

## AGING MOTHERS AND THEIR DAUGHTERS: STORIES OF INNER STRENGTH

Celeste Shawler, Ph.D., R.N., C.S.  
University of Louisville School of Nursing  
K Building, Louisville, KY 40292

The purposes of this study were to describe transitions in mother-daughter relationships when mothers experience a health crisis and to develop a theoretical framework to illustrate the transitions. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998) guided the research process. The goal was to discover a specific social psychological problem that was common to the group studied. "This problem is resolved by the basic psychological process of creating meaning" (Hutchinson, 1993) also called the central core category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical sampling, data collection, and analysis created an ongoing circular process throughout the course of the study. The investigator conducted a total of 27 individual, dyad, and group interviews over a 15-month period with six elderly mothers and their adult daughters. Use of the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) involved continually reviewing and analyzing the data, re-interviewing subjects to obtain participant validation, and collecting data to support themes of the emergent theory. Selective coding facilitated refinement of the emerging theory and the identification of the central core category that explained in a few words the essence of the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This presentation will focus on one aspect of the results - the discovery of the central core category, "evolution of strength." Evolution is a process of continued change from a lower and simpler state to a higher more complex state. Evolution involved a working out of difficulties with health crises as well as the challenges of maturing and aging. Strength is having fortitude, courage, and stamina. Strength means having determination to endure difficult times. Thus, "evolution of strength" represented progressive use of increasing depths of strength by the aging mothers and their daughters to manage the health crisis. The evolution of strength proceeded through five levels: identification of strength, enhancing strength; using strength; renewing and intensifying strength; and finally manifesting strength. Discussion: The use of inner strength by aging mothers and their adult daughters as they transitioned through a health crisis may add to the understanding of family adaptation. Strength, regeneration, and growth in individuals and families warrants further attention to promote healthy transitions. Continued efforts are essential to increase understanding about how individuals, in the context of relationships, negotiate and transition into and out of various health crises. Nurses must attend to the richness, diversity, and unspoken strength and fortitude in older women and their daughters.