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**Living Under Siege:
Women's Narratives of Psychological Violence
within Coercively Controlling
Intimate Partner Relationships**

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requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

Good relationships feel good. They feel right. They don't hurt.

(Michelle Obama, 2016).

As a global epidemic, the violence of women enacted through gendered social power relations of inequality, exploit, harm, and silence women. Specifically, intimate partner violence (IPV) constitutes a systematic pattern of coercive control, embedded within psychological, physical, and/or sexual violence, that intimidates and hurts women through fear and terror. Although previous literature has identified the debilitating effects of psychological violence, within our socio-political landscape physical violence continues to occupy a more visible and privileged position, minimising other forms of violence. The aim of this research, therefore, was to explore and make visible heterosexual women's experiences of psychological violence within previous intimate relationships, framed through coercive control, to enable a greater understanding of how women become subjected to men's coercion and control within intimate relationships. The aim was also to explore how psychological violence positions women within the gendered social hierarchy. A narrative-discursive approach analysed the stories of six women subjected to psychological violence and attended to the discursive resources the women used to narrate their experiences. The analysis identified how the women's experiences of heteronormative coupledom developed into relationships of coercion and control, emphasising their inequitable and subordinate positions within femininity. Becoming entrapped within a destructive pattern of coercion, the women's everyday lives were micro-regulated through their partners' tactics of intimidation, isolation, and control and through their own operations of imperceptible disciplinary power. Importantly, the analysis identified particular turning points of resistance enabling the women to leave their relationships, however, they continue(d) to live under siege post-separation, subjected to psychological violence by their ex-partners through the men's use of both their children and the legal system. The analysis ends with the women's reflections on how these previous relationships continue to currently affect them.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to all the women who have previously or are currently living under siege within violent intimate relationships. There is support, you can do it, you can get out.

Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Tables	v
Chapter One: Introduction	1
My Motivation as Researcher.....	1
The Silent Violence	3
A Woman’s Perspective	3
The Performance of Gender	4
The Nature of Knowledge	5
Feminist Standpoint Epistemology	5
Research Objectives	6
Thesis Overview	7
Chapter Two: Historic and Contemporary Understandings of Violence Against Women	9
Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).....	11
Locating IPV locally	12
Domestic Violence Act (DVA)	12
New Zealand’s IPV statistics	13
Heteronormativity	14
Discursive Ambiguities	15
Coercive Control	16
The imperceptibility of coercive control	17
Feelings of ‘crazy-making’	19
Sexual coercion	20
Constraints of the law	20
A New Narrative for Understanding Violence Against Women	22
Living Under Siege	23
Chapter Three: The Siege of Psychological Violence	26
Psychological Violence Research.....	26
Institutional Responses to Psychological Violence	29
The Ambiguities of Psychological Violence.....	30
Post-Separation: On-going Patterns of Psychological Violence	32
Coercion Through the Legal System.....	32
Understanding Psychological Violence as Coercive Control	35
Chapter Four: Methodology	37
Legitimizing Women’s Stories	37
A Narrative-Discursive Approach	38
Method	40
Ethics	40
Bi-cultural considerations	40
Participants	41

Demographic details	42
Data collection	44
Method of Analysis	46
Narrative-Discursive Analysis	46
Reflexivity	48
Chapter Five: Analysis Part One - The Power of Coercive Control.....	49
The Beginning: The Normativity of Heterosexual Relationships.....	49
Coercive Control as a Technology of Power.....	53
Coercion: Intimidation	58
Surveillance	59
Self-surveillance	63
Verbal violence	65
Intimidation post-natal: The discursive construction of women’s bodies	69
Crazy-making and gas-lighting.....	72
Coercion: Acts of Sexual Coercion and Physical Violence	76
Coercing women’s sexuality	76
“ <i>He is not a violent man</i> ”: Narratives of symbolic and physical violence	81
Control: Isolation	85
Living Under Siege	89
Chapter Six: Analysis Part Two - Coercive Control Post-Separation: The Siege	
Continues	96
Turning Points of Resistance	96
Living Under Siege Post-Separation.....	101
The beginning of post-separation violence	101
Using the Children.....	104
Maternal alienation	104
Child access	106
Using the Legal System	111
Institutional violence: Legal interventions into post-separation parenting arrangements	113
The Women’s’ Reflections: The Sustaining Effects of Coercive Control	118
Health and well-being	122
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	130
References	137
Appendix A – Information Sheet	150
Appendix B – Participant Consent Form	152
Appendix C – Authority for the Release of Transcripts Form	153

List of Tables

Table 1: Demographics of Each Woman	43
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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

*Women & girls are solution makers, peacemakers, and change-makers
the world is yet to fully acknowledge.*

(Phumzile Mlambo, Executive Director, UN Women, 2016)

My Motivation as Researcher

This thesis is a culmination of my personal journey that began as a young girl living within the hegemony of gendered power and men's privilege in 1970s New Zealand, where the subjugation of women's voices was normalised. Gendered stereotypes enacted and enforced on household members represented the historical ethos of a nuclear family, propagated by societal ideology. As a girl, I realised my limitations and that being born male was a privileged position that enabled greater freedom and much less constriction than I had access to. As a teenager, common-sense notions and normative assumptions of femininity positioned me as fragile and in need of protection, especially from my sexuality. These assumptions restricted my movements and morality through a curfew clamped tight on my autonomy, constraining my freedom and imposing on my fledgling identity through normalised expectations of what men/males can do to women/females. I internally questioned why males were not 'protected' from potentially 'sowing their seeds', as I noticed the freedom that privileged males through their biological difference from me. The binary of dominant masculinity and subordinate femininity imbued within heteronormativity that I was, and am, embedded in, continues to enable men greater freedom of movement and places the responsibility of men's transgressions onto women.

The position of feminine fragility, encouraged to protect me from male transgressions, was juxtaposed against a backdrop of male domination and violations where, as an adult, I endured two coercively controlling intimate partner relationships. Coming across the Pence and Paymar (1993) *Duluth Power and Control Wheel* after my son was born, however, enabled me to recognise my subjection to psychological violence by my son's father during my pregnancy and post-natal, as well as post-separation. Later, it allowed me to understand behaviours that I felt were 'not quite right' in the second relationship. By this time, I knew intuitively that my ex-partner's behaviour was dangerous, however, I lacked the confidence in naming fully what I and many other women experience, believing my feelings would be

minimised through an absence of appropriate everyday discursive resources that could accurately represent the imperceptibility of my experiences.

Embedded in my history of experiencing gendered violence, I learnt early on the process of self-surveillance and my position in the gendered social hierarchy. A life-time of gendered subjugation led me to walk on eggshells in my past relationship, watching what and how I spoke, ensuring I did not upset him, and fearing a violent outburst of some type as the goalposts moved to suit him. The operation of social double standards would rear their heads on many occasions as he transferred the blame for his transgressions onto me, leaving me perplexed and questioning my memory, my judgement, and my responsibility for his behaviour, affecting the fragility of my emotions and intuitions. Ultimately, I became silent as I feared further reprisals and that nobody would believe me as he enacted hegemonic masculinity, constructed and legitimated within my socio-cultural environment.

Reflectively, when an intimate partner expresses declarations of love and desire it is difficult for a woman to define his repertoire of power and control, manifested through repetitive, explosive outbursts of anger when he does not get his own way; or through delegitimising the woman's memory of specific events where he said or did things and later denied; or through threats of late-night abandonment, perplexing mind-games, and tormenting the woman over minor things where he sought to blame her for his insecurities; or unrealistic demands of the woman's time and space regardless of her responsibilities; his verbal aggression in front of the child; symbolic aggression; his pompous declaration that at 'least' he was not 'physical'; financial coercion where the goal-posts moved when he decided; and ultimately denial of his actions and paternalistic attitudes towards women in general. Men who expend forms of violence to exert their control over women often minimise their violations and transfer the responsibility onto women, a social repetition of the sexual double standard. They are often brilliant manipulators capable of un-truths and living in an un-reality – and especially worrisome, they are capable of fooling others. As men continue to perpetrate and abscond from their responsibility of psychological forms of gendered violence, women continue to remain silenced.

The Silent Violence

The enactment of gendered social power that operates to silence women through normative processes of masculinity and femininity, has stimulated my innate predilection towards researching psychological violence. Women's experiences of this silent form of

violence that is inarticulable remains covertly tolerated and normalised within our society. Understanding the normalisation of women's silencing by listening to women's stories is important in unravelling how psychological violence occurs and how naming it can open spaces to demand change. My own experiences have led me to question the ordinariness of psychological violence of women within intimate partner relationships, enacted through patterned coercive control. How does psychological violence operate in women's stories of intimate relationships? How can we articulate our experiences to transform our silence, to un-silence?

Recognising now the pattern of internalised blame and silence as a result of men's behaviour, has led me to also question the discursive resources that constitute women's victim-blaming and self-blaming, the connotations of victimised women as 'crazy', and the subjectification of women to men's control within intimate partner relationships. Taking up a position within feminism(s) enables me to ask these questions as I recognise the injustice of victim-blaming that leads to silencing women's stories, through their socio-cultural inequality and exclusion from social power. Listening to women's stories opens up spaces to identify the perpetuation of our subjugation to men's domination. Importantly, protecting and respecting women's human rights to a life free of violence in our social world is vital to transform the power relations that hold women's subjugation in place.

A Woman's Perspective

Historically, research in the discipline of psychology has been positivist and arguably largely androcentric, based on generalising the empirical cause and effect of a phenomenon to all of society that favoured men as the dominant societal group (Riger, 1992). Generalising is problematic, however, overlooking the differences between women and men, and the diversity within both gendered categories. Campbell and Wasco (2000) state that generalising women's experiences creates an androcentric bias that suggests women's lives are not deemed important enough to be studied or understood on their own. Androcentric assumptions, both in science and society, overlook issues paramount to women, such as (marital) rape and intimate partner violence (IPV), supporting gendered power relations (Riger, 1992).

By the 1970s, women's resistance to generalisations emerged from feminist activism, a social movement that challenged society's asymmetrical power relations. Weedon (1999) argues that feminism is a political movement, focusing on changing the power relations in

society between women and men within a patriarchal culture. She adds that a feminist theoretical perspective understands how women's subjectivities and their personal experiences constitute meaning within their lived reality. Subjectivity here, refers to how a woman understands herself and sees herself in the world, through both conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions (Weedon, 1999).

The feminist movement also resists men's perpetual use of violence that has historically exploited and subjugated women. Despite decades of research and interventions globally, women continue to be subordinately positioned to the domination of men through gendered violence (Gavey, 1992; Johnson, 2008). Global statistics produced by the World Health Organisation [WHO] (2016) consistently support this claim of inequality where most often violence is perpetrated by men against women. A feminist perspective argues that men's violence is embedded within a socio-cultural context that covertly promotes and silently ignores violence and creates definitional ambiguities of what constitutes IPV (Yoder, 2003). Feminism, therefore, promotes the protection of women from men's violence and for women to live without fear and suppression of their rights and liberty. By following a feminist approach, this thesis seeks to interpret the sociocultural ideologies within New Zealand that perpetuate the inequality of women enabled through a gendered hierarchy. This includes understanding how the construction of gender for women and for men affects intimate partner relationships, silently tolerating and maintaining IPV, specifically psychological violence.

The Performance of Gender

The study of women considers the construction and maintenance of gender through interpersonal processes. Gender is constituted within, and enacted through, a pattern of social organisations that structure the power relations between women and men in society, based on assumed sexual differences (Connell, 1987). Riger (1992) argues that when studying women, consideration of gender performance through relational processes is essential for greater detailed knowledge of women's lives. The social construction of gender is a reproduction of the socio-cultural power relations situated within dominant discourses of patriarchy and heterosexuality that embrace men's dominance and control, legitimating their entitlement and privilege.

The Nature of Knowledge

The guiding philosophy of feminist engagement within psychology is the nature of knowledge (or epistemology) and the process of knowledge creation through the analysis of how research should proceed (or methodology) (R. Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Harding, 1987). R. Campbell and Wasco (2000) argue that feminist methodologies attempt to eradicate sexist bias in research and listen to women's voices in ways that are consistent with feminine ideals of caring, respect, and rapport. Additionally, feminist epistemologies identify women's lived experiences as a legitimate source of knowledge from their standpoints. Feminist standpoint epistemology provides a framework to attend to how women endure the tactics of psychological violence within coercively controlling intimate relationships, through legitimating women's stories that have been conventionally disregarded.

Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist standpoint theory informs the epistemological stance in this thesis, designed to hear women's stories from their standpoints, or perspectives, in a safe space. Feminist standpoint is knowledge produced by and for women as a counter-narrative to hegemonic discourses, where women's experiences problematise and disseminate the social powers that influence and constrain their everyday lives, including in psychological research (Riger, 1992). A feminist standpoint addresses these social power relations and attends to the lives and stories of women who have been marginalised and silenced by structural inequality (Harding, 1987, 2004; Riger, 1992).

Feminist standpoint espouses how women see the world from their own particular standpoint, embedded in a patriarchal world. It situates itself on women knowing their own reality informed by both their social positioning and the historical context of their lives, or situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 2004; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Situated knowledge incorporates the diversity of all women's knowledge and how they make meaning from their particular location. For instance, the diversity among heterosexual women psychologically violated by their intimate partners can reach across all levels of society through class, ethnicity, or race and is situated in social power relations. As Harding (1987) claims, feminist standpoint epistemologies seek multiple standpoints to understand and acknowledge the complexity of women's experiences and the differences among us. This enables the creation of social justice for all women whose partial and distorted understandings of themselves are produced within social, cultural, political and historical

contexts that systematically silences their voices and devalues their perspectives, through the authority of science considered as legitimate knowledge (Harding, 1987).

Challenging legitimated claims to truth produced through the authority of masculine knowledge, enables women to name and understand experiences pertinent to them, such as psychological violence. Women who have endured the coercively controlling tactics of psychological violence within intimate relationships understand what it means and how it impacts their identity as a woman. As its starting point, this research listens to women's subjugated knowledges to understand how, from their position in the gendered hierarchy, psychological violence operates. Women psychologically violated by an intimate partner because of their gendered position can help to inform strategies for interventions into tackling the current epidemic of violence against women. Consequently, there are different approaches to understanding women's experiences. A narrative-discursive approach is one way and central to this is a researcher's empathetic, intuitive, and sensitive listening (Taylor & Littleton, 2006; Wilkinson, 1996). Riger (1992) suggests that listening to women's perspectives helps society understand their reality and subject positions, consequently allowing the invisible to become visible. As a researcher writing for women, co-collaborating in telling their stories, the narrative-discursive approach legitimates women's knowledge from their standpoints that are situated in and through the discursive resources available within their social location.

Research Objectives

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how women living in provincial New Zealand articulate their experiences of psychological violence in previous intimate heterosexual relationships. In particular, how do women understand psychological violence? What discursive resources do women draw on in their talk of psychological violence? Importantly this thesis aims to identify the discursive production of psychological violence as coercive control within the women's narratives and to understand the overall effects on women's health, well-being, and current or future identities.

Thesis Overview

To understand the issues of IPV and specifically psychological violence, *Chapter Two* reviews historic and contemporary research on violence against women, both globally and locally within New Zealand. In Chapter Two, placing coercive control as a new narrative

challenges the historical notions of IPV and offers transformational change in the understanding and identification of IPV, and importantly psychological violence, formed out of men's power over and control of women. Within this chapter, I outline Evan Stark's (2007) theory of coercive control used as a framework for understanding the imperceptibility of coercively controlling tactics men utilise. The chapter then concludes by identifying how these terroristic-like tactics entrap women to a life under siege. *Chapter Three* identifies and dissects literature on non-physical forms of violence including the ambiguities of understanding the meaning of psychological violence. As the tangible effects of physical violence continue to function as the measure of IPV criminality, non-physical forms of violence are trivialised or over-looked within our legal system. This chapter then discusses the on-going patterns of psychological violence that subject women post-separation and the coercion of the legal system. Finally, a new narrative helps to understand how psychological violence is coercive control. In *Chapter Four* I discuss the methodology I used that includes the ethical and bi-cultural considerations, the women's demographics, the data collection process, and the narrative-discursive approach. The construction of the analysis is in two parts and in *Chapter Five*, I first analyse the women's¹ stories using the narrative-discursive approach to identify how gendered social power relations operate within their narratives through discursive talk and action. The chapter begins with the women's positioning within heteronormativity and coupledness and follows the shifts in their narratives as they begin to talk about psychological violence. At this point, the analysis identifies the power of coercive control and I follow Stark's (2012) framework that separates coercion and control into tactics of intimidation, acts of sexual and physical violence, and isolation that culminate in the women living under siege. Although I have sub-divided coercion and control for ease of understanding these tactics, they often overlap and do not follow a straight trajectory. In part two of the analysis in *Chapter Six*, I analyse the women's narratives of post-separation violence and identify how they continue to live under their ex-partner's siege. Not only are the women coerced and controlled by their ex-partners but the legal system also coerces them

¹ I avoid using the word victim. Within our gendered culture, the position of victim assigns a status of subordination linked to discourses of weakness and powerlessness associated with women/femininity. Although researchers use the term 'victim' to highlight the ongoing victimisation of women post-separation (Elizabeth, Gavey, & Tolmie, 2012a; Hayes & Jeffries, 2016) and through the Family Courts, Police, and Victim Support, the position of victim remains significant offering greater access to advocacy and resources, the term, however, is problematic, positioning women as the focus of violence rather than the violence that harmed them in the first instance. Therefore, throughout this thesis I politicise the women's position using 'women who have been violated' or 'the violation of women', or 'violence against women'.

through advocating for fathers' rights, to the detriment of both the women and their children's safety and well-being. I discuss how, within the legal system, there is a lack of knowledge of the power of coercive control. Within this chapter the women reflect on how these relationships affected them, including the effects on their health and well-being. To conclude, in *Chapter Seven* I discuss the relevance of the women's experiences to my research objectives, the limitations to this research, and future research endeavours. I argue that coercive control should become a new narrative for understanding IPV, and specifically psychological violence as gendered violence, and importantly for understanding women's continual subjection to coercive control, post-separation.

CHAPTER TWO: Historic and Contemporary Understandings of Violence Against Women

Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act. (Ban Ki-Moon, United Nations Secretary-General, 2016).

Violence of women by men is a global phenomenon. The United Nations [UN] (2016) state that 70% of women are subjected to gendered violence² worldwide, declaring this a global pandemic that restricts women's rights to liberty. Gendered violence is argued as men's discrimination of women and includes sexual, physical, and psychological violence's, sexual violence in conflict, genital mutilation, and intimate partner violence, affecting women from any nation, culture, or societal group (United Nations, 2016). Historically, different terms have been used to acknowledge violence against women, such as wife battering, wife abuse, domestic violence (DV) or more recently, family violence (FV) (Lagdon, Armour, & Stringer, 2014). Although DV is a common term that represents normalised understandings of violence against women, it misses the complexities of intimacy between partners. Behaviour that is generally considered unacceptable within loving relationships, such as intimidation, violation, and humiliation, become tools of power and coercion to teach women that their partners control how the relationship will function, thus crossing over the boundaries of love and trust into violence (Valente & Farney, 2003). Morgan and Coombes (2014) argue that the term FV, although used in government policy in New Zealand and aligned with DV's broad definitions, veils the social context and gendered social problem of violence within intimate relationships, neutralising its gendered status.

Contemporary literature utilises the term intimate partner violence (IPV) and coercive control, to not only identify the intricacies between intimate partners but also to identify the specific dynamics of gender where women³ are the victims and men their perpetrators. Elizabeth (2015) argues that IPV is a gendered pattern of interaction and is a socially constructed phenomenon imbued within complex power relations between women and men. These power relations intersect with ethnicity, culture, race, and language, aggravating the

² The UN defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (UN, 2016).

³ This thesis's focus is on violence against heterosexual women although I acknowledge IPV exists in same-sex couples and can also affect men.

generic terms of DV and FV that overlook the complexities of women's lives (Morgan & Coombes, 2014). These terms used to describe violence against women are, therefore, problematic, and limit what we say and understand. In order to confront violence perpetrated by men, a need exists to address the narrative that still plagues our various positions within research and policy institutions centred on physical 'bashings'. The dominant discourse that focuses on violence as physical and the wider DV and FV paradigms undermines the severity of non-physical forms of violence and reprieves men of their responsibility for violence, particularly within intimate partner relationships. Understanding the gendered power relations within intimate relationships, and the complexities of IPV, must be the focus.

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

IPV is a prevalent, insidious, and debilitating form of control, domination, and power most often perpetrated by men onto their women partners. The term IPV is inclusive and acknowledges that contemporary coupledom comprises a range of intimate relationships, such as intimate partners who live together or apart, impeding a specific focus solely on 'wife' and 'husband' under the institution of marriage. IPV is a crime against women's self-determination and self-identity, depriving them of their rights and resources to freedom and agency, essentially resulting in their entrapment within intimate relationships (Herbert & MacKenzie, 2014; Stark, 2007; Women's Refuge, 2016). Using coercion and fear to get their own way, men's use of IPV incorporates a range of physical and non-physical behaviours, rather than a sole focus on the physical.

Victim advocates and researchers define IPV as a set of behaviours that induce physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical violence, sexual coercion, date and marital sexual violence, stalking, financial violence, and psychological violence, conceptualised as the over-arching loss of liberty endorsed within patterns of coercive control (Stark, 2007; Women's Refuge, 2016; World Health Organisation, 2016). The New Zealand Women's Refuge (2016) describe how IPV, as a systematic pattern of coercive control, aims to intimidate and hurt women, making them fearful for their lives within intimate relationships. New Zealand researchers Wilson, Smith, Tolmie, and de Haan (2015) argue that the insidious complexities of IPV exist within a dyad where one individual's coercive control is used to manipulate and silence the other. Stark (2007) proposed the concept of coercive control to understand, define, and help present women's experiences of IPV situated in asymmetrical power relations. He argues that the primary harm men inflict on women is

political and represents women's lack of rights and resources endorsed through gendered power relations (Stark, 2007).

The World Health Organisation (2016) have linked IPV to disparate health outcomes for women globally, violating their human rights and with lethal outcomes at the extreme. It is lethality as an outcome that has seen the establishment of a national committee in New Zealand to investigate the chronic record of women's deaths by their intimate partners (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2016). Still, IPV's detrimental effects on women's psychological and physical health are diverse, ubiquitous, and enduring where poor health outcomes as a result of IPV include somatic symptoms, illness risk, and aggravated medical conditions in addition to physical injuries (J. Campbell, 2002). Researchers have also identified that chronic pain, headaches, high stress levels, exhaustion, gastrointestinal issues, anxiety, and depression are all symptomatic of living with violence (J. Campbell, 2002; Chang, 1996; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2006). Much of the literature, however, considers women's health outcomes as a result of physical violence, or physical violence in conjunction with non-physical violence (Bonomi, Anderson, Rivara, & Thompson, 2009; Breiding, Black, & Ryan, 2008; J. Campbell, 2002; J. Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997; Humphreys, Cooper, & Miaskowski, 2011; Lacey, McPherson, Samuel, Powell Sears, & Head, 2013; Matheson et al., 2015). Knowledge of the effect of psychological violence on women's health is limited because of the lack of space to understand it as separate from physical violence (Chang, 1996; Loring, 1994). The consequences of violence on women's health is further compounded by 21st century neoliberal ideology requiring 'good citizen' responsibility for personal health, that fails to recognise the effects of systemic power and oppression founded on sexism, misogyny, and racism as contributing factors to women's overall well-being (Gavey, 1992).

As a result of IPV's poor health outcomes, nations incur high financial costs (Kahui & Snively, 2014). Canada and the United States annual estimates of IPV range from \$680 million to over \$5.8 billion respectively (United Nations, 2016); the United Kingdom's estimates are over £15 billion, that includes £10 billion on human and emotional costs (Refuge UK, 2016); and in New Zealand with its small population of only 4.5 million people, Kahui and Snively (2014) estimate the economic costs of IPV are between \$4.1 to \$7 billion per year and rising, with lost productivity costing over \$9 million and the overall impact on the New Zealand economy estimated at \$8 billion per annum. Therefore, IPV results in substantial economic costs to New Zealand's communities and businesses.

Locating IPV Locally

Geopolitically, New Zealand society was founded on war and violence between Māori (the indigenous peoples) and the early white settlers who colonised Aotearoa (New Zealand) through English imperialism in the mid-1800s (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994). The early settlers' men's violence, tolerated and normalised through British value systems, extended towards their wives that ensured women lacked equality and power. This was manifested through an ideology that promulgated women's lack of independent rights and entitlement to property, land, and later employment (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994). These value systems were gradually enforced through strategies of colonial power onto the Māori population, where power, inequality, and gendered social relations were catalysts for recurrent IPV by men against both Pākehā and Māori women (Mikaere, 1999). In this process of colonisation, hegemonic masculinity became synonymous to the nation's identity of strength, resilience, and power as opposed to femininity as passive, weak, and powerless, creating asymmetrical gendered power relations between men and women (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993). Mikaere (1999) describes how women's position in the social hierarchy was essentially as men's property, understood through the authority of the Crown.

Although the civil war in New Zealand has long ended, violence within New Zealand continues at epidemic proportions. In 2006, retiring Governor-General Dame Silvia Cartwright's farewell speech emphasised New Zealand's dark secrets of violence, endemic within families and intimate partner relationships (Young, 2006). The insidiousness of IPV is complex entailing unilateral attitudes and behaviours by men, endorsed through colonisation and institutional power (legislation), and reproduced within heterosexual relationships that New Zealand's culture silently tolerates (Wilson et al., 2015). New Zealand's Domestic Violence Act (1995) addresses the different forms of IPV as it attempts to protect New Zealand women from intimate gendered violence.

The Domestic Violence Act. Prior to the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act (DVA) to protect women from violence, IPV was not recognised nor understood as a public concern, viewed as a private family matter with minimal social science research and a lack of legal protection for women (Johnston & Ver Steegh, 2013). Considering that marital rape was only legislated as a crime in 1985 and 40 years ago the first Women's Refuge was opened by New Zealand's feminist movement, who sought to activate the government's political protection of women's rights to live without heterosexist violence (Morgan & Coombes, 2014), society has historically tolerated IPV as far back as the early settlers.

In 1982, although the Domestic Protection Act was legislated offering women formal protection from men's violence through the recognition that behaviours historically considered as private and normalised were misdemeanours, the subjection of women to men's harassment and violence including psychological forms of violence and post-separation violence, continued. By 1995, the current DVA was legislated to offer women greater protection from IPV, including psychological and financial violence's (Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992). Through the issuing of Protection Orders, the DVA activated interventions to protect women. Protection Orders, filed through the Family Courts, have two main conditions: no violence (in all forms, including threats or damage to property) and no contact with the applicant (including stalking) (Ministry of Justice, 2017). Despite this legislation, however, Protection Orders are not always effective in protecting women, warranting a crime when breached (Ministry of Justice, 2017).

New Zealand's IPV statistics. The prevalence of IPV in New Zealand continues at epidemic proportions despite the enactment of the DVA (1995) and Protection Orders, to protect women. The legal response of issuing Protection Orders, although an important legal document, has not reduced IPV and fails to attend to gendered power relations. For instance, between 2000 and 2010 New Zealand's levels of IPV were reported as the highest for all developed OECD countries, based on prevalence over a lifetime for physical and sexual abuse (Turquet et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 2015). More recently, the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse's [NZFVC] (2016) statistical analysis, identified through government and non-government organisations including their own research studies, estimate that 35.4% of ever-partnered women experience physical or sexual IPV in New Zealand. This is consistent with statistics from the WHO estimating that almost one-third (30%) of all women globally have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their intimate relationships (WHO, 2016). Additionally, the NZFVC (2016) have found that an additional 20% of ever-partnered New Zealand women experienced psychological violence co-occurring with physical in their intimate relationships, increasing the number of ever-partnered women to have experienced IPV to 55%. The Women's Refuge (2016) statistics have exposed that one in three New Zealand women experience psychological or physical violence from their partners in their lifetime.

Researchers (Ali, 2007; Towns & Adams, 2009, 2016) have found, however, that most women do not report IPV. Statistics are discernible only if IPV is reported to the police and the police respond to them accordingly (Ministry of Justice, 2017). According to the New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey (NZCASS, 2014), only 24% of victims of interpersonal

violence (that includes IPV) reported their experiences to the Police in 2013 (Ministry of Justice, 2014). The data provides useful information to draw attention to the prevalence of IPV in the population and to activate resources, however, it excludes how experiences might be understood and reported, for example, the NZCASS asked participants to report their experiences over the past 12 months, rather than over their lifetime (Mowat, Coombes, & Busch, 2016). Additionally, women's fear of retribution from their violent partners, or ex-partners, as well as a lack of knowledge, appropriate discourse, and ability to specifically name their experiences, often renders their experiences silent and misunderstood (Towns & Adams, 2009, 2016). Another limit to women's reporting is the sociocultural influences linked to New Zealand's history. Societal common-sense understandings of IPV as physical violence reproduce the "ideological dilemmas" women encounter (Towns & Adams, 2009, p. 735). These dilemmas are situated within the gendered social hierarchy that continually constrain women through heteronormative practices.

Heteronormativity. Entrenched in New Zealand's political landscape are the standard practices and social expectations of heteronormativity. Gendered binaries of man/boy and woman/girl are (re)produced through social power relations of domination and subordination according to normative sociocultural understandings of masculinity and femininity (Gavey, 1992, 2005). These common-sense understandings of masculinity and femininity as relationships of power, are (re)enacted through the institutional practices of neoliberalism, Western hegemony, and the everyday systems of normalisation, and reproduced within intimate relationships that includes the capacity for men's violence against women (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994; Morgan & Coombes, 2014; Towns & Adams, 2009). Childress (2013) argues that it is through the enactment of gendered social power relations that the normalisation of violence occurs. As Bishop (2016) purports, violent intimate heterosexual relationships situated in relations of gendered power privilege men's entitlement to control and subjugate women. Violence against women, therefore, is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016).

From a feminist perspective, analysing the normalisation of gendered power relations is political as the historical, cultural, and social conditions of women's lives (re)produce their inequality and subordination to men's authority (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994). The dominant societal discourses of both patriarchy and heteronormativity ensure that women and men are socialised to occupy specific subject positions in the social hierarchy. Subject positions support our understanding of how to behave, the behaviour of others, and our self-identity (Gavey, 1992). These positions are constructed through discourses of sexual

difference that assume masculine entitlement and privilege, simultaneously supporting feminine passivity (Gavey, 1992; Johnson, 2008). For instance, women's experiences of IPV are too frequently situated and normalised as intimate heterosexual relationship 'conflict', often left unchallenged and invisible. It is through women's positioning in normalised gendered social relationships that they learn to "tolerate" men's violence when it does occur (Childress, 2013, p. 699).

As men position themselves according to normative sociocultural understandings of masculinity and femininity, they utilise their position to demonstrate their accomplishment of 'being a man', (re)produced in and through the discursive practices of gendered power relations of domination and subordination (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Stark (2007, p. 281) argues that the accepted standard of the "universal masculine" subject stands for "rationality, reasonableness and righteousness" as a binary to feminine "irrationality, emotionality and immorality". Within the IPV literature, Adams (2012) illustrates how heterosexual men's performance of masculinity is used to ultimately dominate and scare their partners into submission, to "keep them in line" (p. 63) and to reproduce their masculine identity as "a real man" (p. 63). Understanding men's violence against women through the parameters of a coercive gendered dichotomy demonstrates how social norms coerce men into masculinity. Attending to gendered social power relations within the discourse of heteronormativity and bringing men's violence against women into the public sphere, requires feminisms political engagement to understand the discursive resources that enable and constrain women's safety.

Discursive Ambiguities

Language is the vehicle for cognitive life and communication, structuring each individual's experience of reality (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988). Accordingly, language operates through the sociocultural discursive resources, authorised by men's institutional knowledge and their related tools of control and domination, silencing women's experiences (Kelly & Radford, 1990; Towns & Adams, 2009). Men's historic privileged access to education and higher rates of literacy than women has granted them authority over the production of knowledge, or "malestream knowledge" (Kelly & Radford, 1990, p. 41). This bestows men the power to create societies and cultures from their standpoint and produce dominant discourses based on their values and ideology, to women's detriment. In this way, institutional knowledge has the authority to limit the understanding of what constitutes IPV,

despite decades of debate within the field, remaining problematic for women by excluding their experiences of violence. Thus, when IPV is framed through institutional (research, policy, and the legal system's) definitions of particular incidents, meanings are limited to how men understand their behaviour rather than understanding the ongoing every day unmeasurable reality that women endure (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016; Stark, 2012).

Recognising the ambiguities that frame violence against women is important for understanding the realities of women's lives and providing interventions for their safety. The discursive resources used to engage social and legal meanings of violence against women continue to reproduce these common-sense understandings of violence as physical attacks. For instance, legal and social institutions historically have utilised discursive resources to represent IPV as "occasional, physical, and serious violence" (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016, p. 43), minimising psychological violence. Minimising women's experiences of psychological violence through institutional authority denies them the appropriate legitimacy for understanding their own experiences. Contemporary research by Stark (2007), however, draws attention to the ongoing patterns of non-physical violence manifested through coercive control. Stark (2007) argues that understanding IPV as physical violence unconsciously silences the imperceptible tactics of coercive control that men use to ultimately retain their power over women, a manifestation of gendered social power inequities.

Coercive Control

The theory of coercive control has started to gain momentum in research as a legitimate theory of IPV, focused on a more contextual approach to understanding the complexities of IPV (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007). The emergence of coercive control was in response to both the lack of focus on the normalisation of gendered social power that (re)produces women's inequalities and the interventions that address the violence perpetrated against them (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007). For instance, the criminal justice system's historic failure to fully recognise and understand violence against women by still using gender-neutral language (such as 'domestic' violence), the continuous conceptualisation of violence as singular and isolated incidents, and the prerequisite requirement of physical violence as evidence (a 'bashing'), trivialise women's lived experiences and recognises the need to transform language, knowledge, and practice around IPV (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007).

Stark (2007) connects coercive control to IPV through its prevalent and demoralising effect on women, dominating their personal lives, their sense of self, and resulting in negative health outcomes. Women's negative health outcomes are attributable to their legitimate fear of men's violence. Stark argues that women, unlike men, have limited space and freedom for self-determination within the normative gendered relationship, because of the perpetrator's everyday pervasive control of the minutiae of their lives. Dutton and Goodman (2005) and Stark (2007) advocate for a re-conceptualisation of IPV to be understood through the operation of coextensive patterns of coercive control, manifested through gendered social power inequalities that subordinate women and maintain women's silence. Coercive control can include both physical and psychological violence that produces cumulative and harmful effects over a protracted period of time, a process of entrapment that emerges from the multiple strategies that affirm gender normativity and that imprison women in hostage-like, terroristic situations within their everyday lives (Stark, 2007).

Coercive control, therefore, can be understood as the contextual, continuous, and gender-specific use of degrading and debilitating tactics that men utilise to psychologically, emotionally, and at times physically hurt, humiliate, intimidate, and confuse women, resulting in the exploitation, isolation, and domination of women's everyday movements (Elizabeth, 2015; Hayes & Jeffries, 2016; Johnson, 2008; Kelly & Westmarland, 2016; Stark, 2007; Velonis, 2016; Wilson et al., 2015). Understanding IPV as coercive control makes visible the gendered power relations that constrain women's liberty and perceptions through men's manipulation and intimidation (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007; Wilson et al., 2015). The historic exclusion of understanding IPV through the imperceptible operations of coercion, have limited both institutional and regulatory interventions.

The imperceptibility of coercive control. Stark (2007) argues that coercive control is a liberty crime, micro-regulating women's lives. Coercion operates through subtle and imperceptible transgressions of women's agency, where compliance to their partner's control is achieved through fear and intimidation that maintains the women's silence and enforces the men's domination (Williamson, 2010). Women's "space for action" (Kelly, Sharp, & Klein, 2015, p. 12) becomes limited through their partners' omnipresence and unpredictability that controls the women's everyday lives, actions, and space. Men's micro-regulation of women's everyday movements exploits women's basic human rights to freedom (Stark, 2007), penetrating so deep that their entire identities are compromised. This systematic micro-regulation of women's lives links to gender norms where men use gender inequalities to assert their dominance, accrue benefits, and at the same time reproduce women's position

in the social hierarchy (Stark, 2007). The micro-regulation may also extend to stereotypical female behaviours, such as controlling how women mother, and may result in women's punishment, imperceptible to others, when they fail to perform to the men's version of femininity (Elizabeth, Gavey, & Tolmie, 2012b; Stark, 2007).

Stark (2012) suggests that the imperceptibility of coercive control operates through the specific use of over-lapping tactics to intimidate, control, and isolate women. These include all forms of "bullying" (Elizabeth, 2015, p. 32) behaviours intentionally deployed by men to maintain their power and control over women's everyday lives. Stark (2012) argues that the perpetration of intimidating tactics by men through surveillance, threats, and degradation are forms of coercion to hide their violence and entrench women's "fear, dependence, compliance, loyalty, and shame" (p. 208). Stark (2007) found in previous studies, that between 85-90% of women had experienced surveillance by their abusive partners to detect the women's disobedience or disloyalty to the men as 'head' of the household.

Thomas, Joshi, and Sorenson (2013) claim that the enactment of coercive control is dependent on women's perceptions of threat credibility, their compliance or resistance, and their fear. Threats are varied, used to create fear of potential physical and psychological torture that the men may inflict and are expressed through behaviours such as symbolic violence (punching inanimate objects) and non-injurious physical aggression (slapping, pushing, kicking or pulling hair); non-fatal strangulation; contradictory demands confusing women's perceptions; stalking; sexual coercion/exploitation; and belittling women through degradation and verbal violence, destroying their self-respect and self-identity and leading to women's own self-surveillance (Stark, 2007, 2012). These tactics convey the men's omnipresence in the women's lives.

Coercive control tactics maybe both overt and covert and covert messages only operate effectively within the context of the controlling relationship where a woman's lack of compliance results in threats of violence and repercussions (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). For example, men's facial expressions or body signals may "communicate menace and threat" (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016, p. 124), sustained within the history of the men's intimidation and only relevant within the context of their intimate relationship (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015). Enactment of men's control through material restraints, such as transportation, food, finances, or sexual exploitation further threaten women's liberties (Stark, 2012).

Men's sustaining intimidation and control tactics of women also include socially isolating them from family and friends and withdrawing emotionally (the 'silent treatment'), resulting in women struggling to understand their self-identity and what they have done, as

they live within the men's unreality (Stark, 2007). Additionally, men continue their intimidation post-separation to further compound women's vulnerabilities through child-custody proceedings and using institutions to further harass and control women (Crossman, Hardesty, & Raffaelli, 2016; Elizabeth, 2015; Johnson, 2008; Stark, 2007). Consequently, coercive control is established when women's submission from fear of reprisals, restricts their agency. Men sanction women's compliance through their refusal to take responsibility for their behaviour, resulting in the women's feelings of 'crazy-making'.

Feelings of crazy-making. Often men who perpetrate violence play mind-games to undermine women's identity and deny their reality. Women's confidence in their memories and perceptions are destabilised by their partners to the point beyond all reasonableness, resulting in feelings of 'going crazy' (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 11). Encumbered with feelings of "losing their mind" as their partner's challenge their perceptions, women's fear, confusion, and vulnerability increase (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 16). When women are told their perceptions of men's violence are ludicrous and exaggerated, they are rendered 'crazy' and blamed for their non-conformity to femininity, and for breaching the normative social order (Stark, 2012). In this way, men relinquish their responsibility onto victimised women. To illustrate, in their study on men's accounts of IPV, LeCouteur and Oxlad (2010) argued that men discursively accomplished distancing themselves from taking responsibility for their violence, situating their partners within a gendered moral order that justified their violent behaviour on the women's lack of morality. Furthermore, men's ability to present as "charming and sociable" conceals their intimidating and threatening persona directed at their partner's whom fail to comply to the men's rules (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 25). When men alter from 'charming to harming' (Corbett, 2013) within the relationship, feelings of craziness are facilitated in the women as they negotiate the men's unreality, questioning their own version of events, doubting their memories, and being reminded that resistance is harmful (Stark, 2012).

It is through the "social endowment men inherit from sexual inequality" that enables them to enact these patterns of domination, entrapping their partners (Stark, 2007, p. 199) and contributing not only to women's ambiguous understandings of living with violence, but their crazy-making feelings. Williamson (2010) argues that the impact of ambiguity is an effect of living within "an unreality of someone else's making" (p. 1415). Just as important, sexual coercion is a constituent of women's entrapment within the imperceptibility of coercive control and gendered social power.

Sexual coercion. Sexual coercion within abusive relationships is a common occurrence (Stark, 2012). Gendered social relations of power and control within Western society are underpinned in and through the dominant discourse of heterosexuality, privileging men's sexual desires (Gavey, 1992). Nicola Gavey (1992) explains that women's subjection to the normalising social technologies of sex, within the discourse of heterosexuality and traditional androcentric notions, control how women perform their sexuality. Discourses that contain the practice, knowledge, and strategies of performing sexuality are "technologies of heterosexual coercion" that (re)produce women's powerlessness within heterosexual intimate relationships (Gavey, 1992, p. 325).

Within intimate relationships, sexual coercion entails unwanted but not forced sex where one partner coerces the other for sexual activities. Nicola Gavey (1992) drew on Foucault's (1980) concept of disciplinary power to provide an understanding of how imperceptible power operates through sexual coercion within the discourse of heterosexuality. The enactment of disciplinary power through indirect or invisible coercion makes the exercise of power effective (Foucault, 1980). The operation of disciplinary power that acts on women's bodies, expects their acquiescence to men's sexual requests without force or violence to comply with androcentric versions of sexuality (Gavey, 1992). The technologies of heterosexual coercion embedded in multiple discursive fields within our social world, such as the pornographic representation of women and men, maintain these power relations as they are prescribed, enacted, and reproduced in and through intimate relations between women and men (Gavey, 1992).

Common-sense understandings of heterosexuality, however, blur the distinctions between consenting sex, forced sex, and sexual coercion within intimate relationships. Gavey (2005) discusses how there is a grey area within academic research that struggles to account for women's experiences of 'consenting' to sexual practices they do not want, without men's direct force. This grey area also extends to other institutions, such as the legal system, where the imperceptibility of sexual coercion lacks the tangible physical evidence that currently still operationalises IPV, including sexual violence.

Constraints of the law. Law plays a central role in constructing what constitutes violence with its focus on standards of evidence. New Zealand's DVA (1995) was an attempt to provide greater legal protection for women in violent intimate partner relationships. The inclusion of psychological violence (and financial violence) in the legislation has afforded a wider understanding of domestic violence/IPV for the implementation of Protection Orders. The coerciveness entrenched in these forms of IPV, however, are not criminally sanctioned,

overlooking the systematic and patterned context of violent behaviour that accumulates over time. New Zealand researchers particularly argue that as coercive control is not recognised in New Zealand's court-system, despite the DVA, the legal system overlooks women's enduring victimisation in both a relationship and post-separation (Busch et al., 1992; Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b; Wilson et al., 2015).

The legal focus on prioritising discrete singular acts of physical violence as the standard for the criminalisation and regulation of IPV, disconnects from IPV's specific context and patterned behaviour. Men also draw on this dominant legal discourse of IPV. In conversations with men who had used violence against their partners Kelly and Westmarland (2016) identified their use of "the incident" or "one-offs" (p. 120) to describe the physical violence. This leads us to understand how the legal system perpetuates structural violence against women when the primacy of physicality as normative, legitimates men's discourse. Research, policy definitions, or practice responses framing IPV in terms of incidents collude with men's incident talk to reproduce and reinforce the "discourse of perpetrators" giving men a space to avoid responsibility (Kelly & Westmarland, 2016, p. 120).

Framing IPV as discrete singular acts of violence constricts our understanding of keeping women safe within a context of non-physical violence. When the meaning of violence is limited to singular discrete acts, the social and structural inequities that privilege men over women remain invisible (Wilson et al., 2015). Until law and policy understand the coerciveness of IPV and how it micro-regulates women's lives within an intimate relationship and/or household, the lived realities of women will continue to be misunderstood and misrepresented (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016). Consequently, Stark (2007) claims that research and policy focused on coercive control will help identify and contribute knowledge towards the enduring patterned violence that entraps women in intimate relationships. In this way, explicit descriptions of coercive control tactics would enable women to recognise the early signs of a controlling relationship, to prevent serious psychological and physical harm, and ultimately lethality. Herbert and MacKenzie (2014), however, assert that there is limited information about coercive control available for women, impacting on women's understanding of the violence perpetrated against them and particularly the minimising of psychological violence. Thomas et al. (2013) argue that by understanding coercive control as asymmetrical gendered power relations would enable a shift in knowledge of both the women's experiences and the perpetrators motives within the relationship context. This shift in knowledge would open up space to recognise the operation of coercive control, aligned with the United Kingdom's [UK] 2015 legislation that includes coercive control as a criminal

offence (Home Office UK, 2015), and within a local context would be vitally important for the well-being and safety of New Zealand women where statistics for violence against them remain ashamedly high.

A New Narrative for Understanding Violence Against Women

The extensive and continual perpetuation of violence against New Zealand women constitutes a human rights epidemic and requires a new narrative to protect women from violence. The violation of women's physical and mental well-being that dishonours their dignity and self-worth is supported by, or may lead to, structural barriers to freedom such as homelessness, poverty or lethality (Wilson et al., 2015). Internationally, a shift in institutional knowledge of coercive control was actioned through the UK's inclusion of coercive control into section 76 of their Serious Crime Act, as a new offence for domestic violence (Home Office UK, 2015), recognising that the previous domestic violence legal framework failed to distinguish non-physical coercive and controlling behaviour from physical incidents (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015). The Crown Prosecution Service (2015) defines this new offence as: "*controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship which causes someone to fear that violence will be used against them on at least two occasions; or causes them serious alarm or distress which has a substantial adverse effect on their usual day-to-day activities*". Bettinson and Bishop (2015) suggest that a coercive control offence enables understanding the controlling characteristics of interpersonal violence. Legislation and research focused on coercive control, therefore, attempts to explicitly understand women's experiences of IPV, especially psychological violence and controlling behaviour. Through the Serious Crime Act psychological violence becomes a legitimate offence whilst also holding perpetrators accountable for their actions.

Despite the UK's change in legislation, its effectiveness in keeping women safe, holding perpetrators accountable, as well as understanding fully the relationship between coercive control and gendered social power relations, are arguable (Bishop, 2016). In England and Wales (as in New Zealand), the legal system continues to be "heavily male-dominated and patriarchal", fostering "the inequalities and gendered societal expectations, values and beliefs" (Bishop, 2016, p. 60) that continue to enable IPV to occur. Concerns have also arisen that the new crime of coercive control does not extend to dislodging existing notions pertaining to serious physical violence and injuries that most people still associate as the core of IPV (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015; Bishop, 2016). Bettinson and Bishop (2015, p.

185) argue that a “hierarchy of harm” will continue to relegate non-physical violence to a minor offence as physical harm continues to occupy the more serious realm. Conceptualising and measuring offences of (physical) harm based on standardised outcomes, overlooks the context and presence of coercive control that entraps women and strips their freedom of thought and movement (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015). Nevertheless, opening up a new narrative for IPV in New Zealand would activate an understanding of coercive control as a theory of entrapment.

Understanding coercive control within the theory of entrapment identifies how patterned forms of gendered violence constrain women’s liberty. As coercive control draws on cultural norms about masculinity, femininity, and women’s vulnerability due to their location in the gendered hierarchy, undermining women’s worth and legitimating men’s violence enables the privileged status of men within society and as “head of the household” (Crossman et al., 2016; Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Westmarland & Kelly, 2016, p. 15). Understanding these gendered social power relations as the site where coercive control operates with a debilitating effect on women, is important in recognising the indiscernible operations of power over women’s everyday life that entraps them. The “technology of coercive control” (Stark, 2012, p. 203) that entraps women in hostage-like conditions is achieved not only by what men subject their intimate partners to, but more precisely what they prevent women from doing for themselves. In this way, women live under siege within intimate relationships, entrapped through their partner’s unreality.

Living Under Siege

In a healthy relationship people feel loved, respected, trusted, and safe – even when times are tough. (areyouok.co.nz, 2016).

The metaphor of ‘living under siege’ locates women’s experiences of IPV, and specifically coercive control, as terrorist hostage-like activity. The awareness of global terrorism, securitisation, and militarisation have become everyday discursive resources in our lives, generated through institutional power relations and popular culture, such as the “war on terror” (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 2). The threat of everyday terrorism, however, lacks the same political and social attention given to global terrorism. Terrorism, nevertheless, is present in everyday discourses of threat and fear, familiar to women harmed by the social structures of power and control that restricts their movement and bodily integrity. Restriction

of women's bodily integrity, both physically and psychologically, are performed through the "insidious, terroristic and torturous nature of IPV" (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 3), enforcing their entrapment. Women's entrapment is not only imposed by the men's restriction of their movements and bodily integrity, but also by society's expectations of women (their femininity) as well as institutional and structural constraints that restrict resources and support for women (Herbert & MacKenzie, 2014; Stark, 2007). Consequently, IPV and global terrorism share a politics through the enactment of fear (Stark, 2007, 2012). Stark (2007) argues that everyday terrorism is political, contested, and understood by its capacity to instil fear through coercive control.

Framing IPV as terrorism enables us to understand IPV as a political exertion of power where the threat of violence is the operational underpinning of gendered social power relations. As Hayes and Jeffries (2016) argue, the terroristic exploitative nature of IPV is politically centred within gendered norms that imbue gendered power relations and where women's subsistence is constantly under siege. The purposes and processes political terrorists utilise to forcefully scare and intimidate are similar to IPV except IPV perpetrators inhabit a gendered relationship of domination and subordination with their intent to inflict psychological and physical pain (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016). Within many traditional heterosexual intimate relationships, men often exercise the majority of power, (re)producing power differentials that may erode women's identities and social competence (K. James & MacKinnon, 2010), creating greater vulnerabilities in women. Unpacking the meaning of gendered power relations, therefore, is important to understand how women's entrapment leads to their life under siege and how the operation of living under siege is dependent on women's vulnerability to coercive control tactics, including what their partners can exploit or remove (Dutton & Goodman, 2005).

Living under siege in intimate violent relationships entails women living within men's oppressive force. The oppressive force encloses and isolates women, smothering their integrity through men's persistent attacks on their identities. These attacks intend to defeat women, compel women's surrender, and to take control of women's lives by overcoming their resistance to men's control (Stark, 2007). As men conquer women through attrition of their identities in both low- and high-intensity violations, the women's lives reduce to existence or survival where their future becomes unimaginable and maintaining hope is difficult (Stark, 2007). Living under siege encapsulates Stark's (2007, 2012) concept that coercive control removes women's freedom, entrapping them through terroristic strategies manifested as tactics of both psychological and non-injurious physical violence. These

tactics invade women's psychological health, impacting on their well-being as their identities erode, leading to feelings of crazy-making as they live under men's constant and unrealistic siege (Williamson, 2010).

Importantly, living under siege can also constrain women's freedom post-separation through tactics of psychological violence, further entrapping them, invading their privacy, and attacking their mothering identities. Equating entrapment to terroristic activities and understanding the terroristic nature of IPV through legislating coercive control, would enable recognising women's restriction of movement and freedom of thought, actioned through their own self-surveillance techniques. The normalisation of IPV is enacted through disciplinary power that produces women's "docile bodies" (Foucault, 1977, p. 28), where they learn to self-govern their own behaviour and subjugate their "obedience to patriarchy" through embodying the gaze of femininity, coerced and managed by others into compliance (Bartky, 1998, p. 42). Consequently, everyday terrorism produces and intensifies women's lived experiences of IPV, specifically psychological violence. Understanding women's experiences of psychological violence enables an in-depth understanding of coercive control's specificity and how it operates as terrorism. This specificity may lead to a transformation of response interventions with a focus on gendered social power relations that continue to maintain violence against women, and can confront the current legal focus on physicality and lethality.

CHAPTER THREE: The Siege of Psychological Violence

I now see that what my husband did to me was the mental equivalent of physical violence.

He verbally punched and punched away at my brain until it became spongy.

Until I could barely think for myself, barely speak.

(Survivor of psychological violence, England)

(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/11869385/Bullying-your-partner-is-about-to-become-a-crime.-Survivors-stories.html>)

Although physical violence is the most commonly recognised form of violence against women, psychological violence is extremely prevalent over a woman's lifetime (UN, 2016). In this thesis, psychological violence is conceptualised as a pattern of coercive control where women embedded within gendered social power relations become entrapped in controlling heterosexual intimate relationships, enabled through their wider socio-cultural (and historical) contexts. Within these contexts, many women struggle to recognise coercive control enacted as psychological violence. As they grapple to understand what they are experiencing, a lack of discursive resources constrains the telling of their stories. For instance, through a history of physical and identifiable violence, the societal marker of IPV constitutes a 'bashing' and serious injury. As such, when the coercive elements women endure hold less societal recognition compared to physical violence, women become constrained in understanding the constituents of IPV. Common-sense understandings of IPV as physical harm exemplifies the inadequacy of institutional knowledge to recognise psychological violence and in turn women's experiences of psychological violence become unsayable. Psychological violence against women, therefore, is a political and social issue embedded within a neoliberal society historically founded on notions of male ideology and entitlement. This thesis seeks to address the detrimental effects of psychological violence in the context of intimate relationships, manifested through tactics of coercive control. This chapter will discuss and disseminate both early and contemporary understandings of psychological violence, including institutional knowledge and the operation of post-separation violence.

Psychological Violence Research

For the purposes of this thesis, psychological violence represents all forms of non-physical violence encompassing psychologically, emotionally, verbally, and financially debilitating tactics used by men to control women's movements, bodily integrity, and to

inflict mental harm and torture. Historically, the under-representation of heterosexual psychological violence in academia, mainstream media, and the legal system was due to the lack of tangible evidence, however, there is an ever-increasing awareness of this issue, both in early and more current research, and within New Zealand's legal system (Busch et al., 1992; Elizabeth, Gavey, & Tolmie, 2010; Elizabeth et al., 2012a; Murphy, 2002; Sims, 2008). Earlier researchers (Chang, 1996; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Loring, 1994; Murphy, 2002; O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001; Pence & Paymar, 1985; Tolman, 1989; Walker, 1979) recognised the long-lasting and debilitating effects of psychological violence on women's mental and physical well-being, including their self-identity, either in conjunction with physical and sexual violence's, or in and of itself. Compared to the visible and tangible effects of physical violence, researchers identified how the insidiousness of psychological violence enacted through vicious and wounding psychological attacks, resulted in women's mental harm (Chang, 1996; Loring, 1994; O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001; Sackett & Saunders, 2001; Walker, 1979).

A pattern emerged during the 1970s and 1980s that IPV, including psychological violence, was based on men's control of women. In 1979, Lenore Walker first recognized the severe effects of psychological violence on women. In her book, *The Battered Woman Syndrome*, Walker identified how women's descriptions of non-physical violence and control were more debilitating for them than physical violence (Walker, 1979). Walker's focus on psychological violence as specific acts, signalled an awareness of the effects non-physical forms of violence have on women, regardless of their marital status. Following on from Walker's research, the Duluth Wheel visibly guided researchers (and 'victims') to understand violence beyond physical, describing the psychological effects of patterned, non-physical tactics of IPV (Pence & Paymar, 1985, 1993). For example, coercion (Pence & Paymar, 1985) and emotional withholding (Tolman, 1989) were recognised as forms of non-physical control over women by their male partner. The Wheel explicitly highlights how violence, as tactics of power and control, operate in women's lives and provides a discursive resource for women to understand their experiences of intimate partner psychological violence.

By the early 1990s, Follingstad et al. (1990) had identified that in women's experiences of IPV they considered psychological degradation, including humiliation and fear, as the most painful forms of violence affecting their long-term self-esteem. In 1994, Loring described how both overt and covert 'emotional' abuse resulted in "damage of one's inner self" (p. 3), where women misunderstood the devastation of emotional abuse leaving them feeling confused and hopeless. Research by Chang in 1996 drew attention to the

processes of psychological violence that harmed women's identities, leading to their gendered entrapment as men made the rules and did things 'their way'. Later in 2001, Sackett and Saunders identified that men's controlling tactics, such as their emotional isolation, negatively affected women's perceptions of self-worth and self-identity, resulting in the women's loss of confidence.

The on-going effects of psychological violence can also result in detrimental physical health effects. Research has identified that the constant stress and hyper-vigilance women endured living with the perpetrator of psychological violence, impacted on their immune system and caused gastroenteritis, high blood pressure, reoccurring migraines, physical and emotional exhaustion, and eating disorders (J. Campbell, 2002; Chang, 1996; Loring, 1994; Murphy, 2002; O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001; Pico-Alfonso et al., 2006; Thomas et al., 2013). Pico-Alfonso et al. (2006) argues that psychological violence deserves elevation to a more serious form of IPV because of these negative effects on women's health. More recently, using focus groups to hear women's experiences of living with psychological violence, Thomas et al. (2013) identified the effects of non-fatal strangulation and coercion on women's health, by their male partners. Recognition of the impact psychological violence has on women's health and well-being through research endeavours is essential for legitimating the harmful effects of this form of IPV.

Since the turn of the 21st century, contemporary New Zealand research on the impact of psychological violence against women has gathered greater attention. Restriction of women's agency, identified in the study by Fanslow, Whitehead, Silva, and Robinson (2008), found men directly controlled women's reproduction, either refusing contraception or controlling their partner's contraception use by destroying or removing it. In the study by Fanslow and Robinson (2011) on the lifetime prevalence of all forms of IPV reported by ever-partnered New Zealand women, they identified how the subtlety and invisibility of psychological violence was widespread for women, both as a primary form of violence and co-occurring with physical violence. Moreover, even when women separate from their partners, psychological violence continues post-separation, and researchers (Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2010, 2012a, 2012b) have focused on the multiple ways that New Zealand men continue to violate women post-separation, including through the legal system⁴. Consequently, these New Zealand researchers demonstrate how the dynamics of gendered social power control the intricacies of women's lives as women endure long-lasting mental

⁴ A more detailed discussion of post-separation psychological violence occurs later in this chapter.

harm from men's psychological violence. Attending to the intricacies of psychological violence repudiates its current lack of social recognition, evident in contemporary research that focuses on institutional responses to psychological violence.

Institutional Responses to Psychological Violence

The legal system's reliance on dominant discourses of violence that focus on the physical, limits our understanding of psychological violence in the context of heterosexual women's relationships, and post-separation. In 1992, researchers in New Zealand argued for the inclusion of psychological violence within New Zealand's DVA after their study identified institutional and structural violence within the Family Court system by Judges, police, juries, and lawyers (Busch et al., 1992). For example, structural violence was enacted through decisions that enforced counselling for separated couples, invariably leading to increased exposure of non-physical violence for women by their ex-partners (Busch et al., 1992). Importantly, Busch et al. (1992) exposed police tactics of power and control by advocating with the perpetrator through a discourse of victim-blaming, adhering to a patriarchal ideology that supports hegemonic masculinity and subjugated femininity. Police considered IPV as a "one-off" and "a waste of valuable time"; condemned women for being "assertive"; and often showed pathological pity for the man citing him as "having no sense of self control" after an attack (Busch et al., 1992, p. 80). Busch and colleagues (1992) further identified that the police disregarded the women's continual stress and fear of their ex-partners, while the men's psychological violence against the women was trivialised and their responsibilities downplayed. Towns and Adams (2009) argue that victim-blaming women holds them responsible for men's violence.

More recently, research by Stewart, Langan, and Hannem (2013) and Hannem, Langan, and Stewart (2015) on verbal violence has also identified institutional violence where police trivialised men's verbal degradation of their partners and minimised the women's fear of continual violence. If women feel undervalued by societal institutions they most often concur with cultural assumptions that constitute psychological violence as illegitimate, and take up a position of self-blame (Stewart et al., 2013).

Psychological violence is delegitimated by institutions that deny men responsibility for their violence and minimises the effects on all aspects of women's lives. In this way, women's subjection to continual violence is not just by men but also by the structures and institutions within society. Furthermore, the legal system's limited understanding of

psychological violence in the context of women's relationships and post-separation, adheres to broader assumptions of IPV and dominant discourses within New Zealand's culture, focused on physical violence and dominant masculinity. The lack of tangibility and visibility with psychological violence situates it as a lesser form of violence and create ambiguous meanings for women as they strive to understand their experiences.

The Ambiguities of Psychological Violence

The specific aspects and multiple forms of psychological violence that are not necessarily measurable or identifiable are overlooked and undermined within the hierarchy of harm that privileges the tangibility of physical violence as an objective standard of harm (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015; Stark, 2007, 2012). Bettinson and Bishop (2015) argue that the hierarchy of harm has implications for how legal interventions, expert knowledge, and social understandings contribute to limiting the seriousness of psychological violence against women (Bettinson & Bishop, 2015). Murphy (2002) argues that the trivialisation and minimisation of psychological violence as 'normal' relationship conflict restricts women's movements and absolves perpetrators, contributing to women's entrapment. In this way, women are unable to recognise their victimisation as they experience the imperceptibility of psychological violence without physical 'proof', constituted through the hierarchy of harm.

Psychological violence is considered an epidemic within many heterosexual relationships in New Zealand and is socially tolerated, covertly minimised, and normalised (Murphy, 2002; Wilson et al., 2015). Only by shifting the focus of psychological violence from private to public, akin to physical violence, can women recognise and give meaning to the ambiguities of their experiences and hold men accountable for their actions (Chang, 1996). Liz Kelly (1988) argues that the act of naming an experience is extremely powerful and can transform the meaning of violence. Kelly's research supports the notion that appropriately addressing and naming psychological violence provides clarity, reduces ambiguity, and publicises it to encourage effective support for women's experiences. Concomitantly, Wilson et al. (2015) argue that ambiguity over women's understandings of psychological violence occur within dominant cultural discourses. Research that takes a specific interest in psychological violence and its coercive controlling tactics, constitutes risk aversion through knowledge production that increases women's and society's greater understanding of IPV's multiple forms and complexities.

Although contemporary research has begun to recognise psychological violence as a way of understanding women's experiences of IPV, a lack of cohesion on how to operationalise the meaning of psychological violence creates ambiguity, linked to a lack of cohesion in understanding the constituents of IPV. This can be illustrated by the conventional ways that researchers name non-physical violence, such as emotional abuse (Ali, 2007; Fanslow & Robinson, 2011; Fanslow et al., 2008; Jackson, 2001; Jewkes, 2010; Lammers, Ritchie, & Robertson, 2005; Loring, 1994; Matheson et al., 2015; Queen, Nurse, Brackley, & Williams, 2009; Sims, 2008), psychological abuse (Busch et al., 1992; Chang, 1996; Crossman et al., 2016; Murphy, 2002; O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001; Rogers & Follingstad, 2014; Sackett & Saunders, 2001; Stark, 2007; Straight, Harper, & Arias, 2003; Williamson, 2010), or verbal violence (Hannem et al., 2015; Stewart et al., 2013). Moreover, some researchers confusingly use these terms interchangeably adding to the complexities of meaning (Hayes & Jeffries, 2013, 2016). However, these researchers agree that within the context of IPV, power and control over women's liberty is sustained through the many tactics that men use to humiliate, intimidate, belittle, and undermine women's perceptions and experiences.

Understanding the coercively controlling tactics that enable women's subjection to psychological violence would identify the emotional, psychological, and verbal acts that at times co-occur with physical acts of violence, employed by men to constrain their women partners. Stark (2007) argues that men's intent to control, dominate, and punish their partners is effectively a violent form of blackmail to achieve their own interests. Therefore, the theory of coercive control has the potential to draw attention to the insidious patterns of control and coercion that constitutes psychological violence and that produce the conditions for women's lives under siege, both during the relationship and also post-separation. Understanding the complexities of post-separation psychological violence is a contentious but necessary area within research and the legal system.

Post-Separation: On-Going Patterns of Psychological Violence

Often women who have separated from their partners are subjected to the ongoing effects of psychological violence through the operation of coercive control. Post-separation abuse⁵ is becoming an increasingly researched area where heterosexual women's stories of

⁵ Although I use violence through-out this thesis, researchers have consistently identified and named the tactics men employ post-separation as abuse, not violence, reproducing the hierarchy of harm.

constant harassment by their ex-partners continue to subjugate and demean them after the relationship ends (Elizabeth et al., 2012b). Researchers who have investigated post-separation abuse identified that men whom perpetuated psychological violence after separation, utilised legal and social institutions as sites to further their control and power (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012; Beeble, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2007; Busch et al., 1992; Crossman et al., 2016; Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Hayes & Jeffries, 2016; Stark, 2007). The early research by Busch et al. (1992) and more current research by Crossman et al. (2016) has found that women were just as vulnerable to abuse post-separation. Both studies identified men's continuation of psychological violence and persistent controlling behaviour targeted towards their ex-partners through stalking, workplace harassment, home break-ins, threatening letters, and persistent harassing telephone calls. Additionally, men often demand full-custody of their children (Elizabeth et al., 2012b; Stark, 2007), or use their children as collateral to further intimidate the women (Crossman et al., 2016; Elizabeth, 2015). Hayes and Jeffries (2016) describe how threats of murder by an ex-partner have also added to women's fear post-separation and are effective controlling tools in women's compliance to their ex-partners. Although structures are in place to protect women's safety, such as Protection Orders within a New Zealand context, women's continual subjection to violence post-separation is through their ex-partners use of coercive controlling tactics. In this way, women continue to live under siege post-separation. As the legal system has become a site for men's continuation of power and control over their ex-partners, questioning the legal response to this epidemic is important.

Coercion Through the Legal System

Structural forms of violence continually subject women to psychological violence post-separation, such as men using the legal system to their own advantage to maintain their control over women. The New Zealand Family Court's insistence on equal parenting rights and joint custody of children for separated parents has become a site where men continue to intimidate, constrain, and frighten women post-separation. The Family Court system in New Zealand, enacted through a benchmark of patriarchal authority, sets the standards of heteronormativity. Within these standards, the encouragement of men as active parents, regardless of the relationship context before separation and at the expense of both the mother's (and the children's) wellbeing, sanctions fathers' rights (Busch, Morgan, & Coombes, 2014; Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b). As the Family Court mandates, both parents

have equal legal rights to parenting and must equally make decisions and share responsibility for care of their child(ren), disregarding the gendered power dynamics and the history of fathers' violence against mothers (Elizabeth et al., 2012a).

Enforcing co-parenting within the masculine Family Court structures, without fully being aware of the relationship context, perpetuates structural violence against women. Sanctioned through the law and legal systems domineering and coercive behaviour, structural violence marginalises women's experiences and encumbers them with additional stress and worry (Elizabeth, 2015). Consequently, the illusion that co-parenting is amicable frames legislation regarding custody disputes. Elizabeth et al. (2012a) argue that a dichotomised view of post-separation parenting juxtaposes physically violent relationships with those that are 'normal' (i.e. non-physical) and considers 'normal' relationships as egalitarian. If no evidence exists of physical violence within the family before separation, fathers are granted access to their ex-partners and children through co-parenting arrangements, irrespective of the men's use of non-physical violence (Elizabeth et al., 2012b). Focusing solely on physical violence ignores the dynamics of power that subordinate women and the common-sense assumptions that assumes egalitarianism. In this way, over-ruling the rights and concerns of mothers and granting (violent) father's equal access to their children, maintains gendered inequalities (Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2012a).

The enforcement of co-parenting or joint legal custody is contentious (Elizabeth et al., 2012b; Wilson et al., 2015), suggesting that the Court's use of gender neutrality standards and equal parenting ideology does not account for gender inequalities and differences between women and men, such as men's often greater economic resources. Obscuring the power and control tactics of psychological violence that men utilise to further subordinate women, trivialises women's experiences of psychological violence and renders their concerns for safety as invisible and unspeakable (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b). Consequently, the controlling and intimidating behaviours of men both during and after the relationship, such as harassment, belittling, verbal violence, and threats that scare the women (and children), are underestimated (Beeble et al., 2007). Furthermore, when mothers contest the fathers' claims for child contact, based on the men's history of domination and control, the Family Courts endorse the men's view of their ex-partners as 'bitter' and 'irrational' women or the "implacably hostile mother" (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, p. 463), positioning the women as "irresponsible (mothers) in their parenting" (Shea Hart, 2011, p. 35). Additionally, men's presentation as rational and calm within the legal system further sanctions this negative view of women/mothers.

Continual endorsement of men's rights as responsible parents is often attributed to their presentation as clean-cut, middle-class, self-assured, and rational individuals, and their 'honourable desire' to want to care for their children. Bancroft et al. (2012, p. 17) argue that men who perpetrate domestic violence are proficient at managing their public perception and typically appear to others as "friendly, calm, and reasonable". This public persona assumes men's suitability as active fathers and lacks credibility of their controlling and coercive behaviour (Bancroft et al., 2012). These 'types' of men are linked to a culture based on courtesy, propriety, and "progressive family practices" (Elizabeth, 2015, p. 27). Normalised within the legal system, contemporary ideology of co-parenting as being in the child's 'best interests' reconfigures the traditional nuclear family arrangement. "Psy knowledge" greatly influences the Family Courts assumptions that co-parenting supports a child's best interests, emphasising how absent father's harm children's social and psychological development and overall well-being (Elizabeth et al., 2010, p. 257; 2012a). These common-sense assumptions open up a significant space for fathers' continual psychological violation of mothers, undervaluing both women's and children's rights. Elizabeth et al. (2012a) argue that the Court's overriding assumption that children's 'best interests' are served by ongoing relationships with both parents, ignores the context of family and intimate partner violence and men's tactics of control, post-separation.

Men's dominating power tactics to control their ex-partners encapsulates continual maternal denigration and psychological torment. Elizabeth et al. (2012a, p. 468) understand this as the existence of a "misogynistic discursive environment" where fathers occupy a legal space to openly disparage and verbally violate mothers, often in front of children (Elizabeth et al., 2012a). In Elizabeth and colleagues (2010) research, the controlling tactics men enacted post-separation, such as enforcing drop-off and pick-up times for their children and overlooking the mothers' requests, was identified. When the mothers resisted the controlling demands the men subjected them to intense bouts of verbal degradation in front of the children (Elizabeth et al., 2010).

Fathers' attempts to fracture the mother-child relationship has been termed "maternal alienation" by Morris (2009, p. 414) that identifies fathers' attempts to dislodge relations between mothers and their children. The power and control of non-resident fathers is proficient enough to forcibly create a wedge between the resident mother and her children (Elizabeth et al., 2012b). Maternal alienation is a form of structural violence and was identified in a case study of "paper abuse" (Elizabeth, 2015, p. 27). Paper abuse, initially coined by Miller and Smolter (2011), is a form of psychological violence post-separation that

includes a range of behaviours manifested through ‘paper’ to maintain women’s victimisation, such as Court summons. Men whom engage in paper abuse, under the guise of respectability and civility, are manipulators who lack fear of exposure or any negative penalties (Elizabeth, 2015), and where their coercive behaviour is “invisible in plain sight” (Stark, 2007, p. 14).

Men who manipulate the legal system, exert their power at the site of child access. For example, through enforcing child custody hearings, accusing mothers of child abuse, and constantly intimidating and financially exploiting women by burdening them with unnecessary financial costs (Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2012b). The continual subjection of women to men’s psychological violence post-separation requires responsive advocacy to address these concerning issues. Understanding women’s subjection to post-separation psychological violence, manifested through tactics of men’s coercive control, is essential for providing appropriate advocacy for them (and their children) and recognising the distress and harm these behaviours cause them.

Understanding Psychological Violence as Coercive Control

Recognising the enactment of coercive control through acts of psychological violence visibly locates this insidious form of IPV. Reconceptualising psychological violence as patterns of coercive control enables researchers, policy-makers and the legal system a clearer understanding of IPV complexities, specifically psychological violence, that operate to affect women’s psychological and physical health (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). Dutton and Goodman argue that understanding coercive control through an IPV framework can help modify interventions towards women’s safety planning and guide the legal system to understand IPV as patterned behaviour. Establishing coercive control within psychological violence research, encapsulates the context of violent intimate relationships to understand how women become entrapped. Importantly, a framework of coercive control would enable the legal system to focus on gender inequality that continues to subordinate and subject women to psychological violence. Understanding the sociocultural context in New Zealand, situated on gender inequality that silently endorses psychological violence, can enable a critical understanding of how women’s lives are infiltrated in extreme ways that result in long-lasting effects on their health and well-being.

New Zealand researchers (Elizabeth, 2015; Elizabeth et al., 2010, 2012a, 2012b; Wilson et al., 2015) are increasingly focussed on coercive control’s context and its operations

within the political sphere. Elizabeth (2015) argues that greater knowledge and understanding of coercive control as a vital feature of psychological violence may help guide Judges' decisions on shared parenting with violent fathers, enabling understanding the interplay of imperceptible forms of violence constituted in and through gender inequality. Although New Zealand's DVA (1995) attempts to politically address psychological violence (and financial violence) as debilitating forms of DV and 'improper' behaviour (Ministry of Justice, 1995), the legal response to these non-physical forms of violence remains unrecognised, lacking the comprehensive knowledge of the complexities entwined within acts of intimate psychological violence that makes interventions into this social problem problematic for women.

Although the legal system cannot prevent men's violence towards women, effective well thought-out legislation can problem-solve and deter perpetrators (Hanna, 2009). Recognising how the patterned behaviour of coercive control is derived from specific tactics that generate women's compliance and limits their space for action, and re-focusing the law towards gendered social power relations associated with IPV, specifically psychological violence, connects the personal with the political (Hanna, 2009). Listening to women's stories of their subjective experiences exposes how psychological violence impacts on women's lives. Analysing women's stories of psychological violence enables an in-depth understanding of coercive control's specificity and how it operates as terrorist-like behaviour. This specificity may lead to a transformation of response interventions, with a focus on gendered social power relations that continue to maintain violence against women, and confront the current legal focus on physicality and lethality. Therefore, greater attention to psychological violence within and through coercive control in intimate relationships, must be a vital part of the overall protection strategies for women subjected to IPV.

CHAPTER FOUR: Methodology

What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning.

(Heisenberg, 1959)

While quantitative studies have been helpful in categorising and measuring specific markers of IPV behaviour, that also constitutes psychological violence, it has become increasingly important to understand forms of IPV from the experiences of women. A qualitative research method provides greater sensitivity in understanding women's experiences from their own location in the gendered social hierarchy. Listening to women's experiences of coercive control enacted through acts of psychological violence, has the potential to make sense of discursive resources and socio-cultural influences that shape women's narratives. From a feminist standpoint epistemology, this research aims to disrupt dominant narratives and privilege the narratives of the six women whom participated in this research, as knowers of their own experience. In this way, legitimating the six women's stories of psychological violence emphasises the gendered social power relations affecting the intricacies of their everyday lives.

Legitimating Women's Stories

Feminist social science legitimates women's lived everyday experiences through the principles of respect, collaboration, and empathy within qualitative research methods (R. Campbell & Wasco, 2000). The task of feminist psychology, and specifically feminist standpoint epistemology, is to reclaim women's forgotten voices and their ways of knowing, as separate and distinct from men's (Gergan, 2001). Riger (1992) suggests that listening to women's voices benefits social understandings of women's subject positions and consequently allows the invisible to become visible.

Within the bicultural context of New Zealand, the Māori principle of *manaakitanga* refers to hospitality, kindness, and the process of showing respect and care for others. Part of *manaakitanga* refers to strengthening women's silenced, excluded or marginalised voices. In this sense, privileging the narratives of women necessarily attends to their particular position in the social hierarchy (Riger, 1992). Listening to the women's narratives of their psychologically violent intimate partner relationships, through a narrative-discursive

approach, enabled understanding the discursive resources that impacted on their everyday lives and that positioned them in certain ways, ultimately legitimating their stories.

A Narrative-Discursive Approach

Taylor (2015) suggests that by applying a narrative-discursive approach to women's stories enables an understanding of their experiences, through both narratives that link particular events and people and through the social discourses of shared meaning. Riessman (2008) states that narratives support individuals to normalise or explain an event through access to a set of social and cultural meanings. Embedded within cultural, social, and political contexts, it is through narratives that individuals shape and define their lives, making narratives context-bound (Boonzaier, 2008; Yoder, 2003). As the social world is 'storied', individual's experiences are organised through narrative where characters are created and positioned in a particular time and space (Riessman, 2008). Moreover, when we tell a story it is a socially situated action, a way of producing different positions or identities (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007). In this way, we construct narratives to make our experiences coherent.

Within the research context the process of telling a story through dialogue and connection between the researcher and the narrator, enables knowledge production that is constructed through current social locations and relational positions, such as class and ethnicity, and the interview context itself (Hyden, 2005; Riessman, 1993). The participant and researcher together co-construct stories and produce a joint story or a hybrid story (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993). Thereby, narratives are co-constructions through questions asked or associations made by the researcher (Hyden, 2005). Additionally, the construction of individual narratives (storytelling) is linked to social discourses and are situated within a firmly interactional or intersubjective context, such as a conversational interview (Wilkinson, 1996). Narratives produced through a conversational interview can be discursively analysed as individuals rely on their culturally available discourses to tell their story and to bring about shared meaning. Shared meanings become the discursive resources used to tell and understand stories through narrative (Riessman, 1993).

Individuals also engage in discursive struggles over meaning where opposing social interests compete for control in their narratives, shaping their version of the story to their current context and shared understandings (Taylor, 2015). Taylor (2015) also describes how discursive research highlights the constructed and situated nature of language and its multiple

functions. In this way, language guides the researcher's understanding of constraining and common-sense discourses, such as discourse that positions violence as solely physical. Consequently, both discursive and narrative research strategies within psychology provide a method of understanding individual's location in the world and bring meaning to their experiences.

A narrative-discursive approach can identify the commonalities in participants talk and the diverse meanings and life trajectories emerging through the exploration of social practices, processes, and experiences that position individuals in certain ways (Taylor, 2015; Taylor & Littleton, 2006). The narrative-discursive approach is relevant to this research, identifying how women's experiences of psychological violence are a result of their positioning within the gendered social hierarchy and situated through dominant discourses. For example, LeCouteur and Oxlad (2010) argue that the operation of common-sense ideology frequently justifies and tolerates the continuation of violence against women. From a feminist perspective, addressing the assumed societal norms and patriarchal ideology that subjugates women and constitutes women's social positioning, is necessary in understanding the gendered nature of men's violence against women operating through socio-cultural discourses. By uniting feminist standpoint epistemology with a narrative-discursive approach, it is possible to engage in research that legitimates women's subjugated knowledges by attending to these socio-cultural processes. Narratives generated through feminist standpoint epistemology become a cultural analysis for social change by problematising gendered social power relations producing dominant discourses, and by providing space for women's stories of resistance.

This research, therefore, attends to the six women's narratives discursively produced within the context of conversational interviews. The question this research sought to address was how women understand IPV in the absence of physical violence. Specifically, how do women make sense of their experiences of victimisation given that previous research suggests it is difficult to recognise and name psychological violence? How do women understand the gendering of men's violence against them? How did the women's narratives of their experiences of psychological violence link to discursive constructions of living under siege? How do the women's narratives implicate the wider socio-political culture that condones their life under siege? Attending to the discursive resources the women use to narrate their experiences of psychologically violent relationships is a constituent of this research. This chapter now addresses the research method used within this thesis.

Method

Mary Gergan (2001) proposed five central tenets of a feminist method that I brought to this research: 1) collaboration between each woman and myself in the construction of their narratives; 2) being aware of the socio-cultural context of both myself and each woman; 3) being reflexive of my own values that led me to question psychological violence; 4) understanding that meaning is socially produced and identifying the discursive resources that shape the women's talk; and 5) developing relationships with each woman, acknowledging they are the knowledge producers. The enactment and development of these tenets within a supportive and collaborative interview protocol legitimated the women's stories and emphasised the socio-cultural influences on gendered social power relations.

Ethics. The HEARTH cluster at Massey University peer-reviewed this research and assessed it as low-risk, due to the assurance women were no longer in violent relationships. The Massey University Human Ethics Committee then reviewed this research. Initially they questioned the women's potential distress by (re)telling their stories and how that might impact on their well-being, requiring an immediate response. While I had worked through a responsive and empathetic narrative approach to the interviews, I needed to make explicit that the discomfort many women experience in retelling past stories of violence is part of the ordinary lives of women with these histories. Researchers in the IPV community recognise these issues and value the process of enabling women to talk about their experiences. Prior to my ethics application, I had established a relationship with a local woman counsellor with specialist knowledge in working with women affected by IPV. She was willing to provide counselling services to the potential participants. Although I mentioned the counsellor's services to all six women, none of them felt they needed to engage with her.

The Information Sheet (see Appendix A) identified the ethical considerations regarding the interview process that included confidentiality, privacy, and voluntary participation. Initially the Information Sheet talked about psychological 'violence', however once I completed the literature review I became aware that the common understanding of 'violence' as physical contributes to women's silencing. I then changed the working term in the information sheet to experiences of psychological 'abuse' before sending out to my network.

Bicultural considerations. Bicultural understandings of New Zealand life must necessarily inform research in New Zealand. In this way, understanding the diversity of women and women's perspectives of psychological violence would be beneficial in

understanding how cultural and familial norms, as well as societal expectations, impact on what women consider normal or acceptable. Feminist research has often excluded cultural specificity and assumed homogeneity of all women, regardless of their cultural background, and Māori women have been unable to safely tell their story within a safe place (Jenkins & Pihama, 2001). Connor (2007) however argues that women of colour, including Māori women, have challenged this Eurocentric gaze and argued for consideration of their own cultural experience as separate to white women. One such challenge is *mana wahine* that Jenkins and Pihama (2001) describe as Māori women's movement to take back their own knowledge and experience that was dismantled through processes of colonisation.

My University education has given me a foundation for bicultural understandings of ethical research and I established cultural supervision. As part of my bicultural understanding, *manaakitanga* was very important to the research process. While no Māori women participated in this research, I practised the principal of *manaakitanga* by creating a warm, nurturing environment in which to conduct each interview and hear the women's stories. I developed rapport, provided hospitality (including refreshments), showed empathy and compassion in times of sadness and tears, laughed with each woman, and ultimately supported their lead as they told their story.

Participants. Through the snowballing technique, I recruited six women as participants in my research. Polkinghorne (2005) suggests the snowball technique requires researchers to inform their networks of the research aims to generate a pool of possible participants. In the months preceding the research, I had talked amongst my peers about my research idea. Once I gained ethical approval, I gave the Information Sheet to my social network for circulation amongst their own networks of women. The Information Sheet detailed my interest in understanding women's experiences of psychological abuse, in the absence of physical, in their previous heterosexual intimate partner relationships. Through my social networks I recruited three women who had expressed an interest in participating once they saw the Information Sheet. Their details were sent to me to make further contact and once contact was made I talked through the research in more depth with each of them before they all agreed to participate.

Prior to recruitment, three women who were already known to me had expressed an interest in participating. I contacted them via a text or an email asking if they were still interested and as they all agreed, I then either emailed or dropped around to their home the Information Sheet asking them to contact me should they decide to proceed with participation, which they did.

Although I had no set criteria for the number of participants, I made a decision to stop recruiting once I had conducted the six interviews. The stories of psychological violence I heard provided me with enough data to proceed. As is often the case with snowballing techniques, I was aware of an obvious homogenous group of Pākehā, middle-class women, with children (Bowen, 2008). I was also aware that the production of meaningful analysis might be disrupted if my sample became too large (Henderson, 2013).

Demographic details. The women's ages ranged from 32 to 50 years, the range of women's ages at the beginning of the abusive relationship were between 17 to 33 years, and the duration of the psychologically violent relationships were between 13 months to 20 years, with an average of 10 years. This information demonstrates that not all women remain entrapped in psychologically violent relationships for long periods of time and age was not a predictor of when women enter or leave violent relationships. However, the average age when the relationship ended was 34 years although two women left their ex-partners in their early-mid 20s. Additionally, the number of years since the relationships had ended ranged from 4 to 20 years. One woman whom left her relationship 20 years ago still had a very vivid recollection of her violent situation with her ex-husband. All six women had children and, therefore, contact with their ex-partner is either on-going or has the potential to re-arise at any given time. Table 1 below is a summary of the women's demographic information.

Table 1:
Demographics of Each Woman

	Age at present (years)	Age at beginning of violent relationship (years)	Duration of violent relationship (years)	Age at the end of the violent relationship	Status of violent relationship	Years since violent relationship	Children	Ethnicity	Current relationship status	Employment status
<i>Sally</i>	46	17	8	25	Married	20	Two aged over 18 years	Pākehā	Married for nearly 20 years	Self-employed
<i>Louise</i>	47	25	20	45	Married	4 ½	One under 18 years	Pākehā	In a relationship of three years	Employed
<i>Gigi</i>	37	23	10	33	De facto	4	Three under 18	Pākehā	Single	Social welfare and part-time jobs
<i>Lola</i>	50	33	10	43	Married	7	Two 18 and under	British Pākehā	In a relationship of five years	Self-employed
<i>Lily</i>	47	22	15	37	Married	10	Two 18 and under	Pākehā	In a relationship of eight years	Employed
<i>Abigail</i>	32	20	13 months	22	De facto	10	One under 18	Pākehā	Married for two years	Employed

Data collection. I conducted the interviews individually and face-to-face at the women's choice of location and at a time suitable for them: a private soundproof office at two places of employment; my home; their homes; and at a private office within a community centre. The period of approaching the women and conducting the first round of interviews took place over two weeks. Four women participated in one interview and because two women still had much more of their stories to tell, they both participated in a second interview that took place approximately one week after their first one.

Through the principles of *manaakitanga* I created a supportive relationship and relaxed environment in alignment with feminist research and Māori culture that emphasises hospitality and respect between participant and researcher. The interviews were conversational in style, consistent with both feminist standpoint epistemology and narrative inquiry. I had a list of prompts to help guide me if necessary. Apart from beginning each interview with the question “why did you decide to participate?” and enquiring about their well-being during and after the relationships, I found that each woman took the opportunity to talk freely and openly about their experiences.

At the beginning of each interview before I began recording and as part of the informed consent process, I explained my aims for this research: to transform social and institutional knowledge of IPV, specifically psychological violence, through listening to women's stories. The silencing of women's stories, through fear of reprisals, stigma, or shame, is a frequent occurrence. I mentioned that by using the narrative approach to research each woman takes control of the interview and ownership of her life story that stems from her unique background and reality. Within this context, I clarified the women were the authority of their life experiences, they were in control throughout the whole process and could stop recording at any time, and they were active participants leading me as researcher. I reiterated that their interviews were strictly confidential using a pseudonym of their choice. Three women chose their own pseudonyms and the other three left it to me. I also invented names for other people spoken of in the interviews, such as children, ex-partners, and current partners.

As part of the informed consent process, I asked every woman to read and sign the Participant Consent Form (see Appendix B) confirming they understood what participation would require. I also explained the transcription process and that they would have the opportunity to read their transcribed interview and amend or make changes. However, none of the women were interested in viewing the transcribed interview and they signed the

Authority for the Release of Transcripts Form (see Appendix C). Each woman was gifted a \$20 petrol voucher as a *koha*, or thank you, for their participation in my research.

The interviews were all digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcription included utterances, laughter, tears, and pauses in conversation. I am aware that by transcribing the interviews from audio to word, specific intonations, gestures or facial mannerisms that were specific to each interview are lost (Polkinghorne, 2005). The interviews produced a total of 776 minutes or just under 13 hours of talk and their duration ranged from 82 minutes to 123 minutes. The second round of interviews were 30 minutes and 108 minutes. Overall, each transcription including the second interviews produced between 13-41 pages of text that comprised 6,000-24, 270 words.

The conversational interview process was chosen to access first-person accounts of an experience that are filled with comprehensive and detailed information (Polkinghorne, 2005). For example, all my participants discussed the multiple forms of psychological violence that was utilised by their ex-partners. Because of this, at times throughout each interview the women's stories were interspersed with tears and sadness, laughter and happiness. Some women told particularly harrowing stories that they had not shared prior to our conversation. I felt a great honour that they chose to share their stories with me for this research project. In this manner, knowledge was generated through active dialogue with both myself and each woman through mutual listening and talking (Riessman, 1993). At the end of each interview we hugged and I thanked them for the privilege of allowing me to listen to their stories, and for sharing their personal journey with me. They all expressed their reasons for participating that included an opportunity to create change for all women through sharing their stories. As Lily stated, "*you can get out, you can do it*".

The following day I either texted or emailed them to check their well-being and if they felt they needed additional support. Some felt emotionally drained but also expressed a sense of empowerment through telling their story. A week later, I sent follow-up e-mails or texts to again touch base and check on their well-being after the interviews, being aware that sometimes the enormity of what they have spoken about may take a few days to have an effect. None of the women experienced any detrimental effects to their well-being.

Method of Analysis

Narrative-Discursive Analysis

Applying a narrative-discursive analysis to this research, I sought to identify commonalities in the women's stories of intimate partner psychological violence by examining the discursive resources that informed and gave meaning to their narratives, positioning them in specific ways within their local context (Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Additionally, I wanted to identify how coercive control functioned within their relationships. Taylor and Littleton (2006) claim this approach seeks to explore the sociocultural assumptions of gender that contributes to gender inequality, through discourses that shape and constrain common-sense understandings. A narrative-discursive analysis, therefore, can identify how participants are positioned within gendered social relations of power that impact on their agency and capacity for resistance (Burkitt, 2008).

From a narrative perspective, this research intended to understand women's experiences of intimate partner psychological violence, as a result of their gendered positioning. Analysing narratives as a social action identifies the sustaining power relations in society and is important in challenging dominant discourses that continue to enable and constrain women's positioning in the social hierarchy. The concept of positioning conveys both a fluid and dynamic sense of an individual's multiple 'selves' or 'identities' and how they are actively constructed in conversations between people or in other discursive contexts (Davies & Harré, 1990). I was interested in understanding how the women's positioning within dominant discourses of heteronormativity enabled and constrained their liberties. For example, as the women navigated the gendered social power within their intimate relationships, how did their positioning within femininity form, control, and constrain their narratives?

The women's telling of their stories that produced their narratives, enabled them to take full ownership of their experiences centrally positioned within their own socio-cultural histories and endorsed by their diverse backgrounds and reality. "We are the stories we tell" (Skjelsbaek, 2006, p. 376). Through the process of telling their personal stories, the women inscribed meaning to their experiences of intimate partner psychological violence. Taylor (2007) states that a narrative-discursive analysis seeks to provide insight into overall narrative structure and shifts over time. In this way, the women's temporal narratives made it possible to identify their experiences that shifted over time, from initially meeting their

partners through the ‘trappings’ of dominant heteronormativity and the trajectory of their relationships, until the present where they talked about their past and current experiences from a safe place.

The women’s narratives identified their subscription to normative understandings of femininity and masculinity, discursively constructed through both sociocultural assumptions and common-sense understandings of everyday heteronormativity, helping them to make sense of their positioning within the relationships. Within these expectations of enacting gendered relationships, the women’s positioning within heteronormativity was socially sanctioned. Social sanctioning approves not only women’s ‘choice’ of partner but their rights, duties, and obligations as they enact femininity within a ‘normative’ heterosexual relationship that produces subject positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). In the analysis, the women’s subjugated positions and enactment of femininity drew attention to the gendered social power relations operating within New Zealand’s culture that made it difficult, at least initially, for the women to recognise their entrenchment in violent and coercively controlling relationships.

Analysing the women’s narratives through a frame of coercive control enabled identification of how violence operated in their lives, functioning to subjugate the women through dominant social discourses that were shaped and constrained by common-sense understandings. I identified patterns of coercive control manifested as psychological violence, aligned with the literature I had read. For example, there were many instances of intimidation, isolation, and micro-control of the minutiae of the women’s everyday lives. These led to the women’s own self-surveillance and hyper-vigilance, positioning them in and through the men’s exploitation of their mental, physical, and economic resources. At the same time, I noticed turning points within the women’s narratives as they reached moments of resistance, where their subject positions changed and yet, while contested, they remained positioned within the dominant discourses of heteronormativity influenced by society’s common-sense understandings and sanctioning. Furthermore, the women’s narratives were organised and influenced through the use of metaphors, images, and storylines to bring meaning to their experiences.

As the women’s positioning and their experiences within the violent relationships lacked every-day explanatory language and available discourses to tell their stories, they drew on metaphors within their narratives to make sense of their experiences. The women’s use of metaphors, such as “*the goal-posts kept moving*”, “*living under siege*”, and other ‘military’ terms, conveyed how they understood their position at that time and how their

subjection to IPV impacted on their everyday lives. The metaphors helped guide my understanding of their positioning within the relationships, and post-separation, where the men's demands and ever-changing 'rules' continually constrained and entrapped the women. Additionally, within the analysis, the metaphor's context and how it informed the narrative at that moment enabled an understanding of the women's positioning in and through discourse. As I analysed the women's narratives for their subject positions, discursive constructions, and metaphors to convey meaning, I remained reflexive and aware of how my own standpoint influenced this research and analysis, as research is never value-free.

Reflexivity. Being a reflexive researcher is imperative to qualitative feminist research. In order for the research to be ethically and methodically viable, reflexivity on the part of the researcher must be a central component of the research process (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). As a researcher, I am cognisant that my experiences, values and beliefs can affect the research process and throughout the entire process I reflected on my standpoint as a woman, as a co-constructor of the narrative process, and as researcher, as all research is situated around the values and life experiences of the researcher. Moreover, after each interview I recorded how I felt about hearing the women's stories and if their stories had aligned with my knowledge of psychologically violent intimate relationships. I was also mindful that my personal experience enabled me to understand the women's experiences and guided my analysis interpretation in a specific way. However, although my standpoint influences, and is embedded in, the telling of the women's stories, the women's voices must be heard first and foremost within the analysis, enabled through the transcription process that respects their telling's and through the discursive resources they are entrenched in, to recognise *how* the women tell *what* they tell.

CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis Part One

The Power of Coercive Control

Domestic violence flourishes because of silence, because the problem stays hidden, and in some subtle but powerful way . . . acceptable. (Esta Soler, cited in <http://www.health.govt.nz/publication/recognising-and-responding-partner-abuse>)

The following research analysis draws on, and values, the narratives of six women - Sally, Louise, Gigi, Lily, Lola and Abigail – who were subjected to heterosexual intimate partner psychological violence by their former partners. This research and the co-construction of the women’s narratives created an opportunity to listen to their previously silenced stories and to understand how psychological violence operated within their intimate relationships. Unravelling the women’s stories the analysis attends to the discursive resources embedded in gendered social power relations and sociocultural assumptions.

Dividing the analysis into two parts over two chapters, this chapter attends to Part One of the analysis focused on the women’s stories within their psychologically violent relationships, structured within a framework of coercive control. Chapter Six attends to Part Two of the analysis, aimed to understand and further explore how coercive control operates post-separation as an important focus of current research.

This chapter is organised through a temporal narrative of events significant to the women as they reflected on their history within their previous relationships. Their stories are contextualised through a dominant narrative of gendered social order. Within the women’s stories, their relationships began as do any ‘ordinary and normalised’ heterosexual relationships, founded on mutual attraction and the social sanctioning of coupledness, embedded within the boundaries of heteronormativity.

The Beginning: The Normativity of Heterosexual Relationships

By listening to the stories women tell about their lives . . . we have found that . . . women’s sense of self and of worth is most often grounded in the ability to make and maintain relationships. (Jean Bake Miller and Irene Pierce Stiver, 1997)

One question I asked each woman at the start of our interview was how and where they met their (ex)partners, to gain an overall idea of their relationship context and what

initially attracted them to the men. What the women revealed was the normalisation of their relationships in the beginning, based on mutual attraction and assumed shared values within a society that privileges heterosexuality and coupledness. Through discourses of femininity and masculinity, heterosexual relationships are socially sanctioned and singleness is often constructed negatively, carrying a stigma of deficit, especially for women (Reynolds & Taylor, 2005).

Within the context of meeting their partners for the first time, the women articulated how they saw themselves. Lola and Lily spoke of bringing particular vulnerabilities with them, having both come out of previous relationships. Lily, aged 22, was at crossroads in her life after she “*had been gypsying around*” overseas and came home “*where I was so lost and feeling flaky*”. Meeting her partner allowed her to finally put some roots down as “*it felt like I belonged for the first time in forever . . .*”. Lola, aged 33, stated “*I kinda was a bit sort of lost really . . . I was damaged goods you see, so I was not the full me*” and Gigi, aged 23, specifically positioned herself as “*. . . I guess I was just vulnerable . . .*”.

The women’s narratives positioned them within heterosexual ideology and as Dutton and Goodman (2005) have argued, women’s vulnerabilities maybe catalysts for men’s coercion and exploitation. Despite Louise, aged 24, considering herself a “*strong, independent person. . .*” when she met her partner, she was not immune from a position of vulnerability within the gendered social hierarchy. Abigail positioned herself as “*. . . being a naive 20-year-old . . .*” when she met her partner at work “*and he was that much older than me [29], thinking he would know better*” and Sally, aged 17, reflected how “*we were only young*” when they met. Although the six women positioned themselves in different ways – vulnerable, independent, young - within the discourse of femininity, their narratives then spoke of how the norms of masculinity operated in attracting the women in the beginning.

It is within the context of coupledness expectations that Lola, Lily, and Louise described the men’s initial positive masculine image. Their images were framed by the markers of masculinity that have historically structured ‘manliness’ in New Zealand through physical size and strength, reliability, independence and ambition (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994). In the women’s narratives, the operation of gender enacted through the norms of masculinity and femininity positioned the men as confident, active, good-looking, and independent. For example, Lola’s narrative draws on the gendered characteristics of masculinity that initially attracted her to her partner. She described how he met the criteria of masculinity in relation to her femininity through the traditional standards of a family-man.

Lola: We were playing on the swings and a guy and his daughter walked into the park, this great big strapping 6-foot-2 farmer with his 6-year-old daughter, and the girls started playing and we started talking and he was really nice, you know, presented really, really well.

Lily's narrative also described the masculine characteristics that attracted her to her partner. Lily's recognition of masculinity resonates with Lola's as she positioned her partner within traditional masculinity, as a future provider and protector.

Lily: I got to know this guy and he was um, he was charming, he was nice looking, and um he seemed really driven . . . he seemed so sure of himself, very confident you know, he spoke very well in public, he conducted himself really well, and I really admired those qualities about him, the fact he was focused.

Louise described her initial attraction to her partner, embedded within the standards of masculinity and femininity. Louise's gendered identity of "female passive receptivity" was produced in relation to his "male active dominance" and prowess, that Budgeon (2013, p. 323) states constitutes the normalisation of heterosexuality.

Louise: One of the things that very first attracted me to him when we were both really young, in our early 20s . . . he was more of a challenge, and that was quite exciting you know. I was 24 and he had only just turned 20. . . although he seemed more mature and sophisticated than I was [then].

The women's narratives emphasised the many ways that femininity and masculinity work in bringing women and men together, through the ordinariness of heterosexual relations. For instance, Lola, Abigail, Sally, and Gigi's narratives described their partners' initial presentation and how the men charmed their family and friends. Discourse that positions men as 'good', socially endorses masculinity.

Lola: . . . (he was) extremely persuasive with people . . . and he always came across as a good bloke, you know, and at 6-foot-2 and big and strong, he would always be around to help people [pause] . . . he was sooooo overly generous with finances . . .

Abigail: . . . (he was) just being charming . . . and even my friends and my family and people that met him said “oh he is a good guy”, you know, they all liked him . . . they all spoke highly of him . . . and I know now that he is one of those people that has got the gift of the gab . . . so he knows how to talk to people.

Sally: He would be really nice . . . it was fine when people came over, if I made a new friend he would be nice as pie. . . and when (my) parents did come over he was also charming to them . . .

Gigi: We were friends [laughs] and, you know, he is a good-looking guy and funny.

Emerging within the women’s narratives was their social endorsement through achieving coupledness and their ‘choice’ of partner, as societal expectations and pressure position women not imbued within a heterosexual relationship, as ‘lacking’. The positioning of men as socially charming resonates with a culturally available discourse of romantic love that constructs men’s identity as a ‘prince’ within the relationship (Baly, 2010). Towns and Adams (2000) have argued that romantic love discourse connects women to the existing gendered social order, drawing on an idealised version of the socially sanctioned partner and, therefore, creates difficulty for women to recognise or make sense of their relationship experiences. As the women’s narratives unfolded, they attached meaning to love, excitement, pregnancy, and motherhood that worked to embed them further into their relationships.

Gigi: . . . I fell pregnant with [first-born] and her pregnancy was a welcome surprise.

Lola: We were kinda very fond of each other, if we didn’t love each other we were very fond of each other in the beginning, but it was [step-daughter] now in hindsight, [step-daughter] was the one I fell in love with . . . and they [Lola’s daughter and step-daughter] were brought up as sisters, it was just the perfect situation.

Abigail: We, um, were only seeing each other for about three months before I fell pregnant, so it became very serious very quickly which I probably wasn’t ready for.

Louise: . . . we have similar, um, values I guess, and actually have quite a lot in common . . . he actually is really good company and fun and you know we would

laugh and stuff . . . when we travel, we travel pretty well together, have a lot of fun, enjoy the same stuff.

The women's narratives of their initial meetings and early relationships were based on normative and romantic gendered expectations. Romantic discourse explains why women enter into relationships and what conceals their recognition of abuse (Baly, 2010). Within the women's narratives in this research, expectations of romance, femininity, and masculinity discursively constructed the social and cultural processes of heteronormativity and gendered social power relations. These expectations coerce women into ordinary everyday heterosexual relationships that produce the conditions for forms of IPV to occur, manifested as coercive control.

Coercive Control as a Technology of Power

Discipline may be identified neither within an institution nor within an apparatus; it is a type of power; a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets; it is a 'physics' or an 'anatomy' of power, a technology. (Michel Foucault, Discipline and Punishment, 1977).

Coercive control, as a technology of power embedded in gendered social relations, emphasises the multiple strategies of violence that men deploy and the "experiential consequences" of entrapment that subjugate women, restricting their freedom of thought, movement, and bodily integrity (Herbert & MacKenzie, 2014; Stark, 2007; 2012, p. 203). In this way, IPV is women's social and cultural entrapment within intimate relationships, endorsed through the structural inequities of gender. Understanding coercive control as a technology of power enables understanding IPV's explicit link to gender norms. This link was evident in the women's narratives through the men's assertion of dominance in pursuit of masculine entitlements, while simultaneously targeting the normative gendered expectations of women through the micro-regulation of their everyday lives.

As the women's narratives of romantic love and coupledness progressed, they disclosed how they began to experience their partner's intimidating and controlling behaviours. The women talked about the men's operations of power and control as the relationships intensified and the women's various positionings in the gendered hierarchy as they began to question their own realities and the men's incongruous behaviour. For instance, Abigail

noticed a particular change in her partner's behaviour that emerged after their relationship became socially recognised and endorsed.

Abigail: His personality changed quite quickly . . . there was a comment that was made . . . 6-7 months into the relationship that I now look back and think that was a bit of a sign. He said . . . “oh well everybody always tries to make a good impression on people when they first meet them”. And at the time I thought ‘well no not really you sort of be yourself’ . . . you kinda want to know that person and get to know that person as them.

The recognition of things ‘not being quite right’ appeared on the boundaries of gendered social power relations. Lily described how her understandings of what constituted family were different from her partner's. Having taken up a position within the dominant and culturally produced narratives of gender and romance early in her relationship, Lily's boundaries became blurred. Her expectations of normative heterosexual coupledness and traditional family relationships were not met nor valued and instead, Lily was positioned as ‘property’ and ‘passed’ from one man to another within a patriarchal narrative of masculinity and ownership (Adams, Towns, & Gavey, 2000).

Lily: I used to feel like he would not really engage well with my family and they are quite ‘family’ family - if we have a dinner it's like a meeting of the Italians! [Then], we were only together about 6-7 months and he asked me to marry him . . .but I found out that when he asked me to marry him it was only after he had asked his father if he could . . . and spoken to lawyers about it, spoken to everyone else about it before he actually asked me . . . and I didn't like that at all . . . him and his father did everything together. . . were in the family business together . . . but the lines were so blurred . . . [and I ended up being] married to the father too.

The men's tactics of control, recognised by the women, challenged their understandings of normative heterosexual relationships. It emerged through the women's narratives that their partners began to assert authority over the relationship, created through the men's ambiguous assertions of love and withdrawal to ensure the women's compliance. For instance, early in their relationship Louise realised that “. . . we did things his way” and her recognition enabled Louise to see that “. . . his method of control was to withhold

approval and affection, yep, that is his controlling way, so looking back on it that is how it was right from day one”.

Discourses of romantic heterosexuality often conflate controlling behaviours with love, communicating love through ownership such as being told what to wear and how to behave (Papp, Liss, Erchull, Godfrey, & Waaland-Kreutzer, 2017). Although Lola initially maintained a long-distance relationship with her partner that enabled her autonomy, he began controlling her through disciplining her body to meet his expectations of gendered normativity and to demand sexual loyalty (Budgeon, 2013). The establishment of Lola’s narrative was through her partner’s ownership of her body that persisted during their seven-year relationship.

Lola: [in the first year of the relationship]. . . I used to take my top off to sunbathe and he would go absolutely bonkers, he hated it . . . he didn’t like me exposing what were ‘his’. . . [he would say] “they are a sexual object and I don’t like you taking your top off”. Little things he did along the way that, looking back on, I realise were his ways of just controlling me.

Once the relationships became established, the women became the men’s ‘property’ where masculine dominance was emphasised within gendered norms. Patterns of coercive control emerged within the women’s narratives as they began to question their reality of particular events. The men’s actions debased the women’s sense of normalcy. Williamson (2010) has argued that the difficulty in appeasing seemingly insignificant forms of control locates women within an unreality of someone else’s making, blurring their boundaries of reality. As such, the women began to change their meaning of normalcy and acceptability to meet the men’s demands. The men’s controlling behaviour appeared more frequently, leading the women to micro-regulate their own behaviour, as Lily described.

Lily: I always thought things would come right . . . I was young . . . he would go to the pub every night . . . and of course no cell phones in those days and sometimes if he said “look I will ring you” . . . I would sit and think ‘well is he ringing, can I do what I want to do?’ No I couldn’t, so he exerted control at me like that [sighs] and if I went down to the pub to see him, um, sometimes that was welcomed sometimes it wasn’t, but what I did find was that I lived my life in the pub drinking beer with him and it was awful. And he had a wee flat next to his parents before we were married

and then he wouldn't allow us to live together and I am like what the hell . . . I was on this freight train and I couldn't stop it and I kept thinking it would be better, it would be better. . .

As the women began negotiating their partner's unreality, they began to question their own version of events. Positions of self-blame were a common theme in the women's narratives as they began to conform to their gendered location. Abigail questioned her responsibility for her partner's behaviour.

Abigail: . . . he was just very good at when there was an issue, turning that issue back to say it was my fault – it was always my fault . . . and I used to question it . . . maybe I shouldn't have done it that way . . . maybe he is right.

Research by Power, Koch, Kralik, and Jackson (2006) found that women's patterns of self-blame are located within a dominant discourse of romance where their desire for love is central to understanding themselves as feminine subjects. The discourse of romantic love characterises IPV, coercing women into 'trying harder' to end the violence (Hayes & Jeffries, 2013). Despite the concerns of Gigi's family, her commitment to the relationship reproduced notions of self-blame.

Gigi: My dad and my brother used to often say that they didn't like the way he would treat me . . . they saw it, um, yeah . . . I guess cause of how I was in the relationship . . . that I didn't talk to him well either, you know so that is where I blamed myself, does that make sense?

As the women's narratives unfolded further, the problematic connections between romance, jealousy, coercion, control, and violence, as well as the women's commitment to masculine and feminine norms, intensified. The women's process of entrapment also began to emerge through the "insidiousness of Westernised notions of romantic love" that have a perchance for being "painful, all-encompassing, controlling, and obsessive" (Hayes & Jeffries, 2013, p. 69).

Gigi: He was very jealous of me 'cause I am so bubbly and outgoing and I watched that change [crying] you know over the years [crying]. . . I am normally a very positive person, and I am now, but with him I guess I lost a side of that at times. . .

Louise: He was like my best friend at the time but it was just [pause]. . . it was definitely you know we did things his way . . . and I remember really vividly going "shit, here we go" and tensing and waiting for the explosion [if things didn't go his way].

Lily described how, over time, she grew desensitised to her partner's demands as she struggled to survive within his unreality.

Lily: I [became] desensitised to everything . . . the de-humanisation [pause] . . . he normalised the unusual, he bastardised our occasions, he would push the boundaries to here and make it normal and then push them a bit further. The demands became outrageous . . . we lived in this outrageous world of what was acceptable . . . he had so muddied my mind – actually normal stopped a long way back here.

The process of dehumanisation shifted Lily's understanding of normal, through her partner's "everchanging and destabilising" unreality as he controlled the rules that governed Lily's gendered boundaries (Williamson, 2010, p. 1418). A particular moment where Lily recognised the unreality of her relationship was finding herself alone as a new mother, where the differences in gendered expectations of family life became evident through her partner's masculine entitlement. For Lily, his unreality lacked coherence and contradicted the feminine norms of relationships, marriage, and motherhood, reinforcing a traditional construction of parenthood that exploited the gender binary.

Lily: . . . new baby, come home from the hospital, you get dropped in the driveway and he has gone. And then that night nobody has come home and you are there with your new baby and this empty house, washing it, bathing it for the first time, and nobody comes home and when they come home its midnight and they are drunk . . . [but] we had a new baby today!

The women's narratives identified how the performance of femininity within romantic discourse involved the women's compliance, enacted through their deference to the men's privileged position in the social hierarchy. The women's narratives were also embedded in normative rituals of courtship, love, and family, and enabled the performance of gender as the men ultimately entrapped the women, rendering them as inequitable and, as Louise described, ". . . probably most of what I felt was helpless".

Achieving the "technology of coercive control" (Stark, 2012, p, 203) through the restriction of women's liberty, entraps women in hostage-like conditions enacted through men's strategies of violence. Engaging his theory of coercive control, Stark (2007) reframes the meaning of IPV towards a focus on gendered social power that frames women's inequality and renders coercive control unrecognisable because it involves behaviours that are normative in contemporary Western cultures. As such, the women's narratives reiterated the claim by Stark (2007, p.14) that coercive control is "invisible in plain sight".

The following section takes up Stark's (2007, 2012) theory of the technology of coercive control that separates coercion (tactics that intimidate and hurt) and control (tactics that isolate and regulate), emphasising how they entrap women. The multiple tactics of coercive control men used were emphasised in the women's narratives and involved the function of intimidation, violence, isolation, within a systematic micro-regulation of the women's everyday lives that benefitted the men. These tactics provided the conditions for the women's lives under siege.

Coercion: Intimidation

The operation of power micro-regulates women's lives and is achieved through tactics of intimidation, such as surveillance, threats, and degradation, to instil fear, dependence, compliance, and shame (Stark, 2007). In this analysis, the men achieved intimidation of the women through the processes of surveillance and the women's self-surveillance of their actions. Also, enacted with the women's narratives were the men's tactics of verbal violence and degradation as well as acts of intimidation post-pregnancy that led to positioning the women as 'crazy'.

Surveillance. The women's narratives identified a storyline focused on their partner's omnipresence that regulated their everyday lives and rendered visible many acts of surveillance that denied the women's privacy and freedom of movement. Surveillance is one "apparatus of control" to maintain power (Foucault, 1977, p. 135). Stark (2007) describes

how men's tactics of surveillance instils fear in women and makes intimidation "portable" through "check-ins" (p. 257) to scrutinise women's everyday behaviour. Similar to victims of terrorism and torture, women are subjected to extreme bouts of interrogation designed to break them into confession or other forms of compliance (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016). Sally articulated how her husband's feigned charm when her parents visited would later turn into intense interrogation to ensure her loyalty.

Sally: When my parents come over he was [initially] charming to them . . . it was when they left. . . "Oh what did your mother mean by that? Why did she look at me like that? What did you tell her?". It got to a point I didn't want them coming over as it was too stressful . . . you just didn't know when you were going to get questioned.

The surveillance extended to monitoring telephone calls, with consequences for non-compliance. The process of monitoring Sally's relationship with her family enforced her obedience to her partner's rules.

*Sally: If my parents rung me he had to listen to the phone call . . . every phone call I had to hold it like this [holds arm outstretched] so he heard every word they said
Carmel: Were they aware that he was listening in?*

Sally: They knew about it – but if I didn't hold the phone up for him then afterwards he would just get so angry . . . he was so paranoid that he had to listen to every conversation I ever had and if I said no then he asked "what are they saying about me?"

The constant monitoring of Sally's telephone conversations extended to her partner using the telephone to monitor her behaviour and as a tactic of coercion and intimidation, instilled her fear and compliance through implied 'consequences'.

Sally: . . . when he went to work at night-time he would ring at random times so he must have like gone to the toilet at work and would ring and if I didn't answer I was in big trouble

Carmel: And what was big trouble?

Sally: You know, "where have you been?", shouting . . . "where were you, who were you with?"

Carmel: . . . and how did you feel, how did you answer him when he was screaming at you?

Sally: I just had to answer what he wanted to know . . . say the TV was on, he would think there was somebody here . . . I would have to hold the phone up for a good ten minutes so he could listen to the background noise . . . and that there was nobody there.

The incessant surveillance and monitoring of telephones extended to Lola's husband monitoring her e-mails.

Lola: [I have] a private e-mail that my dad set up for me because he [partner] was checking my e-mails . . . he did do a bit of sort of looking and all that kind of thing . . .

Carmel: Did he check your phone?

Lola: Yeah yep. . .

As a technology of coercive control, surveillance was practiced through the constant observation and examination of the women's intricate everyday lives, limiting their space and movement and maintaining gendered relations of power through various tactics. Sally's everyday life was micro-regulated by her partner as he extended his surveillance outside their home.

Sally: . . . he knew every time I left the house, when I went down to the supermarket, and he asked where I had been, who I was talking to

Carmel: So you were trapped, really weren't you?

Sally: Yes.

As an exercise of power, Lily's husband extended his surveillance by keeping her within his 'view', confining her to his physical space.

Lily: They [husband and father-in-law] did the whole "the business is going under and you will have to give up your job" - so I gave up my job and I went to work for them, and I used to work seven days a week, and they didn't pay me . . . "that is what is expected of a wife to keep it [the business] up and running" they would say.

Abigail was also subtly subjected to her partner's surveillance.

Abigail: . . . over Christmas I was just going to get on a bus and come up here [to her parents] by myself and he was going to stay in Christchurch with his family - and then the day before he said "I will come up with you" and I was like "OK", so he came up with me

Carmel: He didn't ask, just told you?

Abigail: Yep, so I am like OK, whatever. . .

The acts of surveillance the women experienced through tactics that monitored their relationships, movements, and activities, operated to control the boundaries of gender and space. Positioned through a relationship of domination and subordination in the gendered social hierarchy, the men took up positions as regulators of the women's movements.

Men who violate their partners may also invest in third parties to carry out their surveillance (Stark, 2007). Dutton and Goodman (2005) state that conscripting others, such as family or friends, extends the men's surveillance of their partners well beyond what they could achieve alone. During Lily's marriage, both her husband and his father subjected Lily to intense surveillance. Lily described her father-in-law's inter-familial surveillance through his intimidating omnipresence and micro-surveillance of her married life. Amongst many tactics of surveillance enacted through his authoritative status, was a position of control that included entering their marital home at any time, unchallenged.

Lily: . . . sometimes he [father-in-law] would just let himself into the house with his key in the morning . . . I might have been out to make a cup of coffee . . . we would hear the door and it would be what the hell, and it would be his father letting himself in . . . I always had to live with that.

The inter-familial surveillance extended to an intense micro-regulation of gender. Lily's failure to make the bed was understood as a failure of her feminine position that stained her father-in-law's masculine pride. The intimidating surveillance of Lily's private space undermined her sense of reality and limited her ability to resist.

Lily: The father [in-law] considered [my] house his and he would often bring people through it as a matter of pride . . . which was awful for me, and one day he rang me

up . . . and tore strips off me . . . he said “I brought a friend through your house at lunchtime today and I’ve got to say, what the hell, I walked into the bedroom and the bed wasn’t made!”. And I said “I make the bed everyday” - “well it wasn’t made today” – “well there was still someone in it when I left, [husband] was in the bed when I left” – [father-in-law] said “that is no excuse you should have come home on your lunchbreak to have made it, I was so embarrassed to take someone through ‘that’ house and the bed wasn’t made!”

Carmel: How did you react to that?

Lily: I was shell-shocked and a part of me was what the hell do you say to that . . . I would walk around gob-smacked. . .

The enactment of surveillance by Lily’s father-in-law was not only an extension of her husband’s surveillance but was also a tactic of relationship intimidation.

Lily: . . . the lines were so blurred, I was married to the father too . . . um, to the point where I was not allowed a letterbox, the mail had to go to the office . . . his father thought he had the right to open mail with our names on it . . . I couldn’t bear that as I hadn’t come from anything like that, it was awful . . . And we lived on a hill so his [husband’s] father would watch his car come around the corner and timed it exactly and as soon as he walked in the door he would ring him . . . we never actually had time alone together.

Surveillance, as a technology of gendered power, enables men to intimidate women into feminine compliance and deference to their masculine authority through the micro-regulation of women’s movements and space (Stark, 2007). This is evident in the women’s narratives of surveillance and monitoring, embedded in demands of constant contact, that established the conditions of women’s entrapment within gendered social power relations. As Tetlow (2016, pp. 196-197) commented, tactics of surveillance, such as checking women’s mobile phones and hacking their emails, makes surveillance “terrifyingly easy”, rendering violent men as “omnipresent and omniscient” in the women’s lives.

The use of disciplinary power that restricted the women’s movements was enacted through ongoing surveillance. The operation of disciplinary power is sustained through tactics of “subtle coercion” that position women as passive subjects (Gavey, 1992, p. 327), and is understood as the maintenance of masculine domination within heterosexual

relationships without the necessity of direct (physical) force. Intimidated by the men's coercion the women enacted self-surveillance, where they constantly self-governed their movements, discourse, and performance to avoid their partner's 'harm'. As the women learnt to internalise their partner's rules and adapted their bodies to the limits of space and movement, their own disciplined behaviour restricted their freedom further.

Self-surveillance. The women's narratives identified their compliance to the men's intimidation enacted through surveillance tactics. As they conformed to the restrictions placed on their femininity, the women regulated their own movements to avoid further harm, carrying out self-surveillance through the discursive processes of coercion. Various metaphors were utilised in the women's narratives, including 'walking on eggshells', to make sense of their constant anxiety and hyper-vigilance towards their partners every spoken word and action. The women learnt to adjust their behaviours becoming deeply embedded in conforming to the "dictator" as is seen in times of conflict, where a "third eye" was used to self-govern their behaviour knowing they were being watched (Adams, 2012, p. 163). If they became complacent in relation to their partner's rule-book, specific types of behaviour such as a simple gaze (*Lily: he would sneer*) by the men, instilled fear and additional anxiety.

Louise and Abigail gave examples of how they modified their own behaviours in their attempts to avoid a negative response from their partners.

Louise: I'd learnt that the rare decisions I made were the wrong decisions so I actually became more and more indecisive because I worried about what was the right answer [for him] . . . I started to modify my behaviour . . . the conversation I'd have with him I'd have in my head first . . . I would start to question what I was going to say before I said it because I thought I'd upset him . . . it wasn't about what I thought it was about, it was about what I thought he wanted [to hear].

Abigail: I was scared, I didn't know what to say or how to say it or anything 'cause there was no reasons around anything . . . whatever I say would be wrong and I didn't know what was right or what was wrong.

Within a landscape of unpredictable and ever-changing rules, the women's self-surveillance became increasingly difficult to maintain. Sally recalled humiliation and shame for simply being a woman, subjecting her femininity to her husband's discipline. Through the operation of power within the "gendered household regime" men's ownership of space

and the “imposition of a coercive web-like regime” on women and children (Morris, 2009, p. 414) further inflates men’s power as they humiliate their partners.

Sally: . . . he would have his mates over and they would drink but, yeah, you wouldn’t look at someone as of course afterwards it would be “why did you look at him?” . . . and when the kids were little, of course, he would have his friends around to watch the rugby and I wasn’t allowed - I had to go to the bedroom to feed them [children] . . . but of course they weren’t allowed to cry, and you had to ‘shut the baby up’ ‘cause they can’t hear the rugby.

Carmel: Would he actually say those things, like ‘shut that baby up’?

Sally: Yep, in front of his friends, and they would all laugh . . .

As the women struggled with the unpredictability of the men’s rules, they remained fearful of their partner’s reactions, continuously monitoring their own behaviours. The constant fear of shifting rules and moving boundaries added to Lily’s hyper-vigilance during pregnancy, where she became careful not to upset her husband or aggravate his anger. Lily learnt to monitor how she spoke to him, carefully choosing her verbal tone and words.

Lily: I used to have to ask things in a specific way and I had to be really careful how I did things . . . and often I would use that tone of voice [‘sing-song’, happy, undemanding] “hey hon do you think you could . . .”, so the day my son was coming. . . I rang him and I said [pause] - “look, no hurry and there is no panic, just letting you know my waters have broken and when you get in, hon, I think I might have to go to hospital soon - do you think you would mind coming in straight away rather than hopping off to the pub this afternoon?”. And he replied with “oh well, if I must”. He arrived back about 4 p.m. . . . and by now I knew the baby was coming and I am just sitting there smiling with my legs crossed [both laughing] - and I had my bag and I said “right go and get changed hon and we will head off” – [he replies] “What do you expect! I have just worked all fucking day!”, and he said this in front of my parents and he did what he always did and went out to his garage where his beer fridge is and he picked up the phone and spoke to his father, drunk two cans of beer, and had several cigarettes, and when he was good and done he finally said “ok we can go now”.

Self-surveillance emerged in the women's narratives as a form of self-governing, where they monitored how they spoke and behaved in response to the men's tactics of coercion. However, as Lily's narrative identified, self-surveillance did not stop the men's enactment of social double standards that emerged through their explicit forms of verbal degradation towards the women.

Verbal violence. A common storyline in the women's narratives was their subjection to explosions of verbal violence enacted through every day belittling, shaming, and insults, as the men continued to intimidate and degrade them. Following Hayes and Jeffries (2016) link between psychological violence and domestic terrorism, the women in this research described their constant fear of their partner's extreme outbursts of verbal violence, positioning them in a continuous subordinate position. As Louise stated "*the landmines [were] going off all the time*". The men's pattern of calm followed by a sudden explosive verbal outburst, or their 'charming then harming' (Adams, 2012; Corbett, 2013), was a ubiquitous presence in the women's lives. Often minimised, verbal degradation "creates some of the most lasting wounds under a regime of torture . . ." to "degrade and humiliate their victims" (Tetlow, 2016, p, 197). As a tactic of coercion used to control women, the relentless criticisms, put-downs, and verbal threats had a cumulative and compounding effect on the women's entrapment and identity.

The patterns of verbal degradation that emerged in Sally's narrative operated to make her believe she was unattractive and unworthy of love, placing her in a position of victim-blame.

Sally: Everyday he told me I was stupid, every day he told me I was ugly and no one would ever want me, and I was so lucky he was hanging around as I was so disgusting - and you look back, and that's what makes you stay [in the relationship] . . . I mean that went on for 5-6 years . . . and by that time, I mean I didn't have friends 'cause every time I would make a friend he would then say "oh your friend told me they hate you and they think you are stupid and they don't actually like you" . . . then he would be really rude to them so of course they wouldn't come back . . .

Lily learnt to self-regulate her emotions within the presence of her husband to avoid his abusive outbursts.

Lily: . . . and if I got upset around him it would set him off so I always had to hold myself together and then he'd go away and then I'd be like "oh my God, oh my God, oh my God"

Carmel: So when you say 'it' would set him off . . .

Lily: He would get angry, belittle me, abusive, um [pause] - he would say "look at you, would you just grow up and join the real world".

Lola described how her partner used humour in the presence of others to humiliate her, asserting his masculinity by positioning her as transgressing the appropriate norms of femininity.

Lola: . . . he would always be having a jibe or a joke at my expense you know, his sense of humour was always [pause] um, [pause]

Carmel: Putting you down – humiliating you?

Lola: Yep, humiliation . . . yes definitely, in front of people, he did that a lot . . . he doesn't think there is anything wrong with the way he is . . . and because I am quite a strong person I would stand up for myself in front of everybody

Carmel: When you stood up to him did he, um, say anything back to you, did he try and put you down again?

Lola: Yeah, but through humour . . . makes a joke . . . "you always take things the wrong way" and "why are you so reactive, what has gone wrong in your life today?"

Gigi also experienced her partner's humiliation in front of others as he made fun of her bodily appearance. His day-to-day belittling comments gradually shifted from the subtle put-downs about her body-size to an exhibition of jealousy intended to discourage her social life.

Gigi: We just didn't go out very often together and I think, looking back, that happened because he was jealous and the arguments that would come . . . and how I felt when I went out with him too as I was always the butt of his jokes

Carmel: . . . what kind of things would he say to make fun of you in front of people?

Gigi: . . . it could be day-to-day stuff . . . anything that happened that day, just belittling . . . and it was subtle things. I mean it wasn't in the end . . . he used to take

the piss out of my figure . . . in the early stages, before we had children . . . and because I didn't knock it on the head it just grew

Carmel: What is an example of how he belittled your figure?

Gigi: I would walk through the room and he would go "boom, boom, boom" - saying I had a fat arse . . .

Lily also described her husband's sudden outbursts and explosion of verbal violence when she asked him for household help, breaching the rules of feminine domesticity.

Lily: . . . he would go silent [when I asked him to help] and he would go "what do you mean, can I just have the firewood in, who the fuck do you think you are to ask me to have the firewood in, I've got shit to do and I don't need this shit from you ok so if you want the fucking firewood in then you get it!!!". That is how he would speak to me.

Carmel: So would he talk like that pretty much anytime you asked him to help?

Lily: Yeah.

Although Louise was not explicitly verbally degraded, her partner used implicit statements to put her down, implying she no longer fits the feminine stereotype of attractiveness.

Carmel: Did he ever compliment you?

Louise: Occasionally, occasionally – kinda like doling it out as, again, it was about control - it was better not to give me too many compliments or I might let myself go you know, it was about control . . . and I remember he found a passport photo that I had taken in London [sigh] it was maybe [pause] 4 years old, 5 years old, and he picked it up and said look how lovely you were [then] and, you know, it was such a back-handed compliment, and I was just like 'gee thanks', you know.

The verbal degradation intensified for some of the women during pregnancy. Abigail described patterns of sudden outbursts from her partner that made her question his reliability as a parent, destabilising her notions of familial stability for their child.

Abigail: . . . in the middle of the night I had to go to the toilet [five months pregnant], and I woke him up and he went absolutely ape at me . . . screamed at me for waking him up . . . “oh for God’s sake, fucking this and that” and screaming and whatever and um and I was just like “sorry” [pause] . . . and I just couldn’t believe that someone who is meant to be supporting me could react like that . . . then I thought how are you going to be able to deal with a child – it was just like what have I got myself into and who is this person?

What followed was another incidence after Christmas where Abigail recognised his verbal attacks as a potential problem. Rather than taking up a compliant position, Abigail confronted her partner’s shift from ‘charming to harming’.

Abigail: . . . we ended up screaming at each other in the car . . . and I was emotional and hormonal and everything and I just sort of lost the plot because I didn’t know why his behaviour had changed, why he was being the way he was being . . . and I didn’t know where it had all come from – so we had ended up in this massive argument . . . and we were parked up on the side of the road . . . and he was like “fucking get out of the car, you can walk!” . . . he was yelling at me, and I was yelling back . . .

Abigail then realised her entrapment.

Abigail: . . . and I think by that time I was so pregnant [5 months] as well and there was no going back

Carmel: Did you feel trapped?

Abigail: Yeah, I did, I did feel trapped.

These extracts have identified the women’s experiences of explosive verbal violence, used as another tactic of intimidation to coerce them through fear to the men’s assumptions of femininity. The men’s shift from ‘charming to harming’ entrapped the women further within their relationships, leaving them confused. The women also experienced intensification of the men’s violence during pregnancy and particularly post-natal.

Intimidation post-natal: The discursive construction of women’s bodies. An important, yet equally distressing, commonality I found between some of the women was their exposure to a wide range of degrading and intimidating behaviours by their partners

during or after giving birth. While pregnancy may become a site of entrapment within the dominant narrative of romantic relationships, embedded in normalising discourses of the nuclear family, childbirth becomes a site for intense scrutiny of women's bodily integrity as a further tactic of intimidation (Finnbogadóttir & Dykes, 2016). A specific sign of psychological intimidation during pregnancy and post-natal is men's indifference to women's pregnancy, labour, and birth (Finnbogadóttir & Dykes, 2016).

An example of indifference, as a tactic of coercion, emerged in Abigail's narrative in several ways. Assuming maternity and domesticity was a feminine responsibility, Abigail's partner did not bond with their baby and refused to engage in domestic tasks, positioning Abigail at fault for her predicament. Blame and barrages of verbal abuse together are tactics by men intended to keep their partners compliant (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016).

Abigail: His mother came up and stayed for a couple of days [post-Caesarean section] and I felt crowded and he was not bonding with us as a family and my midwife had suggested to his mother to give us a bit of time - and she [partner's mother] sulked and rang the father said she was coming home and how dare they and it was all my fault – it all got put back on me . . . so he comes home from work, goes off at me 'cause his mother has been treated badly and "how dare you" . . . it was all my fault . . . and he stayed in the bedroom all weekend, didn't come out, didn't do anything . . . I couldn't do a thing on my own with the baby. It was the middle of winter, so needing to light the fire but I couldn't cut wood. He sat in the bedroom . . . for three days.

The gendered assumptions of the nuclear family define the parameters for the ongoing regulation of women, including maternity, and identify how coercive control operates within the micro-regulation of everyday behaviours. Women positioned in and through the discourse of a heteronormative family are socially sanctioned. Women ensconced within a nuclear family provides them with a sense of identity and offers them a particular societal status along with the societal benefits conferred to this status. In Lily's narrative, subjection to her husband's intimidation became exemplified following the birth of their first baby. In her attempts to meet the norms of a 'happy' nuclear family and to avoid social stigmatisation in the hospital, Lily took responsibility for the public affirmation of being in a heteronormative family. According to Finnbogadóttir and Dykes (2016) such attempts to promote the 'normal', however, can have dire results and produce further humiliation.

Lily: . . . he wouldn't come and visit me in the hospital as it was boring and I was so upset as you know you are a little emotional after the baby is born . . . anyway I cooked up this scheme thinking I just want my husband here, this is so embarrassing you know . . . so I rang him and said "maybe we can go out for dinner". Well, my wee girl she wasn't even 24 hours old, we took her to the pub so he could sit there and drink. . . he is sitting there drinking, smoking . . . we were there a couple of hours before he decided he would take me back to the hospital and he dropped me at the door [of the hospital] and off he went.

As Lily's narrative unfolded, the expectation that she was responsible not only for mothering but also the household functioning, upheld her position within the nuclear family. Within a discourse of heteronormativity that constructs masculinity as independent and femininity as nurturing, Lily's request for support from her partner made her vulnerable to his violent outbursts. The depreciation of motherhood and Lily's well-being subjected her to further degradation.

Lily: . . . I had so many [vaginal] stitches . . . and [a few days later] the rubbish bags were full of beer bottles and nappies . . . I said to him . . . "can you take the rubbish up when you go to work this morning" and he said "I haven't got any fucking time for that, you are the one who is home all day!". So, I put the rubbish bags in the wheelbarrow to push them to the top of the hill and I blew out two stitches . . . and I rang him and I said "oh shit, um a couple of stiches have come out because of the exertion of pushing" – [he responded] "well what do you want me to fucking do about it, why are you ringing me at work?!"

Carmel: So your well-being, your health . . .

Lily: . . . meant nothing

The depreciation of motherhood was also realised in Sally's narrative. Her partner extended his rule-book and authority with the expectation Sally was solely responsible for the household chores, where her well-being was also irrelevant.

Sally: . . . I had a C-section so I wasn't allowed to hang washing out when I got home from hospital . . . but my mother was not allowed to help me at all and if she helped me he would get really abusive . . . I wasn't allowed to ask for any help and he

wouldn't help me either so it [hanging the washing] split my stitches open, so I sort of spent weeks walking around trying to hold my wound together and ended up being rushed back to hospital 'cause it had opened.

Both Lily and Sally were vulnerable to poor health outcomes as a direct result of their partner's outbursts, affecting their bodily integrity.

When women are overly-sexualised or objectified they are often not taken seriously in other non-sexual roles (Sanday, 2007), including mothering. Within a hegemonic patriarchal culture where women's bodies become men's possession, their breasts specifically become a commodification for men's titillation (Sanday, 2007). Lily and Abigail's narratives highlighted the humiliation of maternal bodies where breast-feeding became another site for degradation.

Lily: . . . I would give her a feed before bed and he would come in and look at me and sneer – he was the King of sneer – and he'd say “look at ya, ya got your tits out for that fucking baby again” - and that was what he would say . . .

Abigail: one night . . . I was breastfeeding her and he was in the kitchen and walks into the lounge and sits down and I said “do you mind getting me a glass of water?” – and he went absolute ape-shit at me [screaming] “I just sat down . . . don't you think you could've asked me while I was up!” – and I just said “forget it” . . . and he kept going on about it . . .

As the men's operations of power intensified, enacted through surveillance, self-surveillance, and verbal attacks, the women began to question their perceptions and sense of reality. Becoming ever fearful of their partners' retaliation and his scare tactics, the women felt they were 'going crazy' because of the men's mind-games, further entrapping them within the relationship.

Crazy-making and gas-lighting. As time went on, the men's tactics of intimidation and coercion towards the women intensified further, functioning to elicit the women's feelings of 'crazy-making', particularly in relation to their non-conformity to the men's version of femininity (Stark, 2007). Perpetrators use of a “psychological and emotional arsenal” against women from a position of “romantic terrorist” (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 13), reminds their partners that confrontation is dangerous regardless of how preposterous

their version is. Psychological violence, therefore, becomes the “crowning achievement of crazy-making” as a tool of coercion and control because in the absence of overt physical violence no-one will believe the women’s fears (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016, p. 16).

Coercing women into doubting their perception of events, perpetrators of IPV break-down their partner’s defences until they concede to the men’s rules (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016), securing the women’s position within the entrapment of the men’s unreality. As the men trapped the women further into their unreality, the women’s voices were replaced by theirs. Lily described the erosion of her identity that she experienced as a loss.

Lily: You don’t know what is up or down, you don’t even know what you like anymore, you don’t know what your favourite colour is anymore, you don’t know what your favourite song is, you go years in a vacuum, and you don’t even realise new songs and movies have been released – there is a whole period of music and movies that are missing from my life . . .

Men’s constant challenging of, or denying, women’s memories becomes a strategy to render the women feeling ‘crazy’, doubting their own version of events. As Ussher (1992, 2011, 2013) argues, the operation of men’s power is constituted through discourses that position women as ‘mad’ and in need of regulation. In this way, the men positioned the women as crazy through their non-conformity to the ‘rules’ of subordinate femininity, creating greater confusion and disorientation for the women. Both Gigi and Lola’s positioning as crazy by their partners was used as a “*weapon against me*” (Lola), or to “*hurt me*” (Gigi), coercing the women into submission.

Gigi: . . . he used to say “you are crazy like your mother” . . . and that was actually the worst because he knew that really hurt me . . . when you are told things like that enough you start to believe them. . . and I hate to think how he painted me [to others] “oh she is crazy. . .”.

Lola: . . . my mum’s brother committed suicide a year and half before [we] split up. . . he had bipolar. . . Eric used that as a weapon against me

Carmel: That’s very sad - and how did he do that?

Lola: “Oh, well you have got bipolar just like your uncle, so are you going to hang yourself in the tree just like your uncle?”.

Mind-games and crazy-making behaviours are effective as tactics of intimidation, often leading women to believe they imagined the violence or are over-reacting to it (Tetlow, 2016). The metaphor of ‘gas-lighting’ to make sense of women’s ‘imagined’ violations, draws on Charles Boyer’s 1944 film where a husband creates visual and auditory illusions to convince his wife (and others) that she is insane, insisting that she imagined the illusions including the dimming of the gas lights (Stark, 2007). Gas-lighting’s intent is to reinforce women’s dependency on their partners’ perception of events, instilling additional fear if the women resist. As Lily reflected on her previous relationship, she located her feelings of crazy-making within her husband’s strategies of intimidation, where she felt she had imagined his behaviour.

Lily: Lately I have been reading about the term gas-lighting and that definition sums up a lot of my life with him. That crazy feeling like you’ve imagined things, when [his] outrageous behaviour and dialogue is minimised and trivialised to make you feel stupid and incompetent.

In Lola’s narrative, the gas-lighting behaviour of her husband was authorised by the medical professional her husband engaged to affirm her pathology. In Lola’s story, however, she was pathologised as ‘overwhelmed’ by her maternal body and not the unreal situation she was embedded in.

Lola: He marched me off to the Doctor - and told me I was depressed, and that I had postnatal depression before the baby was born, and I am not myself, and he needs to medicate me - and the Doctor wouldn’t medicate me because I was (3 months) pregnant and so Eric sent me off to a psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist said to me “you are not depressed you are overwhelmed” [pause] . . . “there is nothing wrong with you, you just don’t know what to do with the situation”, which is exactly what I felt.

A lack of discursive resources to concisely express their feelings also attributed to the women’s sense of crazy-making. Louise’s narrative suggested she could not understand or express what was going on in her life.

Louise: In your information sheet there was something about feeling crazy and definitely at times I thought that . . . I would think what is wrong with me, why didn't I see that?

A pattern of coercion emerges through these stories of crazy-making to intimidate the women and keep them under the men's control. Hayes and Jeffries (2016) describe the "wearing down manoeuvres" (p. 16) that are characteristic of the controlling behaviour of IPV perpetrators, a common characteristic of torture, and a keystone tactic of political terrorism. The constant barrage of crazy-making tactics challenged the women's realities where they felt they were losing their minds as their partners coerced them to their way of thinking.

Louise: . . . he would convince me that black was white and white was black - if he had an opinion about something or a thought about something then that was the right one and I couldn't persuade him otherwise . . . he would have an air about him, an attitude and he would say, "well you are completely wrong . . . what are you talking about?"

Abigail: . . . it was like me turning around and saying the sky is blue and him saying it is not, it is green . . . trying to manipulate me.

The threat of murder also increases women's fears and their feelings of crazy-making (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016). Tetlow (2016) argues that threats of murder may accomplish as much damage as an actual infliction. Gigi described her feelings of crazy-making.

Gigi: . . . I am quite sure he wouldn't [kill me] and its totally in my head and I feel 'cray cray' - [laughs] - and it's like oh my goodness, don't even entertain those stupid ideas, but this is what I have come to . . . and feeling like I am spiralling out of control.

As the women questioned their own perceptions, they described how they felt responsible for their partner's behaviour, entrapped within the relationship and their gender. Louise adhered to the gendered stereotype of women as men's emotional and physical

caretakers as she described how her failure to “bring him down from the ledge” was a failure of her femininity.

Louise: I started to feel, I absolutely felt like I had failed, it was all my fault, um, 'cause I couldn't make my husband happy, you know, I couldn't bring him down from the ledge when he was there, you know, I absolutely felt like I had failed . . .

Gigi described how she blamed herself for her partner's anger.

Gigi: . . . he would be angry 'cause I would be, and it may well have been me starting them [arguments] at times because of how I felt or he would just, he was a very, very jealous person and he is very insecure . . .

Gas-lighting and feelings of crazy-making emerged in the women's narratives as part of the men's repertoires of psychological violence, used to manipulate the 'truth' and challenge the women's memories of events in such a way that the women began to question their own sanity, leading to their increased fear. The subtle manipulation of women into believing they are going crazy (gas-lighting) enacted through the emotional and psychological tactics of violence men use to control their partners, is a form of terrorism. Part of men's arsenal of tactics to coerce and control their partners can also include explicit forms of 'low-level' physical violence. The next section analyses the women's narratives that identified objectification and exploitation of their physical bodies, adding a further layer to their subordinate position and the overall complexities of IPV.

Coercion: Acts of Sexual Coercion and Physical Violence

While forms of psychological violence are often coextensive with physical and sexual violence, the women whom participated in this research understood their psychological violence in the absence of physical violence. In this analysis, the blurring of boundaries between threats of violence as a tactic of coercion and actual physical, sexual or symbolic violence complicated women's understandings of the constituents of 'serious' violence.

While theoretically the concept of coercive control specifies tactics that intimidate, isolate, and control the minutiae of women's lives, these tactics overlap to form a system of micro-regulation that benefit men incrementally. Within this system of micro-regulation, the

threat of force may include the dispensing of physical consequences to coerce the women into compliance. For example, when a man rapes his wife as a consequence of her refusing to have sex with him, the likelihood of her compliance the next time increases. Like Stark's (2007, 2012) theory of coercive control and heteronormativity, normative heterosexuality positions women as passive subjects in relation to men's sexual dominance. Through the operation of disciplinary power is the maintenance of male sexual dominance without the need for direct force or violence. This process of gendered social power has been well researched by Gavey (1992, 2005) as a technology of heterosexual coercion. Within the discourse of normative heterosexuality, the blurring of boundaries between sexual coercion and rape are also located.

Coercing women's sexuality. The achievement of women's compliance to heterosexual coercion, through the regulation and normalisation of femininity, renders women as passive objects of sexual interaction. Women's experiences of their sexual encounters within their intimate relationships are "prescribed, enacted, and reproduced" (Gavey, 2005, p. 139) through the technologies of heterosexual coercion. Sexual coercion involves a form of "sexual imperative" (Gavey, 2005, p. 135), intertwined within women's cultural knowledge of normalised behaviour that assumes sex is a compulsory requirement of 'intimate' relationships.

Sally described a particular time of coerced sex by her partner, not through the threat of force but through the threat to her liberty.

Sally: . . . a lot of the other stuff was manipulation, if I wanted to do something I had to do that [sexual intercourse]

Carmel: Threatening?

Sally: Not threatening - if I didn't do it then I couldn't go, like if it was my father's birthday

Carmel: Forcing you to have sex in order for you to go and do something?

Sally: I mean I agreed . . . I didn't think it was okay but I didn't want any more trouble either . . . I just wanted to be able to go and see my parents and be able to do things.

When women do comply with men's coercion, unwanted sex appears to be the best option for them (Gavey, 2005). Deeply embedded within the confines of the trajectory of marriage ". . . for so many years because I thought it was the right thing to do", Lily

described her sexual relationship as a performance that she tolerated. She also described her husband's attempts to manipulate her into other degrading sexual performances in exchange for his co-operation, positioning her at fault if she did not acquiesce. Lily's acquiescence to unwanted sex with her husband positioned her as conforming to traditional feminine stereotypes.

Lily: If he wanted to keep me up till 4am for marathon sex sessions then so be it – sometimes I wouldn't even go to bed, I would just merely put my dressing gown on and go and start making the school lunches – he became outrageous in his demands . . . [he] would scream at me at night “You won't even have a threesome for me and you wonder why I won't help you with the dishes, what are you doing for me? If you can't even do that for me why would I ever help you?!”

Carmel: Was he forcing you to have sex?

Lily: Not forcing, I couldn't say he forced me down to have sex, but I couldn't get away from him

Carmel: Coercion

Lily: It was coercion and it was like, well this is what is going on now . . . he could make it from 9pm to 4am . . . absolute marathons where there was no getting away – it was exhausting and it was continuous

Carmel: Debilitating

Lily: Yes it was and it took away any kind of intimacy, you know, it was just for the sake of it and it was awful . . . I was completely objectified.

Within the discourse of traditional marriage, women are positioned as the property of men. Explicit in Lily's narrative was the notion that she was a possession for her husband's sexual gratification, where she understood the objectification of her body.

Lily: . . . I became nothing, I was completely objectified so it probably went from kinda emotional abuse to a sexual abuse in a way 'cause I was now just an object, I was there only for his gratification and I wasn't a person in my own right.

In the following account, Lily described how her husband's attempts to coerce her into degrading sex acts extended into the public domain of the internet, entailing a contemporary

yet just as frightening objectification and coercion of her sexuality. Lily questioned his unreality as she resisted his coercive demands.

Lily: . . . without telling me, he sent me out on a swinger's club - he was advertising me on the internet for sex without me even knowing and when I found out I remember saying to him "I am not allowed people around for fricken' dinner but we are going to have strangers over and I am going to do them on the lounge floor while the kids are in bed, is that what is going to happen? What is going on here?!" . He wanted me to start doing webcams at home . . . and he would say "well I will let you keep the money" - and he was deadly serious!

Lily's husband threatened to end their marriage when she resisted his coercion to attend a sex club in another region. As he continually moved the goalposts around their sexual relationship, his micro-regulation of her sexuality to his rule-book intensified.

Lily: . . . he threated he would divorce me if I didn't go there with him and I just point blank refused . . . [you think] "I am going to leave my children and do these perverted things with you?" . . . and so that was shocking . . . and I found out he had another persona going on on-line and he had been emailing people . . . the girls that do live sex, you know, the sex camera thing . . . but it was ok because they weren't like he was actually sleeping around on me . . . but to me it felt like it was

Carmel: It's just another form of cheating

Lily: It really rocked me.

Louise experienced coercion into sexual compliance, also via the internet. She described how her husband's on-line sexual activity humiliated her and positioned her as responsible for not fulfilling his sexual desires.

Louise: He was on-line dating . . . I was probably two weeks pregnant . . . um, I had my suspicions and I checked the computer . . . and found he had been conversing with people on-line . . . and I discovered that he was planning to meet up with some people, like a group thing . . . I confronted him, we had quite an argument about it . . .

Carmel: What did he say?

Louise: I didn't make him feel loved or wanted . . . it's ridiculous, I feel really ashamed about that and that is not my behaviour that is his behaviour

Carmel: Why do you feel ashamed?

Louise: Um [pause] 'cause it was such a dodgy thing for him to do, because I probably should have left him there and then, um, I don't know, 'cause I couldn't make him happy, to fulfil him sexually . . . it made me feel like I was responsible, I felt it was all my fault.

Lily found that “when I was pregnant with my daughter he became addicted to pornography”, draining their savings to the point there was nothing left for the new baby. The normalisation of consuming pornography, especially as part of ‘everyday’ life, co-exists with neoliberalism as an individual’s right and freedom, tolerated as “each to their own” (Gavey, 2013, p. 2). While watching pornography may not be considered a form of sexual coercion, or even a tactic of control, pornography unrealistically depicts women enjoying sexual aggression, domination, and objectification of their bodies for men’s pleasure and as a discursive field, pornography replicates social power relations (Gavey, 1992, 2013).

Lily: Well I got on the computer . . . [pause] I don't know why, something came up weird and I went in to the history - well he had spent my entire [first] pregnancy at home, eight hours a day, doing porn – the reason I couldn't buy anything . . . he had spent thousands of dollars on his credit cards on porn, on internet pornography.

Sexual aggression and rape have been found to be prevalent within heterosexual relationships, a result of a more “pervasive coercive heterosexuality” where many women lack “ultimate control and power” in relations with men (Gavey, 1992, p. 326). Sally disclosed an occasion of forced sexual intercourse in exchange for her freedom, where she was subjected to the ultimate physical violation of her body and the betrayal of her sexuality and femininity. Tetlow (2016) argues that Western culture often associates rape with the “theft of sex” (p. 224), rather than rape as an act of violence and degradation.

Sally: There is something I have never actually told anyone . . . something I don't want anybody else to know about, but, um [pause]. . . the only way I could go and see my parents on Christmas Day - he basically raped me [begins crying]. I never want anybody to know . . . I never want her to know. . .

Carmel: I am so sorry to hear this Sally. . . so the reason why that happened was so he would allow you to go and see your parents on Christmas Day?

Sally: We had been fighting as I had asked if I could see my parents on Christmas Day and he raped me, and [then] said “you can go and see your parent’s now”.

Although Sally experienced direct sexual force on her body, the operation of normative heterosexuality that acts on women’s bodies without direct force is achieved through a pattern of intimidation that shames, insults, and degrades women. Lily described how subjection to verbal degradation by her husband ultimately destroyed her identity as a woman. As Tetlow (2016) affirms, verbal shame, degradation, and sexual humiliation by men who violate their intimate partners may produce the “most lasting wounds under a regime of torture” (p. 197), resulting in deep psychological scarring.

Lilly: I always overcame but I never overcame the sex stuff, that really took something away from me . . . what really started breaking me, and it has broken me, and it’s never been the same since . . . after sex he would get off and say “fucking look at you who would want to shag you anyway, who would want to fuck that anyway”. And he would just walk away. And it left me shattered Carmel, as a woman . . . you are my husband, we have two children together, and you know you just fricken destroyed me . . . it took me a long time to be trusting again . . .

The women’s narratives have identified how sexual coercion and sexual violence are effective ways to “break a victim’s spirit” (Tetlow, 2016, p. 224) through the humiliation and degradation of a woman’s sexuality and femininity. Men who use shaming and humiliating tactics to injure the inner self of women often keep their violations and degradations hidden ‘behind closed doors’, including their use of symbolic and non-injurious forms of physical violence.

“He is not a violent man”: **Narratives of physical and symbolic violence.** Within the women’s narratives, stories of psychological violence interspersed with stories of physical and symbolic violence even though they often mentioned that “*he was not a violent man*”. Discursively constructing ‘violence’ as physical incidents limits out understanding of IPV to severe physical harm. The women’s subjection to ongoing patterns of violence, including both physical and symbolic violence and implicit threats of force, dominated their lives and inflicted “a range of harms in addition to injury” (Stark, 2007, p. 99). What emerged within

the women's narratives, however, was the minimisation of the men's acts of physical violence because the benchmark for violence as serious harm and visible 'proof' did not exist. In Sally's narrative, although physical violence was significant as that "*happened all the time*", her experience of the ongoing psychological aspects of coercive control that led to her overall entrapment, had a greater affect.

Sally: But even now . . . it's not the physical side of it, it really wasn't that big of an issue when I look at it now . . . I mean I would get the odd slap around the head and stuff like that . . .

Carmel: Did that happen very often, the physical abuse?

Sally: Yeah, that happened all the time, but that doesn't bother me

Carmel: Why doesn't it bother you so much, the physical side of things?

Sally: Um, it was more the words and that is what bothers me now . . . that physical side of it bothered me at the time, but it doesn't bother me now. Like he would punch me in the back of my head and stuff, and obviously where there are no marks.

When the discursive construction of violence as serious physical and identifiable harm does not constitute women's understanding of harm and violence, their voices often remain silent (Stark, 2007). Additionally, men who use violence on women often evade detection as they 'hit' places that do not reveal bruises (Tetlow, 2016), as Sally revealed.

Lola, Louise, and Lily articulated how their partners were "*not violent*" or "*he was not a violent man*" although they all experienced physical and/or symbolic acts of violence, blurring the boundaries between discrete incidents of serious harm and ongoing tactics of coercive control. Although Lola's narratives intersperse with incidents of physical violence, she stated her partner "*was physical to a point*" suggesting his attacks never extended beyond 'that' point into more serious perceptible violence. Lola's subjection to the severity of physical violence, however, becomes translucent as she described her partner's scare tactics to intimidate her using his physical build. In Lola's story, the infliction of physical violence on her pregnant body did not meet the benchmark of dominant understandings of 'battering'.

Lola: He was verbally abusive and physical to a point when I was pregnant. He used to hold my neck and hold my head against the wall in the cottage - we had rough plaster and it would scratch the side of my face . . . and, um, he kicked my tummy

when I was pregnant and that was the one thing I thought was absolutely appalling, he had me down on the floor and he just went boom [mimics a kick] and walked away

Carmel: That is absolutely horrible . . . an awful experience for you to have been through

Lola: . . . but he isn't physically abusive, if you know what I mean, he has hit me in the dark once, on my face, when we were in bed - that was very close to when I left, very close

Carmel: Hit you because you had had a fight?

Lola: Um, I said something to him and he just went boom [mimics a punch] and he said he went to hit my pillow but my face was in the way, obviously.

Kicked in the abdomen is a common occurrence for pregnant women as pregnancy symbolises women's reproductive power – power that men do not have (Sanday, 2007). Men who use violence often focus on vulnerable parts of women's bodies (Tetlow, 2016) and may also use non-fatal strangulation. As a threatening control tactic of gendered violence, non-fatal strangulation is inflicted to produce fear and physical powerlessness in women, ultimately coercing them into submission as they realise the threat of lethality (Thomas et al., 2013). Non-fatal strangulation is a well-documented persuasive form of gendered coercive control in IPV literature. New Zealand has legislated to include non-fatal strangulation in the Domestic Violence Act as a particular form of IPV. The New Zealand Law Commission's report acknowledged that non-fatal strangulation within IPV results in women's psychological harm and demonstrates an increased risk of future lethality (Law Commission, 2016). It is therefore an effective form of intimidation, coercion, and control.

Although Louise began her interview describing how her 20-year relationship “. . . wasn't a violent relationship. . .”, within her narratives the coercive and controlling aspects of the relationship were evident. Women in coercively controlling relationships learn to “negotiate the unreality of coercive control” by internalising their partners' control and demands (Williamson, 2010, p. 1412). Claims that her partner was ‘not violent’ reinforces the dominant understanding of violence as a ‘battering’ and minimises the violence perpetrated against her. The ‘subtle’ acts of physical violence as a ‘slight threat’ operated as a powerful method of control to coerce Louise into submission.

Carmel: So you had a big argument . . . and he was being verbally abusive towards you?

Louise: Yeah it was ugly, um . . . and I think things actually got a little bit physical. . . he pushed me. . . it was nasty and ugly . . . he didn't hit me or anything, but . . .

The women often endured symbolic acts of violence by their partners, used to intimidate and inflict terror. Often constructed as the women's fault, men's acts of symbolic violence coerce women into their partners' unreality. Symbolic violence may include a 'look', property damage, throwing objects in anger, and other behaviours that "*actively sabotage*" (Lily) women's freedom of movement and symbolise the threat of more serious violence. In their research, Queen et al. (2009) argue that symbolic threats are often at the core of coercive controlling tactics within IPV, making disclosure difficult for women. Louise described her experience of symbolic violence, a threat of potentially more serious violence.

Louise: . . . he walked in [to the house] and threw his phone at me, he got so angry . . . it hit me on the head . . . I wasn't badly hurt.

Sally described her experiences of symbolic violence that began early in their relationship where she became the target of her partner's symbolic threats as he destroyed property.

Sally: We moved to Australia and that is sort of when it started and when things didn't go his way, him throwing things across the room and smashing things on the walls and that sort of thing. If I said something he didn't like, and if rugby was on, if New Zealand lost, he would start throwing stuff around the room, smashing things - I hate rugby today, absolutely hate it, can't watch it

Carmel: . . . and did you feel he was blaming you because they lost?

Sally: No, [but] he would just absolutely go into a rage and every little thing for hours after would be an issue.

Lily described how her husband would explicitly attempt to sabotage her everyday reality.

Lily: . . . he would never actively help you with anything but that wasn't the worst of it . . . not only would he not help but he would actively sabotage at the same time . . .

Carmel: Can you give an example of it?

Lily: Yeah it would be, um [pause] like, you know . . . coming home with \$300 worth of groceries in the boot, park in the garage [and he would] sit there watching me, but then he might just put a stack of books in the doorway [of the house] as well, you know just things like that.

Sabotaging Lily's reality also extended to her husband keeping her awake at night. As Tetlow (2016) argues, sleep deprivation, or other physical efforts to unnerve and confuse the victim are just as effective forms of torture as inflicting physical pain to control women's bodies.

Lily: . . . he wouldn't let me sleep at night, in the last year you know, he would come home drunk from the pub and he would be like "you think you are fucking sleeping" and he would rip the covers off me and just keep me awake, and you know that torture of no sleep.

Although Gigi did not experience physical violence by her partner, she described how he intimidated her through symbolic acts of violence and threats to kill her, heightening her anxiety of what was coming next and sustaining her entrapment. As Tetlow (2016) states, the threat of physical violence is as frightening for women as its actual perpetration.

Gigi: . . . he's definitely aggressive . . . I was lying in bed and he was over me . . . he was so angry . . . he threw a cup across the room full of milk . . . it was hideous . . . he had that feral, controlling behaviour . . . and he threatened to put me in the ground . . . to put me 6-foot-under, and I remember I was so scared . . . he said "I am going to put you in, I should put you 6-foot-under" . . . I guess cause of the threats, you know . . . I questioned whether he was capable of it [killing her] . . . and I think that is probably what held me there as long as I was, as I was scared of what actually can happen.

Lily also feared for her and her children's lives as her partner enacted symbolic violence.

Lily: One night he came home and he got all my drawers and threw them down the stairs and the kids bedrooms were down below and I remember my wee girl standing there looking out and he is acting like a monster, throwing the actual drawers and the clothes down the stairs. It's 12.30 a.m. and I've been asleep since 10 p.m. . . . and he would say "take your fucking arse-hole children and just fuck off" . . .so I finally left him - we had this massive big blow-up up, I thought he was going to kill us, I thought he was going to kill us this time . . .

Common-sense notions of physical violence as only serious discrete acts with visible markers, overlooks all the other forms of 'less serious' markers of physical and symbolic violence that intensify women's terror and heighten their threat credibility. These forms of men's coercive control create fear and compliance in women through threats of more serious or lethal outcomes. Non-fatal strangulation as a scare tactic, for example, makes the threat of lethality and women's powerlessness, very real for women (Thomas et al., 2013). Minimising non-injurious forms of physical violence and acts of sexual coercion/humiliation on women's objectified bodies, trivialises men's insidious tactics of coercion to control women in all aspects of their lives, including their sexuality and femininity. The next section describes how the women's partners controlled them through isolation and other forms of micro-regulation, coercing the women further into the men's unrealistic world and their entrapment in siege-like conditions.

Control: Isolation

The women's partners controlled their lives to varying degrees throughout the entire relationship. As Louise articulated at the beginning of our interview, ". . . *it was definitely a controlling relationship*". Women's entrapment in psychologically violent relationships is supported through their deprivation of social support or where their social interactions and freedom of movement are controlled and restricted by men who micro-regulate the women's every day existence (Stark, 2007, 2012). Isolation operates through men's tactics that deprive women of social connectedness, controlling and restricting their relationships with family, friends, and other support systems. In this way, isolation supports men's control over women's space and place. The women's narratives attended to the tactics of isolation where their partners maintained control of the women's relationships with family, manipulated their friendships including prohibiting contact, and prevented them from leaving the house until

virtually no aspects of the women's lives were untouched. As Hayes and Jeffries (2016, p. 19) state, the men took "total control of almost everything . . .".

Lola described how her husband used her parent's geographical distance to exploit his control. To limit Lola's contact with her mother, who had the potential to 'interfere' in their relationship, her husband positioned Lola's mother as mad, controlling, and therefore unwelcome.

Lola: . . . he tried to control me through not having a relationship with my parents and he hated my mum, my mum caught him being really quite cruel to me and stood up to him and so from that moment on she was a bitch and controlling and mad and bi-polar . . . they came out for our wedding and my 40th and then they didn't come again . . . he never made my mum feel very welcome, he got on with my dad. These are his words "I don't mind him but I can't stand her".

Despite living in close proximity to her parents, Sally's husband prevented her visiting them or accessing her mother's support.

Sally: I wasn't allowed to go into their [her parents] house to talk to them and they weren't allowed to come into the room [pause] . . . and she [their daughter] was born a month after we moved . . . I had a C-section so wasn't allowed to hang washing out . . . but my mother was not allowed to help me at all and if she helped me he would get really abusive.

Lily described a very clear example of the boundary her husband drew to isolate her from family and friends, locating their relationship as needing to be separate from other people.

Lily: . . . he would have nothing to do with them [her family] . . . I remember one time we had been drinking a lot of wine [laughing] and he got all serious and he started drawing diagrams and little circles . . . [he said] "this is us up here ok, and this is some of your friends and your family down here . . . it's time for the circles to stop interlinking . . . we are in a different place than these people" and I thought "what the hell, and it always stuck with me. . ."

Carmel: Is this early in the relationship?

Lily: Yes, in the first year

Carmel: So kind of like trying to isolate you from your old life

Lily: Yeah, he did.

Abigail described how her partner attempted to control the boundaries of her familial relationship.

Abigail: . . . it was the first Christmas [without her grandfather] . . . and I felt comfortable being at home and being around my family and wanting to spend time with them and even just sitting around in the lounge not doing anything was nice . . . and the whole time he was sitting there saying “I want to go do something, I am bored, let’s go do this, let’s go do that” . . . and I was like “no, no, no” and it got to a point it was really irritating me.

According to Stark (2007), controlling men generally isolate their partners to instil dependence but also to restrict the women’s freedom to socialise, maintaining the men’s unchallenged control over the women. Lily stated how her husband prevented her friend from visiting.

Lily: I lived for 11 years literally around the corner from my very best friend and she never came to the house once

Carmel: Was she not allowed or was she scared?

Lily: She wasn’t allowed

The enactment of Stark’s (2007) notion of isolation that restricts women’s access to resources and their freedom of movement, deprives them of social connectedness. In Lily’s narrative, she recognised her husband’s isolating tactics as part of his repertoire of control. Despite his attempts to isolate her through a lack of transport, she found ways to overcome her isolation.

Lily: . . . he tried to thwart me . . . his mother and I would share a car between us when I had the children so I didn’t have a car, only on certain days . . .

Carmel: . . . his control

Lily: Yep, to keep me on the hill, so the hill was like this [holds hand out on a slant] and it was not easy with a pushchair so I put one [child] on the back and one [child] on the front and I would walk . . . it always pissed him off [laughing]

Carmel: So you always found a way to overcome your isolation

Lily: I always overcame . . .

Another tactic used by controllers to isolate their partners is telling degrading and humiliating lies (Stark, 2007). Sally's husband fabricated lies about her friends as a constituent tactic of control to isolate, hurt, and humiliate her, reinforced through a regime of punishment.

Sally: . . . I didn't have friends, 'cause every time I would make a new friend he would be nice as pie but then after he would say "oh your friend told me they hate you, and they think you are stupid, and they don't actually like you" . . . and then next time they came he would slam doors, then he would be really rude to them, so of course they wouldn't come back . . . [and] I would get the odd slap around the head [after the friend left].

Social isolation provides the hostage-like conditions that entrap women within the confines of their relationship. Sally's experience of social isolation manifested in her rarely leaving the house, fearing his reprisals.

Sally: I probably didn't go out apart from to the supermarket for a good three-to-four year's . . . I didn't go anywhere, I didn't leave the house . . . if my parents ever visited then I had to see what mood he was in . . .

Carmel: If he was not in a good mood?

Sally: Yeah, I just put them off coming

As women become isolated from social support, they embody less social space and become reliant on their abusive partner. Their partner's omnipotence and omnipresence results in complete control over the women's lives. Men who isolate their partners aim to not only exclusively possess her but to also monopolise her skills and resources, with his ultimate goal to make "who and what she is, who and what she is for him" (Stark, 2007, p. 262). Lily

described how her husband enacted ultimate control over her space and movements through his demands of her time.

Lily: He was very isolating . . . he demanded more and more of my time . . . he would mock and make fun of me and belittle me for my [5-day-a-week] job . . . [and then] make me have to be down at work with him at [his] office all weekend . . . then I had no time to see friends, and he would refuse to see friends, so I went from this very social person . . . to cutting off, having nothing to do with anybody or any of my friends.

Within the women's narratives, they described how the operation of isolation was another tactic of their partner's control. As a form of control, enforced social isolation instils women's ultimate dependency on their abuser through the micro-regulation of the women's everyday space and movements. A multitude of isolation tactics prevented the women from gaining social support, keeping the men's violence and control unchallenged, sustained, and hidden. In this way, the women became embedded deeper within hostage-like conditions reinforced through their partners' regimes of punishment if the women resisted. The women's entrapment in their coercively controlling intimate relationships, that inhibited their liberties, led to their feelings of utter fear and despair and where their experiences of psychological violence was likened to living under siege.

Living Under Siege

Emerging in this part of the analysis is the intimate dynamics of coercive control manifested through psychological violence. Tactics of extreme intimidation, sexual coercion/exploitation, non-injurious physical violence, isolation, and control enacted by the women's intimate partners, instilled fear and terror into the women's everyday lives. The achievement of the "technology of coercive control" (Stark, 2007, p. 203), by not only what controlling men subject their intimate partners to but also more precisely what they prevent women from doing for themselves, entraps women in hostage-like conditions. The use of 'living under siege' as a metaphor in this thesis seeks to address how women's experiences of psychological violence as terrorist-like activity, subjects them to a regime of terror designed to break their spirits and demand their compliance (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016; Tetlow, 2013).

Living in a world of unreality, sustained through fear of what might happen next, the women drew on war metaphors of a combat zone to describe the terroristic and torturous tactics used by their partners against them. As discursive resources, the women used these metaphors frequently to evoke feelings of despair and hurt within often insufferable conditions as they sought to battle the complexities of their unreality.

Lily: . . . it was always waiting for the big explosion . . . [so I would] slowly back away [from her husband] so as not to encourage attack . . . or the bomb to go off. . .

Lola: . . . you can see it bubbling and simmering and you can try and dodge the bullets before the actual big explosion.

Louise drew on the metaphor of a landmine to describe her partner's use of psychological violence. Louise described the impossibility of knowing what triggered his behaviour because of a lack of explicit signs.

Louise: . . .the bad stuff came out of nowhere, that was the thing I found the hardest, and I didn't look for the signs, 'cause why would you, and I would stand on a landmine and it would explode in my face - never physical. . . he existed in a world of conflict and I didn't, and I wasn't comfortable in that and he would get annoyed with me about it.

Lily drew on metaphors to describe how she constantly monitored her actions as her husband changed direction and confused the rules.

Lily: There was so much crazy gong on Carmel, I was broken . . . it hadn't quite gone far enough, it wasn't crazy enough, the shifting sands, the moving goal posts, the weirdness, the moods . . .

Lily and Louise both used the metaphor of 'walking on egg-shells' to describe their anxiety as they attempted to control the inevitable explosions of their partners. As Lily said, "[I was] walking on egg-shells and making sure everything was perfect. . .".

Louise also used a moving roller-coaster as a metaphor to describe how her life became uncontrollable.

Louise: . . . there had to be that blow up and that tension and that angst. . . I felt like I was living on a roller-coaster, nothing I did I felt was good enough or the right thing, um [pause], and walking on eggshells constantly.

The women's use of metaphors enabled them to describe their experiences of psychological and non-injurious physical violence as they lived within their partner's changing rule-book. Never quite knowing when the next explosion would occur or how destructive it would be, coerced the women into submission as the men's attacks aimed to control their everyday lives and to isolate them from the 'real world'. If the women resisted, the men's control intensified resulting in greater anxiety and fear for survival.

Living under siege within an intimately abusive relationship equated to living like a hostage where tight, unrealistic, imaginary, and even tangible boundaries restricted the women's movements, actions, thoughts, and feelings. Lola and Lily both drew on the metaphor of living under siege to bring meaning to their experiences of entrapment. Lola understood her life of terror when a friend stated, "*I always thought you were under siege*". Lily drew on the metaphor of being on the edge of a cliff to make sense of her feelings of fear that were located within a life under siege. In her narrative, the insidiousness of her partner's regime of terror affected every aspect of her life.

Lily: . . . you always felt you were on the edge of the cliff and something massive is going to happen so you lived in stress and tension all the time. I lived under siege all the time. . . what I mean by living under siege was that all of our [Lily and the children's] interactions and very being, felt controlled by the mood and tension in the house. If we were laughing and happy and he came home, we would suddenly stop as it would make him angry, [so we] became very quiet and still. How I spoke, constructed questions and sentences, how I stood and controlled my natural mannerisms, everything made him angry or mean, often mocking and sneering . . . any spontaneous outbursts of joy, laughter, excitement, or surprise were met with ridicule and derision so I had to overcome any natural responses all of the time. . . [and] never quite getting 'it' right – 'it' could mean anything from actually breathing to the way I cooked dinner, or having the children in bed, or the phone ringing when it didn't suit him – just anything really . . . to have someone stalking you in the house menacingly.

Living under siege encapsulates Stark's (2007, 2012) concept that coercive control executed through terroristic strategies of physical and non-injurious physical violence by men, silently entraps women within a gendered social hierarchy. Up to this point in the analysis, the women's narratives have recognised that their position on the gendered social hierarchy silenced them through the social power relations between men and women. Social power relations exclude and marginalise women (Morgan & Coombes, 2001). As they lived under imperceptible siege, the women resisted getting support or telling friends, fearing nobody would believe them and that their disclosures would result in further humiliation and shame.

Carmel: Did you ever consider getting the police involved?

Lily: [Pause – shakes her head] . . . because nobody would believe me.

When I explored Sally's story about her lack of support, her embodiment of psychological and non-injurious physical violence over six years rendered her fearful of further retribution by both her partner and society. Sally explained how she did not feel her or her experience of IPV were worthy of help. As Hannem et al. (2015) have discussed, in the absence of identifiable physical violence women believe their experiences will not be taken seriously by others including the police.

Carmel: Did you ever consider calling the police, telling other people such as parents at the kid's school, or fully informing your parents?

Sally: I didn't tell anyone because for one, I didn't want to get in trouble with him and two, I was terrified no one would believe me and [they would] think I was causing drama. I didn't feel it was worthy of calling the police. I did contemplate calling the Women's Refuge a few times, but didn't because I didn't think that my situation was bad enough for them to help me and that would have meant that he would have found out. I just really hoped that someone would guess and offer to help because that way I didn't have to worry about whoever I told, telling me I was being stupid.

Gigi realised that even some of her friends would not necessarily believe her stories as she had no visible 'proof'. She described how her disclosure, also likened to causing a drama, would cast the blame onto her for over-reacting.

Gigi: . . . its only my closest, my nearest and dearest, that know my journey [crying] - and some of them not even the depth of it

Carmel: It's hard to talk about it . . . and no matter how close you are as friends not everyone is going to understand or have that kind of empathy

Gigi: [They would be thinking] I am making a drama . . . they have no idea . . . I wished he had beat me

Carmel: Yes, so people can see it.

Lola emphasised how others chose to remain silent over what they witnessed for fear of upsetting her partner and disrupting the gendered social norms of heteronormativity.

Lola: . . . people are so funny, they are almost blind-sighted or blind-folded . . . I don't know what the word is . . . nobody has the guts to stand up and say to him you know what you are is a wanker and the way you behave is just appalling.

Carmel: Do you think people were too scared to say something or didn't want to rock the boat?

Lola: Yes – nobody would say anything to him, nobody would . . . like [the man] who said I was always under siege, would not have said anything to [her partner]

Carmel: Because they are a little bit fearful of him and his temper?

Lola: Yep, and his bully-boy tactics.

Family also resisted getting involved fearing their involvement would intensify his violence and instead they acted as 'peacekeepers', during the 'siege'.

Sally: . . . talking to them [her parents] since this happened, they said they didn't want to get me in more trouble . . . they just kept away. . .

Lola: . . . dad is a real peace-keeper, a very, very clever switched-on kind of guy but a real peace-keeper so he knew he just had to keep the peace otherwise he was going to lose me and the grandchild, you know.

The women's fear that nobody would believe their stories structured their narratives in and through the entrapment of their gender, discursively positioned within heteronormativity. Hayes and Jeffries (2016) argue that the terroristic exploitative nature of IPV is politically

centred within gendered norms that imbue gendered power relations and where women's survival is constantly under siege. As Berns (2001) states, the silent toleration of misogyny and violence against women perpetuates IPV through de-gendering the violence and gendering the blame, depositing the women's responsibility for their victimisation onto them. Lily described how inter-generational misogyny silenced her within her relationship and gendered norms enforced her entrapment.

Lily: [He said] I was useless, I couldn't make decisions, it was not for me to know about anything even if it was about us . . . I had no voice . . . he would say women were just stupid. He said she [his mother] wouldn't know how to get the power on, she wouldn't know how to do this . . . his mother was basically a housekeeper. . . he treated his mother terribly, I should have known. I married a bully, I married somebody who didn't like me. . . and I stayed there for so many years because I thought it was the right thing to do . . . that is what is expected of a wife. . .

When Sally and her partner sought marriage counselling, Sally's voice remained silent. Her narrative, constructed around her gendered position as a subjugated woman, exposed how professionals can become blind-sighted by men's strategies to cover their violence. Berns (2001) argues that men who use violence on their intimate partners compete for victimisation as a counter-attack where their responsibility for the violence ricochets off them. By not having a safe space to tell her story, through fear of further violence from her partner, Sally remained silent.

Sally: . . . we went to marriage counselling and I hated it . . . he went on about his childhood [pause], poor him . . . and he basically made me out like I was a real bitch for being mean to him . . . [the counsellor said] "you have got to understand what he has been through" and all the rest of it and I hated it

Carmel: I bet you did – did you tell her what he did to you?

*Sally: No as we were together . . . it wasn't long after we had been to see *Once Were Warriors* [the film] . . . and he walked out of that movie theatre laughing saying what a hero 'Jack the Muss' was . . . I think we had to do six [sessions] . . . I didn't get to speak really . . . it was all about how he had a poor childhood. . . she [counsellor] was really basically accusing me of not being understanding . . . that is why I never went back to a counsellor.*

The women's narratives have shown how the insidious coercively controlling behaviour by men, manifested through forms of psychological, non-injurious physical, symbolic, and sexual violences, have highlighted the terroristic nature of IPV that entrapped the women within their relationships. Tactics of intimidation, isolation, and control reduced the women to living under siege-like conditions, much like hostages in a combat zone, where their partners controlled their bodily integrity and freedom of movements in his world of unreality. Fearing nobody would believe them, the women's silencing by both their partners and professionals, positioned the women as subordinate to the men's dominance within the gendered social hierarchy.

Part Two of this analysis in the following chapter, attends to the women's turning points of resistance that enabled them to eventually leave their partners. Living under the men's siege did not end after separation, however, resulting in the women's stories of post-separation violence. Both the legal system and their children were used by the men as sites to continue their reign of terroristic attacks on the women.

CHAPTER SIX: Analysis Part Two

Coercive Control Post-Separation: The Siege Continues

History, despite its wrenching pain, cannot be unlived, but if faced with courage, need not be lived again. (Maya Angelou, 1928–2014)

The women's stories of their intimate partner relationships all began centred on hope, love, and commitment embedded within the confines of heteronormativity. As their relationships intensified, however, the women's subjection to tactics of coercive control positioned them as living under siege within their partner's unrealistic world. Each woman described moments of recognition that their relationship was unhealthy and problematic. As the women's narratives progressed, I identified the discursive shifts that enabled them to eventually leave their relationships. At this juncture, their narratives climaxed at a turning point where the women shifted from a position of "passive subject" to an "active subject" (Hannem et al., 2015, p. 397) as they fought for their own and their children's survival.

This chapter analyses the women's narratives of their lives after they separated from their partners, with a focus on how the men used both their children and the legal system to coerce the women into compliance through socially and legally sanctioned discourses of motherhood. The men's use of the legal system and child access became their new tactic of control over the women. The women's assumptions and experiences of the Family Court are also analysed, as well as the overall effects of coercive control on the women. Coercive control enacted by the men post-separation, maintained the women's lives under siege. This analysis begins with understanding the women's turning points of resistance that enabled them to leave.

Turning Points of Resistance

"I want other people to read this because I know people live like this – and they think they are crazy, and they think they can't get out, and its hard but you can do it . . . you can save your children, you can save yourself". (Lily).

As research has stated, an accumulation of intensive violence can enable women to recognise the unsustainability of their relationship (Hannem et al., 2015). In the following

narratives, the women revealed how they reached out for help or how they understood why they left the relationship. Sally revealed how her partner's persistent vicious treatment through tactics of coercive control that culminated in her rape, enabled her to recognise rape as the ultimate act of violence and physical control, triggering a turning point towards her freedom.

Sally: I reached a point as I started, I mean, things like blowing out your birthday candles and I started wishing he would get hit by a truck [laughs] - and not meant as a joke but honestly, I wished he would . . . I did that for a couple of years on my birthday candles. . . and I pulled a wish-bone and wished he would die [laughs]. . . I mean when you are told every day that you are stupid and ugly . . . and after that [the rape], I mean I didn't like him before that . . .

Carmel: Was that like the trigger

Sally: That is why I started wishing he was dead, you know . . .

Sally began to recognise the unsustainability of her relationship and how the relationship impacted on her sense of self. As she said, “*I knew I was, you know, [pause] down in the doldrums*”. This recognition enabled Sally to become an active subject where she joined a self-esteem course run by Barnardo's that activated her resistance.

Sally: I saw an ad in the paper and it was actually a self-esteem course. . . a Barnardo's course which was really good – kind of gave me the stepping stone to get out at the time. . . I was probably half-way through that course when I told him I wanted him to go . . . in the middle of an argument . . . he was ranting and raving about something and I just screamed I wanted him to leave and I just said “I want you to leave, I am not doing this anymore, just get out . . . I just don't want to be with you anymore”, and that kinda stumped him I think because he had never heard it before.

Because of the imperceptibility of psychological violence, Gigi came to recognise her experiences were psychological violence when she read Police brochures on IPV. Gigi explained how these brochures enabled her to understand the seriousness of her situation as she recognised that violence was more than physical, positioning her as a victim.

Gigi: I didn't realise until a friend went to the police station and got brochures on abusive relationships, so I didn't realise until that was put in front of me, and um I, yeah, I knew we were in a toxic relationship but I guess, um, I didn't realise the seriousness of it

Carmel: And how far into the relationship was it when your friend helped you identify that?

Gigi: Over ten years . . . and four children later . . .

Carmel: What were the brochures on?

Gigi: The different types of abuse – sexual, physical, emotional, verbal . . . so, you know, it's like reading through those symptoms and I was like tick, tick, tick

Carmel: And what ones did you associate with, out of the different forms of abuse what could you see?

Gigi: Verbal and emotional . . . what was the deal breaker was seeing those facts that I was living, you know, and I couldn't believe it 'cause I am such a strong woman - and that point ten years into the relationship and um I couldn't believe I hadn't seen that and I was living that, it was surreal . . . [her ex-partner] used to tell me I was fat, I was a slut, I was lazy.

Louise recognised her turning point when she reclaimed some power also through taking up an active subject position.

Louise: We had pretty nasty arguments . . . [and] he was sitting on the floor in the kitchen and he cried and I yelled at him, absolutely let him have it which I had never done before and that was a little bit of taking back some power . . . normally . . . I would have immediately calmed him down to make him feel better as that was my role - but I was so angry and I said "I am not going to worship at your feet anymore, that is not what I am going to do" - and that was a turning point for me at that point.

A dominant turning point in the women's narratives was evidenced through maternal protection, embedded in discourses of motherhood. Within a context of IPV, maternal protection highlights the impact of gendered relations on protection where women are held responsible for the effects of violence on children (Morgan & Coombes, 2016). Khaw and Hardesty (2007) have found that mothers are more likely to leave their relationship when violence shifts to their children. Recognising a shift from violent partner to violent father

also became a turning point in Sally's narrative of resistance as she took up a position of protective mother that also activated her help-seeking.

Sally: . . . [and] the other reason I went to the course as well is 'cause he started saying horrible things to her [eldest daughter] . . . stuff like "you are a useless bitch" to her, she was only three or four [years] and I was not going to let her put up with that.

Similarly, Lola took up a position as protective mother when she recognised her partner's violence had become directed towards her daughter, enabling her turning point.

Lola: . . . the straw that broke the camel's back was when he was really, really horrible to [my daughter]

Carmel: And how old was she at this stage?

Lola: Ten [years old] . . . [Lola's voice rises and deepens], and he said to [daughter] "you useless fucking piece of shit, what the fuck is going on here, I fucking told you to turn that fucking tap off, what the hell, get yer mother!" . . . she was just in so much trouble [then he said] "I don't know why you and your useless fucking mother don't pack your bags and go back to Australia and do both countries a favour" . . . it was getting worse and worse.

As well as direct targets of men's violence, researchers (Hayes & Jeffries, 2016; Morgan & Coombes, 2016) have identified that many children who witness IPV within their families become targets and assume it is a normal and acceptable aspect of family life. The idea of children witnessing IPV has led to the construction of a 'cycle of violence' as a popular cultural discourse based on the assumption that children replicate the behaviour of their same sex parent (Callaghan & Alexander, 2015). They state, however, that the construct of a cycle of violence is highly contentious within research literature because it reproduces patterns of gendered social power relations, positioning women and girls as passive and vulnerable targets of male aggression. In Gigi's narrative, there is a discursive shift from providing her children with a stable nuclear family life and protecting her children from reproducing the cycle of violence. Gigi took up a position as protective mother to limit the harm of her children becoming victims (or later perpetrators) of violence through witnessing their father's control of Gigi.

Gigi: . . . and I got to a point that the kids were getting older and the girls don't remember much at all, they were only 4 and 2 (years) but [10-year-old son] does, he remembers quite a bit [starts crying] . . . what I have come to learn . . . he [ex-partner] is very controlling . . . I so wanted it to work [crying] and coming from a family where our parents separated I didn't want that for our kids, but it was like actually I needed to make a decision based on I didn't want [son] growing up thinking it was OK to treat women like that and our girls to think it was ok to be treated that way.

Lily's turning point also drew on the discourse of the cycle of violence as she too took up the position of protective mother.

Lily: I was just so rocked by everything; my life had been a train wreck and a nightmare and I couldn't think and . . . I had no job 'cause I was working in the family business, I didn't get paid, I had nothing, but I was at a point where . . . [I thought] he's [her son] going to grow up to be like him and she is going to marry one or worse she will grow up to be like him and he's going to marry one . . . I can't live like this . . . our children are not growing up in this crazy-ness. . . so If I had stayed, if I hadn't dragged my sorry arse out of there, if I hadn't had the upbringing I had . . . if I had have stayed then my daughter would stay too . . . so if she gets into a relationship like that she just thinks that is normal.

The women constructed their understanding of violence through dominant discourses, such as the cycle of violence construct and motherhood, where they positioned themselves as protective mothers. Although these discourses are problematic because they ignore gendered power relations, they enabled the women to become active resisters to their partner's violence. However, women's resistance to their partner's violence does not end the violence and often the strategies of control intensify (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2016). What followed the women's turning points was a continuation of the men's systematic pattern of psychological violence post-separation, enacted through tactics of coercive control, where the women felt (and feel) they were (and are) still living under siege.

Living Under Siege Post-Separation

Once the women recognised their turning points of resistance, a common and very relevant theme was their experiences of post-separation violence. Separation from abusive men is no guarantee women or children are free from harm (Morgan & Coombes, 2016). Stanley, Miller, and Richardson Foster (2012) argue that the assumption violence will cease when women leave their partners overlooks the occurrence of post-separation violence. This section draws attention to the women's experiences of 'still' living under siege, enacted through the men's tactics of coercive control. These tactics contested the women's position of protective mother through a discourse of maternal alienation or 'hostile mother' and manipulated the mother-child relationship. The privileging of fathers' 'rights' is considered paramount to the protection of children, regardless of the Care of Children Act (The Backbone Collective, 2017), and was experienced as ongoing psychological violence where women were coerced into compliance by both their ex-partners and the legal system.

The beginning of post-separation violence. The women's narratives of resistance occur simultaneously with their narratives of psychological violence enacted as emotional, financial, and social losses that continued to intimidate, isolate, and control them. Although Sally resisted her partner and ended the relationship she explained how, as another act of control, he burdened her financially by making her solely responsible for the children's welfare.

Sally: He moved out, he took everything . . . he emptied out all the food, all the cleaning products, [took] the car . . . he left the kids' stuff and left the lounge suite 'cause that was my grandmothers, but he took everything else, literally everything including our bed, so apart from my clothes and the kid's stuff . . .

Lily explained how she tried to rebuild her life after she left her husband and illustrated the conditions of her (and her children's) lives immediately after they left the family home.

Lily: When I left we lived in the campground for a wee while, then I went to a friend's . . . but I was very, um, mindful that I could not stay too long because it was encroaching on them and I was an emotional wreck. . . then another friend of mine went away for a couple of weeks so they let me house-sit, so we moved in there and

then I eventually found a flat and I picked up five jobs and slowly regained myself, but the whole time he was hideous at this point . . .

Louise's narrative emphasised how she continued to live under her ex-partner's siege after they separated, where she was 'held captive'. As she struggled with the failure and loss of marriage, Louise's position within the discourse of femininity locates her as responsible for her husband's breach of the moral code of coupledness and sanctity of marriage.

Louise: Eight months we lived in that house [post-separation], he would not move out – I moved into the spare room . . . he would not leave . . . he didn't see why he had to, he didn't see that was the decent and honourable thing to do . . . he would sit on the couch in our house talking to her [his new girlfriend] on the phone . . . and I would just get up and leave the room . . . I thought I was losing my mind, you know, it's one thing to have your marriage fall apart, then find out he is seeing somebody else, then have to exist in the house together and not know what your future holds. Were we going to sell the house? Where was I going to live? How was I going to afford to live? My life was in tatters . . .

Carmel: He was not taking responsibility for what happened

Louise: No - as far as he was concerned I didn't appreciate him.

Stark (2012) states that coercion entails the use of threats and acts of surveillance by men to produce fear and compliance, and that both threats and surveillance continue to intimidate women post-separation. Lily explained how she continued to live under the surveillance of her ex-husband after she left him and how he expressed his omnipresence in her life through ongoing gas-lighting strategies to scare and intimidate her. Lily's narrative emphasised her continued feelings of terror and self-surveillance as she continued to live under his siege, where her ex-husband's retribution for her leaving him was – and is – chillingly embedded in her everyday life.

Lily: . . . I was convinced to this day that my house was bugged . . . I would have conversations with people in the house and then he would text me exactly what I was talking about . . . one time my daughter got a phone that could pick up Bluetooth and she put it on and it picked up another Bluetooth device in the corner of the lounge . . . and then she never got it again . . . and I am sure that that is what it was . . . I

couldn't say anything 'cause I knew I was being watched, and I came home one day and when I walked into the lounge my ranch sliders [doors] were open and I know I hadn't, 'cause I lived like a secret agent, everything was locked, checked . . . everything was strategically placed. . . I lived [pause] under siege . . . and I lived like that for a long time . . . I wouldn't feel safe . . . he was still coming around threatening me . . . his torment, and abuse, and his night-time rattling of windows, and screaming outside the house, and drive-byes, and emails, and threats, and texts didn't stop and they are continuing 10 years on . . . I will never be free of him . . . and I don't know whether it is my over-imagination or not but . . . the hate, the absolute obsessive hate for me, is still so there, that sometimes . . . I do fear, thinking oh my God [he could kill me] . . . sometimes I feel . . . [pause]

Carmel: . . . you feel fearful?

Lily: I do, I feel like I haven't seen the end of him, put it that way . . . if he came gunning for me, literally gunning for me. . . it wouldn't surprise me . . . his hatred of me is intense [pause]. . . [but] I always used to say, I can honestly say he is not a violent man [pause]. . .

Although Lily used a terror metaphor – “*come gunning for me*” – to describe her fear that her ex-husband might kill her, the imperceptibility of the violence that subjected Lily continued to maintain her belief that he was “*not a violent man*”.

Lola also expressed her fear of her ex-husband as he continued to threaten and intimidate her, seven years post-separation. Lola illustrated her fear through her heightened worry around securitising her life.

Lola: I don't want [ex-husband] to know I am here on my own . . . I am scared of [him], I don't want [him] knowing who is here and who is not here . . . I have become paranoid about locking doors, about checking to see if things are locked up, the gates . . . I did talk to somebody about putting some security cameras in and if [he] could hear this he would go “haha, how pathetic, I wouldn't waste my time with you”

Carmel: But you still feel scared and you still feel threatened by him

Lola: Mmmmm.

The women's narratives post-separation are embedded within discourses of fear, loss, and threats to their welfare as their ex-partners continued to coerce and control them through

tactics of intimidation. Although the women had hoped to reclaim their liberties and to live free from violence once the relationship ended, their ex-partners' interplay of coercive control tactics subjected the women to ongoing psychological violence. As their stories unfolded further, traditional normative gendered expectations targeted femininity and mothering.

As shown in the next section mothering became the site for coercive control, discursively regulated through fathers' rights discourse where child access and the protection of children became the site of contest. In this way, the women positioned themselves as protective mothers, yet when they resisted the men's control their position changed to that of alienating mothers. The on-going tactics used by the men to scare the women post-separation also extended to their children, used as instruments for their fathers' on-going coercive control of their mothers, and into the legal system that coerced the women into compliance to protect their children.

Using the Children

Child custody and child access arrangements provide a context in which abusive and violent ex-partners neglect their children or manipulate access arrangements as specific tactics to retain control of the children's mothers (Elizabeth, 2015; Toews & Bermea, 2015). In the study by Toews and Bermea (2015) the majority of women interviewed reported how their ex-partners used their children as a site to further hurt, scare, and threaten the women post-separation. In this research, the women described how their ex-partners used or manipulated their children to maintain power and control of the women post-separation. As Lola disclosed, "*I mean the only way he can control me is through the situation with [our son] and he does it actually very well and I allow him, unfortunately*". Within the women's narratives, discourses that activated "men's rights" and "proper (or good) mothering" (Morris, 2005, p. 224) contributed to the men deflecting responsibilities for their coercive control. If the women did not concede to the men's requests they were mother-blamed, resulting in the fathers attempts to disrupt the mother-child relationships.

Maternal alienation. One of the men's strategies that appeared in the women's narratives was of maternal alienation. Maternal alienation, a form of coercive control, is "one weapon in an arsenal of strategies utilized by violent men against their ex-partners and/or children", where abusive partners "deliberately undermine and destroy relationships between mothers and their children" Morris (2009, pp. 415-416). Morris (2009) describes how the

success of maternal alienation embedded within social discourses of mother-blaming, denies women's credibility and status. Enacted through a "repertoire of coercive strategies" (Morris, 2009, p. 416) maternal alienation targets mothering as a site to instil fear, humiliation, degradation, and blame on women while redirecting the men's responsibility for their violence (Morris, 2005). The fathers' depiction of mothers and women as "mad, stupid, malicious, unloving, and monstrous" is crucial to maternal alienation, attacking maternal identities and is dichotomous to the fathers' presentation as "safe, respectable, and rational" (Morris, 2005, p. 227), aligning with socio-cultural practices and ideology through which gender operates.

To illustrate the tactics of maternal alienation we turn to the women's narratives where the men depicted the women in negative and degrading ways to their children. The existence of a "misogynistic discursive environment" enables and tolerates the exercise of men's dominating power to denigrate women (Elizabeth, 2012b, p. 468). Lola referred to a particular conversational event between her ex-husband and her son that excluded her. Lola understood this as another tactic of her ex-husband's control to 'gang' up on her, with imperceptible results.

Lola: He does a lot of ringing here when [son] is with me . . . and whenever [son] speaks to [ex-husband] he then comes off the phone and he is a little arsehole to me
Carmel: Ah, right - so do you think [ex-husband] is saying things about you to [son]?
Lola: Definitely . . . [ex-husband] had been in [son's] ear . . . [son] had the phone on speaker phone and, um, he [ex-husband] said . . . "I have told mum you are coming with me on Tuesday but she's not too pleased about it, haha, why are we not surprised about that!" - and it was all on his terms - and of course [son] feels duty-bound, he has to laugh with his dad . . . let's gang up against her . . . it's just continual all the time and we have been split up for seven years and it just doesn't get any better, and there should be a law against it . . . there really should be. . . [son] is probably exhausted with it all.

Lily explained the degrading language her ex-husband used when he spoke of her to their young children.

Lily: He would keep them up all night talking at them and telling them what a prostituting slut I was and a liar.

After ten years' separation, Lily has identified how her ex-husband continued to discredit her, positioning her as “monstrous” and “unloving” (Morris, 2005, p. 227) as a tactic of coercion and control.

Lily: . . . he [ex-husband] still texts my daughter regularly and when they are bad enough she will come to me and say “oh my God, look what dad has just sent” – and the hate, the absolute obsessive hate for me is still so there. . . .he then rang her at Christmas [last year] and told her that she is lucky to be alive ‘cause he saved her life because at 8 months old I was going to abort her and if it was not for him she would just be a mass of fucking dog meat - that is what he told her . . . and um and he tells everybody that [our son] is not his but he doesn’t do it to hurt [our son] he does it to discredit my reputation . . . he still controls [me]. . .

Sally explained how her young children mirrored their fathers abuse where they learnt to humiliate Sally, degrading her maternal position.

Sally: . . . [the] kids would come back from their weekend him [their father] and they started getting abusive towards me . . . they would say “mum you are a fat cow” and I mean they were only five and three [years old]. . .

As well as maternal alienation, the women also experienced coercive control at the site of child access, opening spaces for the women to be further psychologically violated by their ex-partners.

Child access: The women disclosed the men’s on-going violence through child access arrangements. Elizabeth and colleagues (2012a, 2012b) argue that post-separation tactics of coercive control reproduce gendered relations of inequality between mothers and fathers. Research by Jeffries (2016) identified the commonality of perpetrators using child access as a site of continued coercive control against ex-partners, a successful intimidation tactic post-separation. Coercive control is located within the discourse of fathers’ rights to their children that presumes their rights are a site to further intimidate, isolate, and control the mothers (Stark, 2012). The women’s narratives identified how they continually lived (and live) in fear of the men’s violence, positioning the women in both hostage-like conditions that restricted their movements and as protective mothers through the men’s manipulation of child access arrangements. Researchers have argued that maternal protectiveness in the context of

IPV needs to be understood within the complexities of gendered power relations and attending to these complexities entails noticing when focus on the mothers responsibility for child protection overlooks the father's perpetration of violence (Wendt, Buchanan, & Moulding, 2015). To maintain her position as a protective mother, Lola described having to call the police to intervene in her ex-husband's on-going verbal violence at changeover.

Lola: I have called the cops a couple of times because he [ex-husband] wouldn't get off my property and he was slanging shit at me and throwing all sorts of bloody verbal abuse [at me], in front of [son] – and so I said no, I am not going to have this anymore, I really need to keep this away from [son]. . . it just got worse and worse . . . and he is verbally abusive on the phone too [when he calls to speak to their son].

Lily used a horror film metaphor within her narrative to describe the terror she experienced at changeover.

Carmel: The times he would come to you to pick the children up . . . was he ever abusive to you, was he verbally abusive or belittling to you or did you both avoid talking?

Lily: He would sneer all the time and he would scare me because he would speak in riddles . . . the atmosphere . . . you could cut it with a knife, it was like you were waiting for the [spooky music], that is how it was . . . and [he would] walk around and give me the 'skinny eye' and the mannerisms were so oohhhhh [shaking] . . . it was like a horror movie, if you listen to it without the sounds it looks stupid, but the build-up, the music, the tempo that instils the terror in you and that is what is was like with him. I had a gravel driveway in those days and he would swing in and turn around and park outside the door and pop the boot and he wouldn't even get out of the car. So, the kids would go out, put their stuff in the boot, and then they would get in and then he would go with a scrunch of the tyres and flicking gravel up everywhere . . . just that constant brooding anger simmering . . . [and] accusations that he made and, you know, just the goading.

The men's manipulation of child access extended to a restriction of the women's movements. Louise experienced her ex-husband's control over her freedom.

Louise: . . . he gives me the bare minimum [when ex-husband has their daughter] and I have to make up whatever. . . that still continues, very much so, like the weekend she spends with him I don't really know when she is going to come home, will it be on the Sunday perhaps at some stage or will it be the Monday – he won't offer that information, he would never offer that, I would have to say "so when will you bring her home?" and he would say "oh I will let you know".

Without a legal parenting agreement, Lily experienced a lack of reasonable contact arrangements that restricted her movements leaving her in, what Elizabeth and colleagues argue (2012b), is a state of suspense.

Lily: When they were gone I would spend the whole time inside the house pining for them, just counting the hours until pick-up time because they had been forcibly taken away from me, it wasn't my choice . . . I was on tenter-hooks all the time . . . I was always under his control, always under his control . . . I wouldn't go anywhere, I would just sit inside my house and just wait for the text [from him to pick them up] . . .

In the women's narratives there was evidence that child access was not only a site for further violence and intimidation by the men, but as Toews and Bermea (2015) argue, child access is also a site for manipulation and hurt of both the mothers and the children. This is particularly so where perpetrators treat "the child as an extension of the mother and as a way to hurt or control her", a form of "child abuse as tangential spouse abuse" (Stark, 2007, p. 251). Meier (2003, p. 705) argues that men who control and violate intimate partners are "unlikely to be capable of the loving, nurturing, and self-disciplined behavior of good parenting". Men who violate their partner's often re-create specific tactics of their violence in the relationship with their children, post-separation (The Backbone Collective, 2017).

Manipulating access arrangements emerged as a form of control and on-going harassment over the women's lives. In Sally's narrative, the children became 'collateral damage' as her ex-partner continued to control her life and intended to disrupt Sally's relationship with her children.

Sally: When he [ex-partner] realised I met someone he stopped coming for his weekend with the kids . . . I would always get the kids ready and they were excited as their dad was coming and he would then ring and say "I will be there in half an

hour” and then an hour would pass and then the kids would get all upset and would sit outside with their bags and wait . . . and finally, he would ring about 2pm and say “oh I have been held up and I will be there in half an hour” - and he wouldn’t turn up - and then a few times he would ring me up about 8pm at night and say “haha did I ruin your weekend?” - and I thought you hurt your kids that much to ruin my weekend . . . so that probably went on for about two-three years with him not turning up just to annoy me. . . only people he hurt were his children. . . [and] he still manipulates the kids, he does terrible things to them . . . and [he says to them] I have poisoned them against him - and I think, no he did that all by himself [laughs] . . . he told the kids that basically his lack of relationship with them is my fault.

Elizabeth et al. (2012b) argues that women’s fear of the legal repercussions produces tensions for protective mothers who encourage their children’s relationships with their fathers even though they have knowledge that care of their children is not adequate. Lily’s narratives identified how her ex-husband manipulated child access arrangements as a form of ongoing harassment and as a site of terror, as Lily drew on the position of protective mother. The protection of Lily’s children is embedded within a discourse of the presumption of fathers’ rights in the “best interests of the child(ren)” (Elizabeth et al., 2012b), that in itself is “highly subjective” (The Backbone Collective, 2017, p. 20) and open to interpretation.

Lily: . . . sometimes he wouldn’t come and get them and he would say “so and so is coming to pick the kids up” – and it’s like, deep breath – “oh my God! I don’t know this person how do they drive?!” – [he would retort] “don’t be so pathetic Lily” . . . and one time he sent this woman over . . . this chick turns up at our place to take the children away

Carmel: Who you had never met before?

Lily: Yeah! And she is driving his car . . . it was awful. . . and another time, it was the guy across the road [from him] . . . and I had never met him before either

Carmel: How were the kids going off with these people?

Lily: They weren’t very good about going with [the woman] ‘cause they didn’t know her. . . I was so distressed at the thought of strangers picking up my children and I used to ask myself what sort of people do this . . . you don’t go around taking peoples kids, what the hell is wrong with you?!!

Lily: [and] . . . he would make their meal at 430pm and put it on plates whilst still relatively sober than beer o'clock would come and he would sit outside drinking and smoking till 10pm at night then he might microwave their dinner up or not – often times they came back and would say “oh dad went nuts and then we didn't have dinner”

Carmel: That must have been so hard for you hearing that as a mum

Lily: Mmmm, really hard and they would get up in the morning and they would have to step over him as he was passed out on the lounge floor and had spilt all the red wine and stuff like that. I used to be terrified there would be a fire . . .

Lily then talked about her understanding of her ex-husband's interest in the children as being ultimately about keeping her under his control.

Lily: . . . his interest in the children has only ever been as a ploy against me . . . to get me back under his control . . . he has never been interested in them [children]. So, I am like the obsession but it is not necessarily a love obsession, if you know what I mean. . . if he had been a great father and I just didn't like him I would have stayed 'cause the kids loved him – but he had never, they had never been on their own with him.

'The best interests of the child' principle was a specific site of control in Abigail's narrative. Women negotiate complex relationships as they take up various positions to protect their children from harm. Protective mothering for Abigail was embedded in gendered social power relations that reproduced the child's best interests discourse to “preserve the image of a ‘good father’” (Morgan & Coombes, 2016, p. 69). However, her ex-partner's ongoing strategy of ‘shifting the goal posts’ for access, as a form of control, emerged in Abigail's narrative and is meaningful in understanding the discourse that assumes maternal responsibility for children's relationships with their fathers.

Abigail: . . . he wouldn't answer the phone and he wouldn't get back to me . . . and I found out later it was because he was out drinking, so then of course on Sunday he would be hungover - he just wouldn't contact us and by Monday I would hear from him, “oh sorry I was not feeling very well” . . . I would say once a week to once a fortnight we might hear from him but doesn't mean we would have seen him

Carmel: So he didn't show much interest in the baby?

Abigail: No, but he would pretend he did . . . and for the last 10 years he has shown me how many times that he can't follow through . . . a lot, a lot, a lot . . . we haven't seen him for nearly 3.5 years

Carmel: He still wants to have his control

Abigail: Yes, yep and another time, he said "I am going overseas and I want to say goodbye" – and I would say "that's not fair you haven't seen her in a year, it's not fair to say goodbye" - and I was always worried about what kind of state he would be in when he came up – there was one time he came up and he just reeked of alcohol. . . and another time he brought his girlfriend and I said "you are taking my daughter with you with somebody that I haven't met before, how dodgy is that!?" . . .but I also didn't have any support behind me as my parents weren't there so what was I going to do?

Within the context of IPV, the complexities of mothering post-separation are increasingly understood as women protecting their children whilst being subjected to re-victimisation (Morgan & Coombes, 2016; The Backbone Collective, 2017). Researchers argue that when a man uses violence against his ex-partner and the mother of his child(ren), the man is making a “parenting choice” (The Backbone Collective, 2017). In this way, the woman’s narratives identified how power and control was central to the fathers’ re-victimisation of the mother’s post-separation, often at the detriment to the children’s welfare. The discourse of fathers’ rights also extended to using the legal system where the men could continue to perpetuate coercion and control of the women.

Using the Legal System

Threats of their ex-partners taking the children and prolonged custody battles are part of the many complexities for women as they live under siege post-separation. The ongoing presence of gender power dynamics within separated parent’s relationships are the main site of concern for women in custody disputes (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b). As Lily described, “*he never had sole care of them [their children] until I moved out and then of course he spent the last ten years threatening to take them off me*”. Lily further explicated how, not long after she left her ex-husband, his threats of taking the children were to scare her as a reprisal for leaving.

Lily: He would get drunk and come around at night and start yelling outside the house and walking around the house, and threatening and all sorts of things, just frightening, as in “you are going down bitch I am fucking taking you down” [aggressive voice] . . . “[I’m] going to get you, going to get those kids off you” - you know all those sorts of things.

In Elizabeth and colleague’s (2012b) study, non-custodial fathers drew on a dominant narrative of father’s rights that enabled the men to threaten and control their ex-partners through custody arrangements despite not having a history of caring for their children and who may “lack the required practical and emotional skills” (p. 4) to parent. Elizabeth et al. (2012b) also found that women subjected to IPV feared their ex-partners’ capacity to use the law as a legitimate power tactic to threaten, harass, and coerce them into decisions they did not agree with, as a form of psychological violence. Women positioned as “alienating mothers” (Elizabeth et al., 2012b, p. 10) obstructed the father-child relationship to protect their children when they disagreed over contact arrangements.

While Lola positioned herself as having her child’s best interests in mind, the legal response to her ex-husband’s ongoing demands for shared care were upheld through legal advice, which Tolmie, Elizabeth, and Gavey (2010) have argued, has become an inevitable outcome experienced by women in the legal system. Lola felt pressured to comply with 50:50 custody arrangements that undermined her position as a protective mother.

Carmel: . . . you did Court hearings at the beginning [of their separation] because he [ex-husband] wanted custody or sole custody?

Lola: Yes, and he said I was, um, [pause] incapable, pathetic

Carmel: So then you had to take him to court to ensure you got 50:50 custody?

Lola: I wanted more than 50:50 but he was harassing me so much that [lawyer] said to me how about we let him have [son] 50% of the time . . . but [son] was only 5 [years old] you see and needed to be with his mum . . . but no, he [ex-husband] was just so abusive over the whole thing it ws just easier to do 50:50.

Given the normalisation of the assumption that Family Courts will award 50:50 care, Tolmie et al. (2010) found that women fear the real possibility that they may lose day-to-day care of their children. “Mothers’ level of anxiety about this possibility are particularly acute when there were histories of abuse” (Tolmie et al., 2010, p. 144) and the fear of going to

court meant that many women felt coerced into agreements that oriented their lives toward the ‘rights’ of their ex-partners’ contact arrangements. Without a legal parenting agreement, Lily was in constant fear about her children’s safety.

Lily: . . . I would be terrified . . . if he just decides to keep them there is no parenting arrangement, he could actually just keep them then I would have to go through the Family Courts to get them back and that could be months . . . or he might have just gone mad and killed them in their sleep, and that used to go through my mind all the time . . . [so] I always played the game, I never called his bluff.

The women’s narratives also identified institutional violence, recognised through legal interventions of post-separation parenting that reproduced notions of victim-blaming and mother-blaming. In this context, mothers are blamed both for protecting their children from the men’s violence (understood as alienating or hostile mothers) and through their negligence if their children come to any harm. Women often fear that the institutional support of fathers’ rights obscures the women’s positioning as protective mothers (Morgan & Coombes, 2016), thereby placing the children in greater harm.

Institutional violence: Legal interventions into post-separation parenting arrangements. As the women negotiated ongoing violence in the post separation period, their positioning as protective mothers emerged as a particular site of contest within the legal system. The women’s understanding of the construction of IPV within the legal system emerged in their narratives as contest between the meaning of care and responsibility for their children as well as fathers’ rights discourse. The legal system depends on normalised gendered social power relations, evidenced through research that identified how constructions of fathers in the Family Court system overlook the significance of harm violent men can inflict (Shea Hart, 2011; Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008). Within the family law system, there is an assumption that children have a right to be cared for by both parents or at least have regular contact with both parents, regardless of the child’s needs or wishes (Shea Hart, 2011; The Backbone Collective, 2017). Fathers are discursively positioned as “deserving parents and mothers as having the responsibility to overcome their ‘hostility’ or ‘resistance’ and to ‘facilitate’ and ‘co-operate’”, in decisions related to child access and parenting (Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008, p. 298).

Shared parenting has emerged then, as the least contestable option for post-separation parenting and within a context of IPV has rendered the contesting of father-child contact

almost impossible (Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008). According to Stark (2009), men use tactical strategies to manipulate pro-contact decisions as an ongoing form of power and control over their ex-partners. Protective mothers, however, who challenge the dominant assumption of shared parenting relationships are often constructed as having failed to support and/or facilitate father-child contact and are positioned as alienating mothers (Shea Hart, 2011; Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008), reproducing discourses of mother-blaming and victim-blaming.

In the research by Elizabeth et al. (2012a), they found that fathers mobilise their “economic and social resources” (p. 472) through the Family Court to alter child access arrangements and position the women in a state of fear of losing their children. As her husband intensified his control, Lily resisted using the Family Court aware of the tension between protecting her children and the normalised position of masculinity and femininity within the legal system.

Lily: I was just stressed . . . my mum . . . said go to the courts . . . [but] what if they award him [ex-husband] 50:50 'cause that is what he is going for. . . I didn't want to go to Family Court because he presents so well and he is so good at trivialising me and even if I went in my suit, you know . . . he presents very well because he is a businessman. . . I haven't gone to Court with him and I haven't taken legal avenues because of the way he presents and he out-presents me every single time . . . so, I was terrified that a white middle-class judge . . . [would] determine if the children are actually far better off with their father and . . . I knew that if he got 50 percent of them they would have been screwed forever and he would have destroyed them.

Lola described how her ex-partner continued to intervene and regulate her life through the instigation of family law processes, in what Elizabeth et al. (2012b) have argued is where men “swap their fists for the system” (p. 6). In a context of psychological violence, Miller and Smolter (2011) argue that threats invoking custody proceedings can be understood as paper abuse, a process whereby fathers continue to use the legal system to force the women's compliance to their domination through paper. Lola explained how this tactic of control maintained her fear that she will be unable to protect her child.

Lola: . . . [his] applying to the [Family] Court to get [son] and for me to only have supervised contact is just bull-shit and it is so scary because, you know, he is very

good at bull-shitting everybody and brainwashing the people that are supposed to know [pause] better. . . [telling them] I was, um [pause] incapable, pathetic. . . he is thinking he wants [son] full-time and I think it is all about the money, I think he just wants to get child support from me. . . some of the stuff that has been written in the affidavit for the Court is just bullshit. . . he even said that I have asked him to take [son] full-time, and I haven't! That is just a lie! I haven't had a conversation like that. . . he was just so abusive over the whole thing. . .

Carmel: So he is lying in these official court documents?

[pause]

Lola: Yep, it is just so sad

Carmel: . . . and you think "when is he just going to stop?"

Lola: Not until he is under the ground. . .

Lily also experienced paper abuse enacted by her ex-husband through his use of the legal system, continuing his harassment and intimidation of her by changing the access arrangements.

Lily: . . . about four years ago I get this letter out of the blue from Relationship Services. I had been ordered to another meeting because [ex-husband] has applied to the Family Courts again, he wanted to change the days he saw the children 'cause he had moved . . . it was only to feather his own cap. [Ex-husband] had somehow used the system to get me back there for his own end, and all the rest of it.

Mediation and counselling are other sites where the legal system minimises the impact of on-going coercion and control (Elizabeth et al., 2012b). As seen in Abigail's narrative, the presumption of the 'best interests' of the child that reframes violence as relationship conflict in need of intervention, positions contesting women as "unreasonable and irrational" linking to the positioning of mothers as hostile and alienating (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, p. 14). Abigail experienced an indirect pressure to agree to her ex-partner's coercion, to avoid an alienating mother position.

Abigail: . . . so we did mediation, we had to do that . . . my stipulations were not that major there were probably maybe four . . . he came back with about twelve and they were things like when he comes up to see her it will be through Barnardo's, if we go

down there it will be visitation through Barnardo's. . . and I thought that I would be the one that should be saying that. . . I just sort of agreed and it was just like, yeah right 'cause also I knew that through them he would never do it – too much work. . .

As Abigail made sense of her experience within the legal system she became acutely aware that her ex-partners' rights as a father were her responsibility to uphold rendering her experiences of ongoing coercive control invisible.

Abigail: I started to find out what my rights were and his rights and that sort of stuff and found that he could actually pick her up from school as we didn't have the custody agreement, so I started that process and I remember talking to the first lawyer and she was great but when I was trying to tell her my story and jam-pack a lot of stuff in a short period of time, she was very much like well he has rights, he can do that, he is allowed to do that, you know, and I felt very much like she was on his side.

Emerging from these narratives is discourses of victim-blaming and mother-blaming that permeate women's contact with the legal system. The discursive construction of victim-blaming through stereotypes of the "ideal or worthy victim" and a woman's intimate link to their abuser, positions the women as guilty and blames them for the men's violence (Meyer, 2015, p. 76).

Relationship counselling is well established as an intervention into access and custody decisions within the family law system (Elizabeth et al., 2012a). Enacted through a dominant position, men's ability to manipulate the women's position within the system was a common theme in the women's stories. In Lily's story, the privileging of normative masculinity within the counselling relationship and her resistance to that, re-positioned her through her deficit (drama queen) femininity. Failing to care for her ex-husband resonates with victim- and mother-blaming, a coercive strategy that blames women/mothers for the relationship conflict and positions them as unreasonable and 'unworthy victims'.

Lily: He arrives before me . . . and he is like a lamb . . . and he is shaking and he is tearful and he is like "oh, I've just been giving [counsellor] the background and the way you have really hurt me and all the things you have done to me" . . . there is none of the strutting persona the, you know, the ape in the cage, he is like a boy whimpering in the corner and he is sniffing and saying "she is so hard on me" . . .

and I am like “you are not actually falling for this shit are you, you are meant to be a counsellor, can’t you see through this?”. [The counsellor responds] “well I don’t think there is any reason to be like that”. So, I am like OK keep it together or she will think you are a nut-bar, ‘cause I am about to explode . . . and [the counsellor] goes “well I can see the problem here, [ex-husband] is obviously very traumatised by the things that went on in the marriage and you are quite the drama queen aren’t you?” - and what made it worse, while she is addressing me [in this way,] he is in the corner going like this [smirking face] . . . she was eating out of his hand . . . where is the common-sense?! And I go “good women don’t just leave good men . . . they don’t leave to put themselves in a situation of destitution and poverty for nothing . . . at what point did you not go why does a woman with a 6-year old and 8-year old walk out with nowhere to go and no money and no house?!” . . . it was horrible and this was why I never wanted to go to [Family] Court as he could present well and make me look like the bimbo floosy.

The discursive resources that construct challenging women as blameworthy for their own victimisation within legal system interventions, operate as another form of coercive gendered violence. Mediation counselling in Louise’s narrative, however, was a counter-story to coercive control operating within the legal intervention. Louise described her emotional relief for support of her story. Rather than positioned as ‘crazy’, the counsellor understood she was the target of psychological violence.

Louise: . . . she [the counsellor] said to me after we maybe had separate meetings, she said to me his argument is not rational, he comes across very calm and very rational and like you have lost your mind but what he is saying is not rational. . . I think I cried and cried and cried.

Within a context of IPV, the legal system’s common-sense understandings of violence as physical and severe incidents limit a fuller understanding of how coercive control operates within intimate relationships. Despite women’s attempts to resist ongoing IPV, professionals continue to reproduce the gendered inequalities that enable coercive control to occur (Williamson, 2010). Elizabeth, Tolmie, and Gavey (2011, p. 1) found that “gender enters into almost every dimension” of the counselling process within the legal system, positioning fathers as more credible than mothers. In particular, when there is a history of psychological

violence, counsellors tolerated men's coercive tactics and actively supported fathers' rights at the expense of mother's obligations to protect their children from harm (Elizabeth et al., 2011).

The post-separation narratives of Sally, Louise, Gigi, Lily, Lola, and Abigail were embedded within on-going gendered social relations of power and control. As each woman struggled to reclaim their liberty post-separation, they continued to live under siege as their ex-partners maintained the use of coercive and controlling tactics. The women's narratives identified how their ex-partners used both their children and the legal system to coerce the women into particular positions, specifically within the complexities of mothering within the IPV context.

Within the legal system, a discourse of fathers' rights to child access is legitimately utilised by the men as a site of on-going coercion and control of the mothers. The assumption that fathers, including violent fathers, are necessary for the well-being of their children constitutes the dominant understanding of gender that operates within the legal interventions into child custody (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b). However, the legal system disregards women's very real fear of the threat to their children's well-being as fathers' rights are prioritised in the best interest of the child(ren) (Elizabeth et al., 2012a, 2012b).

The women's experiences of legal interventions into child custody disputes became a further site for the men's coercion. The men harassed the women through threats of custody proceedings or altered child access arrangements. The discursive resources within legal interventions positioned the women as blameworthy through their ex-partners' manipulation and coercion. Privileging masculinity over femininity rendered invisible the women's ongoing experiences of coercive control and positioned them through a deficit femininity that continued to subjugate and silence them. These forms of psychological violence used as strategies to further intimidate and scare the women into compliance by their ex-partners post-separation, were located at the site of child access. As a result of the men's on-going insidious tactics of coercive control, both during their relationships and ongoing, the last section in this chapter recognises the everyday effects of coercive control on the women as they reflect on their lives under siege.

The Women's Reflections: The Sustaining Effects of Coercive Control

To end this analysis, it is important to understand the effects of coercive control and the processes that continued to entrap the women. The women's stories have revealed how

the pattern of coercive control progresses over time through intensive attacks on the minutiae of the women's everyday gendered lives. As the women reflected on their previous psychologically violent intimate relationships, the analysis identified how a gendered social hierarchy with traditional gendered expectations imposed within a patriarchal society, along with a lack of visible markers of the violence they endured, and inadequate words to identify and name their experiences, obscured how the women's relationships operated through coercive control. Westmarland and Kelly (2016, p. 43) argue that the "current definition, legal framework, and criminal justice processes" focus on singular, physical incidents of violence ignores the patterned effects of coercive control that infiltrate women's everyday lives.

As the women's story unfolded it was evident there were no meaningful words to describe what they had experienced. Lola spoke of why she took part in this research, emphasising the forgotten voices of women.

Lola: . . . for other women that might be going through it themselves in silence knowing that they are not the only ones . . . empowering other people to know they are not the only ones who have ever been in that situation . . . that helps them stand up for their own rights when they don't think they have got any . . .

Lily explained how the invisibility of psychological violence within society results in a lack of words for women to describe their experiences and give meaning to the operations of coercive control.

Lily: I talk to people all the time [in her job] and I just see so many [women] that have no words for 'it' . . . there are no words for 'it' . . . there is nothing for 'it' and I think we need - 'it' needs - more recognition

Carmel: And when you say 'it', are you talking about the psychological/emotional side of abuse?

Lily: Yeah . . .

Sally also spoke of how "[I] see 'it' now in other women . . .", 20 years after leaving her psychologically violent ex-husband. Silencing women's experiences of psychological violence keeps it hidden and reinforces both men's and the legal system's descriptions of violence as severe "physical" and "occasional" (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016, p. 43). These

forms of IPV constrain women from leaving, keeping them entrapped in relationships of power and control. Sally recognised how her ex-partner's constant belittling coerced her into staying in the relationship for six years as she came to believe his verbal attacks that positioned her as blame-worthy.

Sally: . . . now I understand why I stayed – back then I was so confused . . . when someone is telling you that you are fat, useless, ugly, and stupid on a daily basis, you believe it . . . it was always made out that it was my fault and that I was lucky he stayed with me . . . he also always told me that other people had told him that I was ungrateful and stupid and not to go crying to anyone because they would just think that I was being stupid. You really do believe these things and that is why I never did anything for so long . . . but listening to the others [at the Barnardo's course] I realised that his behaviour was actually not okay and that it wasn't my fault.

Sally's narrative highlighted how her subjection to her ex-partner's coercion and control became visible once she heard others share their experiences, recognising she was not to blame for his behaviour.

Common-sense understandings around heteronormativity are continually (re)produced in society to maintain women's subordination and loyalty through the construction of femininity and masculinity, as Lily explained.

Lily: . . . I was with my husband for so long and I stayed there for so many years because I thought it was the right thing to do . . .

Lily's narrative described how 'the right thing to do' was part of her positioning as a woman that encompassed being a 'good' wife. The traditional understandings of femininity also embedded Gigi.

Gigi: . . . yeah so you know I guess I think the reason I stayed there for so long too was I got on really well with [mother-in-law] and I respected her, you know, and I thought "ok I just have to suck this up and get on with it" – she hung in there and she is still with [father-in-law].

Connell (1987) argues that within emphasised, traditional femininity, compliance is core and endorsed culturally and ideologically. In this way, cultural narratives prescribe how gender is socially constructed and enacted within institutional cultural norms and expectations (Budgeon, 2013), such as traditions of marriage, coupledness, and/or the nuclear family, that sustain relationships of domination and subordination. The family as an institution is profuse with the entwining of power and resistance, economics and emotions (Connell, 1987). Within the private nucleus of the family, invisible forms of violence are normalised and used to coerce women to remain in violent relationships.

The women who participated in this research felt constrained and silenced because they lacked ‘proof’ of their victimisation. In their narratives, they spoke of how they wished for bruises or other visible evidence that would legitimate their position of inequality and provide them with advocacy. With a lack of proof of their violations, the women struggled to understand and disclose their terror to others. Education through the media, however, brought into view the aspects of IPV that Sally had experienced on an everyday basis.

Carmel: Do you think it would be easier to talk about it now or to describe it now than perhaps back then, do you think society is more open to certain things?

Sally: Yes definitely now. I mean you see the ad’s on TV, and stuff like that “it’s not ok” [advertisement]

Carmel: That’s right and they talk about the controlling behaviour which is really good, not just about the physical

Sally: But that ad on TV, you know that woman who walks through the school-ground and somebody finally comes up and says “are you OK”? And that’s what I always wanted, somebody to come up and say “are you OK?” . . . well that is why I used to punch myself in the eye, so somebody could see [laughs]. . . there were a few occasions where after something had happened, um, I had actually punched myself in the eye to try and get a black eye so somebody would notice, because I just wanted somebody to see, you know

Carmel: Yeah, and were you successful in leaving a mark?

Sally: No! [laughs]. . . ’cause it hurt! [both laughing]

The imperceptibility and lack of discursive resources for making sense of psychological violence, sexual coercion, and non-injurious physical violence, constrained the women’s disclosure as they feared others’ scepticism. As Sally later mentioned, “*I wanted*

someone to guess ‘cause I didn’t want to tell anybody, but I wanted them to guess”. When I asked her how she would have felt if somebody had approached her, she responded saying “I would have been relieved”. Sally longed for support but through the discursive constructions of victim-blaming she remained entrapped and subjected to prolonged psychological, ‘low-level’ physical, and sexual violence.

Unable to express her experiences of psychological violence that had broken her, Gigi also sought for a legitimate reason to leave her partner.

Gigi: . . . I used to wish that he would just beat me to give me a reason to leave [crying] . . . what I’ve come to realise [is] people won’t understand [crying] what we have talked about

Carmel: Because they can’t see it. You can see bruises and a black eye but you can’t see that horrible psychological abuse

Gigi: And inside was just this broken person

Lily expressed how the visibility of physical violence is socially legitimated unlike the hidden terror of psychological violence.

Lily: . . . and to wish someone would kick the hell of out you just so you had something physical that would represent what they had actually done to you, seemed wrong . . . and don’t get me wrong, the physical side is not easy but it’s easy in the fact that even if someone really hates you they can’t deny a black eye . . .

Men who violate their intimate partners use imperceptible coercive tactics to intimidate and manipulate women’s compliance to gender normativity. When I asked Lola if her subjection to physical violence had left a mark, she replied “*Hmmm, not that I can ever remember, nothing big enough that I could go look at this . . . [he was] ever so clever*”. In the absence of visible physical violence, Lola lacked proof of her experiences and her potential risk of more severe, injurious physical violence. Living under siege for many years because of the men’s coercive control within the relationships and the stress of not having identifiable proof of their victimisation, affected the women’s overall health and well-being.

Health and well-being. As the women reflected on their experiences of psychological violence within their previous relationships, they spoke of the effects on their psychological and physical health and overall well-being. Sally, Louise, Gigi, Lily, Lola, and

Abigail were, and in some instances still are, affected by their life under siege as a result of their ex-partners' tactics of coercive control. First, the women talk of the physical affects on their health. Sally described the effect on her physical health as a result of constant stress.

Sally: . . . that last couple of years [of the relationship] I had this horrible, horrible rash . . . weeping rash on my arm . . . I put creams on it, went to the doctors and it was like raw and weeping and horrible sores on my arm, and um . . . he left and um and then it was about six months later and I don't know how I didn't notice but I looked down and it was gone and I didn't notice it going or anything like that, it just disappeared

Carmel: Do you feel that was manifested through stress perhaps . . . a result of the stress and strain you were under?

Sally: Yeah.

Lily talked about the health effects of living under siege, embedded in a relationship of fear. The constant hyper-vigilance and stress took a toll on Lily's physical health.

Lily: you just lived on adrenalin all of the time . . . he was frightening and I had the shakes all the time . . . I had the diarrhoea, I had the old twitch [points to right eyebrow] going on and I used to think that people must be looking at me going "oh what is wrong with her face" [laughs]. Um, I used to have this terrible scaly rash on my hairline that used to go right down my neck and it was red raw, like acid burn all the time and, um, I would get rosacea on my legs and, um, I had continual breast lumps as well and I read something about that, that another woman, um, in a really abusive relationship manifested too in all these breast lumps . . . and I've had none since I left him

Carmel: And you had them when you were with him?

Lily: Yeah and when it was really bad . . . pretty much all of our marriage . . . that daily gut-wrenching this-is-not-going-away-thing . . . living on the edge, living off adrenalin, I lived with constant diarrhoea all of the time . . . I had lived with it for so long, my guts was just liquid . . . living with that constant anxiety . . . anything that went near me it just turned to liquid 'cause I couldn't hold it down . . . [then] I walked around one day and I thought something is wrong, I was unsettled . . . and it's like, I haven't had diarrhoea for two days – that was after 2-3 months after leaving him.

Lola whom remains subjected to the stresses of post-separation violence also suffers health-related markers even though it has been seven years since she left her ex-husband, emphasising how his constant coercive control continues to affect her well-being.

Lola: This stress thing on my face, all the stuff that goes on in my face was terrible last year – really, really bad . . . sometimes it's treated with an antibiotic, I just had a course and it's done nothing . . . and I don't want to take antibiotics in the long term so it's just the way it is

Carmel: Do you think it's a result of stress?

Lola: Definitely . . .

Abigail recognised how her dramatic weight loss so quickly after giving birth was a result of living under perpetual stress in the house.

Abigail: I think I lost 10kgs in the first two weeks after having her [baby] . . . it was not just from breast-feeding, it was from everything, all the tension.

The women also emphasise the psychological effects of coercive control. Louise explained how her decline in confidence and loss of identity was a result of nearly 20 years living constantly on edge. From having lived on the edge, Louise drew on a further metaphor of “*that hole*”, a result of subordinate femininity and intimidation that rendered her helpless in a ‘dark’ place.

Carmel: How was your well-being affected . . . that is your mental and physical health?

Louise: Mental health [pause] yes definitely affected me, I lost a lot of confidence. . . I wasn't happy, I wasn't a happy person

Carmel: Did you ever feel it could be depression or was it more just feeling unhappy with your situation?

Louise: [pause] – um [pause] – I don't think it was depression but it certainly was dissatisfaction and, um, and probably helplessness. . . I absolutely let myself get worn down by him. . .

Carmel: Did your self-esteem and self-identity take a knock?

Louise: Absolutely – and it took a long time to crawl back from that hole.

Abigail spoke of how the constant stress she encumbered both during and post-separation also affected her confidence and self-esteem.

Carmel: . . . can you recall losing sight of your self-esteem or self-identity, your confidence?

Abigail: Yeah . . . I did lose myself . . . I was just going through the motions of day-to-day. . . I didn't have the drive to do anything, I wouldn't sit back and think right I need to go out and do something, what am I going to do – it was always like 'nah'

Carmel: And do you feel like it's come from him and perhaps it zapped your energy?

Abigail: Yes . . . I wouldn't do exercise, I would smoke a lot . . . I didn't look after myself at all and, um, and it was the last thing I was thinking about was looking after myself . . . I had the stress and his crap and I never thought about looking after myself . . . [I was] emotionally on and off, I would start to get better then he would get in contact again then it was just a downward spiral. . .

Like Abigail, Gigi also spoke about her lack of investment in herself while in the relationship and how she de-valued her well-being.

Carmel: Do you think your well-being was affected in any way?

Gigi: Yeah – probably more my emotional, how I saw myself and that self-talk, just not believing and valuing myself . . . and I never exercised whereas now I do. . . I wonder if I didn't feel valued so why take care of myself. . . but I just probably never put time into myself

Lily reflected on her well-being after leaving the relationship, aware of how living for 15 years in a coercively controlling relationship affected her psychological health.

"I see how I am now and how I was when I got out, but when I got out I truly believed I had gotten away unscathed, you know, but when I look back I go 'oh my God, I was bat-shit crazy!!'" [laughing].

The women spoke of the effects of coercive control where they embody their past every day.

Lily: . . . [it] breaks something inside of you, and it changes who you are . . . it changes your worldview, it changes how you see people, and it makes you really distrustful, and it makes you sniff things on men that you have no rational reason for.

Sally: [it] affects me today . . . I realised how raw it actually [still is] just talking about it . . . the frustration, the fact that it is still there after all this time [after 20 years], and how someone says something to me and it kinda triggers stuff.

Abigail: I definitely have got some anxiety now that I never had before I met him. I am not as outgoing as I used to be, I don't feel like I want to socialise as much as I used to socialise, um, even just stupid things like ringing up places and organising things, and stuff . . . I don't want to do it . . . I think I am too worried a confrontation is going to happen.

Like shrapnel from a bomb, the women's experiences of the men's patterned violations over the years have embedded so deeply in their psyche that their bodily integrity and identities remain marked. Sally explained how she struggles to trust new friends.

Carmel: So when you came out of that relationship did you have any idea of your self-identity, so actually who you were as a person?

Sally: Well no . . . I didn't really know how to interact with other people and I mean, when I say it affects me today, I don't have friends now. I just guess I am just used to it. . . I make a lot of acquaintances but I don't make good friends, I don't let anybody close. . . the fact I was always told everyone hated me, and they are not your friends . .

As Lily continues to embody the memory of her ex-husband's violations, she positions herself outside of her own body, as a protective measure from future harm.

Lily: I am really hard about sex now . . . if someone slept around on me I'd be like sweet yep there is your bag . . . it sounds funny but I don't even think I'd care . . . I would screw anyone but nobody will ever touch me again, do you know what I mean, nobody will ever touch me again . . . it's just a body. My lovely man will say [kind things] to me . . . and I just laugh as it means nothing to me . . . he would marry me tomorrow [but] I will never be married again – no man will ever own me [again].

Abigail also embodies her previous violent history and understands that it affects her new relationship, yet she has learnt to question the voice that affirmed her ‘wrong’ position.

Abigail: . . . I had been bringing over other things from the previous relationship . . . I said to him [current husband] I am not putting up with your shit . . . I was quite blunt and up front and I, ‘cause I knew I had nothing to lose . . . ‘cause I did it right from day one and . . . I took control right from day one to not be treated the way I had been treated [in her previous relationship] . . . the previous relationship I wouldn’t have said “what is your problem”, I would have just felt like it was my fault and I do find sometimes . . . I turn back to thinking “what have I done wrong” . . . I’ve obviously done something, but I am not scared to say [now] what is wrong . . .

After being hypervigilant during her entire previous relationship and still subjected to post-separation violence, Lola found it difficult to experience her new relationship without fear and hypervigilance for her safety.

Lola: [I would] try to push [current partner of five years] to have a fight with me and see where his breaking point was . . . and to be honest I missed . . . the adrenalin of being on the roller coaster ride with [ex-husband], then when I got off the roller-coaster it was kinda like a bit boring. . .

Carmel: You lived in hypervigilance, wondering what next, what is he going to do and watching how you say it and what you say

Lola: . . . yes [and with sex] that [‘doggy-style’ sex] affected my next relationship.

In the women’s reflections, a visible lack of ‘proof’ and inadequate meanings to legitimate what they had experienced, sustained the effects of coercive control. In this way, the women spoke of their lost voices as the invisibility of psychological violence (and non-injurious physical) continued to keep their experiences hidden and positioned them within constructions of subordinate femininity. Violence against women is entrenched in a culture of male domination that dehumanises, exploits, and controls women as subordinate ‘others’ based on their sexual differences (Stark, 2007). As Stark (2007) emphasises, men who subjugate women in personal life inflict and produce a political harm that deprives women of their right to live free from violence and in some cases, deprives them of access to necessary

resources. The women spoke of the effects on their mental and physical health and well-being as they embodied the violence that affected their current identities and new relationships.

Within this chapter on post-separation coercive control, the women's narratives have shown how violence against women operates within a political gendered space where men use many tactics of coercion and strategies of psychological violence to control women post-separation. Yet, women often learn to minimise psychological forms of violence and coercion as it is "normalised within gender orders" (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016, p. 51). Through the women's turning points we come to understand how they eventually recognised their subjection to psychological violence and, within the discourse of motherhood, how they took up positions as protective mothers, attempting to protect their children from experiencing their father's violence. As the women began their new lives out of the relationships, their positions within gendered relations of power continued as their ex-partners refused to let them live in peace and free of his control. Instead, the women experienced the men's campaigns to constantly harass and intimidate them through forms of psychological violence, subjugating the women to a life still under his siege.

Post-separation, the men achieved the women's compliance through tactics of coercion targeting the site of mothering. Using both their children and the legal system the men manipulated the women through the site of child access. In this way, the women experienced the men's tactics of maternal alienation to disrupt the mother-child relationship through the telling of lies to their children and degrading the women's maternal position, enacted through discourses of mother-blame and fathers' rights.

Within a discourse of fathers' rights, the pattern of coercive control becomes a site for men to intimidate, isolate, and control their ex-partners further (Stark, 2007). In this research, restriction of the women's movements through the men's manipulation of child access arrangements, left the women fearful for their children's safety. The site of motherhood, consequently, became contested through discourses that supported fathers' rights to see their children. The women then became positioned as both protective mothers and alienating mothers through maternal care and protection of their children. Women who challenge fathers' positions as 'safe' parents are positioned through the legal system's masculine discourse that constructs mother's as alienating and hostile, based on an assumption that mothers purposefully put a wedge in the father-child relationship (Morris, 2005; Shea Hart & Bagshaw, 2008). Although the position of women within the construction of femininity is as maternal protectors of their children, fathers' rights become all-powerful in

the ‘best interests of the child’ that undermines the women’s maternal position (Jeffries, 2016).

As men use the legal system to threaten mothers over child custody arrangements, the endorsement of fathers’ rights is to the detriment of the women’s positions as protective mother and their experiences of psychological violence. Women are further victimised, mother-blamed, and victim-blamed in legal institutions such as Court-induced counselling or mediation. It is no wonder that women who fear the Family Court system often acquiesce to the men’s stipulation of child access arrangements, sustaining a subordinate position of femininity. In this way, women’s coercion into legal custody agreements is an endeavour to protect themselves and their children from greater harm. Thus, through their subjection to psychological violence post-separation, women experience on-going sufferings legitimated in and through institutions and social power. Therefore, though the operation of gendered power relations post-separation, femininity continues to be the site of women’s subordinated position within a gendered social hierarchy.

The final chapter of this thesis will summarise the findings from this research, including any limitations and gaps for future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion

When women and girls rise, their communities and their countries rise with them.

(Michelle Obama, 2016).

The intention of this thesis was to understand the experiences of women subjected to the imperceptibility of psychological violence. The continual subjection and exploitation of women to men's violence, not just here in New Zealand but globally, is a political and social issue that demands consistent informed attention through current research. Research enables societies to gain insight into subjugated knowledges and feminist qualitative research specifically offer's an opportunity to listen to the forgotten voices of women. Listening to women's voices challenges dominant discourses, such as masculinity, men's and fathers' rights, and heteronormativity that suppress women's experiences. Realising that many women are subjected to primarily psychological forms of violence in intimate relationships, generated my interest in this area of gendered violence as I came to understand the lack of adequate language and social exposure within my own socio-cultural environment. This led me to question how other women's current or past experiences of psychological violence rendered invisible, left women unable to give meaning to their experiences, make sense of their victimisation, and describe the effects. As Tetlow (2016, p. 250) argues, a lack of proper language to describe the "full horror of domestic violence" is a failure, both within the criminal justice system and culturally, to understand women's experiences of intimate violence as a pattern of torture that leaves deep "psychological scars".

I began my initial literature search with terms such as 'psychological', 'emotional', 'abuse', and 'violence' as well as 'IPV' and 'DV'. What I first uncovered in the literature was a discrepancy in how to name non-physical forms of violence/abuse. Literature either differentiated between psychological, emotional, or verbal forms of violence or some researchers used these terms interchangeably within their research, only serving to strengthen the ambiguity of these forms of violence. I also noticed that current research on psychological violence/abuse was minimal, especially New Zealand qualitative studies that listened to women's voices of their previous experiences. Furthermore, I identified that substantial research on IPV or DV was conceptualised as physical violence

As I continued reading the research literature, the majority of studies identified and spoke of women's experiences of non-physical *abuse*, even though positioning of their stories was within a ferocious pattern of attacks on their identities and their femininity, resulting in

considerable mental harm and a debilitating loss of self-esteem. *Abuse*, as a term, seemed to hold a less significant status than *violence*, minimising the impact and life-long injuries I was reading about as a result of non-physical forms of violence. Current societal and legal understandings of violence as a physical ‘bashing’ that leaves visible markers, such as bruises or broken bones, discriminates against women who experience forms of non-injurious and non-physical violence. Understanding violence as a singular act of physicality with visible evidence ignores the intensity of insidious patterned psychological violence, that can include sexual coercion/violence and physical acts of non-visible injurious aggression and threats, generating intense terror in women. The current meaning of violence, therefore, needs re-conceptualising. Additionally, representing all forms of non-physical violence as ‘psychological’ consequently reflects both the strategies men use and the effects this type of violence has on women’s identities including their emotions, lessening the ambiguity of what constitutes non-physical violence. This is when I decided my thesis topic would be ‘psychological violence’ and as I have found, the harrowing effects of psychological violence can last a life-time.

During my literature search, I also came across Evan Stark’s 2007 book on coercive control and how his theory of IPV is inclusive of all violence, positioning the coercive strategies men use to control women at the core of IPV. Stark’s concept of entrapment was enlightening as I understood how the imperceptibility of coercive control, manifested through acts of psychological violence, kept women’s stories of their victimisations hidden from others, reinforcing their entrapment. Coercive control became the framework for understanding the operations of gendered psychological violence and through which I could understand how the women’s stories of entrapment equated to living under siege.

I drew on a narrative-discursive approach to the analysis to understand the previous silencing of the women’s stories, the discourses that enabled their entrapment, the discursive resources the women used to tell their stories, and what discursive resources empowered the women to recognise the violence and eventually leave. The strengthening of dominant discourses covertly tolerated and sanctioned by society through common-sense understandings, become normalised. Privileging certain discourses over others, such as the physicality of violence or fathers’ rights, can subjugate women’s positioning by controlling their freedom of movement and bodily integrity within (and post-) intimate relationships, structured through gendered social power relations.

This research offered the six women who shared their stories, the space to talk freely about how they understood their experiences of ‘abuse’ in previous intimate partner

relationships. As mentioned previously, abuse is widely recognised and understood as non-physical acts of violence. Heteronormativity, socially sanctioned as a normative aspect of our everyday culture, dominated their narratives from the beginning.

As identified, each relationship began through mutual attraction and notions of love and commitment, fun and excitement, and coupledness. The women positioned themselves and their partners within the socially constructed norms of femininity and masculinity that guided their performances within the relationships. As their relationships progressed, the women's narratives shifted becoming visceral as they spoke of their subjection to harm, fear, exploitation, and confusion everyday within siege-like conditions. Through the invisibility of disciplinary power, the women learnt to self-govern their behaviour and discourse while struggling to keep up with their partners' changing rule-book. As they strived to understand the psychologically violent intimate relationship they found themselves embedded within, the men's tactics of coercive control (verbal attacks, belittling, sexual degradation and coercion, and constant surveillance) that intimidated, isolated, and controlled the women, led to their feelings of crazy-making where 'normal' ceased to exist. The women's narratives then became filled with stories of survival, self-preservation, and maternal protection endorsed through perpetual harm, fear, self-blame, and eventually shame within an unreal world.

An interesting and very significant finding that emerged from the women's stories of psychological violence was their subjection to forms of imperceptible physical violence that included acts of sexual violation and exploitation. Although the women understood their experiences of psychological violence in the absence of physical, they did not recognise that their subjections to non-injurious physical and sexual violations were forms of violence. The implications for this finding are significant, identifying how the women have drawn on common-sense stereotypes of 'serious' perceptible physical violence that excludes the most intimate physical attacks women can experience. We are already aware that the stereotype of physical violence dominates common-sense understandings and traditional gender stereotypes of IPV and this suggests the stereotype operates to exclude sexual violence/violations, non-injurious physical violence, and the very real link existing between psychological, sexual, physical (and financial) violences. The women's disclosures have, therefore, identified and clarified the patterned and diffuse violence of women in intimate relationships that does not consist of singular episodes of physical violence.

Within their narratives, the women used metaphors of violence in place of adjectives, as a lack of available discursive resources constrained their telling's. The metaphors helped the women describe the complexities of their experiences. The metaphors also enabled me a

glimpse into how the women understood their experiences of IPV and how they gave meaning to the vicious pattern of psychological violence. As they spoke, war-like metaphors described the building tension and fear that they felt waiting for the next 'explosion' or other forms of 'disciplinary' action by their partners. Metaphors also described the fragility of the women's situations as they precariously went about their everyday lives, trying to make sense of their unreality far removed from their understanding of a normative, mutually respectful heterosexual relationship. Eventually the analysis identified how the women's turning points enabled them to leave their relationships.

The effects of coercive control, as a framework for understanding women's experiences of psychological violence, is vast. Each woman suffered from negative health and well-being. Often their stress morphed into physical symptoms as a result of both the men's control and their own hypervigilance. Some of the women found that negative aspects of their previous relationships transmitted into new relationships through sexual practices or not knowing how to maintain an intimate relationship free of conflict. The dominant discursive resources within the women's narratives enabled me to understand the imperceptibility of psychological violence, a loss of adequate language to explain their experiences, the lack of legal legitimacy of psychological violence that made them feel they would not - and were not - believed, and of violence as patterned behaviour.

This research has analysed the devastating effects that coercive control has on women in psychologically violent intimate relationships. Reflecting on my response to hearing the women's narratives, their stories shocked, saddened, and angered me. Although I had read the literature and felt open-minded about what I might hear, naively I was not expecting to hear the ferocious diversity of their debilitating experiences as they lived under siege within their relationships and importantly post-separation. Although I found their stories upsetting, I also felt the women bravely disclosed how their experiences violated their femininity and identity. Sally, my first interviewee, disclosed her enforced isolation, surveillance, and marital rape; Louise and Gigi declared their transition from strong, out-going women to having low self-esteem and feelings of helplessness; Lola identified how she was subjected to physical violence while pregnant as well as on-going distressing post-separation violence; Lily was intensely subjected to the extreme exploitation of her femininity through misogyny, positioning her as a compliant wife; and Abigail became disorientated because of her ex-partner's constant mind-games and double standards leaving her confused and unsure what was right. Although these were key messages from each woman's story, their talk overlapped in certain ways, as shown in the analysis, that culminated in siege-like conditions

both during their relationships and post-separation. The women were all subjected to verbal attacks or humiliation and, for some, degradation of their maternal body. Often the women self-blamed or were victim-blamed. Traditional gendered stereotypes punished them for challenging masculinity or not enacting their femininity as prescribed by a patriarchal society. Ultimately, the women were all subjected to patterns of coercive control within their intimate relationships, and post-separation, where their position within the gendered social hierarchy maintained their subordination and quietened their voices.

Vitally important to this research has been analysing how the women continue to live under siege post-separation. Post-separation violence was a particular form of IPV that demanded attention as it often goes unnoticed. The women's stories disclosed how their ex-partners continued to coerce and control them by using the children and the legal system through a legitimate discourse of 'fathers' rights' in the 'best interests' of their children. Acts of maternal alienation enacted through the men's degrading talk to their children, control of child access arrangements, verbal abuse at changeovers, and the women's genuine fear and concerns of the legal system all coerced the women into compliance and submission. Within legal interventions used to coerce and control the women, professionals often lacked knowledge of the insidiousness of coercive control enabled by the gendering of social relationships, further entrapping the women to a life of stress and anxiety, especially when their children were in un-safe situations.

I argue that coercive control is a crime of gendered violence impacting on women's basic human rights to freedom and positive well-being. Only when the forgotten voices of women are listened to are the patterns of coercively controlling behaviours by men, within intimate partner relationships, identified as the core of IPV and its effects, both during and post-separation (Westmarland & Kelly, 2016). Westmarland and Kelly (2016) argue that including gender within IPV discourse links it with the international human rights framework on gendered violence and emphasises how all forms of violence inflicted on women by men, a common occurrence in many women's lives globally, makes gendered violence political. Importantly, the international human rights framework for violence against women and girls has its focus on gender inequality and power relations that compromises women's liberty (Burman, 2012). This framework reflects Stark's (2007) main argument that IPV and particularly the patterns of coercive control, are a liberty crime.

Within New Zealand, researchers are seeking a new 'narrative' that changes "people's mindset" on how they think about IPV, requiring a collective understanding of these forms of gendered violence in order to enable effective transformational change (Family Violence

Death Review Committee, 2016, p. 20). The Death Review Committee add that reframing IPV as entrapment by an “identifiable individual” (p. 13) recognises the “individual, structural, and collective dimensions” (p. 37) that create hindrance to women’s effective help-seeking. They add that this reframing understands how women’s acts of resistance are their fight for freedom to reclaim their lost liberty and recognises that the violation and entrapment of women in intimate partner relationships is a violation of women’s human rights (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2016). Within the Human Rights Commission, the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (1990) states all individuals have: *the right to life and liberty, freedom of expression, freedom of movement, equality before the law, and the right to be free from discrimination* (New Zealand Human Right Commission, 2016). The extensive and continual perpetuation of violence against New Zealand women that leads to their entrapment in coercively controlling relationships constitutes a human rights epidemic and makes this new narrative essential for taking seriously New Zealand’s performance in human rights, to protect women from all forms of violence. The theory of entrapment, where patterned forms of gendered violence constrain women’s liberty, enables an understanding of how coercive control constrains women to a life under siege.

This research is not without its limitations. The women’s homogeneity, a result of the snowballing technique, located them in a privileged position as white/Pākehā, middle-class, able-bodied women, as well as mothers who had conceived children with their ex-partners, imbued within heterosexuality as a dominant social norm. Their stories of heterosexual violence and sexual inequality did not intersect through ethnicity, race, disablement, sexual orientation, or relative poverty making their stories un-generalisable to all women’s experiences. Nevertheless, their stories exposed sexual inequalities that un-privileged them. I had hoped to interview women from other ethnicities and to find women without children to ascertain differences in their subjection to post-separation violence. The benefits of future research would be to conduct studies with a diversity of women participants to understand how psychological violence affects all women.

Additionally, future research that examines how professionals within the legal system understand the imperceptible, coercive behaviour men utilise to control their (ex)partners, would enable New Zealand’s legal system to recognise how coercive control is a site of violence for both women and their children. Social condemnation of men’s violence in New Zealand that shames the perpetrators and not the women, would match other countries where low rates of IPV are due to zero tolerance for men’s violence against women (and children) (Tetlow, 2016). Changing the mind-set of a culture that currently normalises and silently

tolerates violence against women in New Zealand, would enable more effective results from the legal system that acts as a cultural signal of what behaviours are censured or endorsed (Tetlow, 2016). Additionally, teaching our young people respectful and dignified ways of enacting intimate partner relationships, based on equality, must be an imperative to changing the mindset for future generations. Furthermore, through using coercive control as a framework, future research could extend our knowledge on IPV to identify the patterned range of intimidating and violating strategies men use to coerce and control all women as operations of power, gender, and ultimately violence. New research would be helpful for our legal system to understand the intricacies of coercive control and might enable future changes in New Zealand's current legislation. Finally, raising awareness of women's experiences by listening to their stories encourages the creation of preventative strategies for psychological violence to transform women's (and girls) lives, through eliminating or at the very least alleviating the violence of all women who are, or have lived, under siege.

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Appendix A



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

The silent epidemic: Understanding women's experiences of coercive control embedded in psychologically abusive intimate partner relationships

INFORMATION SHEET

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Carmel Hancock, from the School of Psychology at Massey University, as part of a Master of Arts thesis. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

STUDY PURPOSE

I am interested in hearing women's stories of their previous heterosexual intimate partner relationships. Your relationship(s) might have included forms of intimate partner violence (IPV) such as physical, sexual or psychological abuse. My aim with this research is to understand how to account for violence against women in the context of their intimate relationships, *in the absence of physical abuse*. Psychological abuse may have been separate from physical and sexual abuse or in conjunction with it. Examples of psychological abuse may include threats to harm oneself or one's children/animals or threats to remove something if you had not done what was asked by your male partner; intimidation including verbal abuse; demanding you do something you are not comfortable doing, in order to please him; putting you down; humiliating you in front of others; making you believe your perspective on events is wrong; and, making you feel like you were going 'crazy'. Often this behaviour is a pattern and occurs regularly throughout the relationship. For safety purposes, if you wish to participate you will need to not be in a current unsafe relationship

I believe research on these forms of abuse are important for gaining greater knowledge about intimate partner violence, especially as they are often not recognised or even talked about in our society for fear of being stigmatised, or minimising the behaviour as normal relationship conflict. You may or may not have been subjected to psychological abuse in your relationships, or might have just felt something was not quite 'right' in your relationship. I am interested in hearing your stories and feelings around this. We will talk in a safe environment that you are comfortable with. Telling your story may help other women come forward to tell theirs and begin to confront society's stigma around women's experience of IPV.

PROCEDURE OF THE RESEARCH

If you volunteer for this study I will ask you to do the following:

Sign an informed consent sheet once you are completely aware of your requirements as a participant.

You will then be asked to participate in a conversational interview with me at a safe location suitable for you. I anticipate the interviews will last between 1-2 hours. The main focus of the interview is

on your personal experience and your story which you can tell in any way you wish and rather than ask you specific questions it will take the form of an ordinary conversation.

Some of the issues I am interested in hearing about from you are your experiences of your previous intimate relationship(s), if you felt subjected to psychological abuse in your relationship(s), and how you processed this at the time. I am interested in hearing if, at the time, you were aware the behaviour by your partner was abusive and how it made you feel as a woman. I am also interested in whether you told any family or friends and if so what their reaction was to it. Finally, I would like to know how psychological abuse and/or your experience in your intimate relationship(s) affected your well-being.

The interview will be digitally recorded and then I will personally transcribe our interview and present it to you in written form for you to check over and amend if necessary. Your identity will be fully removed during transcription and you will be provided with a pseudonym of your choice.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Talking about your experiences of past intimate relationships may be emotional at times and may make you feel uncomfortable, especially if your experience is recent and/or unresolved. For this reason, it is important for you to understand your rights.

PARTICIPANTS 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 time before transcription has been agreed and signed off;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

CARMEL HANCOCK

Mobile: 021 023 51931

Email: carmel_nz@hotmail.com

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, Email: humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B



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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 agree to the interview being digitally sound recorded.

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

I understand that after I have agreed and signed off the transcript I am unable to withdraw from the study.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Appendix C



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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**The silent epidemic: Understanding women's experiences of coercive control
embedded in psychologically abusive intimate partner relationships**

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