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**Growing Up with Domestic Violence: The Voices of
Resilience**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of**

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence is not only a problem affecting many women nationally and internationally, it is a phenomenon being negotiated by thousands of children on a daily basis. The aim of this research was to bring voice to the experiences of adult children exposed to domestic violence as children; to privilege their experiences, insights, contradictions and resistances in their stories of resilience as they negotiate lives free from violence. Nine participants volunteered to participate in conversational interviews that were focussed on the effects of living with violence. Interviews were voice-recorded, transcribed and analysed using Riessman's (1993) method of narrative inquiry. The analysis represents the participants' stories of resilience, linking past experiences with particular storylines as they reflect on their meaning making in the present. Narratives of change were embedded in understandings of violence as intergenerationally transmitted and maintained through the conspiracy of silence. Through these stories of change, there were common storylines of safe relationships, being heard, changing actions and spaces to reflect from that were critical to positions of resilience. The presence of domestic violence produced tensions in mother and child relationships, and the loss of what a mother should be was profound. Embedded in stories that normalised violence, protected the secret, and ensured silence, were conflicting messages that the participants had to negotiate and overcome. The embodiment of trauma was embedded within the conspiracy of silence and produced relationships of gendered domination and subordination, and the effects were enduring. In a continuous movement between the past and the present, forgetting and remembering the pain and suffering, the participants positioned themselves through stories of victimisation and survival as they continue to encounter the enduring effects, as adults, through positions of resistance. These findings have implications for the necessity to privilege interventions for women and children in our attempts to reduce the effects of violence in our communities.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

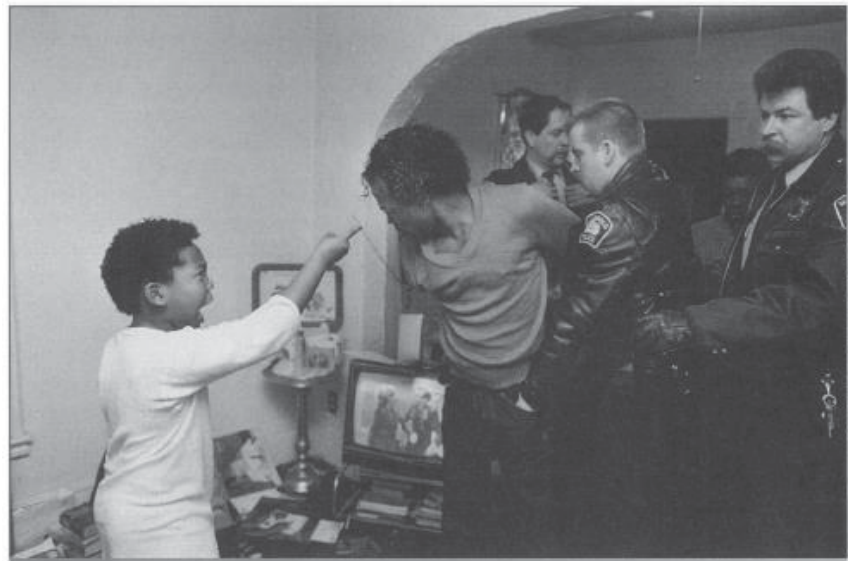


Figure 1: Living with the Enemy (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999)

Listening to the voices of adolescents – to their concerns, their experience, their insights – and listening for their strengths and resources as well as their weaknesses and liabilities, not only reveals a range of competencies that would not be evident within prevailing assumptions of risk and deficit, but also makes many current interpretations and conclusions of deficit and deviance untenable. (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1996, p. 238)

INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a problem affecting many New Zealanders on a daily basis; it is estimated that one third of women in New Zealand will be affected by domestic violence despite New Zealand being credited with progressive policies and campaigns for addressing domestic violence in our communities (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; New Zealand Families Commission., 2009). It is also estimated that 1 in 4 children witness (or experience direct) acts of abuse at home (Lievore, Mayhew, & Mossman, 2007), indicating a need for greater awareness regarding the effects of domestic violence upon this vulnerable group.

While research has focussed heavily on the effects of domestic violence on women, there has been little research on the experiences of the often silent victims of domestic violence, children. Understandings of victimisation are problematic especially where a ‘victim’ is positioned as a passive recipient of abuse in patriarchal discourse, and ignores the many resiliencies that children may enact (Ferraro, 1996). Most research has focused on the psychological and/or behavioural impacts of violence and the ongoing effects on health and wellbeing, with particular attention to intergenerational transmission of violence. However, research on the extent to which children living in violent homes become perpetrators or susceptible to victimisation is mixed; most children who grow up with violence do not become perpetrators or victims (Richards, 2011).

While research on the effects of violence on children has begun to emerge, there is little research that accounts for the children who appear to have the same ‘risk’ and do not necessarily experience the same trauma. How might children’s stories of resilience and resistance increase our understanding of the effects of domestic violence, and also inform social change to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence and its effects?

This research explores how adult children make sense of their experiences of living with domestic violence as children. It seeks to address how they make sense of their relationships with their parents and their families and their on-going social relationships, and it endeavours to unravel any personal strengths and resiliencies that have arisen from their experiences. Adult children’s narrative accounts are analysed to help us understand the effects of domestic violence and how their experiences can inform living free from violence in adulthood.

An important and crucial aspect of this research is the consideration of personal resiliencies. While there is increasing literature on the ‘deficit’ effects of violence on children exposed to domestic violence, there is little research that addresses how these children negotiate a life lived free of violence; the strengths and knowledge they have developed from adverse events as they produce counter narratives. Not all children exposed to domestic violence encounter abuse as adults and research suggests that resiliencies are necessary to adaptive, or non-violent outcomes

(Masten, 2001; Suzuki, Geffner, & Bucky, 2008) or as this research suggests, the possibility for counter narratives.

Positioning the research

An ethical assumption of this research depends upon promoting the rights of women and children and thus it is understandably appropriate that the theoretical framework of this research is based upon a feminist standpoint, understood here as the diverse historically, culturally and socially constructed social power relations that produce women's lived experiences (Harding, 1986). In taking a feminist standpoint, I consider it critical to place the experience of women and children at the centre of the research that questions the gendered power relationships that produce domestic violence.

Without disregarding statistics that indicate that it is not only women and children who are victims of domestic violence, it is important to understand that in 90% of cases it is women who are victimised by men (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2009). Because of these asymmetrical statistics it is easy to understand why a feminist standpoint is critical; domestic violence is a gendered crime, so not only does feminist standpoint theory enable a focus on promoting the rights of oppressed groups within society, it also works to break down the patriarchal nature of society including its discourse and social structures. In doing so, standpoint theory claims all knowledge to be situated, and therefore the experience of particular knowers can be understood through an ongoing process of meaning making within social power relations (Harding, 1995). The emergence of feminist poststructuralist theories enables standpoint theory to be understood as an epistemology that is specifically located and partial. This research is interested in the experiences of the effects of living with gendered violence, as children, understanding that these experiences are shaped through multiple positions in social relations of domination and oppression.

Necessary to an understanding of our geopolitical situatedness, it is important to understand the Treaty of Waitangi as the first formal acknowledgement of both Māori as indigenous and Pākehā as British immigrants as first settlers. While contemporary New Zealand may be positioned as a multicultural Western

democracy, biculturalism is privileged at least through its constitution. The Treaty potentially enables researchers to engage with legitimate spaces for indigenous knowledge; “questioning complicity between psychological knowledge, practice and colonisation; questioning the normality of western epistemological assumptions; valuing relationship, partnership, collaboration and negotiation within the socio-political context of asymmetrical power relations; thinking and acting critically with regard for the formation of our relational subjectivities” (M. Morgan, Coombes, & Campbell, 2006, p. 52).

Historically, Māori women formed the base of Maori culture and cosmology (Mikaere, 1999); Māori women were traditionally viewed as both very powerful and nourishing (Mikaere, 1994). According to Māori cosmology, the very existence of the Maori people was centred around the sexual power of women (Mikaere, 1999). Maori women were never viewed as chattels or possessions, instead they were celebrated, enabling them to live with confidence and share with the whanau the celebration of birth and femaleness (Mikaere, 1999). While women occupied very important leadership roles, their main source of support was their whanau, and through the ritual of marriage, women remained a part of their whanau; women did not become the property of their husband, and assaults on women were considered very serious offences (Mikaere, 1994, 1999) and were punishable through whanau means (McEachern, Van Winkle, & Steiner, 1998). Social hierarchies were not traditionally organised according to gender.

Colonisers brought with them to New Zealand, not only their own hopes and dreams, but their own set of patriarchal values and standards for behaviour, leading to the oppression of Māori women, robbing them of their economic and social power and resulting in women being seen as chattels or possessions (McEachern, et al., 1998; Mikaere, 1994, 1999). The imposition of patriarchy broke down and reshaped Māori cosmology and recast the strengths of women in a negative manner; not only were women disempowered but they were engendered into a hopeless acceptance of objectionable behaviours (Mikaere, 1999).

Ongoing processes of colonisation have resulted in the alienation and dislocation from the whenua (land and the relationship between the placenta and the land of

their ancestors). New Zealand's colonial laws and traditions have resulted in the discrimination and oppression of Māori as a people through having a negative impact upon their rights, their culture and their land (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008). As a result of this history of colonialism and discrimination, Māori women are three times more likely to be assaulted or threatened by their partner than non-Māori (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008).

Throwing the hearts of women to the ground was and is the success of the colonization project (Mikaere, 1999, p. 79).

In order to break down relationships of domination and oppression, research, particularly that focused upon power relations, must begin with the oppressed within society (Bowell, 2011). Feminist standpoint epistemology seeks to address the power relations that shape structural inequality and institutional oppression. Feminist standpoint theorists assert that women's oppression is "real" and that it has immediate lived effects (Hirschmann, 1997, p. 81). The power of a standpoint is precisely its ability to name experiences of masculine power that render women's experiences of harm invisible.

For example, within Western legal systems there is a history of patriarchal ideology that is critical of mothers who depart from the normative positioning of women as compliant, self-sacrificing and responsible for family relationships. In a 2008 study, it was found that in 15 of 20 decisions, Family Court judges categorised women as hostile whenever mothers were perceived to have failed in their caretaking role by not supporting on-going contact with fathers despite their acknowledgement that serious violence against the mothers was evident (Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008). This raises questions of whether a child's right to safety, including their witnessing of violence, can be achieved in a system where mother-blame is assumed (Shea Hart, 2006). Women are caught in a contest of protecting their children from the effects of domestic violence and facilitating fathers' access to children in the child's best interests (Lapierre, 2010; Shea Hart, 2006). Resistance is produced as poor parenting.

Reflexivity

Standpoint theory assumes that because the knower and the known cannot be separated, the position of the researcher is central to the research process. This means that the researcher is implicated in explicating the bases for knowledge. According to research, reflexivity is a strategy that brings together the views of participants through the personal assumptions, commitments and values of the researcher and the wider cultural assumptions that produce frameworks for understanding (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). For me this is a form of researcher accountability for the interpretations and political consequences of the research, the participants, and the community.

Owing to my upbringing in a family system that supports achievement and independence, it at first seemed foreign and incomprehensible to me that it was possible for children to be silenced into a culture of oppression where their needs and aspirations are not quintessential. A culture of violence within society is all around us; not one person is immune to it. There are few people in New Zealand society who can claim they are not affected by the effects of domestic violence, if not personally then through the experiences of others, and the effects on our communities. As a young, Pākehā woman without a history of violence in my childhood, some critics may choose to question my suitability for this research, but I believe my commitment to this area, through my own social relationships overrides this disparagement. The production of new knowledge is informed through my education, especially in feminist studies, where my dedication to social justice research and practice enabled me to question the gendered power relations that have produced and reproduced patriarchal discourses that exclude the voices of women and children. These have failed to protect them from intimate violence, and thus I began thinking about issues of voices of resistance. However, as I read the research literature, I became aware of the missing voices of children, the future of our social and cultural wellbeing.

The process of self-reflection in social science research is critical to addressing power relationships between the researcher and the researched. For the purposes of the current study I must continuously come back to my position and consciously and critically reflect upon my own, and my research participants social, cultural,

and historical context to ensure that I am both aware of my position and am making efforts to decrease power differentials. Reflexivity is a continuous process, which evolves and develops throughout the process of this research and I must repeatedly question how my values, expectations and biases may be impacting upon my personal interpretations of others' experiences. It enables me as the researcher to better understand the research process and in doing so, it becomes possible to leave my own "footprints" in the analysis. This is particularly critical when the researcher holds limited or no experience within the realm of what they are researching (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). As a researcher, this process of reflection enables me to bring the voice of the women and children who have been abused in their intimate relationships to the research process. This is an ethical response to research on the effects of violence on women and children.

Understanding Domestic Violence in New Zealand

Definitions of domestic violence are necessarily embedded within political and historical contexts and are enabled or constrained through multiple ideological positions within gendered social hierarchies (Shea Hart, 2006). Various terms have been used to reflect different meanings of violence against women and children that have the ability to define the space through which experiences can be named, with implications for policy and practice. Terms such as family violence, spousal abuse, wife battering, intimate partner violence and domestic violence are used variably within the field both enabling and constraining understandings as it produces others.

For the purposes of this research, the term 'domestic violence' is used to be consistent with the language frequently used in the literature, and in the legislation related to violence in intimate relationships in New Zealand (Domestic Violence Act, 1995, amended 2012). The use of generic terms for domestic violence mask the social context in which the movement against domestic violence originated (Stewart 2004), and represents a gendered social problem as if it were gender neutral.

Domestic violence is an abuse of power perpetrated against an intimate partner, usually by men, and can be understood as an attempt by a partner to dominate and control the other through physical and/or sexual violence, threats and intimidation,

and often includes emotional, social and economic abuse. It is the exercise of control by one adult, over another; the prevalent pattern being women and children victimised by men (Barraclough, 2004; Holden, 2003; Humphreys & Mullender, 2000; D. A. Wolfe, Crooks, Lee, McIntyre-Smith, & Jaffe, 2003). While domestic violence as a term accounts for the violence that occurs in the home, it has also been criticised for being gender neutral by its failure to recognise that the majority of violence in the home is perpetrated by men against women and children. Domestic violence has been defined as “the intimate context within which one partner is abused by another, involving both men and woman as victims and same sex partner violence” (Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008, p. 798). Gender neutrality within this definition can be viewed in a positive light in that it highlights the diversity of the culture of domestic violence while on the other hand this neutrality complements patriarchal discourse by overlooking or minimising the reality that women are overrepresented as the victims. For example, it has been reported that in 2008, 34,186 men were arrested for violence against their partner while only 6,748 women were arrested for the same act in that year (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2009).

Consistent with the gender neutral definition of domestic violence is the term family violence. While family violence and domestic violence may appear inclusive, they fail to account for the specific gendered dynamics of violence against women and children, and tend toward an understanding of violence as single acts of physical assault. Without an understanding of the effects of systematic abuse, it limits understandings of the problem to family conflict, and/or as a private concern (Richards, 2011; Shea Hart, 2006) where there is an assumption of equal power between partners.

In this research, it is not assumed that all domestic violence occurs within heterosexual relationships. Domestic violence is its own culture within society, and is not limited by class, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, socio economic status or education level. Thus, we must understand that children with a wide variety of backgrounds have experienced the effects of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act (1995) is designed to protect not only heterosexual but also gay and

lesbian couples; it seeks to protect children, family members, flatmates and anyone else in a close personal relationship (New Zealand Police, 2011).

The legislation on domestic violence in New Zealand interprets violence as physical, sexual and psychological. Psychological violence includes but is not limited to intimidation, harassment, property damage, and *threats* of physical, sexual or psychological abuse (Domestic Violence Act, 1995, amended 2012). According to section 3 subsection (3)(a&b) psychological abuse of a child occurs if a person causes or allows the child to see or hear domestically located violence, or if a person puts a child at risk of seeing or hearing that abuse (Domestic Violence Act, 1995, amended 2012). This is an important piece of legislation both here in New Zealand and internationally and has the potential to inform understandings of the best interests of children.

Children who live in homes characterised by violence directed at one parent or partner by the other are often understood as the silent, forgotten, unintended, invisible victims of domestic violence (Richards, 2011). There has been debate throughout the literature as to the effects of children's experiences of hearing or seeing, and whether such experiences are exposure, witnessing, or victimisation (Edleson, 1997; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Holden, 2003). Children do not always see the violence being carried out, but they may hear it, or experience the aftermath of their home being damaged, their father in an angry rage, or their mother physically hurt. Some children may be the victims of abuse; how one understands the various impacts of domestic violence upon a child is critical. It has been discussed that exposure to domestic violence is not a one-dimensional experience, but rather something that encompasses the entire context of the situation (Holt, et al., 2008). To limit the meaning of the complexities and effects to 'witness' assumes to have seen a discrete act and excludes the experiences of the aftermath and on-going repercussions of domestic violence. To locate the child as a victim may reproduce their oppression. For the purposes of this research, the term exposure will be used to account for the complex meanings of domestic violence and the multiple experiences of children who suffer abuse and/or are exposed to violence in their families – the distinction between the two is rarely discrete (Richards, 2011). The effects of children's exposure to domestic violence is becoming increasingly recognised (Humphreys, 2008; Richards, 2011).

Critical to the heart of this research is that it does not assume that all children exposed to domestic violence suffer the on-going effects of trauma. It would be unethical and misleading to assume that adult children are a heterogeneous group. Rather, they have diverse histories of violence and protection (Richards, 2011).

Resilience

I propose here that any mental or behavioural act through which a person attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose any form of violence or oppression (including any type of disrespect), or the conditions that make such acts possible, may be understood as a form of resistance. (Wade, 1997, p. 25)

The meaning of resilience as a construct has also been highly contested. Psychological definitions of resilience tend to focus on personality traits in relation to adaptation to high risk factors associated with positive adaptation processes, resistance to stress and recovery from trauma or adversity. In this way, resilience has been defined as the maintenance of healthy and/or successful behaviours and adaptations despite the exposure to stressful or adverse conditions (Cicchetti & Rogosch, 1997; Garmezy, 1993b; Masten, 2001; C. Smith & Carlson, 1997). Not all adverse situations and stressful events have the same impact upon children; instead it is thought that having healthy coping mechanisms and protective factors will increase an individual's resistance to stress as well as maladaptive behaviours and consequences, thus resulting in high resilience (C. Smith & Carlson, 1997). Consistent with the theoretical assumptions of this research, resilience is useful to contextualise risk and understand some of the protective factors and processes that enable and sustain effective outcomes *within* a context of resistance to violence and oppression, and the conditions that enable it (Wade, 1997). It is important to recognise the effects of gendered social power relations in the meanings of resilience. This understanding of resilience has implications for the ways resilience is understood for interventions to eliminate domestic violence and to promote well-being in vulnerable populations. How children respond to living with violence will depend on how they understand their own position embedded in relationships of

violence and resistance (Allen, 2011). Resilience, therefore, does not occur separately from its relationship with vulnerability; it is dynamic. Children and young people are at 'risk' of negative life outcomes when, among other risk factors, they live the effects of violence in their homes. Some children do adjust well and are therefore considered resilient if they develop normatively. Research has often focussed on the individual factors that contribute to resilience but ignore the social and cultural meanings of violence, and its socio-cultural and temporal positioning of children.

The aim of this research is to bring 'voice' to the experiences of adult children who were exposed to domestic violence as children, to their experiences, their insights, their resistances, their contradictions (Taylor, et al., 1996) to produce a counter narrative to risk and deficit and to the problem of domestic violence. Using narrative analysis, this research focuses on how adult children construct their past experiences of violence, and how they position themselves in their narratives. It is argued that these accounts have the potential to open an ethical space where children's experiences can inform social change in the intervention to domestic violence.

The following chapter reports on the research that investigates the impact that domestic violence has upon children; it looks at social, historical, cultural and individual factors, which act upon the children. The following chapter also goes on to investigate how a patriarchal society has impacted our view of the mother and her role in these complex and sometimes devastating situations.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

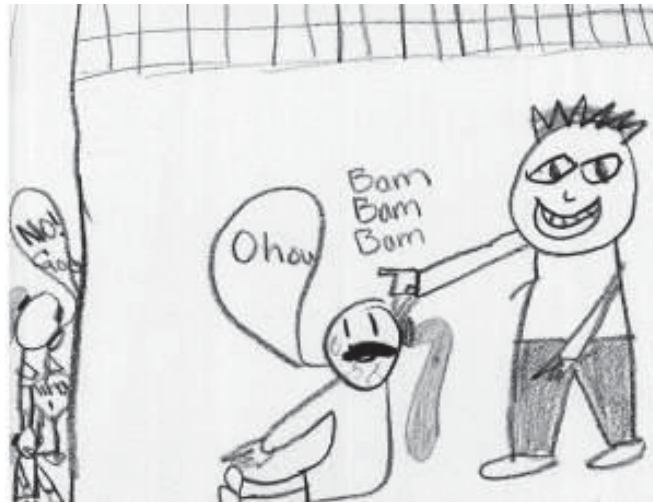


Figure 2: Child's Artwork(National Children's Awareness Month, 2010)

PREVALENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, QUANTITATIVELY SPEAKING

The prevalence of domestic violence is particularly hard to determine, in part due to reporting issues and differences in how violence is measured. However, a review on international estimates has suggested that at least 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime, and New Zealand was estimated to be among the highest (Heise, Ellsberg, & Gottemoeller, 1999). 1 in 3 New Zealand women experience domestic violence in their lifetime (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; New Zealand Families Commission., 2009), with Māori women 3 times more likely to be abused by an intimate partner (New Zealand Taskforce for Action on Violence Within Families., 2006) and 1 in 4 children estimated to have been exposed to domestic violence in the home (Lievore, et al., 2007) domestic violence in New Zealand can be understood as a social and economic epidemic. It has been estimated that the financial cost of domestic violence in New Zealand is 8 billion dollars a year (Contesse & Fenrich, 2008).

Measures of domestic violence have often limited the construct to physical violence, however physical violence is almost always accompanied by psychological abuse and one third of the time accompanied with sexual violence

(Heise, et al., 1999). In their research it was found that a lifetime and 12 month prevalence study addressed the question of measures of violence by including psychological/emotional, physical, and sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) that are included in the DV Act 1995 (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). In this New Zealand population study, it was found that the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence was 55%. Of these women, 33% had experienced more than one form of violence, usually psychological/emotional violence *and* physical and/or sexual violence.

The most often cited statistical data on domestic violence in New Zealand uses police reporting data. Reported incidents of domestic violence increased by 54% between 2000 and 2006. During this same period, more than half of domestic violence offences involved violence, and 1% of offences reported were sexual violence (New Zealand Families Commission., 2009). Sexual offences have been identified as the most likely offence to be underreported (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2012), with an estimated 9% of sexual offences reported to police (New Zealand. Ministry of Justice., 2009). In 2010, there was a total of 85,617 Family Violence Incident Reports (FVIR) recorded. Of those, 39,993 were coded as a 'domestic incident' and 53,316 recorded family violence offences (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2012). It has been argued that reported incidents of domestic violence are not representative of all incidents and tend to be skewed towards more serious violence, privileging physical violence (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2009).

Reported incidents can inform what we know about those incidents that come to police attention. However, it is well documented that there is considerable under-reporting of domestic violence, and in a NZ study, fewer than 12.8% had reported their experiences to police (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). It has been estimated that approximately 18% of family violence cases are reported to police (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2009). Research has shown that women seek help when they can no longer endure the abuse (Stubbs, 2002) or when they fear for their children's and their own safety and many women fear the repercussions following reporting (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010). It is also believed that only the most serious of incidents are reported and the majority of violence is dismissed by the

victim as insignificant (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2009). This is a form of minimisation; the violence is not serious enough to warrant intervention (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010).

The number of children exposed to domestic violence is also difficult to determine. International research reports that between 3.3 and 10 million children and adolescents are exposed to domestic violence every year within the United States (B. Carlson, 1984; DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Straus, 1992). It has been argued that these figures are difficult to pinpoint and cannot easily be used to demonstrate the full extent of the problem as it is likely that this exposure in many situations are not discrete events, but rather children are being constantly exposed to different levels and forms of abuse, and they themselves may also be victims of this abuse (Edleson, 1997). Of the 85,617 recorded domestic violence incidents in 2010, it was reported that 94,099 children were present at the time of the incident (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2012), being mindful that reported domestic violence is estimated between 12-18%. These statistics are troubling as research on domestic violence suggests that domestic violence is also linked to other forms of violence, such as child abuse, with an estimated co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse between 30-70% (Shea Hart, 2004; Sullivan, Nguyen, Allen, Bybee, & Juras, 2000; Tomison, 2000). In a study involving women within refuges, it was found that 90% of the time the children were exposed to the violence, and 50% of the time the children had also been abused; this study also noted that in 58% of all recorded domestic violence incidents, children were present within the home (Maxwell, 1994). Another New Zealand study found that domestic violence was most common among families with young children, and it is these young children who are most vulnerable to exposure as they spend the most time at home where the violence is occurring (Barraclough, 2004). In a 2006 study, it was found that up to 25 % of adolescents were exposed to domestic violence (Martin, Langley, & Millichamp, 2006). There has been increasing attention to the psychological and emotional abuse of children and Child, Youth and Family Services in New Zealand have reported an increase in psychological and emotional abuse notifications since 2004 (New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse., 2012).

Reporting however, remains problematic. Research suggests that more often than not, mothers underestimate the extent to which their children are exposed to domestic violence; in many cases, parents believe that if their children are not witnessing the event they are then unaware of what is going on, which is certainly not the case (Holden, 2003; Osofsky, 2003). Exposure to domestic violence has been linked to a range of psychological, emotional, behavioural and social concerns for children, including youth suicide and an increased risk of repeating the cycle of violence themselves (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Lievore, et al., 2007; Ministry of Social Development., 2002; D. A. Wolfe, et al., 2003).

PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: THE NUMBERS GAME

Behaviour is only an external indicator of the child's subjective experience and coping ability. Little is yet known about the intrapsychic processes by which children experience, interpret, and react to the stress of living in a home with domestic violence. (S. Douglas, 1997, p. 2)

There is significant evidence indicating that exposure to domestic violence can lead to increased behavioural problems such as aggression, bullying, insomnia, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and temperament problems (Carter, Weithorn, & Behrman, 1999; DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Edleson, 1999; Holt, et al., 2008; Humphreys & Mullender, 2000; Huth-Bocks, Levendosky, & Semel, 2001; Kilpatrick, Litt, & Williams, 1997; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003; Osofsky, 2003). Aggression appears to be a common theme throughout the literature and research demonstrates that children who are exposed to domestic violence have increased levels of aggression and greater problems with violence and bullying (Baldry, 2003; Currie, 2006; Edleson, 1997; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Henderson, 2004; T. I. Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Moylan, 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; Kilpatrick, et al., 1997; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Osofsky, 2003).

Current research has identified that children exposed to domestic violence frequently exhibit internalising and externalising behaviours. Internalising behaviours identified by researchers include depression, anxiety, phobias, somatic complaints, social withdrawal, lowered self-esteem, suicidal ideation, insomnia and bed wetting (Barracough, 2004; DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Edleson, 1997; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Henderson, 2004; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Osofsky, 2003). Externalising behaviours included aggression, disobedience, destructiveness, violence, bullying, animal cruelty, abusive behaviour, antisocial tendencies, conduct problems and delinquency (Currie, 2006; Edleson, 1999; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Henderson, 2004; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; Kilpatrick, et al., 1997; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001).

Psychological problems played a large role in some of the measurable effects noted by the researchers. A common relationship was noted between the exposure to domestic violence and the development of PTSD symptoms. It was found that children who have been exposed to domestic violence have a greater risk of developing PTSD (Barracough, 2004; Carter, et al., 1999; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001; Kilpatrick, et al., 1997; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001).

Research has shown a significant correlation between being exposed to domestic violence and becoming a victim of child abuse (Barracough, 2004; Humphreys & Mullender, 2000). Evidence suggests that children who witness domestic violence are 15 times more likely to be abused by the same perpetrator than children living without domestic violence (Holt, et al., 2008; Moffitt & Caspi, 1998). It has been argued that exposure to domestic violence as well as being a victim of child abuse (including physical, sexual abuse and bullying and neglect) has a far more significant impact upon the child's development than abuse or exposure alone (Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001; Osofsky, 2003).

Research has identified a relationship between growing up with a violent parent and having on-going difficulties in future intimate relationships. It has been proposed through the use of social learning theory, that when children are exposed to

violence they are more inclined to learn to use it in their own relationships with others (Edleson, 1999; Henderson, 2004). This was further supported throughout the literature with evidence indicating that children who are exposed to domestic violence learn that violence is a way of dealing with conflict, that it is a vital part of intimate relationships, that the offender will often go unpunished and that violence is a method of controlling others (Barraclough, 2004; Maxwell, 1994; Moffitt & Caspi, 1998; Osofsky, 1995).

It has been argued that exposure to domestic violence is one of the strongest determinants of the development of violence in future intimate relationships for these children (Holt, et al., 2008; Indermaur, 2001; Moffitt & Caspi, 1998; Osofsky, 1999, 2003). It is now becoming known that exposure to domestic violence has a significant effect in adolescent's earliest intimate experiences (Moffitt & Caspi, 1998). For example, young women, who were exposed to their mother's abuse, are at risk of repeating the intergenerational cycle of violence accepting victimisation in their intimate relationships (Osofsky, 2003). This intergenerational cycle of domestic violence is of great concern, as it is one of the most significant effects of growing up in a home with domestic violence.

Gender differences have also been found in the effects of violence on children. For example, research has shown that boys exhibit more externalised problems such as violent behaviour and hostility, while girls display more internalised problems such as depression and anxiety (Baldry, 2003; Edleson, 1997, 1999; Fergusson & Horwood, 1998; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008). It has been suggested that while girls exposed to their mothers being abused learn that violence is a normal way to be treated within intimate relationships, boys witnessing their father being violent learn that violence is an appropriate response to conflict and disagreements (Baldry, 2003). Literature suggests that boys are more likely to approve of the violent behaviour displayed by their parents than girls are; because of this, boys are more likely to use violent control as a coping method in their adult relationships (Edleson, 1997). However, social learning theory and the intergenerational transmission of violence cannot explain why many children do not become perpetrators or susceptible to victimisation (Richards, 2011).

RESILIENCIES ARISING FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

“We are all born with an innate capacity for resilience, by which we are able to develop social competence, problem-solving skills, a critical consciousness, autonomy, and a sense of purpose” (Bernard, 1995, p. 1).

When studying the effects of domestic violence upon children, one must not take a unilateral view. We must not over-pathologise children, or expect outcomes of the inevitability of the intergenerational transmission of violence. In this section of the literature review, I bring together the psycho-social research that informs what we know about resilience and how particular resiliencies are necessary to adaptive non-violent outcomes (Masten, 2001; Suzuki, et al., 2008); the factors and relationships that enable children to manage the adverse conditions synonymous with living with domestic violence.

Personality Factors and Social Support

There is no one system that can be found to be more influential than another when understanding resilience as a dynamic process. Individual factors, relationships and social and cultural meanings of violence are necessary to protective systems. A 2010 study argues that there are clear indicators that are necessary for resilience (Masten & Wright, 2010); people and community resources and meaningful value systems. These include the development of positive relationships, and positive meaning making experiences informed through interactions with others (school, family members, community support and value systems).

It is well known that the first years of a child’s development are crucial in that it creates the building blocks for the rest of their development. It is at this point of their life that a child is highly impressionable and any disruption such as on-going violence can create long lasting effects, especially when it is continuous (Barraclough, 2004).

Personality factors have been identified within the literature as impacting on the ways a child learns to cope with the stresses of living with domestic violence. For

example, children with higher levels of self-esteem have been found to adapt better than those with lower levels; self-esteem has been described as a foundational element of resiliency and as an internal coping resource (Henderson, 2004; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; McRae, 1990; Moran & Eckenrode, 1992; Osofsky, 1999).

It has been found that a defining personality factor of those children with high levels of resiliency is their ability to develop positive relationships with their peers and other adults; they demonstrate warmth, humour, extroversion and responsiveness (Bernard, 1995; Osofsky, 1999; C. Smith & Carlson, 1997; Werner, 2001). The literature argues that resilience does not stem from some extraordinary levels of functioning, but rather from the normal features and resources of a child's development (Masten, 2001); it is common in that it does not evolve from rare qualities, instead resilience is a possibility and reality for many children growing up and developing in the context of domestic violence.

It has also been found that there is a significant relationship between intellectual ability and a child's level of resiliency when exposed to domestic violence (E. C. Herrenkohl, Herrenkohl, & Egolf, 1994; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; C. Smith & Carlson, 1997). Intelligence has been discussed as a building block that helps the child to differentiate themselves from their parent's behaviour and to seek external supports when necessary (T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Osofsky, 1999).

It has been found that while children often need someone to talk to about these experiences, parents and social services often undermine and minimise just how much violence the child has been exposed to, resulting in children being unable to communicate how they are feeling (Groves, Zuckerman, Marans, & Cohen, 1993). Research has found that not only are children being made invisible, it is linked to the risk of substance abuse in adolescence associated with the stress of being a silent victim (Groves, et al., 1993). Research has found that while parents underestimate their children's exposure to domestic violence, and attempt to protect their children from the violence by not talking about it, children do best when they have a caring adult they are able to talk to about the distressing experience (Radford & Hester, 2006). The development of a strong relationship has been linked

significantly with resilience; characteristics of these relationships with an adult include pro-social tendencies, positive attitudes, and care and compassion. A relationship that is nurturing, stable, and consistent while providing the child with a good source of high self-esteem is linked to resilience (Benard, 1991; Carter, et al., 1999; Edleson, 1997; E. C. Herrenkohl, et al., 1994; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Osofsky, 1999; C. Smith & Carlson, 1997; Werner, 1990, 2001). It is important for children to have a relationship that builds trust in an ongoing relationship of availability and support (Holt, et al., 2008; Radford & Hester, 2006).

Peers and siblings can also provide a significant level of support to a child who is experiencing domestic violence within their home; not only can these relationships act as protective factors they can also provide an escape and an outlet for the child and buffer the effects of stress and constant concern (Holt, et al., 2008; Osofsky, 1999). Sibling care giving has been found as a common theme amongst children exposed to domestic violence and can buffer the effects of this exposure; unfortunately, however in some extreme cases children begin to act as surrogate parents for one another resulting in decreased levels of resiliency (Werner, 2001).

Social bonds have been determined as a source of support and caring within a community context; these bonds provide children with stability, high expectations and opportunities, which help to buffer the effects of exposure to domestic violence. It has been examined throughout the research that the destruction of these social bonds and support systems are a major underlying cause of the development of many social problems for children exposed to domestic violence (Benard, 1991).

School has been a major focus of the literature on resiliency. It has been argued that schools provide children with respite, opportunities, structure, organisation, expectations, rule enforcement, a place for participation, and a way of avoiding their home life (Benard, 1991; Bernard, 1995; Holt, et al., 2008; Werner, 2001). Other community networks such as cultural groups have also been recognised for their beneficial aspects in helping children develop resiliency (E. C. Herrenkohl, et al., 1994).

It is important for the purposes of this research to fully understand the experiences within a child's life that enable them to build resiliencies in relation to the negative aspects of growing up with domestic violence; how these children negotiate a life lived free of violence.

Discursive research on resiliency and domestic violence suggests that both the effects and the social and psychological response to and resistance of oppression are interwoven in daily lives (Todd, Wade, & Renoux, 2004; Wade, 2007). Because 'open' resistance is not always safe or practical, the victim often expresses resistance and resilience through indirect methods within social interactions (Wade, 2007). Within dominant discourse, violence is often minimised and any resilience or resistance to violence enacted by women is understood as hostile (Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008), helpless or pathologised (Todd, et al., 2004; Wade, 2007). A particular example of the positioning of women can be understood through the discourse of mother blame.

MOTHER BLAME

What concerns me is the framework of [the Child Safety Department] in dealing with domestic and family violence . . . even where there is recognition of the violence that a male might be using in a relationship; their focus is on the woman and her capacity to protect the children. Not about his capacity to cease using violent or abusive behavior, the emphasis is on her capacity. The focus is on her and the level of misplaced and transferred responsibility onto the women is quite dangerous and has significant implications for women. (H. Douglas & Walsh, 2010, p. 493)

According to a 2007 study, dominant discourse can manipulate resilience in such a manner to shift the responsibility for violence against women and children onto the mother (Wade, 2007). It has been argued that living with violence can affect mothers' relationships with their children, especially where women experience maternal stress and depression and live in constant fear (Holt, et al., 2008). Under

these circumstances, mothers may be unable to provide the developmental resources such as trust and security necessary for healthy outcomes. They may also use physical violence. Research that focus on these deficits outside the context of living with violence, reproduce mother blame discourse – mothers are blamed for the effects of violence on their children.

Research focussed on the negative impact domestic violence has on a mother's ability to parent, has argued a depressed mother subjected to domestic violence is unable to provide a child with emotional support (Barraclough, 2004; DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Erikson & Henderson, 1992; Holt, et al., 2008; Martinez-Torteya, Bogat, Von Eye, & Levendosky, 2009; Osofsky, 1999), she hinders the child's social development (Barraclough, 2004), she is to blame for the child's behavioural problems (Edleson, 1997; Moffitt & Caspi, 1998), she fails to support the child's development of intellectual and cognitive abilities (Caplan, 2010; Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001), she provides the child with less warmth and consistency (DeVoe & Smith, 2002), and she fails to allow the child to develop a secure attachment with her (Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Osofsky, 1999).

The positioning of women in mother blame discourse resonates with her relationship with an abusive (ex)partner; many perpetrators of domestic violence undermine the parenting of mothers through strategies of manipulation, contradiction, destruction of self-confidence and by directing the child's perception of their mother into a negative light (Cunningham & Baker, 2007). Several ways in which abusers undermine the abilities of mothers are maintaining control over reproduction, implicating the child in the abuse of the mother, abusing the child as a way of abusing the mother, control over domestic labour and childcare, threats of harm and suicide, practices of familial and social isolation, manipulating institutions, and on-going humiliation (Radford & Hester, 2006). It is her inadequacy that is used to compete for control of the child (Cunningham & Baker, 2007), and this is especially so within the family court system. For example, it is argued that the practice of custody law governs gender. In practice it enables "men as fathers... to engage in nonreciprocal exercises of power that have negative effects

on the everyday lives of mothers and children” (Elizabeth, Gavey, & Tolmie, 2012, p. 23).

Mother blame has become deeply embedded within society through social power relationships that have produced motherhood as responsibility for children’s normal development. This disproportionately shifts the blame for any of the child’s problems onto the mother and minimises any effect the violence and manipulation of the perpetrator may have upon the child. Blame placed upon the mother can result in her feeling responsible, guilty and anxious which can then impede her ability to develop a sound relationship with her child; as if the child is unaffected by the actions of the perpetrator (Caplan, 2010). This research is interested in the positioning of mothers in the context of domestic violence and how it impacted on children’s relationships with their mothers, and how relationships with the perpetrator may have impacted upon the relationship the child desired with their mother. As new research unfolds, a shift needs to be made from mother blame to a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of the perpetrator on children.

Rather than focus on mother blame, the effects of violence on children, both direct and exposure, it is the perpetrator’s actions that should be the focus (Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). Research has emerged that suggests that a group of perpetrators of domestic violence are likely to parent in such a way that is also negligent and abusive toward children (Bancroft & Silverman, 2002). These behaviours will not only directly affect the child, but will also impact upon the mother’s ability to effectively care for her child as he physically abuses her in front of them, contradicts her parenting style and forbids her to make certain decisions regarding the children. It is argued that some perpetrators demand a special status within the family that involves the right to use violence and abusive language as well as partaking in selfish and self-centred behaviour (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). It has also been suggested that it is commonly found that these perpetrators demand greater levels of control over their children and partners by seeking custody of their children at greater rates than non-batterers (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family, 1996).

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Attributing acts of domestic violence to substance abuse has also shifted attention away from perpetrator responsibility. Substance abuse among perpetrators and victims of domestic violence is undesirably common, and it can be assumed that it is a complicating problem in the already complex relationships that children exposed to domestic violence face. It is argued in the research literature that substance use can significantly increase the prevalence of violence within the home while also reducing adherence to 'men's living without violence' (Bhatt, 1998; Collins, Kroutil, Roland, & Moore-Gurrera, 1997; Easton, Swan, & Sinha, 1999; Maiden, 1997). Not only does substance use increase the prevalence of domestic violence, research also indicates that it increases the severity of the violence used against the victim (Easton, et al., 1999). It has been found that 86% of perpetrators had used alcohol on the day of a discrete incidence, and up to 92% has used some form of substance (Brookoff, O'Brien, Cook, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Research on the relationship between treatment of substance abuse and a reduction of violence found that while treatment may reduce domestic violence it cannot eliminate it altogether (Maiden, 1997). The use of alcohol cannot explain domestic violence, although it is argued that men who are either alcohol dependent or batterers, or both, show similar patterns of denial, minimisation, projection and rationalisation (Collins, et al., 1997; Maiden, 1997). While use of substances may increase risk and severity of acts of violence, it is argued that domestic violence is an on-going pattern of domination and subordination and isolating a discrete incident and attributing causality to substance use deflects perpetrator responsibility for the violence, and minimises the experiences of women and children (McGray, 2008).

THE FORGOTTEN VOICE: THE CHILDREN

Within the literature it has been agreed upon that children make up a large forgotten and overlooked voice in the context of domestic violence (Cheng, 2006; Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001; Elbow, 1982; Groves, et al., 1993; Masters, 2000; UNICEF., 2006). Throughout the history of domestic violence research and intervention strategies children have become the silent witnesses, and are only just becoming visible in more recent times (Dauvergne & Johnson, 2001; Elbow, 1982). In reported cases, it is too often that children who witness domestic violence are

recorded by police officers as an assessment category (94 099 in NZ in 2010), and appear as a statistic (Masters, 2000). The problem of a focus of legal interventions is that the relationship between the adults remains the focus. Research has shown that amidst all the commotion that is the pattern of domestic violence, legal interventions fail to enforce certain child protection laws (UNICEF., 2006). There are interventions for women and children that seek to enhance safety, however knowledge of the experiences of those children who do not come to the attention of services may provide valuable resources to legal responses to domestic violence and to service provision.

RESEARCH AIMS:

It is increasingly clear that further research on how children exposed to violence make sense of the impact of domestic violence as they negotiate lives free of violence, the stresses and the resiliencies. How children make sense of these experiences is the heart of this current research, to bring into view their often forgotten voices.

This research aims to understand how adult children who grew up with domestic violence make sense of their experiences. It explores how they make sense of the effects on their relationships with their families, and their adult relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

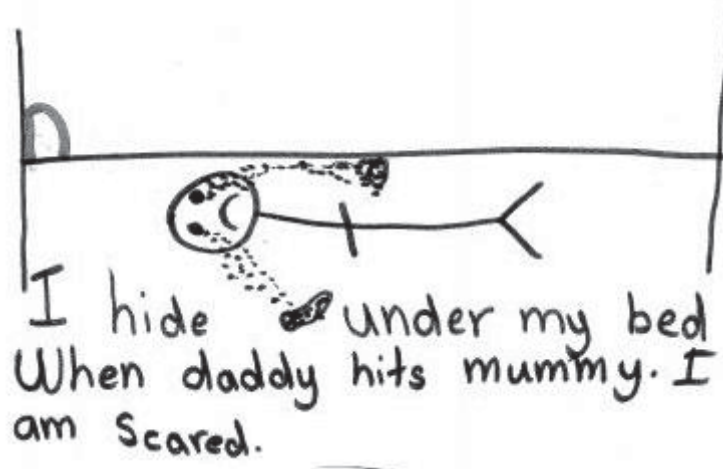


Figure 3: Child's Artwork (Shine., 2012)

Feminist standpoint theorists argue that the researcher's positionality affects every aspect of the research process, from the research question, the method of analysis, and the presentation (Harding, 1995). Rather than reduce experience to the level of individual affects separate from the context within which the experience occurred, this research seeks to understand the lived effects of domestic violence through narratives that attend to the historical, social and cultural relationships that they are embedded in. Attending to social power relations within this framework attends to the lives of the marginalised, and this research therefore attends to the stories of those who have been silenced in domestic violence research.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

Narrative inquiry is based on the assumption that stories enable us to make sense of highly stimulating and stressful events, experiences, feelings and emotions (Bruner, 1990). It has been identified that the relationship between our understanding of ourselves (identity) and social power relations can inform our understanding of the psychology of trauma (Crossley, 2003).

Rather than mirror reality, stories are constantly open to change. They are embedded within complex and often competing socio-political relationships (Crossley, 2000), including dominant discourses of patriarchy that produce, for

example, mother blame. Through narrative inquiry, we can begin to unravel the impact of oppression (Riessman, 1993), and violence on those who live its effects.

Born from the soil of discontent (Fine, 2007b, p. 613)

From a review of the forms of narrative inquiry, there appears to be many interpretations of the narrative turn, however it is commonly assumed that it was instigated by a burning need to empower the voices of those who are oppressed; to create change in society and politics where numbers and statistics have not made a significant impact on social change (Crossley, 2000; Riessman, 1993). It enables us to bring volume to the voices of those who are silenced through social power relations; it is a method for expressing stories of pain and oppression to bring about political change.

According to the literature all social science research is narrative, including the research process (Sarbin, 1986). The narrative history of psychological knowledge production that legitimates quantitative research devoid of socio-political context has oppressed the experience or silenced those in the most pain (Fine, 2007a). The development of narrative inquiry has been driven by a greater need for social justice and responsibility. It has been described as the bridge between research and the community (Fine, 2007a), a force which binds and brings about the transformation of knowledge into social action. It has been argued throughout the literature, like life itself, narrative is everywhere; it knows no borders, it is international, trans-cultural and trans-historical and it is embedded within everything we know to be true (Barthes, 1977). Because of the relevance of narrative, and the power of experience, researchers have learnt the potential of bringing together voices which are different in and of themselves and also share similar problems within oppressive powers (Mills, 1959). By appreciating and analysing the telling of stories, greater awareness of the oppressive forces of socio-political power can be recognised; personal narratives are now being taken seriously due to their ability to represent social realities away from a single truth to a representation of multiple and diverse experiences within social power relations that produce them (Blackman & Walkerdine, 2001; Squire, 2004).

Narrative Analysis

Events do not present themselves as stories, but it is the experience of an event that becomes a story. (Hiles & Cermak, 2008, p. 149)

Within narrative inquiry, the objective of the study is the story itself (Riessman, 1993). Rather than being interested in facts and measurements located within individuals, narrative inquiry is concerned with how we tell ourselves through lived experience within the social power relations within which we are embedded (Crossley, 2003). In this way, it is the meaning of the story to the experience, the way we construct histories and our on-going relationships within available storylines, that is privileged.

How individuals recount their histories- what they emphasize and omit, their stance as protagonist or victims, the relationship the story establishes between teller and audience – all shape what individuals can claim of their own lives. Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone about one's life; they are the means by which identities may be fashioned. (Rosenwald & Ochsberg, 1992, p. 1)

Rather than reduce the complexities of lived experience, narrative inquiry is concerned with how individuals make their experiences meaningful. Narratives enable a sense of order, meaning and coherence in lived experiences that configure everyday life (Crossley, 2000). Instead of questioning what has happened, as researchers we are asking why the story is being told this way (Riessman, 1993). Understanding that narratives are knowledge of lived experience, a narrative analysis aims to represent common elements of stories and configure them into a meaningful or unified whole, through a process that leads toward an endpoint (Polkinghorne, 1995). Meaning is created through language use within relationships; what we know is not produced by an individual subject (Gergen, 2001). People make sense of their lives, day-to-day experiences, actions and reasons for events. Stories enable us to bring coherency to how we understand our lived lives, our knowledge of ourselves (Crossley, 2003; Fine, 2007b). The

narrative production of identity (as we understand ourselves to be) is enacted through its relationship with other stories, and this may produce resiliencies.

Positioning theory

Research suggests that positioning theory is necessary to narrative research because conversations involve telling stories from particular experiences (A. Morgan, 2002). How we tell our accounts of particular events are also iterations of previous conversations that both enable and constrain knowledge of who we are and how we come to know ourselves. The stories we produce depend on what can be told through available subject positions in a particular moral order.

Positioning theory enables us to make sense of the production of our identities through our socio-political locations and power relations (R. Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). Research reports positioning as the discursive process that locates subjects in conversations as coherent beings in mutually produced storylines (R. Harre, Pilkerton-Cairnie, Moghaddam, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009). Positioning theory and narrative analysis enable us to understand the ways that stories come to be meaningful within narratives of social power that are embedded in our everyday talk. In turn we understand ourselves in relation to each other. In this way, the social meaning of our stories is entwined with the social force of conversation (B. Davies & Harre, 1990). Recent research states that positioning theory is a way in which we can “speak ourselves into our communities, producing ourselves as subjects and communities of voices simultaneously and reproducing them in various versions through multiple relationships” (A. Morgan, 2002, p. 468), which opens the possibility for counter narratives to be told. Subject positions carry particular rights, duties and obligations (B. Davies & Harre, 1990) within storylines that are enabled and constrained through available socio-political narratives and power relations.

Within relationships of domination and subordination a subject may be more or less constrained by what is possible through socially sanctioned storylines, where the rights of the oppressor controls the duties of the oppressed (R. Harre & Slocum, 2003). Within patriarchy, subject positions with the right to enact violence control the subject position available to the oppressed; a duty to accept the abuse without

question (Ofreneo & Montiel, 2010). The differences in the rights and privileges between the oppressor and oppressed can be understood as unequal access to social power.

Narrative inquiry in this study seeks to address how the participants' understand themselves through their storying of the effects of their narrative histories of violence. What are the critical moments and influences in their lives as they (re)negotiate their future relationships? How are participants positioned within socio-political narratives of violence and how are they enabled or limited by their subject position and the enactment of it? How do stories of resilience open possibilities for counter narratives?

Method of Narrative Inquiry

Narrative analysis does not provide researchers direct access to an individual's experience (Riessman, 1993). The narrative that is produced is embedded in the relationship between the participant and the researcher, for a particular purpose. In this research, I had particular questions that informed my own position, in the construction of the research question, the co-construction of the interview, transcription and the analysis. In this way, the research process itself adds to the interpretation of the analysis.

The five levels of representation facilitate the process of narrative analysis and help us to understand how the research process impacts upon our final understandings (Riessman, 1993).

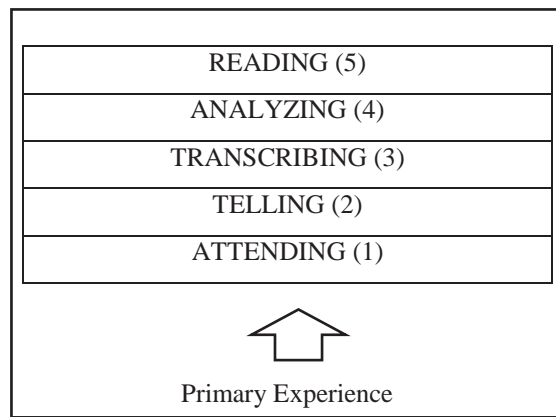


Figure 4: Riessman's Five Levels of Representation (Riessman, 1993, p. 10)

The first level of representation is *attending to the experience*. This occurs as the experience is unfolding and describes what the person notices about the experience; what they attend to and what feelings are evoked. In this selective process, what is noticed will depend on other experiences and interactions that are meaningful to understanding this experience.

The second level of representation is *telling about the experience*. This stage describes the point at which the individual talks to another about their experience, drawing on their socio-political context. The interview, as a process of talking and listening, asking and answering questions, storylines are co constructed. An interviewee imposes order on their telling within the constraints of the interview. There is an inevitable gap between the telling and the experience itself (Riessman, 1993).

The third level of representation is *transcribing the experience*. This is an important phase of the analysis as the narrative makes a transition from being that of the teller to becoming subject to the researcher's interpretations. This phase involves changing the spoken narrative into a written one. Because the interviewee has deprived us of aspects of the experience, and because we as the researcher's choose to select only certain parts of the storyline to attend to, we create gaps within the experience. As the researcher, I was interested in critical moments and influences within socio-political narratives of violence that enabled or constrained stories of resilience. The transcription required decisions about how much detail to

include in the meaning making. Language is neither neutral, nor transparent, and therefore the analysis is an interpretive process (Riessman, 1993).

The fourth level of representation is *analysing the experience*. This section of the analysis involves the identification of themes, or storylines, throughout the narratives. Decisions are made about order, style and how the segments will be presented (Riessman, 1993). Ultimately the goal is to create a meta-story which demonstrates the storylines found throughout these experiences; a hybrid is created through editing and reshaping, described as a 'false' story (Behar, 1993). Once again, it is at this point that the values, culture and context of the researcher, their epistemological position, that informs the method, and the identification of storylines that form the analysis (Riessman, 1993), a form of summation of the narratives produced and turning the stories into a hybrid narrative.

The final level of representation is *reading the experience*. This phase, being the final, is when the reader encounters the narrative and draws their own conclusions and interpretations from the text based upon their own historical, socio-political context. Because of the subjectivity of the text, it has been argued that there is no master narrative of an experience, but rather a narrative stands on moving ground where it is constantly subject to new interpretations (Clifford, 1986). In this way, knowledge is co-produced by participants, researchers and readers.

METHOD

Ethical Considerations

A pre-narrative has been described as occurring when one is unable to discuss particularly painful memories due to the oppression and patriarchal control that has taken place chronically throughout the individual's life (Riessman, 1993). This can arise due to a lack of language to depict the issue, or the opportunity to safely speak about these stressful experiences has not been available. This is an important aspect of narrative inquiry which is worth considering in the current study as it asks participants to talk about how their histories of violence in childhood have impacted on their lives.

Approval for the ethical conduct for this research was obtained from the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/10.

As is ethical practice with research conducted in New Zealand, and as discussed in chapter 1, cultural specificity and diversity was important to this study. The criterion for inclusion in the study was the shared experience of exposure to domestic violence. After much consultation, I developed a protocol that was as inclusive of diversity as possible and reflected a consideration of the concept of Manaakitanga, understood here, as a relationship of respect and care to ensure the dignity of the participants is not compromised. This practice is compatible with the design of this research through a process that values the participants as the knowers of their own experience, within their socio-cultural locations, and the researcher is reflexive on their own position.

Recruitment

Individuals were recruited for this research through employing a snowballing technique. Recruitment of participants through snowballing is widely used in qualitative methods in the social sciences as a response to sampling oppressed or minority groups. It enables the researcher to access an increasing number of participants through contact with an initial participant.

Initially, I notified both my peers and family members regarding the aims of my research and asked them to inform anyone they knew who may be suitable for the research. From that point my peers and family members either provided potential participants with my contact details or the research information sheet and it was left up to the participants to make contact with me; participants needed to volunteer into the study and make the first contact so that they did not feel any pressure to participate.

Participants were not restricted to living in certain cities or countries. Due to the availability of technology, if I could not visit participants on a face to face basis, interviews were conducted using Skype. Due to safety reasons, a requirement of participation was that the participants were over 18 years old; for ethical safety I

also needed to ensure the participant had not been living with the perpetrator for at least two years.

Recruitment of participants was surprisingly easy, and once people became aware of the research there were several requests to take part. Once potential participants made contact with me, either through my cell phone or via email, I promptly contacted them and sent them the information sheet, providing them with an opportunity to carefully consider what the research would require of them. Once I received confirmation of their willingness to participate, I organised a time and location that would best suit the participant in order to conduct the interview. While some interviews were conducted in private homes, others were conducted in more public environments such as cafes and libraries. Only one participant failed to show up to the interview but later apologised and provided me with the reason that they no longer wished to bring up and talk about past memories.

Having read the information sheet and signalled interest in participation, all of the participants gave written and verbal informed consent and were made aware of the stringent confidentiality provided for within this study. Participants were made aware that the interview may stop or the voice recorder may be switched off at any time should they request. I located myself in an informal position so as to depower myself while also providing a small amount of self-disclosure to help the participant relax and feel more comfortable prior to the interview commencing. Participants were aware of my position both as a researcher and as without a history of violence as a child. This was important to the ethical conduct of this study, as a negotiation of the power relationship between researcher and participant, especially where their position as experts of their own experience was valued.

The 9 individuals who chose to participate in this research came from diverse backgrounds and upbringings. All made either direct contact with me or through a third party who was an acquaintance of mine in some form or another.

Initially it was determined that 12 participants would be needed for sufficient data saturation with this research, however after 8 interviews it was apparent that data saturation and high repetition of storylines was already beginning to occur, and

there was no further recruitment after 9 participant interviews were completed. It has been discussed throughout the literature that data saturation with narrative analysis can occur through the repetition of stories and themes with large amounts of interview data; while it is difficult to achieve saturation with a small sample, overly large samples can lead to an increased difficulty in achieving meaningful analysis (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

Interviews

All participants chose the location for the interview to ensure their comfort. In regard to my own safety, my supervisor was informed of each interview and the location before they commenced; she was also advised when the interview had been completed and I had finished with the participant. The interviews took between 30 and 120 minutes and the length depended upon the participant's desire to discuss certain aspects of their experience. When I felt that the interview was coming to a close, I thoughtfully asked the participant if there was anything further that they would like to discuss before we closed the interview.

The interviews were conversational, although I did have questions that related to childhood experiences and relationships with parents and siblings and wider social relationships. I did not follow the focus questions in a lineal way. Through the interview process I listened for storylines that developed and asked further questions, where appropriate, to gain further insight into how particular stories were meaningful. Conversational interviews provide a setting in which conversation is enabled to flow without restriction while still being guided by the ultimate goals of the research. In other words, the questions I brought to the interviews were modified through the participants' responses. This framework was important as it enabled unique or unexpected turns in the conversation. In this way, the relationship between the researcher and participants co-produced the storylines during the interview.

Once the interview was completed, all of the participants engaged in general conversation that gave both them and myself an opportunity to discuss, in a relaxed manner how they felt regarding the interview. No participants regarded themselves as feeling distressed after the interview, although they were made aware that I could

put them in touch with an agency that would be able to provide them with suitable support had they done so. Many of the participants felt really positive after the interview and could only thank me for the opportunity to openly discuss their experiences in a safe environment.

The interviews were voice recorded, however participants had the opportunity to request that the voice recorder be switched off at any point throughout the interview. By voice recording the interview, it enabled me to be completely involved within the conversation as opposed to taking notes; the interview was then transcribed once the interview was complete.

Transcription

All of the participants who completed the interview process consented to the final transcription of their interview and this data was used in the final analysis. Although the participants provided personal details about themselves that may have made them identifiable, all details regarding their home town, name and others' names were removed from the transcript to ensure confidentiality. Transcripts of the interviews were returned to the participants after the interview to give them an opportunity to withdraw from the research, make amendments to their interview, or return it to me unchanged. While no participants chose to withdraw or remove any comments that they had made, two participants added extra information that had arisen for them during the debrief post interview. These additions helped to add further depth to their narratives and provide the researcher with a greater understanding of their experience. All of the participants were given aliases for the purpose of confidentiality and any names or town locations were removed from the text; this helps to further ensure each participant's confidentiality and safety.

An amalgamated story has been created from the experiences of these participants. Their experiences and stories are highly personal and embedded in emotion and therefore are re-presented as a greater narrative, drawing on storylines produced through excerpts brought together by the researcher. This strategy is useful to protecting confidentiality as it does not tell any single story. As I transcribed the interviews, the analysis had already begun as common storylines, from diverse experiences, began to emerge.

Analysing the data

During the process of the interviews and as the transcription was completed, it was clear that each of the 9 participants had diverse histories. While all of the participants had lived in New Zealand, some had migrated to New Zealand, and two had migrated from New Zealand. Many of the participants are now in adult intimate relationships and several have their own children. All of the participants were exposed to domestic violence as children and the majority had also been victims of the perpetrator's violence as well. For many, their experience of being verbally or physically abused became the key storyline; as one participant describes it, the domestic violence going on between my parents "*doesn't even register on my scale of hell*".

The age range (18-60 years) of the participants also re-presented diverse socio-political histories of responses to domestic violence, and yet there were many similar storylines across the range. Participants were also culturally diverse, including their family structures, ethnicity and class but shared similar understandings of domestic violence, a particular cultural practice of the oppression of women and children.

The narrative that is produced in this thesis is a re-presentation of the experiences of adult children exposed to domestic violence. It is retold by the voices of adults reflecting on the initial experience (Riessman, 1993). It is a story of the present as it re-presents the past, with the reflection enabled through other experiences that come with time and age. As the experiences are retold in the interview process, through a conversation, it is produced within the limits of that relationship (Crossley, 2003; Riessman, 1993).

As I considered the diversity among participants, I began to organise the storylines that were common. These storylines enabled me to create a hybrid story; a story that re-presents the diversity within it, and protects participants from being identified. The hybrid story is about bringing together the voices that can tell us something of the ongoing effects of violence on children. Through the storylines, there are commonalities among the battles, dilemmas and struggles that children

who are exposed to domestic violence face. There are also stories of resilience, and opportunities to create positive change.

What is produced through the analysis is a narrative representation of the voices of adult children who were exposed to domestic violence to contribute to the knowledge of the effects of domestic violence and women. The fifth stage of representation brings the reader into the relationship, which in this study, is informed through a feminist standpoint (Riessman, 1993). As I turned the stories into a hybrid story, it was important to reflect on the methodological assumptions of the research, and be open to the stories of strength and courage within oppressive gendered social conditions.

The story begins with turning points within the commonly understood storyline of breaking the cycle of violence. The turning point is a site of change and resilience that is an ongoing process where, as adults, they continue to live and negotiate the ongoing and changing effects. To bring meaning to breaking the cycle, the participants told of their histories of violence. Current intimate relationships and adult relationships with their mothers, fathers and step-parents enabled the past to be told through its meaning in the present. The focus then shifts to stories of recognising significant moments of recognition and response that evoked change. Recognising violence also meant a recognition of emotional and behavioural difficulties, and the participants talked of how they responded to (coped with) violence in their lives.

CHAPTER FOUR: STORIES OF RESILIENCE AND CHANGE

When researching domestic violence, stories of resilience are often not taken into account. Resilience has been defined throughout the literature as the dynamic process of the development and preservation of healthy functioning within the face of adversity (Garmezy, 1993b; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten & Obradovic, 2006; Rutter, 2006). The purpose of this first chapter is to demonstrate how the participants positioned themselves in narratives of change, embedded in relationships of violence and resistance. It attends to storylines that draw on individual factors of resilience, often referred to as protective factors, at the same time as making sense of their position in social and cultural meanings of violence (Allen, 2011).

This chapter is told through attention to stories of personal resilience, located in a relationship between protective factors and understandings of violence as an intergenerational cycle. It is organised through attention to turning points that are understood here, as powerful stories of resilience.

TURNING POINTS: A CHANGE IN POSITION

Within each participant's story, there were turning points in which critical moments or storylines were recognised or decisions were made, that influenced their lives. A number of important relationships emerged in the storylines of resistance.

A significant and recurrent storyline that emerged in the interviews was having a strong and caring relationship with a significant other person. These significant others were positioned as providing some form of protection from the adverse context of their lives. The literature focuses heavily upon the importance of significant others as a protection from the adverse effects of violence on children's development. In reference to protective factors, a relationship with a caring adult is the main, and in many cases the only protective factor that has been consistently found within the literature. It is reported that children are better able to cope with

their experiences of growing up with domestic violence if they have a safe and caring adult to talk to about their experiences in their life (Ayoub, Deutsch, & Maraganore, 1999; Graham-Bermann, DeVoe, Mattis, Lynch, & Thomas, 2006; Levondosky, Huth-Bocks, & Semel, 2002; Masten et al., 1999; Mullender et al., 2002; Osofsky, 1999; Radford & Hester, 2006; Tiet et al., 1998; Wyman et al., 1999). The characteristics of these relationships with an adult included pro-social and positive attitudes, the adult providing care and compassion, and the relationship being nurturing, stable, and consistent while providing the child with a good source of high self-esteem (Benard, 1991; Carter, et al., 1999; Edleson, 1997; E. C. Herrenkohl, et al., 1994; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Holt, et al., 2008; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998; Osofsky, 1999; C. Smith & Carlson, 1997; Werner, 1990, 2001).

Within a socio-political context of domestic violence however, relationships with significant others have been contested. For example, fathers have been positioned within family law as inherently good for children and the responsibility (and the blame) falls upon mothers to keep their children safe. For example, research argues that family courts have tended to adopt the position that despite known patterns of domestic violence, fathers are seen as able to offer benefits to their children through an argument that displaces men's responsibility for violence by positioning women's fears as unreasonable or even harmful to their children (Eriksson & Hester, 2001). In this way, there is an assumption that any fathering is good-enough, leaving mothers open to criticism and blame, enabling men to exercise power over the daily lives of mothers and children (Elizabeth, et al., 2012).

In the stories of protection from adversity, none of the participants in this study positioned fathers as offering benefits. The participants positioned their mothers, grandparents, siblings and other familial relationships as providing protection from harm and as significant to opening spaces for turning points in their lives. Positioning his mother as positive despite her history of abuse, Ben holds his mother as the person who he tries to emulate.

Ben: *My mum did come from an abusive background but she was always a positive lady and she always showed love to everybody and that's the example that I want to take... I want to take on mums words; I want to be positive like her as well...*

In his story of resilience, Daniel positions his mother as his saviour. It was when his mother was able to remove him from his father that he was provided with a turning point:

***Daniel:** Turning point probably was living with my mum, being taken away from my dad, that was probably what saved me, that more than anything, that was probably my big turning point... It was as beneficial as it can be, staying there I think would have been worse...*

Embedded within the secret, or the (un)telling of violence, Ashley's relationship with her brother enabled a story of resilience by providing her with opportunities away from the constant tensions of her daily life. It has been argued within the literature that a positive sibling relationship can help protect against the stresses of living with domestic violence and can provide an element of support and caring (Guille, 2004; Mullender, et al., 2002).

***Ashley:** My oldest brother was abused actually by his biological father, so he helped me a lot growing up and stuff not that he ever knew that it had happened or that it was happening, I think he just suspected... so he'd always be there and he'd do huge amounts of things with me like take me places and things like that just to get me away from the environment that I was in...*

While relationships with significant others did not always culminate in being removed from the lived conditions of violence, they were often a source of strength. In Sarah's account, her aunty recognised the visible signs of violence and provided a stable relationship. It was the connection and safety that was offered that enabled Sarah to understand that not all relationships were necessarily violent:

***Sarah:** My aunty hands down...she was my mum, basically, I still think of her in that light, she died when she was thirty, I was like 13, she was amazing..., she just stayed in my life the whole time she would not let me go... she was definitely, one of my rocks in my life...when she died I think I lost a lot of sort of connection and safety from her... no matter who you are, or what you do, she will always love you, she was determined to love you... but you can always (count) on her for support and love...she would always ask about bruises and things like that... I remember just feeling totally safe with her and just switched on...it would have been a lot worse if she wasn't there...*

Grandparents were also positioned as providing a safe and supportive relationship. Research supports the notion of the role of grandparents and how they can play an

imperative role in the child's life and act as a supportive and protective role model (Cox, Kotch, & Everson, 2003). A turning point for Megan was knowing that she had a place to run that was safe. While this might have only been a dream, it offered a space in which she was able to find respite from the chaos of living with violence. Similar to other accounts, Sarah and Megan were supported by loving relationships that offered protective spaces.

Megan: *My grandmother and I were, so close... she was another safe person in my life especially growing up... she was the safe person in my life really... I can remember I used to dream about running away... I used to plan it that I was gonna run away and I was gonna run to (her place), and I was gonna live with my grandparents you see ... I knew that they were there for me, totally...when my grandmother died in her 90's, mum and I were there and I was crying... and I can remember saying to my mother who will love me now, and she's like well I will, and I'm like no not like that, not like she did... that was just the most unconditional love... yea I think on some level it kinda kept me sane, just that she thought, that I was the bees knees...*

Safe spaces and relationships have been described as playing an important role in the development of resilience as they provide the child with a set of support systems (Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, & Pardo, 1992). For Emily, the safe space enabled through her maternal grandmother provided the kind of nurturing that she attributed to opening pathways.

Emily: *My mothers' parents...they probably had a profound effect because we used to go there for school holidays, and it was a safe place, there was no violence, we never got smacked, if my grandfather put on his gruff voice you stopped and paid attention, but you were well behaved for them, because they were kind...they were very attentive, they looked after us... definitely my grandmothers creativity, all that nurturing of those early sewing and knitting, probably opened a pathway that I've stayed on into that creativity...*

It was not only family relationships that provided resources for stories of resilience. Ben attributes his insight into a process of change to the mentoring of sports coaches. Through these relationships he was enabled a position away from the adverse conditions at home.

Ben: *...I was blessed to live with people later on who showed me what to do... I got into sport and... then I met the right people, my athletics coach for example, while I was into my sport they were also mentors as well, like I said, despite all*

that's happened I've been really blessed to have good people around to point out the right way to go and so I think that's definitely a start to a change

Not all the participants produced storylines of safe spaces enabled through relationships during their childhood. For some, turning points emerged when they formed intimate relationships of their own. It was at the point of meeting boyfriends/partners/husbands that they were able to find safety. Similar to Megan knowing she had a place to run, Claire found that moving away with her boyfriend enabled her a safe space.

Claire: *I didn't realise that I used (weed) for coping until I moved away with my high school sweet heart and completely stopped, I quit for him... cause he wanted me to quit smoking... and he was this stable guy that y'know wanted to go into the military and wanted to get away from everything and had these goals and plans for the future so he was the ideal candidate for me for someone to fall in love with and, I did, first love, we fell pretty hard but, yea, we moved away and it was good, it was good to get away and everything...*

Ashley positioned her husband as her hero, similar to Daniel positioning his mother as his saviour, where she was provided with the space to experience the safety of a significant other; she was given the chance.

Ashley: *My husband was probably the first person... he made me open up to him about things... he's been great, like he's my hero, I call him my hero because, he gave me a chance when no other guy would, like he took the time to sit down and fix me when everyone else would just walk by and stuff like that so he would be really, he's my everything, he is, I know it sounds cheesy and stuff but yea...*

Sarah also positioned her partner as the person who enabled her safety. Both Ashley and Sarah attributed the support they received from their intimate partners as being significant to the ongoing effects of their histories on their healthy functioning.

Sarah: *...My partner's my first boyfriend that I've ever had and we've got a very strong relationship... I'm lucky that he was such a good guy and he is a good guy that he knew something was up but he knew I didn't wanna talk about it, so he never pressured me to do anything.... I didn't really tell him about my stepfather, what happened to me, I only told him that little bit, and he helped me lots through it as well, he gave me a lot of support... it y'know made it so much easier to have someone like that who understands... he was just fantastic...*

While Megan had a relationship with her grandparents as she was growing up that provided a safe space and kept her “sane”, she positioned her husband as the person who saved her from being a ‘basket case’, through a storyline in which she had not been able to function well and was able to begin to break free from the effects of her violent history.

Megan: *I met my husband when I was 15 years old... I look back now and I think he didn't know how much of a basket case he was marrying to ha-ha... and I looked at him as my personal saviour to be honest, he was the person that, enabled me to break away from, my home life and so he was like my rock...*

Even where Daniel and Emily produced a storyline of safe spaces, the effects of violence on their healthy functioning was told through a desire to be saved before the violence began, or when it was recognised.

Daniel: *If somebody had stepped in before I got hit, it could have been a lot different...*

Emily: *I think the only difference that would have been made was for someone to come and pick me up and take me away from it... and I think that if someone had of stepped in and done something for me then, I wouldn't have spent the first 30 years of my life struggling...*

The significance of safe relationships and spaces was critical in these storylines. Where safety of women and children is at the heart of feminist and coordinated, collaborative community interventions into domestic violence (Coombes, Morgan, Blake, & McGray, 2009; Pence & Shephard, 1999), including New Zealand policy on protection (Robertson, 2007), attributing safety to ‘luck’, heroes and saviours suggests that women and children’s safety is far more dependent on contingencies than a change in the socio-political conditions of interventions into domestic violence.

In the stories of protection from adversity, the participants positioned therapists/counsellors as providing a safe relationship through which they were able to receive the help they needed to understand the violence and make sense of their own understanding of the effects, and also the support for making changes in their healthy functioning; they listened.

In this storyline of protection, therapists/counsellors opened spaces for the stories of violence to be heard, and therefore made interventions possible. Ben attributes a turning point in his story to his school counsellor who heard his struggle and stepped in.

Ben: *I couldn't really work at school and stuff so I put it out there to the counsellors what was going on at home and then the next day I came to school with a black eye, and so they took action straight away, and I ended up telling them everything that happened.*

Sarah also attributes a turning point to her counsellor, and being able to talk about the violence in her life with her friends. The provision of a safe space to tell her story enabled her to continue to understand the effects of violence.

Sarah: *I remember getting moved into the counsellors office and I remember my friends just sitting around me and I just blubbered it all out... Was talking to the counsellor helpful? yes, oh god yes, it was hard, 'cause there's days when you just don't want to talk about it... the counselling I think was an excellent way for me to get that out of my system, to talk about it, I'm glad that I stuck to it even though it was real hard...*

Within the face of adversity, a process of change for Emily was enabled through an ongoing engagement with therapy. It was being heard, and being validated through an understanding of the specific gendered story of abuse that provided a safe space for her to develop a sense of healthy functioning.

Emily: *...I went into rehab when I was 28... so the first few years in and out of therapy was about survival and then I went away from it and I went back and then that was about, sort of looking at what the damage had actually done, and so where it was that I was screwed out of shape and trying to get some semblance of normality... I think (my therapist) was just kind enough and gentle enough, she had that faith in me, she saw that somewhere inside of me I was worth it...She had a profound effect, she was a very strong Christian woman, but she was also very aware of the trials that women went through after abuse... she understood... she was a strong woman... taking me in when I was a right little bitch, and I really was a piece of trash when I first arrived there...they put up with some really bad behaviour... which I've apologised for repeatedly, but no they're always so pleased to see me and they're so pleased to see the woman that I've become, and they're so proud of me... last time I saw her she looked at me and she burst into tears and she says I knew you had promise, I knew there was something beautiful inside you... her faith in me being able to turn my life around... yea it's a special one and I mean,*

she never got it right, she never always understood, we struggled but she always stuck with me, yea she never gave up believing in me...

Like Ben, Claire locates a turning point in her story when her therapist stepped in. In this account, the therapist noticed signs that alerted him to intervene. It was this recognition by another person that led to her being provided the safety of a programme where she was enabled the space to make sense of her world, and the opportunity to understand the effects of her environment on her functioning.

Claire: *when I was a teenager I was in therapy...I told mum ok well you sign the papers (for school) or I take off to Vegas, cause I had a job opportunity out there, and when my counsellor heard that he was like right, red flag, red flag, you've gotta rescue your daughter before she takes off and bad things happen to her... people that end up in Vegas end up being kidnapped by drug dealers, forced drugs and then put on the street, so that's what they were seeing where I was headed...*

Claire: *(the deep therapy wilderness programme) was my first big eye opener as a kid, I was like holy shit where's my world where am I going, it totally pulled me out of my environment and showed me what was going on now...*

For Megan, therapy was a last resort. Being able to make sense of her experience through therapy, enabled her to make sense of her feeling of being on the edge as the effect of the violence and was critical to her survival.

Megan: *I was hanging on by my finger nails and it was horrible, it was just horrible and so ended up going back on medication and for the first time having counselling and that was just a huge turn around for me to be able to talk about that stuff that had happened in the past and realise what was happening internally for me it was like yea, that was all happening and somehow I disappeared in all of that and never ever thought about how it was affecting me, but yea through having counselling it really helped me to, kinda think through all of that stuff...*

Opening spaces for the voices of the participants to be heard was critical to the stories of resilience. Being heard enabled safe relationships to develop where the effects of violence could be understood in the context of their healthy functioning.

A crisis is often a turning point that leads to major structural changes in the functioning of a family, and is often reported in domestic violence literature as the point in which women seek intervention (Coombes, et al., 2009). In their stories of resilience, the participants talked about breaking points as being particular critical

moments that enabled change and resulted in a re-positioning of themselves; where they are and where they need to be, a shift from victim to that of fighter/survivor. In the face of adversity, voices of strength emerged through critical events.

A critical event for Sarah was disclosing her abuse. Giving voice to her experience, speaking out against the secret was a point of no return; a permanent change in her position. To speak out was to take up a position that would change her relationships, and shift her position from victim to survivor.

***Sarah:** I remember this was probably the turning point cause I remember my mother, cause I knew that she wasn't on my side, she came in cause the counsellor phoned her... she turned up and I couldn't say it so the I think the counsellor did, she said your husband has been abusing your daughter, and I remember her looking at me and she said to me, you know this is gonna break up my marriage, that was her reaction, to the whole thing, it was this is gonna break up my marriage, not holy shit are you alright, I had no idea my darling daughter, give me a cuddle, not even that...*

Emily's breaking point came from reaching such adverse conditions that she was no longer able to cope. The disclosure of her abuse positioned her as 'sick'. Attributing blame depends upon the extent to which self-blame or perpetrator blame positions those who have been abused (Wilke & Vinton, 2005). Through a storyline that located her as responsible for the effects of her abuse, a space for resistance was possible. Emily resisted the position of blame through recognition that her abuse was not normal; it had effects that were a catalyst for a change in position from 'sick' to fighter.

***Emily:** Coming very, very close to killing myself, that was the major one, being called a fucking sick bitch... Who by? Some guy that I really liked, I'd had a bit of a crush on him, he was a nice guy, he called me a fucking sick bitch, because I'd told him what my father had done, and I realised that in a way that he was actually telling the truth, I was warped out of shape, and I sort of realised that yea, this is not normal I need to do something about it...and I think I sort of became aware that y'know well I needed to sort these things out*

In their stories of resilience in the face of adversity, safe space and safe relationships were critical storylines that enabled the participants to make sense of their lived experiences of the effects of violence on healthy functioning. Spaces

that enabled their voices to be heard, were critical moments in their stories and enabled resistance.

Extracurricular activities appeared in some of the stories and resonated with stories of escape. For these participants, healthy relationships with others, through sport or through meaningful work, were critical to their healthy functioning. Research supports this interpretation in concluding that extracurricular activities provide children with healthy identity formation, peer group membership and an attachment to non-familial adults (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003). In terms of protection, extracurricular activities also provided participants with particular experiences that enabled them to make sense of their position within socio-cultural meanings of violence.

A turning point for Ben was being mentored through sports training which provided a space away from previous undesirable behaviour where he was able to use his energy in pro-social ways through the discipline required of competitive sport. As he reflected on his previous response to adversity, he repositioned himself through the positive effects of being disciplined.

***Ben:** I always had everything else going for me...when I was a kid I was always into my rap music and I was into lifting weights and always trying to be this little muscly guy so we can say that there were always other things to put my energy into, I got into sport and then I met the right people, my athletics coach... while I was into my sport they were also mentors as well... once I got into competing, you soon realise that you might think you're tough but you're not really at all... there's always tougher out there... that's when discipline started kicking in and ever since I've been training and my life's become more positive... I think less about going back to what I used to, it just doesn't make sense now, 'cause like the way I'm living life now is so much better than what I would have been doing when I was doing the other things... it is really time consuming, and so just finding that time to put energy, valuable time, that's what worked for me... you spend so much more time on sport and you get so much more benefits...when you're doing something you enjoy, or you're doing something that's not breaking the law and you're getting rewards from it at the same time, what comparison does it have to going out and getting drunk, getting arrested possibly, getting a criminal record to your name, it just doesn't make sense ...*

In his story of resilience, extracurricular activities enabled Daniel not only with an escape from the adverse conditions of violence, but also enabled relationships with

others with whom he shared an interest that were non-violent. He found a space where he could be free from the effects of violence; surfing enabled healthy functioning.

***Daniel:** Surfing was probably my extracurricular, cause you could go out all day... getting me out of that environment and being with other people that love the environment of being outside and sharing and caring, most surfers are pretty much, don't wanna hurt anyone, don't wanna be a part of what's going on so yea... cause I spent a whole lot of time doing that, pretty much from 10 years old right through until I had my first job...Unwind, relax, enjoy the water, cleanse yourself, enjoy nature, forget about what's going on around ya...*

Like Ben and Daniel who found physical activity meaningful, a turning point for Emily was finding meaningful work. Finding a 'fit' was a critical moment for Emily that enabled a change in positioning from where she was to where she needed to be.

***Emily:** I have worked, prior to my hips being done I had a job, I was there for 8, 9 years as a cook at a residential school and I loved it because I was mum in the kitchen... I loved it, really enjoyed it, ah but then sort of as my hips deteriorated again it became, I went to part time and then I had to stop, I grieved that job because it was the first time in my life that I actually found something that fitted, that I enjoyed doing, that was healthy, emotionally healthy...for the first time it was a legal job...*

For two participants, becoming a mother was the critical moment that enabled change in their response to the effects of violence. Having a child, and taking responsibility for that child, enabled them to shift from the position of victim to that of survivor.

***Megan:** it kicked off when I became a mum, yea that was huge*

Ashley positions her son as her saviour; his conception was the biggest turning point of her life. Positioning herself as responsible for her son meant that she also had to take responsibility for not reproducing the effects of adverse conditions in his life.

***Ashley:** I guess because of the kids, they're making me realise that life's too short and also that I need to deal with this stuff so that I can be a better mum to them...*

I'm kinda lucky to be out, like my son would be my saviour because he saved me and if I had carried on for maybe another 6 months or a year I don't think I'd be here with the way I was going... my biggest turning point that made me I guess have to accept what had happened and deal with it was when I got pregnant with my son, I stopped drugs like straight away, stopped alcohol and just realised that I didn't want to do this to someone else, like I couldn't bring another child into the world and do the same thing that I struggled so much with.

Accessing forgiveness through a belief in god appeared in the stories of two participants. Research has found religion to provide children with belief systems, social supports, and a safe haven while also helping them feel less isolated and over-whelmed as they manage adversity (Hill, Levermore, Twaite, & Jones, 1996). Personal growth has been linked to psychological concepts of inner potential, that enable people to interpret their behaviours so they can move beyond them toward greater good (Coombes & Morgan, 2001). Through their belief in god, these participants drew on the wider narrative of Christian belonging/connection to make sense of their understanding of the effects of their history of violence and the support for making changes in how they understood themselves. Belief systems enable people to construct meaning in their lives and accordingly provide opportunities for change in actions (Coombes & Morgan, 2001). In this storyline of protection, the participants' belief systems opened up an opportunity to forgive their abuser and reposition themselves within stories of healing and personal growth.

Megan told of a process of becoming Christian, which enabled her to find a place in which she 'fitted' and this sense of belonging was a crucial turning point toward healthy functioning.

Megan: *My husband and I became Christians and there was some part of me that needed to find a way of forgiving him... I think that that has really helped us to come through that forgiveness process, not because we have to or anything like that, but it's about that whole understanding that the longer I hold onto any kind of unforgiveness towards him the more bound we are... I tell you what the turnaround was for me and I can name it, it was this understanding that god made me because he wanted to have me in the world just like me, for this time, and that was huge because I'd always felt like I never fit... and so I think that understanding that actually god created me exactly how I am because he wanted to add me to this world was huge for me, it was like actually I am created perfectly, for who he wants me to be, and so when you talk about the healing and my faith that was the turning point for me, it was the actually I'm ok and if you don't like it well there's something wrong with you...*

Emily also told of a process of forgiveness as critical to healthy functioning. Her belief system enabled her to counter feelings of loneliness that emerged as an effect of living with violence; it provided her with a safe space to address her depression with the belief that someone (god) loves and cares about her.

Emily: I had a profound experience as I believed in god and after a year or two understood that power of unforgiveness actually had the power to make me a worse person than he was and I didn't want to be like that...in all honesty I'd have to say that my faith has had a big part to play in that...I'd say that I have to believe in miracles because I'd say that I am one... as much as I believe there's a god I also believe there's a devil for lack of a better word, and I think that a lot of that can be attributed to him and his influence, I do believe that god is a healer and he's a lover...I have a best friend now...I have someone there that I know who loves me and cares for me and wants the best for me, and I think that if you're a child and you have parents that love you and want the best for you you're not gonna go playing in places that are detrimental to yourself and so I think knowing that there's someone there that's bigger than me that loves me and cares about me... I know at my lowest times I'm not alone, there will be something, whether it's a bird that's sitting outside all of a sudden, or there will be a rainbow ...there'll be something little that just speaks to your heart that I find reassuring, or comforting...just that little quiet voice that says hang on for just a little bit longer, just ride it through, it's just like a really bad wave, just ride the wave and you'll get back to shore... I trust god to protect me...

Spiritual belief systems offer protective factors such as supportive relationships, validation of self and knowledge. This has been described as process of empowerment which can be understood as a shift from a position of internalised devaluation (Kieffer, 1984), to a position of personal growth through both Megan and Emily's storylines.

Reflecting on these stories of resilience, there were diverse critical moments or turning points that provided safe spaces and relationships that enabled the participants to reposition themselves within social and cultural meanings of violence. Through these stories of change, there were common storylines of safe relationships, being heard, changing actions and spaces to reflect; it has been argued within the literature, however, that freedom to create change is limited to developmental context (Boeck, Flemming, & Kenshall, 2008). What is salient to this analysis is that resilience is dependent on both protective factors and an understanding of the social and cultural meanings of the effects of violence.

Breaking the Cycle

Stories of resilience emerged through an understanding of violence as an intergenerational cycle of violence. Breaking the cycle was a dominant storyline across the participants' accounts. As discussed in chapter two, a social learning theory of violence suggests violent behaviour is learned and then enacted to address conflict, control over intimate relationships and likely to go unpunished. It also operates through gendered social power relationships. The narrative of violence as an intergenerational cycle is well supported in domestic violence research and practice, and it has also become common, everyday knowledge in the public sphere. Research argues that children develop tolerance and acceptance of violence within intimate and interfamilial relationships (Coohey, 2004; Guille, 2004; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2005; Margolin, Gordis, Medina, & Oliver, 2003; Markowitz, 2001; S. M. Smith et al., 2000; Whitefield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). However, it has been proposed that rather than necessarily taking up the same behaviours as their parents, these children are critical of and oppositional towards the behaviour and make decisions to avoid these forms of relationships in response to their childhood experiences (Boyd, 2001; Lackey, 2003). In this way, common sense understandings of intergenerational violence can enable resistance (Pollak, 2002).

In their stories of resilience in the face of adversity, the cycle of violence was a critical storyline that enabled the participants to make sense of their lived experiences of the effects of violence; it provided another kind of space where they could position themselves as breaking the cycle and producing change.

By understanding his position through the narrative of an intergenerational cycle, Ben resisted the narrative that located violence against women and children as generationally reproduced by his father. Resistance to this narrative was enabled through the fear of 'turning into' his father; the enactment of violence represented a failure.

***Ben:** It was everywhere in my family, my dad had seven sisters... it would have been the generation at the time, their generation growing up and the way they dealt with disciplining kids, the way they treat their women, their wives, and it got passed down, I've been around it since I was born pretty much... As the older generations would have been, and my dad didn't break the cycle, my dad became his father...*

what scares me is the fact that I feel like... there's been a big generation of us like so many generations in the past and how they do it so if they haven't broken the cycle how many years ago how am I going to, I feel like all of a sudden we automatically fall into this cycle and that's what scares me so I'm more scared of failing to be a good husband and a good father so that's why I'm constantly thinking about it, that much more...

Daniel also drew on a narrative of the cycle of violence to position his brother as enacting his father's pattern of violence. Within this account, 'getting it' (reproducing the cycle) was attributed to his brother spending more time with his abusive father, whereas Daniel was able to resist the position because he had the safety of less time with his father.

Daniel: *I'd say it's a cycle, and it's a terrible cycle, and my brothers got it, he's the hitter... I actually put that down to growing up, brought up by my dad... I definitely think its bred into ya, cause I look at my brother, I've watched him go through beating his girlfriends up, virtually in front of me, just like dad would have done to us, the same thing, outraged, can't use the words to fix it, straight into it, push her over, punch her, kick her, and the thing was it was in front of people, so it wasn't closet*

The cycle of violence narrative enabled Daniel to locate violence generationally and make sense of his experience of the effects of violence through understanding the patterns of abuse that were present in the relationship between his grandparents. What is salient in Daniel's account is the silence; the violence perpetrated by his brother was visible, whereas the violence perpetrated by his grandfather was known but not acknowledged.

Daniel: *... granddad had been quite vicious to his (wife), so there was always that between him and us kids, he sort of just kept his distance, it was always nana who took care of everything, and we know nana had little things going on in the background from her husband but nana kept us out of it, so that's the same cycle, it's there and it's just carried over into the next household...*

Understanding narrative of the cycle of violence enabled these participants a position in a story of resistance; breaking the cycle. In these accounts, the participants deliberately positioned themselves in families, current or with a view to the future that were violence free. Rather than develop a tolerance for violence within family relationships (Coohey, 2004; Guille, 2004; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2005; Margolin, et al., 2003), these participants actively resist the form of

relationships that they experienced as children. While those who have not yet had families talked of making plans to ensure their children's lives will be violence free, those who had children talked retrospectively about the steps they took to ensure their children grow up in a safe and loving environment.

Ben draws on the cycle of violence narrative through attention to modelling; if his actions are non-violent then he will break the cycle. Resistance to his past frames a movement to a healthier future.

Ben: *There's a quote that talks about that if you want your kids to behave, behave yourself, I think that's very true... That's what I believe in so I know for sure that I don't want violence to be a part of my family and I wanna be the best husband ever...I would be happy with my life if in 10, 20 years time if I can, happily see my kids off to university or to where ever they want to go and no grudges, no grudges, I still want to be married to my wife, that's what I want to achieve and all I want to do is break the cycle... it starts with you...*

Claire's account also draws on the narrative of the cycle of violence to offer a position of resistance. Drawing on social learning theory, she positions herself as different from her mother in as much as she understands the need to be a protector for her children. Breaking the cycle is a position that resists the risk of tolerance and acceptance of violence within intimate and interfamilial relationships.

Claire: *I think it's the fact that well I'm now nearly thirty and I waited to make sure I have the right environment for when I want to have children, and the fact that I will be very much aware of how they grow up and a better protector for them, and yea, definitely learned from my mum's mistakes and try my best to protect them and make sure they don't have to go through what I went through...*

Ashley also draws on the cycle of violence to take up a position of resistance. Understanding the effects of violence on her own childhood she takes up a position as protector to her children through a refusal to accept violence in her life and the lives of her children. Breaking the cycle of violence is achieved through a safety plan that would involve escaping to a safe space.

Ashley: *I know that if my husband ever laid a hand on me once I'd be out of here in a heartbeat because I know the effect that it can have on kids, being that kid and I don't want my kids going through that at all ... I don't want any part of that life to do with my children...*

The recognition of the lack of a safe space or relationship in Mary's childhood produced a position of resistance to the cycle of violence. Understanding her own loss enabled her to take up a counter-narrative, to break the cycle, and provide a safe space for her children.

***Mary:** There's no way I'm going to live like that... I always tell myself, if me and my husband ever have kids, I would bring them up totally different to the way I was brought up, so when like we had my daughter and son I spent time with them... I always told them that it doesn't matter what ever is worrying you, you can always come and speak to us cause that's the one big thing that I remember, that not being able to go, or didn't feel like I could go to my mum or dad, with any problems... I don't ever want to be associated or in that environment... cause I missed out on a loving relationship and I feel that me and my husband have given our children what I didn't have...*

In Sarah's account, the narrative of the intergenerational cycle of violence enabled her to make sense of the loss of a safe and supportive relationship with her mother. With that understanding, she resisted the acceptance of violence and positioned herself as responsible for the protection and safety of her future children.

***Sarah:** ...I didn't get a lot of, my mum isn't a very affectionate person, and I'm the complete opposite, I'm very affectionate, I know a lot of people say when people are abused, like my father's a good example, cause I'm abused I'm gonna do it to my children, I can't think of anything worse than doing that because I know what it's like to have that kind of pain and sadness, and I can't wish that on anyone, so I'm gonna absolutely love my children, gonna protect them... I can't wait to have kiddies, hopefully it makes me a better mother than what my mother was...*

Resistances to the inevitability of intergenerational cycle of abuse were developed through stories of not wanting to be like their fathers, and their mothers. Rather than emulating the behaviour of their abuser, the participants positioned themselves as actively resisting the form of violent relationship they had experienced. Understanding the cycle of violence enabled their resistance (Pollak, 2002).

Resistance was enacted through a desire to create change, and to produce healthy functioning. Ben positions his father as a failure; he failed to learn from the mistakes of his father. For Ben, breaking the cycle of violence required learning from the experience and refusing to reproduce it. Taking a stand against violence,

recognising it and acting against it is the moral of the story; non-violence is the right choice.

Ben: *If anything it's shown me what not to do to my children... it doesn't matter where you have come from, it doesn't matter how you get brought up, if you wanna live in their shadow then that's your choice, but if you wanna live out of it and make something of your own and be proud of it then you can do that too... I know so many people who don't feel comfortable sitting around my dad and I would hate, like that would do my head in...I can thank him for trying but I am confident that I'm gonna do a way better job...I don't plan on laying my hand on my kids... if you turn into your father and you do what your father did to you then, there's no cycle broken, no lessons learnt, your kid's gonna grow up and do the same to his kids and his wife, it's about teaching, it's about learning lessons, it's about being smart, you step in the shit once it's an accident, you step in it twice and it's a coincidence, do it a third time and you're an idiot, my granddad didn't learn, so that was an accident, my dad hasn't learnt, that's a coincidence, and I'm not gonna be the idiot, so I'm gonna make sure, I do the best job and I wanna break the cycle for the next generation...*

Knowledge of the narrative of intergenerational violence evoked a response of fear for Emily. The idea that it was possible to become like her abusive father was so frightening it was resisted.

Emily: *Someone once told me statistics that people who are abused could become abusers and that just scared the dickens out of me because I didn't want to be a bad person...*

Daniel also resisted the position of being like his father who he felt hatred for. The narrative of intergenerational violence was understood as heritability and habit and gave him an account of how not to reproduce the same feelings in his children. Knowledge of the effects of violence on the relationship between himself and his mother informed his desire for breaking the cycle.

Daniel: *I knew I didn't want to be like someone else, I think it made me deal with it, I think it's definitely, what you live in...I never ever, in that entire time dreamt of even hitting (my partner), and that's something that I'm actually really proud of because in my bloodlines I should have hit her, and even with my kids, I've yelled at my kids, but as parents do, which I now know is not the right way to do it but I'm also proud that I didn't stem to the violence like my father... I try not to treat people badly... and I think I'm one of the lucky ones that has actually stopped a habit, but I think that's from the hatred of the habit... being so close to mum, just made me promise I wouldn't do it to someone else...*

There is a powerful story of loss that informs the desire to break the cycle in these accounts. Understanding the effects of violence on relationships, including the loss of a safe and loving environment, enabled the participants' positions of resistance toward action; a desire to create change, and to produce healthy functioning.

Processes of forgiveness were not only engaged through spiritual belief systems, forgiveness was critical to finding a place from which to heal and move toward the development of healthy functioning in the future.

The intergenerational cycle of violence narrative enabled Ben to reflect upon the position of his father in his own history of abuse. Understanding his father's location in the cycle does not mean he accepts the violence, but accepts that his father 'did his best'. From this knowledge, Ben has been able to make sense of the effects of violence, and shift his position from victim to a position of social power in which he is able to forgive his father.

Ben: *My dad still loves mum, (I'm) in a better relationship with my dad now but I think after everything he's done to me, to my family, to my mum if he can still turn around to me and tell me that he loves me well... I don't know what was going on at the time, all I can say is that he tried to be a father and he tried what he knew was best and even though that wasn't the best he still tried and it's made me who I am today so I can only thank him, I can only forgive him for what's happened and I can thank him for trying...*

For Megan, forgiveness was constructed through a process of wanting to let the past go and break the bind of the cycle that held the relationship in place.

Megan: *There was some part of me that needed to find a way of forgiving him, it's like I made a decision early in my life to forgive him... because I'd made a decision that I need to forgive him for everything that happened because I don't need his baggage in my life... that whole understanding that the longer I hold onto any kind of unforgiveness towards him the more bound we are...*

In Emily's narrative of resilience, the process of forgiveness is still evolving; while she has spoken it into intention, it is not always easy to achieve. An exchange of accountability and forgiveness marked the beginning of a process toward the development of healthy functioning. Important to this process was the forgiveness of her mother who she positions as accountable for failing to provide protection,

resonating with the notion of mother-blame discussed in chapter two where the responsibility for the violence shifts the responsibility onto the mother for her failure (Wade, 2007).

Emily: *The relationship now, the situation now is that when my father admitted to abusing me, I forgave him, I verbally forgave him and I've worked very hard to... I forgave my father and...I forgave my mother...*

In these accounts, there is a powerful story of forgiveness that represented a critical moment that enabled the participants' positions of resistance toward change action. Knowledge of the narrative of the intergenerational cycle of violence provided a framework across the participants' accounts that informed their narratives of resilience.

Resilience

Throughout the interview process some powerful stories of resilience emerged. What was evidenced through the conversations were stories of strength and courage and the incredible tenacity of the participants to reposition themselves through narratives of resilience by attending to the social and cultural meanings of violence and its effects, and engaging with processes of change toward healthy functioning. As participants repositioned themselves in processes of change they positioned themselves as stronger, and with knowledge of the effects of violence on their lives, they told of a desire to pass their knowledge and experience on to others.

Most of the participants, having developed processes for healthy functioning in the face of adversity, talked about feeling stronger and better able to deal with difficult situations and circumstances. Both Ashley and Hannah derived strength by taking up a position of no tolerance for violence.

Hannah: *It's made me a stronger person, I have a no tolerance kind of personality...*

Ashley: *I find that I can handle a lot of things better... I know that if my husband ever laid a hand on me once I'd be out of here in a heartbeat...*

Zero tolerance for domestic violence emerged in campaigns against violence in the 1980s. Zero tolerance campaigns challenged the social and cultural acceptance of violence against women and children by attending to the problems with widely held assumptions that led to victim blaming and reducing the likelihood of women seeking help. The goal of zero tolerance campaigns were to break the silence and reduce tolerance and at the same time increase social responsibility by promoting community action against domestic violence (Gracia, 2004; D. Wolfe & Jaffe, 1999). All the participants positioned themselves in stories of non-violence suggesting that zero tolerance for violence against women and children was necessary to a narrative of resilience.

Strength, as a result of the process of developing healthy functioning, emerged through storylines that were a resolution of struggles; Sarah repositioned herself as stronger and wiser.

***Sarah:** ...I definitely think I'm a stronger person and a wiser person definitely from both the abuse, mentally I am stronger, and I can handle a lot more...I definitely think I'm a very strong woman, but I think I was already a strong woman, I think it's just helped me grow into a lot more strong and confident woman in myself...*

Emily's process of resolution of the struggle through adversity draws on a storyline of progress, how far she has come, to reposition herself as having the strength to relate to other people's stories and use the 'gift' of her experience to help others.

***Emily:** I can be in situations now and do things now and relate to people now on a level that a lot of people don't seem to be able to, like with the victim support work... what my life experiences have... given me gifts that not many people have...It is possible to heal, it is possible to have a life after...I think under the circumstances I've actually done bloody well, there have been a lot of people who have had a major input in that, but at the end of the day I'm the one that hung on, and so I think there's a lot I can be proud of, I can sort of dispel that despair, knowing that well if you've come this far imagine how far you can go...*

Through the progressive storyline through adversity and change, the participants made use of their knowledge of the effects of violence and the processes of developing healthy functioning to position themselves as empathetic to the conditions in the lives of others. As the narrative of resilience opened up critical

moments of healing the participants used their strength, knowledge and experience to empower others. At the same time they were able to position themselves as compassionate, having learnt from their own adversity.

Reflecting on her own history, Ashley understands herself to be able to hear the stories of others facing adversity without assuming that she has knowledge of their particular experience. Providing a space in which others are heard is not to judge.

***Ashley:** Its taught me a lot of things about myself, but also more to understand about everyone else that's surrounding me that are going through the same things, not to judge, I've learnt if I see someone who I think is in trouble then I try and help as much as I can now because you just never know what's going on...*

Sarah also talks about being open to the stories of others, even if from her position the struggles might be less severe. In this way, she provides space for others to have their stories heard and begin their own process of healing. She attributes her ability to empathise to being stronger and therefore able to understand their pain.

***Sarah:** I can handle a lot more... a lot of people come to me with issues, even though it's not as severe as my kind of life I always sympathise with people because I know that pain regardless of if its physical or mental or sexual, it still hurts your soul, I think a lot of people trust me in that kind of way to talk about their problems and things like that...*

Through the progressive storyline from adversity to change, Megan made use of her knowledge of the effects of violence and the processes of developing healthy functioning to develop professionally as a counsellor. Her position as a counsellor enables her to bring a specialised understanding of the effects of violence into her work with women who are variously positioned in stories of domestic violence, especially in relation to the effects on children.

***Megan:** I discovered in my adulthood that because I have such an understanding of this stuff I can work in this environment and have a real empathy for people who are going through that and also an understanding and empathy for women who live through that and some of the reasoning that they tell themselves for staying in it, and one of the things that I often say when I'm working with women is that you think you're protecting your children but you're not, and so its understanding those dynamics have helped me in my work, but also it gave me a desire to go into counselling myself after having being counselled...*

Emily also uses her knowledge and experience as a victim support worker. Having learnt the strategies for keeping herself safe she is able to hear the stories of others without assuming their experiences are the same as her own, and provide the support that she understands to mediate the ongoing effects of their trauma. It is through this work that she positions herself as strong and compassionate and able to make a difference to others. It is this difference that enables her to feel successful.

Emily: I find my victim support work, is that after responding to a suicide or responding to a sudden death... I have a sense of having done something good, or achieved something, or a sense of satisfaction, I'm glad that I was able to be there at that time for them...I do believe we make a difference, to support people...it's good to know you're not alone in doing that, that they had that support...I've discovered... tremendous compassion and empathy for people... I can be in the moment with people when they go through hell and I can walk beside them, it's their pain not mine, but I know how to support them in it, keep a level head, provide them with the information and the support they need and walk out and be, not untouched by it, but still feeling strong, I don't always understand their situation... but I can empathise that any sort of loss and any sort of trauma if you can support people through it you can mitigate the ongoing effects...that tremendous empathy and compassion for people who are suffering, the ability to stand with them and not be overwhelmed by it, some people are overwhelmed by other peoples pain and avoid it where I can address it head on, and do it in a compassionate way...

As the participants were able to engage with the social and cultural meaning of violence and its effects, they were also able to draw on specific storylines from their own process of developing healthy functioning to understand the stories of others. Knowledge of the effects of violence enabled them to not only demonstrate empathy and compassion toward others but their processes of healthy functioning also enabled them to share their knowledge in specific ways.

Having developed the strength to engage in work or relationships that continue to challenge the socio-cultural acceptance of violence against women and children by reducing silence and tolerance, necessary to their taking up a position of social responsibility were personal relationships that provided love and support.

Through various turning points and critical moments of change, the participants positioned themselves in narratives of violence and resistance. They also drew on storylines of protection as they made sense of their position in social and cultural meanings of violence. One of the recurring storylines, both within childhood and as

adults, was the necessity of safe loving relationships. Loving relationships acted as protective factors and as turning points in their development of healthy functioning. Storylines drawing on intergenerational cycles of violence evoked a fear of reproducing violence and enabled resistance to be taken up. Healthy intimate relationships represented how far they had come in a process of change. In their stories of resilience, it was love and safety that emerged as critical to a shift in social power that enabled healing to occur.

Hannah: *I've got enough love now...*

Daniel: *Way stronger, think I've got more love in my life now than I've ever had...*

Ashley: *He's my everything...*

Sarah: *...without a guy like that...it made it so much easier to have someone like that who understands...*

Megan: *...he's still my rock to this day and so without him, I don't think I would be strong at all...*

Mary: *...yea so it's just been pretty much the two of us really, can't really say I've ever confided in anybody else...*

Stories of resistance were enabled through the relationship between protection and understanding the socio-cultural meanings of violence and its effects. Even where safe and loving relationships were necessary to the participants' stories of resilience, they also had to negotiate the ongoing protection of their children and their intimate relationship from the abusive conditions of their past. In these accounts, the participants reposition themselves as protectors of the effects of exposure to intergenerational risks of violence.

Many of the participants talked of a desire to protect their partner's and children from their abusers. While these stories are diverse in the actions taken by the participants, from no contact to imposing clear boundaries and developing trust, they told of a clear desire to exclude the possibility of the effects of violence being reproduced.

Hannah: *well my partner won't be going near my mother, she will never meet her, just because I don't want her exposed to any of that ever...*

Ashley: *she sees the kids but the kids aren't allowed to stay with her or anything like that, just because of everything that happened and she won't talk about it...so it makes me feel really uneasy with her having the kids and things like that... I don't want any part of that life to do with my children whether or not she was just the victim, or whether she was part of it, I don't know because I don't remember...*

Megan: *I was so protective... watching all the time about how he was interacting with the children because he's very strict and he would sit there at the table and watch them, waiting for them to do something wrong, and so I would put things in place like my husband and I will deal with reprimanding the children, you don't go there... but over a period of time, he became nicer, and I could see that happening and the kids somehow helped to mellow him as well, he just adored my children, and so I learned over time to trust him with them, and mum...she would never ever allow anything to happen to them, so they used to go and stay there and things like that but if I thought for a second that he was kicking off, I'd never have allowed them to go there...*

Resilience in this chapter was told through the relationship between protection and understandings of violence as an intergenerational cycle. In the face of adversity, the participants resisted reproducing the cycle of violence as they developed healthy functioning. Turning points and critical moments were enabled through safe spaces and relationships, being heard, escape, fear of reproducing violence and thus empowered the participants to reposition themselves through processes of change. Resistance is a continual process of healing and strength that is never static and occurs as the participants make sense of the position in social and cultural meanings of violence. The following chapter explores the participants' experiences of abuse and how they renegotiate, in a movement between the past and the present, their experiences.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE AND THE PARENTS ROLE

EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE

Storylines of the diverse experiences of living with violence as children were the focus of this research, rather than a retelling of actual events. I was interested in the ways in which the participants positioned themselves in their current relationships with their parents and families in their narratives of resistance. As the participants told of their relationships, they also reflected on their experiences of abuse, their histories, and how they understood the effects of violence on their current relationships. Understanding the meaning of the violence was necessary to understand its effects and take up a position of resilience.

In the conversations about relationships with parents and families, some of the participants talked about actual events and through the retelling of these past events made sense of their experiences from their position in the conversation. Some of the participants had not talked about their histories before the interview. In this way, it was necessary to retell the past to make sense of the present. I am aware of the diversity in the storylines, and bringing them together through my interpretation of selected text is necessarily partial and selective (Riessman, 1993).

This chapter is told through attention to how stories of exposure to violence and/or direct abuse inform understandings of the effects of violence on relationships. It is organised through the stories that retell past experience that are critical to narratives of resistance.

Abuse against their Parent

The participants talk produced two forms of abuse; the abuse they witnessed that was one parent using violence against the other that was most often (step)fathers abusing their mothers, and the abuse that was directed physically, sexually and verbally by the same perpetrator on themselves. As the participants reflected on the abuse of their mothers, they understood the effects of the violence as more than

from a position of witnessing the acts; the experience of the aftermath within the family was ongoing.

It has been argued within the literature that both exposure to domestic violence and being the target of such violence can have very similar effects for children, particularly when the abuse occurs between people to whom they are emotionally attached (Carroll, 1994; Groves, et al., 1993; Mertin & Mohr, 2002; Runyan, 2006; Zuckerman, M, Groves, & Parker, 1995). It has been reported that many parents underestimate the extent to which children are aware of the abuse; children are not only aware of the violence, their recollections of it are highly detailed and comprehensive (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, & Raskauskas, 2011; Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, Atkins, & Marcus, 1997; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Mittal & Carrington, 2012; Rosenberg, 1987).

Ben locates his narrative in the specific relationship of violence where his father was the perpetrator of violence against his mother to position himself as a ‘victim’ of exposure to violence and direct violence. This location marked a starting point in a story where his father’s violence dominates his relationships.

Ben: *(Dad) used to beat my mother, he used to beat my mother in front of us children*

Some of the participants talked about actual events and through the retelling of these past events made sense of their experiences from their position in the research conversation. The literature argues that hearing the violence can be more distressing than seeing it due to the feelings of powerlessness that are interlinked with the context (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007). Hannah told of a specific event that was significant to understanding the ‘paralyses’ that children experience. Rather than a singular event however, the fear is told through previous experiences; this event embedded in a pattern of violence.

Hannah: *There was one time that he was drowning her in the bath and she had previously said to us, there’s prison guards next door, if you need to, if he does it again to me then jump out the window, go next door, and we were like ok, so we were like sitting there and we can hear him doing stuff to her in the bathroom, we’re too shit scared to do anything, I was just paralysed with fear...*

Sarah also located her story of abuse through the positioning of her mother as the victim of her father's abuse. In this retelling, it is the aftermath where what she could hear, and what she saw that informed her understanding of the effects of violence. This supports the idea that parents underestimate how much children are aware of the effects of violence. The aftermath experience, where Sarah would go to her mother and lay together, was produced as a site where the violence that had occurred was minimised – not that bad.

***Sarah:** I just remember being locked in my bedroom a lot like when an argument would break out...I remember I had a big basket of toys and every time they would fight eventually I'd just go to my room and I'd hear them close the door...I also remember going into mum's room afterwards and she'd be crying on the bed and things would be kinda tossed around and I would just get up and I'd just come lie on her and she'd be like, either like a little bit red, it wasn't really bad abuse but I knew that something had happened because her hair would all be kind of ruffled up....so obviously she'd been grabbed on the head or been pushed round a bit, and I remember a lot of screaming...that's probably the indication of the violence, my mum and dad both screaming at each other... and things being moved...*

Like Sarah, Megan told of hearing the screaming and yelling, and being removed to the bedroom. This did not protect Megan from the effects of the abuse, and in her retelling she was able to recall details of the abuse that her father perpetrated even though they were not seen, supporting the argument that children's recollections of ongoing patterns of violence are comprehensive (Carroll-Lind, Chapman, & Raskauskas, 2011; Fantuzzo, Boruch, Beriama, Atkins, & Marcus, 1997; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Mittal & Carrington, 2012). Common understandings of 'protection' minimise the understanding of what children do know and continue to silence the effects.

***Megan:** He was very violent towards her and used to hold her hand over the stove and all sorts of things... probably my earliest memories are of the yelling and screaming really... I can remember plates being shattered against the wall...I have some distinct memories of when I was a lot younger, one was when my mother came into the bedroom, dad had been firing plates and things at the wall and hitting her and doing what have you and we couldn't see it we could only hear it because we had been herded into the bedroom...*

Daniel contextualised his experience of his father's violence toward his mother through the specific witnessing of an event. While the specific event was a threat of

violence, embedded in this account 'and things like that' also locates the event within a history of violence – through a storyline of the significance of the relationship of domination and subordination within meanings of marriage.

Daniel: watching my mum get her fingers nearly cut off for rings and things like that, cause he was gonna cut her fingers off cause he wanted the rings back...

Mary located her story of exposure to violence in the relationship between her parents that was unpredictable. In this account, the pattern of abuse was experienced through the tension that followed arguments and could last for days.

Mary: They would sometimes be alright to each other, they would get on, and then they'd have a big argument over nothing and then...they wouldn't talk, so you'd get that atmosphere, so you'd have one in one room, mum would be in the kitchen and they'd be going on for days...

By attending to the stories of exposure to violence it became clear that the participants were aware of the abuse that was being perpetrated against their mothers, and that their exposure to violence was embedded in patterns of violence that were distressing. Strategies of minimisation did not protect these children, and reproduced silence around the effects.

Becoming the Target of Abuse

While research attempts to distinguish the effects of exposure to and being the target of violence, it has been argued that the effects of living with violence, direct and indirect, can have similar effects. Within this research, there was a common storyline that not only were the participants exposed to the violence between their parents, they also became victims of the abuse themselves. This shift in the pattern of experience is well documented in the literature. It has been argued that almost 50% of children exposed to domestic violence are also victims of physical, sexual or verbal abuse (Bowker, Arbitell, & McFerron, 1988; Fantuzzo, et al., 1997; Jouriles, Barling, & O'Leary, 1987; Jouriles & LeCompte, 1991; McCloskey, Figueredo, & Koss, 1995; McKibben, DeVos, & Newberger, 1989; O'Connor & Wilson, 2004; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980); the relationship between these two forms of violence is now well established and is an important indicator of the risk of abuse for children (Appel & Holden, 1998; Farmer & Owen, 1995;

Humphreys, 1999; Kellog & Menard, 2003; C. McGee, 2000; R. A. McGee, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1997; O'Keefe, 1994; Osofsky, 2003).

In the retelling of their histories of violence, the participants began to recall stories that marked a shift from exposure to direct violence. There was not just one story, sometimes they overlapped. There were stories of escalation and emotional recollections of moments that were significant to their understanding of the effects that were critical to narratives of resistance.

The starting point in Ben's narrative was the dominance of the violence perpetrated by his father toward his mother, and then toward him. The violence perpetrated by his father, first toward his mother and then himself tells of a relentless progression in the form of violence and it becoming more visible. The violence perpetrated against Ben became more widely witnessed and more frequent, despite intervention.

***Ben:** He used to beat us up.... he'd end up beating me up in front of my sister... Dads abuse started getting 10 times worse, like by the day he started closing his fists... the hidings were becoming more frequent, so I was at least getting beat up every day... within the first 3 weeks of going back after dad had the certificate of parenting I was getting beaten up again*

The exposure to witnessing the violence against her mother, the very 'real' fear of the potential for her father to cause serious harm, when juxtaposed with the physical abuse Hannah experienced suggests the separation of exposure to violence and direct violence may not be useful. The direct violence was told as if it was 'just something that happened'. When understood through a progressive narrative of violence, the direct violence that she experienced appears to have become 'normalised'.

***Hannah:** Sometimes he would like whack me on the arse with the cricket bat, and kick us up the arse with like steel cap boots and stuff...*

Sarah provides us with a vivid description of her experiences of abuse by her stepfather that is complicated through the complicity of her mother. As she retells the story of physical abuse by her stepfather, she attends to the experience as

torture. As the story unfolds, her mother's complicity to the violence ensured her silence at school.

***Sarah:** I got hit a lot...by my step father, it was pretty bad...I remember drawing on my hand, little pictures, and I remember coming home and he was like don't do that again, and this must've been when he was only a couple of months into the relationship, and I remember having an attitude well fuck you, stuff you I'm gonna do what I want, so I went back and I did it again... coming back home, I remember trying to hide it, and he saw it, and I was like shit, and he was like right I told you not to do it, grabbed my hand, and he got washing machine powder and then he got a steel brush, he said this is gonna hurt, and he got my arm and he poured that stuff all over my arm and then got this steel brush and started scraping my skin, I remember screaming, like this is burning and steel rubbing against my skin, and the ink just came straight off and then he kept going, and he's like you're gonna remember this, I remember screaming for my mother, and I remember my mum coming into the bathroom and me looking at her and she just walked away, I had a massive burn up my arm, and I remember the teachers asking me what happened, did you fall over? Cause it's a massive, and I said yup, that's what happened, I fell off my bike...I don't know if that's violence, or if its torture...*

In Sarah's narrative, physical abuse progressed to sexual abuse, supporting the research evidence that there is a high co-occurrence of forms of direct violence. It was the shift from physical violence to sexual violence, and her constant attempts to secure her own safety that were significant to Sarah – the critical moment was the understanding of her own unrelenting fear.

***Sarah:** I think when I was a lot older like maybe 12... he never hit me after that, and then the sexual abuse started when I was about 15... I remember just waking up and he'd come over every morning and pull my sheets off my bed... he would try and take my clothes off, and, I'd like wear so much clothes to bed so that he wouldn't be able to, and then I'd kind of kick him...then I'd go have a shower and I just remember like I would try and close all the windows and he'd come and tell me off and go don't close the windows because it steams up the whole room...and I realised that when I didn't he'd be standing out on the porch watching me in the shower... I remember him trying to stick a phone underneath the door and trying to take photos of me... I remember sitting on the bottom of the shower with the water running over my face and going I'm sitting on the floor of the shower closing windows, so he can't see me and now he's trying to stick a phone underneath... I was like I've had enough, what is this turning into, it's not just the inappropriate touching or anything like that, I'm in fear at 7 o'clock in the frikin morning, on a Wednesday, like this is ridiculous, and I remember that was just, snap, and I was just like fuck, fuck this, I'm not gonna live my life like this...and I just cried, I just started crying, cause like fuck, I just wanted to hit him, I don't know why I started crying, just wanted to kick him... crying, and crying, and crying*

It is also difficult to separate the effects of physical and emotional abuse; in a story of abuse they inform each other. Megan recalls her fear as being significant to understanding violence. In her retelling, it was the air that was the site of the ‘worst’ tension. Air here represents a space that is psychological, and is far from empty. In this space is a network of steps – a performance of abuse that is constructed through careful positioning between Megan and her mother in response to her stepfather’s desire to fight. Megan’s understanding of her own position was responsible for what would happen to her mother if she got it wrong.

***Megan:** Very afraid of my stepfather... he seemed to me... to be a very angry, stern person, very cold, and so I used to kind of avoid him... I went in on myself, I just went really withdrawn... couldn't trust him, it was that kind of, I didn't know what he was gonna do, the yelling was the most, it was not very nice but it was the air, it's really hard to explain, he's only once ever hit me, and that was at my mother saying that he could...he gave me a good hiding around, the behind and the legs, but she'd never allowed him to hit me prior to that, so it wasn't physical abuse that I got, it was the psychological abuse that was the worst... I remember he used to come in and, he would say things to me like what are you looking at... wanting to pick a fight, and I'd say oh nothing and I'd not want to say anything and he'd just keep at me because he'd want to start a fight and of course as soon as mum would step in and say what are you doing to her, that would just, that was just the green light for him, that would kick off and away he would go*

Daniel also drew on a storyline of psychological abuse being worse as he told of multiple forms of violence. While he was physically abused by his father, Daniel was able to understand the violence through a culturally acceptable narrative of punishment among his peers. He was also able to normalise his father’s violence when he went to live with his mother. It was the psychological violence that was perpetrated by his stepfather that was ‘worse’; being constantly reminded of his subordinate position in the relationship.

***Daniel:** I went to my mates and he hit the cricket ball and it smashed the window and his dad gave him a hell of a hiding with the big stick that was next to the door, shit that's what my dad would have done, and you find yourself leaving his house going fuuuck, he's getting a hiding and then you get home half an hour late and you find yourself getting a hiding and you think oh shit I should have stayed at my mates and watched him get his hiding*

***Daniel:** ...I went to a worse situation, I went to live with my mum and my step father was abusive mentally, you're useless, you're good for nothing, you're thick... No touching, no hitting, no nothing, just that... you fucken useless little shit, you don't know anything, you can't do anything right, and that was it...*

Emily recalls explicit details of the sexual, physical and psychological abuse that she locates as operating differently through age stages. In this storyline, the abuse was clearly understood as gendered, an effect of being a girl among boys, retold here as a story of a sexual relationship of domination and oppression where loss of virginity rather than rape is the privileged account. Psychological abuse endured.

Emily: ...I could have been as young as three, three and a half when the abuse started but I didn't actually lose my virginity until I was five...I was at afternoon kindly...if I did what my father wanted me to do I could wear the twin set that my grandmother had knitted me to kindly... My father was my first experiences in sex, which began when I was four, and lasted until I was 8 years of age ...the (physical) violence stopped when I got to about 12 or 13, but the verbal continued on until I left home at 15... his mood could go from smiling and happy to very aggressive very quickly, he would laugh and joke with the boys but then lose the plot very quickly if I opened my mouth...

As the narratives of living with violence unfolded, it was clear that exposure to violence against mothers and direct forms of violence against children were connected. The participants told of these relationships by reflecting on their experiences of abuse through their histories of past events, as they understand them now. The complexities of their relationships were contextualised through meaningful moments in their understanding of the violence and its effects as they take up positions in narratives of resilience. The stories of abuse became a starting point for understanding current relationships.

THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS

As the stories of abuse unfolded, there was a commonly held desire to explain the behaviour of parents, both mothers and fathers, to come to some resolution of their own. The participants drew on other storylines that complicated the experience of abuse and relationships. There were common storylines among the participants that drew on the notion that substance abuse was a complicating factor in their experiences, and mothers were blamed for their failure to protect their children.

Parental Substance Use/Abuse

Many of the participants told of the complicating action of substance abuse. While not a causal factor for domestic violence, substance abuse has been associated with

poorer parenting, child abuse and neglect (Murphy, O'Farrell, Fals-Stewart, & Feehan, 2001) and increases the risk and severity of acts of violence in an ongoing pattern of domination and subordination (McGray, 2008).

As Ben told of the relentless progression in the forms of violence perpetrated by his father over time, he also described an escalation in his father's alcohol use as a consequence of his depression. Within this storyline, substance abuse did not cause violence, but was simultaneously produced with the increase in violence.

***Ben:** He had a really bad alcohol problem... he started getting more depressed, because everything he was doing for himself, it was catching up on him, and his drinking problem only got worse...*

Like Ben, Megan locates substance abuse and violence as a simultaneous process, as she reflects on her father's behaviour with the knowledge that she has now. It was clear that Megan does not attribute his violence to alcohol abuse, although she understands the pattern of abuse that enabled her father to justify his drinking and the increased risk and severity of acts of violence. Even when he took responsibility for his substance abuse, the abusive behaviour did not stop.

***Megan:** He was an alcoholic, like I know now as an adult, but as a child I didn't know that, I knew he drank a lot and in my mind now, working things out it was his way of picking a fight so he could storm off to the pub... him coming home, picking a fight so that he could go off to the pub.... he went to AA and so then he became a dry drunk... You don't drink anymore but you're still a bastard... when he was drunk he was a very vicious and malicious person... it was just him, it was kinda like that was his thing...mum used to do all sorts of things, he'd get drunk, fall asleep so she'd pour bottles of port and all sorts of things down the sink, or put water in the bottle to fill it up a bit, she used to do all sorts of things, to stop it...*

Mary also locates her father's substance abuse as a complicating action; he was positioned as either sober or drunk with different effects. This account suggests that Mary's father was abusive as a result of alcohol abuse, however the fact that he drank every day after work suggests that the split between not drinking (nice) and drinking (abusive) was not so common, or easily delineated. It was people who did not see him drunk who thought he was a nice guy, reproducing the private/public dichotomy that normalises violence in families.

Mary: *Dad he worked for a brewery... and then when he finished work he just used to take himself off and go to the pub, and drink...he drunk every single day, so he was like a Jeckel and Hyde character, so if he didn't drink he'd be really nice, and to people outside he was really nice guy, and then when he drunk he was a different type of guy ... probably at the end he stopped drinking but then it was too late then, yea it was too late really, I mean to me he never really sort of thought he had a problem I don't think...*

Sarah understands her father's drinking through an intergenerational cycle of substance abuse. However, she does not understand the substance abuse as causing the violence, rather it 'lit the fire a little bit more'. In this account alcohol exacerbates an already abusive relationship, increasing the risk.

Sarah: *My family's like, they never do drugs, but they are alcoholics... my nana's an alcoholic, my father's an alcoholic, my aunty was an alcoholic... I think alcohol just lit the fire a little bit more, that's how he dealt with his problems... and yea that made his temper probably a lot worse...*

Claire also constructs her account of the effects of substance abuse through the intergenerational cycle of addiction narrative, and as a complicating action in the neglect she experienced from her father. Claire positioned her father as an often absent drug dealer who exposed his children to harm.

Claire: *My dad's a heavy user and we never really got to see him much because of the lifestyle he led, he's gang related and lots of drugs around the whole family, so aunts and uncles, grandma...he would take my older brother out with him to hotels with other heroin addicts and drug dealers, and, so my brother was exposed to that at a really young age and then he would come home and sleep all day...*

Substance abuse was not only a complicating action for an increased risk of violence. Mothers were also positioned as substance abusers as a result of the violence they were subjected to. In Claire's account, her mother used substances as a coping strategy and in turn was unable to care for her children appropriately.

Claire: *Unfortunately a lot of the time that (mum) was relaxed enough she would de-stress by drinking and then she'd come to us and try to cuddle us and stuff and she'd have an alcohol breath and we hated it...*

Both Hannah and Ashley's mothers were positioned as drug dependent as an effect of the violence perpetrated against them. In these storylines, mothers were

positioned in a medical discourse, where the effect of violence had a significant effect on their mental wellbeing. Rather than retold as discrete events, these stories tell something of the experience of violence and exposure to the ongoing effects of the aftermath.

Hannah: *She's just gotten worse basically, I guess her way of coping is she's on prescription drugs and she's addicted to them and she's just surrounded herself with alcohol, needing to make herself feel safe...*

Ashley: *I remember mum, had a lot of problems...she overdosed a couple of times... I remember getting home and... she was just vomiting everywhere and having seizures on the ground and stuff and the ambulance came...I wouldn't have been any older than probably 8... that was my first memory of her trying to overdose... then there was incidents after that which was the same and things like that... I know that when she overdosed she took a lot of sleeping pills and things like that...*

The exposure to substance abuse as a complicating factor in living with violence drew on a narrative of intergenerational cycles when making sense of the violence perpetrated by (step) fathers. While the participants did not attribute the cause of violence to substance abuse, in their making sense of their relationships it was a factor that enabled them to shift the attention away from perpetrator responsibility. Exposure to substance abuse by mothers was also a complicating factor in making sense of the violence. Mothers' substance abuse was attributed to the effects of the violence they were subjected to. These gendered differences in relationships were told as the participants reflected on their histories of violence and its effects on current relationships.

It's Ok: Parents' Childhood Experiences of Abuse

Understandings of violence as an intergenerational cycle were addressed in chapter 4 as necessary to protective factors in stories of personal resilience. In this section, I show that the narrative of intergenerational violence is drawn on to make sense of the effect of the violence on their relationships. In these accounts, the intergenerational cycle of violence narrative enables an acceptance of violence (Coohey, 2004; Guille, 2004; Lieberman & Van Horn, 2005; Margolin, et al., 2003; Osofsky, 2003) and this in turn enables the participants to understand and become

critical of the effects of abuse, and reposition themselves in a narrative of resistance.

Understanding that either their fathers or mothers had their own history of abuse both normalised the violence and enabled stories of resistance to emerge. Both of Ben's parents had experienced violence in their families. While his father reproduced violence, he positioned his mother as accepting victimisation. Through understanding violence as a gendered power relationship Ben took up a position of empathy with his mother's victimisation.

Ben: *It was everywhere, it was everywhere in my family... my dad had seven sisters and they were all, it would have been the generation at the time, their generation growing up and the way they dealt with disciplining kids, the way they treat their women, their wives, and it got passed down, I've been around it since I was born pretty much.... Dad grew up with it, ten times worse.... As the older generations would have been, and my dad didn't break the cycle, my dad became his father...*

Ben: *Mum was abused which was ten times worse than what I ever got....I was more sorry for her on her behalf, the fact that you know she hadn't been raised in the best childhood and her uncles, were never really the best to her and then she met my dad and then my dad never treated her well...*

Like Ben, Sarah understood the abuse of her father as located within an intergenerational cycle of violence that was normalised as discipline and functioned through force. Understanding his history enabled her begin to make sense of how discipline and power were related to her own victimisation.

Sarah: *...my father had a history of violence as well, his father died real young, and then they got put into a home...it was real old school, and they got beaten up a lot I think like the domestic abuse was like what they would call obedience and stuff like that, and discipline, in those days it was quite severe, my dad was a little shit, like he was real naughty...yea I think that's, how they learnt to get people to submit and to get power over people, that's how they would do it, not by respect or anything like that, it was just brute force how they got, that's how you show your in power*

What emerged in these storylines was a sense that these histories did not adhere to justification or diffusion of responsibility of violence, but understanding the intergenerational cycle of violence enabled the participants to take up a position that

did not reproduce the same effects. Daniel's account however, explicitly draws on the dominant explanation that positioned his father as not responsible for the violence that he perpetrated.

Daniel: His family, it's come from his dad, mum told me oh it's not your father's fault, he was brought up by his dad, same thing, his dad smashed his car window when he wouldn't put the car somewhere else on the property so he threw bricks through all the windows, mum said when they first met, it was nothing unusual for dad to get a blood nose at 18 years old from his dad, for not listening...

While the intergenerational cycle of violence narrative can be used to minimise or justify violence, it can also be used to position the victims as responsible for breaking it. In these accounts, recognising the intergenerational stories of violence opened up a space through which they could make sense of the adverse conditions of their lives and therefore take up positions of resistance.

The Relationship with their Mother

The relationship the participants shared with their mother as a child were located in storylines in which the context of the violence against their mothers and how mothers responded in the face of adversity mattered to the telling. In this section, I attend to the sometimes contradictory relationships with mothers, including through the mother-blame narrative, toward a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of violence on these relationships.

As discussed in chapter 2, a narrative of mother-blame has become dominant in western societies (Caplan, 2010). In the research literature, it has been argued relentlessly that the ongoing effects of domestic violence upon mothers impacts adversely upon women's abilities to provide their children with the love, support, trust, warmth, guidance and attention that they need to have a healthy development (Cleaver, Unell, & Aldgate, 1999; Holt, et al., 2008; Levondosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001; Levondosky, Huth-Bocks, Shapiro, & Semel, 2003; Levondosky, Lynch, & Graham-Bermann, 2000; Mittal & Carrington, 2012). The research proposes that mothers who are living with domestic violence may be feeling numb, scared, depressed and unable to cope or attend to their own trauma and are thus

unavailable to provide their children with the love and support they need (Osofsky, 1999).

Mother-blame is also produced through research findings suggesting many mothers become physically abusive towards their children in response to being abused themselves (Coohey, 2004; Holden, 2003; Holden, Stein, Richie, Harris, & Jouriles, 1998; Levondosky, et al., 2000; McNeal & Amato, 1998), without understanding the effects of perpetrator violence. It has been proposed that many mothers minimise or even deny the amount of abuse their children are actually being exposed to and therefore 'fail' to protect their children from the adverse conditions of living with violence (Farmer & Owen, 1995; Fick, Osofsky, & Lewis, 1997; Mullender, et al., 2002).

Critics of the dominance of mother-blame have argued that it minimises or ignores the impact of the perpetrators' actions on both the mother and the child in complex and enduring ways (Buchanan, 2011; Edleson, 1999). Research has also shown that a mother can have a significantly protective role in a child's development, and their parenting style and increased sensitivity to their child's needs can ensure the protection of the child from the abuse (Casanueva, Martin, Rinyan, Barth, & Bradley, 2008; Dayton, Levondosky, Davidson, & Bogat, 2010; Holt, et al., 2008; Levondosky, et al., 2000; Margolin, et al., 2003; Mullender, et al., 2002). I was interested in how the relationship between mothers and children was informed by the culturally dominant narrative of mother-blame as they told of living the effects of violence.

Ben's relationship with his mother was contextualised through the fear of what might happen to her. An effect of his father's threats to kill his mother in an ongoing pattern of physical violence that rendered this possibility very real, meant that Ben and his mother shared a position as victim's and it was through this shared relationship that he understands the efforts his mother made to protect him.

Ben: *I was always worried that my mum was gonna die, that my dad was gonna kill her, used to threaten her enough about it, so we would just wait for it to happen...*

Ben: *Being as close to my mum as I could, just being there for my mum, and being there to comfort my mum and being at her company and vice versa, just getting through another day... I had a pretty good relationship with her... I think the last thing she wanted to do, was for us you know son's to grow up and beat their father's up...I think it's the last thing my mum wanted me to do... I think mum was the best mum...I think she would be, let's say very strong because she put all of her emotions and everything aside just to make sure us kids were happy for that day and you know that we were fed and I didn't find out that all this and what was happening until I was about 9 10... she must have been a strong woman because we couldn't see any of the warning signs*

Claire positions her mother through a tension between protective and unable to provide meaningful support due to her own response in the face of adversity. While Claire is able to understand the limits to her mother's presence and protection, she also positioned her as not able to provide 'good' mothering as an effect of her own victimisation.

Claire: *She didn't have a lot of time, she was a single mum... she wasn't there, and that was the big down fall for my mum, which she couldn't really help cause it was this healthy balance of trying to put food on the table and give us a better life but not being there, active enough, knowing what was going on... like she tried to do things to protect us, but then as soon as she went to work we would get away with something else... she was a very high strung, high stressed mum, that was trying to, do everything... but like as far as the good stuff that's supposed to be good, like her giving us love and hugs and kisses, unfortunately a lot of the time that she was relaxed enough she would de-stress by drinking and then she'd come to us and try to cuddle us and stuff and she'd have an alcohol breath and we hated it*

Ashley locates her relationship with her mother in a tension between closeness and emotional distance. Her mother's response to the violence against her was enacted through a history of suicide, which is untellable in their relationship. Because of the untellable, the next generation has limited access to a relationship with their grandmother, a position that Ashley takes up to protect her children.

Ashley: *Me and mum, we have a pretty difficult relationship, we are close but since (my husband) came along and stuff like that we have grown apart a lot, I don't talk to her about anything really personal, she sees the kids but the kids aren't allowed to stay with her or anything like that, just because of everything that happened and she won't talk about it and stuff so it makes me feel really uneasy with her having the kids and things like that so our relationships a little bit iffy at the best of times but it's ok...As I got older into my teen years I'd always remember those (suicide attempts) when I wanted to talk to her and it always stopped me because I never*

wanted to bring that pain up again for her, like I'd already lost one parent, I didn't wanna lose another, so I never pushed anything with my mum...

Sarah tells of a shift from being close to her mother as she understood her mother's victimisation, however, over time as they shared a relationship of victimisation she felt abandoned by her mother. Through this storyline we see a form of mother-blame emerge; her mother failed in her responsibility to protect Sarah from her abusive stepfather.

Sarah: *I guess I felt bad for my mum...I was scared for her in a way...*

Sarah: *She, I guess in a way chose (my stepfather) over me...she really did abandon me in a way, and ever since then, me and her have never been close...*

Mother-blame did not always result in a lack of closeness. In Megan's account, the failure of her mother to protect her produced a conflict; she understood her mother's victimisation and at the same time was angry with her mother for not leaving. However, because they shared a relationship of victimisation, Megan did not believe she had the right to be angry. In both Sarah and Megan's accounts the 'failure' of their mothers to leave shifts the responsibility for violence against women and children onto the mother (Wade, 2007). What is clear in Megan's questioning of her right to anger is how to resolve the issues of victimisation in an ongoing relationship with the perpetrator.

Megan: *Mum and I were always very close... my mother's got a really good sense of humour so we would have a laugh and we would have a good time...I felt really angry with my mother, and yet didn't feel that I should feel that way and hid it, because, from what I could see she had been abused or the victim, and so what right did I have to feel angry with her, and yet I did...I felt really angry with her as a teenager because I felt she should have left him and I kept saying to her all the time you need to leave him, why do you stay with him? and she wouldn't leave... it had its ups and downs, we were really close when I was young, I trusted that she would protect us... I don't remember my mother ever asking me anything about feelings...*

It is the protection that his mother provided that enabled Daniel and his mother to form a strong relationship; their shared history of victimisation united them. What was different in this account was that Daniel's mother would position herself between her children and their father, however, this also produced self-blame for

Daniel in as much as he blamed himself for his mother's abuse. In this storyline, Daniel's mother left the abusive relationship and that enabled them to relate to each other as they negotiated safety, together.

***Daniel:** Me and mum, thick and thin, I'll do anything, go anywhere, jump through hoops... we both went through the same ride, and we both got out and one got left behind, and that was my brother... we sort of know what each other's done and been through...*

***Daniel:** Mum used to always say the next day, when she had a chance, it's alright guys, you didn't know any better... she still says today she wishes she had done more, stopped him more, left him sooner... once you start seeing I think your mum, trying to stop your dad hitting you, and then she gets it, because she stood between you and him, so that's when things start, you know it's pretty wrong... that's probably the scariest part of the whole thing, is cause you're watching your mum take, what was probably due for you, so as a kid you're sitting there going oh my god, mum's getting the bash because I didn't put my toys away... the old man's come for you, your mum's stepped out said leave him alone they're only kids, it's a horrible feeling... I was with mum, that was the good thing, I was mum's boy...*

Not all mothers were able to leave the abusive relationship and were not necessarily positioned through the dominant mother-blame narrative. Emily does draw on mother-blame to question her mother's refusal to acknowledge the sexual abuse perpetrated by her father, but positions her mother inside a cultural narrative that offered her no position outside of marriage.

***Emily:** My mother was not a physically demonstrative person... she wasn't there and there was, no maternal bond if you know what I mean... I never went to my mother for advice or anything, the day I got my period she told me to stop crying and get used to it cause it's gonna happen every month, I was very young I was only 10 when I had my first, and she basically gave me some pads and told me to wear them... mum was quite cold and, I was a very, very difficult child from the perspective of a woman who didn't understand what was going on, she found me very difficult... she vows and declares she didn't (know about the abuse) but then what woman would launder her daughter's bloody underwear and not wonder and be in a panic about what was going on... I felt very upset about it, why didn't you protect me, but I then understand that she couldn't have left my father, not with my grandmother watching, what could she do? I think the DPB would have been available but it would never have been something that she would consider... When I confronted my father she announced that I made my marriage vows for better or for worse and I'm staying with your father...that was sort of her saying well sorry but I'm with your father...*

Neither Emily nor Mary talked about an emotional connection with their mothers, and although they were able to make sense of their mothers' positions, I sensed a profound loss. Mary also questioned why her mother did not leave in order to protect her, and positioned her mother through a traditional moral trajectory of marriage where it would not have been possible for her to leave.

Researcher: *What was your relationship like with your mum?*

Mary: *Umm, not really, not that good, yea...didn't do anything... I always used to say to my husband that I always remember her just sort of like, standing in front of the fire keeping warm, she never used to take us out, we'd never go to church, she'd never take us to the park... she put up with a lot, but I'm thinking, but why did you put up with it, probably because she didn't have anywhere else to go, I don't know, I sure as hell wouldn't, but I suppose things were different back then ...*

In Mary's construction of her relationship with her mother, she draws on a mother-blame narrative, where the emotional distance she experienced held a tension in the motherhood position between providing a home and social isolation. Understanding these positions within the context of living with violence, Mary is able to resist reproducing the same enactment of what it is to be a 'good' mother.

Hannah positioned her mother as living the effects of violence and its relentless aftermath through a storyline of drug addiction and mental health issues. The inability of her mother to resist the ongoing effects, positioned Hannah in a continuous relationship with the aftermath of the violence, as a victim. The only position available to Hannah was to sever the relationship.

Hannah: *I cut all ties to my mother basically... I'm the one who won't accept that she's my mother any more...: I haven't spoken to her in years...Once I realised that mum doesn't actually give a shit about me, I stopped going (to see her)...*

Listening to these stories, an interesting relationship between the presence of domestic violence and tensions in mother and child relationships emerged. Relationships with mothers included positioning mothers as blameworthy, not for the violence, but for how they responded to the violence. At the same time, and in sometimes contradictory ways, the participants shared a relationship with their mothers through an understanding of the effects of violence and victimisation,

including their profound loss of what a mother should be. Listening to the storylines that focussed on relationships with mothers did not minimise or ignore the impact of the perpetrators actions (Buchanan, 2011; Edleson, 1999), or the effects.

Their Relationship with the Perpetrator

Following on from relationships with mothers, I was interested in how the participants understood their relationships with their (step)fathers, as perpetrators. The participants showed compassion toward their mothers through understanding their positioning as victims of violence, and while they sometimes drew on mother-blame, there was some suggestion that they were also protective of their mothers. These relationships are further complicated for children who lived the effects of violence, especially where they are both afraid of the perpetrator/father and empathetic toward them because they are also father/perpetrator (Goldblatt, 2003). The literature understands this tension through the contradictory positions of good loved father and bad abusive father that are difficult to hold at the same time. Research that has examined the perpetrator/father relationship with children suggests that children who lose their relationship with their father as an effect of domestic violence experience pain, resentment, and disappointment that is confusing, especially if they also long for, and love, their absent father (Mittal & Carrington, 2012; Peled, 2000). In their New Zealand community based research, Mittal and Carrington (2012) suggest that children are caught in a conflict between wanting the violence to stop and not wanting to lose their fathers.

Ben's narrative of resistance was embedded in an understanding of intergenerational violence locating his father as reproducing violence and his mother's victimisation. In their shared victimisation, Ben empathised with his mother, and understood her leaving his father as an act of protection. When reflecting on his relationship with his abusive father, Ben told of the absence of his father as a loss, and therefore he was positioned in the tension between loss and his desire for the relationship. In this storyline, Ben was caught in the in-between, he wanted to be with his father, but also wanted to be safe. Making sense of his own hatred as emulating his father's violence enabled the realisation that the conflict could not be resolved and offered a position of resistance.

Ben: *At the time, I would ask for my dad, I would ask to be back with my dad, I would ask them to work with my dad, that my dad and I got help, that's all I wanted to do, I wanted to be at home but I wanted to feel safe... I was living under my dad's roof but I was hating him at the same time and it wasn't healthy so I had to leave because I started... following in my dad's footsteps, I started drinking, and I started becoming violent as well and, I had to get out of there... I rebelled as my way of coping, I did everything, I acted towards them, was just in hate, hatred for my dad...*

The sense of loss was profound in Ashley's relationship with her absent father. Ashley's relationship with her mother in the aftermath of her father's violence was complicated by her mother's substance and mental health response to the violence. In Ashley's account, visits by her father were sporadic and only occurred in the absence of her mother, suggesting that any possible relationship had to protect her mother. I sensed that in the loss there was confusion as to why he turned up then, and the gap of 11 years that had passed since turning eighteen.

Ashley: *I haven't talked to my bio-, or seen my biological father in about 13 years... I've seen him a couple of times, he used to show up on the door step when mum had gone out or things like that, he turned up on my 18th birthday actually, but I haven't seen him or really talked to him since, yea, about 11 years ago...*

Sarah minimised the negative effects of her father's violence, and positioned him in a positive light despite understanding the effects of his violence on her mother. Sarah blamed her mother for her complicity in her own victimisation in her relationship with Sarah's stepfather, and blamed her mother for her failure to protect her. With this set of relationships, Sarah negotiated the complex relationships by empathising with her father through his location in a narrative of intergenerational violence and substance abuse and protection. Her father gained a position of 'good father' through her mother's failure.

Sarah: *I always feel safe with him cause I know that he's never been able to lay a hand on me or any of his girls and he's protected us a few times when we've been in danger, but I spose a strength can be used for good or evil, I think in a way and it's just at the time my mother was the evil one, that he was protecting us from, in his view... I was extremely close to my father... I loved him and I can see that he loved me too in a way...*

Emily's relationship with her father was complicated through her mother's inability to recognise or protect her from the abuse. While she empathised with her mother's

cultural location, she struggled to understand her own place in the dynamic of power and control enacted by her father. She was excluded a position in the family as if she was responsible for the sexual abuse her father perpetrated; the enactment of physical and psychological violence against her represented her exclusion, and sense of loss.

Emily: I confronted my father and the reason he gave for the violence was that he hated the sight of me because I reminded him of what he had done... and I can understand, that but at the same time I did very much feel like well why didn't you just give me to someone else...I was quite hurt by that, because my father obviously couldn't stand to be in the same room as me, and my mother would go off, follow my father out into his computer room, and if I went out into my computer room my father would not long after get up and go back into the lounge, and my mother would follow him so I would follow them, and so I pretty quickly worked out well they really don't want me around...

Mary's relationship with her father was also experienced as profound loss. While she blamed her mother for failing to protect her, she made sense of this failure through the positioning of her mother in a cultural narrative of traditional marriage. She positioned her father as oscillating between good or bad in an unpredictable way. The ongoing tension between good/bad was experienced as both relief and disappointment (Peled, 2000). Recognising the loss enabled Mary a position of resistance.

Mary: Just used to stay out of his way if he was in a bad mood, but if he was in a good mood it was all good... cause I missed out on a loving relationship.... he didn't come to our wedding, on the day of the wedding, he come in and he said to me I'm not coming to your wedding and walked out the street door, and that was it and it was like uh oh, ok... I tell you what it was like a relief but a disappointment... and I just thought that it's your loss it's not my loss because I'm gaining, I've got my husband, but you've just missed out

Throughout these stories of loss, I was acutely aware of the tensions between pain and disappointment and a desire for love from mostly absent fathers that were complexly related to their relationships with their mothers. While (step)fathers were positioned as responsible for the violence, some of the participants were able to empathise with fathers by locating them within the narrative of intergenerational violence. However, all of the participants did lose their relationships with their fathers and this was a site of profound loss (Peled, 2000).

Separation and Custody Battles

Stanley (1997) argues that parental separation creates new issues and instabilities for children. Childcare or custody arrangements post separation was a site of conflict in the participants' stories. Legislation that governs the care of children produces an expectation that parents should reach an agreement on parenting arrangements that are in the 'best interests of the child' (Elizabeth, et al., 2012). It has been well documented that violence against women and children often intensifies in the post separation period, and that child contact, including court mandated contact, can increase the risk for further abuse (Harrison, 2008). Despite an increase in awareness of domestic violence, the rights of fathers in the post separation family have displaced concerns for the safety of women and children (Elizabeth, et al., 2012). According to the research, perpetrator/fathers are more likely to be inconsistent fathers and yet a 'good mother' is required to be willing to support father contact. Women who resist joint parenting, for example, are often viewed as alienating rather than privileging the concerns of the child's wellbeing (Elizabeth, et al., 2012; Harrison, 2008) and fathers' responsibility for the violence is ignored. As discussed in chapter 2, the post separation period provides opportunities for perpetrators to continue to abuse the mother and undermine the ability of mothers to care for the children. Legal interventions into custody disputes reproduce gendered power relationships that entitle fathers to exercise power over the daily lives of mothers and children (Elizabeth, et al., 2012). How children make sense of the conflict between their parents post separation and how it affects their relationships, is not well understood.

Many of the participants identified their parents' separation as a significant event within their upbringing that was life changing. Rather than a set of discrete issues, custody arrangements were woven into narratives that produced contradictory emotions and recollections. For example, experiences of relief and escape were confused through feelings of conflict and guilt, positioning the participants as torn between or as a pawn in the separation.

In Ben's story of post separation, he recalled from the past, the difficulty he experienced making sense of the ongoing arguments between his parents. The movement back and forwards between his parents was remembered as a result of

his behaviour toward his mother, and her position in relation to his father. It was not until he and his mother were able to talk about the abuse that he recognised that the separation had enabled them to move on to a more positive relationship.

***Ben:** A year before she passed away that's when she started opening up, she had her own place, and she was looking after us three kids and that's when the truth started coming out, so they weren't together then, things were a bit easier then she had a bit more time to be a mum... (I would be) Wondering where I'm going, what's going on, what's going on with mum and dad, why are mum and dad arguing and so I started becoming a handful for my mum and so my mum would send me to go live with my dad and then they would fall out and then ohhh, (mum) would want (me) back so then I would get moved back to my mums...*

Claire remembers the post separation period through the intensity of a custody dispute over her younger brother. As a form of resistance to the opportunity for her stepfather to continue the abuse through the legitimacy of the court, Claire's mother escaped with the children to provide some distance from the abuse. In this storyline, what was recalled from the past was the relief of disappearing, understood in the present as kidnapping, and this enabled Claire a feeling of adventure away from the intensity of the abuse.

***Claire:** When we were kids, in custody battles and stuff, it was, pretty intense...she got so buried in giving the lawyers all of her money, that she got so fed up she got all of the rest of her money together and took all three of us kids to Europe and just disappeared with us for a while...it was an adventure, we were kids... we did know she was running away with us and in essence she was kidnapping my younger brother, because she didn't want him to be taken away because my stepdad was a cop and he was winning custody...*

For Sarah, it was the position of pawn that was significant to her storyline. Being 'kidnapped' by her father in the middle of the night invoked fear for Sarah and this past event continues to affect her life. As her parents continued to use Sarah as a pawn, used by her parents to get at each other, she became increasingly guilty as she tried to please both parents.

***Sarah:** My mum and dad decided to both break up, well she left him, she didn't tell him and took me, and just packed up the house and left, and I remember getting a phone call...at home, I must've been four, and it being my dad... he's like I'm coming to get you... but don't tell your mother...and I remember this...next minute I woke up there's a man, I couldn't identify him, standing over my bed, he grabbed me, put a hand over my mouth, chucked me out the window, and then uncle*

catching me, and it was my father, and he popped me in the back of the car and he took me and drove me all the way to Christchurch... I still get nightmares about it, because I was so afraid and yet being able to see it was my father and my uncle, that's so bizarre...

Sarah: *Trying to organise Christmas would be hell because I could never please both of them...I was definitely a whipping post between them, it wasn't about being, it wasn't the good way of seeing divorce, when a kid benefits because the parents are trying to compete with each other, in a way, kids get it better, I didn't get that, I was to feel bad for seeing each other, the parent...*

Daniel understood his position as being torn between two parents until he was able to make a decision to live with his mother in his own best interests. Being able to make a decision against his father's abuse was a significant event in his life. What emerged in this storyline was the split between Daniel and his brother; he was mum's boy and resisted violence, and his brother stayed with his dad and reproduced violence.

Daniel: *You got that tornness between, you get to an age where you know you don't wanna live with someone, I didn't wanna live with dad cause I didn't like the brutality... Yea but I was with mum, that was the good thing, I was mums boy, my brother stayed with dad...*

Not all of the participants experienced parental separation; however what did emerge was a story of ongoing abuse that positioned the children in confusing and sometimes conflicting relationships. Separation provided an opportunity to escape the abusive parent, but it also created a situation in which they were forced to choose between parents or where they were used as a pawn in the custody battle; an enactment of ongoing abuse. Each of these participants told of the loss of emotional and tangible relationships, and at the same time, expressed feeling relief, especially when it was possible to determine their own best interests.

Parents: Blame and Responsibility

As the participants told of their relationships with their parents, they positioned their fathers as responsible for the violence. As shown above, there were storylines that positioned mothers as blameworthy, not for the violence itself, but for their response to the violence. There was also a thread in the layers of the narrative that

de-gendered the problem, and gendered the blame through attributing violence to their mothers' provocation; she deserved it.

Attributions of responsibility and blame are often made as we witness domestic violence. Pavlou and Knowles (2001) argue that cause and blame are inseparable as concepts, and are assigned through emotional connections that depend on empathy with the perpetrator or the victim. Research supports the argument that verbally 'provocative' women are more likely to be positioned as blameworthy. The use of violence by women in domestic violence incidents is controversial. The notion of victim participation in violence has often positioned women as provoking men to violence. The research literature has found that women are positioned as provoking violence if they have been verbally antagonistic and are, therefore, held more responsible (Pavlou & Knowles, 2001). In this way, women's resistance to violence is often understood as provocation. These storylines further complicate the relationships the participants have with both parents.

The notion of provocation is taken up in Claire's understanding of her mother's position of victim. In this storyline, her mother was tolerant of violence for a time, but when she resisted the violence against her she became the abuser. In this account, Claire attributes blame to her mother's actions.

***Claire:** (Mum) would be very tolerant with people for a long time and then all of a sudden she would snap and just be very emotionally abusive, and really nasty, she was more nasty with her words than she was her, physical actions... as soon as she got sick of these guys that she would date, she would just pack all their shit and put it on the front porch and call them names, and loser and that and this and that...*

Hannah also attributes blame to her mother by explicitly invoking provocation by her mother as the cause of violence; rather than preventing violence, her mother was held responsible for exacerbating her father's propensity for abuse.

***Hannah:** she would like wind him up and then he would just snap...*

While Sarah held her father as ultimately responsible for the violence, when understanding the abuse as a result of conflict she positioned her mother as equally

responsible for enabling it to happen. In this way, her mother's resistance was understood as provoking her father's violence.

Sarah: I think it was both ways to be honest as well, I remember mum slapping him a lot, I don't know what the disputes were over but I remember her being just as bad as him...I know that my father's got an extremely short fuse, like real bad, so I reckon she would probably wind him up...my mother's really got a sharp tongue, and dad would start, I mean it's not an excuse but when you know someone's like that you would kind of be the enabler a little bit, and when you know someone's like that you don't really get, you don't wanna do that but they were both just as bad as each other I think....

It is important to note that none of these participants excused their (step)fathers for being physically abusive. However, what emerged in the storylines was an understanding of violence that was located within a story of conflict between parents. When acts of violence are understood to emerge from a specific conflict, they assume gender neutral, equal power and therefore equal responsibility for violence. Where mothers resisted a position of compliance, they were positioned as provoking violence, particularly if they were verbally antagonistic and were, therefore, held equally responsible.

CURRENT RELATIONSHIP WITH PARENTS

Current relationships are embedded in histories of violence, and are dependent on how the participants understand the effects of violence on relationships over time as they make sense of the present. In this way, narratives of resistance require the participants to reflect on their past, to evaluate their experiences and their relationships in a process of change, in their positions and understanding of the effects of violence, toward the future. I was interested in how the participants located their current relationships with their parents, in their narratives of resilience, as they reflected on the past to make sense of the present.

Through a story of her mother's failure to protect Claire and her siblings in their childhood, Claire understands her current position in the relationship as that of 'nurturer'; taking care of her mother in the way her mother could not. The position that Claire takes up in relation to her mother depends on understanding her mother through the effects of violence that limited her ability as a mother; under the

circumstances, she did the best she could. This understanding, however, was not shared by all the siblings.

***Claire:** The roles have kind of reversed where I'm more of the parent than she is, and a lot of the time I have to remind her that I'm the child, she's the parent, because she offloads a lot to me, I'm her therapist, I'm her confidant, she comes to me for questions and answers time so yea, I guess it's changed a lot in that sense, she talks to me about stuff that she would never talk to me about before... I think my younger brother and I, have accepted our childhood as she did the best that she can, but my older brother definitely doesn't, he holds it against her a hundred percent*

In Claire's story, talking about the meaning of the past enabled a relationship of change. Ashley's story reflects a lack of understanding of her mother's victimisation because without talking about the past, she is unable to make sense of the effects in her relationship with her mother. Therefore, the relationship continues to be a site of unresolved tension.

***Ashley:** The main reason why me and my mum have such a hard relationship now and why we don't have a lot to do with each other is because I don't want any part of that life to do with my children, whether or not she was just the victim or whether she was part of it I don't know because I don't remember...*

In Sarah's account, the relationship is also a site of tension. However, in her narrative of resilience, the complexities of the relationship, both her desire to maintain a relationship with her mother and her refusal to accept her mother's compliance and silence, is reflected on as a source of pain in her present. In this process of change, Sarah reflects on her position as making a conscious decision to demand from her mother an explanation for her failure to recognise the abuse and its effect on their relationship. While Sarah empathises with her mother's history, she also stands strong in her desire for her mother to take responsibility.

***Sarah:** She still keeps in contact with me, but me and my partner decided to pump the breaks on that... she's done some very, very awful things... some of the decisions she's made over her life are questionable and there's gonna be a time when she's gonna have to answer my questions, of why she did it and she has to face the facts that she made wrong choice, like choosing my stepfather over me, and when she did that, it was hard, I've always wanted her in my life, I think because she's my mother and regardless of what her choices have indirectly done to me I guess.... I've had enough of her... I said this to her...you need mental help, like you*

actually do, you've got problems and you're inflicting them onto me and I really need you to go seek counselling and I'm not gonna talk to you and I'm not gonna continue our relationship until you do... she definitely knows that our relationship isn't the same, I mean she's quit fighting for it now, but in the mean time I've decided to stay strong until she does, she really needs help to deal with the issues of her whole entire life, she's got a lot of them...I've had counselling but she hasn't...

While Megan maintains a relationship with her mother, and they talk about the effects of the violence, Megan shifted her view of her mother's strength and repositioned her as weak. Her mother's weakness was the failure to protect Megan, through pride, and it remains a source of anger for Megan. At the same time, Megan empathises with her mother, understanding her mother did not understand the effects for Megan, and she repositions her mother as strong for surviving the violence.

Megan: *I had a good relationship with her and I loved my mother but I still felt angry with her and, and looked at her in a different way, whereas as, as a child I looked at her as a strong person, but when I was an adult I looked at her, that that was weak, you should have left him, and she actually said to me once, years ago, the reason I never left him was pride, I didn't want another failed marriage, and that really made me angry I was thinking you put your pride before us, as your children, but what she said to me was that she didn't know, that it would have the effect on us that it did...but she lives with that guilt today that she never left...I've never told her that I was angry with her for a long time, there's no point but I did feel that way but I'm kinda over that now...he still tries to control my mother, today but she won't allow herself to be controlled... I think (the domestic violence) made my mother a very strong person, extremely strong person, I think if she hadn't been a strong person she wouldn't have been able to withstand it, and I look at her and I think man I'm nowhere near as strong as her...*

As Megan continues to have a relationship with her mother, her relationship with her stepfather has also shifted over time. Being able to reflect on the changes in the relationship between her (step)parents, and the ability to reflect on the past as a family, there was a sense of forgiveness that emerged in this story.

Megan: *we're actually quite close now, he's mellowed in his old age for a start... and I think he feels quite guilty about the past and I think that he feels grateful that he can have a good relationship with me and my family considering how much of an arse he was, but I do know that he also puts some of that down to oh yes but I was drinking...it's not really an excuse... I wouldn't wanna go about hurting them, my dad's actually terminally ill with cancer, and I don't even know if were gonna have him at Christmas time...they're not those people today, those people from my childhood, they're really very different from those people today... and I am so*

pleased that we have this relationship now and often when we get together with the family, somebody will make a joke about how dad used to be, and he can deal with that now, because of the relationship that I have with them...I've been able to look at both of them and say well look, they are just broken people the same way that everyone else struggles with stuff, they struggled with stuff, the only problem is it affected all of us

Emily also reflected on the changes over time and their impact on her present, including getting to a place of forgiveness, and like Megan's story, I sensed that this forgiveness was perhaps, bittersweet; it took her father to lose his mind to be able to show love. While the relationship between Emily and her father was tentative over the years, it was her ability to forgive, positioning her father as pathetic and no longer feared that enabled her to come to terms with the effects of the violence. However, sharing the care of her father with her mother did not resolve the tension between them. In this account, like those above, the inability for mothers to take responsibility for talking about the effects of the violence remains problematic in current relationships, and here, Emily resists taking care of her mother's victimisation.

***Emily:** My father is actually dying of Alzheimer's... he is now in the final weeks of his life, I moved up two years ago to help my mother nurse my father at home so that he didn't have to go into care, which lasted about 6 months and then he ended up in hospital care... I'm unable to provide my mother with any nurturing or care now...my father and I, over the last seven years, have tentatively mended that relationship to a level where he would make random phone calls just to see how I was doing, and we would just, quite shallow conversations, but it was a tentative reaching out and bridge building... after I forgave my father and I sort of went through that whole letting it go and not holding it against him, getting rid of all that hatred and the anger and I actually saw my father as a different person, I actually saw him as being quite pathetic and quite broken and quite wounded...I was no longer afraid of him... the first time my father looked at me and smiled, the only time that my father has really enjoyed my company is ever since he's lost his mind..., it hurts like fuck... (mum) puts up with me and we get on ok, we're both adults now, it's a different world, they're different people than they were, and in a way you forgive them for the past because none of us live there anymore, we don't talk about it, it is an elephant that sits in the room, so my mother and I never ever talk about it, and if any allusion is made to it she gets very upset, very quickly*

In these accounts, current relationships were embedded in histories of violence, and as the participants reflected on the effects of their past relationships on their present, they told of ongoing tensions that depended on mothers taking responsibility for

talking about the effects of the violence, and coming to terms with the pain of the past, to be resolved.

Narratives of resilience, in this chapter, were organised through attending to the violence experienced in the past and its effects on current relationships with parents and families. The participants reflected on their experiences of abuse, their histories, and how they understood the effects of violence on their current relationships. All of the participants attributed responsibility for the violence to their (step)fathers; violence against their mothers and for most participants, direct violence. They drew on the intergenerational transmission of violence narrative to make sense of both their fathers' violence and their mothers' victimisation. While they understood the complicating action of substance abuse in the violence, it did not shift responsibility away from the perpetrators. The dominance of mother-blame narrative was a storyline that attributed the failure of protection to mothers, and positioned mothers as either complicit with or provoking violence, continued to be problematic in current relationships.

Resistance is a continual process of change that is never static and occurs as the participants make sense of their position in social and cultural meanings of violence. Emotional recollections, the interrelationship between cause and blame, were critical to these narratives of resistance, producing a sense of profound loss. The following chapter attends to some of the psychosocial effects that emerged as the participants recalled their resistance to violence.

CHAPTER SIX: THE CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE AND PSYCHO-SOCIAL EFFECTS

As the participants negotiated their positions in the social and cultural meanings of violence, stories of some of the complex and contradictory psycho-social conditions of their lives emerged. Embedded in stories that normalised violence, protected the secret, and ensured silence, were conflicting messages that the participants had to negotiate and overcome. In their narratives of resilience, the participants told of the struggles they had as they coped with conflicting positions between silence and resistance.

It is well reported in the literature that children learn, from an early age, that the violence they experience should be kept secret and therefore they actively resist disclosing what is happening (Alexander, Macdonald, & Paton, 2005; Daniel, Wassell, & Gilligan, 1999; Mittal & Carrington, 2012). At the same time, research with young people suggests they need a safe person to talk to, and as shown in chapter 4, having a safe space was salient to narratives of resilience.

According to research, a commonly understood strategy of men's violence against women and children is their ability to keep the violence shrouded in silence by rigidly maintaining the family secret, further adding to the tensions (Humphreys, Mullender, Thiara, & Skamballis, 2006). As shown in chapter 5, a 'conspiracy of silence' that produced both mother-blame and ongoing tensions in relationships between the participants and their mothers, emerges as an effect of violence dominated by secrecy, silence and fear. How this is taken up in these storylines suggests that concealing the violence produces diverse and sometimes contradictory positions and psycho-social effects. This research is interested in how the secret is maintained and resisted in the participants' accounts, and how resistances to the silencing strategies were enacted.

STRATEGIES OF SILENCE: IT'S A SECRET

It has been acknowledged that children are aware of the 'secret' of the violence and make conscious efforts to hide the effects from their family and their peers, especially if they fear the loss of a parent, or fear that breaking the silence will

exacerbate the abuse (Alexander, et al., 2005; Daniel, et al., 1999). Children then may enact silence as a strategy of survival, especially if the consequences of telling have the potential to increase danger in the absence of safety. It is often the effects of speaking out that continue to maintain silence. It has been argued that the conspiracy of silence traps children through practices of isolation that the children reproduce in their own social locations, therefore reducing the possibility of finding protective spaces (Humphreys, et al., 2006).

The participants recalled knowing that the violence was secret, although they were not always able to be explicit in how they came to know. What emerged in these storylines were layers of meaning that ensured the silence. The production of the secret through it being untellable, attempts by mothers to minimise the effects, the normalisation of violence within heterosexual relationships and direct threats, were present in the participants' accounts.

Sarah accounted for her silence through an understanding of it being untellable, whereas Ashley understood the untellability as an effect of shame. In both these accounts there was a sense of knowing that telling would breach some form of social boundary.

Sarah: I guess, the weird thing is, I never spoke about it...

Ashley: No one knew what was going on... it was an embarrassing thing and it was a really hard thing to talk about...

Shame, embarrassment and fear produced through violence have been well documented as barriers to help seeking for women who are abused by their intimate partners (Buckley, Whelan, & Holt, 2006; Fugate, Landis, Riordan, Naureckas, & Engel, 2005). Ashley located shame as making the violence difficult to talk about. I was mindful of the function of shame in the following account, where Megan positioned her mother as responsible for producing the secrecy through her attempts to minimise the effects of the violence.

Megan understood the secret as being continuously reproduced by her mother who did not recognise the effects of the violence on the children, and pretended that

nothing had happened, in both the private and public spheres. With the experience of violence rendered untellable, adherence to the secret was produced. In this account, silence limited Megan's ability to find the language to make sense of the fear she felt.

***Megan:** Then mum came in and had a big smile on her face and so was like everything's fine, don't worry, everything's going to be ok it's alright and, in my mind because she had done that, I felt like she was saying to me you have to pretend like everything's ok, cause we knew that everything wasn't ok...*

***Megan:** I never talked about it to anybody, I never talked about with girlfriends...it was a secret, it was secret, it happened in our house and that was my mother, my mother had this thing where she pretended that everything was ok to us, and to the outside world and so she modelled that, that you just pretend that everything's fine...no one told me it was a secret, my mother didn't tell me that in those words, she never said this is a secret... her actions meant that that was in bold, that you pretend that everything is ok, so there's no way that I would be telling a soul, and, and I think when I grew up I didn't have the languaging, I didn't know how to say that my father makes me scared, I didn't know what happened in other people's houses*

Maintaining the secret was confusing for these participants, and also reproduced positions of isolation that limited the possibility of finding protective spaces. Maintaining the secret served to protect her family from shame, or from a fear of retaliation, and at the same time meant her relationship with her grandparents was based on lies. What it did not do is protect her from the effects.

***Emily:** So it's always been a secret...it was difficult because I always had to keep secrets, and so as far as my grandparents are concerned 99% of my life is a lie, because I've had to lie to them and invent a lie, because I couldn't tell them the truth... I knew that I was to keep it a secret...*

The narrative of the conspiracy of silence was also embedded in stories that normalised violence. For many participants there was an unspoken assumption that violence was normal in families, and because it remains unspoken, they had no way to confirm or refute these ideas.

The normalisation of violence assumes that some levels of violence are normal or justifiable, a normal reaction to everyday stress, or that women are responsible for

managing their partners' behaviours. Commonly held assumptions of masculinity and femininity position men as powerful protectors, through physical strength and aggression, and in intimate relationships, heterosexuality normalises men as the head of the family, responsible for the care and protection of the wife and children (Dryden, Doherty, & Nicolson, 2010). These myths about marriage and the family have become so normalised that many women take up a position of keeping the marriage and the family together, and minimise the effects of violence, or attribute blame to themselves (Dobash & Dobash, 1990). To tell of the violence is to betray the gendered social power relations that maintain privacy, and expose their abusers and the family to scrutiny. Where domestic violence is understood as a private issue between couples, it reproduces silence.

In the following accounts, the participants reflected on their past understandings of the violence as normal, and how they shifted their positions as they became aware of their difference from others. When Sarah was able to break her silence, she became aware of the seriousness of the violence, and was able to understand that it was not normal.

Sarah: *I didn't really know it was bad until I started speaking about it with friends*

Like Sarah, Daniel was confronted with the idea that violence was both normal and not normal as he negotiated his social relationships and recognised that not all children were abused. Rather than his experience being isolated, he shifted his understanding of violence through recognising that some of his peers were not abused, and at the same time, was able to account for the prevalence of violence, as a form of discipline, in his social location.

Daniel: *I think as a, young boy you don't really see it until its, probably until you go to your mates place and they don't get hit, or screamed at for...I think as a young kid you don't actually realise its only you... Once you learn what it actually is and that it's not right...it was accepted... everyone knew, most ya mates you go to were, caned, punched, pushed, it was quite a common family thing... all the kids had it though, not all, I would say 60% of my age group, probably had the jug cord, the cane, or a bit of wood, quite often it was the jug cord and the fly swat, wooden spoon...*

Emily recalled understanding her experience of sexual abuse as normal when she had no access to alternative meanings.

Emily: It was normal, you don't know anything better ... it was normal, and I did actually think that all girls did that with their fathers...

Despite understanding the abuse as normal, the participants still maintained their silence. What was significant in these storylines was how they came to question the violence through making sense of it through observing their difference from their peers. This is similar in Mary's account, however there were several layers to the silence; she shifts from understanding the abuse as normal, and tells of a difference where she went to the houses of her friends but knew not to bring them home, and returns to a tension in the meaning of normal.

Mary: but the thing is you just sort of think that that's the norm, but you didn't feel that you could tell anybody, it's really weird a cause you don't tell your friends or anything and you go to their houses, like I've never invited any friends up... so you'd go to friends' houses and you sort of think oh, do they have the same, they were, their lives were the same as ours, cause you didn't know any different... I don't know really, you feel like you just want it to be normal, but what was normal cause that was normal really...

Not only was silence maintained through the normalisation of violence, it was also enacted as a strategy of survival, where breaking the silence had the potential to exacerbate the violence (Humphreys, et al., 2006), and was enacted by the perpetrators' direct threats. The very real fear of speaking out was present in some of the participants talk, further isolating them from protective spaces.

In Ben's account, to break the silence would result in his father going to jail. While some children maintain silence to protect their fathers from arrest (Mittal & Carrington, 2012), in this storyline, his father ensured silence by his threat to kill.

Ben: Cause dad always told me that if I told the police (about the abuse), then he would get locked up, then he would come and kill me...

Emily's silence was also maintained through a fear of retaliation. She was fearful of betraying the secret, and therefore opening the family to scrutiny, as she was

positioned by her father, through his threat that she would have to leave, that she was to blame.

Emily: I knew that I was to keep it a secret, I mean dad told me if mum found out you won't be able to live here...

In Sarah's account, there was not a direct threat that ensured her silence. However, to tell of violence would disrupt the normative assumptions that her family held and expose them to scrutiny. She was fearful of betraying the secret, and therefore the family, as speaking out had the potential outcome of profound loss; and she would be to blame.

Sarah: I think I knew this is the start of everything that's gonna go to shit... I was scared and afraid that this is gonna be, you know this is gonna be a shit storm, and this is the choice I'm making, and I knew it was gonna be hard, and that's what I was crying about, I knew that I could potentially lose my mum, my siblings, my whole family...it's a massive gamble, cause, to have something that you know is gonna change everyone you loves' life, and you know that you're gonna wreck their life...

The enactment of silence as a strategy for survival, and the normalisation of violence that reproduces gendered social power relations that maintain privacy, also enable the conditions that maintain silence through loyalty to the nuclear family. In research on trauma as an effect of exposure to domestic violence, it is argued that an intense conflict of loyalty adds to a child's burden (Kilpatrick, et al., 1997). However, in these accounts, it was not a conflict of loyalty that is associated with attributing blame to one parent, speaking out was understood by these participants as a betrayal of 'the family'.

Megan constructs loyalty to family through understanding that speaking out would betray the family. However, it was also complex; there was a strong sense that there would be no point, and betraying the family by telling the secret evoked a feeling of fear. From this account, it seems possible that children do carry the burden of maintaining the secret.

Megan: It's a loyalty thing, it's like if I told people the stuff that happened when I was growing up, a) would they even care, and why would I tell them anyway, but b)

is that, just being disloyal to my parents, that's how it feels, it would feel, really like I was being disloyal... betraying my dad? betraying the secret, there was a lot of fear associated with it...

Emily also told of her experience of speaking out, even in the safety of counselling relationship, as a form of betrayal. In her account, speaking out produced feelings of guilt.

Emily: Absolutely, and for a long time when I first got into counselling there was a real sense of guilt about talking about it, a sense of betrayal

What emerged through these accounts were diverse stories of how silence was constituted and enacted through storylines that normalise violence. As the participants negotiated the complex, and sometimes contradictory terrain of secrets and silence, their relationships became more complicated and access to safe spaces became limited. In their narratives of resilience, the participants told of the struggles they had as they coped with conflicting positions between silence and resistance, feelings of shame, loss, fear and guilt that added to the burden they already carried. I was interested in how the conspiracy of silence was implicated in narratives of resistance as psycho-social effects.

CHILDREN'S RESPONSE TO ABUSE: THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS

Throughout the narratives of resilience, the effects of violence dominated their relationships with others, their emotional responses, their strategies for coping and their experiences at school. I am mindful that these narratives move between past and present, and the participants shift their positions as they reflect on how to tell this story, now, as they continue to negotiate current lives free from violence.

Relationships with Siblings

The conspiracy of silence impacted on the relationships the participants had with their siblings. Relationships between siblings are very salient in children's lives especially where their relationship can buffer the impact of violence perpetrated by one parent against the other (Humphreys, 1999; Kelly, 2000; Pepler, Catallo, & Moore, 2000). However, sibling relationships may also be a site of potential

conflict and can exacerbate violent behaviours among them. Sibling relationships can be complicated through differences in access to power, and differences in experiences of victimisation (Pepler, et al., 2000). Older siblings often carry the burden of responsibility to take care of their younger siblings, and take up positions of protector (Goldblatt, 2003; Holt, et al., 2008; Mittal & Carrington, 2012); and the burden may be understood as a loss of childhood, and a source of severe emotional distress. However, the sibling relationship may also reflect the gendered power relationships of the parents (Pepler, et al., 2000).

Research argues that little is understood about differences in interpersonal relationships between siblings (Dryden, et al., 2010). The complex and subtle differences in children's sense making where they experience the same family, social and cultural context matter to how they respond to the effects. In their study of two boys from the same family, it was found that despite the contextual similarity, and similar understandings of their father's abuse, the similarities did not prevent significant differences in the way the siblings responded to the violence as they formed their own narratives of resistance (Dryden, et al., 2010).

Within the participants' accounts, relationships between siblings were complex. What was evidenced through these accounts was the impact of the conspiracy of silence.

Ben tells of the separation between himself and siblings that produced a complex difference in the meaning of the violence; Ben was raised by his father and his siblings stayed at 'home' with his mother. While their experiences differed, knowing that his siblings were also affected by the violence was interpreted as care. I sensed that the difference in their experiences produced a loss of a close relationship.

Ben: *I went off to live with my dad when I was 5 and my brother and sisters stayed at home, and so dad bringing me up and having mum bringing the other kids up was totally different, so we never really... but they were always there, they were always right there by me once my dad left the room, and just seeing my brother and sister break down and cry while my dad would do what he did, that definitely, that just told me that they did care you know and to see them upset like that...*

In Claire's account, the relationship between siblings reflected the gendered power relationship that mirrored the violence perpetrated by her father against her mother. As her older brother abused her, her younger brother took up a masculine counter position, and acted as her protector.

Claire: *Most of the domestic violence that went on in our house was between siblings, my older brother and I... my younger brother, I guess with him having to always come to my rescue and defend me from older brother and yea so it was most of the fighting that went on...*

Hannah's account of the relationship with her siblings is complicated through the various differences in blood kinship ties. In her storyline, the siblings were both connected to and distant from each other as they negotiated their way, individually, through the violence. Despite the extent of the abuse of her brother by her step father, fear stopped her from taking up a position of protector. A further complicating action was the silence that was maintained about her sister's refusal to visit.

Hannah: *Have a good relationship with my youngest brother, who's the son of the guy, but I don't see him very often, I've seen him once in the last year, and then there's my other brother, I like talk to him but he's going through his teenage stage and I can't be bothered with him, and then there's my sister, I can tolerate her for a short amount of time... it was all like, we were all just fending for ourselves basically... because he was pretty mean to my brother, he'd drag him like everywhere if he didn't do what he was told because he wasn't his son but he was playing the father role to him, he was hard on him and we were too scared to like get in there and stop it, and then my sister, she stopped going to my mum's when she was maybe like 13 and she just kinda didn't tell me why, she just stopped going...*

Despite the conspiracy of silence pervading their relationship, Ashley positioned her older brother as caring for her and providing her with a safe space, buffering the effects of the violence.

Ashley: *My oldest brother was abused actually by his biological father, so he helped me a lot, growing up and stuff, not that he ever knew that it had happened or that it was happening, I think he just suspected, in some ways, that something was going on so he'd always be there and he'd do huge amounts of things with me like take me places and things like that just to get me away from the environment that I was in*

Keeping the secret, for Sarah, is a source of fear and a complicating action in her relationship with the brother that she loves. From a position of protector that safeguards the secret and does not bring the family under scrutiny, she also protects her brother's position in his relationship with his father. Protecting the secret also evokes the fear that if her brother is also abused, then she has failed to protect him.

***Sarah:** I love, even though my brother is, the favourite like he gets everything... I love him, I love him to bits, he loves me, I haven't told him anything, he's asked what's happened...I don't know if I could ever tell him ...It's not about my stepfather, it's not about mum, or protecting what they did, is it even my role in his life to tell him what happened, am I gonna be that one, and I don't want to be the one that tells him the father that he loves is this horrible person, I fear about it, I fear that maybe there's something happening to him and no one knows, that's my worst fear to find out that that's been happening to him, I would feel that's, that I could have stopped it, for some reason I don't think it is, I hope and pray it isn't happening to him, I don't know if I could be that person to break his whole world, I couldn't do that...*

Daniel's account is also embedded in a layering of the conspiracy of silence that was produced through fear, and normalised in the family. The brothers carried the burden separately and differently as they hid the effects of the violence, and individualised their response; neither was able to protect the other.

***Daniel:** Pretty normal, pretty normal, sort of didn't back each other up much, I felt too scared to, sort of did our own things, hid in our own ways, he was three years older than I was so I did different things...*

As the older sibling, Mary took up the responsibility of a parental position, caring and protecting her younger brother. This relationship changed as Mary left her brother behind in the place she would not return to. I sensed a profound loss in this retelling; embedded in the conspiracy of silence, Mary carried the burden of not being able to continue to keep her brother safe.

***Mary:** Closer with my younger brother, we're 12 years difference, because I sort of used to look after him when he was born, my mum used to work in a biscuit factory, I remember that, and she used to work from 5 till 10, so I used to just look after my younger brother like change his nappy and stuff, and we got really close, and then when me and my husband got married I always remember, like my younger brother standing on the road side crying, cause we weren't going back there, yea...I was the first one to get married and leave home at 22 and the others were still there so whatever went on, I know my brother, the youngest, he used to come up for*

weekends and stop with us, and then he used to cry when we took him home, I mean that, what does that tell ya...

What was realised through the storylines that accounted for their relationships with their siblings were the complexities that were produced through maintaining silence. The participants were not only unable to protect themselves from the effects of violence, they were not always able to protect or be protected by their siblings. The participants were aware of the differences in their own positions as victims, and as a result of fear producing and reproducing sometimes contradictory relationships of connection and distance. There was also evidence that the gendered power relationship between their parents was reproduced between siblings. What emerged through these storylines was an overwhelming sense of the emotional burden of the conspiracy of silence.

Carrying the Emotional Burden: Responding to Trauma

The participants' emotional response to living with violence was critical to understanding the narratives of resilience, especially when understanding and appraising their experiences is an embodied emotional response (Cummings, 1998). Often research has attended to emotional responses that can be identified as outcomes; the effects of trauma on psychological wellbeing. Here, I attend to the storylines that address the relationship between emotional response as an effect of living with violence, and the how the participants made sense of the embodiment of trauma. Within these accounts, the participants talked about some very raw and intense emotional experiences of events, that as I make sense of the layers of meaning presented in the analysis, I am aware that I cannot begin to unfold the extent of the pain and loss that were 'so very felt' during the process of the interview.

Childhood trauma and adverse experiences have been consistently reported to lead to negative health outcomes, including depression, substance abuse and antisocial behaviours, and suicide among adolescents. Often these negative outcomes are interrelated (Dube et al., 2001). Childhood sexual abuse, physical abuse and exposure to domestic violence are strongly associated with suicide attempts (Huth-Bocks, et al., 2001; D. A. Wolfe, et al., 2003). Research has found that two thirds

of suicide attempts among adolescents are related to abusive or traumatic childhood experiences (Dube, et al., 2001). The participants talked about how they felt at particular times as they made sense of their emotional responses to trauma. What emerged in these stories were significant memories/moments that moved between past and present. Storylines of embodied emotion were neither stable, nor singular; they were layered with overwhelming desire to be free of the significant pain and loss produced through violence, and its ongoing effects.

For Ben, contemplating suicide was a reflexive process, an embodied position that enabled him to make sense of his intense feelings of failure and worthlessness that were an effect of his father's violence and the loss of his mother.

***Ben:** I did contemplate suicide as well at times, I did become suicidal, but I don't know...I always thought of myself as a mistake, and I'm like life's not meant for me you know mum's dead, dad can't stand me and so just think what more is there for me not doing well at school...*

Both Claire and Ashley experienced depression as an emotional response to trauma that had both depth and endurance. For Ashley, depression, alcohol abuse, and suicidal thoughts were interrelated.

***Claire:** How do I get out of this I've gotten in too deep, and that was my first experience with depression...*

***Ashley:** I struggled a lot with alcohol and suicidal thoughts, I had depression since I can remember, it's only just started getting better, now...*

Making sense of the embodied effects of trauma also means understanding that the violence continues to impact on their lives. It is argued that while depression is recognised as the most common indicator of suicidality, histories of trauma are more important, and often excluded in professional assessments of risk (Read, Agar, Barker-Collo, Davies, & Moskowitz, 2001). Symptoms of trauma emerged in the storylines. Research findings on the long term psychological impacts of exposure to violence suggest that an enduring symptom of trauma is flashbacks (Geffner, Igelman, & Zellner, 2003; Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998;

Henning, Leitenberg, Coffey, Turner, & Bennett, 1996; Kilpatrick & Williams, 1998; McCloskey & Walker, 2000).

Making sense of his emotional response to trauma, Ben tells of embodying the tension between the past and the present through flashbacks that are enduring. I felt an intense sense of pain as Ben told of his struggle.

Ben: *I am really traumatised by it... I'm still traumatised obviously from everything that did happen.... I think, it has a lot to do with the trauma catching up on me, with the way I was living my life at the time... it's done nothing for me but traumatise me... at the start the traumas still there, I get flash backs every now and then, sometimes, on the odd occasion my dad would beat me up, he would be too furious and, he would grab me and he would fully just like spit all in my face and, I could just be sitting there and having a cup of tea going about my day and then next thing I'm, bang, flashback happens and my dad's spitting in my face and hitting me and I just fire right up like, that's still there...*

Embodying the tension between the past and the present, Ben makes sense of periods in his past where he was so low he could not imagine a future. Feelings of hopelessness are well documented within the literature as common amongst children who are exposed to chronic abuse (Bell & Jenkins, 1991; Osofsky, 1995). Understanding histories of trauma means making sense of the depth of despair, the rock bottom, and knowing what those conditions are (Read, et al., 2001).

Ben: *I feel that the abuse and the violence was really at the lowest of lows... and a lot of what my dad has done to me like I said I think back in my younger days that's when I hit rock bottom, and I don't think rock bottom would be any lower than what it was back then...I felt like there was no hope... yea it's, really a feeling of no hope, of no hope, like everything's going bad, it's gone bad, it's going bad, and it's only gonna go bad, that's how I really felt*

Claire: *I was just, went ok this is what rock bottoms like...*

As the narratives unfolded, storylines that connected adult experiences of depression were embedded in the conspiracy of silence; the embodiment of relentless fear, paralysis, loneliness and the desire to escape. The enduring effect of living with fear has been linked to the constant monitoring of potential threat and safety, and children who experience violence often report feeling 'jumpy', hyper-

vigilant, and anxious (Cunningham & Baker, 2004; Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007; McIntosh, 2000; Onyskiw, 2003; Osofsky, 1999; Snow, 2009).

Hannah: *it was scary, most of the time... it was hard to deal with... Oh scared, really scared... we're too shit scared to do anything, I was just paralysed with fear...*

Ashley: *it's scary, I don't know, don't really know how to, word it, I don't know, hard I guess...I remember being really scared and alone, and really just wanting it all to stop and just go away*

Sarah: *At first I did get feelings of being afraid a lot...*

Megan: *being very afraid of my stepfather... as a child I was scared all the time of him and I lived in that whole, anxious state of I don't know what's going to happen next...*

Daniel: *a pretty scary thing to be in at times...*

Emily: *I used to hide under the bed some nights because I was afraid, yea I spent a lot of time being afraid, I spent a lot of time avoiding situations...yea I've avoided life to try and stay safe*

Mary: *yea, fear, hoping that when you came home from school he'd be in a good mood and wouldn't be in a bad mood, and just pretty much we used to just take ourselves off, to our bedrooms, we just sort of stayed out of his way and yea...*

Research has consistently found links between fear, anxiety and negative affect as an effect of experiences of trauma. When children live with fear, they often seek ways to escape their feelings, or to find opportunities to become emotionally numb. Rather than an effect of desensitisation to violence, emotional withdrawal is more likely a desire to escape (B. E. Carlson, 2000). As the participants recalled their feelings, in the process of telling, they connected how they felt to a desire for love. Within these storylines there was a sense of lack (of the mother), a missing mother, and attempts to fill that feeling of loss were enacted in ways the literature understands as acting out (Dube, et al., 2001). Children exposed to domestic violence hold lower social competence and social problem-solving skills (B. E. Carlson, 2000; Downey & Feldman, 1996; Feldman et al., 1995; Maccoby & Martin, 1983); they have no consistent manner for obtaining comfort from their

parents and demonstrate high emotional insecurity (P. T. Davies & Cummings, 1994; McIntosh, 2000). As I heard these stories there was an overwhelming sense of loss; the participants' histories of trauma (Read, et al., 2001) suggests that their desire for love was enacted through the meaning of the effects of violence – crying for help, confusion between sex and love.

Claire: *I would cry sometimes but it would be by myself, when nobody was around and it was just the feeling of, I just want mum to be here to hug me or to love me or whatever but she was at work or something...*

Ashley: *a lot of times, that things happened that were my cry out for help like the alcohol and stuff like that and no one noticed...*

Sarah: *I never wanted to be taken away from my family at all, I just wanted to be loved and held... my mum isn't a very affectionate person... I remember missing being held, being loved... I just wanted to be loved and held*

Emily: *I was attention seeking at times with my mother and with other people that came to the house...as a child, I think all children need attention, they need time, someone to talk to, they need to be raised, brought up and nurtured and I wasn't getting that, and I asked my parents for love and I got sex...I started working as a prostitute, by which stage I was the girl at school that all the boys practiced their sex on, and I let them because you didn't say no and it might have been an opportunity to get some affection, and some attention...*

What emerged through these storylines was the desire of the girls/women for the love of their mother. I noticed that the participants did understand their love/attention seeking responses as negative, even as they made sense of them as an effect of their histories of abuse. I sensed a feeling of self-blame.

A common interpretation of children's responses to violence is that they have a capacity to blame themselves. It has been argued that the tendency to blame oneself can be attributed to a child's developmental stage where they think egocentrically and therefore see themselves as to blame (Grych & Fincham, 1990; Holt, et al., 2008; Jaffe, Hurley, & Wolfe, 1990; Mittal & Carrington, 2012), and may absorb the guilt for the abuse perpetrated against their mothers and themselves (Holt, et al., 2008). Children are more prone to personalise their abuse and negative experiences, and attribute their parents' actions to being their fault (Terr, 1994). However, as children develop emotionally and become more aware of others, they

also come to understand the effects of violence on their mothers. According to research, because there is an absence of predictability in their lives, and little they can do about the violence, children exposed to domestic violence often blame themselves for the violence and take on parental responsibility to try and gain some kind of order (Pepler, et al., 2000). The lack of control over 'events' may lead to an inappropriate sense of responsibility, that it is their fault, especially if the content of the abuse involves them (Edleson et al., 2007).

The participants drew on storylines that positioned them as to blame for the violence, and the belief that they were to blame was enduring. In these accounts of self-blame, the participants were positioned as responsible for the violence, through what they had done, or had not done well enough. They felt responsible for the violence against their mother's if their mothers stepped in to protect them from their father's violence. In Emily's account, it was the feeling of guilt that she was somehow responsible for the abuse, because otherwise it would not have happened at all; she must have deserved it.

Hannah: *it was scary, most of the time, cause like, they would fight mainly like about what us kids would do... because like you hear them fighting about what you were doing and you think it was your fault... even though they'll be arguing about what you've done, it's still not your fault...*

Megan: *he would pick on me because I was my mother's only daughter...he knew it would get to her, and so as a child I grew up thinking somehow this is my fault, somehow everything that's going on is my fault... for most of my life, I thought it was my fault... he used to always pick on me. I can remember saying to mum why doesn't he love me? And she said to me, well maybe you need to try a bit harder, to love him, and I can remember, to me that made me feel like it was my, well that's just confirmation that it's my fault, somehow, couldn't work out quite what I'd done, but somehow this is my fault... I wish I'd known that it really wasn't my fault... this is about your mum and dad, and even though it's happening and you're living in that home, that it's not because of anything you've said or done, it's because of their problems...*

Daniel: *that's probably the scariest part of the whole thing, is cause you're watching your mum take, what was probably due for you, so as a kid your sitting there going oh my god, mum's getting the bash because I didn't, put my toys away, I'd left a golf ball on the lawn, the old man's come for you, your mum's stepped out said leave him alone they're only kids, it's a horrible feeling... that was when mum stepped in between us, then it was your fault, if I hadn't of left the golf balls on the*

lawn, or if I hadn't of left the car window open and it rained, yea and then it's your fault, you feel it's your fault...

Emily: *there comes a mind-set, well what have I done that makes these people do this to me... yea for years, .the guilt, what have I done, what did I do to make my father want to do that to me...*

Feelings of guilt and self-blame may also be understood as an effect of experiences of trauma. When children live with guilt, which is also complicated through fear, they also seek ways to escape their feelings (B. E. Carlson, 2000). What emerged in these stories were accounts of the past that had been 'forgotten' and re-gathered as they made sense of the present. The process of forgetting and remembering enabled the participants some space as they resisted the relentless pain and trauma. In Megan's account, however, what was forgotten were the good memories.

Ashley: *a lot of it I've blocked out I guess.... repressed a lot of the memories and things like that, and I've started, only in the last probably 6 months, starting to get a lot of memories back... I'd repressed so much*

Megan: *for a very long time I found it very hard to remember any good things that happened, in my childhood, to me it was all awful, but as I got older, and became a bit more healed I think I was able to remember some of the good things...*

Mary: *I can't even remember, no, it's really weird isn't it, because like you try to forget about it, so as the years have gone on you just, totally, it's just like a blocked out yea like a brick wall being built...*

Being abused and being exposed to domestic violence can be a very lonely experience. Feelings of loneliness and isolation are well reported in the literature. It has been argued that children develop a fear of being alone, whilst becoming more withdrawn from their family and peers (Lundy & Grossman, 2005; Onyskiw, 2003; Osofsky, 1999). It has also been argued that children who have experienced the effects of violence are unable to trust others which results in them being unable to form close bonds with others (McNeal & Amato, 1998). Alongside this element of trust, there is also argument that children anxiously avoid rejection by others and thus behave in a manner which does not seek out interactions with others (Downey & Feldman, 1996). Embedded in histories that maintain the conspiracy of silence also contributes to a web of social isolation and rejection that research argues

entraps families and impacts on the child's emotional expression (Holt, et al., 2008). Forming and maintaining relationships can be difficult for children with a history of domestic violence, increasing the feelings of isolation and rejection. Literature found that a fear of rejection compounded children's feelings of isolation (Buckley, et al., 2006). The fear that maintains silence also means children may avoid friendships for fear of revealing the abuse (Pepler, et al., 2000).

As the participants told of the effects of living with violence, there was a sense of sadness and isolation that was enduring. Positioned as victims within a complex set of relationships, the very real feeling of aloneness emerged that was connected to rejection; keeping the secret was enacted to protect further rejection, and at the same time reproduced their own isolation.

***Ashley:** no one noticed that anything was going wrong when I was in high school and stuff like that so that made it really hard... I remember being really scared and alone... I didn't want to be rejected by anyone...*

***Megan:** yea it was just more, yea just more rejection... I think rejection was the hugest thing in my life because my natural father had gone and I didn't know why when I was growing up... I didn't know that he was abusive, it was only as an adult that I knew that, and he never had anything to do with us, and so I felt rejected by him and then I had this step father who hated me, so I just felt totally rejected by any man in my life, so one of the things that came out of that was when I got together with my husband, I never trusted that love, for many, many, many, many years... I think there's an element of loneliness, that I have...*

In Sarah's account, despite have support in the process of 'healing', the experience itself and the enduring feeling of being alone, was not easy to shift.

***Sarah:** cause you're the victim, it's gonna be a lonely road when you're the victim, regardless of how much support you get, from people, like your friends and family, it's, the abuse is solely on you, that's why it's alone...I was the one getting abused, it was just me and that's it... the healing has to be alone in a way I guess, there's not much you can say or do, the wounds are on you, you've gotta let them heal... people can say I'm here for you, I'm here for you, and things like that but it doesn't really sink in for a very long time, you still feel alone*

As the narratives unfolded, storylines that connected emotional responses were clearly complicated by the conspiracy of silence. Maintaining the secret was necessary to minimise further devastation, compounding the participants imbu-

sense of sadness and vulnerability; the embodiment of fear, rejection, and loneliness were complexly related to feeling of self-blame and guilt.

There is no one way of responding to living with violence, and not all children display ongoing psychological or social problems (Dryden, et al., 2010; Hester, Pearson, & Harwin, 2000). The emotional complexities that have emerged from the participants' accounts are clearly embedded in the conspiracy of silence. In these narratives of resilience, there were also very clear strategies that emerged as the participants faced the ongoing effects of living with adversity.

The negative health outcomes of living with violence are interrelated. The participants talked about how they enacted their emotional responses to trauma that were a response to the overwhelming desire to be free of the emotional burden produced through their histories of living the effects of violence. How children resist or cope with adverse conditions within histories of domestic violence will also depend on the enduring effects of trauma that last well into adulthood. As the participants moved between childhood and adulthood, they told of problems with substance abuse, social and behavioural difficulties and problems at school.

It is well reported in the literature that children exposed to abuse will often turn to alcohol, drugs and other mood-altering substances in an attempt to self-medicate against their overwhelming emotions and block out, or escape, the memories that burden them. It has also been suggested that excessive drinking and or drug abuse is a 'coping mechanism' to deal with negative feelings toward the self (Caetano, Field, & Nelson, 2003; Cunningham & Baker, 2004; Mullender, et al., 2002).

The participants drew on storylines that produced substance abuse as an act of resistance to their adverse conditions and at the same time as a way of escaping the emotional burden. In Ben's account, substance abuse was an act of rebellion; he took up a position of being like his father that also enabled him to escape his pain.

Ben: *I rebelled, I rebelled as my way of coping ...I started, following in my dad's footsteps, I started drinking...so the only way I can seem to block it out or any negative thoughts is by getting high...*

Claire also told of using substances to escape the relentlessness of her feelings. As she became aware of the effects of living with violence, she was able to reflect on her substance abuse as a means of coping with her feelings. Looking back to the past, from a position of safety after escaping the abuse, she no longer needed to numb her feelings.

***Claire:** I had a huge substance problem so I was a big time pot head so I would smoke and just numb my feelings constantly... like why was I a substance abuser at 12 years old when everybody else was playing hop-scotch ... I didn't realise that I used it for coping until I moved away with my high school sweet heart and completely stopped, I quit for him*

As Ashley reflected on her alcohol and substance abuse, she understood that alcohol gave her a place to hide, and at the same time, it was an act of resistance – she wanted someone to notice what was happening. When her resistance failed to alleviate the burden, substance abuse became her means of escape.

***Ashley:** I had a lot of alcohol and drug abuse problems, a lot of it was due to what happened and no one would talk to me about it or no one noticed that anything was going wrong when I was in high school and stuff like that so that made it really hard... things happened that were my cry out for help like the alcohol and stuff like that and no one noticed... after when I moved back to Auckland, I started like heavily on drugs and things like that so yea ... I'd gotten in with a bad crowd and, started drugs and things like that and then that's just how it, it ended up being my escape ... as I grew up I hid with alcohol and things like that...*

Substance abuse, and in Sarah's account, food addiction also emerged through storylines of self-medication; it was used to suppress emotional responses and to enable the participants to feel better.

***Sarah:** it was not safe to be angry, when I was growing up and so I just used to shove it down, and I became I think part of my, thing was using food to medicate myself, so I used to shove it down with food, I used to eat, still do I think, still think that that's part of, my addiction is that I might feel a bit crap so I'll have something to eat...*

Self-medication was also a storyline in Emily's account. Here, she learnt the effects of medication while in hospital and it provided her with such a relief from the effects of the relentlessness of trauma that it became a source of strength. As she

continues to recover from the effects of violence, maintaining a balance between use and abuse remains a tension.

Emily: I discovered drugs actually when I was in hospital with my hip, that if I took a few more I could sleep the afternoon away or at least be in a dazed state so that I didn't care when people touched me... have struggled with cocktailing drugs and alcohol up until, I've been clean now for 15 years...every so often I will have a brief session of pot smoking...I don't want to be an alcoholic and I don't want to be an addict, but all things in moderation, I use those things to medicate...I have had times where I've combined, cocaine, marijuana and alcohol, and cocktailled sleeping pills, speed, alcohol, I could drink half a bottle of whiskey and not get drunk, I prided myself on being able to do it cause I could drink a lot of men under the table and for me that was being umm quite tough and staunch, I was proud of it...

What emerged within these accounts was the desire for the participants to be able to escape the ongoing effects that childhood trauma has had on their lives. Substance abuse, as an act of resistance, a place to hide, or a way of medicating enabled the participants the space to not feel the emotional burden that was often experienced as overwhelming.

Social and Behavioural Difficulties

Storylines of rebellion emerged as a strong theme throughout the participant's stories. It has been well documented that children who are exposed to violence struggle with social relationships, attend fewer interests outside of school, are less involved in social activities and more likely to demonstrate conduct disordered behaviours and aggression than children from non-violent homes (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007). Theoretically, antisocial behaviour posits that because children learn that violence and aggression is a way to deal with situations, they are rejected by many peer groups; rather they are accepted by other deviant peers who encourage and help further develop antisocial behaviours (Dishion, Andrews, & Crosby, 1995; Dishion, Andrews, Kavanagh, & Soberman, 1996; Dishion, Eddy, Haas, Li, & Spracklen, 1997; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, & Skinner, 1991). Researchers suggest that children learn their behaviours from their parents and reproduce them as a method to cope with the violence and abuse (Edleson, 1999; English, 1998; Mittal & Carrington, 2012; Osofsky, 1999). The participants recalled stories where they were so angry that they reproduced the violence they had witnessed.

In Ben's story, violence and aggressive behaviour were a means of fitting in, of belonging to a group of peers who were also rebelling. He positioned himself as fearless in his rebellion, through a desire to belong. Rather than face further rejection, participation in anti-social activities enabled him to cope with his isolation and rejection.

***Ben:** any chance I could get to fight somebody I would, I was just not scared of anyone, and then I used to start vandalizing property, I was staying at a boy's home in [town] and I used to, race about with them and we would just find anything we could, smash it, I was breaking into cars, everything and because I wanted to fit in, I wanted to fit in cause I didn't know where I stood, so I felt that with these boys, doing everything they did, and joining in with them I had that feeling of you know, being a part of something...I rebelled, I rebelled as my way of coping*

The literature reports that children exposed to violence may also respond to fear and hurt through enacting anger and/or violence in their social relationships rather than respond through withdrawal (Pepler, et al., 2000). It is well reported that children enact aggression as a response to challenging situations (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007; Lundy & Grossman, 2005; McNeal & Amato, 1998; Osofsky, 1995). Research has reported that adolescents who had been exposed to domestic violence demonstrated both high levels of verbal and/or physical expressions of anger and high levels of suppressing their feelings of anger (Adams, 2006). Children exposed to violence express direct aggression toward the person who is the object of anger, and toward those who are not the object of their anger. In their histories of trauma, the separation between internalising and externalising behavioural problems, as a form of resistance vary over time, however, the enactment of anger and violence emerged in the participants' storylines, as both through an understanding of the cycle of violence, but also as a form of resistance to the violence.

Research has shown that children who witness their mother's abuse may also enact violence and anger towards them (Pepler, et al., 2000). Ben rebelled against the effects of living with violence through reproducing violence in his relationships with both his mother and his father during his adolescence. Embedded in histories of trauma and the enduring emotional effects of fear and hurt, Ben and Claire enacted direct anger toward their perpetrator, so much so, that in both storylines the

desire to kill the perpetrator was, in that moment, the only way they could imagine the violence would stop.

Ben: *I started, following in my dad's footsteps, I started drinking and I started becoming violent...it was frustrating, because well, because what I seen when I was a baby was really screwing with my head and then when I was about 5 or 6, I started becoming a handful, cause I was just this little angry confused kid, like wandering where I'm going, what's going on with mum and dad, why are mum and dad arguing and so, I started becoming a handful for my mum...I rebelled, I rebelled as my way of coping, I acted towards them was just in hate, hatred for my dad... I had already set my mind that I was gonna kill him...*

Claire: *I tried to chase after him, and the boyfriend grabbed me behind and held me back and then I turned around and started fighting with him like, punching him and stuff and he was just a real dickhead, and then what was really bad I guess is with the violence and everything I grabbed a screwdriver and jumped on his back and put it to his neck and told him I was gonna kill him and that if I didn't kill him that my dad would, I'd call him in jail and somebody would come out and kill him...*

In Ashley's account, the anger she felt as an effect of living with violence was enacted toward her peers. Over time, and through talking with others, Ashley has come to make sense of her actions as a movement between internalising and externalising her response as she sought to maintain control over her emotions.

Ashley: *I was a very angry child, I remember when I was younger I slammed a girl up against locker hooks when I was probably about 8 or 9, yea I used to lose it, even in intermediate, like now I'll talk to people I went to intermediate with and they'll tell me stories and I don't remember being that angry and stuff...*

While Ashley struggled to remember how much anger she felt at the time, Sarah recalls her actions as a form of resistance to the anger she felt and was unable to reveal to her mother as she understood her mother's position as victim.

Sarah: *I can remember in the early years I used to slam doors, because it was my way of letting, getting out this frustration that I had, and I used to yell a lot, scream a lot... I never knew what to do with all of the anger that I had...I had so much anger, I can remember having so much anger towards this man and I was angry with mum, but couldn't show her, I couldn't reveal that to her because how, cause in my mind I was thinking how could I be angry with her she's the victim...*

A gendered difference in the participants' histories of trauma emerged through what is understood as a self-destructive expression of emotion (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007;

Osofsky, 1999; Pepler, et al., 2000) enacted through excessive and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Early sexual behaviour was understood, above, as enacting a desire for love. However, early sexual behaviour in the experiences of the girls in the following accounts, and embedded in histories of violence, suggest that girls may deal with sexuality and intimacy differently from others in adolescence (Osofsky, 1999).

Both Claire and Hannah told of early sexual encounters, and for Claire this was contrasted with her peers who were still positioned within childhood.

***Claire:** at 12 years old when everybody else was playing hop-scotch, I was promiscuous at that age...*

***Hannah:** I had sex at 13...*

Early sexual encounters and promiscuity were also evidenced in Emily's account. Her position as the girl, who was sexually available to boys during adolescence, was on reflection, not such a seamless transition to prostitution. Her initial encounters were marked by an inability to say no, and a desire for the potential for affection. Within this retelling, she is repositioned as a victim of sexual violence by her flatmate. As Emily turned to prostitution, her experiences with sexuality and intimacy were born from fear, and normalised through sex work.

***Emily:** when I was 19, I started working as a prostitute, by which stage I was the girl at school that all the boys practiced their sex on, being a prowess, and I let them because you didn't say no and it might have been an opportunity to get some affection, and some attention...I needed a place to live and so I answered an advert in the paper for a flat mate and I moved in with him, he decided he wanted the relationship to be sexual, I didn't, he was horrible, he forced the issue, and then held me in the house for hours and I feared for my life and, I was 18 then, it was only a matter of a year or so later I was in the whore houses where it's an occupational hazard, in some of the cheap and nasty places in Auckland...*

Within histories of trauma embedded in the conspiracy of violence, children exposed to violence may react to their peers in ways that are not socially normative, through aggression as discussed above, or through an enactment of sadness and depression (Holt, et al., 2008) and therefore can be at an increased risk of being bullied. School may also be experienced as a site of respite – and therefore a safe

place to engage in learning and to avoid or escape home. A strong commitment to school has been argued to be a protective factor in narratives of resilience (Garmezy, 1993a; T. I. Herrenkohl, et al., 2008; Hill, et al., 1996; Osofsky, 1999). However, children's learning potential may be compromised through the complexities of living with violence that have competing demands on their energy; hyper vigilance, exhaustion, absenteeism (Holt et al., 2008) resulting in school failure, poor concentration, and early leaving (Hogan & O'Reilly, 2007; Holt, et al., 2008; Mittal & Carrington, 2012; Osofsky, 1999).

Within the participants' histories of trauma, school was a site of either safety, or another place to become abused. What was evidenced through these accounts was the impact of living with violence on learning and education outcomes and the participants' ability to focus, and the interrelationship between becoming the bully or being bullied.

In Ben's account, living with violence impacted on his ability to learn in competing ways. As reported in the literature, it is common for these children to move schools (Holt, et al., 2008), disrupting their social and learning outcomes. In this account, Ben was unable to successfully engage in learning where the threat of violence and the enactment of violence were attached to his achievement and failure.

***Ben:** My old man's behaviour was really affecting me at school as well, mentally, I couldn't really work at school and stuff...I never really had someone to teach me after school... his way of disciplining me was, you don't learn your spelling words you get a hiding... (dad) used to beat me up, he'd beat me up right there and then he'd be smacking me round the head until I actually got it... I've been expelled from two schools... I was constantly changing schools as well... (I was) turning really bad at school because I was just really confused like just didn't know where I was...*

Mary's achievement at school was also dependent on her father's threats and her fear of his violence. Living with the fear of violence was understood as limiting her achievement. In this account, however, school did function as a safe place to engage in learning and a place to escape before going home.

***Mary:** I did alright in my education, but you don't need someone telling you that oh if you fail your exams I'm gonna kill ya constantly... I didn't do as well as I could have done... we didn't get any support like that it was just a case of if you fail*

these exams then I'm gonna kill ya...I was oh my god I'm gonna be killed, oh I don't really wanna go home tonight after school cause like, or when the exams come through and you're like you look at em and when he comes home from work I'm gonna be dead, that's it, this is my last breath...doesn't help really... I liked school, I enjoyed school, it was like a haven as such...it was just an escape for so many hours of the day before you go home...

As Claire told of her history of trauma, school was also experienced as a place of safety. In this account, Claire told of a strong commitment to school as vital in her narrative of resilience; no matter what the struggles she was facing were, school functioned as a protective factor.

Claire: *For some reasons school's always very important to me, so it didn't matter how many drugs I sold or did, that I wasn't living at home I'd still, would get up and get to school somehow... I would go to school and then it was getting really hard for me though, finding a ride to school and everything...I went to a university...and I ended up getting mine paid for by the state because of my grades...mum helped me out with the first year and a half and then after that I qualified for a scholarship based on my grades so, I had the rest paid for which I was lucky*

The burden of living with violence was too overwhelming for Ashley and affected her ability to concentrate, resulting in school failure and early dropout.

Ashley: *I flunked out at high school... high school and stuff I wish I'd done better in my education because I know that that had a huge impact on my education as well... found it really hard to concentrate at school...*

In Daniels account, school was way down the priority list for his survival. The overwhelming burden of living with violence had competing demands on his energy. School in this account was just another site for more distress.

Daniel: *My education was shocking, most of us have come out with I would say lower education, way lower...it's just like bully syndrome, too busy watching your back...too busy worrying about everything else and school doesn't really matter... school jeese it's just another place to go and get picked on...*

In Emily's account, it was her position as a target for bullying as a function of her difference through the ongoing effects of abuse that compromised her learning potential. As a function of living with violence, complicated through social

isolation and bullying, that made school unsafe and resulted in poor concentration and school failure.

Emily: I left school when I was 15 and I was a second year fourth former, I have trouble learning... I find reading very, very difficult, reading and comprehending... school was hell... I was bullied, I was plump with glasses, personal hygiene was a problem, and I was still being abused and so yea...

Bullying emerged as a recurring storyline in the participants' accounts. Research has found that histories of trauma for children exposed to domestic violence were not only more likely to engage in bullying, but were also susceptible to being bullied, and this effect was more likely for girls (Overlian, 2009). Bullying emerged in the participants' storylines, and for both genders. However there were differences in the way that boys understood the effects of being bullied that enabled them to reposition themselves as bullies as a technique for survival. In this sense, bullying emerged in a tension between being bullied and emulating the violence they had experienced (Bauer et al., 2006; Cunningham & Baker, 2004).

As Ben retells his experiences of being bullied at school, he locates the violence perpetrated by his father as a form of bullying. In this account, Ben remains bullied by his father and fears his father, but resists the position with his peers; he becomes a bully as a form of resistance, he fights back.

Ben: I got bullied all through primary, and then when I got to intermediate I got to the point where... I was getting bullied at home and like before and after school...I didn't care if I really affected anyone else, the only person I would never ever upset was my dad and so I knew that if there was no dad around there was no consequences so I started to bully people and I started to fight back...

As Ashley told of the anger she felt and enacted toward her peers and began to make sense of her actions as a response to the overwhelming emotional burden of living with violence, I specifically asked if she now might understand it as bullying. As she responded to the notion of being a bully, I sensed a moment of recognition as she understood what that might have meant.

Interviewer: Do you think umm, in a sense you sort of became a bully when you were younger? Would you go as far as calling it that?

Ashley: Yes, yea, ha-ha, I was, yes...

Embedded in a history of trauma, Daniel positioned himself as the protector of his own survival. While school was a source of distress for Daniel, and he understood that he was positioned as a bully, he did not position himself as emulating his father's violence. In an interesting turn, bullying and child abuse are interrelated, they are both at the same time.

Daniel: I think at school for me, was protecting number one, cause I couldn't do it at home, so I'd do it at school cause they're all the same size, y'know you haven't got a gorilla standing over you, you've got a monkey next to you and you're a monkey too type thing so you can deal with what's going on... that's where a lot of bullying comes from, you will probably find the bully is actually being bullied at home, so, it is, it's a form of bullying and a form of child abuse...

Claire was positioned as neither bully nor bullied, but took up a position as a protector of the bullied as an effect of living with violence.

Claire: Kinda taking it to school with me, and then not so much being a bully but defending people that were bullied...

For many of these individuals, school was at the least of their priorities. Their narratives represent a survival mode in which many of them did what they had to just to get through the day without too many serious repercussions. We see narratives of escape and learned behaviours within this theme and it teaches us a lot about how children manage their interactions and relationships with others.

Through this chapter, we have seen how the conspiracy of silence has embedded itself within these narratives and have impacted upon how the individual positions themselves in relation to their experiences. It has taught us how societal expectations can impact upon children growing up with domestic violence and highlights areas which need to be addressed in order to tackle the problem that is domestic violence.

The following chapter introduces to us and carries through the embodied effects of domestic violence. The narrative guides us to understand how the enduring effects of domestic violence shape the way in which the participants position themselves

not only in the past but also currently as they demonstrate resilience and resistance in response to their experiences.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CURRENT BATTLES

Longitudinal studies have found that the effects of exposure to domestic violence last well into adulthood (McNeal & Amato, 1998). In this chapter, I return to the notion of resilience as a dynamic process of resistance and vulnerability. Resilience is a continual process of healing and strength that is never static and occurs as the participants make sense of their position in social and cultural meanings of violence. How children resist or cope with adverse conditions within histories of domestic violence will also depend on the enduring effects of trauma that last well into adulthood, and as shown in the previous chapters, as the narratives unfolded, the embodiment of trauma was embedded in the conspiracy of silence, and the effects were relentless; they were exhausting. The participants' emotional response to living with violence was critical to understanding the narratives of resilience. In a continuous movement between the past and the present, forgetting and remembering the pain and suffering, the participants positioned themselves through stories of victimisation and survival and at times, somewhere in-between. There is diversity in the participants' storylines as they continue to encounter the enduring effects of their childhood experiences of exposure to violence, as adults, through narratives of resilience.

In the following accounts, histories of violence were brought into adulthood, where the anticipation of conflict and its possible effects was so overwhelming that the participants enacted avoidance strategies if they sensed adverse situations. Megan told of us of the exhaustion she felt through the intensity of constant monitoring in anticipation of conflict, and the enduring embodiment of fear.

***Megan:** The exhausting thing was especially when I became an adult, when there was anything to do with confrontation I would exhaust myself by working out every possible eventuation of, if I go into conflict with this person or confront this person what if this happened, what if that happens, what if the other thing happens, and I was, completely, taken over with a negative outcome... because I used to avoid confrontation because of the backlash because it always turned out negatively and somehow it always back lashed on me...I couldn't deal with confrontation or conflict or anything like that, I just didn't know how to do it and I had to pretend*

Similarly, Mary continues to take up a position of avoidance in relationships that are confrontational; the past is not a place of return for Mary.

***Mary:** I try to avoid confrontation, big time, yea, cause don't wanna go there, don't want any of it, it can be a result of all this arguing and stuff...*

While both Meagan and Mary took up positions of resistance to conflict, I sensed that this was complex. As the participants positioned themselves through stories of victimisation and survival, the enduring emotional effects emerged from time to time in a continuous movement between the past and the present. In the following accounts, the participants talked of this process as the embodiment of anxiety as an effect of their histories; anxiety is reported in the literature as an outcome of exposure to domestic violence (Henning, et al., 1996).

In the following account, Ashley reflects on a history of anxiety as an enduring effect of living with violence as a child that has shifted and moved over time. In a continual process of healing and strength, she has made sense of her anxiety as an embodied effect of the violence.

***Ashley:** I'll still turn to like a wine or something like that if I get really anxious just cause of the feelings that come up inside that are so deeply ingrained from when I was younger... all the time, I can probably name a thousand times that I've had anxiety and freaked out and things like that, I used to over react to a lot of stuff...*

It was the process of making sense of the embodied effects of the violence that was salient to Megan's account. She reflected on a history of a flight or fight response to understand her feelings of anxiety and depression. Breaking the conspiracy of silence meant she no longer had to pretend everything was fine, but at the same time, she struggled with trusting her feelings. The process of resistance and vulnerability is enduring.

***Megan:** That fight or flight response would just kick in all the time and so it caused me to have huge anxiety and depression and all of that kind of stuff so that affected me there and it affected me in that I didn't trust my feelings or my emotions, when in my adulthood, I didn't know how to deal with anything properly, I couldn't deal with confrontation or conflict or anything like that I just didn't know how to do it and I had to pretend...she modelled that, that you just pretend that everything's fine and I think that I lived with that my entire life until, as an adult, I had a nervous*

breakdown and then it was not ok any more for me to pretend that everything was ok...

The constant movement between resistance and vulnerability was also salient in Emily's account. As an effect of the embodiment of fear, Emily takes up a position on the edges of social relationships. As she reflects on her history of violence, and makes sense of her enactment of heightened vigilance to ensure safety, Emily positions herself in an ongoing struggle between victimisation (people are unpredictable) and survival.

Emily: You were always on edge, hindsight comes into play here cause when you look back and you think oh yea well that's where you learn to deal with it, where you learn that hyper vigilance, being invisible... I fear intimacy...I don't cope in social situations where there are crowds I wouldn't cope with this situation if it was indoors in a small room, where there's too many people, I still have a heightened vigilance, I'm still very aware of where people are and what they are doing, although it's all slowed down right now, but it's taken a long time to do that...there was no such thing as safe, even now, you always live on the edge...at any point of time some psycho could find me... I was afraid, I spent a lot of time being afraid, I spent a lot of time avoiding situations, public transport, things that I couldn't get away from, being shut in a room with people, going to parties where people were drinking, I've avoided life to try and stay safe... don't do social situations with strangers... I don't like to be with strangers who are drinking, people become less inhibited and then they can become unpredictable...

In the continuous movement between the past and the present, the participants' emotional response to living with violence was critical to understanding narratives of resilience; the pain is enduring.

As discussed in chapter 6, two thirds of suicide attempts among adolescents were related to abusive or traumatic childhood experiences. Suicide emerged as a storyline in the participants talk as an overwhelming desire to be free of the pain and loss they embodied as an effect of living with violence. It has been a consistent finding in the research literature that exposure to violence in childhood can have long terms effects such as depression and lowered self-esteem, and suicidal ideation into adulthood (Indermaur, 2001; Kelly, 2000; Purvin, 2003); the effects are enduring.

Depression emerged as a storyline in the following accounts, as a constant battle and as a story of survival. Emily is unable to imagine a time when the movement between past and present will be free of remembering the pain and suffering that she endured as a child.

Ashley: *I will be dealing with this until I die, I have to deal with depression every day because of what happened...some days I don't wanna get out of bed and I don't wanna shower because I would have had a bad dream or I would have seen someone the day before that looks like my biological father...it's had a huge impact on who I am now, and I'm gonna have to deal with that...*

As Megan moves between past and present to make sense of her pain and suffering, depression emerged as a storyline of both victimisation and survival. It took a clinical intervention into her embodied emotional response to enable a position of survival.

Megan: *After a while I just couldn't cope with anything and so ended up with being diagnosed with clinical depression, and going on medication... the whole anxiety and depression and all of that I have to wonder how much of that has come out of growing up in that environment, and feeling like I have to pretend that even though a whole lot of crap might be happening that everything's ok...I'd always felt like I never fit, I always felt like I was too fat, that I laughed too loud, that I never felt comfortable in my own skin... in my mind I was never quite good enough...*

The continuous movement between past and present to make sense of the enduring effects of pain and suffering emerged in Emily's account as an ongoing tension between victimisation and survival. Her embodied response to trauma is relentless; she moves between hopes for the future, and at the same time, her struggle with the effects of depression produces fear.

Emily: *I had become quite hard, and to survive in the jungle where I lived where there was gangs and drugs and other illegal activities I had to be a big bitch to survive, and I really didn't like the person I had become...I struggle still with depression... I have been on antidepressants for fifteen, twenty years, and I will probably be on them for the rest of my life... (Suicide's) always been an option, I've come very close several times, but then I never found the courage to actually carry it through, when it came to crunch time I couldn't do it...when I think about it and when I hear other peoples life stories I think fuck I lucked out, because I've never been able to hold down a job, I've always, well not always been on the benefit...sometimes I look at little girls running around and they're the same age as I was and there's a sense of grief, y'know when you were that age look at what they*

were doing to you, there's a great sense of loss... what's the future gonna hold? I mean, I don't know if I'm ever gonna be fit to get married, and I don't want to be married unless I can have a healthy relationship, I'm never going to have children, my fertility has been ruined, compromised, due to scar tissue and damage that's been done, that's always a source of grief, so basically I'm alone and I've only got me, and lord knows where the government's gonna end up with the benefit, whether there's gonna be one available or whether I'm gonna end up as a bag lady with a shopping trolley with all my possessions, that's a real fear, I don't know...

It is through these narratives of resilience that we can begin to understand the very large impact that domestic violence has, well into the future; the effects are enduring. The continuous movement between the past and the present emerged in the participants' storylines as they continue to encounter the process of healing and strength. As the narratives unfolded, the conspiracy of silence that fragmented relationships with family emerged as a site of ongoing tension.

POSITIONS WITHIN RELATIONSHIPS

As I listened to the participants stories, my attention was drawn to the relentless pain and suffering that continued in the present as a result of the past. In the following accounts, the participants tell of being positioned as the abuser, they position siblings as suffering the effects of trauma, and position siblings as abusers, therefore they continue to encounter tensions in the process of healing and strength.

In the following accounts, the participants' heredity made them vulnerable to being positioned as the abuser; their recognisable attributes were markers of pain for others.

Ben: *I was talking to my sister earlier this year and we weren't off to a good start and we were arguing and she turned around and she apologised, she said I'm sorry that I'm like this towards you, it's just that I can't stand your dad and you look like your dad, you're starting to look more like him every day and I can't stand that person...*

Sarah: *She sees so much of me with him, like she sees him in me a lot, just the way I look, the way I talk, my personality traits as well I'm like my father a lot...*

As discussed in chapter 6, relationships between siblings were complex. What was evidenced through the participants' accounts was the impact of the conspiracy of

silence. The enduring effects of violence were present for both the participants and their siblings. In Ben's account, all the relationships between siblings have been affected, and he especially understands the trauma his sister has suffered.

Ben: *My sister's been traumatised by it, my sister still hasn't let go of it, she doesn't talk to my dad anymore and I think that's quite sad, but I would say the relationship that I have with my brothers and sisters has really been affected by what has happened*

A tension between Megan and her brother that has endured is her brother's anger at her failure to continue to protect him. As Megan has come to understand the effects of the abuse on her own life, she produces her brother's struggles with mental health and his enactment of violence against women as an effect of living with violence; she positions him as damaged to the core.

Megan: *Every single time she chose him, over my brother and I think that hurt him something terrible, I can remember him saying to me...I'll never forgive you for leaving home and for leaving me to deal with that, and it was like, I couldn't believe that he was saying that to me, because I had spent all my life protecting them... my brother and I both suffer from depression and anxiety... I've got a brother who's about a year or so younger than me and he has suffered terribly from our childhood... my father was physically abusive to him and I actually think that he may have Asperger's, he finds relationships with people very difficult, last time he came back he ended up having a huge row with mum and dad and left...he just doesn't know how to be around us, anymore, and at 45years old he doesn't have a partner, he has a job now which is great...that's been the outcome for him, and I think he would be a totally different person had he not undergone what he underwent when he was growing up...he just needed someone to say to him I'm really proud of you and he's never ever heard it, it's just so easy to say I'm proud of you or I love you, and the things that a boy I think need to hear from his father...there's some core damage that's been done that I just don't think that can be fixed unless he goes and has some counselling and sees it for himself, I feel very sad about the fact that he's unable to have a relationship with someone because he's actually violent now...*

It is Daniel's resistance to violence that is produced in this account as a site of tension between himself and his brother. He positions his brother as the same as his abusive father and at the same time he resists being positioned as the lucky one; he resists violence.

Daniel: *It's just the other day I said "oh god he's just like his old man", said "his old man not mine", I've tried to talk to him, but he's too late, he's forty years old...*

we don't talk a lot because he says I'm the lucky one, he says I'm the golden child, I've got everything, he's got nothing type shit...I'm not violent, I had a family, didn't beat my girlfriend up and lose her every time I got one...so he gets a bit pissed off with that sort of stuff and I'm easier going, more cruisey, laugh a lot more, cause he's real serious, doesn't laugh, gets angry... it's a cycle and it's a terrible cycle, and my brothers got it, he's the hitter, so and I actually put that down to (being) brought up by my dad... Yea, spending longer with it, and I actually think the violence has come through in him...

The effects of trauma are enduring, and in this account, breaking the conspiracy of silence produced an emotional response by Emily's brother that was confusing. I sensed that the response to knowledge of the abuse was unable to produce a relationship of healing and strength between them. As Emily made sense of the effects of her own abuse, she positioned her brothers as vulnerable to and reproducing violence in their relationships.

Emily: *When my older brother found out (about the sexual abuse), he sent me a tape, a recorded tape message, which ended abruptly and I was sort of left sitting there waiting for the gun shot...but then on a face to face relationship, the relationship is actually devoid of any love, he calls me sis, he's kind and polite but he doesn't really make conversation with me, he's embarrassed and awkward...all three boys border on having drinking problems, they all lived in an abusive environment, as well, although it wasn't necessarily aimed at them, they still struggled with dad's and mum's neglect...my older brother has struggled with alcohol dependency, he's getting over it...my other two brothers have struggled with alcohol, and they've had to keep a tight rein on themselves...*

I argued, in chapter 4, that the relationships between mothers and children were diversely fragmented through the effects of violence perpetrated by (step)fathers. The participants made sense of the effects of their relationships with their mothers by positioning their mothers as victims within culturally dominant narratives. They also positioned their mothers within the cultural narrative of mother-blame; mothers were blamed for their failure to protect and for exacerbating the violence, they were held accountable for how they responded to the violence, including neglect, and for maintaining the conspiracy of silence. The effects of violence on mothers was enduring, complicating the continual process of healing and strength as the participants made sense of their position in their relationships with their mothers and the social and cultural meanings of violence. As these stories of resilience unfolded, I had a sense of the desire for a shift from mother-blame to an understanding of the enduring effects of violence on mothers and children.

Ashley positions her mother in the narrative of the conspiracy of silence; a position that is meaningful through an understanding of her mother's vulnerability within the social and cultural meanings of that silence.

***Ashley:** My mum still won't talk about anything... she doesn't acknowledge that anything happened between, when I was younger, not to the point that it did anyway... even now if I was to ask her what happened she will change the subject and like run away from it ... because of everything that happened and she won't talk about it and stuff...I think my mum never had coped with what happened to her... I don't think she ever wants to because she's had a pretty hard life, so she I think she ended up ignoring it...*

Sarah also positions her mother within the narrative of the conspiracy of silence; a position that is static. For her relationship with her mother to move, to become part of the process of healing and strength, Sarah desires her mother break the silence and engage with a process of healing, the movement between the past and the present, victimisation and survival. While her mother continues to take up the position of victim, Sarah resists the embodiment of the pain of the past by resisting the relationship, from time to time.

***Sarah:** She's in denial, always in denial, so she still doesn't believe it did happen, y'know how crazy do you have to be to think that but, that's her type of mechanism is to not talk about it, the thing is she's not coping, and its affecting our relationship, so that's how it is... she really needs help to deal with the issues of her whole entire life, she's got a lot of them, and I've had counselling but she hasn't... I said to her you need mental help, like you actually do, you've got problems and you're inflicting them onto me and I really need you to go seek counselling and I'm not gonna talk to you and I'm not gonna continue our relationship until you do...*

In the following accounts, mothers are positioned as maintaining the conspiracy of silence through their inability, or refusal to acknowledge the abuse; they remain static in the participants' stories of resilience. Emily makes sense of her mother's silence as self-preservation, and her mother's inability to move from victimisation remains a source of pain; it is enduring.

***Emily:** She can't accept that even after she's heard my father admit to it, she still wants to say it never happened, so there's a strong denial there which is her I guess umm, self-preservation ...*

Hannah makes sense of her mother's inability to move from victimisation through a storyline of addiction as a response to violence. Her mother is positioned as suffering the enduring effects of her own experience of violence and reproduces pain for Hannah.

Hannah: *Yea, she, hasn't grown stronger from it, she's just gotten worse basically, I guess her way of coping is she's on prescription drugs and she's addicted to them and she's just surrounded herself with alcohol, needing to make herself feel safe who knows.*

Intimate relationships also emerged as sites of struggle in the continuous process of healing and strength, past and present victimisation and survival. While a criterion of participation was that the participants were living free from violence, I was encouraged by the lack of abuse, in past intimate relationships, given the extensive research that supports re-victimisation as an outcome of exposure to domestic violence (Ehrensaft et al., 2003). In the following accounts, Claire and Hannah tell of their different response to intimate partner violence. As Claire retells of her experience of intimate partner violence, she took up a position a dominant cultural narrative that violence was normal. In a dynamic process of resistance and vulnerability, and through a complex interplay of shame and fear, Claire was able to make sense of the relationship through her past and shift to survival.

Claire: *I ended up in an abusive relationship at one point, and my reflection on it now being away from the situation, was the reason that I allowed that type of person to enter my life was because I had been exposed to it before... And for some reason part of me accepted that this is normal or that this is ok or I can handle this... and then once I was in the situation really deep, I had a sense of shit how do I get out of this I've gotten in too deep and that was my first experience with depression... then he manipulated his way into my life and then before you know it I was, knee deep into a relationship with him and trying to figure out how to get out of it... the first time that he hit me, it took me a long time to understand why I didn't tell anybody then and I just hid it and stayed with him... I hid it because of my pride... I hid it because I didn't want everybody to tell me we told you so...I thought that I had control of the situation, and I felt responsible for him hitting me, because I was warned that he was abusive and he would say I don't want to do this and he was very good manipulating and making me feel that I was responsible for it, so I was under his spell...it wasn't until leaving that relationship, wasn't until I felt like my life was actually in danger, when he looked at me and told me that he would bury me and nobody would find me... because the times that he would leave marks on me we would leave, out of town, until I healed... was definitely tough, I did not want to be with him, I didn't like him, I wasn't attracted to him, I just was there, I*

was just in this situation and I was just like how the fuck do I get out of this and he would intimidate me and threaten me non directly so he would tell me stories about how he got other girls beat up for doing something that made him mad how anybody that crossed him wouldn't be able to walk around in town safely ever...

In Hannah's account, it took one act of violence for her to resist a position in the narrative of normalisation of violence.

Hannah: *My ex, she hit me after I broke up with her, like the same night, like that was it, there was no going back, even if there was before she hit me...*

Narratives of resilience were embedded in the movement between the past and present as the participants continue to encounter tensions in their relationships with significant others also affected by violence, including issues of trust in intimate relationships.

As the narratives of resilience unfolded, a lack of trust in men emerged in the participants' storylines. Children exposed to domestic violence struggle with trust because their relationships with the very people who are supposed to provide protection and care are harmful, and integrating the experience of violence becomes confusing (Osofsky, 2003; Osofsky & Fenichel, 1993). A lack of trust in future intimate relationships is well reported in the literature (Holt, et al., 2008). Distrust in men emerged as an enduring site of tension in the participants' stories of the continuous process of healing and strength, past and present, victimisation and survival.

In Ashley's account, the ability to trust was generalised to adults as the past failure of adults to be trustworthy permeates the present.

Ashley: *I found it hard with adults as well because I never learnt to trust anyone so teachers and stuff, I couldn't talk to them or trust them...*

The distrust in men was also an embodied effect of living with violence. Hannah's distrust of men is a felt physical response; she does not like to be touched by men.

Hannah: *I don't have a lot of trust in males.... I don't really like them touching me*

For Sarah, distrust is also an embodied response to men, where some men represent the perpetrator and she is sickened by them. As Sarah reflected on her response, she connected the past feelings of fear to the present lack of trust.

***Sarah:** I'm very cautious about men, I have a lovely partner, but when men look at me I sometimes get like a, especially older men, like I don't know if that's just general yuckiness, but when old men look at me I feel real sick, I'm just like eww...I don't know if it's old feelings or not, or if it's just something that I've learnt to feel fear of men because of what could potentially happen, so I don't know if that's from the inner feelings of what happened to me or just something I've adapted to learn...*

In Megan's account, the lack of trust in men emerged through feelings of past rejection, and the effects were enduring. In this account, her past experiences led her to reject the love of her intimate relationship; her lack of trust positioned her husband as necessarily going to leave.

***Megan:** Just felt totally rejected by any man in my life, so one of the things that came out of that was when I got together with my husband, I never trusted that love... I just thought he's just gonna wake up one day and realise that, what am I doing here, I just never, felt that I could trust that this man was actually going to stay in my life, which is part of the reason why probably the affair was able to happen because I just didn't trust him, I didn't believe him when he told me that he loved me and that he would never leave me, I was like I can believe you for this second...*

The effects of living with violence as children are enduring, and last well into adulthood. The participants' narratives of resilience are embedded in a continuous movement between the past and present, victimisation and survival, resistance and vulnerability, in a process of healing and strength that never ends.

As I followed the storylines, the relentlessness of the effects of histories of violence well into adulthood was sometimes overwhelming, mindful that in New Zealand 94, 099 children were present in reported incidents of domestic violence (see chapter 2).

HINDSIGHT IS A POWERFUL THING: FINAL WORDS

“If I was gonna say anything to that child I’d say hang on, just hang in there...” Emily

Children are often referred to as “silent”, “forgotten”, or “invisible” victims of family violence (Bagshaw, 2007; Shea Hart, 2004) and yet they experience a “catastrophic loss of power” in their lives (Batmanghelidjh, 2006, p. 53). The aim of this research was to bring volume to the voices of those who are silenced through social power relations, to their experiences, their insights, their resistances, their contradictions.

In closing the interviews, it was important to hear from the participants what would have been meaningful to them, as children, and from their understanding now, what might be important for others. I asked the participants two questions:

1. *If you could go back and talk to yourself when you were a child and give yourself some advice from the future what would that be?*

And/or

2. *What advice would you give to children who are currently going being exposed to domestic violence?*

And I leave the participants to have the last word.

Ben: *I would tell that (younger me)...not to get caught up in anything bad, just know that if you, whatever you put your mind to... you've got a bright future ahead of you, it's quite hard to say because the 11 year old (me), even if I helped him the 12 and 13 year old (me) still had it quite bad so he's only gonna be in for worse, but I would tell him to keep his dreams alive...look, you've got the best future ahead of you and if you don't know what it is you can make it that, you can make it whatever you want, and don't do this to your children....*

Claire: *I would probably hug her and just tell her that she's beautiful, and that she doesn't have to wear short shorts and she doesn't have to hang out with the bad people and, to get back into sports... cause I was really good at sports but I always got distracted because of the drugs... like my advice to kids now, I always tell them stay young, enjoy being young, keep your innocence, you don't have to know what... the adults are up to, just be you...stay young, go do things and enjoy life*

and be a kid, climb trees, don't be curious and wanting to know what the adults are doing, because what they're doing isn't fun, it's stressful, it's hurtful...

Hannah: *I think... if it's your mother, say with me, and you've got a stepfather, and you've got a dad fighting for you to get out of that situation, and like you can see that how it's affecting you then go to your dad's straight away, like don't bother living with your mother anymore, get out as soon as you can before it affects you too much...that it's not their[children's] fault... even though they'll be arguing about what you've done, it's still not your fault, like and you need to tell someone and get help...*

Ashley: *just to ask for help... y'know it's not their fault... like they shouldn't have to suffer because of what their parents do...I never went to uni and things like that so if I'd known now that it was ok to talk about it and that it is hard to talk about it at the start but it does get better then I would, yea slap myself in the face and just said get over it.*

Sarah: *If I had one thing to say to someone who's been abused I guess is I'm here no matter what, cause I think that's all people need is not necessarily a way out or for it to stop, I think what people most need especially in all abuse is people going I believe you and I'm here for you...some people who are in domestic abuse don't want to be saved... they love this person and they would do anything to be with this person, including being abused so it's not necessarily about leaving the situation, the first most biggest priority for them is that people are there for them regardless... especially sexual abuse, they don't feel like they're gonna be believed, they don't feel like anyone's there, I think that's the reason why some of them stay, because they don't think they have an out because no one does believe them or no one is there for them, so they stay... I remember missing being held, being loved, I guess that's what I would want, is someone just to be there, I don't know if I'd want a knight in shining armour or anything to take me away, I never craved that, cause they're my family, I never wanted to be taken away from my family at all, I just wanted to be loved and held...I would say, say do something, don't be afraid...tell the truth... be strong, you are stronger than you think, you doubt yourself a lot but you are so strong and you've got wonderful friends, and you're strong enough for this, you're strong enough to do this, I think that's why it took me so long to tell people about the abuse, I didn't think I was strong enough to do it*

Megan: *I wish I'd known that it really wasn't my fault, I think it would have made me choose differently, I never knew I had a choice, I think if I had known then what I know now I would have actually chosen to go and live with my grandparents, and been out of that environment... I used to dream about going... but never realised that I could actually do that... the other thing that I would want them to know or to think about was who is a safe person, for them to actually, not just for them to be with but to talk about how they feel*

CHAPTER EIGHT: REFLECTIONS

I write this final reflection with some hesitancy; to create a space for the voices of the participants to emerge and at the same time use my own position as researcher to produce a narrative of resilience for the purposes of social change to reduce the prevalence of violence and its effects carries a huge responsibility. The production of knowledge often develops from a place of dissatisfaction with what is 'known' or as stated by Fine (2007b, p. 613) new knowledge is often "born from the soil of discontent". Rather than reproduce deficit, or quantify negative outcomes, it was my intention to bring meaning to how the effects of living with violence, as children, has implications for interventions into living free from violence through stories of resilience. As argued by Riessman (1993), the final level of representation occurs as the reader encounters the narrative produced and draws their own conclusions; there is no master narrative, but rather a constant engagement with the reader and the text that is subject to new interpretations.

This thesis engages with the knowledge produced through attention to dominant theories used to understand domestic violence, such as the intergenerational transmission of violence and mother-blame discourse, to configure a story of the lived experiences of living with violence as told through narratives of adult children. In this way, the analysis that I have produced is something like a hybrid story where, even in their complexities, common storylines, movements, subject positions are reshaped to create volume to the experiences of living with violence through the voices of the participants, and myself as a researcher. As I made decisions to bring storylines together I inevitably practiced a form of power over the participants' voices; it was my position as researcher, the values, politics and theoretical assumptions, that inform the final story (Riessman, 1993) to produce knowledge that has the potential to inform ongoing research and practice for the future wellbeing of our children. In the construction of their narratives of resilience, the participants' telling is part of a process of making sense of their past experience, linking particular events and storylines, and reflecting on their meaning making. In this way, the co-construction of narratives is specific to the

conversation between the participant and the researcher and it is the analysis of their stories that produces the narrative of this thesis.

The aim of this research was to bring voice to the experiences of adult children who were exposed to domestic violence as children; to privilege their experiences, insights, contradictions and resistances to produce a counter narrative to the current focus on individual risk and deficit that permeates current research and interventions. Through a feminist standpoint, I was interested in producing an ethical space where children's experiences of gendered violence can inform social change in the ways we understand its effects. This research sought to address *how* the participants made sense of their relationships with their (step)fathers and mothers, their siblings, and their ongoing social relationships, and to unravel personal strengths and resiliencies that can help the community of domestic violence researchers and service providers understand the effects of violence on children and how their experiences can inform living free from violence in adulthood.

What emerged from the analysis was that understanding the meaning of the violence was necessary to understand its effects and take up a position of resilience that enabled the participants to reflect on the past to make sense of the present. I read the narratives of resilience alongside dominant understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children in the literature. An important and crucial aspect of this analysis was an ethical position that did not seek to reproduce the 'deficit' effects of violence on children, although the narratives of resilience did produce storylines of specific effects. What emerged were stories of strength and courage and the incredible tenacity of the participants to reposition themselves through narratives of resilience by attending to the social and cultural meanings of violence and its effects, and engaging with processes of change toward healthy functioning.

The narrative produced through the analysis in chapter 4 began by reflecting on narratives of change embedded in relationships of violence and resistance. In this way, the storylines of resilience and change emerged through an understanding of protective factors, such as safe relationships and spaces that enabled the participants to make sense of their position in the social and cultural meanings of violence.

In their narratives of resilience, the participants talked about breaking/turning points as being particular critical moments that enabled change and resulted in a re-positioning of themselves; where they were and where they need to be. There were diverse critical moments that provided safe spaces and relationships that enabled the participants to reposition themselves within social and cultural meanings of violence. Through these stories of change, there were common storylines of safe relationships, being heard, changing actions and spaces to reflect.

What was salient in their stories of resilience in the face of adversity, was the common everyday knowledge of violence as an intergenerational cycle that emerged as a critical storyline that enabled the participants to make sense of their lived experiences of the effects of violence; it provided another kind of space where they could position themselves as breaking the cycle and producing change. Throughout the participants' stories, there was a continual movement between positions of victim and survivor that were constantly negotiated as they made sense of the social and cultural meanings of violence. Knowledge of men's violence against women and children enacted across generations was implicated throughout the participants' stories; the participants understood the historical and cultural conditions of violence in their parents' lives that positioned them as perpetrators and/or victims and the reproduction of violence in their siblings lives. While two participants experienced violence in past adult relationships, none of them perpetrated violence in their adult relationships, and this was a difference between them and their siblings. While the intergenerational cycle of violence suggests that boys are likely to reproduce violence and girls are likely to become victims, this research shows that it is not inevitable.

While any particular event of abuse was not the focus of this research, in conversations about their relationships with fathers and mothers, the participants engaged in retelling past events to make sense of their present relationships. The participants talk produced two forms of abuse; the abuse they witnessed that was one parent using violence against the other that was most often (step)fathers abusing their mothers, and the abuse that was directed physically, sexually and verbally by the same perpetrator on themselves. As the participants reflected on the abuse of their mothers, they understood the effects of the violence as more than

from a position of witnessing the acts; the experience of the aftermath within the family was ongoing. And while the aftermath in chapter 5 relates to patterns of violence after particular events, what emerged throughout the narratives was that the effects of violence are relentless and enduring.

The literature argues that mother-blame discourse can manipulate resilience in such a manner to shift responsibility for violence against women and children onto the mother. This was not evidenced in any simple way in this research. The responsibility for violence was clearly located with (step)fathers. The participants positioned their mothers as victims of their (step)fathers abuse, and at the same time held their mothers responsible for their failure to protect them; where they positioned mothers as either complicit with or provoking violence produced a tension that continued to be problematic in current relationships. As the stories of resilience unfolded, I sensed the desire for a shift from mother-blame to an understanding of the enduring effects of violence on mothers and children. Throughout the narratives, the presence of domestic violence produced tensions in mother and child relationships, and the loss of what a mother should be was profound.

Embedded in stories that normalised violence, protected the secret, and ensured silence, were conflicting messages that the participants had to negotiate and overcome. In their narratives of resilience, the participants told of the struggles they had as they coped with conflicting positions between silence and resistance. The conspiracy of silence fragmented relationships with family and emerged as a site of enduring tension. Not only was silence maintained through the normalisation of violence, it was also enacted as a strategy of survival, where breaking the silence had the potential to exacerbate the violence and was enacted by the perpetrators' direct threats. Fear was experienced as very real and limited the participants' ability to find protective spaces (chapter 4).

What emerged in the analysis were diverse stories of how the conspiracy of silence was constituted and enacted through storylines that normalise violence. As the participants negotiated the complex, and sometimes contradictory terrain of secrets and silence, their relationships became more complicated and access to safe spaces

became limited. In their narratives of resilience, the participants told of the struggles they had as they coped with conflicting positions between silence and resistance, feelings of shame, loss, fear and guilt that added to the burden they already carried.

Resilience is a continual process of change that is never static and occurs as the participants make sense of, and resist, their position in social and cultural meanings of violence. I was often overwhelmed by the relentless emotional effects that emerged through these narratives, the profound sense of loss of childhood that is embedded in a continuous movement between the past and present, victimisation and survival, resistance and vulnerability, in a process of healing and strength *that never ends*. As shown in chapter 6, storylines of embodied emotion were neither stable, nor singular; they were layered with overwhelming desire to be free of the significant pain and loss produced through violence, and its ongoing effects. The participants' emotional response to living with violence was critical to understanding the narratives of resilience, especially when understanding that their experiences are an embodied emotional response that is enduring.

As I reflected on the narratives of resilience, what was most salient was *how* children both cope with and resist the adverse conditions within histories of domestic violence given the enduring effects of trauma that never end. The embodiment of trauma is embedded within the conspiracy of silence and produces relationships of gendered domination and subordination, and the effects are relentless. In a continuous movement between the past and the present, forgetting and remembering the pain and suffering, the participants positioned themselves through stories of victimisation and survival as they continue to encounter the enduring effects, as adults, through positions of resistance.

From my research standpoint, an ethical assumption of this research was to promote the rights of women and children through questioning the diverse historically, culturally and socially constructed social power relations that produce women's lived experiences, in particular the gendered power relations that produce domestic violence and their effects on children. There is compelling evidence in the participants' narratives of resilience, that men's violence against women and

children does adversely affect the wellbeing of children and their relationships with their mothers, and that these effects are relentless and enduring.

It is important for the purposes of this research to understand the experiences within a child's life that enable them to build resiliencies in relation to the adverse effects of growing up with domestic violence; how these children negotiate a life lived free of violence. While the emphasis on funding for intervention into domestic violence privilege men's living free from violence programmes, this research suggests that services for women and children are necessary for the future wellbeing of our children. At present one quarter of our children are growing up with domestic violence, one quarter of our children are negotiating their way through the journey of domestic violence, one quarter of our children are trying to break the cycle, one quarter of our children are keeping a secret. These are the forgotten voices within our literature, within our communities, within our schools and within our country, despite legislation. It is only with new interventions, new therapeutic spaces and new voices that we can attend to the forgotten voices to provide children with the space to develop their own resiliencies, their own resistance toward healthy functioning.

LIMITATIONS

Like any other study, this research has its limitations. The goals of this research assume domestic violence is gendered and therefore the experience of domestic violence is understood through social relations of domination and oppression. I take a standpoint that women and children's oppression is 'real' and therefore name experiences of masculine power that render the experiences of women and children visible.

From this standpoint, I am aware that I have represented the participants' accounts through a narrative of resilience that is shaped by my personal assumptions and the wider political assumptions that produced my framework of understanding. For example, I was interested in common sense understandings of the intergenerational transmission of violence and mother blame discourse as organising strategies in the narrative produced here. In this way, although I assumed a level of "truthfulness"

of the participants' accounts, I represented their stories through attention to storylines that addressed what I considered to be of critical importance to the aims of the study.

The interview process was intended to bring volume to the voices of those silenced through social power relations, providing opportunity to express stories of pain and oppression to bring about political change. The stories shared by the participants were inevitably produced through the interview relationship and were shaped through trust in me as a researcher, to ensure their safety as they reflected on their past and its effects on the present.

The criteria for inclusion in this research were a history of exposure to domestic violence as children, and a commitment to living free from violence, which performed a particular exclusion; the analysis does not include those children who continue to struggle with violence as victims or as perpetrators. Within these constraints, nine participants took part in this research – seven women and two men – that meant that differences between the experiences of girls and boys could not be addressed. The analysis of nine interviews did enable in-depth attention to the complexities within the storylines, but the small number of participants can only provide a snapshot of insight.

APPENDIX

Participant Information Sheet for the Study of the Impact of Domestic Violence upon Adults

Dear

Researcher: Maree Henderson: School of Psychology, Massey University

I am a Masters student in Psychology at Massey University. I am inviting you to take part in some research that I am doing which is looking at how adults make sense of their experience of growing up with domestic violence, their relationship with their mother and any personal strengths that may have arisen from this experience.

The University requires that ethics approval be obtained for research involving human participants. This research is being partially funded by the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse and is being supervised by Dr Leigh Coombes from the School of Psychology at Massey University.

I am inviting women and men aged over 18 years of age, who have grown up with domestic violence to participate in this study. You will not be expected to travel and interviews will be conducted within a private location that you have nominated.

What would you have to do?

You are invited to complete an interview with myself, which involves discussing your development as a child and teenager and talking about your experiences with domestic violence, your relationship with your mother and personal strengths you have found to have arisen from your experiences with domestic violence. I will ask some open ended questions but I am mainly concerned about your experiences and feelings towards your personal exposure to domestic violence. The interview should last between 1 and 2 hours. Interviews will be voice recorded so that they can be transcribed after the interview. You have the right as the participant to request that the voice recorder be turned off at any point throughout the interview. All written records of the interview will be brought back to you as the participant to ensure that what has been transcribed is correct; you will have the opportunity to make any suitable changes to your statements if you feel necessary.

If, at any point throughout the interview you begin to feel discomfort and wish to be referred on to an agency for further assistance, as the researcher I am connected to a national network and can work quickly to put you in touch with the appropriate

agency. As the researcher I have a moral obligation to report any ongoing domestic violence which may be affecting you or a family member. Should this situation arise, reports will be referred to the national network who works closely with police who can provide you with the best possible levels of support.

Extracts of the conversation from the interview will form the basis of the research and will be put into written report. It will not be possible for you to be identified personally, no names or family names will be used throughout the written documents. Audio recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed. All material collected will be kept confidential and separate from any identifying data in a secure location. Only myself and my supervisor Dr Leigh Coombes shall have access to the data collected. After 5 years, all data collected for this research will be safely destroyed.

Should you choose to take part in the research, we welcome any questions you may have, and it is important for you to understand that you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any point prior to or during the interview. At the completion of this research, everyone who has taken part will be sent a summary of the research findings.

Your Rights:

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation.

If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question,
- withdraw from the study at any given point prior to the analysis of the data,
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation,
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used and be given access to a summary of the research findings when it is complete.

It is important to contact myself as the researcher if you choose to withdraw or if you have any questions regarding the research.

The thesis will be submitted for marking to the School of Psychology and deposited within the University Library. It is intended that the research may be submitted for publication in scholarly journals.

Please consider this information carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to participate, and ensure that you fully understand your rights as the

participant. If you have any questions or would like to receive further information regarding this research, please feel free to contact us.

Maree Henderson (researcher)
School of Psychology
Massey University
Palmerston North
Phone: 0210530590
Email: maree_henderson@yahoo.co.nz

Dr Leigh Coombes (supervisor)
School of Psychology
Massey University
Palmerston North
Phone: 06 350-5799, ext 2058
Email: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

Thank you for your time
Regards
Maree Henderson
Signed:

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 12/10. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 8729, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

How Adults Make Sense of Their Experience of Growing up with Domestic Violence

Participant Consent Form

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name - Printed: _____

How Young Adults Make Sense of Their Experience of Growing up with Domestic Violence

Authority for the Release of Transcripts

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name - Printed: _____

How Young Adults Make Sense of Their Experience of Growing up with Domestic Violence

Interview Schedule

The following questions will be used within the semi-structured interview to guide the discussion and to ensure all necessary information is obtained.

1. Could you describe your experience of being exposed to and growing up with domestic violence?
2. What does it mean to you to have grown up with domestic violence?
3. How did you feel when the domestic violence was carrying on? How did you cope with these feelings?
4. How do you think being exposed to domestic violence has impacted upon you, both positively and negatively?
5. How do you regard your relationship with your mother and significant others in your life?
6. What are your attitudes towards domestic violence now, and have these changed over time?

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