Through the Portal of Shame:
A Path Toward Self-Love for Fatherless Daughters Living in Patriarchy

by
Jessica N. Garfield-Kabbara

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology

Pacifica Graduate Institute

3 March 2014

I certify that I have read this paper and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a product for the degree of Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

_____
Barbara Boyd, M.A., L.M.F.T.
Faculty Advisor

On behalf of the thesis committee, I accept this paper as partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

_____
Sukey Fontelieu, M.A., L.M.F.T.
Research Associate

On behalf of the Counseling Psychology program, I accept this paper as partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Arts in Counseling Psychology.

_____
Avrom Altman, M.A., L.M.F.T., L.P.C.
Director of Research

Abstract

Through the Portal of Shame:
A Path Toward Self-Love for Fatherless Daughters Living in Patriarchy

by Jessica N. Garfield-Kabbara

This thesis is a heuristic exploration, from a depth psychological perspective, of the relationship between shame and authentic voice for fatherless daughters living in a patriarchal culture. Literature is reviewed related to a definition of shame and understanding its etiology and psychological effects. Through a depth psychological analysis of the author's personal experience of abandonment by her father, the path toward healing shame is revealed as the capacity to be vulnerable enough to tell one's whole story in the presence of a loving and compassionate witness. This profoundly courageous act is what leads a fatherless daughter from a place of a silenced voice in the face of shame to a place of empowerment through sharing her authentic voice and moving toward psychological liberation.

Acknowledgments

Dedication

To all my relations,

you are the birth canal of who I am.

To all the women in my life,

you show me the way more than you could ever know.

To my mother,

thank you for carrying the shadow of patriarchy in the best way you knew how, and for

inspiring me to do the same.

I love you more than infinity, no givebacks.

And, to my father,

you have been one of my greatest teachers and allies through your absence in my life.

Thank you for playing this most difficult role.

Table of Contents

Chapter I
Introduction

The fact that we are here and that I speak these words is an attempt to break that silence and bridge some of those differences betwe'en us, for it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.

Lorde, 2007, p. 42

Area of Interest

This thesis explores the correlation that has been established between young girls whose fathers were either physically, emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually absent and the tendency for the girls to internalize a sense of shame and core identification with a lack of self-worth or value (Leonard, 1982; Murdock, 1990; Reis, 2006). It proposes that in a culture with a history of thousands of years of patriarchal domination, the absence of a father results in lack of mirroring and validation of the daughter's worth. This thesis also proposes that this abandonment produces a sense of being deficient and worthless and this causes a deep internalization of shame. Further, the shame internalized by young girls when abandoned by their fathers brings about a loss of the child's voice, or ability to express her deepest desires, feelings, and dreams. This exploration will also consider the question of how shame affects the formation of self-image and the subsequent access a woman has to her authentic self and true creative power.

When a young girl internalizes shame as a core sense of identity, she quickly learns that it is safer to reject herself than experience rejection from someone in her life (Leonard, 1982). The outer abandonment of the personal father is internalized as an inner

abandonment of the child to herself. The outer abandonment by the personal father is a shaming experience for the child. The child does not have enough differentiated self-awareness yet to understand logically that it is not her fault that her father has left her; the only way the child can comprehend the traumatic experience is to assume she has been left because she is bad rather than the parent who is experienced as godlike.

The egoic structure forms, in part, in response to this profound loss and defense mechanisms begin to crystalize (Bradshaw, 1988). The child learns how to protect herself from further pain and loss by hiding her authentic self because who she really is was rejected, not accepted, and abandoned. This experience is internalized as shameful and wrong. The child believes now that there is something wrong with her innate being; similarly to any other adaptive creature, she instinctively responds to the environment by creating various forms of armoring and false senses of self in order to survive. Among the defensive armors is the cloak of perfectionism. Perfectionism is an ideal armoring for a fatherless daughter in that it defends against the imperfect nature of the child that she believes caused the father to leave.

Perfectionism is also highly regarded in a masculine-dominated society as something to strive for on a daily basis in all areas of one's life, for it is achievement and success that defines one's value and sense of self-worth in patriarchy (Reis, 2006). When one is constantly striving to be perfect, there is no room for vulnerability or hard feelings like being scared, angry, sad, or jealous. There is no room for mistakes, taking chances, being creative, play, and wild abandon. There is only time to work, achieve, and be better than everyone else. There is no time to suffer, feel pain, grieve, or mourn loss. There is no time for the body, love, art, or music. There is no time to be, to see, or to be seen.

When the father is physically absent the tendency for the child to constellate an inner father as an archetypal father figure becomes a magnified caricature in the child's inner world (Reis, 2006). In the absence of the human father the void is filled with a larger than life and often impersonal presence. The impersonal father is both idealized in a godlike way carrying great powers and feared for his condemning and scrutinizing gaze that is always looking down upon the child. An actual father is fallible, has a shadow, makes mistakes, and is human with all types of qualities and characteristics. The impersonal father often only has one face with which the child learns quickly to become identified in order to avoid the archetypal father's wrath and rejection. At this point he has become an internal aspect of the child that fundamentally rejects her as unholy and bad. The shame that can haunt a young girl's life in the wake of the father's abandonment can have devastating implications for her relationships and her psychological well-being.

Guiding Purpose and Rationale

The emotion of shame prohibits human beings from feeling deeply connected to themselves and the world around them. Shame is the root of feeling alienated, isolated, and cut off from family, friends, community, spirituality, and the world at large. It is also at the core of loss of meaning and purpose in one's life (Welwood, 2005, p. 11). According to psychologist John Bradshaw (1988) shame is the source of all addictions and compulsive behaviors (p. 35). This experience of fundamental disconnection blocks access to one's creative potential, true desires, and a sense of love and belonging—central tenets of human existence. When one feels unworthy of belonging the psyche or sense of self fragments and becomes disjointed (p. 31). In shame the impulse is to silence and hide (Brown, 2012b, lecture).

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a deeper examination, from a depth psychological and feminist perspective, of shame in the life of a daughter abandoned by her father within a patriarchal context. Both the specific focus on the daughter-father relationship in which the undeveloped feminine is abandoned by the older masculine, and its analysis from a feminine psychological perspective, are important to the role of psychology in helping both clients and culture move toward greater wholeness.

The central path for people to begin to change their behavior in life is through empathic mirroring (Rowe & MacIsaac, 1998). Empathy is one of humanity's greatest allies in the revolution from disconnection to connection. The values of patriarchy, however, do not foster empathic attunement and mirroring, vulnerability, and interdependence, but rather emphasize the individual over the whole, value homogeny over plurality and difference, and logical linear rational thought over feelings, emotions, empathy, and intuitive sensing. In that Western culture is patriarchal, structures of power and domination are wired into Western culture's way of thinking, language, and modes of relating intrapersonally, interpersonally, and transpersonally. This discourages the compassion and human connection that is the basis of human beings coexisting in a creative way together on this planet. A recoding of these power structures needs to be the task of humanity today. This is an area in which the feminine, individually and collectively, once freed of shame, can contribute something of great value.

Patriarchal principles that tend to measure one's worth based upon masculine qualities and values of rational, linear, and logical thinking, as well as achievement, autonomy, and radical self-reliance often have the effect of denigrating feminine principals such as emotions, the body, intuitive knowing, nonlinear thinking, the

imagination, and interdependence (Reis, 2006; Woodman, 1985). As revisioned and reframed by feminist depth psychotherapist Maureen Murdock (1990), in her book *The Heroine's Journey*, a women's quest in the world, given the current condition of Western culture,

> is to heal the split that tells us that our knowings, wishes, and desires are not as important nor as valid as those of the dominant male culture. Our task is to heal the internal split that tells us to override the feelings, intuition, and dream images that inform us of the truth of life to hold the tension of not knowing the answers, and the willingness to listen to our inner wisdom and the wisdom of the planet, which begs for change. (p. 11)

The task at hand during this time of the world's unprecedented ecological, spiritual, and existential crisis of meaning is for women to heal their inner split, and to reclaim their authentic feelings, desires, visions, and dreams in order to be taken into consideration and listened to by the culture at large. The shame that stifles women's creativity as fatherless daughters living in a patriarchal culture must be healed in order to access the eros or creative power that lies hidden in each woman and between all persons. If one is prevented from connection and avoids being truly seen due to shame then shame is not only a destructive force in the psyche, but is also the gatekeeper that blocks one's creative potential and ability to truly love. The only way to cross the threshold is by learning how to be safely vulnerable (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a).

It is in the shared temenos, the sacred container or vessel, of eros, the circulation of love and creativity between people, that true healing begins. This thesis explores the need for a deeper psychological move than empathic mirroring in the reintegration of deeply shamed and split-off authentic feminine. More than witnessing is required to heal shame and peoples' sense of being disconnected: Consciously engaging with the

unconscious in the temenos of eros is needed to give people back their sense of self in a deeper and richer way than before.

One of the main tenets of this thesis is that the only way to heal the relational wounds exacerbated by the values of patriarchy is to reclaim the disavowed aspects of humanity. The key to humanity's future and the success of the species lies in the space between people, and this requires radical interdependence through self-love and acceptance in order to truly love and accept others and the differences that allow the unimaginable complexity and diversity of life that is needed for the thriving of any species. When a person descends into the depths they rediscover who they are, and are no longer solely defined by a cultural construct, but by their soul's deepest inner knowing. Healing patriarchy is about healing a relational wound of disconnection, the disconnection from divine nature. In this severance, human beings tend to forget that they are an integral part of the web of being, not separate and meaningless but wholly meaningful and deeply connected. In patriarchy, a woman's story is narrated by a male-dominated paradigm that dictates that the masculine subjective experience is the objective truth by which all is measured and valued. This thesis takes the position that it is an ethical imperative for each person to be free to tell his or her story and to listen to each story from a place of love, compassion, and understanding. Speaking and listening from a place of raw vulnerability and truth is erotic, in other words, creative and connecting. Such deep listening may finally end mass genocide and homogenization of the soul on this planet.

The goal of this thesis is to contribute to understanding the nature of and how to heal the shame that splits off the feminine self when a father abandons a daughter. This

shaming is a microcosm of the patriarchal abandonment and shaming of feminine values

at the collective level. As such, this thesis is committed to the role of psychotherapy in

cultural change: It seeks to bring about a time when a woman needs no longer to be in

search of approval from her father, personal or collective, a time when a woman no

longer needs to look for validation by living a life that fits a mold that is not her own and

no longer adheres to the standards of a male-dominated society that is destroying this

planet, the people on it, and humanity's future. Women must lead the way, for no man

can give a woman her identity, and this is what this quest of self-discovery and self-love

is about, the reclamation of a woman's self.

Research Problem and Questions

This thesis responds to the need for psychological research from a feminist depth

perspective, and in a woman's voice. Liberating a woman's voice and power means

breaking the bonds that tie her to her inner and outer imprisonment, risking being rejected

by her patriarchal society. A woman who has lost her voice and power to the patriarchal

values either risks being rejected by a culture that has already made her inferior or signs

up for a life in which she is dead to herself and the world. This means that women will

have to liberate themselves. As the feminist psychologist Patricia Reis (2006) wrote,

> Many women have a desire to write but feel they cannot find their voice. Finding
> one's voice, written or spoken, is central to establishing a woman's sense of self
> and is at the core of some our most mutinous and subversive relations with men.
> A compliant, dutiful daughter and wife does not speak or write her own mind.
> Instead, she serves the ones who own the language. (pp. 167-168)

The field of psychology is replete with literature written from a masculine perspective

using psychological constructs and referring to experiences that are assumed to apply

across genders. This thesis models for the field and for the women who enter it, a female

voice from a feminine perspective on lived female experience. The guiding research questions are these: How does a fatherless daughter living in a patriarchal culture experience shame around her self-worth and value as a woman? How do fatherless daughters heal this shame in order to give voice and radical self-expression to their own subjective truths that do not align necessarily with the values of a male-dominated society?

Research Methodology

A heuristic approach was used as a framework of this thesis. Humanistic psychologist Clark Moustakas (1990) described heuristic research as

> a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand oneself and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance. (p. 15)

My research question is one of the deepest personal challenges of my life in understanding who I am, where I come from, and how my sense of identity fits into this world. This thesis is autobiographic: My sole intention is to be structurally transformed through researching how shame has shaped who I am as a fatherless daughter living in a patriarchal culture by coming to a place of greater self-acceptance, understanding, and most of all love. I have tremendous shame around my voice; the only way I knew how to get to a place to be able to write this thesis was to study and analyze how and why I have shame around sharing my story, ideas, and reflections in written form. This thesis is a personal journey of lived self-analysis that perhaps may have universal significance that may serve other fatherless daughters in finding their authentic voices. All persons mentioned in my story have given me written consent to include them.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter II reviews existing literature that has offered definitions of shame and has discussed its etiology and psychological effects (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a, 2012b; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Welwood, 2005). It further explores research related to how to work with shame, healing it in one's life (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2010, 2012a; Sullivan, 1989). It also provides a discussion that contextualizes women's experience of shame within patriarchal culture (Gilligan, 1982; Lorde, 2007; Murdock, 1990; Reis, 2006; Tarnas, 2006). Working from a depth psychological perspective, Chapter III is a heuristic analysis of shame as it relates to my experience as a fatherless daughter living in patriarchy and its healing through the process of sharing my story. Chapter III also includes reflections on the clinical applications of my findings in working with shame. Finally, Chapter IV gives a brief summary of what was explored in this thesis, concluding thoughts, and suggestions for further research.

<center>**Chapter II**
Review of the Literature</center>

Introduction

In service to granting access to qualities, desires, visions, and intuitive sensing

split off into the unconscious by shame, it seems one must inquire into the nature of

shame from a psychological perspective—what it is, how one gets it, how it operates in

the psyche, the effects it has on one's inner and outer life, and how to heal it. Exploring

the phenomenology of shame, throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, has been one of the

core endeavors of psychoanalysis and depth psychology (Tangney & Dearing, 2002,

pp. 12-13). Symptomatically, shame reveals itself in all forms of addiction and

compulsive behaviors, as the source of substance abuse and dependence, eating disorders,

obsessive-compulsive disorder, perfectionism, bullying, violence, and sexual abuse

(Bradshaw, 1988, p. 35; Brown, 2012a, p. 73). Shame is one of the most excruciatingly

uncomfortable states of being, and it is extremely difficult to be in contact with one's

shame without going into a defensive and reactionary impulse in an attempt to not feel

the shameful vulnerability and fallibility of one's existence (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 34).

Shame is a universal human experience; the only people who do not experience

shame are sociopaths who are incapable of feeling empathy for another person (Brown,

2012a, p. 68). According to the research of psychologists, June Price Tangney and Ronda

L. Dearing (2002), shame serves a necessary relational function as it informs human

beings in their moral evolution: "Shame and guilt are thus both 'self-conscious' and

'moral' emotions: self-conscious in that they involve the self evaluating the self, and

moral in that they presumably play a key role in fostering moral behavior" (p. 2).

Defining Shame

There has been debate and confusion within the field of psychology on whether or

not shame is a healthy or unhealthy emotional state and whether it can serve a positive

function in peoples' lives. Bradshaw (1988) explained that the preverbal origins of shame

make it difficult to define and that it is "a healthy human feeling that can become a true

sickness of the soul" (p. 5). He defined the difference between healthy and unhealthy or

"toxic shame" (p. 5), the debilitating force in the psyche that is the focus of this thesis.

> Just as there are two kinds of cholesterol, HDL (healthy) and LDL (toxic), so also
> are there two forms of shame: innate shame and toxic/life-destroying shame.
> When shame is toxic, it is an excruciatingly internal experience of unexpected
> exposure. It is a deep cut felt primarily from the inside. It divides us from
> ourselves and from others. When our feeling of shame becomes toxic shame, we
> disown ourselves. And this disowning demands a cover-up. Toxic shame parades
> in many garbs and get-ups. It loves darkness and secretiveness. (p. 5)

For over a decade researcher and social worker Brene Brown (2012a) interviewed

thousands of people about connection and belonging and discovered that there is a direct

correlation between feeling disconnected and shame. Brown, from her research, defined

shame as arising from the human instinctual need for love and belonging and the fear of

loss of connection if we do not fulfill the expectations of others.

> First, shame is the fear of disconnection. We are psychologically, emotionally,
> cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging.
> Connection, along with love and belonging (two expressions of connection), is
> why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives. Shame is
> the fear of disconnection—it's the fear that something we've done or failed to do,
> an ideal that we've not lived up to, or a goal that we've not accomplished makes
> us unworthy of connection. …I'm unlovable. I don't belong. Here's the definition
> of shame that emerged from my research:
> *Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are*
> *flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.* (p. 69)

Most simply put, shame, as Brown described it, results from the experience of being rejected, abandoned, or in some other manner excluded from love. Feeling loved is as essential and vital to living as food and shelter (Lewis et al., 2000, p. 70). Shame is what creates disconnection and disconnection is antithetical to human experience because human beings are here for connection and belonging (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a).

The reason shame is such a powerful emotion is that when human beings feel a sense of disconnection it literally threatens their survival, since human beings, as a species that is formed out of interdependence, are wholly dependent on one another for survival beginning from the moment of birth through the moment of death (Bradshaw, 1988). The research has shown that toxic shame, shame that causes one to disown oneself (Bradshaw, 1988) leading to a profound lack of self-worth (Brown, 2012a), is a dangerous emotion that is at the root of highly self-destructive behaviors like addiction, violence, and depression, and does not lead to any helpful results of positive behavior or productive solutions (Brown, 2012a, p. 73).

In discussing shame it is also important to distinguish here the difference between shame and guilt. The emotion of guilt is not comprised of identification with being wrong or bad, but rather is the self-reflective recognition of a negative behavior or action (Brown, 2012a, p. 72; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Guilt is the ability to acknowledge and own when one has done something hurtful to oneself or another or when one has not followed through in embodying core values.

The Etiology of Shame

The source of trauma and subsequent shame is a relational wound that runs deep, manifesting when a break or schism happens in the relationship between two or more

people (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 31; Brown, 2012a, p. 52). Bradshaw (1988) described how

shame occurs when a child looses the mirroring of a caregiver through abandonment by

an emotionally or physically absent parent.

> Shame is internalized when one is abandoned. Abandonment is the precise term to
> describe how one loses one's authentic self and ceases to exist psychologically.
> Children cannot know who they are without reflective mirrors. Mirroring is done
> by one's primary caregivers and is crucial in the first years in life. Abandonment
> includes the loss of mirroring. Parents who are shut down emotionally (all shame-
> based parents) cannot mirror and affirm their children's emotions. (p. 31)

Every individual has a version of being abandoned at some point in his or her life,

whether physically, emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually, by another person. Being

abandoned has the potential to leave a very deep and scathing wound when left untreated.

Bradshaw (1988) contended that "all forms of child abuse are abandonment.

When parents abuse children the abuse is about the parent's issues and not the child's.

This is why it is abuse" (p. 71). Bradshaw delineated why abuse is abandonment and why

children tend to make the abuse their fault:

> Abuse is abandonment because when children are abused, no one is there for
> them. What's happening is purportedly for the child's own good. But it isn't about
> the child at all; it's all about the parent. Such transactions are crazy-making and
> induce shame. In each act of abuse the child is shamed. Young children, because
> of their egocentricism, make themselves responsible for the abuse. (p. 71)

When children's needs are neglected they tend to interpret this interaction as a

result of there being something wrong with them, and that they are not worthy of care and

attention; that they lack intrinsic value (Bradshaw, 1988). This leads to a whole host of

dependency issues, causing children to believe that they have no right to depend on

anyone, they do not matter, and that they are too much to handle. The child begins to shut

down and repress his or her emotional, physical, and psychological needs. This

overpowering sense of disconnection from love arises out of not being seen, accepted,

and wholly embraced by one's family of origin creating a sense of shame or what the psychologist John Welwood (2005) termed "unlove" (p. 9).

In the feeling of being disconnected or unloved, a person's survival is threatened interpersonally, intrapsychically, and transpersonally, on a psycho-spiritual level, because human beings are both individually and collectively wholly dependent on one another for existing in this world (Bradshaw, 1988). "Although this love-wound grows out of childhood conditioning, it becomes in time a much larger spiritual problem—a disconnection from the loving openness that is our very nature" (Welwood, 2005, p. 11). As seen in Brown (2012a), human beings are hardwired for belonging and connection, and when this primal need is challenged in any way the volcanic and terrifying emotion that accompanies it is shame. The crucial importance of being lovingly mirrored in developing health rather than toxic shame was expressed by object relations theorist Donald Winnicott when he voiced, "I am seen, so I exist" (as cited in Sullivan, 1989, p. 102). Being truly seen gives one a necessary sense of psychosocial existence.

For over 30 years psychologist and cofounder of emotionally focused couples therapy Sue Johnson (2008) explored the cycles of connection and disconnection within the relationships of couples. Johnson pointed toward the necessity of connection from a human evolutionary and biological perspective when she wrote, "Isolation and potential loss of loving connection is coded by the human brain into a primal panic response. This need for safe emotional connection to a few loved ones is wired in by millions of years of evolution" (p. 46). Johnson expressed the inherent vital imperative and necessity for connection with a loved one in light of attachment theory:

> Attachment theory teaches us that our loved one is our shelter in life. When that person is emotionally unavailable or unresponsive, we face being out in the cold,

alone and helpless. We are assailed by emotions—anger, sadness, hurt, and above all, fear. This is not surprising when we remember that fear is our built-in alarm system; it turns on when our survival is threatened. Losing connection with our loved one jeopardizes our sense of security. (p. 30)

Because emotional abandonment by a primary caregiver results in deeply internalized shamed overlaying the anguish of being unseen, alone, and unsafe, when one is unwilling or unable to feel one's shame one closes the heart to oneself and therefore the world (Welwood, 2005, pp. 19-20). Paradoxically, the tragedy of closing one's heart is the pain is locked inside instead of being kept out as intended.

The Psychological Effects of Shame

As discussed by Brown (2012b) and Bradshaw (1988), one way that shame operates in the psyche is that a person begins to believe and feel at the core of his or her being that he or she is unworthy, bad, and primarily flawed. One of the main consequences of believing that one is unworthy and bad is that a person begins to silence his or her voice (Brown, 2012b). In other words, one believes and acts as if what one feels, experiences, or thinks is not important enough to be expressed and shared, let alone valued. One then becomes shut down and split off from self and others. This deep imprinting and template of shutting down tends to become perpetually worse as one develops from childhood into adolescence and then into adulthood (Bradshaw, 1988, pp. 32-33).

People with toxic shame tend to develop strategies, by which they move away from, toward, or against others, to cope with an ongoing fear of abandonment and disconnection that arises from the belief that one is fundamentally flawed and unacceptable (Brown, 2012a). Brown shared the research of another colleague who expressed the different ways that shame operates in people's lives and relationships.

According to Dr. Hartling, in order to deal with shame, some of us *move away* by withdrawing, hiding, silencing ourselves, and keeping secrets. Some of us *move toward* by seeking to appease and please. And some of us *move against* by trying to gain power over others, by being aggressive, and by using shame to fight shame. Most of us use all of these—at different times with different folks for different reasons. Yet all of these strategies move us away from connection—they are strategies for disconnecting from the pain of shame. (pp. 77-78)

Shame-based relational strategies, aimed at protecting a person from re-experiencing shame, end up keeping the shame secreted inside, thereby perpetuating its effects.

As was shown in the research on love conducted by physicians Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon (2000) in their book, *A General Theory of Love,* no human being can exist, let alone thrive, without love and belonging. The "I" is utterly dependent on a "Thou" for survival. If the "I" senses at all that the "Thou" is rejecting it in any way, then the "I" is driven into survival mode. From this place of the fight or flight mechanism, the "I" is forced back into its primal origins as a wholly vulnerable, desperate, and even wounded animal. The "I" will do anything to ensure its survival and to not be left behind. The experience of shame creates desperation for connection and a sense of worthiness. As Brown (2012a) articulated, "When we're hurting, either full of shame or even just feeling the fear of shame, we are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors and to attack or shame others" (p. 73). Whenever one begins to descend into a spiral of shame the likelihood that one will do whatever it takes to get out, including shaming another, dramatically increases, causing even more damage in the wake of one's already destructive behavior.

People learn to adapt to the early wounds and traumatic places within the psyche, and find what protection they can, whether through rage, judgment, blame, withdrawal, or disassociation. This defensive or protective armoring reflects the ways in which people

adapt, doing the best they can with what they have in order to survive and avoid or

tolerate psychological pain. Brown (2012a) put it clearly when she wrote,

> As children we found ways to protect ourselves from vulnerability, from being hurt, diminished, and disappointed. We put on armor; we used our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors as weapons; and we learned how to make ourselves scarce, even to disappear. Now as adults we realize that to live with courage, purpose, and connection—to be the person whom we long to be—we must be vulnerable. We must take off the armor, put down the weapons, show up, and let ourselves be seen. (p. 112)

In shame the impulse is to split-off from and silence the aspects of self that are

perceived to have brought about the disconnection. Shame needs three things to survive

and thrive—secrecy, silence, and judgment (Brown, 2012b). Therefore, the antidote to

shame is to bring into the light what has been hidden and repressed out of fear of

rejection and abandonment. As Brown's (2012a) research revealed,

> If we can share our story with someone who responds with empathy and understanding, shame can't survive. Self-compassion is also critically important, but because shame is a social concept—it happens between people—it also heals best between people. A social wound needs a social balm, and empathy is that balm. Self-compassion is key because when we're able to be gentle with ourselves in the midst of shame, we're more likely to reach out, connect, and experience empathy. (p. 75)

Vulnerability: The Antidote to Shame

If shame needs secrecy and judgment to survive, then the antidote to shame and

the way to begin to heal it is by being vulnerable enough to tell one's story to someone

who can be a compassionate listener and loving witness (Brown, 2012a, p. 82). Because

shame is a social and relational wound, it can only be truly healed through relationship.

> Since it was personal relationships that set up our toxic shame, we need personal relationships to heal our shame. This is crucial. *We must risk reaching out and looking for nonshaming relationships if we are to heal our shame. There is no other way.* Once we are in dialogue and community, we will have further repair work to do. But we can't even begin that work until affiliative relationships are established. (Brown, 2012a, pp. 154-155)

 Affiliative relationships and intimacy can only be established through the courage to be vulnerable, allowing the authentic, inner, but shamed, self to be seen, affirmed, and reintegrated. Because shame splits one off from one's authenticity and inner source of one's life, the vulnerability required to heal it reconnects one with others and with one's own vitality, meaning, and purpose. As Brown (2012a) proclaimed,

> Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path. (p. 34)

Feminine depth psychotherapist and author Barbara Stevens Brown (1989) explained that interpretations of a client's symptoms and insight into his or her psychological reality are not healing. Rather, insights are the by-product and confirmation of "the mutual process of empathic sharing and emotional accompaniment" (p. 89) that led to healing the intrapsychic and interpersonal disconnection. Thus, "Insight is more fruitfully understood as a product of the psyche's healing than it is the cause" (p. 89).

 If things are ever going to change from the purgatorial cycles of pursuing and distancing to a place of connectivity and belonging, then vulnerability is the guardian of the threshold into the realm of experiencing love. There is a curious yet exquisite beauty in vulnerability. As is shown in Brown's (2012a) work it is through being vulnerable to feeling one's shame and sharing it with another that one finds one's way back to oneself and to relationship. It is empathy and connection that makes this move possible. In order to begin to heal shame one must engage in the practice of being vulnerable. First, one must understand the nature of vulnerability and begin to decouple this word with the false belief that to be vulnerable is to be weak. As Brown discussed,

> Vulnerability isn't good or bad: It's not what we call a dark emotion, nor is it always a light, positive experience. Vulnerability is the core of all emotions and feelings. To feel is to be vulnerable. To believe vulnerability is a weakness is to believe that feeling is weakness. To foreclose on our emotional life out of a fear that the costs will be too high is to walk away from the very things that gives purpose and meaning to living. (p. 33)

As Brown (2012a) stated, vulnerability is at the heart of all emotional states, whether experienced as positive or negative. To be human is to be utterly vulnerable. Vulnerability is the courage to expose oneself. The constant armoring against vulnerability in Western culture stems from the association of vulnerability with dark or challenging emotions of "fear, shame, grief, sadness, and disappointment—emotions that we don't want to discuss, even when they profoundly affect the way we live, love, work, and even lead." (p. 33). Brown noted that it was only after a decade of research that she learned that "vulnerability is also the cradle of the emotions and experiences we crave" (p. 33). The human experience includes the entire multivalent spectrum of emotions. As it turns out when, when one blocks oneself from feeling pain and suffering one also becomes blocked from feeling joy and belonging (Brown, 2010).

The etymology of *vulnerability* comes from the Latin word *vulnerare*, meaning "to wound" and "capable of being wounded" (Brown, 2012a, p. 39). *Weakness*, on the other hand, is defined as "the inability to withstand attack or wounding" (p. 39). Vulnerability and weakness, then would seem to be not only contrasting concepts, but also antithetical to one another by their very nature. Given these definitions, one could understand that learning to fear vulnerability, when wounding is associated with abandonment and a belief that one is inherently bad, is psychologically weakening, making one more dependent on defensive and dissociative strategies. On the other hand, the experience of being met empathically and lovingly in the presence of one's

vulnerability would be psychologically strengthening, building resilience and self-confidence.

Vulnerability is the way through the threshold of pain and suffering into connection and intimacy, what humans are hardwired for. Connection occurs when people feel authentically seen, heard, and valued. A sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose are the fruits of connection to others, to self, and to something much larger than one's ego (Brown, 2012a, p. 146). However, intimacy can only truly occur by presenting one's truest, most authentic self, including the more challenging emotional states that most people are afraid to share like shame, fear, sadness, and grief. It is only through deep self-acceptance that one can experience a true sense of intimacy and belonging.

Women's Voices, Shame, and the Patriarchy

Voice is how human beings connect, it is the expression of one's authentic self, and without being heard one does not learn the capacity to hear oneself. It is an ethical imperative, in other words, a vital necessity for people to be able to share their own story and speak for themselves. To have voice is antithetical to the silencing of toxic shame. "To have a voice is to be human. To have something to say is to be a person. But speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act" (Gilligan, 1982, p. xvi). From this perspective, to not be heard, to be emotionally abandoned, is dehumanizing, robbing one of personhood.

Through the work of Carol Gilligan (1982), an American feminist, ethicist, and psychologist, one finds a connection between a woman's individual shame and loss of voice and the neglect and silencing of the feminine voice in the field of psychology. More specifically, Gilligan observed that the dominant and largely unconscious model and

measurement of mental health in the field of psychology is based on male psychological development. It neglects adequate understanding of female psychological development, viewing it from a male perspective. Gilligan, in her research, began to define what voice means from a feminine perspective placing it in the context of connection.

> By voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and also cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. Speaking and listening are a form of psychic breathing. This ongoing relational exchange among people is mediated through language and culture, diversity and plurality. (p. xvi)

To have voice, as Gilligan (1982) conveyed, is to speak and express one's feeling tones, one's inner world, and one's emotional capacities. Voice connects inner and outer; connects a person to themselves, to the world, to others in their lives in a deeply meaningful and revelatory way. The connection between voice and language originates at the mother's breast (Reis, 2006, p. 227). As the baby becomes a child and differentiates from the mother's breast, language develops. Language is the way the child begins to communicate with the mother about its own individual needs and desires as separate from the mother. It is a holy longing for simultaneous connection and differentiation (p. 228).

Historically, there has been a profound fear, on the behalf of women, to speak their truth. As the black feminist lesbian poet Audre Lorde (2007) affirmed, "And of course I am afraid, because the transformation of silence into language and action is an act of self-revelation, and that always seems fraught with danger" (p. 43). Speaking one's voice is an act of self-revelation. And, as has been shown by the research of Brown (2012a, 2012b) and Bradshaw (1988) on shame, to reveal or expose oneself is frightening due to the potential of being utterly rejected. However, as Gilligan (1982) stated, "Relationship requires connection. It depends not only on the capacity for empathy or the

ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view, but also on

having a voice and having a language" (p. xx).

The larger encompassing backdrop to the shame that exists in peoples' lives is a

patriarchal worldview that consciously and unconsciously has dominated and subsumed

the zeitgeist of Western civilization for at least the past several thousands of years (Reis,

2006). Patriarchy is a complex cultural institution that pervades, permeates, and informs

every aspect of contemporary existence. Reis gave voice to one understanding of

patriarchy in quoting Adrienne Rich:

> Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political
> system in which men—by force, direct pressure, or through ritual, tradition, law,
> and language, customs, etiquette, education, and the division of labor, determine
> what part women shall or shall not play, and in which the female is everywhere
> subsumed under male. (As cited in Reis, 2006, p. 11)

In a culture of patriarchy, women are regarded fundamentally as property of men,

as a possession to conquer and control; this includes women's bodies, minds, spirits, and

voices. Women are treated as inferior to men and therefore must submit their will, power,

and authority to men (Murdock, 1990; Reis, 2006). Patriarchy is a cultural institution that

has manifested a rational model of relating structured by male domination, hierarchical

power, and subordination, in which the male experience and perspective is the normative

measure by which all else is valued and judged. Reis (2006) teased out what patriarchy

has come to represent within the collective psyche.

> What is patriarchal thought? It is the "objective," emotionless, "scientific," and
> religious discourse on which Western civilization has been built—the ideas,
> treatises, and laws which imply Truth and claim authority, spoken in a
> paternalistic voice. Patriarchal thought is premised on dualism and separation—
> between women and nature, man and woman, humans and animals, body and
> soul, mind and emotion, matter and spirit. (p. 210)

Within the context of the patriarch, Reis (2006) explained, a woman's internalization of her father creates a powerful inner figure that affects her belief in herself, her capacity for mastery, and the trustworthiness of her perceptions and thinking. The significance of the father's presence and attitude toward her is magnified by "the cultural, institutional, and spiritual father giving the figure of the father, in general, an unnaturally inflated importance and exaggerated significance in our inner and outer lives" (pp. 15-16). For a woman, this complicates "the process of thinking for oneself, finding one's voice, [and] creating authentic work (p. 15).

Worldviews shape the beliefs, values, ideas, modes of relating, epistemologies, and ontologies of entire peoples (Tarnas, 2006). The collective values of any worldview carry into personal and interpersonal relations, noticeably between parents and children. For young girls born into a patriarchal worldview there is the instantaneous devaluing and oppression of that girl's innate human value. In such an atmosphere, a woman speaking in one's authentic voice is difficult if not impossible. Gilligan (1982) noted,

> As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in different voice of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. (p. 173)

Healing the Shame

Part of the shadow of patriarchy is the fervent belief and blind declaration that there is a single mode of experience and interpretation. This means that centuries upon centuries of women's voices being silenced and women being disconnected from their sense of self needs to be grieved. Because of the patriarchal context, and its

internalization by girls in part through the cultural and personal father, this loss and grief

resonates through the shame in which paternally abandoned girls have been trapped.

The need for grieving. Grieving seems to be a central path toward being

liberated from one's own inner imprisonment (Welwood, 2005). One must face and feel

the great losses of other and self, the ways one has been abandoned by other and self in

order to regain a sense of connection and belonging.

> What lies at the core of all grievance is deep pain and grief about loss of connection. Because we have never fully and consciously grieved this hurt, it becomes coagulated in our mind and body. *What we fail to grieve turns into grievance.* To extract the medicine that can heal the poison of grievance, we need to acknowledge and allow this grief, instead of running away from it. This means bringing our grief about loss of connection out of the shadows into the daylight of openness and warmth. (p. 76)

The way through is by feeling and wholeheartedly acknowledging the pain and

suffering of being abandoned and rejected by one's culture and more deeply, by one's

parents who are also a product of the patriarchal culture. To continue to avoid the pain of

abandonment is to perpetuate the very state of isolation, alienation, and despair that lies at

the heart of one's deepest suffering (Welwood, 2005). The way to heal is to unearth and

liberate the feelings of loss of connection that remain in one's psyche and soma in order

for them to be metabolized, and a state of well-being restored. As Welwood described,

the interpersonal loss of the other, such as in the emotional, physical, or psycho-spiritual

abandonment by a parent, often leads to an intrapersonal abandonment of oneself.

> Yet deeper still is the loss of connection with ourselves that happens when we spurn our own hurt, confusion, or despair. This creates inner division and discord that prevent us from fully recognizing our intrinsic beauty and lovability and establishing a blessed connection with ourselves. (pp. 76-77)

For women living in patriarchy there is a terror in speaking one's truth that stems

being mirrored as inferior to men. Lorde (2007) expressed this truth when she wrote,

As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and nonrational knowledge. We have been warned against it all our lives by the male world, which values this depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fears this same depth too much to examine the possibilities of it within themselves. So women are maintained at a distant/inferior position to be psychically milked, much the same way ants maintain colonies of aphids to provide a life-giving substance for their masters. (pp. 53-54)

Love and difference. The distrust of a women's deepest sense of self is a loss that creates an inner abandonment that directly correlates to a lack of self-love and acceptance. Brown (2012a) shared her definition of love and its relationship with shame developed from the data she collected from thousands of people's stories:

We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be deeply seen and known, when we honor the spiritual connection that grows from that offering with trust, respect, kindness, and affection.
    Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists within each one of them—we can only love others as much as we love ourselves.
    Shame, blame, disrespect, betrayal, and the withholding of affection damage the roots from which love grows. Love can only survive these injuries if they are acknowledged healed, and rare. (pp. 105-106)

Yet, paradoxically, as shown by Bradshaw (1988) and Brown (2012a), the shame that prohibits human beings from believing they are worthy of love and belonging can only really heal in, by, and through relationship since it was originally internalized through a relational wound, or a "broken mutuality" (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 31). In order to experience love and connection, one has to make the choice to put down one's weapons of blaming, judging, criticizing, withdrawing, or disassociating, and to make the vulnerable move. As has been repeatedly illustrated by Bradshaw (1988), Brown (2012a), Johnson (2008), Tangney and Dearing (2002), and Welwood (2005), it is through one's ability to feel safe enough to be vulnerable and share one's deepest wounds and pain with another as a loving and caring witness that begins to heal the deep schisms in psyche

bound to shame. It is through facing pain and suffering that one can begin to gain a

deeper and more authentic connection with self and other.

> Out of our pain can come strength and a deeper sense of connection—if we can learn to use the power of love. "Someday, after mastering winds, waves, tides, and gravity, we shall harness the energy of love, and for the second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire," wrote the French Christian mystic and writer Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. This "fire" is not the one that burns and terrifies, but the one that gives light and warmth. It is love that can change not just our relationships, but our world. (Johnson, 2008, pp. 250-251)

> Lorde (2007) contended that vulnerability, empathy, and mutuality in

relationships must stretch to acknowledge and embrace differences in order to hold a safe

ground for the emergence and reintegration of what has been shamed and for the

gathering of insight from silenced voices, both inner and outer. When difference is not

welcomed, the human instinct for belonging and the need for love, may further shame

one's unique perspective, experiences, and creativity. Lorde daringly asserted,

> Within the interdependence of mutual (nondominant) differences lies that security which enables us to descend into the chaos of knowledge and return with true visions of our future, along with the concomitant power to effect those changes which can bring that future into being. Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged. (p. 110)

Lorde was pointing to the fact that when people feel safe with one another there are

whole worlds that can be accessed in the liminal space between them as a result of their

differences. The dilemma is that although the need for love and connection drives the

impulse to be the same as others and the shame that leads to disconnection, it is in the

differentiation of each person's own psychology and self-expression and the meeting

between them, that is the necessity for eros to flow.

Summary

This chapter began by defining toxic shame as distinct from both healthy shame and guilt (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a), and exploring the roots of toxic shame related to the human need for love, dependence on interdependency, and the psychological impact of emotional abandonment of the child by the parent (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a; Johnson, 2008; Lewis et al., 2000; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Welwood, 2005). As the psychological research of Bradshaw (1988), Brown (2012a), and Welwood (2005) has shown, the key to healing shame and moving through the pain of being vulnerable is not by avoiding, masking, numbing, or escaping, but by uncovering, revealing, exposing, and unraveling to get closer to the center of one's true being and desires.

However, for a shamed daughter of an abandoning father, finding her voice and finding empathic relationships in which her uniqueness will be received and honored is complicated by having internalized the patriarchal culture that tends to define the nature of the relationships and world in which she lives (Gilligan, 1982; Lorde, 2007; Murdock, 1990; Reis, 2006; Tarnas, 2006). The need to grieve in order to heal extends to both the cultural oppression of the feminine and women's voices, and the individual woman's loss of self through the internalized repression of toxic shame (Welwood, 2005). To heal toxic shame, and to prevent its spread, love must welcome difference and empathically support the differentiation and development of each person's unique perspective and voice (Bradshaw, 1988; Brown, 2012a; Johnson, 2008; Lorde, 2007). Giving voice to one's story from one's unique perspective and life experience is one means by which to begin to heal toxic shame and move from a place of hiding to the courageous act of self-love. The next chapter is a humble endeavor to model the beginning of such a journey.

Chapter III
Finding a Way Through Shame

> When we let go of what other people think and own our story, we gain access to
> our worthiness—the feeling that we are enough just as we are and that we are
> worthy of love and belonging. When we spend a lifetime trying to distance
> ourselves from the parts of our lives that don't fit with who we think we're
> supposed to be, we stand outside of our story and hustle for our worthiness by
> constantly performing, perfecting, pleasing, and proving. Our sense of
> worthiness—that critically important piece that gives us access to love and
> belonging—lives inside of our story.

Brown, 2012a, p. 23

Introduction

A deep sense of wonder and divine play saturates and guides a child's flourishing

imagination filled with inexhaustible creativity and unbounded enchantment. How

children use and invoke their creative imagination has profound implications for the

quality of relationship they have with themselves and the world around them, throughout

their entire life. As a little girl, endless nights would come and go as I dreamed of a world

that had my father in it with me. Imagining worlds with great characters and story lines, I

wondered if I ever crossed my father's mind, as he was the great hero of my mythological

world. I questioned if he kept me in his heart the same way I treasured him in mine. In a

never-ending story returning to the same incessant scene over and over, I scoured my

entire being about how I could have been different so that maybe he would have wanted

to spend time with me. The very first man I ever loved barely acknowledged my

existence. I inherited a lineage of fatherless daughters when my father abandoned me

physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually by the time I was age 4, after

already not being present for the first year of my life. Until the day I leave this world I will equally carry deep in my heart both the tragedy and beauty of the loss of my father.

A recurring nightmare about my father that troubled me greatly as a little girl always began the same way. I am on the fourth story of a metal building missing all of its exterior walls along with no inner decor. I see my father standing below on the green grass, and I excitedly wave to him. I will do anything to get off this building to come down and be with him. There is no easy or clear route, but somehow I do it. He is my catalyst. I manage to get down on the ground and run joyously toward him with much anticipation of our long-awaited hug. As I get near he steps to the side, and I run past, each step in slower motion than the one past. From behind, he sprays me with paint in the back of my head and heart, and I fall to the ground feeling completely alone until I die.

This dream was a holographic intimation of what was to come in my life with my father and with many other men who represented aspects of my relationship with him. The man who helped give me the gift of existence, the capacity to feel the entire spectrum of emotion, and the opportunity to experience love and be in relationships forsook me, leaving me to find my own way, deprived of the very thing human beings are here for, love, belonging, and connection. What are the reverberating implications of one of your creators not loving you simply with their presence?

Seeking the Lost Father and Losing Myself

My father never did any of the things a young girl needs to grow and feel love and respect for herself; he never told me or said that he was proud of me, he never once gave me guidance or advice, he was not there for a single rite of passage whether it was my first day of school, the transformation of my body through puberty, the awakening of

my romantic heart as I began to date boys, or the day I left home to begin my own life.

But, really, it is the little moments I miss the most; hugs at the end of day, tucking me

into bed, his smile, his laughter and shared sense of humor, listening to music together,

long conversations about how we got here and where we are going, and sharing meals.

My father's rejection of me led to a deep unconscious sense of feeling unworthy

of love and belonging that radiates throughout the rest of my life and my identity. This

sense of core unworthiness translated into not being able to be aware of my genuine

desires, thoughts, and feelings because I was so busy trying to become a person others

would want to connect with. A deep self-hatred slowly began to fuel my existence until I

burned so badly on the inside all I wanted to do was die.

Left to interpret his abandonment of me as rejection, I internalized a father with

whom I could not speak and who would not hear me and thus I abandoned my own voice,

believing it to be without value. I saw from the beginning of my life that this world

favored boys, and that this world loved them more than it could ever love me as a girl.

Not fitting into my father's world became psychologically fused with and amplified by a

patriarchal culture, assuring me I had no place in the world. As the feminist depth

psychotherapist Marion Woodman (1985) expressed,

> Most contemporary women are the daughters of patriarchy; their mothers and
> grandmothers were daughters of patriarchy. They know very well how to
> organize, how to set a goal in some transcendent perfection. They know, too, the
> shadow of that perfection that never ceases to judge, to blame, to find them guilty
> for the crime of being themselves. They know too, the blind fury of the instincts
> that fight for recognition through addictions. (p. 352)

The strongest addiction I had was to being perfect. I had been a straight A student who

never got in trouble. I was always the best at whatever I sought to achieve. Meeting the

insatiable demands I put up against my being to be a perfect person was the only way I

knew how to feel worthy of being in this world, my sole guiding purpose was to be the best.

Totally unaware of being driven by an unconscious need to be fathered, I was desperately trying to fuck my way toward love and acceptance: There had to be some way that I could reach him, that I could enter the masculine world to which he belonged. By the time I was 16 years old I had slept with 40 men and a handful of women, half of whose names I did not know. I took great pride in my wildness and how I did not care about what others thought. I was sexually open and raw instead of prudish like most of the rest. In retrospect, I can see my anger at my father internalized and turned inward: If he did not care about or value me, why should I care about myself, what I did, or anyone else's opinion of it? Developing a carefree, wild persona also protected me from touching the anguished girl inside me who desperately cared what her father thought.

My unconscious, unquenchable thirst for the masculine, for a father figure, led me to getting married at 18 in an act of rebellion against my mother and perhaps, unconsciously, against being trapped with her in the culturally and paternally devalued mother-world. I married an alcoholic and drug addict. Drugs were so rampant in my environment that by the time I turned 20, I was facing life in prison for being in the vicinity of various illegal substances. I found myself in solitary confinement, the grey jail walls bleeding with my pain. How did I get so far away from myself? I prayed harder than I ever had to the universe to help save me from myself.

A First Psycho-Spiritual Rebirth: Discovery of the Archetypal

A few months later, after miraculously being set free, my entire worldview disintegrated during a sacred medicine journey. Like absolutely nothing I had ever

experienced before, I found myself reliving my birth trauma in a non-ordinary state of consciousness. I was the baby going through the birth canal, my mother giving birth to me, and concurrently giving birth to my self. Synchronistically, the man I was with who helped midwife my experience knew the work of Stanislav Grof who did years of legal LSD psychotherapy research in the 1950s. Grof (2000) discovered, after sitting with thousands of patients, that people would repeatedly relive their births in LSD-induced non-ordinary states of consciousness as one way the psyche begins to heal and move toward wholeness. My psyche had broken through with a vision that suggested it was time for me to begin to give birth to and parent myself.

The life-altering experience of my psycho-spiritual rebirth led me to a sudden and radical break from my past as I divorced my husband, got rid of all of my possessions, and moved to San Francisco, California to begin anew. The rebirth symbolized for me the reawakening and deep remembrance of being an integral part of a world saturated with love, meaning, and purpose—an enchanted cosmos. After moving west, I entered the bachelor degree completion program at the California Institute of Integral Studies where I immersed myself in archetypal astrology and cosmology and the work of cultural historian and archetypal astrologer Richard Tarnas (2006). After a rapid initiation into the archetypal dimension of reality, I became a professional archetypal astrologer giving readings with my partner at the time, the man who had been with me during my death-rebirth experience. For 6 years we worked and lived together. There felt to be a certain destiny in the two of us meeting. Like the role of the father in a child's life, and quite unlike anything my father ever provided for me, this man gave me a sense of stability and security by bringing me into deeper connection with the outer world through teaching me

archetypal cosmology. This provided me with a worldview that gave me a stronger foundation from which to live my life. I will forever carry in my heart the love, the teachings, and eternal gratitude for the gift of this human being in my life that graced my existence in countless ways. I continued my deep inner work with non-ordinary states of consciousness in the most sacred ways I knew how. These visionary experiences provided me with a working cosmological framework that put into perspective how my psyche, along with every other person's on the planet, was reflected in nature in the movements of the planetary heavenly bodies and the geometrical alignments they make with one another at the moment of one's birth. This has been known for millennia in the most ancient of all of the sciences, that of astrology, the language of the stars (Tarnas, 2006). The re-enchantment of the cosmos and my place in it brought tremendous insight, a deep sense of trust in the Universe's creative intelligence and orchestration, and ever abiding love and meaning through and through. However, even with these paradigm shifting experiences something was still not quite right.

Returning to Childhood: Purging the Pain That Can No Longer Be Stomached

Unshakable feelings of alienation and isolation inundated my inner and outer emotional world. Even though I was deeply embedded in a worldview permeated and informed with meaning, intelligence, purpose, wonder, and awe, something was still disturbing me all the way to my core. Racing toward the only place of soul guidance I knew, I went to see a shaman who practiced Central and South American indigenous teachings and traditional ways of healing with plant medicines. Through the night, I sat erect meditating in a sacred circle of seven others praying for visions of and clarity about my life path. In the plant medicine tradition, as an integral part of the cleansing process

one purges in the night that which is no longer serving one's life path whether it be old thoughts, habits, or feelings. Every person in the circle vomited, except me. Cast out once again from a shared experience shame overcame and conquered me as I sat in my own personal purgatory. The sun could not rise soon enough.

When I made it through to the other side of the long dark night, I discovered, to my great surprise, that my father had called four times while I was in ceremony. We had not spoken in over half a year, as he was living overseas with his arranged marriage wife and three children. During the ceremony I felt called to pray with my father's spirit to let him know my longing for connection. He called me to invite me to his homeland in the Middle East for the first time. I began to imagine deep and abiding connections with my family that I had never met, and that after all these long years of waiting and longing, I would be one of them, and my father would finally be ready to claim me as his own.

Like the recurring dream of my childhood, I will do anything to be with my father, cross any sea at any length for the opportunity for connection. Landing in his homeland—this most foreign country from which half the blood coursing through my heart arises—initiates me into a death of an old identity. After hours of anxious waiting for my father to pick me up from the airport, I am in the car with my 4-year-old half-brother, the age I was when my father left my mother and I, who is vomiting all over everyone. If this had been a dream, I would say that the masculine side of my 4-year-old inner child had just vomited up what I could not stomach, revealing to me the need to purge what I had internalized, as I could not do in the shamanic ritual.

Driving along the winding ocean cliffs we arrive. The dream-like symbolic state of the experience continued. Seriously unprepared for the cultural differences of my

father, who had not prepared me for life, I feel extremely alienated once again. There is a long list of things I am forbidden to do, such as expose my shoulders, walk down the street by myself as a woman, look men in the eyes, and, most shockingly, if they are religiously devote, I am not to speak to them unless they speak to me first. I do not remember thinking that this somehow replicated my relationship with my father. But, in retrospect, it was as if, in visiting him in his country of origin, the emotional rejection I had always felt was reverberating through my current culture shock. The next day my 8-year-old half-sister vomits to the point of needing to be taken to the hospital for serious dehydration. I was 8 years old when my grandfather abruptly died. My grandfather's passing was extremely traumatic for me, and was another profound loss in my young life as he had helped raise me. Also when I was 8, my father came back to live with us for a distressing six months. By the 4th day of my trip my 10-year-old half-brother, who is the same age I was when my father promised to fly back for my birthday but canceled the eve of, vomits through the night. I think to myself, "This is a family illness and since this is not my family I definitely will not be getting sick." But this was not just a part of my extended biological family; it also held echoes of my distressed constellation of inner children. My denial did not prevent me from becoming more violently ill than I had ever been before.

Alternating between throwing up and having diarrhea, time stands still for 24 hours. Propped up against the toilet with no electricity in 100-degree weather, I hear my father outside the bathroom door running around and playing with his three other children who are all better now. As I convulse with a high fever accompanied by terrifying hallucinations, they are laughing and having the great time I fantasized about when I was

their ages. My pilgrimage to my father's homeland in hopes of a healed, new relationship had turned into a journey backward and inward. Even my half siblings purged, reflections of how sick inside I felt when I was their ages. My parents no longer felt like my own.

Entering Therapy: Learning About Love

For 1 year I prayed on a weekly basis for a wise, elder, Jungian analyst who worked extensively in the dream world and knew archetypal astrology to come into my life, take me under her wings, and teach me the ways of navigating psyche. Each night, I became increasingly terrified to go to sleep as my dreams were composed mainly of tragic nightmares unnerving to my core. It was as if the starry heavens were smiling down upon me deep in my suffering when I was graced with the gift of my therapist. We first met in one of my dreams. In my dream I am sitting with a woman on a back porch, and I am telling her that my parents no longer feel like my parents. She turns to me and calmly reflects, "Well, it sounds like it is time to go into the cave. You know the cave, don't you?" I nod so not to look ignorant. She goes on, "The cave is where love is."

Four days later, I was at a birthday party and this woman from my dream, just nights earlier, walked in. Called to share my dream with her, she told me that I am the fourth young woman in my 20s this week to have a dream with her in a cave. She offered for me to come to her therapy office and to look at my dreams together. The depth of intimacy that was constellated between us began to open up entire worlds inside both of us that had not yet been touched or discovered. Through the shared mutuality of our connection we co-created a safe space where parts of myself that I could not previously access promptly emerged. I began to re-experience preverbal states of consciousness where my deepest pain resided, unconsciously locked in my body. My therapist held me,

loved me, and witnessed me in my deepest suffering. Her love, acceptance, and patient

guidance allowed me, over time, to begin to learn to fall in love with myself. I came to

begin to treasure who I was, where I had come from, and where I am going with all of my

qualities, both light and shadow. A deep connection with the Self arose out of feeling

fully seen. What I learned about love in therapy was described by Brown (2012):

> We cultivate love when we allow our most vulnerable and powerful selves to be
> deeply seen and known, and when we honor the spiritual connection that grows
> from that offering with trust, respect, kindness, and affection.
>   Love is not something we give or get; it is something that we nurture and
> grow, a connection that can only be cultivated between two people when it exists
> within each one of them—we can only love others as much as we love ourselves.
> (p. 26)

My relationship with my therapist taught me how to fall in love, and this literally

saved my life. Something was born between my therapist and I. Sheer vulnerability and

grieving the lost aspects of myself, often reflecting similar lost aspects of my therapist,

allowed for a vital awareness to be birthed into my consciousness. We share a common

ground of being with such little pretense between us. In this flow of eros that circulates

between us, I feel ecstatic. Learning how to have the courage to be imperfect and having

connection be a result of authenticity allows me to stand at the frontier of my own

experience where everything becomes possible again. This is where I begin to have a

choice to respond in a new way, where being a father's daughter no longer is the central

tenet of my identity in a patriarchal model of power and hierarchy and mode of relating

and behaving in the interpersonal field. I had experienced all too personally that for the

feminine, shame is the defining emotion of the shadow of the patriarchy—what separates

a woman from her inner source. Patriarchy, at times, fanatically used shame as

punishment for anything unorthodox or outside of what it defined as normality.

Depth psychotherapy seems to be one of the deepest forms of prayer as it is a *via regia* or royal road into the soul by nurturing connection and love. As self-transformation occurs it ripples out into the rest of one's life. As I began to change so did the people around me. I began to be able to be more present and vulnerable in all my relationships, allowing more of my self to be seen creating deeper connection and intimacy. This meant that I had to show all the parts of myself that, until this point, I had felt were unlovable, especially the ways in which I am needy and dependent on another for love.

My task was daunting. I had to learn to grieve the abandoned child that had been inside me all along. What I learned was this: Instead of trying to avoid or repress the pain when I feel abandoned, hurt, disappointed, and in despair, if I am able to be with my pain as it emerges in a situation with another person, allowing myself to be vulnerable enough to simply observe my emotions without judgment as they move through me, then the pain is able to metabolize. Old memories and repressed feelings penetrate my experience until I get to the core of the emotion that is often tied to an image in my body. It is a very raw and primal place that often feels preverbal: There are no words only sounds, affect, and gestures. There is a deep intelligence in this journey, something psyche is trying to show me. It turns out an empathic witness is what the pain needs, to be seen and held in a loving way. When I get through to the other side of the emotion, once it is done washing through my cells, I feel more self-love and acceptance, and therefore, I feel more whole.

I have been courageously providing for myself precisely what I needed when I was abandoned by my father, to simply be seen and maintain connection. When I invite an ongoing relationship with my unconscious, loving what arises, the entire journey is worth it, and meaning is restored in my life with a certain ease and contentment worth

more than the momentary agony of feeling my pain, anger, sadness, and grief. The pattern of abandonment stops with me as I choose to stay present with my experience and myself. We have to experience a loving presence in order to be a loving presence, and this is where the interdependency of another is vital to the healing process of shame that arises out of broken mutuality. Shame is a relational wound and can only truly heal in, by, and through relationship. This is the gift of depth psychotherapy: A loving container in which the therapist's commitment to *re-member* his or her own wounds creates a healing ethos of courage and safety that welcomes, encourages, and holds the authentic presence of the client. It is in this way that I *re-membered* what it is to love and be loved.

Reclaiming My Self Through the Portal of Shame

My suffering will never cease to exist, but the relationship I have with my wounds can evolve. It is not whether or not I suffer, for we all do; it is how I choose to meet my suffering, whether in a loving way that is healing and brings wholeness or in a shaming and condemning way that retraumatizes me. Learning to meet my self in this way has led to a feeling of empowerment, because I realize I can choose to show up for and in my authentic self. No longer am I a helpless child or a victim of circumstance, but an adult who has the capacity to be with myself in a loving and nonabandoning way. This is how I begin to individuate psychologically from the devaluation, rejection, and abandonment of the feminine in my family of origin and in the patriarchal nature of the larger culture, reclaiming my power and regaining a sense of sovereignty as a co-creator of my life.

As I began my thesis research, I blindly avoided having to write about being a fatherless daughter even though it was what motivated me to attend graduate school in psychology and the whole reason I wanted to write this thesis in the first place. Although

I can now easily talk about shame, when it comes to talking about my actual experience of shame and how it relates to my story, I still *feel* shame. I have shame about having shame. I have shame that I am not perfect, that I do not have all the answers, that my early childhood experience has affected me in some serious ways that still give me a sense of being unworthy of love and belonging. I always hoped and thought I was above all that. But now, I understand something that has saved my life, helping me in the midst of my inner struggles to live self-constructively instead of self-destructively. Emotional reactivity stems from unmet needs. In childhood, shame accrues around unmet needs. When we encounter our needs with love and acceptance we metabolize shame. We deny our own needs because of the terror of hearing no, of being rejected, of feeling shamed. I realized that following shame into the unconscious to *re-member* abandoned aspects of self is what began my healing, bringing me back to source and connecting me with every other person on this planet in my shared humanity. Through the portal of my shame and suffering I have gained access to my deepest and most creative potential, integrating more of my authentic self into my embodied, flesh and blood, life—the same flesh and blood that my father helped to create. Suffering and grieving my suffering has become my central path for reclaiming the parts of my self that I have abandoned—that my inner father relegated to the underworld until I was strong enough to face myself. Self-love is a daily choice and practice that becomes easier for me as I grow older, yet I must choose to continue to grow for only I will be able to give myself this vital gift.

Claiming my self through acceptance and compassion is the only way I can begin to show up in this world and feel there is nothing wrong with me, for no one else is going to do this, especially not my father. A huge part of growing up for me is realizing that the

person's acceptance I need the most is my own, and to expect that approval from

someone else is going to give me a deep sense of self-love can only go so far. I owe it to

myself to recover the lost parts of me. If we can only love another as much as we love

ourselves, then for the sake of myself, my future children, and my Earth community, I

must make the journey of feeling all the ways I have become blocked from feeling love

and the circulation of eros, learning to claim space in this world as my own—to claim my

voice, my wisdom, my perspective. As Reis (2006) brazenly voiced,

> The effort to reclaim and use our erotic energy as a resource for change is a
> radical and revolutionary act. Any woman who learns how to awaken the sacred
> fire in her body must move through layers of confusion, depression, anger and
> fear. Confronting the forces, both personal and collective, that have kept us away
> from this ultimate source of female knowledge and power is never easy. As Audre
> Lorde imagines it, the erotic exists in that highly charged place between the self
> and "chaos of our strongest feelings." Once we have experienced the fullness of
> this deep feeling, all else will be measured in relation to its magnitude. (p. 182)

From a Lineage of Fatherless Mothers

I absolutely did not want to address my relationship with my mother in this thesis,

perhaps because her unmetabolized grief of being a fatherless daughter informs most of

my existence. Yet, there is the deepest and most abiding reverence for my mother and her

suffering. How do I properly honor her and simultaneously freely share the pain I have

inherited from my lineage, like all children inherit from theirs? There is no clear

differentiation, no boundaries that define us as separate beings. My mother's pain is my

pain; I know her from the inside. It is easier to talk about the loss of my father because it

is farther away; there is literally more distance. But, my mother, I lived inside of her, she

carried me in her body, and we were one being, one organism. My mother's body was my

home of undifferentiated unity. Her emotions were my emotions. When reviewing my

notes in my research there was not one single page marked in any of my books on the role of mother; I only took notes on the role of father.

It is extremely common for fatherless daughters to discount and ignore the role of the mother in their lives (Woodman, 1985). On one level, this is a deep form of unconscious misogyny and the continuation of patriarchal value systems of favoring the importance of the father over the mother. On another level, it is a well-construed defense mechanism to avoid taking a closer look at certain parts of myself that are quite painful.

A lethal epidemic of fatherless daughters, including my mother, suffer from debilitating depression, anxiety, and acute low self-esteem that shows up symptomatically as suffering from alcoholism; the need to numb the seemingly unbearable emotions. Her lack of self-worth translates into an unlived life. Growing up before I ever knew any other way I was perfectly conditioned to be a caretaker. One common characteristic of a child of alcoholism is secrecy in order to protect the fragile ego of the parent. Woodman (1985) perfectly described the situation between parent and child when the parent has an unlived life when she wrote,

> If parents are narcissistic or full of their unlived life, they use their child to mirror themselves. The soul of the child is then violated because it not free to develop its own potential. It is exploited, forced to carry the parents' archetypal projections, passions, and broken dreams. It carries what the parent failed to achieve. It may even become the beloved the parent never found. In this unboundaried bonding, the parents are so lacking in ego structures that they may incarnate the child's fantasy, may accept the child's archetypal projection, unconsciously accepting an archetypal identity as a substitute for their unclaimed humanity. Then child and parents are unconsciously colluding and the child is frozen in an archetypal world which it can no longer freely explore. (p. 357)

In relationship to my fatherless mother, who struggles to reclaim her own worth or voice, I inherited the role of caretaker. Caretaking and perfectionism pervaded my beliefs about myself: I am only worthy if I am perfect and perfectly taking care of you.

Serving you is the only way I deserve to live; otherwise, I am taking up space that should go to someone else more deserving. If you are not happy then I am the mistake. I am in the wrong. Trained to intuit your every need before you even know it, I am conditioned for total empathy, having no boundaries. I am a mirror to reflect you back to yourself; I have no face of my own. All my focus is upon you, all the time. Subsequently, I never learned how to be with my self, my needs, my wants, and my desires.

So, now, here I am, creating a force of vision and a face of my own. Shame is what creates disconnection, and disconnection is antithetical to human experience because we are here for connection and belonging. And voice is a way of connecting, and without being heard we don't learn the capacity to hear ourselves. As a fatherless daughter, how do I know and value myself in a patriarchal world without that being mediated by my own father? If fatherless daughters do not have their father's voice, then what value do they have? What value do I have? A fatherless daughter's path toward healing the shame around her voice is through expressing the very affect or feeling tone of the shame she carries in her body. Fatherless daughters must find their own way of telling their stories, rising above the oppression and devaluation of women as an equally powerful force in this world as men. The quest of the fatherless daughter is moving from core identification with unworthiness to a deep felt sense of worthiness and belonging. As was articulated by Brown (2012a) a sense of worthiness is key to living an enriching and inspiring life:

> Worthiness inspires us to be vulnerable, share openly, and persevere. Shame keeps us small, resentful, and afraid. In shame-prone cultures, where parents, leaders, and administrators consciously or unconsciously encourage people to connect their self-worth on what they produce, disengagement, blame, gossip, stagnation, favoritism, and a total death of creativity and innovation. (p. 65)

Writing in My Voice and Saving My Own Life

As I wrote about my personal story, my heuristic research became arrested several times. I would tell myself that this thesis is about my healing and therefore about telling my story. But the birth pains were excruciating. In order to honor my topic I had to feel my way through the entire laborious journey. I struggled with my shame and with the ethical dilemmas of sharing my story and the implications it has for others in my life.

Like wind rushing through the cavernous abysses in my psyche, suddenly, with a quickened luminosity it became obvious to me what I had to do. My invocation for this thesis was for it to transfigure my soul so that on the other side, through this arduous writing, my authentic voice would emerge. This is why this thesis's methodology had to be heuristic, because I have shame around my voice, and as I have proposed through this thesis the way to heal shame is by giving voice to the very shame that binds one.

And so, as I worked on this thesis, I followed an ever-winding road through paradoxical terrain in which turning back was the way forward and where the darkest shadows and deepest caves held the most light. From the challenges laid beneath my feet came the most profound gifts; one step after another, I was shown what I finally had to do. It was time to leave my father's house. With a force both jarring and elucidating, I awoke to the very stark reality that I was once again in a very unhealthy, enmeshed, and enabling relationship. Once again, I had tricked myself into blindly believing that I could save people if I simply figured out how to love them enough. If I could only become a better human being, grow up a little faster, prove myself worthy of their love, then maybe they would choose to love me back and we would be happy together. We had become increasingly disconnected emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I had been feeling

more isolated and alone with each day that passed and fallen into deeper and deeper

despair, begging the universe to end my life. What was most striking was that my suicidal

visions were quite similar to the ones my mother would describe to me when I was a little

girl. We both wanted to kill ourselves by driving in a car, she off a bridge, me by pulling

the emergency brake going at high speed. Convinced that it was not meant for me this

lifetime, I relinquished any hopes of true romantic connection with another. The men in

my life were to always be emotionally unavailable and aloof, just like my father. They

were to always be alcoholics and depressed like my mother. It was easy and attractive

because it was familiar and all I knew.

Then the moment came when I comprehended that I too was arrested in my

development just like the alcoholics in my life. Busying myself taking constant care of

addicts I made sure to never leave any space or time for me, denying myself opportunities

to be with myself, almost as an unconscious form of punishment. I fooled myself into

believing I was the mature one and strong one, but really, I was just as stuck as they

were. All my time and attention went toward their life and their problems. Where did that

leave me? Critically out of touch with my emotions, needs, and desires. As I have been

writing this thesis, and in the birth pains of this chapter in particular, I have had the poem

by Mary Oliver (1986), called, "The Journey," running through my mind.

> One day you finally knew
> what you had to do, and began,
> though the voices around you
> kept shouting
> their bad advice—
> . . . But you didn't stop.
> You knew what you had to do,
> . . . little by little,
> as you left their voices behind,
> the stars began to burn

<div align="center">

through the sheets of clouds,
and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own,
that kept you company
as you strode deeper and deeper
into the world,
determined to do
the only thing you could do—
determined to save
the only life you could save.
(p. 38)

</div>

And so, in response to my deepest needs, desires, and intuitive knowing, I made a choice to save the only life I could. Disentangling my identity as a caretaker and enabler, I dared to extricate myself from my unhealthy home situation. In a change that felt like moving mountains, I chose to no longer perpetuate my trauma by abandoning myself, but instead chose to put myself first.

Summary

This thesis emerged out of being abandoned by my father as a little girl. I internalized shame from the loss of my relationship with him, and from the way our Western culture perceives a woman's personal worth. Raised by a fatherless mother whose unlived life had been lost in the devaluation and silencing of her voice, I learned, as a good daughter of the patriarchy, to caretake others and neglect myself. I had suffered the unconscious perpetration of a masculine-oriented subjective reality acting as the objective truth and creating the standard against which my value is measured and my place in the world determined with little to no consent from me. The more deeply I connected with myself, the less able I was to continue having my story narrated by a male-dominated paradigm. I am awakening to my creative power by grieving my shame and feeling my way through my fears and the suffering of not being seen by my father or

my culture and my voice not being valued. I had been dying on the inside. To save my life I had to begin to speak up for what I am feeling, perceiving, and thinking. I have learned that my psychological liberation comes from the dark depths of the unconscious and my willingness to know myself and rediscover my mother-tongue. Loving my woundedness and brokenness is precisely what allows me to love my whole self and realize I am not broken at all. Telling my story is what liberates me from my story.

Chapter IV
Summary and Conclusions

Summary

For fatherless daughters living in a patriarchal culture shame is the cornerstone emotion that fosters an inborn lack of self-worth and value in a young girl's early identity formation, often becoming a debilitating force in her creative pursuits and deep need for belonging and connection with others. Since shame is understood as a core identification with feeling unworthy of genuine belonging and intimate connection, which are two fundamental requirements of human existence, it becomes a vital necessity for fatherless daughters to embark on a journey of rediscovering who they are in a world that makes them a second-class citizen. If people can work through their shame by grieving the loss and forgotten aspects of the self, the ways in which one has been abandoned and abandoned oneself, then there is a depth of being that opens up in which one gains access to one's authentic self where creativity blossoms forth.

Since shame implies a loss of self that occurs through the disconnection between self and other, the road to reclaiming one's alienated self requires immense grieving for the disowned and forgotten aspects of one's self. By going deep into one's underworld of repressed emotions, memories, thoughts, and states of being in a safe container with a loving witness one co-creates the opportunity to heal the inner psychological splitting in one's psyche. Witnessing becomes a sacred and redemptive act that provides a passageway for self-love and acceptance. By deeply accepting one's self, one is granted

access to one's true potential and desires. When people feel safe enough to be themselves, they are able to express their true thoughts, feelings, and visions, bringing forth the creativity that originates and flourishes in the depths of the imagination. Naturally, when one reclaims aspects of oneself, one gains access to more creative energy.

At first, the idea that one must share one's feelings of shame seems counterintuitive to the self-defense mechanism of wanting to protect oneself by hiding vulnerabilities, insecurities, and self-judgments. Paradoxically, hiding shame, keeping it in the dark, is the ideal condition for shame to grow and magnify in potency. If one can withstand the discomfort of sharing oneself with another, being witnessed in a loving way without judgment, then a person may begin to heal the shame that keeps one in an inner and outer state of imprisonment.

Concluding Thoughts and Future Research

From a depth psychological perspective, a significant loss in one's life, such as the loss of a parent, can actually be the source of a profound creative drive. Examining the potential effects of the loss of a father early in a woman's life, Reis (2006) discussed the role of the loss of a father in women who have had a large cultural impact in recent history. Reis wrote,

> Although a father's early interest and encouragement seem to be the most important factor in a women's creative life, in the lives of these women it appears to be the opposite. These accomplished and gifted fathers did not act as mentoring, encouraging, teaching fathers, but rather were distant, closed, unavailable men. In fact, the father's emotional or physical absence, his lack of validation, affirmation, authentication seems to be one of the key factors that drove these women's creative process. Whether she is trying to reach him, please him, fight him, sleep with him, or destroy him, the father appears not as an enabling figure, nor even as an obstacle, but rather as a void into which these women threw their creative efforts. (pp. 206-207)

Vocalizing shame is a highly relational act that requires profound vulnerability, deep listening, and compassionate witnessing. Brown (2012b) proclaimed,

> Vulnerability is the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, courage, empathy, and creativity. It is the source of hope, empathy, accountability, and authenticity. If we want greater clarity in our purpose or deeper and more meaningful spiritual lives, vulnerability is the path. (p. 33)

In order for humanity to make it through the current global ecological crisis and the direct threat to the human species' survival by the disconnection, defensiveness, and silence that shame induces, individually and collectively humans must embark on the arduous journey of reclaiming their voices and radically express their true feelings, emotions, thoughts, dreams, and desires in order to heal shame.

As I heal the shame that disconnected me from self and others, I imagine living in a world in which there is a fluidity of relationships, where each person is both wounded and a healer depending on the moment and the situation; where there is no longer a hierarchy of power and domination, but radical interdependence and mutuality in which difference is honored and celebrated! I imagine women no longer wishing for things to be different as they continue to perpetuate patriarchy by their compliance. To strive to be accepted by a model of living that is killing this planet is insanity. A woman living her truth—and her capacity to love herself and be genuinely present in her relationships—in an embodied and self-expressive way is the revolution, a revolution of the heart. I also imagine, within the psychological community, more research that explores women's experiences of being psychologically wounded and shamed, tracking what occurs in themselves, their relationships, and their pursuits as they give voice to their intrasubjective lives and their perspectives on their worlds.

References

Bradshaw, J. (1988). *Healing the shame that binds you.* Deerfield Beach, FL:
    Health Communications.

Brown, B. (2010, June). *The power of vulnerability.* Unpublished lecture presented at Ted
    Talks, Houston, TX.

Brown, B. (2012a). *Daring greatly.* New York, NY: Gotham Books.

Brown, B. (2012b, March). *Listening to shame.* Unpublished lecture presented at Ted
    Talks, Houston, TX.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Grof, S. (2000). *Psychology of the future.* Albany: State of University New York Press.

Johnson, S. (2008). *Hold me tight: Seven conversations for a lifetime of love.*
    New York, NY: Little, Brown.

Leonard, L. S. (1982). *The wounded woman: Healing the father-daughter relationship.*
    Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Lewis, T., Amini, F., & Lannon, R. (2000). *A general theory of love.* New York, NY:
    Random House.

Lorde, A. (2007). *Sister outsider: Essays and speeches.* Freedom, CA: The Crossing
    Press.

Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research: Design, methodology, and applications.*
    Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Murdock, M. (1990). *The heroine's journey.* Boston, MA: Shambhala.

Oliver, M. (1986). *Dream work: The journey* (p. 38). New York City, NY: Atlantic
    Monthly Press.

Reis, P. (2006). *Daughters of Saturn: From father's daughter to creative woman.* New
    Orleans, LA: Spring Journal Books.

Rowe, C. E., & MacIsaac, D. S. (1998). *Empathic attunement: The technique of psychoanalytic self psychology.* Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson.

Sullivan, B. S. (1989). *Psychotherapy grounded in the feminine principle.* Wilmette, IL: Chiron.

Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt.* New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Tarnas, R. (2006). *Cosmos and psyche: Intimations of a new worldview.* New York, NY: Penguin Group.

Welwood, J. (2005). *Perfect love imperfect relationships: Healing the wound of the heart.* Boston, MA: Trumpeter.

Woodman, M. (1985). *The pregnant virgin: A process of psychological transformation.* Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press.