes we stop for Starbucks Coffee because we both love it!” Simple weekly things like this brought this mother and daughter closer, being very connected by this ritual.

**Summary: High School Daughter/Mother Focus Group**

The high school focus group was very similar with the seventh grade focus group. As teens, some mothers were rebellious and had a poor relationship with their mothers. Many of those mothers shared that they really missed out because of that and made it a promise to always be there for their daughters. Other mothers referred to their mothers as being very “controlling” and “traditional”, however, they felt they had a good relationship with their mothers. All of these mothers were stay at home mothers, which left them spending a lot of time with their daughters all through growing up stages of their lives. The mothers felt that they were very dependable, kind, loving, caring, and
supportive mothers. The daughters said they loved always being able to know that their mothers were at home, and always could come home to them. They also said that they saw their mother most often, therefore they talked the most and were so close.

Conclusions

As one can see the dialectical tensions of openness/closedness and autonomy/connection play a large part in the mother-daughter relationship. The more daughters and mothers disclose to one another, the more open they will be, and this will lead to a better connection. However, sometimes daughters are more likely to go to their peers before their mothers, or they feel they are independent and doesn’t need her mothers support. This will cause a relationship to be separate and closed. Daughters struggle with the love for their mothers and their desire to be different from their mothers. Conflict occurs most often during early adolescence. Conflict and disagreements usually are brought on due to chores, appearance, personal behavior style, homework, school performance, bedtime and curfew, finances, and morality issues (i.e. lying and disobeying). Daughters sometimes feel smothered and resent their mothers over protectiveness because it threatens the autonomy they desire. This can produce conflicts between mothers and daughters. However, mothers use protective tactics because they want their daughters close and safe from harm. However, as teenagers mature and proceed with schooling and life experiences, they gain a deeper respect for their mothers. It is clear to see that although conflict is inevitable not to face conflict within the mother-daughter relationship, both daughters and mothers know that they can depend on one another.
Limitations and Future Study

Results of this study appeared to support what is suggested in scholarly literature (Pennington, 2003, Mens-Verhulst, 1995, and Barker & Watson, 2000). There were some limitations to this study. However, four fairly small focus groups were used so one can not generalize to the entire population based off this study. Also for the focus groups that were conducted, the seventh graders and the high school juniors provided a wide age gap. However, some of the mothers of the high school group were younger than the mothers of the seventh graders. Most of the mothers of the seventh graders had careers where some of the high school mothers stayed at home. That could play a factor with why the high school mother-daughter relationships were so close. Both the high school group and the seventh grade group consisted of a tight group of friends. For example, the high school group of girls all came from the same basketball team and little “clique,” and the seventh grade girls were in the same classes and interested in the same things. To improve future studies there should be more variation in participants, such as age, race, and ethnicity (all focus groups were middle class Europeans).

Another aspect to consider would be to look at different generations of mothers and daughters to see if society impacts mother-daughter relationships at all. Would mothers and teenage daughters in the early 1900’s have the same issues as those in the early part of the century? Clearly, the topic could still use further investigation.
References


Appendices of Questions
(Same questions were asked for both focus groups)

Appendix A: Questions to Adolescent Daughters:

1.) What are some ways that people would look at you and your mother and they would know that your mother-daughter?
2.) Any other way than appearance? Do you share any of the same interests or personality traits?
3.) Are there differences between you and your mothers?
4.) Do you think there are times that your mothers still treat you like little kids, but you think you should be treated differently?
5.) Are there any times that you can think of that you were treated as an adult but you don’t think you deserved that responsibility?
6.) Is there a time you can think of that you felt really close to your mom, a specific time that you felt that your mom was one of the most important people in your life?
7.) Are there times where you feel real distant from your mom?
8.) What I want you to do is think of characteristics that would make the perfect mother, what things come to mind?
9.) Why do you think it’s hard to be the perfect mother?
10.) If you ever become a mother, what kind of mother do you think you will be?
11.) What have you noticed that you and your mom disagree about, has it changed within the years?
12.) If you do have a disagreement, how do you work it out?
13.) When do you and your mom usually talk, like when, where, the time, and what do you usually talk about?
14.) Are there subjects you would rather talk to your friends about rather than your mothers?
15.) Was there a time you felt like you couldn’t tell your mom something?
16.) Is there a time where you felt like your mom wasn’t listening to you?

Appendix B: Questions to Mothers of Adolescent Daughters:

1.) When you think of your daughters, what are some of the interests that the two of you share?
2.) Is there anything like personality traits that you share?
3.) What are some of the ways that you feel different from your daughters or your daughters told you that you two are different?
4.) Can you think of a time that you felt very close to your daughter? As far as having a nice conversation or something?
5.) Has there been a time where you have felt distance between you and your daughter?
6.) Why is it so hard to be the perfect mother, what are some of the problems?
7.) What were you like at your daughter’s age?
8.) Has there been a time where your daughters acted really immature or mature and it just amazed you of her actions?
9.) Do you feel you and your daughters are having more disagreements or less lately?
10.) What are some of the subjects you tend to disagree about more?
11.) In a typical day, what time do you usually get a chance to talk to your daughter?