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

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

Master of Health Science

In

Psychology

At Massey University, Manawatu, New Zealand

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2013

ABSTRACT

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to begin by acknowledging and thanking the participants of this research. Without their voice, this project would not have been possible. Thank you for sharing your experiences of your childhood and allowing me to reproduce your stories within this research. Your stories have helped to empower the forgotten voices of the many other children growing up with domestic violence. You have produced a very memorable collection of work. Thank you.

Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Leigh Coombes. Without her support, input, conversation and guidance this piece of work would not have been possible. With her supervision, we created a piece of work, which has given volume to those previously forgotten voices. I would like to thank Leigh for the guidance she has provided throughout this journey... As stated by Sir Isaac Newton "*If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants*".

Finally, I would like to thank the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse for their financial support in the development of this research. The NZFVC provided the fees bursary, which enabled this research to go ahead, and without their support this research would not have been possible.

Thank you to everyone who supported me in the development of this thesis - all your support and encouragement has been invaluable and has enabled me to achieve the final goal of supporting those forgotten voices.

Thank You Again.

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