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Talking Responsibility: Discourses of Accountability at the
Waitakere Family Violence Court.

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

Master of Arts

in

Psychology

At Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand

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**“We must be able to
imagine a life free of
violence for us to be
able to achieve it”**

Merepeka Raukawa-Tait

So I dream every night of
a world where violence is
unimaginable

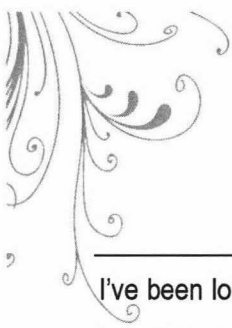




ABSTRACT

To meet the six aims of the court's protocol, the operations of the court need to be effective from a variety of different vantage points: from perspectives of victims and defendants, the judiciary and court administration, and also from the perspectives of community organisations, lawyers, police and community probation. This research was undertaken as part of a wider project to assess the extent to which the court protocols are effective in achieving the court's aims from the point of view of all those who take part in translating the court's principles into everyday practice. These perspectives are all vital to the dynamic process through which the state, the judiciary and the community collaborate at Waitakere (holistic accountability).

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with court professionals practicing from diverse vantage points in the WFVC process. Through a discursive analysis of interview data it was evident that offender accountability was interpreted differently among participants, and variations in interpretations co-articulated with different perspectives in understanding the philosophy of therapeutic jurisprudence, its relationship to procedural justice, and the responsibility of the court to provide legal protection for victims. This thesis is an analysis of court participants' interpretations of offender accountability and how these interpretations are produced through different theories of justice. Constructions of domestic violence and accountability are analysed to show how dominant constructions reproduce victims' responsibility for their own safety.

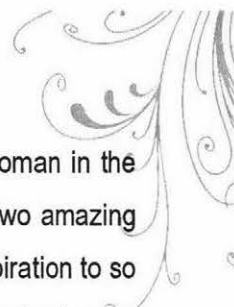


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When I moved to Palmerston North to start writing my thesis a little over two years ago I never intended the move to be permanent thing, but now I can't see myself leaving anytime soon. Thank you to my new friends up here who have supported me in the last few months and made writing this possible. Thank you to Vicky, the funniest girl I know, for reminding me how important it is to laugh, thank you to Amy who shows me everyday what it is to have love and passion as a guide in life. Thank you to Robbie for being the best flatmate ever and for being such a kind and gentle soul in the world. Thank you to Erika who taught me that it is ok to be angry with the world, for reminding me that it is because we care, and that it gives us the energy to keep fighting for the things that matter. Thank you to Chaza who spoiled me rotten, and brought me coffee many mornings, giving me a window of peace from the craziness of writing. Thank you to Hamish, my rock, my love, my shoulder to cry on and the best role model of how to be in the world: respectful and fun.

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Lastly I would like to thank the community of Waitakere. I would like to thank the participants in this study for their willing contributions to the research and their clear commitment to successfully evolving the Waitakere Family Violence Court. I would also like to thank Phil, Helen and Glenda for the ongoing support they have given me throughout the research process.

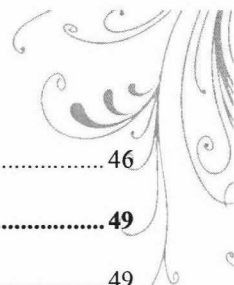
Ever present for me are the families within Waitakere communities who inspire the vision of living free from violence.

Love and hugs
Sarah

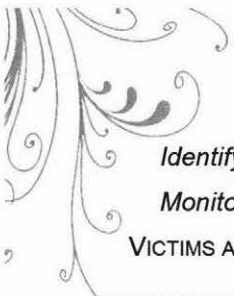


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Table 1: Master Table of Themes

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