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**POSITIONING AND RE-POSITIONING OF
INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
IN RELATION TO ANOREXIA/BULIMIA: AN
AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHICAL INFORMED
STUDY**

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

Master of Counselling

at

The University of Waikato

by

PAULA SCOTT

The University of Waikato

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DEDICATION

To all those that refused to give up or in...

and to the kingfishers for encouraging me not to either.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people I wish to acknowledge and give thanks to for supporting me in the practicing of and writing about this research.

Firstly, I wish to thank members of my family (my mum Evelyn, my dad Jim and my step-father David) and Elmarie, my research supervisor. Without the presence of my family's voices in this research helping rich-en my life, this research would look and feel dramatically different to what it does. I also wish to thank my parents for their generous words of motivation, financial top-ups and movies, coffee breaks and lake walks together. Elmarie's presence alongside me in this research has been incredibly important; the enduring resiliency and willingness she carried into the research meetings helping me to face difficulties in and around the research journey.

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ABSTRACT

Emerging from a ten-year long struggle with anorexia and bulimia and moving into a post-structuralist, narrative-guided counselling frame has drawn me to thinking about how knowledge shapes life. Anorexia and bulimia have been and are of growing concern as the glamorisation of thinness persists (Brumberg, 1988, cited in Olsen, 2000, p. 29), and the ‘cultural fascination’ and ‘high profile’ of eating disorders continues (Malson, Finn, Treasure, Clarke, & Anderson, 2004, p. 5). Movements have been made towards an exploration of ‘insider’ knowledge and meanings around eating disorders, and how eating disorders are discursively produced and regulated. Through this research, which is informed by practices of auto-ethnography and aspects of bibliotherapy and participatory action research, I explore the meanings and experiences that members of my family speak of in relation to anorexia and bulimia. By utilizing aspects of the research practices of auto-ethnography and participatory action research I attempt to communicate my own story, while at the same time weaving alongside the stories of my family members.

Malson, H., Finn, D.M., Treasure, J., Clarke, S., & Anderson, G. (2004). Constructing ‘the eating disordered patient’: A discourse analysis of accounts of treatment experiences. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology, 14*, 473-489.

Olsen, M.E. (2004). Listening to the voices of anorexia: The researcher as an “outsider witness”. In M.E. Olsen, (Ed.), *Feminism, community and communication* (pp.25-46). New York: Haworth.

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INTRODUCTION

PREPARING A RECEIVING CONTEXT

The text you are about to begin reading might look like any other thesis which aims to document research. This text bears many aspects commonly associated with academic thesis research writing: the standard black ink, twelve-point typeface, white paper, and references pages; chapters and words as well as sentences and paragraphs.

However, despite the presence of aspects common to many other research texts, this document is in itself one of a kind, unique, a document of special importance that seeks to give voice to stories: the meaning-making of and in relation to experiences, lives and relationships.

These are no ordinary stories.

These are stories about my life and the lives of members of my family; stories about how we experienced ourselves, each other, and our lives in relation to the illogical, deceptive problem of anorexia/bulimia. Stories we made visible even though it meant making ourselves vulnerable; meant making our personal political and public, readable, available to a potential audience - you – the reader now reading them.

In chapter one, “Locating myself and my research practice within a context”, I tell a story about the developing of my feminist post-structuralist voice and researcher identity; how certain people and concepts came into my life and invited me to re-

consider amongst many things, gender, power/knowledge, what research is, and what research could be.

Chapter two, “Developing theory and identity into research practice”, carries this researcher identity story further. In this chapter I explain how I translated my feminist post-structuralist research identity and the ideas I was interested in into actual methods and procedures that I then took up and asked members of my family to participate in together with me.

Then, in chapter three, “Beyond thin descriptions: My story of sailing on the sea of a/b”, I call upon autoethnography to tell my own stories about my life and experiences in relation to members of my family and in relation to anorexia/bulimia. I tell such stories as a part of making my personal political. I also tell these stories as a means of exposing the rich fullness of my existence and directly challenging anorexia/bulimia’s preferences for thin descriptions.

Finally, in chapter four, “Beyond thin descriptions. Conversations with members of my family: their stories of and about being on a journey on the sea of a/b”, I look towards members of my family, my mother, step-father and father. I use the research space to enable them to give voice to their stories of and about being on a journey on the sea of a/b. Into this space I also weave my own voice and experiences in relation to my parent’s stories.

But these are not the only stories this research embraces.

Weaving into this story, our stories, are many other stories and other peoples’ stories; such as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1798/1996) and the

many stories embodied within the text *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel, Epston, & Borden, 2004).

I mention these sources because both feature within as well as inform aspects of this research document. It is from the latter of these texts that I have borrowed the term ‘a/b’ (meaning anorexia/bulimia) as an alternative to the diagnostic labels anorexia, bulimia, and/or ‘eating disorders’. I have also borrowed the concept of anti-a/b practice from this same text.

This document is in itself an example of an anti-a/b practice.

Not only is it anti-a/b because it aims to look for ways to foster the sharing of experiences and knowledge about and in relation to a/b. This document is anti-a/b because it provides one example of resistance against the repressive, dividing, isolating power of a/b; an example that others may borrow from if they so wish.

In inviting you to read this document of research practice, I ask that you try to see both it and the research about which it speaks as anti-a/b actions; actions that have had and continue to have real effects; actions that have enabled real re-positioning in my life as the researcher and research participant, and lives of the other research participants – my family: my mother, step-father and father. It is these special people and their participation in my life and in this research that makes this document what it is, my life outside of a/b as rich as it now is, and my ability to help myself and to help others against a/b so much more possible.

CHAPTER ONE

LOCATING MYSELF AND THIS RESEARCH PRACTICE WITHIN A CONTEXT

I have lived, breathed, practiced and now write about this research as a young woman whose personal coming of age, like the feminist theorist McLeod (2008), has “paralleled the rise of post-structuralism in...Feminist research” (p.3). Also like McLeod (2008), I identify myself and locate my research practices “within the territory of post-structuralism and feminism” (p.3).

Even as I make this claim of identity, and locate this research and myself within the territory of feminist post-structuralism, I do so with caution. I do not want to tie this research or myself to a fixed definition or category. My fear is that in doing so I might risk losing the sense of movement that now permeates my life. Movement that speaks to the understanding I have of myself as a “transforming post-structuralist subject” (Davies, et al., 2006, p.90). Movement that speaks to my family’s positioning and re-positioning in relation to ourselves, each other and a/b. Positioning and re-positioning that doing this research has made possible.

According to Stanley and Wise (1993), the “research experience...is necessarily subject to on-going ‘theorizing’, on-going attempts to understand, explain, re-explain, what is going on” (p.60). Richardson and St Pierre (2005) suggest that “writing is thinking, writing is analysis, writing is indeed a seductive and tangled method of discovery” (p.967).

Each of these sets of ideas sits with me as I write. So too do other ideas from other women. Women whose shoulders I stand upon in doing this research practice. Women I wish to acknowledge. Suzanne Gannon and Bronwyn Davies are two such women. In their writing about feminist research (2007), these women remind me that writing is one of a number of discursive strategies through which particular versions (accounts) of the world can and are accomplished. They explain how:

An account is...always situated. It is an account from somewhere, and some time, and some one, written [or spoken/produced] for some purpose and with a particular audience in mind. It is always therefore a partial and particular account that has its own power to produce new ways of seeing and that should always be open to contestation. (Gannon & Davies, 2007, p.72)

These women's words call me to pause and reflect on the situating of this account. To pay attention to and acknowledge the ground, air, tools, guides, intentions and perspectives I have taken up within the research to facilitate my own and others movement.

Many theorists in addition to Davies and Gannon have shaped this research. Some of these theorists do not locate their work within the territory of feminism and/or post-structuralism, but rather align their work in some way with a postmodern, narrative or social constructionist worldview (Freedman & Combs, 1996). I include these theorists as members of a chorus of voices (Kotzé, 2000). Each voice existing side by side offering a multitude of approaches to knowing

and telling (Richardson & St Pierre, 2007, p.961). The voices of these theorists offer situated accounts which I have used to guide me in my theorising within this research.

Referring to the situated accounts written by others makes this account situated. My own account here is unique in how it is situated because I theorise the world and research through the medium of my own consciousness (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

A “radical feminist perspective constructs experience and practice as the basis of theor[ising]” (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.58). In offering forward this theory of theory, I open the door to tonal variations amongst my own and other women’s theoretical accounting for the world. Accounts that can in one moment be strikingly different while also united by their appeal to a common cause called Feminism.

Opening a door to difference makes space for and invites a mapping of the particulars of the feminisms I embrace within this research practice. It is with a degree of difficulty that I make explicit the particular threads shaping my perspectives, the feminist consciousness through which I have researched. How to capture that which changes, is multiple, involves process and states of being? (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

The threads are tightly knotted together to solidify the researching ground. Unravelling them enables clarity in the reading of this study. I unravel the threads gently, heeding Richardson and St Pierre’s (2007) words about how “qualitative [research] writing steps away from trying to write a text saying everything to

everyone at once” (p.962); that “qualitative research carries the meaning in its entire text” (p. 960). The ideas of these women are important to me because of the qualitative practices I have called upon within this research.

As previously stated, this research straddles the theoretical paradigms of feminism and post-structuralism. I make this claim primarily on the basis I self-identify (Reinharz, 1992) as a feminist post-structuralist theorist. Haug et al. (as cited in Davies, Flemmen, Gannon, Lewis, & Watson, 2002) observes that “theory is neither meaningful nor useful if bears no relation to life as we experience it in the everyday world” (p.293).

Feminist, post-structuralist theories are meaningful and useful in this research because they are relevant to my everyday experiencing of life as a New Zealander, a woman, daughter, sister, narrative therapist and anti-a/b activist. And because I research through the medium of my feminist consciousness, feminist post-structuralism informs the questions I ask, the assumptions I make, the procedures, methods, and approaches I have used to carry out research, collect and analyse data and draw conclusions (Peirce, 1995).

I have not always privileged feminist post-structuralist perspectives in my life. Perhaps in my teens through to the start of my counselling studies I was orientated towards feminist politics, but certainly not post-structuralism. The term has only had meaning and relevancy to my life in the last three years; feminist post-structuralist theories came into my life the same year I began research practice.

Three years on from beginning this research practice, I still struggle to clearly describe what it means to live a life and practice research that is informed by

feminist post-structuralist theories. In their writing about feminist post-structuralism, Gannon and Davies (2007) adopt a position that is both a looking back, to “trace the emergence of that field and its influence...and looking forward, simultaneously, to the possibilities that such work opens up” (p. 72). In the following paragraphs I will adopt a similar position. Looking back, I will at the same time look forward. First I will examine the emergence of feminist post-structuralist influences within my life, then move on to discuss some of the possibilities that feminist post-structuralism has opened up in the context of my research practice.

I begin with my personal. Begin with but never move entirely away from. This research is woven with accounts of my own and family member’s personal experiences. In chapter three I make visible my personal in the form of an autoethnography. Chapter four meanwhile calls on an ethos of participatory action research (PAR) to enable members of my family to offer accounts of their personal.

THE DEVELOPING OF MY FEMINIST POST-STRUCTURALIST VOICE

Born in 1982, mine was a world already in the grips of feminist politics; a “... politics directed at changing existing power relations between men and women in society” (Weedon, 1987, p.1). In prior years, radical and liberal currents of feminism had together “catalysed a mass movement that challenged definitions of public and private life and called for human rights for women” (Heywood, 2006,

p. 136). Liberal feminism had brought change to individual women's rights, while radical feminism had "rejected the male symbolic order in favour of a celebration of the feminine" (Davies et al., 2006, p. 88). Women had achieved "the right to be educated... the right to criticize the accepted body of knowledge...the right to create knowledge" (Reinharz, 1992, p.11).

As a consequence of these movements, I was taught and subsequently believed that being a woman meant I had the right to do anything: Get an education, dress in a manner of my own choosing, think for myself, have a career and seek financial independence. I perceived my mother's actions and choices as evidence of this. Working, owning a business and/or home, travelling, becoming a leader or politician and attending university were avenues I genuinely thought were openly available to anyone; basic rights of living in a democratic New Zealand society. I believed women and men were equal, and that feminism was part of the past; not relevant to or for the lives of women living in contemporary society.

Entering into secondary education, I became aware that the world around me was actually littered with historical and present-day unequal power-relations between people. Inequalities in relation to facets of daily living that I had until then taken for granted, such as access to quality education, healthcare, employment, and personal, financial and political autonomy. Initially my noticing was primarily around how unequal power relations affected the lives of people of particular colour, religion or ethnic identity. It was troubling to realise that that I had lived so unaware of inequality in my everyday world. I began to wonder how many other domains of my life might be shaped by unequal power relations that still remained invisible to me.

The domain of gender is an example of an area of my life where inequality was rife, but about which I was unaware of. Hence I was also oblivious to the need for the ongoing presence of feminisms. Oblivious until I entered university for the second time in 2007 as a twenty-three years old returning adult student studying counsellor education.

It was as a participant in counsellor education that I was invited to consider gender as relevant, as socially constructed (Butler, 1990) and “fundamental in how we understand what a person is and in how people act and how their actions are understood” (Holmes, 2009, p.54). My own gender as a woman therefore became an aspect of my identity that I was more conscious of.

I had never really considered how the practices, relationship(s) and experiences I had had (and might go on to have) were shaped by my gender. Yet the more I reflected on it as an idea, the more it began to make sense. So too did the idea that feminisms were relevant to me as a woman, and to ‘everybody’ (hooks, 2000a) as gendered beings.

These ideas made sense because they spoke to questions I was grappling with at the time, questions about how my gender as a woman had shaped what and how I experienced aspects of my life. Of specific interest to me, because I was personally revising and transforming the relationship I had with a/b and my body at this time, was how my being a woman might have shaped the relationship I had with my body: a body-relationship dynamic of criticism and general dissatisfaction that appeared to be common to the lives of many women; myself and mother included.

As I have already stated, it was through my education in counselling practice that I found myself looking at gender as simultaneously socially constructed, and as relevant to my experiencing of life. I believe that both ideas helped me begin to make sense of some of my experiences. Much of this was because of my participation in counsellor education. Especially (but not limited to):

- **who was teaching me** (*the counselling programme educators*)
as well as
- **what I was being taught** (*as in the concepts and theories I was invited into growing my knowledge of*)

In the following section of writing I will outline these facets of my learning context. I will discuss how each shaped my taking up of theories in relation to my research. My primary aim is to speak to the influence my learning has had on my employing of feminist post-structuralist ideas about and within this research. However, because my learning has also sought to weave together many theoretical ideas in presenting a historiography of narrative practice, I will also speak about theories that sit beyond those specifically connected with feminism. In doing so, I hope to offer a vibrant picture and help make possible a clearer reading of this research.

THE COUNSELLING PROGRAMME

THE PROGRAMME FACILITATORS

I start by focussing on the educators of this course, Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotzé. I acknowledge these women because of their influence on how I now theorise the world around me. Both have also been particularly significant figures in my specific developing and employing of feminist post-structuralist perspective(s) within this research.

Gender power relations were one of the first learning areas that Crocket and Kotzé encouraged discussion about. These women talked about their own research and writing about gender (Kotzé & Crocket, 2007; Wright et al., 2008; Crocket, Kotzé, Snowdon & McKenna, 2009). They discussed their experiences of the subtle workings of patriarchy, or institutionalised sexism (hooks, 2000) within their own lives. Lives as women teachers, researchers, feminist theorists, professional counsellors and females living in New Zealand in a 21st century context.

A consequence of my being witness to Kathie and Elmarie's making visible of gender power relations in their own lives, together with my participation in gender-related discussions, was that I began to think about and notice more the gender power relationships shaping the meaning-making of women in my community.

As a woman and member of such a community, I felt supported to make a turn inwards: towards my own life. I began to ask questions: Just what had my identifying as a woman meant? What had my being a woman meant when I had

been a client of the therapy and medical professions? What did my being a woman, daughter, stepdaughter and sister in the family context mean for my relationships with family members? What did being a woman mean in terms of my own intimate heterosexual relationships? What did my being a woman mean in relationship to my education and the years I had already spent in the university context producing research and writing? What did my being woman, subject to dominant notions of femininity at various points in my life mean for how I (and others) viewed me? What relationship (if any) did my being a woman have to my and my family's experiences in relation to me as a prisoner of anorexia/bulimia?

WHAT I WAS BEING TAUGHT

THE TEXTS: THE AUTHORS

Standing alongside Kathie and Elmarie, and firming the ground on which I stood in asking these questions of myself within a research context were a number of other feminist and post-structuralist informed theorists and researchers. Voices introduced into my world via texts utilised within the teaching and learning practices of the counsellor education programme.

These combined sources emphasised how women can and are actively resisting dominant gender prescriptions. Historically, universities have been androcentric; yet here I was encountering women, feminists, with high profile positions in academic and professional communities; women tailoring research to fit their feminist-orientated ethical concerns (Thompson, 1992, p.4). Women producing knowledge, utilising their personal experience, researching from a place of

interest in “the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves” (Brayton, 1997-2005, p.1); what Reinharz (1992) describes as “a distinguishing feature of feminist research” (p.258). Crocket and Kotzé were examples of such women. So too were a number of the women theorists (such as Weingarten, 2000; Davies, 1991; Lather, 2002; Drewery, 2005; Bird, 2004) in the various texts I was gathering knowledge from.

At the same time I also began to notice that a number of women theorists such as Davies, Gannon, Burr, Crocket, and Kotzé can and were positioning themselves alongside their male colleagues White, Epston, Winslade, Sampson, Gaddis and Monk; taking forward and growing new theories about power/knowledge, agency, subjectivity and discourse out of the theories of the well-known pioneers (such as Foucault, Derrida and Saussare) of post-structuralism. For example, in the text *Working on the Ground*, Davies et al. (2002) draw together Derrida’s and Foucault’s theorising about the subject, power, and knowledge to “map the rationalities that are available to anyone...the material out of which social action is shaped, and also the material out of which interiorities are themselves produced” (Davies, et al., 2002, p. 293).

THE TEXTS: THE TOPICS

Another reason why these sources shaped my direction and participation in research practice was the texts themselves. Many of the texts that I was coming across constructed research differently from the research practice I was more familiar with. These new texts detailed academic research around topics like that

of motherhood (Weingarten, 1997; Grobbelaar, 2001); illness (Weingarten, 2000a; Frank, 1995; 2004); subjectivity (Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Sampson, 1989; 1993); family (Freeman, Epston, & Lobovits, 1997) agency (Davies, 1991), trauma (Weingarten, 2000b), therapy (Bird, 2004) and women's personal experiences and life stories (Davies et al., 2002; Davies et al., 2006; Ellis, 1999; Lockford, 2004). Topics and experiences I had never considered before as potentially permissible or viable research foci. I found I could connect with this research. I could identify interconnecting points of relevancy with aspects of my own life, as a woman who had had questions about motherhood, as a woman having witnessed and experienced illness as well as engaged in various therapeutic relationships, as a woman, daughter, sister and member of the community who had encountered trauma, and as a woman who had wondered many times over whether my voice had been heard and why it was I felt isolated and did not quite 'fit' in my family or wider community.

A particularly influential chapter of writing I was introduced to was titled "Towards spirit-nourishing approaches" from the book, *Biting the Hand That Starves You* (Maisel, Epston & Borden, 2004). This is a book "written for three audiences – professionals, insiders, and their parents, partners, and friends..." with the hope to "inspire and enable insiders to embrace more of their own freedoms, joys, pleasures, and appetites" through making visible "fighting words, terrifying anti-a/b deeds and thrilling anti-a/b possibilities for the lives of therapists, individuals struggling with a/b, and the communities in which they reside" (Maisel et al., 2004, p. 3).

It was a chapter that resonated with me. I had never read any other text like it before.

The language echoed my own new preferred way to make sense of problems as external – separate from people. There were pages and pages of this way of speaking, externalising language practices locating people in relationship to the problem of a/b.

While the language employed within the text was important because it sat closely alongside my own language, even more significant to me was the topic focus of this text and its close proximity to my own life experiences.

Reading about young women's meaning-making of their treatment experiences in relation to the problem of a/b was amazing. I could personally identify with much of what these young women said. With concepts such as "transferred dictatorship" (Maisel, et al., 2004), I felt myself nodding with familiarity. This term could equally be used to describe my own experiences of treatment. However, unlike these young women I had not spoken my meaning-makings. In fact, I had not yet noticed, nor had I realised that there may be such speaking positions available to me.

For as long as I could remember, I had felt lost and alone; even as I moved into viewing a/b as an external influence in my life, by privileging such an understanding of a/b I had continued to feel I was isolated from people who mattered most to me: my family. I believed this to be the case because when we talked about problems that we or people around us were experiencing, we seemed to speak a different language. I heard my mother's, father's and step-father's

words as internalising problems within people. This view collided sharply with the practice of externalisation I took in relation to problems. Instead of make visible the differences I could identify in our language and practices in relation to problems, and why my new language was helping me to reposition myself away from the immediate grips of a/b, I opted instead to remain silent.

A/b thus was rarely spoken about in my family. Talking about a/b tended to invite tension, conflict and on occasion, anger into our relationships. A position of silence appeared to be the most available means by which I could keeping my fragile but growing stronger anti-a/b voice and stance protected. Protected from potential questions or (at worst) fault-finding of my beliefs. My family's opinions and support were as crucial to me as was my anti-a/b voice. I had not wanted to take any actions that may trouble either's place in my life.

However, after reading this chapter, I began to see myself as part of a community of people with insider knowledge about a/b, and a community of shared language users. I did not know at this point that I would go on to research about my and my families experiences in relation to a/b. However with the benefit of being able to look back, I can identify that this text was especially influential in terms of my own movement towards embracing such a research focus. As a written text, this chapter not only authorised my own continued use and privileging of externalising language and practices in relation to a/b. After reading this chapter I began to see myself as able to claim a speaking position; that I had the authority to speak about a/b to others: to move in from the margins to the centre (hooks, 2000b) and make visible the meanings I had of my experiences like these young women had. Both

factors worked to nourish my spirit and support me as I headed into this research journey.

THE TEXTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PRACTICES

The research and writing practices woven into the texts I read were important in developing my own researcher identity. My use of the word ‘practices’ is intended to include the methods of researching and analysing data, and the writing processes.

An outcome of my reading was I found that the previous understandings I had privileged in relation to research, such as the positivist modern science perspective that “there is a determinate, material world that can be definitively known and explained” (Baxter, 2003, p. 22), and that valid research involves (only) objective methods of inquiry (Baxter, 2003) collided with my developing knowledge and understanding of what research and writing practices looked like when informed by a postmodern, narrative, social constructionist worldview. Traces of this worldview are threaded into this research through my feminist post-structuralist research identity.

Freedman and Combs (1996, p.22) highlight four ideas linked to this worldview:

1. Realities are socially constructed.
2. Realities are constituted through language.
3. Realities are organized and maintained through narrative.

4. There are no essential truths.

Texts I read that were informed by some of these ideas also frequently mentioned other concepts such as discourse, discursive practices, positioning, subjectivity, and agency.

These concepts were totally foreign words to me. None had been terms I used as part of my everyday language prior to moving into counselling education.

Having only been on the pathway of counsellor education for a few months, I had little practical knowledge or experience of how a social constructionist worldview including the above ideas, together with these concepts, “radically changes the rules of the game of social science” (Burr, 2003, p.151).

Over time I became more aware.

Reading texts in order to expand my understanding of the relationship between social constructionist epistemology and narrative counselling practice simultaneously grew my understanding of the relationship this epistemology can have to research practice.

Texts I read as part of my counselling education study invited me to consider my positionality (Lather, 1993; cited in Hoskins, 2000, p.56) as a researcher; how my beliefs and values ultimately guide and dictate the flavour of the research (Hertlein, Lambert-Shute, & Benson, 2004, p. 560) by informing the “questions... assumptions...procedures, methods, and approaches [I] use to carry out research (Peirce, 1995, p.569). There were calls to pay attention to the relational aspect of research practice and seek a democratisation of the research relationship (Burr,

2003, p.154) through engaging participants in the research process (<http://www.bera.ac.uk>) and reflexive acknowledging of the validity of participants accounts (Burr, 2003, p. 155).

In various texts (Morgan, 2000; 2006; White, 1997, 2007; Smith & Nylund, 1997), participants and authors were named, given an identity, an embodied existence within the text (Squire, 2002), made real. Other texts referred to the researcher as a narrator (Chase, 2005, p.657); that the researcher develops “their own voice(s) as they construct others’ voices and realities” (Chase, 2005, p.657); and that because “as researchers we are participants in the creation of the data” (Tierney, 2003, p.301), “the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture she/he attempts to paint” (Harding, 2004, p. 461). Further texts spoke of the value of reflexivity as a resource (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.262) and a “process of critical reflection” (Harding, cited p. 274, Guillemin and Gillam); a useful practice for “explicitly acknowledging the personal and political values and perspectives informing the research” (Burr, 2003, p.157).

Many of the concepts and research practices I read (and which I mention above), also feature within my own research.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS RELEVANT TO THIS RESEARCH

DISCOURSE AND POSITIONING

Discourse and positioning are two theoretical concepts I have included within this research. Because these concepts are so central to the research practice, I believe it

is important that I outline the meaning and use both have in the context of this research. As I do so, I weave in concepts such as agency and subjectivity. It is my belief that each of these concepts is interconnected. Each has come to be relevant to the practice, analysis and writing of this research.

I begin first with discourse.

Discourse

My meaning-making of discourse has been largely shaped by Foucault, and theorists writing and researching in relation to the work of Foucault. According to Mc Houl and Grace (1993), “Foucault thinks of discourse (or discourses) in terms of bodies of knowledge” (p. 26). Foucault used the concept of discourse to explore the links between power/knowledge (Cheek, 2000, p. 22).

Discourse as I use the term in my counselling practice and in this research refers to a “multi-faceted public process” (Davies and Harre, 1999, p.35), involving “meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that is some way produce a particular version of events...” (Burr, 2003, p. 64) or claim to be the truth. As an “institutionalised use of language and language-like sign systems” (Davies and Harre, 1990, p.45), “able to occur on different levels: disciplinary, political, cultural, and in small groups” (Tirado and Galvez, 2007, para.22), discourses “... enable and constrain the production of knowledge... determine who can speak, when and with what authority, and conversely, who can not” (Ball, 1990 cited in Cheek, 2000, p. 23). Finally, discourses are said to

“represent political interests and in consequence are constantly vying for status or power” (Weedon, 1987, p. 41).

Thus when using the term ‘discourse’, I am referring to a constitutive concept and process connected with language, speaking, meaning-making, actions, knowledge production, power, truth, politics, people, experiences, events.

Discourses and Subject Positions

Discourses and discursive practices are constitutive. The term discursive practice is used “for all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities” (Davies and Harre, 1999, p. 34). Davies and Harre (1999) argue that “the constitutive force of discourse and discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions” (p.35). About discourse and positions, Burr (2003) adds further detail:

Positions within discourse are seen as providing us with the content of our subjectivity. Once we take up a position within a discourse....we then inevitably come to experience the world and ourselves from the vantage point of that perspective. Once we take up a subject position in discourse, we have available to us a particular, limited set of concepts, images, metaphors, ways of speaking, self-narratives and so on....Our sense of who we are and what is therefore possible and not possible for us to do, what is right and appropriate for us to do, and what it is wrong and inappropriate for us to do thus all derive from our occupation of subject positions within discourse. (p.120)

Taking up a position in a discourse does not mean being fixed in that position or having our entire existence or sense of ourselves as a person constituted by a singular discourse. A number of discourses surround any one object, event, person (Burr, 2003, p.65), which enable multiple readings (Davies, 1990, p. 47).

A person is forever being

constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate...who one is...what sort of person one is, is always open to question...depending upon the positions made available within one's own and other's discursive practices and within those practices, the stories through which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 35).

This idea got me thinking about the discourses in which I might be positioned; how these discourses may be constitutive of my own and other's seeing of, and positioning in relation to me and to which I contribute.

In chapters three and four I highlight a selection of the discourses that I and members of my family were positioned within, including a discourse of mother-blame, discourse of a/b as disorder or mental illness, discourses of individuality, discourses of gender and the body, and discourses of parenting.

Discourse and Agency

An important note to make about the post-structuralist view of discourse and discursive practices is that people are seen as simultaneously constructed by

discourse/discursive practices and “capable of exercising choice in relation to those practices” (Davies and Harre, 1999, p. 35).

It is thought that if the circumstances are right, in that a person is aware of discourse and able to critically analyse the discourses that frame their life, a person is able to use discourse to their own purpose (Burr, 2003, p. 122). This is an idea associated with the concept of agency.

A post-structuralist framework thinks of authority or agency as, “the discursive constitution of a particular individual as having presence”; “*authority*” or “having access to a subject position in which they have the right to speak and be heard” (Davies, 1991, p.51). Davies (1991) writes that being agentically positioned can involve a speaking/writing subject who has “a sense of oneself as one who can go beyond the given meanings in any one discourse, and forge something new” (Davies, 1991, p. 51) and “can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject her, can use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others” (Davies, 1991, p. 46).

For Davies, a feminist post-structuralist theorist, authority or agency is linked with a feminist theorist identity. She suggests that being a feminist theorist is about “choosing to speak...discovering the possibility of authority, of using that speaking, that authority, to bring about fundamental changes” (1991, p.52). This authority “would not be coercive and would not be located within dominant

discourses except insofar as it persuaded them to change themselves, to become more multiple, flexible, and inclusive of different points of view" (1991, p.51).

This was an idea that influenced me. I began to think about the speaking positions I already had access to, and how engaging in research practice might provide me with further speaking positions.

In this research I have used my positioning as I researcher, and the speaking and authority that positioning makes available to me to identify and unpack discourses; hoping that by exposing the workings of discourses and how they positioned myself and members of my family, that we may each be able to step into more agentic positions in our lives, and more ably re-position ourselves in our relationships with one another.

Positioning

Positioning features in this research as a concept and a theoretical tool of analysis. My knowledge and use of positioning has been shaped by the writing of Davies and Harre (1990, 1999), Tirado and Galvez (2007), Gaddis (2004), Winslade (2005), and Drewery (2005).

Davies and Harre (1999) refer to positioning as a:

...discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says

positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which in positions oneself. (p. 37)

In using this concept of positioning, Davies and Harre (1990) take conversation as their starting point (p. 48). Conversation is, in their eyes, “a structured set of speech-acts” (1990, p.45), with every conversation a “discussion of a topic and the telling of, whether explicitly or implicitly, one or more personal stories ...” (1990, p.48). Their notion of conversation is not limited to what is spoken or written; conversation instead incorporates a very broad range of interactions (1999, p. 34) that occur within and among people in society.

Drewery (2005) uses positioning as a theory through which she might “think more carefully about the work that is being done to produce relational subjectivities in everyday and therapeutic speech, and “dis-cover power relations in production” (p.313). Like Davies and Harre, Drewery (2005) also turns towards conversation, suggesting that, “[i]n conversation, interactions can be characterized in terms of positions that are offered, and the positions that are taken up.” (p. 314). ‘Position call’ is the term Drewery (2005) uses when talking about the offering or invitation to take up a position within a certain discourse.

The positioning and re-positioning of individual and family relationships in relation to a/b is one of the main focus points of this research. Positioning theory features throughout this research, and is most visible in chapters three and four where I have used it as a tool to help me begin to make sense of why and how I and members of my family constructed different meanings about ourselves, each other, and our experiences in relation to a/b.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVELOPING THEORY AND IDENTITY INTO RESEARCH PRACTICE

In this chapter I offer an account of how I wove my developing feminist post-structuralist voice and identity into research practice. I focus on how my growing knowledge of and in relation to research/writing became translated into specific research practices and procedures.

REFLECTING ON THE CONCEPTS OF DISCOURSE AND POSITIONING IN RELATION TO MY OWN LIFE

Learning about positioning theory, discourse, discursive practices, and position calls influenced my own journey into research practice. Becoming aware of how these theoretical concepts (and practices) related to people's lives opened a door for me to consider how these concepts may relate to my life. Because the relationship I had with a/b demanded my attention everyday, I instantly found myself drawn towards revisiting my experiences in relation to a/b.

This was one of the first times I had ever stopped and really considered discourse and positioning in relation to my personal life and relationships. It was also one of the first times I had ever considered discourse and positioning in relation to the lives of my parents; how they had been positioned within discourses; what these discourses were, and how their positioning within discourse had shaped their relationships, understandings and experiences in relation to me and a/b.

I found myself wondering if the relationships we had had and the relationships we currently seemed to have around a/b had to be that way; I began thinking about what other possible alternative discourses and positions might surround and be available for myself and members of my family.

It was not long before I shaped these wonderings and thoughts into specific questions about which I wanted to research. These questions consisted of:

- How were relationships between individuals and the family shaped by the presence of a/b?
- How/why have relationships changed between individuals? The family?
In relation to a/b?
- What do these changes mean for individuals and the family with regards to their future relationships?

I knew I wanted to research these questions as well as create knowledge about my own experiences and if possible, become more knowledgeable about my family's experiences. I wanted to make this knowledge available to others. I knew that if I were to create and make available such knowledge through research, I would need to engage in research practice that was compatible with my multiple concerns as a woman, daughter, counsellor, anti-a/b activist and feminist post-structuralist theorist and researcher; concerns about discourse, power, gender; "voice, authenticity, interpretative authority and representation" (Chase, 2005, p. 655).

LOOKING TOWARDS RESEARCH PRACTICES

The many aspects of research practice, such as the hopes/intentions in doing research, the methods, the identification and selection of participants, and the writing and analysis processes all suddenly at once claimed my attention. I wondered what research methods there were that I could utilise to source and analyse data; methods that did not collide with my values and ideas yet at the same time allowed me to begin to find out more in response to the research questions I had formed.

Looking for guidance, I returned to the texts I had already read as part of my counsellor education training. I also searched for and read through texts which gave voice to people's experiences and meaning-makings of a/b.

There were a number of texts I read, such as (Keel, 2005; Mussell, Binford, & Fulkerson, 2000; Polivy & Herman, 2002; Swain, 2006); that contributed to the growing body of knowledge I was gathering about a/b, yet involved research practices (such as quantitative statistic gathering and testing) and/or constructed a/b in ways (for example a/b as a pathology or disorder) that I knew I could not take up myself within my own research.

There were texts that I read which discussed aspects of research practice that I considered relevant to my research practice. Included within this were texts that looked into the relationship of feminism to research practice (Bryson, 1999; Dankoski, 2000; Harding, 2004; Reinhartz, 1992); relational factors within research practice (Fine, 1994; Bird, 2004); and ethics within research (Ellis, 2007; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Smythe & Murray, 2000).

Then there were texts where a/b was addressed through a feminist lens; examining the links between a/b, feminism, and gender (Bordo, 1993; Brown, 2007; Burns, 2004; Malson, 1997; Malson & Ussher, 1996; MacSween, 1993; Robertson, 1992); a/b, gender, and medicine (de Ras, 1997; Hughes, 2000; Malson, Finn, Treasure, Clarke & Anderson, 2004; Malson & Ryan, 2008) and a/b, gender, and popular culture (Bray, 2005; Shaw, 1998; Urla & Swedlund, 2000). As I read these texts, I knew I wanted to somehow find a research method that would allow me to call into question each of these areas.

Finally were the texts that offered accounts of women's experiences of a/b, using research and analysis practices that spoke to and of the feminist post-structuralist values and intentions I wanted to speak to within my own research.

One of these research practices was autoethnography.

In the following sections of writing I will discuss autoethnography together with the research practices of PAR and bibliotherapy, all of which feature within this research work. My speaking will also include a brief overview of how these practices were utilised within the context of this research.

RESEARCH PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Autoethnography features as one of the main threads in this research work.

Autoethnography is described as "a self-narrative that critiques the situatedness of self with others in social contexts" (Spry, 2001, p. 710). It is research where

“researchers turn the analytic lens on themselves and their interactions with others” (Chase, 2005, p. 660); “a study of how identities are constituted in relation to certain dominant and marginalized discourses” (Hoskins, 2000, p. 49); a means of connecting the personal with the cultural (Holman-Jones, 2005, p. 763), political and professional.

I found the writing of Spry (2001), Tillman-Healy (2003), Holman-Jones (2005), Higginson (2007), Chatham-Carpenter (2006), and Ellis (1999) to be especially influential in shaping my turn towards utilising autoethnography. These women’s work about and/or incorporating of autoethnography research practice challenged me; invited me to think and feel (Berry, 2006. p. 9), and to reflect on my own life experience, my constructions of self, and my interactions with others (Spry, 2001, p.711).

I could see that autoethnography allowed these women to each study a phenomenon of concern to them in their personal life (Reinharz, 1992, p.259); to be creative in doing so, while at the same be “evocative and engaging” (Berry, 2006, p. 2). Autoethnography clearly provided them with a means of communication; a space to write their voice into. I knew I needed a similar such space to communicate my voice, and a method that would aid me in my development of a language and meaning making to give to the physical, mind and relationship suffering (Olsen, 2004, p. 44) that occurred in my struggle with a/b. This space was missing in my life because of how self-starvation (amongst many things) had invited me to feel “threatened by invisibility and non-existence” (or voicelessness) (Olsen, 2004, p.44). I knew I needed and wanted to study how and

what discourses may have been at work constituting my identity and positioning at various points during my struggle with a/b.

Discovering autoethnography as a method of inquiry I could employ as a researcher was a simultaneous discovering of and a choosing to speak and have authority; practices I believed to be important as a feminist post-structuralist theorist.

In chapter three of this research I use autoethnography to study and give voice to my experiences of being positioned in relation to a/b, to make visible discourse, to connect my personal with the political and cultural, and to invite change into my life.

Autoethnography is not however, the only thread in this research.

As I have already stated, my research interest included a wish to learn more about the experiences of my family members and the effects of a/b in relation to their lives. I knew my family had stories to tell about their experiences of a/b, and they too, like me, needed a space to speak their stories. I believed that my providing of such a space for members of my family was an action that I needed and wanted to take; that my performing of this action spoke to and of my feminist concerns with empowerment and authorship, as well as honoured the significance my family had had in my self making projects (O'Grady, 2005, p. 119).

I have been able to provide family members with a space to tell their stories by inviting them to become participants in this research work and incorporating some of the ethos and practices of participatory action research (PAR). PAR is another

thread in this research. This thread informs the research procedures used in relation to the material discussed in chapter four.

PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory action research (PAR) is a research method that “offers an opportunity to create forums in which people can join one another as co-participants” (Kemmis & Wilkinson, 1998, p. 22).

Two key points of PAR – that all –each member of my family were able to participate in the research, and that their participation was a “central and defining feature” (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2005, p. 578) guided my “issu[ing] an invitation [to members of my family] to participate in a common process of communicative action for transformation” (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2005, p.579). Common processes being the research procedures the participants and I were involved in together; communicative action being the discussion our involvement in these procedures brought about, and transformation being the changes and/or shifts in knowledge and understanding that these communicative actions helped create.

Additional guidelines from PAR research practice that I called upon to shape this research included the idea of PAR as “shared ownership” (where my story intersects with family members); “participatory” (for all members of the family that choose to be participants in the research); “practical and collaborative” (as we would be co-searching together as a family); “emancipatory (enable a moving away from unsatisfying social structures that have limited self-development and

self-determination) for some, if not all participants" (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2005, p. 567).

My role in this part of the research was as a co-participant and a facilitator of conversations with individual members of my family, the participants in this research. As a co-researcher in this PAR, I directed my attention towards how it was that changing 'objective' circumstances, including places and ways we related to one another in our family were (and continue to be) shaped by the subjective conditions of participants (family member) perspectives (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2005, p.574.)

As part of my commitment to the ethos of PAR shaping this research, I invited each of my parents to do as I had and outline any questions, hopes and areas of interest which they wanted to explore as co-researching participants in this research. The intention being that my parents and my own research interests would stand alongside one another loosely guiding our research conversations.

In response to this invitation, my mother stated she had an interest in talking about the following:

- Defying other's advice
- What were the driver(s) that drove? Why?
- Knowing best – talking about what I/You actually want/is best – how have we and how can we continue to do so?

My step-father indicated that he wanted to explore the questions:

- How do these situations come about for people? Is it genes?

- How/what are the ways through which anorexia has become a problem in society?
- How do my views about a/b sit in relation to Paula's? How does my views sit in relation to professionals who travel alongside others on the a/b road?

And my father asked to learn more about:

- What led you to become a prisoner?
- Did you try to communicate you were being captured and I missed it?
How did you try?
- Could I have prevented this? How?
- Why is there the sense of difficulty/uncertainty in speaking about a/b with others –especially with those who might, in my eyes, to be a prisoner of a/b?

In addition to their involvement in the above procedure, the research participants were invited to engage (individually and collectively) in three other main procedures as part of the research. These procedures included:

- The reading of the book *Biting the Hand That Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004)
- Conversations post-readings
- Participant's qualifying material within the written work of the research

Although every one of these procedures was valuable in the sense that each spoke to and of the selected ethos of PAR informing the research, the book reading

procedure was extremely important in terms of shaping the conversations and subsequent written work that it helped to make possible.

My inclusion of the reading of the book as a research procedure and aspect of research practice relates to bibliotherapy, which is another thread that features in this research project.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

When I invited my family to become participants in this research, I did so with the knowledge that I was asking them to communicate with me about a delicate, emotionally-charged topic; a topic that I myself had kept silent about on numerous occasions over a long period of time. I was aware that before I could hear about my parents experiences around a/b, I needed to locate some kind of shared practice that my parents and I could engage in together that invited a different kind of talking and positioning not previously available; a shared practice that looked towards deconstructing a/b's power to silence us.

The practice I found myself turning towards was bibliotherapy, which I used to construct the research.

On first encountering this term bibliotherapy, I had little awareness that the practices connected with it were already part of my every day. Books had always held a prominent role in my life; I was fortunate in the sense that I had lived with either parent in homes containing many hundreds of books. I was aware that each of my parents possessed and referred to books frequently; regularly purchasing

texts to help expand their knowledge and understanding about aspects of their lives and world. I too, referred to and purchased books for similar purposes.

I viewed books as an important element within my progress to person wellness. I knew that I had “made connections with the characters or ideas in a text and [rethought my] own behaviour” (Trounstine & Waxler, 2005, p.5). Stories had been helpful in offering potential insight into personal problems, enabling the promotion of my own reflexive thinking (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young & Money, 2005, p. 563). Stories had also provided me with access to language, meaning-makings and speaking positions that I had not previously been aware of as available to me. I believed in the idea that literature has the power to transform (Trounstine & Waxler, 2005); the chapter “Toward spirit nourishing approaches” (Maisel et al., 2004) being an example of a piece of literature that had helped transform my positioning in relation to a/b.

It was a surprise for me to learn that I had both knowledge and personal experience in utilising practices informed by bibliotherapy. This fact motivated me; acting as a backdrop shaping my incorporating of bibliotherapy-related practices into this research project.

The piece of literature I was recommended was titled *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004); a text that draws “to an unprecedented degree on the anti-anorexic/bulimic knowledge of insider clients/collaborators to provide fresh insights into the workings of a/b and the means to overcome it” (Maisel, et al., 2004, back inside cover). Having already read and found one chapter from this book helpful in deconstructing a/b’s power of silencing me, I was keen to invite

the participants to share in the practice of reading the text too. I believed the text might help us move into new territory as a shared discourse community (Bakhtin, 1981, cited in Little, Jordens, & Sayer, 2003, p. 74); its providing new language and new meanings in relation to a/b opening up possibilities and conversational spaces from which we could then talk about our experiences in relation to a/b.

It was thus that bibliotherapy – as in the reading of this book came to feature as one of the procedures in this research. Participants were asked to read a selection of the chapters (part one, chapters one-six) of the book. The participants and I then individually met and had an exploratory audio-taped discussion (conversation (a)) of approximately an hour, to an hour and a half in length. This discussion was loosely guided by some of the research questions I had, together with the hopes and questions of the particular individual participant. A suitable date and time was then arranged for each participant to receive, read and reflect on a transcript of their audio-taped discussion (conversation a). I then met with each participant for a second, shorter audio-taped discussion (conversation (b)), where we talked about aspects from the first conversation (a) about which the participant wanted to revisit or discuss further. Following this, each participant moved into reading the second half of the book (chapters seven-nineteen) which included parts two: “Turning Against anorexia/bulimia”; three: “Reclaiming One’s life from anorexia/bulimia”; and four: “Becoming an anti-anorexic/bulimic ally”. On their completed reading of the second section of the text, I then met with each participant and repeated the same procedures as before: an audio-taped discussion (conversation (c)), a transcribed copy of the conversation for reflection purposes

followed by a second additional re-visiting reflection discussion (conversation (d)).

In chapter four of this text I present a summarised selection and analysis of the stories that were generated within these multiple conversations (a, b, c, d); how these stories related to our positioning in the face of a/b; and how I have been able to re-position myself in relation to these stories and the participants who spoke such stories into existence.

However, before reading about my parents experiences and meaning-making, I first draw attention to my own story; my autoethnography in which I explore my experiences and meaning-making of and in relation to a/b, myself and members of my family. This autoethnography is the focus of chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

BEYOND THIN DESCRIPTIONS

MY STORY OF SAILING ON THE SEA OF A/B

LOCATING A STARTING POINT TO THE STORY

Where am I meant to start? My knowledge about the beginning is cloudy. For so long, other dominant, less preferable stories seem to have ruled my life. My living was organised around the problem (Epston & White, 1990, p.4) of anorexia and bulimia (a/b) to the point that I and a/b had become one and the same. I was a problem. I was THE problem.

How and when did I manage to step out and engage in externalising practices and see the problem as external (White, 1984; 1986; 2007) from myself? How and when did I start seeing the unique outcomes (White, 1988; Freedman & Combs, 1996) and begin richening my alternative and preferable self-narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1988)?

Prior to my reading of the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) and beginning this writing, I had understood November 2007 as a real ‘turning point’ in my life. It stood forward for me as the point where I began building my strength and visibly resisting a/b’s claim on my life.

Now in 2010 however, with the book read and many months of research writing elapsed, I find I am able to notice glimmers of resistance to the voices of a/b

occurring prior to November 2007. I still believe that what happened around November was significant, because it was in that month that I came into awareness and seeing of unique outcomes (White, 1988; Freeman & Combs, 1996). This was like having the clouds around me lift in patches, enabling further points of awareness.

It was around this time, while still negotiating a life away from the immediacy of a/b's control, that my father said to me, "...some day Paula you will be able to look back on the ten years when a/b was around and you will be able to see that there were 'good' bits. You might find it takes time, but you will begin to notice that it wasn't *all* bad" (Jim Scott, 2007). I remember those words and my reaction of total disbelief. I mean surely not! To look back and see good things - to look back and be able to see good amongst an endlessness of pain, anger, hurt, noise, illness, horror, grief, loss?! He had to be kidding. No way! It was not ever going to happen.

Yet in saying that, it is now, in doing this research, happening as he had hoped for. I am seeing through the blanks and blackness. The more I do so, the more empowered and stronger I grow. My self-narrative is becoming one in which a/b has less strength and I have greater capacity to recognise and attempt to "resist subvert, and change the discourses through which [I am] being constituted" (Davies, 1991, p. 51) in my life.

Writing this story as a way of telling others about me is no "simple matter" (Bruner cited in Brown, 2007, p.107), because the narrative I tell about myself is shaped by what I think others expect and think I (and my past) ought to be like

(Bruner as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 107). It means that as I write I am continually thinking about what meanings I make of my past and present relationship with a/b and what others may make of these same meanings. In selecting events to story my experiences in relation to a/b, I am mindful of how “the structuring of narrative requires recourse to a selective process in which we prune, from our experience, those events that do not fit with the dominant evolving stories that we and others have about us” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 11) and that “a narrative can never encompass the full richness of our lived experience” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 11). I am at the same time conscious of how people “organize and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience” (White & Epston, 1990, p.11). Many times I have wondered about which experiences I ought to speak to and why. Often I have found that in the selection and writing of experiences, my meaning-making around these experiences have altered to the point that I want to go back and select different experiences to give meaning to.

Cheek (2000) states that, “[r]ather than seeking universal and essential truths, postmodern thought recognises the existence of multiple perspectives, assuming instead plurality of understandings for any aspect of social reality” (p. 19). The view I have of what and is my own reality, and the meanings I have given to these experiences are constantly changing. The more I hear and learn about my family’s positions in relation to a/b, the more alterations happen.

When I first talk with my parents before we move into the research, they tell me they want to know the answers to questions along the lines of, ‘*What causes it?*’ ‘*Why did it happen with you?*’ ‘*What was it that broke the camels back?*’ ‘*What*

led you to become a prisoner?’, ‘What were the triggers?’, ‘Why us?’, ‘Why our family?’, ‘Why not someone else?’, ‘Why anyone?’

These are difficult questions, especially when they involve something as deceptive and sneaky as a/b. A/b twists words and the intentions of questions around to suit its own purposes. I wonder how anyone answers such questions. Is it necessary for me to participate in the discourses of medicine, science, eating disorder aetiology, blame/shame, or addiction by identifying causes, triggers, or reasons why a/b has come and has been a part of mine and my families lives? If I draw on any of these discourses, what position in turn would I adopt? (Burr, 2003, p. 113). How do I resist positions that may be more helpful for a/b? I know I do not want to create space for the latter, and actively contribute to making myself vulnerable to a/b’s voices. I know I must find ways to navigate through their and my own questions. I know I must risk becoming vulnerable. This is part of the process of exposing discourses and helping make change possible.

Actively shaping my life in anti-a/b ways is a new experience for me.

So I move forward with caution and carefulness and my story begins. It is a story that I liken to the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1798/1996). It is a story of survival at sea that must be told; a story that must be shared as a means of honouring the crew and their journey together. The crew in this story is my family; the sea we journey on being that of the wide, deep, uncharitable waters of a/b. Like the sailor character of Coleridge’s text, who tells all and anyone in sight his story so do I. In telling of my story I have borrowed from Coleridge’s work the stylistic writing convention of separating a text into parts, such as part

the first, part the second and so on. I have also borrowed headings (seduction, imprisonment, turning against a/b and reclaiming one's life from a/b) from the text *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel, Epston & Borden, 2004), a process that allows me to connect my story with a community of insiders, and the stories they share about and in relation to a/b.

My hope is that my story can, as part of the anti-a/b archives “contribute to the celebration and fostering of Anti-anorexia/Anti-bulimic resistance” (Epston, 2000); help support crew of other ships that may have or may be sailing the ocean of a/b.

PART THE FIRST

THE SEDUCTION

HEARING THE CALL OF THE SEA:

When a/b's voices began speaking to me

When I look back, I find myself crafting an understanding of my childhood identity through the expressions I heard others speak about me. Most pertinent to my meaning making and expressions that I felt and heard loudest included Paula 'the fat chubby girl', 'the ugly one', 'the loner with few friends' and 'the teacher's pet'. Paula 'who had never gone out with a guy', was 'useless at sport',

'unfashionable', *'slow'*, *'clumsy'*, and *'quiet'*. These were quite accurate evaluations people made of me in terms of the taken-for-granted (Chambon, 1999, p.52), prevailing ideas about bodies, sports, fashion and young women's socialisation within the society of that time.

However accurate these expressions were on the terms of dominant discourses, it was a painful process to be identified by and through them. They were comments that touched on my entire being. Regardless of whether the comments were about my clothing, abilities, or something else, I interpreted them as originating from and being the effects of the physical shape and look of my body. At the time I understood my body shape to be a total result of the food I ate.

As a child, food was the centre of my life. Food spoke of laughter, joy, colour, freedom, social-interaction and love. Food was about mum's baking, bike-rides, family picnics, Friday-night family time in front of the T.V., birthday parties, walking the dog, dad coming home from work, weekends, playtime, winter, after-time from netball and soccer, gala days and going to the theatre.

Food was and is everywhere. According to Robertson (1996), "food and diet are part of a complex set of meanings in any culture. The production and consumption of food are part of the way in which people come to understand the world. Food and diet contribute to the construction of the individual's sense of self in society" (p.1). Perhaps it was because of such meaning making that when I was six years old my mum took me to see a dietician. Going to see a dietician was a moment of distinction in my life. The process signified and solidified that I had a relationship with food and that this relationship was mostly visibly

communicated through my physical body. It had already become clear to me prior to the dietician that women had distinct relationships with food and their bodies. I had watched my mother and many other women around me engage in slimming diets and exercise programmes. I had listened to talk of ‘will power’, ‘won’t power’, calorie-counting and ideal body measurements. As far as I was aware these practices were normal and a natural part of what being and identifying as a woman meant.

The interpretation I made about being taken to a dietician was that my relationship with food was ‘abnormal’; it needed changing, which meant I required expert help. Seeing the dietician was my first noticing of how I, despite being only six years old, could be called into normalizing practices (Foucault, 1979) of weight and health management. I did not find the dietician to be a person I held high regard for, as she (the dietician) instructed my mother to restrict certain foods – foods which I associated with pleasure. Butter was forbidden. Jam was off the menu. Lollies and cake were restricted. Foods became classified in a binary opposition of good or bad. I took food for lunch that looked different to other kids’ lunches. This had the effect of grounding the worries I experienced about not being ‘normal’. Who I was, what I did, how I looked, what I was becoming – they all become multiple sites of discomfort. Yet there were also aspects of my life – points of resistance outside of the discomforts that helped sustain some threads of enjoyment in my life. I had some friends. I was good at netball and talented at drawing, reading and writing. I liked Sunday school and dressing up. I was trusted, teachers appreciated me. I was known as a good, well-mannered child. These were things I considered far more important than particular diets,

body weight or shape. I did not have the knowledge my mother and the dietician did about the potential effect of these other factors on my long term-health.

RECRUITING THE SHIP MATES:

Calling my family to journey upon the sea of a/b

When I was eight years old we moved from Te Kuiti – a small rural based town - to Hamilton – a large urban city. It was a shock for me; I was unaware of the educational, career and financial disadvantages our family faced by remaining in the rural area. Personally, I loved the comfort of the familiar, small and expected. I had anticipated being a Te Kuiti girl who would leave the area only after completing my high school education. That move would be a ‘coming into adulthood’ echoed by a geographical shift. That was when I had envisaged having to and being ready to handle differences in my life – not at eight years old and half way through my primary school education.

In developmental psychology, eating disorders which develop during adolescence are often thought to stem from difficulty adapting to developmental changes (Mussell, Binford, & Fulkerson, 2000, p. 768). Making meaning from within this discourse invites me to think how relocating, changing schools, and having to make new friends might all be considered as ‘life conditions that I could not change’. The changes took place at the same time that I moved into preadolescence. Does that mean these changes in my life were part of the cause of a/b? I cannot be sure. Back then I did not know anorexia and/or bulimia. I knew a world in terms of binaries: Fat or thin, pretty or ugly, brainy or dumb,

well-off or not so well-off, strict parents or relaxed parents, popular or a loner, backwards (rural town life) or forwards (city life), high achiever or average student. I saw myself as knowing which sides of each binary - each discourse community (Nystrand, 1982) that I and to some extent my family sat within or wanted to be in. There were more moments where I was ‘seeing myself’ (and my family) “through the eyes of others” (Brown, 2007, p. 107). Although I did not know the word ‘discourse’ at that stage, I did know that my own and my families ways of speaking, acting and living were shaped by the world around us which contributed to how, when and why we did things and the certain way we ‘saw’ reality (Cheek , 2000, p.23).

With an initial looking back on those later primary school days, I experience difficultly in tracing a/b. When I look through a different, more aware lens to the past, I find myself able to notice a/b and some of the tricks it used to gain strength and establish a relationship with me. Food and I continued to hold a haphazard relationship with one another, which influenced the meanings I formed about my weight and body. I had been invited into seeing each as intertwined and together they required continual ‘monitoring’.

During my two years of intermediate school I began to actively engage in practices of self surveillance (Foucault, 1979) that involved monitoring and conducting my life according to lists, set programmes and rewards. I refined and reduced the list of foods that I was permitted to eat; timetabled when eating was allowed (or not) and scheduled how long, frequent and intense exercise had to be to gain a reward of either food or sitting still time.

In our first research conversation together my mother recalled her witnessing around my excessive consumption of water. She might have been unaware of the meanings of this activity, but her speaking of it indicated to me that some of the practices of self-surveillance that I took up were visible to others. I wonder now how my drinking excessive amounts of water might have been interpreted had my mother been aware that I drank this water in order to try and change my body shape; I was convinced that these were actions I performed willingly, as a technology of the self.

Foucault (1988) speaks of how technologies of the self,

permit individuals to effect by their own or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection (p. 18).

Unbeknown to me was how what I thought to be a technology of the self was in fact a technology of power, disguised as the former through having me convinced I was in control of this practice of drinking water rather than dominated by it.

I saw myself as differently shaped to others. I pin-pointed my shape as one of the main contributing factors to my experiencing unhappiness in my life. My aim with the lists and schedules was to lose weight, and in losing weight I would become ‘acceptable’. Being accepted represented to me being happy. The primary concern I had around my shape related to fat. Fat represented excess, gluttony and lack of self-control. These were concepts that I had an aversion to. I evaluated others and their potential ability to be my friend on the terms of such

descriptions. I judged people who fit such descriptors as unattractive, undesirable, greedy and lacking self-respect.

Judging myself on these same terms invited me into frequent bouts of self-hate. Sometimes the hate would be so intense I would violently throw and hit things. I would cry, grit my teeth and grab the flabby parts of my body wishing that I could cut them off. I would wonder what I had done to deserve the body I had, facing struggles with food the way I did. Self-hate intensified when I tried on clothes that felt tight, experienced myself excluded from my peers at school, had not achieved as well as I might have hoped with my school work, or had given into hunger and thus broken one of the rules that governed my life.

Historically, dietary restraint has been viewed as a form of virtuous self-control (Malson, 1998, p.122). Most often the end result of these self-hate moments was that I adopted a more excessive approach towards complying with the rules I had imposed on myself. This in turn meant I lost weight, which meant I began to change my shape. People commented on how great I looked. They asked what I had done to become so slim and congratulated me on my self-control and will-power. The more people noticed, the more I felt myself moving towards being seen as acceptable and normal. Yet at the same time I experienced myself moving into a realm of the extra-ordinary; I was achieving something others appeared to desire for themselves. In the discourse of Cartesian dualism the body is seen as the emptive other threatening to overwhelm the self and disrupt self-integrity. The body becomes a “prime target of control” (Malson, 1998, p. 124). Through the envious way people responded to my weight-loss, I came to experience power in being able to ‘control’ my body.

From some perspectives (Bordo, 1993; Garrett, 1998; Malson 1998 cited in Burns, 2004, p.271), anorexic behaviours have been construed as indicative of an ultimate control: as the outcome of the mind successfully transcending the physical desires of the potentially eruptive body. How a woman living with anorexia sees her body has been likened to how Plato, Augustine and Descarte saw the body: as “alien, not-self, not-me, as confinement and limitation, a prison, cage or enemy” (Bordo, 2004, p.143). I wonder about these ideas as I think back to why and how it was that I saw my loss of weight positioning me as powerful, and how I wove this meaning into a story I told about myself as a successful dieter. I interpreted my success at managing my body shape as transforming and distancing me from the problem stories (White & Epston, 1990) of weight and not-like-others-my-age that I had once taken up as part of my identity. When I started to tell my success story about losing weight it was like telling a story about my being able to escape from the trap of my body. It was a story based on the idea that body was an object separate from me. I or ‘me’ was my mind and thoughts. The body that housed this ‘me’ I experienced was, in the words of Bordo, something “*alien...not-self...not-me*” (Bordo, 1993, p.144).

SETTING OUR SHIP TO SAIL ON THE SEA:

When a/b began to grow

In moving into secondary school education I refined this idea about my mind and body being separate entities. It was my own choice to go to a single sex school. I thought it would be great to be out of co-gendered education. A girls’ only high

school appealed. Given that in the past the greater proportion of comments relating to my shape had been uttered by young men, an all girls' school represented to me less focus on appearance or similarly orientated matters. I anticipated entering an institution that would concentrate on my learning and developing educational qualifications. There was also the fact that going somewhere where I did not know anyone would allow me to escape the old 'fat Paula' identity of my past. This all appealed.

Granted, my single sex schooling attended to learning achievement. However, discipline around image was afforded equal importance. Together these stood as two socially productive and culturally desirable virtues the school appeared to want for its students. Disciplinary regimes were constantly at work emphasising the essentialness of these virtues and the particular ways we should conduct ourselves in order to attain them. Halse et al. (2007) suggests that the ways ideas like these are taken up and reformed construct the "behaviours and investments of the 'anorexic' teenage girl both desirable and not deviant" (p.221). In other research around disordered eating, young women and schooling, Evans, Rich and Holroyd (2004) point out how contemporary school culture, "...builds pressure for perfection *and* performance, often in forms which are undesirable or impossible to achieve" (p.139). They suggest this contributes to "...young people [women] feeling powerless, alienated from their bodies and reaching towards starvation diets and obsessive exercise as means of regaining control over the base elements of their lives" (Evans et al., 2004, p. 139).

Reviewing how and what we were taught in conjunction with the knowledge I now have about a/b, I find myself noticing how many aspects of my schooling

were able to be used by a/b. Physical education was especially influential. In this subject we were encouraged to keep food diaries, calculate our weight/height ratio and evaluate our bodies and our selves against normalized ideas around health. Teachers who I positioned as experts promoted lists similar to my own around good and bad foods. This had the effect of confirming and permitting me to continue with the use of my lists. Both in and outside of the classroom we were invited to make meaning about our identity through prevailing ideas about good health, success, achievement and liberal individualism. I can see how a/b would have found all of this very useful indeed.

There was a general sense that we were always in anticipation but never quite reaching being ‘good enough’ (Evans, et al., 2004). Constant reminders were issued about how we should be conducting ourselves and behaviours (in and out of school). Educated, well-presented young women were meant to look and act in accordance with certain ideas. Those who were seen as conforming to the required ideals were made examples of and consequently were ranked above their fellow peers and were then invited to position themselves in relationships of respect with school staff and persons senior to them. This was something that I desired in my relationships with my teachers and the school community. I was prepared to do everything that was asked of me in order to have such a privileged position. It was something I valued; something I believed my parents valued – and I was conscious of wanting to make them proud to be my parents.

Psychological approaches towards a/b speak of there being particular “psychological traits in many people with anorexia ... [which might include] perfectionism, rigidity, anxiety, obsessiveness, compulsiveness, and dissatisfied

perfectionism where the person is unable to gain satisfaction from their achievements because they do not regard them as good enough" (Halse et al., 2008, p.20). It has been suggested that such traits act as causal factors in the development of a/b.

When I look back on my experiences through this framework, I think it possible that the performance of similar traits in my own life might have helped a/b to establish a relationship with me. I had learned from my personal self-surveillance of diet and exercise that I could achieve what I wanted if certain systems were followed. This encouraged me to believe that I could achieve and be good at everything if I adopted rigid, set routines around my school life too. Over time with an increasing pressure to achieve in multiple directions combined with shifting meanings around 'being good' in an area or subject, I had to refine and re-define these routines. They became delicately intertwined and balanced by each other; necessarily and obsessively adhered to.

Winning lots of prizes at school in my third form year and being put into the accelerant class at the beginning of my fourth form year said to me that the routines were having the effects I desired. At fourteen years of age, being a 'good girl' and a high achiever were part of my identity. School personnel described me as an exceptional student, with maturity above and beyond what was expected of someone my age. I liked this kind of exceptionality. It spoke differently to the exceptionality I had experienced as defined by and through my shape and image in my primary and intermediate years. Perhaps if I had had some knowledge around discourses and positioning (Davies & Harre, 1990) then I might have been aware of the possibilities for a/b to use practices like perfection and success.

However, both this knowledge and a/b's presence was rendered invisible to me. They were disguised by the idea that I was just doing what was needed in order for me to achieve and become who I was truly meant to be.

SAILING INTO THE FIRST OF THE STORMS:

A/b gathers strength

Towards the end of 1997, my second year at high school – I experienced the agency I had claimed in my life slip. I noticed it start in September when I learned that my mother was living with breast cancer. Her announcement of this news was a shock to me. I wondered how it was I had not been aware earlier. There was confusion. I thought we had a good relationship with one another – why had I not known that she was unwell? Was it because I had been so caught up in my own life that I had failed to notice? Had she sat with the knowledge and not shared it – why would she do that? There were worries. What would the cancer mean for my relationship with my mother? Positioned as the only other female in the house, what expectations would there be on me around my mother's personal care? I knew I would need to re-examine my routines so I could find ways to support her. Could I do that and continue to meet my own needs? Even with the weeks passing and my mother having an operation and chemotherapy, these questions and worries continued to bubble inside of me, consuming my thinking. I wished hard for this to remain invisible to others. If others believed everything was okay this would help me to believe it would be okay. That way I would know everything would return back to *normal*.

Then, with limited consultation, the school decided I would be excused from my end of year exams. In all that was going on around me, I found this more unsettling. Were other people noticing changes with me that I had not noticed? I did not see my school work suffering. I was still doing all the work, and thought I was achieving as well as I had been prior to needing to help my mother through the cancer. Were the school using the situation at home to tell me that my best was not longer meeting their expectations? Did they not think I could manage – that somehow my mother’s illness made *me* weak? I was not sure of anything. There was so much going on and in this, so many people seeming to know what was best for me more than I did.

These people did not know that I needed school to be just how it had always been because the routine provided me with certainties. Prior to the cancer I had experienced two years of high school in which I had established some certainties and saw myself to be engaged in authoring my own life – or so I believed. School had come to exist as a place with uniformity in expectations and requirements. School provided universal goals to work towards and standards against which to evaluate success. These processes helped to define those with exceptionality. They helped me to define me. Exams were part of this. Everyone did exams, teachers used exams. Not doing the exams threatened the position I had in the school as an exceptional educational achiever. It made space for me to slip back into the mainstream of education. The new development threatened part of my identity.

At this time I was also grappling with changes in our family relationships. The closeness my parents had together in their relationship with one another was

slowly eroding away. As my mother recalls, I was her ally during this period. In addition to what she directly shared with me, I perceived and picked up on what was taking place around and in our family. From my perspective it was like I had finally come to have the ‘best friends’ kind of relationship with my mother I had always hoped for. I felt privileged, trusted, responsible, and mature. These were all things I was trying so hard to claim in my life and was being invited into through relationships at home.

While positioned as my mother’s best friend, I was also positioned as a daughter and a sister. These multiple positions created room for collisions to occur in my meaning-making. There was guilt for me about holding onto knowledge about relationships eroding in the family. There were worries about the effects of sharing the knowledge I had with my father, brother or anyone else for fear of what additional changes that my doing so might bring into my relationships with them. I discovered my exercising helped me escape. The more exercise I did the more I felt I was able to step back from myself and the events going on around our family. This helped me focus and in turn feel capable of handling what surrounded me.

THE TURNING OF THE SHIPMATES:

A/b commences its process of isolating me

In 1999 my mum said she was leaving my dad and going to live in a flat; incisively I said I was going too. In part this was because I did not want to loose the relationship she and I had. Also informing my decision was a fear of slipping

into the ‘keeping house’ role that my mother’s absence made available; a role involving tasks such as cooking, cleaning, ironing, and washing clothes. It was also difficult to stay with my dad and brother. There was a huge amount of bitterness. From childhood my brother had always been ‘Mummy’s boy’ and I had always been ‘Daddy’s girl’. The relationships I had come to have with my mother through my actions had altered these positions. I positioned myself as part of all the heartache and disruption to my brother and dad’s lives. Moving out with mum portrayed itself as a ‘fresh start’. It stood as a chance to ‘redo’ some things in my life, to set up some new practices that might involve a healthier, more cosmopolitan lifestyle – all things I had dreamed about. It might also, I hoped, provide space for my father and brother to be able to eventually forgive me for withholding from them my knowledge of the eroding relationships.

Later in that same year of moving into the flat with mum in 1999, I went to Christchurch for a holiday. It was there, at sixteen years of age that I met and began my first heterosexual relationship with a young man. Frequently I have been given cause to wonder whether this relationship, or more specifically the ending of this relationship had a connection with the arrival of a/b in my life. My parents have spoken similar questions about the meanings of this relationship as a cause of a/b. Listening to their theorising of the effects this relationship and this young man had on my life is difficult. Even after ten years I find I want to shy away from explaining my thoughts around any possible link my relationship with this young man may have to a/b because I want my journey with a/b to be multi-storied, with multiple participants. I want my parents to see themselves as

participants in my storying of experience in relation to a/b and to understand the social context in which a/b grows and survives.

I am unwilling to sit with a conclusion which locates this young man as the cause for a/b's presence in my life because I believe the relationship that he and I shared was shaped by a discourse of heterosexual romance and our taking up of particular positions that this discourse made available to either of us. In this discourse thinness signifies romantic femininity and is the means through which a woman attracts a male partner. Men are rescuers and providers of happiness for women (Malson, 1998, p. 111). Applying a feminist lens to this discourse, I am able to identify the presence of unequal gender power-relations operating within it; relations engendering particular discursive practices of body management (Malson & Ussher, 1996) that as a woman I became easily and unknowingly caught by.

The young man I was in a relationship with spoke to me through letters, emails, and on the phone – just like the men in the books and movies I had read and seen. He listened, asked and heard about the struggles I was experiencing at home. I was able to speak freely with him about family life. Despite the openness we shared, I often asked myself whether I was ‘being real’ with him by pretending to like a lot of the things he liked. The thought he might offer me a ‘perfect life and happiness ever after’ was a story I wanted to live out in part because it meant a different outcome to my parents’ own relationship stories. Being with this young man represented to me a ‘coming into’ adulthood, a journey I thought myself ready for. It was also exciting to think I had finally lost the old identity of the fat,

chubby, undesirable Paula. I understood my thinness as permitting me access to the pleasures of intimacy with another person.

Feminist theorist Marlene Boskind-White suggested in 1978 that sexual fears play a role in predisposing women to anorexia (Robertson, 1992, p.51). There were definitely fears around exposing my body to this young man, especially when I was aware of the role pornographic materials had had in his life prior to and during the relationship he shared with me. This young man was also a consumer of many science-fiction based books. These forms of media offer various constructions of femininity, love and romance. Understanding such forms of media as sustaining ideas about the thin female body as attractive and wanting to measure up to the expectations I assumed this young man to have about females, I developed an overwhelming fear of becoming fat.

At the same time I was informed by a belief that my relationships and happiness were only being permitted because of my thinness. The possible chance that the relationship might go further than just kissing invited in a lot of stress. I did not want to disappoint the person I loved. There was always a constant concern that he might see the ‘real’ – as in the ‘fat’ me and be disgusted. He did not idolise girls who carried fat on their bodies, he idolised slender women such as the likes of Anna Kornakova, Katie Holmes and Keira Knightly.

For the duration of our relationship together, this young man never said or did anything to indicate to me whether my thinking was accurate or not. I in turn did not make my own thinking visible to him. Perhaps it was in the absence of having

any interruption to my thinking that a/b was given space to gain further control in my life. As Madigan (2007) states,

Our internalised conversations with a perceived audience connect and direct us toward what we think the other – who is watching us – thinks about us . . . Left unchecked, the internalized discussion provides an important discursive platform for negative ideas about ourselves to ferment and grow (p.135).

My own internalized conversations with this young man as the perceived audience connected and directed me towards believing that this young man thought only negatively and critically about me, especially my appearance. These beliefs came to stand alongside a collection of growing negative constructions I had formed about myself. Experiencing myself as unable to claim a position from which to verbally ‘check’ these thoughts out with this young man, I instead engaged in a constant internalized debate with myself about the accuracy of my thinking and what that might mean for me and for our relationship. At this point my internalized dialogue had me wondering if this was madness – me going mad – as the internalized dialogue seemed uncontrollable, a formidable force attacking my soul. It was around this time that I took to running and full-on restricted eating. It became a game, with strict, set rules. A game where there was no winner, as the point of the game was to find out how little food I could eat in a day and yet still do the same amounts of exercise (or more). Part of the rules demanded that I consult nutritional information. I remembered how a specialist on one of Oprah Winfrey’s shows had said that to help lose weight every food had to have less than

a certain amount of fat in it. I figured I could do better, allocating myself an amount that was considerably less.

THE LOSS OF THE SHIPMATES:

A/b eliminates its perceived enemies

This young man I was in a relationship with never questioned the exercise. Neither did anyone else until I returned from a holiday where I had spent most of my time with him. At home I gathered my family and informed them that ‘it’s time I did something for myself’, ‘I’m moving to Christchurch’ , ‘I don’t care what you all think’ and ‘I’m old enough to do it anyway’. I was very matter of fact because to me it was all so straight forward. I was hoping for my parents permission to go – that they would see this as me being ready to assume charge of my life. My decision to go to Christchurch was also partially informed by my seeing myself as a burden to my family. I thought my parents would be happy for me to go because it would mean the decisions they were making about their lives and relationships would no longer have to take into account my welfare. My mother could get on with her relationship with the new man in her life. My father could get on with establishing himself in a life outside of marriage. No Paula to think about would make it all much easier for them, which is how I wanted their lives to be.

My parents responded much differently to what I anticipated. They refused to support my suggestion. I could not understand why. My mother says in one of our research conversations that after this particular moment her relationship with

me changed. I too noticed and experienced our relationship change then. My mother also tells me that this was when she noticed my relationship with food and eating changed. Of this change I had no awareness. Psychology literature on the causes of a/b suggests that women's eating difficulties are issues to do with control (Burns, 2004, p.275). I saw my parents' refusal to let me go to Christchurch as not allowing me to take control of my life. Did I start to control food because I knew it was something that I was able to control? Was this, as Brown (2007) suggests, using "eating and [my body] as a form of agency, an effort at having greater control over [my] life" (p.269)? On many occasions I have taken up this discourse of a/b as a form of control as a way to explain a/b to others, despite knowing that such an explanation never fully spoke to my experiences. I believe that there is much more to a/b than an issue of control. A/b cannot be explained so simply! Not knowing if I used food as a form of control puzzles me – I ought to remember it if this was something I did because food – eating is an everyday practice. Yet maybe I do not know because it was not me but a/b who was controlling the food and controlling me at this time. I have to recognise this as one of a/b's tricks.

My mother's noticing around the topic of food suggests a/b must have been more visible to her and to others than what I had been aware. With a/b's presence growing in my life, everything seemed to move into a state of change. At home, life with my family was difficult. From where I was positioned the sharing and the care had been replaced by control and anger. At school it was like my teachers were distancing themselves from me. I found myself in the dean's office, followed by the school nurse's office. Questions were asked: Was I eating, what

was I eating, how much exercise was I doing, did I know what I was doing to my body, did I realise I was sick? I felt bullied and not understood. Could they not see that this had nothing to do about my weight, food, diet or exercise? My peers appeared to look at me and talk with me differently to how they previously had. Everyone seemed to be unaware of what I thought was most important: that I was being denied the right to be my own person, make decisions for myself and be in the same city as the person that I wanted to spend my life with.

Any comments or questions offered on the topic of food or eating I interpreted as nagging, intrusive, or ignorant. I came away feeling greater determination to do as I pleased. I made sense of comments and questions about my exercising as the result of others feelings of jealousy or personal experiences of inadequacy around their own fitness or exercise. It was a meaning making that offered me inspiration and strength to push my body even further: to be better, faster, and fitter. That year, my fitness helped me to achieve sixth place over the finish line in the school cross country. I look back and wonder how, even in the midst of all the comments that my teachers and other made in relation to my decreasing size, these same people were the ones who awarded me a certificate for my cross-country efforts. These people applauded me in front of the rest of the school and even invited me to attend the inter-school competition. The fit, thin, sixth form Paula seemed a very different person when compared to the little five year old girl who had come last in school for cross country and was constantly teased about her size. This Paula was celebrated and acknowledged, normal and accepted.

Come January 2000, I had been in a relationship with this young man for approximately sixth months. Half a year had passed and through intensified

exercise and increased food restrictions I had become waif like and frail. Yet I saw my figure differently. I was like the women that I had heard men making complementary statements about. Much had taken place over the sixth months of the relationship. As far as I could see, I had failed to achieve in my efforts to ‘turn’ my family towards supporting my wishes to continue my final year of school in Christchurch. I had hoped my actions might invite them to hate me enough to let me go, but it felt more like they hated me to the point that they wanted to keep me around to see me suffer. I became aware that my best friend had contacted my mum. Everyone appeared to have an opinion about my actions or being, and everything I did seemed to require justifying. I would even regularly justify things to myself, and once wrote:

I want to be thin because I like it. It makes me happy. It makes me feel as though I am succeeding in some aspect of my life. I also like being able to walk with [C] and be his equal, look good when I am with him – make him feel good when he is with me’.

I also wrote:

I care far too much about bettering myself for him. He makes me want to be the most attractive I can be, the most open-minded and sincere person I can be, the most interesting person I can be’.

Perhaps it was a/b that was actually doing the justifying – to me.

It was that same month – January- of 2000 that various events saw me come to have more noticing around the differences in our relationship. I was bettering myself for this young man in so many ways, and yet he was not reciprocating,

despite repeatedly saying that he wanted to do so. I came to have little faith or respect for what he said. Eventually I positioned him alongside my family, friends and teachers: hypocritical, selfish and controlling. On reaching such conclusions, I ended the relationship between this young man and myself.

THE LOSS OF THE LAST CREW MATE:

A/b achieves its goal of isolating me

This young man was added to the growing list of people I identified as being responsible for the pain, hurt and anger in my life. My writing from that time echoed the regret I experienced over the loss of the relationship:

I feel like a fraud. A fake. A cow. I hate what I have done. Hate how I have reacted. I had arms and had comfort, words, love support. All of it! And I gave it up. My choice. My decision. I ruined it.

Thinness was the only thing I liked about myself and my life. I entered my final year of school prepared to do whatever it took to show everyone that I did not need their help and that I was quite capable on my own. I aimed to prove that I could be beyond good – that I could be excellent. This I hoped would redeem some of the trust and love I thought I had lost in relation to my family, and the respect I felt I had lost from my peers and teachers.

Determined to achieve in my education, the games around food, restriction and exercise became the only ‘out’ from my school work. Life revolved around study, exercise and eating. Or should that be exercise, study and not eating? Eating

became a war with scheduled, known times for when battle would commence, and known tactical manoeuvres which would be employed.

Around the same time that I was grappling with changes in my personal life through my ending the relationship the young man and I had shared, my mother's own relationship with a man named David also looked to be changing. David had asked my mother and I to come and live with him - a move that I readily consented to, hopeful that it might make my mother's life easier and happier.

Unbeknown to him, David's house and manners of doing things facilitated a supportive ground for a/b. In my view David led a very structured, routinely ordered existence. I found this way of living contrasted with the relaxed and casual manner my parents had sought to foster when we had lived as a family. Then, mealtimes during the week had necessarily required some order, but the weekends had been casual. Getting up whenever, eating breakfast and lunch if we were hungry, serving our own portions according to our needs. David lived somewhat differently. Life in his house was constructed in accordance with his preferences. My mother seemed to find this okay but I felt positioned with little agency to exercise my own choices around how life was played out.

Trying to locate ways to handle the lack of choice I experienced, I said to myself that I was 'lucky' David had allowed me to come and live in his house along with my mother. For a while this explanation helped me to weave myself into the flow of his lifestyle. Eventually however, I felt a huge need to claim an agentic position (Davies, 1991) about what I would and would not do, especially when it involved food and eating. Some of this need (not all) must have been because of

a/b. David and I had very different food preparation and eating preferences. A/b had me convinced that fats, carbohydrates, sugar and salt as well as certain cooking methods were bad. A/b also convinced me that anything David cooked or ate held traces of these ‘bad’ things and therefore I could never eat them.

David’s ways of doing, being and thinking did not fit with my own highly ordered routines. He expressed concern about my weight and health. He would often speak about the body being like a car – which you have to put energy in to ‘make it go’. While he may not have seen this as a pro-anorexic statement, it was able to become one and sat quite nicely alongside calorie counting and weighing. I figured that I would ‘put in’ just enough in order to ‘make my body go’. As I believed others had no idea how much ‘go’ I required, they had no right to tell me how much to ‘put in’. I was the one who needed to be in charge, being it my body and mine to do how and what I liked with.

My grandfather - a former coal miner, had always said that my dad’s office job was not real work because it meant that my dad sat at a desk all day. My granddad stated that it was not work unless the physical body was being used. A/b took up this idea, telling me that in order to do study all the perceived energy I had consumed had to be used up. Studying represented sitting – or non-energy use and as such sitting had to be earned. The more the work grew with the pressures of seventh form the more sitting I was required to do, meaning the more concerns I had about maintaining my own routines. This meant that the less food or ‘input’ that I could get by on, the more time I was ‘allowed’ and ‘able’ to do my school work. Eating less so as to be able to sit and study more appeared to be the only way I was going to achieve.

It never felt that my efforts quite reached the mark. I would eat less and try and study more but the more I studied, the more sitting I did. That in turn meant the more exercise I had to do. Showering after eating dinner became crucial. It enabled reassurance that my body was still as it was and that I would not have to exercise more. I would stand in the shower and marvel at the fact that I could see my ribs. That I could almost count them, and I could see the outline of my abdominal muscles. These were signs of achievement. At this point anorexia had become a word in the language of the people around me. Few had directly stated that they thought I ‘had’ anorexia, but I had heard whisperings and developed some curiosity about the idea. I looked up the label and discovered there were a number of supposed aspects of being anorexic.

One night while showering I reflected on what being anorexic meant with regards to the information I had found out about it. That same night I ran my fingers through my hair and clumps fell out. I experienced a sense of pleasure and almost what I would call excitement. I ran my hands over my body at that time and thought that yes, maybe I was anorexic. Surely my hair was a sign? But yet I questioned that. Perhaps the hair was just a sign of not eating the right foods. I looked at my body again and saw ribs and yet also saw what I believed was ‘fat’. As far as I was aware, anorexics did not have any visible fat. So either I was getting there – towards anorexia and was not doing well at it – or perhaps I was sick in some way, and these body things were symptoms of some illness that was still to be diagnosed. That was a double-think (Orwell, 1984) moment in my life, when I was able to re-connect with myself enough to notice a/b’s presence. I could see what others were concerned about and was distressed by how trapped I

felt, but I was also elated by the state of my body and how it looked. Somehow I was convinced that this distress would go away and when it did I would be totally happy. All I had to do was stick it out and eventually I would ‘win’. What the win was about, what the competition was, or why I was entered, I did know. My only thought was just to keep doing what I was doing and I would win.

PART THE SECOND

IMPRISONMENT

SAILING ALONE ON A WIDE, WIDE SEA

Feeling isolated and on my own against a/b

My life after that moment in the shower became full with confusion, madness, distress, defiance, despair and darkness. I felt imprisoned in the life of routine; trapped as it was like the routines were me. They were my life and without them, I believed I would not exist. There were times when I would hate doing what I was doing. I would want to ask for help but then only minutes later I would want everyone to just leave me alone and let me get on with things. A teacher’s approaching death from the effects of cancer shook me so much that I found a voice to ask mum for help. It was early evening and we were sitting in the car preparing to drive home on a chilly Hamilton winter day. I do not know what

happened or how mum responded to what I said, but it was soon after that that I was taken to our family doctor and the suspected ‘anorexia nervosa’ was ‘confirmed’. Further medically-orientated expert help was sought and I was taken to see a psychiatrist. I remember how cold the expensive looking couch felt and how huge it seemed as I sat in one corner, aware of the heavy looking books of medical terms that crowded his book shelf. An hour later I left this office, engulfed by the idea that I had just been diagnosed with depression and that in my hand was a prescription for an anti-depressant drug that would hopefully make it all better.

I took the drug and instead of hope, I faced increasing despair. I did not want to get up in the morning. I did not want to do anything but cry. Ending my life seemed the best option. I was taking drugs that were meant to help me get over all this and they were not working – surely that meant I was so bad, so beyond help, I was trapped for life. I knew that I could not live much longer feeling like a prisoner. I wrote down my experiences in a diary. I gave that diary to mum, knowing I had no voice to speak what I had written. Written words were my last resort. I was so scared of myself and what I might do. It was as though there was another person in me, with me, directing my actions and positioning me as almost completely powerless. Mum felt – was aware of something. Maybe it was the tiny bit of me that was still there: Paula that still wanted to live. Mum decided that the Prozac was doing all this to me, it was telling me to end my life, and she stopped me taking the pills. I never went back to the psychiatrist. Despair lifted enough for me to graduate from seventh form and organise my future: Fine arts school and living at the Railway Campus in Auckland.

UNDERESTIMATING THE POWER OF THE SEA OF A/B

Where ever I ran, a/b followed

Auckland was hard. Art school changed my art-making from that of a passion into a chore. I had dreamed that I would live this wonderful cosmopolitan life in the big city, eating out, going places with friends. The reality was loneliness and being trapped in routine. The idea that I was now in huge financial debt as a student saw me once again trying to save every dollar, justifying the idea of eating less. What I ate never varied which meant I cut out many essential vitamins and minerals. Although I would cook alongside others in the massive shared kitchen where I lived, I would retreat to my room to eat alone in front of the television. Sometimes in the day I would tell myself ‘tonight is the night to try something different’, but when it came to dinner the idea seemed too scary. It was too unknown. So I would end up eating and doing the same things that I always did.

Half way through the year I wanted to leave Auckland. Semester A results had been posted and it was a shock to only achieve ‘C’ passes. Art had been my comfort; something I had seen myself as skilled in and better than average at. Achieving less than ‘A’ level grades was painfully difficult to comprehend. Seeing myself as having given all the energy I could possibly give during Semester A, it was as though my best was, again, ‘not good enough’.

My three parents did not support my leaving the course. They said I had to stay and complete the year. They did not know how this invited me to think that they did not want me; that they preferred me to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’ in Auckland. I came to the conclusion that they wanted me to stay away to punish

me for the mistakes of the past, and because they could not handle the ‘problem’ I had become. Thinking ahead, towards the year’s end, I started to wonder what I might do. Although going to university was not something I was forced into, I was aware of how my parents’ were positioned within discourse around the valuing of university qualifications. I wanted to be the best I could be for them, and myself, and I knew that going to university would enable my moving towards achieving that. Teaching was suggested. Despite the presence of on-going uncertainty I experienced about teaching as a career, thinking this may be an occupation I could excel at did make it appealing. My parents appeared to support the teaching pathway. I reassured myself that training in a field that I had reservations about yet parental support for was better than doing something I wanted to do that they did not agree with. The latter I believed was what I had already done by attending art school, the results of which were that I had felt further isolated from my family.

SAILING INTO THE DOLDRUMS

Feeling stuck, isolated and on my own with a/b

2002 saw me start my first year on a four year conjoint course of a Bachelor of Teaching and a Bachelor of Arts programme at Waikato University, majoring in the three areas of Education, English and History. The work load was more than I had ever imagined. My food intake was minimal and I took to various measures to dispel the hunger that would sometimes divert my focus from all the work I needed to do. That year my mum left to study Radiography at Unitec, and lived

away in Auckland for three days a week. I continued to stay with David in his house; feeling as though the only support I had in life vanished with my mother.

David often made meaning of a/b from a position within modern medical science discourse. Positioned as the diagnosed anorexic, I was invited into seeing myself as a “threatening, hostile figure”, whose behaviour could be “challenging, hurtful, very cunning, manipulative, devious, deceitful and aggressive” (Malson & Ryan, 2008, p. 120). Without mum I had difficulty touching anything that David cooked. I knew I could never eat the meals he prepared because I was too suspicious of what he might have done to it. I told him that ‘*I will eat*’ but ‘*I will only eat what I want and only if I cook it*’. The consequences of exercising my preferences were nightly half-hour slots of a mixture of forced small talk, uncomfortable silence and small grunting sounds of David’s angry, under-breath self-talk murmuring. It was horrible. It was a relief when mum came home, diverting David’s attention enough for me to feel able to move outside of the pressure of the disappointment he communicated of and about me.

Life like this lasted for me until the middle of 2002, when I agreed to go see the doctor regarding the sore swollen legs and breathing difficulties I was experiencing. Blood tests were ordered and a few days later the doctor requested I come see her. I was drawn to wondering if perhaps they had finally found the disease that was causing my hair to fall out, could these other ailments be part of this same condition. Clearly a/b was still able to trick me into these kinds of thoughts.

Exercising with the legs and breathing had proved challenging, but I was certain that it was necessary for me to go out. Inside my head the voice of a/b reminded me about how great I would feel when I was finished. As per usual, I walked to get to the doctors. My memories of what happened after that are unclear. I know the doctor asked me if I wanted to do something to fix the things I had come to see her about. I remember saying yes, but with little awareness that an hour later I would be sitting in an ambulance, on my way to being admitted into hospital for blood and iron transfusions.

A DARK NIGHTMARE ON A TUMULTUOUS SEA

The struggle to keep a hold of my life

My parents tell me that they had to hold me down to get the needles into my arms. All I remember are tears, screams and people yelling at me. The hospital staff said I needed to stay overnight. I felt trapped. I kept asking my parents why they were doing this to me, why were they forcing me to do something when they could see I did not want it. I did not want somebody else's blood in my body. I did not like people touching me, never mind having another person's blood within me, pulsing through my veins. My head ached from my crying and I could barely move with the needles that were in either arm. It was like no one was listening to me, and that no one I loved cared about me or what was happening to me because they appeared to agree with forcing me to stay with the medical enemies. There came a point of being so sick of resisting that I said they could do whatever they liked but they could just 'get lost' if they thought they might force me to eat any

hospital food. I would eat what I normally ate or nothing at all. The hospital staff could not be trusted for what they might do to my meals, and it was important to me to know exactly what I was eating. Dad seemed to be the only one who acted on my statement by going and getting me something he knew I would eat. Why was Dad the only one who seemed able to hear me?

The next day when the drips were out, I took to pacing up and down the corridor. The nurses would watch me, making sure I never left their sight. They put me in my own room with a window where I could look out and see a patch of sky above another ugly part of the hospital. Time passed painfully slow in that room. A child psychologist from Adolescent Mental Health Services came to talk with me and my mother. Mum sat far away at the foot of the bed beside the window, a position that seemed so hostile. It was as though she could barely stand to be near me, her own daughter. This experience of my mother's positioning was a sharp contrast to the closeness I felt with the female psychologist, a stranger, but one who sat very near to my elbow while she asked questions. We talked about where to go next. The psychologist arranged an appointment for us both to meet with her again - after I had had some time to recuperate at home. The days following my discharge from hospital were taken up with my painting of a large piece of art which I later came to call "Hide and Seek". It expressed my sense of wanting to hide away and be left alone at the same time as wanting to be found and cared for. The painting took me away from what was going on around me, as well let me express how I felt positioned in relationships involving my feeling watched, controlled, trapped, "misunderstood and isolated" (Rich, 2006, p.288).

Not long after my hospitalisation, my mother chose to stop studying radiotherapy education in Auckland. To hear her tell people she had made the decision because she needed to live with me permanently because I needed her help invited me into experiencing blame and guilt. Having mum around would mean I could not escape and do my own thing. She was that presence that was always watching and checking me, challenging the hold a/b had over my life. In that moment however, a/b did not allow me to see my mum's presence as anything but controlling.

My initial hospitalisation propelled me into a life shaped by and through numerous medical appointments. Changes in the hospital system saw me referred on to the Waikato District Health Board Mental Health, a service run out of a small block building tucked inconspicuously in a dead end street in central Hamilton. When I turned up to my appointments I was made to wait, like a timid child I would sit quietly, daunted by the presence of the bars over the reception desk and security locked doors. There were often people waiting who had attendants with them. It felt odd to be by myself and almost a relief when I was called through the locked doors and into a small, stark office. Always a different office because every other appointment I had, I found myself meeting and talking with a new psychologist. Quickly I learned what it was these psychologists wanted to hear and provided the desired information regardless of whether it was accurate or not. A/b had taught me to be quite savvy with miss-truths in order to keep control. I was frequently drawn to thinking that I was so screwed up – so puzzling to these experts because my disease was self-imposed that no one could help me and that was why I was always handed on to someone new. On the

conclusion of these appointments I would leave certain that I was beyond help and that it was pointless to try and change so it would be easier to just let my life continue as it was.

And so I did. Things continued as they were. I ate food, but how much, what, when and why was determined by me. I thought. Looking back I wonder if in fact it was still very much a/b who was determining my life for me. It was the same with exercise. I ignored requests people made for me to join in with them and what they were doing, and kept myself to myself somehow certain that that was the safest and best thing for me to do.

Bulimia was not around in those days. Mum did ask me about whether I was throwing up; I responded with disgust and horror at the thought. Honestly I could not understand why anyone would want to do that to themselves. Come 2004 I found out.

JUSTIFYING A JOURNEY TAKEN IN ISOLATION

Believing a/b's suggestion that isolation is a natural, normal process

2004, after almost two years of being back living and working full time in Hamilton, my mother began commuting to Auckland with David. David had been doing a similar trip on his own for many months, staying there Monday through to Friday and returning at the weekend. Having David away was not a concern to me. His absence gave my mother and I space to do things differently to what we had been. With just my mother and I at home, I experienced shifts in our

relationship. There were traces of being with one another that reminded me of life prior to a/b's take over. It was a fragile, still developing relationship that I did not want to nor believed could be sustained if the sharing/contact time my mother and I had was limited to that of only weekends. I knew that if my mother and I did share weekend time together, my mother's time would necessarily be determined by David's presence at home and his plans for the weekend. I also knew that it would not take long for me to become frustrated by such an arrangement, or the growing sense of feeling I was second-best in my mother's life.

Called into a position as an adult over twenty years of age, I accepted my mother's absence as part of the natural progression of life. Converging ideas about age and independence informed me that I should not need my mother at 22 years of age; I should be living independent of my parents and away from home. Parents do not want their adult children living with them. Believing this all to be true got me wondering how mum and David's commuting to Auckland could be their way of escaping from me. Perhaps they needed the time away in order to handle living with me for two nights each week. I felt indebted to them for their putting up with me. I also felt quite vulnerable as I was not ready to live on my own. With a cat, a large ticking regimented grandfather clock and an empty house I felt overwhelmed by my sudden freedom and my sudden sense of loneliness.

SAILING ALONE FOR TOO LONG:

A/b convinces me that bulimia is my friend

Months later I went on a five day holiday to Australia. Constant challenges occurred, such as how to sit still for the four hour flight, and how to manage routines around food and exercise in a different environment. I took hope from my ability to cope with and face these challenges. Recollecting what I had read and heard about people who had ‘rid’ themselves of a/b by being forced to alter their daily routines and living environments for even only short periods of time, I became more and more certain that when I returned home to New Zealand I would be free of a/b.

I know now that a/b is not so easily rid of! Returning to an empty house and being alone at home so overwhelmed me that I cried out for a way to handle the sudden re-entry and re-experiencing of myself as isolated and one of society’s ‘failures’. A/b seized this invitation to entice me into a relationship with bulimia, and so began the purging and throwing up. This was a relationship that developed slowly, with bulimia only coming by occasionally. I had already begun thinking about how much easier it might to ‘make everyone happy’ if I ate food more often than what I had been, instead of continuously ignoring hunger, refusing to eat and feeling as though everyone were ganging up on me. So I ate. It was quite relieving to throw up all the food I had eaten. The physical act of eating was sometimes painful. It was like lead poison sliding down my throat, and felt it could potentially contaminate me. The act of throwing up brought relief. It felt

safe to throw up. It passed the time when I was alone and distracted me from dwelling on that very fact.

Bulimia and I went on to establish a very tight relationship. It was not long before I felt suffocated; it was as though I had little choice but to obey bulimia's commands. Like a ritual, throwing up happened nightly. Eventually this ritual became one I performed after every time I ate. Soon I found it did not even matter whether I was at home or not because it would happen anywhere. This was as usual as it was awful.

No one had any idea. My mother kept buying food because I was eating it. Keeping the throwing up hidden was part of bulimia's conditions of friendship. At that time I saw anorexia and bulimia as a binary to each other. While anorexia spoke of "pride, and a sense of achievement, perfectionism and being different from other people" (Burns, 2004, p. 269), bulimia spoke of "being totally out of control", was "abnormal, risky and disgusting" (Burns, 2004, p.269).

Yet despite feeling suffocated and having to keep it hidden, my friendship with bulimia was more manageable than the friendship I had with anorexia. Everyone saw me eating, stopped nagging me and looking worried. Unfortunately and unbeknown to them, stopping their watching, nagging and worrying was as useful for a/b as having had them do the watching, nagging and worrying. Both gave a/b strength to grow.

Bulimia was exposed on the day I threw up so many times that I found myself admitted into hospital with a suspected hole in my oesophagus and bubbles of air spreading under the surface of my skin across my neck and chest. Being a Friday

afternoon the Accident and Emergency department at the hospital was full. I was ordered to sit in a wheelchair in a corridor. None of my family knew that I had been sent to hospital and I felt very alone. I had tried to contact dad, thinking that dad would be the fairest and the least likely to ask questions or make accusations. Dad would be okay to just be with me, would not scream or be angry at me for what had happened. When he arrived we sat together quietly. After a long time Dad asked what happened and I wished for strength and voice to speak the truth to him. I thought the words but felt unable to say them. Eventually I did speak – whispered to him that I had been throwing up for nearly a year, on and off, and that things had got to the stage that I felt I was being controlled, in a way addicted to the action of purging. I explained how that very day I had engaged in multiple episodes of purging, reaching a point where I was sure I was dying, unable to breathe because my chest crackled with every move I made. I told him I was frightened and did not know what to do. I needed help. I whispered of fears I experienced about my mother's reaction and the anger, disgust and rejection that her reaction might bring.

Dad held my hand and listened.

Time waiting invited me to reflect on why I had come to be sitting in hospital when such a place represented to me imprisonment. A voice told me that I was there because it represented hope for my life, that the doctors would say I was okay, no worries and off you go home back to living life as usual (a life according to a/b). At the same time a smaller voice told me this place represented hope of different living, with solutions and options to get me out of the relationship with a/b. Even the idea that they might keep me in the hospital appealed. I was certain

that a/b's voices would be dimmer in the hospital environment, and that in hospital I would be protected from the rawness of my family's reactions. Reactions that I had previously felt only served a/b's purposes and not me.

That night the doctors did some frightening tests. Mum and David arrived. Questions were asked. I answered when I could. The small curtained space barely contained the waves of words, tears, accusations and anger. I remember self-disgust wrapping itself around me as I listened to my mother speak. I felt as though she did not want me anymore. She did not seem able or prepared to hear me tell her about how trapped I was feeling in a relationship with a/b and how I really did want 'out'. To me it was though my mother and David saw me as the problem. This interpretation brought into my life a greater sense of self-anti-a/b-determination to prove them wrong. When the doctors informed me that further throwing up might result in tubes having to be put down my throat I decided that I would utilise the warning in my fight against a/b. I would tell bulimia that I could not throw up if I was physically unable to do so, meaning our relationship would have to go on hold for a while in order for me to recover. I was not able to tell my family of what I was trying to do as I was concerned that they would sit with disbelief. There was an awareness of how a/b had so many times in the past used any suspected disbelief or mistrust for its own purposes, spoiling my previous attempts to be free of it. This time I would show them and a/b that I meant what I was saying. I wanted out and wanted rid of a/b.

PART THE THIRD

TURNING AGAINST A/B

CHARTING A NEW COURSE TO THE JOURNEY:

My second attempt at physically stepping away from a/b

At the end of the same year (2005) I completed my university studies and began applying for teaching positions. Bulimia and I were in occasional contact. Anorexia still hung around taming hunger and bullying me into exercise but it was a presence that I could manage, despite anorexia and bulimia establishing a more intertwined ‘a/b’ existence. I felt more in charge of me, although I still wished they would both leave completely. Hope for this sat in having a job geographically located elsewhere, with opportunities to meet new people and make friends. Being able to experience less worry with money also supported me against a/b. Lack of money could not act as a justification for reduced food consumption.

When I was offered a teaching position in Auckland I accepted it. This was going to be my new life, with freedom and the means to redesign my self. Having anorexia came with me was okay because I found some of anorexia’s interests helped motivate me to keep fit and eat healthy. It was a shock to realise that bulimia had come too. The day I became aware of it, despair set in and I questioned what this re-entry would mean for me, for my new life, my freedom. To think I would have to go about managing the conditions of bulimia’s

friendship again was agonising. With work demands increasing, the more a/b also demanded of me. Two terms into the year I found myself noticing traces of a/b's dictatorship-like tactics in the practices that I was taking up in order to manage the students I was teaching. It was unsettling to be connected with practices akin to those which I personally had found to have a damaging effect on aspects of my life. I knew there were teachers who managed classrooms of students in ways that were less dictator-like, but how they did so was knowledge unavailable to me at that time. Not-knowing where I would go or what I would do I decided to leave teaching and return to Hamilton. Perhaps it was time to find something else, something that I wanted to do.

Turning first to mum and David I was told I was not welcome at their home. Obviously, I thought, they really do not love me enough to want me around. I then turned to my dad who said it would be okay for me to live with him. My brother was overseas and Dad was on his own. Eagerly I took up his offer, conscious that my father was someone I knew I could trust and be open with. He did not share in the history of a/b the way my mum and David did, which comforted me because I believed it would offer me a fairer chance to establish a new reputation for myself and to do so in a safe supportive environment.

In my search to find out where I fit in the career world, I tried cafe work, temping and tutoring. One day whilst looking at the Waikato University employment vacancies I came across information about a programme the university offered called a Masters of Counselling.

SIGHTING LAND AND SAFETY:

Discovering anti-a/b practices and living

One of the main modalities the programme looked to study was that of Narrative Therapy. Keen to know more about this therapy practice, I began to surf the internet for information. Of the many ideas I encountered, three stood out for me: that humans understand and live their lives through stories; that these stories are always formed in a broader social cultural context and that this context contributes to the interpretations and meanings that we give to events (Morgan, 2000, p.9); that problems can be situated and viewed as separate from the person and their identity (Morgan, 2000, p. 17).

Furthering my search for information, I was directed towards websites where these ideas were taken up and utilised in relation to people's lives and experiences, one of the most important of these websites being the Archives of Resistance:Anti-anorexia/bulimia

(http://www.narrativeapproaches.com/antianorexia%20folder/anti_anorexia_index.htm). This website constructed people as separate from a/b which helped me to begin to see myself in relationship to, separate from a/b. This website also offered knowledge about the tricks and tactics a/b uses. Both were resources that helped strengthen my anti-a/b voice.

The more I learned about narrative practice and took up the ideas in relation to my own life, the more I began to think about counselling as a career. The thought invited fear as well as excitement: deep inside my body I knew that I wanted to become a narrative informed therapist.

At the time I did not stop and think what might support this knowledge I had of myself. Looking back in reflection, I now make sense of this knowing as guided by my spirit voice, my soul: a naked colourful flame of energy that had somehow managed to survive the horrors of the journey and years of living in the grips of a/b. This was another glimmer of resistance, another resource in my life I was and would again call upon in strengthening my own anti-a/b voice.

Exactly what the counselling education programme might involve and how many anti-a/b acts of resistance I might go on to perform I did not know.

It was not until after I had progressed through the application and selection process and was invited to become a member of the programme that I found myself face to face with a question that really shook a/b's presence in my life. The question read, "*What matters do you think might get in the way of accomplishing your goals once being accepted into our programme?*"

Heck, I thought. Exactly what I wrote in response I cannot remember; I grappled for hours with how I might meet a/b's demand for invisibility at the same time as honour my own valuing of honesty. After many attempts I found myself writing a very general description about how health issues and the presence of depression could possibly get in the way of goals I wished to accomplish. Such statements were true although perhaps not precise. However, they were the extent to what I could say with a/b gazing over my shoulder authorising what I wrote.

I posted my application and waited; weeks later I received a letter from the university. A particular paragraph blared out from the body of letter. For me this paragraph was a sharp reminder that I had yet to make visible a/b's presence to

Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotzé - the teachers of the counsellor education programme. Their paragraph read:

[Paula]...In your letter to us you told us that you have had to deal with health issues and depression. We believe it will support your development in the programme if you are able to share with us as teaching staff any aspects of this that are relevant to your success as a student in the Counsellor Education programme.

I was to read and re-read these words many times, ask myself ‘what will it mean for the teaching staff members to know about a/b?’ I knew I had been drawn to the programme because there was a stated valuing of supporting persons in the growing of relationships of “curiosity, openness, and respect” (Freedman and Combs, 1996, p.272). But a/b did not allow me to initially read the paragraph in the letter as an invitation into supportive, open, and respectful relationships with my educators. Instead, a/b tried to convince me such relational qualities would be conditional - if present at all - especially if these teachers knew the extent of the relationship it (a/b) had had in my life. A/b tried to tell me that any place I was offered on the programme would come at a cost; that I would be constantly subjected to a ‘gaze’, my speaking and actions examined for any evidence of a/b’s traces with the identification of such being automatically used as evidence against my retaining a place on the course.

Days passed before I was able to turn down the volume of a/b’s voices and realise that a/b was trying to trick me, twisting meaning-making in order to try to stop me entering into a world that encouraged and supported my anti-a/b voice to grow

stronger. My own spirit voice told me I had to meet with Kathie and Elmarie; that I needed to take the risk and share about myself with these two professional counsellors, teachers, and women. Going into the meeting, I could feel a/b's presence in my stomach; aching gripe-like sensations taunting with my insides. Even long after the meeting was over, the aching continued, a constant throbbing as I replayed the conversations in my head, reviewing what I had and had not shared. I knew I was still keeping a lot of my experiencing of a/b far out of reach, far out of sight from these women. I knew I wanted to tell these women more about my experiences on the sea of a/b, but I also knew that in order to do so, I needed time to grow my anti a/b voice, to make it stronger.

PART THE FOURTH

RECLAIMING MY LIFE FROM A/B

STEPPING OFF THE SHIP, ONTO DRY LAND AND BEING SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE AGAIN

Growing my own anti-a/b voice safely and within a community of care

Participating in the Masters of Counselling programme gave me many opportunities to do just that – to grow my anti-a/b voice. I could feel my voice

starting to grow stronger right from when I left the comfort of my dad's house and headed to university to attend my first day of summer school.

Yet I know that as I write this down, I am glossing-over, choosing to see past the struggles I experienced and the intensity and velocity of a/b's attempts at silencing me. There were many instances when I struggled, never quite as free of a/b's power as I hoped or thought I was. Moments when a/b managed to capture me, to suggest that I could fix things, or feel better about myself or a situation if I wanted to, that all I needed to do was return to living life according to the practices it endorsed as good for me. And in moments when I struggled, it was hard not to believe a/b.

I knew what a life with a/b in charge looked like, whereas I felt swamped by all the number of on-going challenges I faced in trying to live my life as separate from a/b. Challenges such as whether or not to make a/b visible to other members of the counselling programme; whether or not to join my colleagues at tea breaks or use the spare time to exercise; whether to eat my lunch on my own so as to avoid questions and/or comments or go share lunchtime my colleagues; whether to point out when I disagreed or had an idea I thought was valuable or whether to remain quiet, assuming as little presence as possible. One of the biggest challenges I faced occurred mid-April 2007, where it was expected that every member of the programme would attend a week long stay in Marae at Mokau, a place three hours south of my home.

Part of the challenge I faced was that a/b and I were still in the process of negotiating the workings of certain aspects of my life. For example the food I ate

and how it was prepared and cooked, where I ate it and with whom and when, and how long I exercised for every day. I worried that the marae trip might unsettle the delicate arrangement a/b and I did have; an arrangement that had allowed me to experience many new, wonderful moments, such as enjoying sharing dinner together with my family.

I also faced a challenge in the form of delivering a presentation; a presentation that I had decided to use to make visible my experiences of living with a/b.

I knew I had to find ways to work through these challenges. I knew that I needed to proceed carefully, recruiting as many anti-a/b supporters to my team as possible before the marae stay.

I have trouble recalling the exact actions I took to recruit support and to overcome these challenges. I remember experiencing a huge degree of fear. I also remember being a member of a practice counselling session involving my colleagues and a lecturer and volunteering myself to be the person at the centre of the conversation. In this session I used the speaking position it called me into as an avenue to safely make visible the challenges and fears I was experiencing in relation to the planned marae trip. I recall writing a letter to a/b where I specifically mentioned how a/b was not invited nor welcome to come with me to the marae, as well as what steps I was going to take to keep it from effecting me while I was at the marae; I recall circulating this letter to my colleagues. I also remember experiencing surprise in relation to my colleagues' reactions to my speaking and my letter. It seemed that by making visible my thoughts about what I feared and what I needed in order to

keep myself safe on the marae, I created space for my colleagues to make visible their own thoughts and needs in relation to their staying on the marae.

These actions worked to support and strengthen my anti-a/b voice to the point that when I did step onto the marae, I felt so much part of a community that I no longer experienced fear when I thought about the presentation I still had to deliver. In fact, I was quite excited about taking up another speaking position and using that speaking position to show a/b how much stronger I was becoming in relation to it.

As I reflect on my experiences on noho marae, I realise how many significant shifts the marae trip helped to foster in terms of my personal and professional life. For a start, I had never anticipated that I would be able to participate in such an event like a week long noho marae; locating myself away from the known and familiar anti-a/b spaces and routines for such a period of time, with a group of people who I knew very little about, and talking about aspects of my life – about a/b. My participation encouraged my anti-a/b voice to grow stronger; I felt myself become empowered, agentically positioned, able to make choices and take actions that resisted a/b's preferences. My sense of feeling empowered and agentically positioned in relation to a/b supported a repositioning of myself in terms of my professional goals.

Whereas prior to the noho marae I had only flirted with the idea of doing research practice as a facet of my counselling qualification; on my return home I found myself not only seriously considering but actually deciding that I would engage in a research project. I already had a few ideas about what I would like to research,

however my greatest interest was in looking towards my own and my family member's positioning and experiences in relation to a/b.

In this chapter I have attempted to make visible my own positioning and meaning making of and in relation to discourses, through the research and writing practice known as autoethnography. When I began this autoethnography writing, I spoke of the difficulties I had in constructing and telling my story; how I grappled with uncertainty about what I should say and how, what events I ought to include or leave out. I knew I wanted to tell my story, to use the speaking position that a researcher identity and autoethnography practice creates; to make visible some of my insider knowledge and experiences of a/b.

The knowledge that I have selected to share in this chapter is by no means complete; I live in a world of constant movement. I also live in a world of people, in a society where I have membership to a number of discourse communities (Little et al., 2003). My interactions with and positioning in relation to other members of these communities has and continues to shape me, my seeing of myself and my experiences.

Perhaps one of the most important of these communities which I hold membership to is that which I call my 'family'; the members of this community (my mother, father and step-father) each and all involved on a journey with me on the sea of a/b.

A number of the experiences we shared together on that journey have been mentioned in this writing. However it has not been, nor is it my intention that the story I have unravelled within the pages of this autoethnography text be read as

‘our’ story, or ‘my family’s story’. Throughout my research and writing practice I have remained aware that the account I have constructed is an account shaped by and through my positioning within discourse. I cannot nor wish to speak for members of my family. They too, like me, need a space to speak their stories, their experiences of the journey on the sea of a/b.

In the following chapter, I call upon a selected ethos from participatory action research and invite members of my family to step into a space and speak their stories about and in relation to a/b.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY: THEIR STORIES OF AND ABOUT BEING ON A JOURNEY ON THE SEA OF A/B

In making visible the dominant discourses surrounding my parent's meaning-making in our research conversations, I am aware of how the discourses available to me in my life shape what I chose to focus on and give consideration to in terms of the discourses I think are informing their meanings. The sea of language and other signs in which I swim (Burr, 1995, p. 36) influence what I say, do, hope for and intend in speaking to my noticing. This sea of discourses shapes what positions I see myself and my parents to have had in our journey with a/b, and what positions I see we could have in relation to our selves and one another. Davies and Harre (1990) explain that "with positioning, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time is a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions" (p.62). Burr (2003) adds that "an examination of the discourses and positions available to us may help us to occupy positions in discourses which are personally less damaging" (p.123).

It is with these ideas informing me, and with the intention of creating opportunities to re-position ourselves that I revisit the research conversations my parents and I had with one another; conversations made possible through the new

language and new territory introduced to us by our reading of the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). In seeking to bring about re-positioning, I do so not in order to gain or maintain control, or to objectify my parents as if this were research I did *on* them. Rather, this research has been and continues to be about co-research (Epston, 1999); with my parents being invited to position themselves as active, authentic participants (Mc Taggart, 1997, p.29) similar to how Tandon determines authentic participation (as cited in Mc Taggart, 1997, p. 29).

In this research I sought to position myself as a collaborative co-researcher who encouraged the sharing of knowledge and the fostering of agency within relationships. As part of this approach, my parents were encouraged to set the agenda of the research by defining their own hopes in participating in the research, and the questions and areas which they wished to focus on in the research. They were together with me part of a “common process of communicative action for transformation” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.579) in reading the book *Biting the Hand That Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), engaging in conversations post-reading, and then qualifying the written material that emerged subsequent to these conversations.

It is these conversations that I revisit and begin to make visible some of discourses I saw as shaping members of my family’s meanings and experiences in relation to a/b. In my re-visiting I practice “[r]adical listening” (Weingarten, 1995); a listening through which peoples stories are “authenticated by respectful, accepting listening...as well as a listening for the discourses that shape a speaker’s story” (Weingarten, 1995, p. 17). In my writing about and in relation to this re-visiting I

include snippets of dialogue from the conversations I shared with individual members of my family; snippets of dialogue I selected because of the discourses I could ‘hear’ shaping and at the same time being sustained by the stories embraced within them.

There are three threads to what I offer in my writing up of this section in the research.

The first thread speaks to a selection of dominant discourses and positions that were visible to me as a researcher, daughter and former-prisoner of a/b. For the purpose of enabling a fluid reading of this thread in the research writing, I have loosely grouped together and speak about selected discourses under three thematic areas: causes, finding out, and treatment approaches. I use such terms because they appeared to cover the range of questions and areas of interest my parents wished to explore in this research. I also use such terms with the knowledge that they are commonly used within a number of the dominant discourses surrounding the topic of a/b. While these terms are not preferred within *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) the book certainly addresses the particular thematic areas about which these terms speak

The second thread aims to make visible alternative discourses and positions that I noticed as I read and heard the stories of my parents differently. This section of writing is similarly grouped within three thematic areas mentioned above of causes, finding out and treatment approaches.

The third thread meanwhile seeks to speak to the on-going re-positioning that continues between myself and each of my individual parents. This thread is in

part about looking ahead to the future and where I see and would like to experience myself positioned in relation to my mother, step-father and father. Aware of how different subject positions and invitations to re-position myself have and are be-coming available to me through differently constructing my own and my parents interactions (Burr, 2003) around a/b, I speak to these here in my writing.

It is my hope that by making visible the range of subject positions available to myself and members of my family in relation to each other and a/b in the past and presently, I enable a moving away from unsatisfying social structures that have limited self-development and self-determination. This I do as one of emancipatory aspects of the ethos of PAR (Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 2005, p. 567) informing this research.

In the following section of writing, I focus first on the stories my mother spoke of in our research conversations together, followed by step-father's stories and then lastly my father's stories; as I write about each of my parents stories, I attempt to highlight points of connection I see existing between their stories and aspects of the book *Biting the Hand that Starves* (Maisel et al., 2004).

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY MOTHER

In the conversations my mother and I shared together, my mother wanted to explore the following areas:

- Defying other's advice
- What were the driver(s) that drove? Why?
- Knowing best – talking about what I/You actually want/is best – how have we and how can we continue to do so?

In line with the ethos of PAR guiding this research, these areas my mother indicated of interest to her in doing research were given space equal to that given to the general research questions guiding me own research practice.

TALKING ABOUT THE CAUSES

MOTHER-BLAME

In the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al, 2004) the writers briefly mention the family context in terms of the role it can have in shaping a person's becoming more vulnerable to the voice of a/b. No one person or figure within that family context is singled out as causing of a/b because the book itself purposes steps away from such blame/shame language. Contrary to this however, when my mother spoke about the causes of a/b, she singled herself out and located herself as the one to blame for a/b.

As my mother spoke about the cause of a/b, she drew upon two dominant, modernist informed discourses around mothers and motherhood to shape her seeing herself as to blame. One of these discourses produces an understanding about 'mothers' as being "responsible for the physical, psychological and moral well-being of her child and family" (Malson, 1998, p.182). For a mother to be a

‘good’ mother through the eyes of such a discourse, a mother should be completely orientated to others needs (Malson, 1998, p.182). While another of these discourses promotes the ideas of the mother as “a key contributor and the ‘root’ of the aetiology of negative child outcomes and developmental pathologies” (Vander ven & Vander ven, 2003, p.98).

When discourses about motherhood converge with modernist informed discourses around a/b they create and shape a limited range of subject positions. Most available to my mother of these subject positions were those that located her as responsible and to blame for a/b. My mother took up these positions when she said:

*I think it was my getting cancer that was the tip. It was like, ‘here’s my mother who has got cancer...she is going through all this uncertainty to do with life’. I mean, it was a s*** year! In that year I lost a very dear friend to cancer. Your grandparents came to visit. I got diagnosed with fibromyalgia and gall bladder problems, and then had an operation in May of that year. Later that same year in September I was diagnosed with cancer and I had an operation in October. And it was at that point that I wanted to go – to leave your father and pack up and go. I didn’t see a/b. I think I was very self-centred then and did not think about you.*

In a second reflection discussion weeks later my mother added further detail that worked to support her being positioned as responsible and to blame for a/b:

I think my cancer was the tip because I lost control and you lost control and I think...well, probably it goes back to that time when you went to that

specialist and I read the notes that said ‘her mother is always talking about losing weight or always trying to lose weight’...you went through to be examined and he left his notes lying...and I can read upside down because it was just lying there...I only saw what I saw but the bit was enough to actually say – ‘so it’s all my fault’.

Being responsible and blamed are positions made available to my mother through mother-blame discourse. According to Burr (2003) positions, in terms of the theory of positioning, “bring with them a structured set of rights [and] provide the possibilities and limitations on what we may or may not do or claim for ourselves” (p. 113). My mother’s selection of events and subsequent meaning-making around the causes of a/b is thus shaped by and through these positions of being responsible and blamed. The narrative she constructs in accordance with these positions legitimises her claim to these positions. In turn this narrative also works to sustain the mother-blame discourse.

Being a woman myself and hearing my mother speak, I experience waves of disgust about how mother-blame discourse calls women into positions of responsibility and blame. That this discourse and these positions might still be so available to my mother years after the events of which she speaks is quite startling. The survival of this discourse across time suggests it works in quite subversive yet effective ways. For me this is not only new noticing about discourses positioning mothers and women, but also how they work and are working at positioning my mother, and, through our relationship, positioning me. My mother’s words ask me to think how I too in being unaware, participated and sustained this discourse, and how I might still be or go on to do so.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: “CAUSES”

At the time my mother and I were participating in formal research conversations together I was also participating in other conversations with other mothers (both in and outside of my work as a counsellor). Through these concurrently occurring conversations I was able to begin constructing alternative meanings around my mother’s taking on blame for a/b.

Re-positioning, I started to question the ways in which my mother was invited to define her actions as self centred, rather than self-caring. I also started to experience frustration about the limited number of positions that appeared to be available to my mother. It was only after attending to others needs, and then as a consequence of her own ill-health was she invited into a position of self-care and permitted to privilege her needs. I wonder what meaning my mother might have made of this same experience, had she been aware of self-care as a way to refuse intra-subjective effects of assigned identities (O’Grady, 2005, p. 98), instead of understanding her actions as self-centred practices.

My mother is one of my life mentors. Being able to construct an alternative meaning of her actions and see them as practices of self-care supports my performing of similar actions of self-care. This is important for me because I know that my own practicing self-care has helped and continues to help me in growing stronger and more separate from a/b.

Shifting my position, I now understand my mother's act of reading my medical notes as an act of locating herself into an empowered and aware position; a position that called for a sharing of knowledge. Perhaps if my mother had been offered a position from which to interpret the doctor's notes as just one of many possible perspectives (and at that a perspective shaped by prevailing discourses of medical file keeping), she might have been able to tell a different version of this same event. Reading the doctor's notes without the above invited my mother to interpret herself as to blame for the circumstances of my needing to consult this doctor. However, it also offered her knowledge about my health. I frequently experienced my mother sharing this medical knowledge about my health with me when I needed her to. This knowledge helped me understand why and what I could do when my body responded one way over another in certain situations.

Hearing about my mother's experiences and meaning-making in relation to her reading my medical notes invited me to think about the note-keeping I do within and in response to my professional counselling practice: the potential meanings that may drawn and experiences had in relation to the language I use.

I have also used my mother's telling about the experience of reading my notes, together with the knowledge about a/b provided to me in reading the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al, 2004) to re-position myself in relation to medical professionals who I consult and any notes that they may write about me. I am now more actively involved in the authoring of any notes that are made and kept about me. These are actions that I now take because I am aware of how the site of note-keeping is a site of identity construction; a site within which I want to be positioned as the primary author.

TALKING ABOUT “FINDING OUT”: WHEN A/B BECAME VISIBLE

My mother continued to step into mother-blame discourse and the subject positions of responsibility and blame when she discussed with me her experience of ‘finding out’ about a/b.

Her recollection of ‘finding out’ focused on my coming home from a long holiday with relatives in the South Island of New Zealand. She explained what it had been like for her to greet me at the airport on my return from this holiday:

You went to Christchurch and then you came back and I think standing at the airport I realised, and I know I got really upset and I realised that you were much worse. You looked bloody awful and I realised then that we really had got a problem and other people had been telling me for a while but I sort of shut my ears to it...

This particular comment related to her first initial comprehension of there being a ‘problem’. In a third, much later research discussion after my mother had finished reading the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), I asked my mother about another ‘finding out’ experience. Her second ‘finding out’ had occurred years later when she was informed about the ‘bulimia’. As my mother spoke of her ‘finding out’ about the bulimia, she spoke from and of herself being positioned similar to that which she had in our earlier conversation. My mother said of this second kind of ‘finding out’ experience:

From my point of view that [bulimia] wasn't an issue...until that night you told us not to come down – you hadn't text us and then you told us not to come down – you were in Accident and Emergency...I think I could have quite have happily have strangled you at that point...more than strangle you – I didn't really want to know you at that point as that was sort of 'crunch' time for me I think...that it wasn't just one thing it was now two! I laugh now – I probably saw it as two things that were going to take you away – cause you hadn't managed to break the spell of the other – you hadn't managed to tell the other one to go drown itself and here we had something else and how could I have possibly missed the signs when I had done all that reading? Me, as a mum – how could I have possibly missed the signs that I obviously just didn't see? So it was for me like I had failed...it's not a daughter thing, it's a responsibility thing with your kids, your family...and I internalised [it]...I wondered how, what did I do wrong?

While my mother is positioned in the discourse of mother-blame, she is simultaneously positioned in a discourse of parenting; I am her child, one of her 'kids' and she is my parent. In the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), the plight that parents face in witnessing a/b take hold of their child's life and the feelings of failure and being out of control is touched upon. Parenting discourse reaffirms ideas around responsibility, and carries instilled within it normalized concepts of good parenting. My mother evaluates her parenting practices against such a normalizing framework when she describes

herself as having ‘failed’ and questions how/what she might have done that was ‘wrong’.

I experience my mother’s words call us into a humanist discourse of individualism. Positioned in this discourse I am taken to have individual responsibilities for a/b’s presence in my life. According to my mother, a/b continued to be in a relationship with me because I (Paula) had not managed to break the spell of it or tell it to go.

Even though my mother externalises a/b from me, using one of the main practices from within the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), I still feel I am being invited into seeing myself as having failed as a person because I was not able to, in her view and on her terms, change the relationship a/b had with me. Invisible to my mother are the seductive, tricky workings of a/b. She is not aware that breaking a/b’s spell or telling it to go while permissible within the discourses I was positioned in, were dangerous in terms of the discourses I was positioned in. She is also not aware of a/b drained me of energy and imprisoned me in such a way that recognising how I was being constituted by it, or seeing ways I might resist it remained invisible to me. What I needed was others joining together with me to help move a/b out of my life.

As I reflect on my mother’s words I feel annoyed at how easily women appear to be called into taking up positions of responsibility – for both themselves and for others. I also experience frustration towards practices of evaluation and how they subversively invite women such as my mother into measuring themselves and their relationships. These things worked together to shape my mother’s meaning

making. Being made aware of this has me wanting to, with my mother as co-researcher in this research create opportunities through which we might grow the range of meanings about my mother's experiences around finding out about a/b. Guided by this hope, invites me to re-visit the conversations my mother and I shared about her finding out about a/b's presence in my life.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: “FINDING OUT”

Adopting a thinking and speaking about a/b as an external influence, a stance that I read about and which was advocated for within the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), has enabled me to reposition myself in my own life. This re-positioning has created space for me to notice a/b's tactics of imprisonment (Maisel et al., 2004, p.31); I now see myself as more aware and alert, stronger and better positioned to resist a/b's invitations.

Being newly positioned in this way in my own life, I find I am able to construct new, alternative meanings about my mother's experiences of finding out about a/b's existence in my life. My mother claims she shut out what other people had been telling her and that this positioned her as part of the blame for a/b. However, in shutting out others opinions, my mother took up a position from which she could listen, privilege and trust my knowledge of, and ability to be in charge of my self. My mother's actions resisted being positioned as a non-communicative mother to her children. That she mothered from a position of unawareness about

a/b at points along our journey was because a/b had been able to deceive her; calling her into this position in relation to me without making itself visible.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY MOTHER

TALKING ABOUT TREATMENT APPROACHES

In response to reading about other young women and their family' experiences in relation to treatment approaches, my mother and I touched upon the topic of treatment approaches in our conversations together.

DIET/WEIGHT

Modern medical discourse that dominates treatment approaches for a/b influenced how my mother was positioned in helping me. Within this discourse, diet and weight are considered relevant factors in the causes and symptoms of a/b. Consequently, it is these areas that are viewed as requiring 'fixing'. These same areas were the focus of my mother's initial understandings of the options she had in relation to me and my treatment.

My mother made reference to the dominance of diet/weight ideas as the best way to treat a/b when she said:

Lots of people were like that... 'all she needs is a bloody good feed'...People think that's all people who are skinny need...Give you a bloody good feed? And what were the chances of you turning around and

being bulimic then? What were we supposed to do – sit you at the table and stuff food into your mouth? I don't think I did that when you were kids! Can you imagine it? ...blows my mind I think 'yeah, you would probably have thrown it at us!'... [but] basically you need food to sustain life...you need fluid to sustain life...and if you don't get that the body will die as I understand it, the body will eventually just eat itself and die...nobody in the medical sense suggested we should force-feed you but we still actually believed that that was what it was all about because your body needed to be sustained...

My mother explains here how being positioned within prevailing discourses around a/b that emphasise diet and weight as focal points in ‘treating’ a person living with a/b invited her to take up these approaches in relation to me. She further justifies her taking up diet/food approaches and the validity of these approaches as appropriate forms of treatment by calling upon discourses of human physiology in which food is considered an essential need for a human’s survival.

Remaining invisible to my mother is how her taking up of approaches focussing on diet/weight unknowingly positioned her in a/b’s territory because a/b had already laid claim to these aspects of my life. When my mother took up these diet/weight approaches in relation to me, it appeared as though she were colluding with a/b and its pre-occupation with diet/weight as the extent to my existence as a person. The effect of this was that I interpreted my mother working with a/b and therefore wanted to position myself further away from my mother, especially in situations such as meal times or doctor’s visits where food/weight were focal points.

POWER/CONTROL; TOUGH-LOVE AND EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

Weaving into my mother's discussion about the diet/weight approach are discourses of power and control; the interplay of these particular discourses an area which she was read about in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). Although perhaps not aware of their meaning, her use of the words 'stuff' and 'force-feed' speak of actions which were used against my will. Positioned as a parent with responsibilities for her daughter's welfare meant my mother was invited into practices of power and control in our relationship.

In recollecting other advice she was offered my mother speaks about the discourse of tough-love. Tough-love is described as "a firmer, more effective approach to parenting", appropriate for parents of children who engage in "destructive and/or dangerous activities" (Daeg de Mott, 1998). Notions of control are traceable in the tough-love parenting approach, with actions being taken in order for the parent "to regain control of homes and lives" (York, 1990). These actions can involve anything from evicting a child from the family home, to placing a child in a treatment facility or boot camp (Pettrone, 2008).

My mother was invited into this way of parenting by the advice of a (now former) friend. However, in relation to this advice, my mother took the following stand:

...that defied my logical at that stage...I couldn't have chucked you out on the street, I could never have lived with myself if you had landed in the gutter and never got out because you don't go through life having kids to

turn your back on them...not if you think they are going to slit their wrists...

Though she says that this approach defied her logic, and was not an approach she understood herself to practice with me, there were actions that my mother took that were intertwined by the ideas and principles of tough-love. She was positioned within this discourse subversively, not knowing that her speaking, actions and meaning-making around my hospitalisation corresponded with the tough-love parenting practices, or discourses of power and control. My mother told me of how in hospital:

...we had to hold you down to get that stuff injected into you...

And she had:

...tried to get you committed...to get you held under the Mental Health Act [with] Waikato Hospital in 2001; I told them I didn't want you here and they couldn't hold you under the Mental Health Act...so we got in touch with Ashburton Hall and with Christchurch Eating Disorders [Clinic] and they had a waiting list....didn't have any spots and that's when [a psychologist expert] was called in...

These responses my mother took up involved force and were done to and for me against my will. What informed her were ideas of expert knowledge and a/b, parental responsibility, and tough-love parenting.

Prior to the research conversation in which my mother spoke of these actions, I was unaware of what had happened for her. My memory of this time was vague,

and all I recalled was the experience of feeling involuntary imprisoned within the hospital. Revisiting these incidents in our research conversation, it was a shock for me to hear that I had had to be held down, and that my mother had tried to get me committed. What I had wanted at the time that these took place was for everyone to leave me alone. I had felt ignored and had thought that my parents, especially my mother, hated me and wanted me to suffer by forcing me to do many things which a/b had convinced me I did not want or need to do.

My mother indicated that even outside of this hospitalisation, she continued to seek medical and health professionals' expert knowledge to help guide her responses towards me by regularly purchasing and reading books and publications written on the topic of a/b.

Accessing professional knowledge as providing answers about what solutions would be the most effective positioned me as a non-expert in my own life. The idea of consulting me about my life was not available to my mother. The outcome of not being consulted was that I experienced others as taking control of my life. A/b used this as a way to continue its presence in my life, to detriment of the relationship my mother and I shared.

Even though these discourses of expertise call others into positions of responsibility and action, they invited my mother more and more into positions of responsibility. In the situation of my hospitalisation, my mother took up the responsibility of holding me down; in trying to get me committed, it was my mother who took up the responsibility to ask it to happen.

A/B, ADDICTION AND PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Eight years later, my mother continued to position herself as being responsible for my welfare because she viewed a/b as an addiction. About this she explained:

I've always said that anorexia is like an alcoholic and I believe, through what I have read, that once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic. It might lessen but however if somebody has something major happen in their life, it takes them much, much, more to fight not picking up that drink and I think a/b is like that...it must be a hard, hard thing for the person to not allow it to come back into their life if a major disaster happens to them – whether it be emotional, psychological...whatever...and that's why when you broke your hand I was having kittens thinking 'shit, if they starve her [in preparation for surgery] all day...

Constructing a/b as an addiction enables my mother to access knowledge she already has about addictions. This knowledge looks upon recovery from addiction as tenuous. Re-addiction remains a life-long potential threat. She identified abstinence from situations that a/b might find useful as an important counter-practice against a/b.

My mother's words speak to her experience of the time I fractured bones in my hand. She explains that the situation was intensely worrying for her: she was in her words, *having kittens*. Of particular concern to her was that I had to go nil-by-mouth for an extensive amount of time so as to allow surgeons to do an operation to repair the fracture. From my mother's perspective, my having to go without

food or drink for so long was forcing me to directly participate in circumstances that could be useful for the addiction of a/b.

Omitted from my mother's description are the actions she took in relation to me in this situation. As I waited without food or drink, my mother did the same. She continued to refrain from doing so - even when the operation was delayed. When I became nauseous and dehydrated my mother demanded from the hospital staff that something be done to alleviate my discomfort. With each delay that occurred, my mother sought answers from the medical staff while also emphasising the potential effects long-term starvation might have for me. My mother took these actions to reduce a/b's ability to use the situation for its own purposes. Positioned as caring and monitoring, my mother was called into being responsible for me because in this particular instance I was unable to perform these responsibilities for myself.

At the time I understood my mother's actions and scarifying of her own needs as normal. These actions were quite similar to many others I had experienced my mother take in relation to me and my health. Yet in this situation I experienced frustration and worry about my mother's actions. Being aware of how a/b can use starvation, I could not understand why my mother would purposely starve herself when food and drink was available to her. I never gave thought to how a/b might or could use the situation against me through my own starvation; my attention was primarily directed towards acquiring some form of food or drink, adamant that my consuming of either would help me to feel well again.

My mother spoke of this hospital experience to explain how seeing a/b as an addiction had shaped her actions towards me. Constructing a/b as an addiction positions me as a former addict. I find it challenging to accept this position. Invisible to my mother are ideas about addictions as individual psychopathologies. Locating a/b alongside alcohol thrusts me into evaluating my experiences with a/b against experiences I have witnessed others have with alcohol misuse. It is not helpful to have these two likened to each other because I am conscious of some dominant discourses and available positions around alcohol addiction/misuse and recovery. I do not want to be called into these limited, constraining positions.

Accepting a position in addiction discourse invites me into seeing myself as vulnerable; always in recovery but never recovered; my health remaining under the gaze of others for the rest of my life. Positioned in addiction discourse has me seeing myself as lesser-than others which I do not like because I know a/b uses my feeling of otherness to isolate me from my mother (and others).

I am reluctant to share with my mother the insider knowledge I have about a/b and how it uses being made other against me for fear that what I will be seen as speaking through the voice of addiction and thus what I say will not be believed or taken seriously. The fear of not being believed, taken seriously, or seen as speaking through an addicts voice re-creates a/b's tactics of isolation. Seeking to avoid making possible these isolating practices, I chose to keep my knowledge quiet.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: TREATMENT APPROACHES

When my mother spoke with me in the research conversations about some of the experiences she had and actions she took towards me as part of my treatment, she shared information that was new to me. I understand my mother's sharing with me about the topic of hospitalisation as being brought through her reading examples of other people's experiences of hospitalisation. Around the same time I heard this new information, my own participation in the research was inviting me to revisit my experiences around the topic of treatment. With revisiting, I had become aware of how I had had to resist many ideas about what was best for me in order to privilege my voice and what I found helpful treatment. This awareness about myself invited me to re-position myself in relation to my mother; to begin to wonder and then notice how my mother too may have engaged in acts of resistance in order to privilege her voice within the experiences and actions she had. How in performing these acts of resistance my mother privileged her own voice, and in many instances also positioned herself alongside me; a positioning that helped me to make visible to her the practices that worked to support a distancing of myself from a/b.

What I noticed about my mother when I re-positioned myself, was how my mother resisted the practice of force-feeding me and instead privileged her own parenting preferences; she never force-fed me as a kid, so would not begin doing so to me as an adult. Similarly, my mother resisted being called into overt practices of tough-love parenting, refusing to evict me from her home to 'teach me a lesson'. Instead she continued to provide for me, conscious that my living at

home could potentially stand against me being ‘found in a gutter with my wrists slit’.

Moving away from previously interpreting my mother’s contact with treatment clinics as representative of a wish to ‘disown’ me as her daughter, it became noticeable to me how these particular actions my mother took resisted her being positioned in a discourse of mother-blame and absolute responsibility for my treatment. Her seeking support from these clinics spoke to me of valuing of the socially-orientated existence we as people have, and the valuable contributions that a community of care and concern (Madigan & Epston, 1995) can make to a person’s life (and treatment). Her actions positioned her as an authority in her life, privileging the self-knowledge she had of what was possible for her to do as a mother and woman with only outsider-insider knowledge about a/b.

While there were occasions where my mother positioned herself and in turn me as requiring the expertise and knowledge of the medical profession to deal to a/b’s control on my life, she positioned herself differently when I was in hospital with broken bones in my hand. Initially I had interpreted her concern for me in this second hospitalisation as entirely informed through addiction discourse. As an anti-a/b activist and woman in her late twenties, I can now make an alternative meaning of my mother’s actions, seeing them as steps she made towards caring solidarity with me. Together in this experience we were united as two adult women supporting one another to stop a/b from regaining control over my life. With this meaning I experience my mother call me into a position alongside her as a friend, and her daughter.

For me this is a re-membering of positions my mother and I once had in relation to each other before a/b. Re-connected with that relationship, I recall the experience of togetherness that such a positioning brought into my life and what that then made possible for me in relation to myself as well as others besides my mother. I am invited to wonder what might be made possible for myself and for my mother if we were to re-claim a similar positioning in relation to each other now, with our shared experiences and with growing awareness and knowledge.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY MOTHER

POSITIONING AND RE-POSITIONING IN RELATION TO MY MOTHER NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

As my mother and I are in regular contact, we have had many opportunities to engage in conversations with one another outside of the formal research process. Although I understand that my mother may say something different about these conversations, it is my experience that these other everyday conversations frequently seem to link back to the formal research conversations; link back through either the topic of these conversations, what either of us shares or how either of us understands ourselves to be positioned in the context of these conversations.

Despite living the effects of the multiple and new positions the research conversations made possible for myself and my mother in relation to one another, I still experience moments of apprehension and fear when it comes to speaking

with her about anything relating to a/b's presence in my life. These are feelings a/b creates. It wants to get me thinking that these changes we brought about in our relationship are all in my head, imaginary; that in reality when I do talk with my mother about it (a/b), my mother will refuse to position herself alongside me; that she will instead turn away from me as if she had never heard me tell her about the anti-a/b practices she was or could perform.

When I stay connected with the purpose of this research being about making visible and providing spaces for shifts in my positioning in relation to my mother, I experience much more confidence and trust in the shifts that have occurred. Trusting the shifts supports my willingness to step into the spaces made visible to talk with my mother about a/b. I found myself telling my mum about how a/b had challenged me at a family dinner; discussed with her why I had struggled to say yes to social invitation that she or someone else had made to me; shared with her about moments when I had escaped a/b's need to calculate everything I ate and just eaten for the love of it. My mother in turn eventually began (and continues to) step into alternative positions and openly speak with me about topics relating to a/b. Topics such as that of her concerns about aspects of my health that might relate to a/b's presence; her own experiences in relation to other people's living with the presence of a/b; how she understands herself positioned in various contexts as a woman; her relationship to her own body, diet and exercise.

While I now experience many of these conversations from an agentic position, there are still many conversations where I experience my mother call me into positions that I do not find helpful and which I attempt to resist often in a manner that appears detrimental to the sharing that is taking place. For me these are

moments where I think my mother and I are ‘talking past one another’. Knowing that my mother and I can have moments of closeness in our relationship and that using my growing voice has helped in creating re-positioning enables me to both accept my mother’s calling me into certain positions, as well as accept my need to actively engage in using my voice to resist any positions that I do not find helpful.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY STEP-FATHER

When David (my step-father) agreed to participate in the research, he identified the following as being of interest to him:

- How do these situations come about for people? Is it genes?
- How/what are the ways through which anorexia has become a problem in society?
- How do my views about a/b sit in relation to Paula’s? How does my views sit in relation to professionals who travel alongside others on the a/b road?.

In our conversations we touched upon aspects relating to these questions, as well as aspects relating to my own research questions as a co-researcher.

As I reviewed the research conversations David and I had about a/b, which were loosely guided by these areas of interest to David alongside my own general research questions, I noticed his meaning-making was dominated by a humanist, liberalist construction of people as ‘individuals’. The person – or ‘individual’

within this discourse is considered as “competitive, free and responsibilized...in control of itself and responsible for its own fate” (Davies, et al., 2006, p. 88). Persons as individuals are considered “unified, coherent and rational agents” (Burr, 2003, p. 53), who make choices “based on rational thought and are thus coherence choices that signal the coherence and rationality of the individual” (Davies, 1991, p. 43). Converging with these individualist discourses, and in turn shaping David’s meaning-making around a/b were modern, medical constructions of a/b. Together these discourses informed David’s interpretations of our situation and the causes of and necessary treatment for a/b in my life.

TALKING ABOUT THE CAUSES

GENETICS

Although not mentioned within the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), genetics was an area David wished to discuss with me in our talking about the causes of a/b.

A genetic, biological narrative (Jasper, 2007, p.39) about eating disorders informed an aspect of David’s understanding of the causes of a/b. This discourse of genetics looks to establish causal relationships between genes and their manifestations in characteristics/conditions (Jasper, 2007, p. 40). When woven together with a discourse of individualism, those identified with this label of a/b are positioned with individual responsibility for causing a/b (Jasper, 2007, p. 55), and therefore fixing a/b.

David said to me:

There must be some underlying trigger that has people getting to that point [of a/b]...The way that I see it is there has to be some thing in the genetic make-up of a person that is waiting to be triggered and perhaps it is that everybody has a tendency to want to be anorexic...perhaps it is that lots of people never really get anything to trigger it and some people do...I mean you and DJ [David James] are twins and he has never shown any tendencies at all, so to say it was a genetic thing in total...I think there has got to be other things to trigger it...

David explains here one perspective he has on the cause of a/b. His positioning within a biological/genetic causality invites him to talk of triggers (of a/b) and hold accountable the gene structure of the diagnosed ‘anorexic’ person. However, in his speaking about genetics as a cause of a/b David also questions the totality of this construction and suggests that a/b is not only about genetics.

I wonder how David’s position in my life as my step-parent, and therefore not a direct contributor to my own gene pool makes it possible for him to access a discourse of genetics to suggest that a/b’s presence in my life might have a relationship with my genetic composition. In viewing a/b as caused by genetic factors while positioned as a step-parent, David concurrently positions himself outside of any responsibility for a/b’s existence in my life.

ADDICTION

Another concept not mentioned in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), but about which David wished to speak was that of addiction. The concept of addiction wove its way into the research conversations in response to my asking David, in accordance with the ethos of PAR guiding this research, to join me in discussing his understanding(s) and experiences in relation to the topic of bulimia.

David drew upon a discourse of addiction to explain part of his meaning-making on the causes of bulimia:

The way that I see a/b is that it's in some way in my mind like any other addiction and every addiction in the human body is always wanting to or striving to go to the next step...so they [eating disorders] have to go the whole circle...I see the bulimic phase of the illness as more of a condition... so I think that from an anorexic's point of view, left to their own devices they would probably be more than happy just being anorexic and doing their thing to maintain anorexia, but those same people have got pressures on them from family and friends and social things around them where they will be in situations where essentially they are almost forced to eat – not forced in that you must eat this or this but they are in a social situation where they realise that they have to eat...in order to protect themselves and hide their condition and having done that...they would then purge themselves to get rid of it...

David understands bulimia as caused by the body; that the binging and purging practices denotative of bulimia are the body's responses to the physiological demands of the addiction of anorexia. At the same time that he speaks through addiction discourse to explain his understanding of anorexia as an addiction, and bulimia as an aspect of that addiction, David again draws upon humanist-informed ideas about people as 'individuals'. David uses the construction of the person as an individual whose "experience and meaning it holds originates from [that] person" (Burr, 2003, p.54) to identify the addiction of a/b as belonging to and originating from within the person whom he names the 'anorexic'. His use of the term anorexic is averse to the terms he read about and which are preferred within the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al, 2004). In using this term 'anorexic' David serves to ascribe the manifestation of the addiction to the person; the person is primary author of what overall presence the addiction has in their life.

Subsequent actions that the person takes, such as not eating, are actions thus construed as originating from the person; these are actions the person takes because they 'want to maintain anorexia'. There is a glossing over of the potential influence a/b may have had in shaping these actions, or how contextual influences may have restricted the person's access to not comply with a/b's requirements. Through this lens, bulimia is thus caused by the person themselves necessarily choosing to engage their physical body of which they inhabit in complying with the demands of the addiction of a/b.

CARTESIAN DUALISM, MENTAL HEALTH AND INDIVIDUALISM

Informing another aspect of David's meaning-making of the causes of a/b was a discourse of Cartesian dualism. Within Cartesian discourse, the mind and body are considered in conflict, with the mind being privileged and in control over the body. David speaks to the Cartesian construction of the mind/body split when he explains a/b as:

... a mind set, something that has been programmed into the mind that governs how someone thinks and behaves...It is all just in the mind...and I see it as that person having a death wish to take their own life...the mind is able to switch off from that particular function of what I would call logic reasoning for the survival of the body...the mind decided it was going to shut out what other people thought was logic and reasoning...

Accessing a discourse of Cartesian dualism, David offers an interpretation which quite clearly locates it (a/b) in the mind as a programmed mind-set which controls the body's physical states or how it 'behaves'. How David positions the person with a/b in relation to this mind-set is complex, because as David speaks through a discourse of Cartesian dualism he simultaneously calls upon two additional discourses offering two competing, conflicting versions of this mind-set and how it relates to the person and a/b.

Weaving into David's speaking is an idea of people as individuals who are able to make "logical, rational, coherent choices and actions as masters of their own destiny" (Davies, 1990, p.43). With this idea, the person with a/b is called into a position from which to understand a/b's existence and functioning in their life.

The ‘mind-set’ of a/b is of their own making. A/b is a result of their individual choices and actions.

Yet David’s interpretation also speaks to a discourse of mental health, the person with a/b is called into an almost contradictory position from which to make sense of a/b’s existence in their life. Prevailing ideas within mental health discourse construct mental illness as a losing of the mind, going mad and/or insane. Viewed through this discourse, the person with a/b is invited into seeing themselves as having lost their mind; the ‘mind-set’ controlling the body is madness. Such constructions of a/b are identified in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) as pro-a/b talk.

The effect for me of David’s privileging of these particular ideas is that I experience myself called into taking up two dichotomous positions; being responsible for the existence and working of the mind-set of a/b or in possession of a faulty mind over which I have ‘lost’ control. I want to and chose to resist being called into either position because I know a/b has taken up the ideas sustaining these positions before; a/b has used these ideas to distance me from my self-knowledge. Initially a/b used the concept of individual choice to be-friend me, convincing me that I was free to make choices around the practices a/b wanted me to take up in my life. Later it used the concept of itself as a mental illness/mind-set to prolong its relationship with me, convincing me that its location in my mind makes escaping it impossible, pointless. These past experiences make it difficult for me to comprehend how, if I were to accept either of these positions again now, either of them could be helpful for me (rather than helpful for a/b).

BODY IMAGE

Another section of meaning David constructed around the causes of a/b was informed by ideas connected to human development discourse and the concept of human growth occurring in developmental stages. In a way, David's speaking about this topic connects with one the sections in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) where periods of life transition are identified as inviting of a/b (p. 27). One of the prevailing views within the developmental discourse is the idea that a human being develops an identity as well as particular skills, abilities and behaviours during certain stages of their life. A subject of ongoing debate within human development discourse is whether such developments in a person's life are predominantly the result of environmental (nurture) or hereditary (nature) factors.

David accesses ideas from human development discourse when he speaks about why the adolescent stage of development (adolescence) appears to stand out as when a/b more readily develops in a person's life. About the factors involved in adolescence and their contribution to these factors in causing a/b David says:

Environments are factors, no question about that... I think society must be feeding this anorexic way...it's thought patterns...its almost peer pressure in that this is the right thing to do and the right way to behave...this is what is right for me in that that I need to be thin, I need to look like this... the thing about anorexia is that it turns up in young people clearly when they are most vulnerable to receiving new ideas and things... [so] a young

person that becomes anorexic does so because they want to be thin or see themselves as acceptable by being thin as the right way to be...they want to look in a particular way...[and] I can't help feeling that there is also in the background a rebellious type of thought in that the person says 'I am going to do this and I am going to look like this because I am rebelling against something as well that I don't like and I feel that I don't have much control of this and I like this because I feel right and I can also teach these people a lesson because I am going to be a pain in the butt when I do it...sub-consciously I think it has something to with that...

Visible in this meaning, as with other meanings David offers in the research conversations, are ideas linked to the notion of people as individuals, whose behaviour and experiences in life are a direct result of particular conscious and rational choices that the person has made. Central to David's meaning-making is an idea that the cause of a/b is an outcome of a person's choice/desire of a thin body. Contributing to David's understanding is that of a dominant, common construction of a/b as a form of self-regulation or being in control of one's own body (Brown, 2008, p.105). Here the person with a/b has chosen a relationship with a/b as a means through which to exercise control over an aspect of their life; a choice commonly perceived to be in response to a loss of control in other areas of their life.

Remaining unspoken, and perhaps hidden from David are some of the ways that he too participated and participates in sustaining gendered ideas about beauty and the body, and women's bodies as public property through his everyday, casual comments of admiration and criticism in relation to women's bodies. David also

appears not to be aware of the gendering of the thin body, and how it exists as a signifier of femininity. His knowledge about the kinds of position calls adolescents experience, and specifically the position calls I experienced as an adolescent female is knowledge David has formed from his position as an adult outside of, and looking in at the adolescent stage of a young person's (my) adolescence.

GENDER AND RELATIONSHIPS

Noticing David had made no direct reference to our situation invited me to ask about the meanings David might give to the causes of a/b when directly relating to our family. In response, David spoke to one of the topic areas which he had read about in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). This topic, called “feeling demeaned and belittled by others” discusses social interactions a person has and how certain kinds of interactions can make a person more vulnerable to a/b’s promises (p.26). In relation to this topic David said:

As far as you are concerned, I think it was the appearance of C [a young man] and a particular comment that he made to you.

The ‘C’ person David refers to was a young man with whom I was romantically involved during my mid-teens. One of the more visible effects of David’s words is that this young man is positioned as the cause and blamed for a/b’s presence in

our family, and there is potential for David to be understood as positioned external to any involvement in shaping a/b's existence in my life.

When I hear David speak these words to me, I find myself wondering about the gender discourses that might be invisible to him yet informing his meaning-making. His words have the effect of positioning me as a fragile young woman who's relationship with a/b began all because of a comment a young man made to me. These words position me as weak and particularly susceptible to others (especially men's) words. Considering myself as a strong, intelligent, discerning young woman now, I experience disgust at the idea that I might have been captured by a/b through my hearing certain words spoken to me by a young man in my life.

Being in an intimate relationship now with a different man (named James), the suggestion that I might have been, and could still be at risk to a/b's imprisonment because of the words of a man actually invites a/b into trying to do so by using any of the numerous speaking occasions that James and I have together.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: “CAUSES”

When David and I talked about the causes of a/b in the research conversations, I initially experienced myself called into positions that I wanted but did not know how to reject. Even with the knowledge about a/b that I had gathered in reading the text *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004), I was unaware of the existence of alternative, more preferable positions that I might take up;

positions that might enable me to construct alternative meanings about what David said to me. In some respects I even struggled to keep a grasp of my position as a co-researcher with access to similar speaking rights as David.

These formal research conversations took place more than a year ago. In the time that has passed, I have been able to revisit David's words and make alternative meanings out of them; I have been able to see and take up other positions in relation to David. With shifts in my positioning, I can and do now speak to some of these alternative meanings I have come to make of and about what David discussed with me in the research.

In the section that follows, I focus on a selection of ideas that David raised in our discussions about the causes of a/b.

In the conversation David and I about genetics and a/b, David resisted subscribing to a reductionist idea of genes as the singular cause of a/b by accessing and making visible his knowledge around twin offspring's genetic structure. This act of resistance allowed David to take up positions in other discourses and make other additional meanings about the causes of a/b.

Two of these additional meanings involved a/b as an addiction, and a/b as being related to body image concerns. When I re-visited David's speaking about these topics, I found myself able to notice points of similarity in our meaning-making about a/b. Being able to identify points of similarity in our constructions not only spoke to and of my re-positioning, but also opened up the possibilities for continued shifts and multiple positions.

One of these points related to David's comment about the role that a person's community has in shaping the potential appeal of, existence and form that a/b takes in relation to the person's life. This peopled understanding of a/b spoke to my own understanding of a/b; a shared construction I believed positioned David and I as members of each other's community, sharing responsibility for a/b's presence in my life.

At another place in our research conversations, David suggested that some actions a person experiencing a/b takes can be understood as 'rebellious'. Aware of the previous connections in David's and my own meaning-makings, I found myself re-visiting David's statement and considering his idea in relation to practices referred to within positioning theory. I wondered how David's words may actually be read as speaking to and of the practice of resisting and/or rejecting a position call that one person makes towards another. It is not surprising that David's statement is made in relation to young people and those living with a/b; both have constraints on their ability to claim agentic positions.

Identifying David's position of male privilege and how this positioning may have shaped his meaning-making invited me to consider how David's meaning-making and speaking may have been different if he had been differently positioned. In this sense David and I are comparable peers, our meaning-making and speaking shaped by our positioning within discourse. Positioned alongside David, I experience myself as having agency; I feel that I am more able to effectively and within my rights to resist David's calling me into positions of silence. I am also better placed so as to speak and negotiate new, alternative and more preferable positions in my relationships with David.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY STEP-FATHER

TALKING ABOUT TREATMENT APPROACHES

MEDICAL EXPERTISE

The role and task faced by professionals who are entrusted with the medical care of a person living with a/b is touched upon in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). After having read about this in the book, David directed our conversation towards his interest in the medical profession and the actions that members of this community take as part of treatment approaches.

Using medical discourse to construct a/b as a disorder or mental illness within the mind makes available the idea that successful treatment for a/b requires medical professionals and medical expertise. The individual diagnosed with the disorder is positioned at the centre of this medical treatment as the problem requiring fixing lies within them. David makes reference to these particular ideas when he says:

The anorexic has got to see things for themselves, and until they do they will just fight it or they won't listen...the therapist obviously has to lead as they are in a position where they can see the situation...lead their [the anorexic's] thought patterns down a path so that the person can then see the whole picture because it's one that people in that situation can't be told to do anything.

David visibly positions the therapist as an expert who is able to objectively see the situation of the person consulting them. In contrast the person in the relationship with a/b is positioned, as White (1995) states, “on the other side of knowledge, on the outside...objects of psychiatric knowledge” (p. 113). This person is positioned as unable to see their own situation for what it is without an expert’s help, yet at the same time is also positioned with responsibility for the effectiveness of the treatment.

This particular construction about treatment discounts the expertise and insider knowledge of the person living with a/b or the possible helpful contributions that family and friends can make in support of the person against a/b. This construction also disregards the possible influences that contextual factors may have in assisting a/b’s ongoing survival in a person’s life.

My previous experiences of being positioned as an object of psychiatric discourse and a non-expert in my own life had the effect of distancing me from my own self-knowledge. This was at a time when I needed to learn to privilege my own knowledge and not a/b’s knowledge. Having various persons question me about what I thought invited me into similar questioning (about what I thought), so I would be a constant state of analysis and confusion.

PARENTING AND RESPONSIBILITY

When I asked to hear more from David about his experiences in relation to me, David again drew upon ideas about people being individuals who are responsible for their actions and outcomes in life. Previously, David had positioned the

person with a/b as responsible for their treatment. However as a parent David was called into a position where he too had responsibilities around my treatment:

I believe that I along with everyone else did the best that we possibly could at the time and I have no regrets about what I did...I was very frustrated I suppose to the point of being angry because I couldn't see why you couldn't realise what you were doing to yourself and therefore...it was almost as though you had a death wish and nothing that anybody said to you or could do was ever going to change that and that frustrated the hell out of me really because I just don't understand that, and I don't think I ever will...If I...did nothing about it, along with your other parents that were involved, I think you would have died, simple as that. So as a parent my underlying philosophy was to make you survive...so if I walked away from it and said 'stuff it, what ever happens, happens' I would have never forgiven myself because I would have been walking away from what I see is a responsibility...

In giving voice to his experiences around my ‘treatment’, David speaks of experiencing frustration towards me because of how I responded to him (and others). He makes sense of this frustration by calling on a discursive construction of people as individuals who have responsibilities, using this discourse to position me as the cause of the frustration through my failing to meet the responsibilities I had towards my self. Remaining hidden from David is the level of control that a/b had over my life at this time he speaks of, and how a/b worked in such a way that it remained invisible from me so that I was convinced what I was doing was the best thing to do.

About his own responses to me, David says that he did what he did to make me survive because it was his responsibility. He speaks of this responsibility as part of being positioned as a parent in my life. Understanding himself as having ‘responsibilities’ because he was positioned as my parent corresponds with many dominant narratives of parenting in Western society. Converging ideas around parental responsibilities with some of the dominant constructions of a/b, has the effect of producing subject positions for parents that include responsibility for both the causes of and treatment of a/b. Parents might be considered as having responsibilities in the locating and making of decisions about what is appropriate treatment or help, as well responsibility in doing the ‘help’ itself.

FOOD, DIET AND WEIGHT

Discourses around parenting, individuals and responsibility also shaped the meanings David made of another experience he had in relation to my treatment. Influencing David’s actions in this particular experience was a belief that the most appropriate treatment for a person living with a/b involved practices that focussed on the person’s diet and relationship to eating. Such diet/eating practices, and examples of peoples experiences in relation to such practices are woven throughout the text *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). In relation to these practices, David describes how:

...one of things that we did with you was to insist that you sit at the table and have regular meals... I think that the fact that you had discipline on you in that you still had to come to the table and eat – I think that was a

good approach – nobody said you had to sit at the table and eat this or that – you were given freedom of choice...but I think that it was still a good discipline because although your mind was telling you something else, the discipline was just cementing in the fact that people do have to eat regularly and things like that...if we had allowed you not to come to the table, not to partake in regular meals and not to do all those things...to my mind what we would be teaching you is that it doesn't matter about meal times... we put you in a situation where we said that you had to come to the table and had to have something to eat along with the rest of us and you did that ...how you dealt with that afterwards was a separate issue...because we didn't know how you were dealing with it...

Being positioned within multiple discourses of parenting, gender and age enabled David authority and responsibility to discipline and teach me particular things that he believed would be helpful for me as part of my treatment. The majority of what David tried to educate me about focussed on food, eating and weight.

I found these food-orientated ideas and the situations in which they were conveyed to me confusing and painful. Each meal was like a battle that had the effect of distancing me further from my parents and closer towards a/b. David was not aware that the disciplinary approach he took echoed the very methods a/b used to dominate my life by forcing me into a situation of dictatorship. Although David positioned me with freedom to choose what I ate, he was not aware how a/b was able to use this to gain further control: first monitoring and deciding what it was I ate which meant I was continually hungry, vitamin deficient and weakened

in my ability to resist it (a/b), and secondly by eventually enticing me into a habitual pattern of binging and purging from which I felt there was no escape.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: TREATMENT APPROACHES

In the section that follows I speak about my repositioning in relation to David and his meaning-making of treatment.

One of the factors enabling my re-positioning has been David's and my mother's recent marriage to one another, the result of which David is now officially positioned as my step-father. With the making official of this positioning, I have found myself re-visiting David's actions and meaning-making; asking questions about how either may have been informed by his seeing of himself as a father-figure in my life long before it was made officially so.

The concept of fatherhood has particular discourses around it, some of which I subscribe to. I see being a step-father like being a parent. It is a position that asks for practices of care, love, support, acceptance, willingness to learn, sharing knowledge, but also invites challenges because of age, gender, history and tradition.

The fact that David claimed a parenting position and involved himself in matters regarding my treatment, despite not being my natural or legally appointed guardian (and thus not legally obligated with parental responsibility for my welfare) suggests to me that David cared for and loved me.

Viewing David's meaning-making as informed by feelings of care and love for me, the comment he made about the 'anorexic having to see things for themselves' could be understood as his acknowledging of how important it was and how much he wanted me to re-claim my voice in my relationship with a/b. I wonder if this was an idea that informed David's allowing me to choose what I ate - that he respected and wanted to help me to access my own self-knowledge about what I, my body needed. When I think about these and other actions David took in relation to me and the food I ate and my involvement at meal times, I can see how David's actions resisted subscribing to many dominant ideas from within science and medical discourse around the best treatment practice for people experiencing a/b. This act of resistance positioned David alongside me, helping to facilitate the small opening up of opportunity for me to grow my anti-a/b voice. As such, David's own actions bear traces of anti a/b practice. However, because David used a patriarchal gaze in doing such actions, I was unable at the time to experience David actions as trying to support and help me.

Constructing David's actions as anti-a/b actions has me understanding David's actions as trying to help me. I wonder what our relationship might look like if David had been (or in the future) was aware of when he is with me against a/b. To think that he can stand alongside and help me grow strong against a/b means I want to position myself as David's adult step-daughter, and position him as my step-father. Re-positioned, I can see that it might be possible for us to develop a relationship that regularly incorporates knowledge sharing and collaborative action.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY STEP-FATHER

POSITIONING AND RE-POSITIONING IN RELATION TO MY STEP-FATHER: NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

For a number of years, I have experienced David call me into positions that I have struggled to resist. In a way, I have grown accustomed to the idea that our relationship will continue to be dominated by the presence of frequent collisions in our meaning-making and tension. Developing a different relationship with David has been and continues to be something I do delicately, as it is a new, unfamiliar experience for me to become more preferably positioned in relation to David.

Inviting David to become differently positioned in our relationship has involved me making visible discourse and how I understand certain discourse to be informing aspects of both David's and my own meaning-making. Aside from this piece of writing around David's understandings of a/b, there have been a number of occasions post-research where I have utilised my growing voice and made visible discourses and positioning around gender, food and the body.

With the time David and I share together usually being in the immediate company of family, my decisions around when and which discourse I chose to make visible usually relates to one or more of the family members present. Recently I have sought to make visible how David's positioning in specific gender and age discourses have permitted him to openly comment on my mother's and my own

consumption of ice cream/dessert foods. I experienced these comments as gender biased (in that another male family member was excluded from being subjected to similar comments). For me, David's comments could be read as sustaining an idea that women should or are always in conflict with and subjected to certain rules and regulations around food.

Inviting David to notice any discourse and how it might be informing his meaning-making has been and continues to be an action I take only after first giving thought of the many possible discourses that may be informing David's meaning-making and speaking. At the same time I also consider the many potential meaning-makings that David in turn may make of my speaking to one or more of these discourses. My earlier attempts at making visible discourse had the effect of calling David into positions that he chose to resist or reject. Our positioning remained unchanged. Yet as I become more familiar with how to make visible discourse in ways that invite a taking up of rather than a calling into alternative positions, David and I have been able to engage in many more discussions. While there are still many situations when David and I are unable to engage in discussion because of our positioning, a/b is not able to gain as much advantage over me as it once did in relation to such a situation. The fact that David and I are able to and continue to hold many discussions with each other about aspects of our lives tells me that we must be and are continuing to shift how we are positioned in our relationship.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER

When my father signed his contract as a participant in this research, he said he would like to learn more about:

- What led you to become a prisoner?
- Did you try to communicate you were being captured and I missed it?
How did you try?
- Could I have prevented this? How?
- Why is there the sense of difficulty/uncertainty in speaking about a/b with others –especially with those who might, in my eyes, to be a prisoner of a/b?

With an ethos of PAR informing this research, these questions my father asked sat alongside my own research questions, both together loosely guiding us in our research conversations.

TALKING ABOUT THE CAUSES

Throughout our research conversations my father positioned himself as a co-researcher and stepped into the space made available to him by PAR to ask me as many questions as I asked of him. Being asked questions invited me into an agentic positioning in relation to my father. However, unbeknown to my father was how his questions and his own responses to my questions positioned him within particular discourses and in turn called me into particular positions in relation to him.

DEFINING A/B

Before asking me questions, and after reading the book *Biting the Hand That Starves You* (Maisel, et al., 2004) my father summarised his understandings of the causes of a/b:

...they [people with a/b] all seemed to be captured as a prisoner in the same way...they seem to be either something missing in their life or a lack of self-esteem – something that was dragging them down which made the voice of a/b sound seductive...there would still be individually around each person's individual circumstances...different age ranges ...that would suggest ...you can't define it by age. You can't define it by personal circumstances ...you can't pigeon hole it, you can't show a trend for one particular demographic...

His summary is formed by and through multiple discourses. He begins by taking up a narrative metaphor and personifying a/b while also externalising it from the person; his language speaks to and of the language used in relation to a/b within the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004). At the same time however, he constructs a/b through a discourse of individualism thus implicating the individual's circumstances and life experiences as being part of the causes of a/b. His words, and inability to define the cause of a/b, speaks to both his position as an outsider to a/b, and the slippery, shifting identity a/b has, making it difficult to define.

While I experience my father's words position me as separate from a/b, I also experience my position as one 'lesser than' the position afforded to a/b. Mine is a position of vulnerability; weakness; easily seduced. I interpret and take my father's struggles around defining and comprehending a/b as suggesting a/b is just too problematic or freakish to be defined. I too therefore, because I once claimed a/b as part of my identity, must be equally problematic and freakish. Seeing myself in these ways works to isolate me: a trick I know a/b has used many times before in my life.

QUESTIONS

In the book *Biting the Hand that Starves you* (Maisel et al., 2004) specific mention is made about how important it is that parents learn as much as possible from their child about how a/b works so as to better understand what their child will experience as supportive and anti-a/b (p. 243). I believe that my father's reading of this in the book encouraged him to ask me questions about what I saw as the 'causes' of a/b. Sometimes these questions ran one after the other in a series, while at other points they were interspersed throughout the conversation. When I first encountered the questions in our conversations I was surprised; I had entered the conversation with my father anticipating I would ask questions of him, not he ask questions of me. I experienced the first initial questions my father asked as interrogative-like, and felt disappointed in myself that there were few straight forward clear answers that I could offer to him. It was as I grew more accustomed to the questions and had space to consider the meaning of them in

their research conversation context that I could understand these questions as not intending to be interrogative but more of curiosity, interest; that my father was taking up the position I had offered him as a co-researcher in our experiences and his questions were asked from and through his understanding of being positioned as a researcher.

For the purposes of analysis I drew together collections of his questions around the concept of causes of a/b.

QUESTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS

In this first collection of questions, my father calls into consideration the concept of relationships:

...the circumstances of our [your mother and I] separation may have contributed to your own captivating by a/b...was that a contributing factor? Or was it “C”? [A young man I was in an intimate relationship with around the time a/b became visible to my father]. A romance gone wrong that started it off? Was it something at school?were you feeling you weren’t achieving? ...I didn’t see any evidence of that...I didn’t see...I wasn’t aware of any emotional stability or instability...I saw you maybe twice a week, did we avoid talking about certain types of thing? ..I struggle to understand how you fell into the clutches of a/b...I didn’t perceive that you had not met educational performance objectives... I wasn’t aware that your body condition was as important as it appears to have been or that a lack of friends was a contributing factor... Did not

having a circle of friends or attracting boys, did that contribute to a/b's grasp on you?

In the above, my father speaks of his relationships with my mother and I. He also speaks about the relationships he witnessed occurring within my life; my intimate relationship with a young man, and my relationship to school and achievement, my body and my peers. Dominant discourses around a/b support the possibility of each or any of these areas being part of the cause of a/b in my life.

That the cause of a/b might be tied up with my parents relationship is not a new idea. In Strober and Humphrey (1987), familial relationships are considered to be important factors associated with the development and persistence of eating disorders. Minuchin, et al., (1978) theorised that those with anorexia in their life ‘...divert attention away from their parent’s vulnerabilities and marital strains (cited in Strober & Humphrey, 1987, p. 654). Through the lens of these discourses, the cause of anorexia has much to do with familial contributions. My father brings these discourses into the play (and thus positions himself within them) when he questions how and what relevancy various social relationships may have had in terms of our experiences of a/b.

Ideas in society that follow modern concepts of individualism, which position people as responsible for their circumstances in life permits my father to question how I personally might have caused a/b. He makes specific mention of the topics of change, expectation and achievement; questions how my actions and responses in relation to these topics may have *caused* a/b to enter my life. My father also questions how my relationship and meaning-making of body image may have also

acted as a causal factor in a/b's existence in my life. This question I understand to be informed by dominant modern medical discourse around a/b which views a/b as "caused by an anxiety about body shape and weight" (Lock, et al., 2005, p.320).

I am aware of only some of the discourses surrounding my father's questions, and the discourses that might inform my responses. His questions about how I responded to change, expectation and achievement invite me into evaluating and questioning how I respond/ed to these aspects of my life. The effect of which is I experience myself being called into a position of responsibility for what positions I took up within these aspects and responsibility for a/b. I start to question if it was due to some (mis)management of, or lack of social skills around how to respond to aspects of my life that I permitted a/b to enter my life. The consequence of my being invited into thinking about a/b as a result of my lacking in skills is that I find myself stepping into a discourse of parent-blame. I begin to contemplate how my father – as my father and parent - could be seen as responsible for my lacking in certain social-life skills, and thus also therefore responsible for a/b's existence. This thought bothers me, as I know that a/b is much bigger than either of us. However, this thought also serves to remind me how vigilant I, like the other participants, need to be around blame-shame language; how I too can and do position members of my family during and in making-meaning of our research conversations together.

Prior to the conversation with my father and his raising of the idea, I had given little thought to how my responses to aspects of life could have acted as causal factors of a/b. I had had little reason to do so, as I was convinced that a/b had

been speaking through me, shaping my actions and responses for the majority of my life. From my perspective it was not a new presence in my life, just a presence that was becoming more visible to others sharing in my life with me. While I want to step outside of thinking of a/b as having “causes”, my father’s idea about my responses does invite me to wonder what and how I might have differently responded to areas such as change, expectation and achievement; what forms of response, if any, would have perhaps stood in resistance to a/b. It is a thinking I now do with less regret and great deal more interest and wondering around how some responses may support and sustain a/b’s goals and intentions, while other responses may stand in resistance to it.

QUESTIONS AND BEING AN OUTSIDER/ABSENT FATHER

The questions my father asks position him as an outsider to particular experiences and knowledge. These same questions also make it possible for my father to be positioned within a discourse of father blame, where my father is considered part of the cause of a/b. My father is called into a position of blame through converging discourses around fathering and a/b, which locate the “father...as relevant to the development and maintenance of disordered eating” (Meyer & Gillings, 2004; Wonderlich et al., 1994 cited in Jones, et al., 2006, p. 327). These discourses also sustain ideas about absent fathers and paternal rejection (Jones, et al., 2006, p. 327) as causes of a/b.

Through frequent reference to situations he considered himself to be ‘not aware’, and in some cases not overly involved in what was going on in my life, my father

locates himself within father-blame discourse as an absent father. I notice him calling upon these discourses when he says:

...looking back there was probably a number of things that stopped me noticing the likes of I was still doing some extramural study at the time which meant that the little bit of time I had after work wasn't being given to the family – it was instead given to study- I don't think that was helpful in noticing what was going on..[yet] ...there are a couple of things that I can pass my mind back to and think, oh yeah, maybe that should have highlighted more than it did..when you were quite a bitch, and that just wasn't like you...or it wasn't what I was used to...it wasn't something you had displayed when you and I had met on occasions...[and] maybe we should have done something about it then, the two of us should have been stronger and made an approach to talk about it...

His words explain how he was distanced from and unaware of some of the workings of my life. He names these as possible contributing causes to a/b's development in my life.

In contemporary fathering discourse, one of the dominant constructions of a 'good' father is that of a father who is actively involved in the care of and relationship with their child/ren (Lupton & Barclay, 1997). These activities are part of a father's parenting responsibilities to his children. Through the lens of this discourse, my father is invited into seeing himself as having failed to meet the expectations of being an involved father, and also his responsibilities as a parent.

Ideas clustering around the topic of parenting, and which bring into question the effects parents' actions have on and in their children's lives invite my father into seeking specific details about the effects his and my mother's actions as parents might have had on my life. In asking me about his actions as a parent, my father simultaneously takes up ideas about social/cultural pressures – such as friendships and boys as possible causes of a/b. Regarding these ideas and his parenting my father wonders:

Did we fail as parents by not talking about issues such as boys and friends not being around...[I] certainly can't see it as being a big topic of conversation...your mum and I were inwardly focussing on our own problems to some extent. I'm not saying that we ignored you but we had our own things that we were trying to deal with and missed what was happening in your life... [but] I thought I was adequately covered with problems...so that maybe I devolved myself rather than involved myself and that was a mistake...

At this time my father was negotiating his marriage ending and living apart from my mother. His own meaning making about his involvement strengthens his positioning as an absent father. Claiming to have been inwardly focussed and devolved from his daughter's life positions my father as a participant within a common discourse about fathers of those living with anorexia. This is a discourse that perceives the father to be "emotionally restricted, obsessional, moody, withdrawn, passive, and in-effectual" (Strober & Humphrey, 1987, p. 654).

What my father says resonates with my own meaning-making. During this time I experienced my father grow distant from me, as though our lives were becoming less connected paralleling the physical separation process of living in different houses from one another. I thought my father welcomed this distancing of his life from mine because I reminded him too much of my mother, which was not helpful for him in terms of his developing a life outside of their marriage together. I also thought of the growing distance between my father and I as a resulting factor of his increasing self-interest; self-interest that I took as an indication that my father no longer cared or was interested in my life.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: “CAUSES”

I experienced myself become differently positioned in my relationship with my father quite quickly within and immediately following on from our research conversations together. At the time I was living with my father. I was also experiencing rapid movements taking place in other areas of my life encouraging a repositioning of myself in relation to a/b. I believe that these factors helped foster the speed in which we were able to shift ourselves in our relationship. I also believe that these factors helped to sustain the on-going formation of our re-positioning.

Throughout the research conversations, my father asked me questions. He wanted to find out more about my experiences in relation to a/b, and he wanted to know more about how I experienced his actions in relation to me. His questions invited

me to re-position myself alongside him - I saw myself as a co-researcher (Epston, 1995); my father's equal. This re-positioning enabled me to more confidently and openly respond to his questions and share my insider knowledge of a/b. Being able to share about a/b helped me to build my strength in relation to a/b.

My father also altered the way he spoke about a/b, making our languaging of a/b similar. Thinking my father had made this alteration because he heard me say that his doing so would be helpful in growing my strength and his relationship with me invited me to re-visit other practices and actions that my father had spoken of in our research conversations; practices which had helped me to grow and to claim more preferable positions in my life.

In the research, my father wondered about the effects his studying and his reduced involvement could have had as part of the cause of a/b. Being an adult student myself, I am able to notice how my father's decisions and actions in relation to his study have gone on to support me here within this study. My father's modelling an ethic of life-long learning is an ethic I have carried forward into my life today. This is an ethic I now frequently call upon to help sustain me and my commitment to projects, especially when I encounter points of difficulty, such as I have within the doing of this research.

My father also wondered about how his separation from my mother and then me, and how a possible failing to orientate his attention in such a way when we did meet one another might have been a cause of a/b. Aware of my father's love and care for me, and conscious of his abilities to orientate his attention to my needs (such as above), I am able to make different sense of my father's meaning-

making. I am able to see how my father resisted being separated from me. My father organised for us to spend time together twice a week. Even when a/b got me to decline to see him, or convince me to say very little when we did meet, my father continued to invite me to spend time with him and to take up a speaking position in any conversations we shared together, even if only over the phone. I can see now that my father's attention would have been tested in these moments, but still he persisted; this persistence helping me to grow my voice and separation from a/b. I can now see why a/b sought to keep me (and him) from the knowledge that these times together were helpful for me. A/b did not want me to realise how much of anti-a/b activist and support-person my father was or could be.

To make meaning of my father's responses towards me as supportive actions he took because he wanted to be involved in my life enables me to begin to notice and appreciate the talking and listening relationship we had and what that made possible for me to do. I find myself drawn to thinking how my re-positioning in relation to my father may have been able to occur within our research conversations and happen so quickly because we shared a history of being able to do so within conversations with one another.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER

Reading in the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) about another father's experiences of being involved in his daughter's treatment invited my father to discuss his experiences of such in relation to me.

TALKING ABOUT TREATMENT APPROACHES

Discourses around fathering, parenting, notions of individualism, and medical constructions of a/b shaped my father's meaning-making around causes of a/b. These same discourses also informed much of his meaning-making around treatment. My father's meaning-making was also additionally shaped by and through his experience of being physically distanced from me during the time I required treatment.

NON-RESIDENT FATHER

Regarding physical distance positioning him as a non-resident father and the influences that this had on his response(s) to me my father says,

.....I think because of your mum and mine marital situation – how did I get involved in a way that was acceptable was where I struggled...acceptable to your mother, that wasn't saying 'what are you doing with Paula's life?'... I could have been more inquisitive, more inquiring of your physical condition instead of leaving it for your mother to deal with...I would ask what was happening with regards to your visit to the hospital and the doctor and try and find out but try and let your mother manage the situation...just try to get her to talk to me and if she wasn't managing, then hopefully she would say something...

Being a non-resident father shaped the positions available to my father in relation to me and my treatment - as too did converging discourses around gender, parenting and marital separation.

In traditional discourses around parenting, mothers are positioned as primary caretaker nurturers (Willie, 1995). Fathers on the other hand are positioned as providers. Interpreted through this discourse, my father's actions of leaving the care of my 'physical condition' up to my mother was to do only as his position within this discourse permitted.

Taking up a position as non-resident father made more available to my father the option of leaving the care of 'physical condition' up to my mother. Non-resident fathers have thought to limit their contact with their children in order to avoid conflict with a former spouse (Wright & Price, 1986 cited in Seltzer, 1991, p.80).

That my father might too have positioned himself as a non-resident father and been informed by a similar concern is visible through his comments about the struggle he experienced in his interactions with my mother in relation to my care.

I can recall little about my father's involvement early on in the period of my life when I was seeing doctors regarding a/b. I had thought my father non-interested or too busy to become as involved as my mother. Sometimes I wondered if my father thought a/b was an illness only women experienced and that my mother, as a woman, might be more adept at helping me. Having previously positioned myself as Daddy's girl, and used to him helping me, I experienced confusion about his absence, which in turn contributed to my sense of isolation.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT/POSITIVISM

Continuing with the topic of treatment, and curious to learn more of my father's experiences and choices in our situation, I asked my father in the research conversation about the meanings he made of specific actions and responses he offered during the time I required treatment.

Asserting both modernist notions of individualism, along with personal development discourse, my father explained:

...I think the basic rule that I have in life is that we are responsible for ourselves...acknowledging our responsibility is acknowledging we have faults, we have strengths and strengths in how we live our lives is how we all overcome our faults, if we act positively...so it's a case of encouraging people with the right words, with the right nudges in the right direction to sort of say 'good, supportive encouragement'...it's just trying to awaken your mind to think... I can think as much as I like and I can say as much as I like but when we come down to a/b, it has got to be the person that is actually involved that comes in and turns things around...and [when you were in hospital] it got to the stage that I made the comment 'I don't want you to die before me. I will cry at your funeral but I can't help you with this. I can be there, I can offer you support but it's you that has got to do the fight'...at the time my life was improving...I got into a lot of positive reinforcement and I guess I was trying to share that with you...[that] you first of all got to be positive about yourself before others will be positive about you...

In the words above my father talks about how he was positioned. His meaning-making is dominantly informed by personal development discourse sustaining ideas of self-actualisation, self-responsibility and self fulfilling prophecy. Having taken up a position within these discourses to make sense of his position in relation to himself, my father invited me to do the same in terms of my self-relationship, and the relationship I had with a/b. Believing a/b's control over my life might diminish through positive thinking emphasises to me how the tricky, complex workings of a/b were and largely still are invisible to my father. I wonder if and how my father may have differently positioned himself in relation to the idea that I should take up positive thinking practices if he had been and was more aware of a/b's ways of working; how a/b would and can still easily resist and twist all thoughts – positive or otherwise – to its own advantage, the outcome of which being that I (as the creator of these thoughts) am invited into self-blame for a/b's on-going means of survival.

Modern notions of individualism shaped the positions my father made available to me in our relationship. Through these ideas my father was able to call me into a position of responsibility for my own treatment.

I interpreted being positioned as responsible for my treatment to also mean I was responsible for the treatment's success – as in my survival. The effect being I felt extremely pressured. Previous attempts I had made to take up a position of responsibility had, from my perspective, failed – an outcome that a/b was very quick to use to strengthen itself. My father appeared to be unaware of these attempts I had made to take responsibility for my survival. That my father continued to be positioned as unaware of the attempts I had made, even after all

the knowledge sharing that we had engaged in the research conversations (prior to the one in which the above comments were made) was frustrating. For me, knowledge shared and spoken about between people was knowledge to be remembered. In this instance with my father, I felt that what I had shared with him in the past and in our conversations together had not counted, had not been heard or the meaning of it fully recognized by my father. For me knowledge shared was knowledge to be remembered. A/b seized on this frustration I was experiencing in relation to my father and invited me into thinking that the knowledge I had shared with my father had been pointless and the research a waste of time; that like all the other attempts I had made in my life to take responsibility for my survival, a/b had and would always emerge victorious, stronger and more powerful.

While I began to learn that the personal development ideas my father took up in his responses to me were useful for a/b, I also came to see them as of use to me. Taking up my father's invitations, and positioning myself in a way that made it possible for me to practice these ideas was where I experienced difficulty. A/b was and is an adept user of positive ideas. Therefore, when I used positive affirmation orientated practices, I struggled to distinguish whether these ideas were a/b's or my own. In addition to this, the discourses informing many of my father's ideas about what was best for me collided with those my mother and step-father had. Aware of my financial and in some respects physically dependant position in relation to my mother and step-father further constrained me from actively taking up the alternative positions and ways of looking at life that my father offered to me. I wanted to be loyal to my mother and step-father but I did

not know how I could practice this loyalty while also participating in ideas my father supported. I worried that if I did so my actions would threaten the delicate balance in the relationship I had with my mother and step-father, making me vulnerable and exposed; a situation which I knew a/b would seize upon and use.

RE-POSITIONING AND ALTERNATIVE MEANING-MAKING: TREATMENT APPROACHES

When my father spoke with me in the research about his experiences around my treatment and the effects his relationship with my mother had for him during this time, it was a new experience for me. I noticed that his speaking appeared to have shifted after reading the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) within which another father describes his experiences with his daughter and wife in relation to a/b. On previous occasions when my father had talked about his relationship with my mother, he had spoken of things that did not involve or mention anything about me. During such past instances I had found myself listening from my position as a daughter seeking to protect my mother as the absent participant in the conversation.

Yet by making available to me how his relationship with my mother shaped his relationship with me, my father invited me to listen from a dual position of co-researcher and his daughter. Taking up a different listening stance meant I could notice the context to my father's actions around my treatment. I was thus able to notice how my father took up a position in relation to me that sought to privilege

my mother's knowledge and abilities to manage the situation while also enable him to resist being on the outside of my life.

As I reflect on what my father shared with me from my position as a co-researcher, I begin to notice how certain ideas he spoke of appear to be related to some of the social constructionist informed ideas shaping aspects of my own life and work. My father's valuing of language as a tool that has the power to shape a person's experiencing of themselves and their life connects with an idea I associate with social constructionism, that of the power of language and stories as constitutive - shaping lives and relationships (White & Epston, 1990). Being able to see connections with my father's and my own ideas around the power of language invites me to reposition myself alongside, in closer relationship with my father.

Re-positioning and seeing my and father's relationship as one of closeness supports me to speak more easily and more often with my father outside the formal research conversations. With each of these additional speaking moments we share together, I experience my voice strengthen and our relationship grow. This growing strength enables me to resist a/b's demands more easily. I feel I have the power and means through which to give language to the demands a/b is trying to make, and able to identify and make visible the specific practices and actions my father could perform to help me to resist such demands from a/b.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER

POSITIONING AND RE-POSITIONING IN RELATION TO MY FATHER NOW AND INTO THE FUTURE

My father and I continue to hold many conversations together about what it means to have had and/or be living a life influenced by the presence of a/b. We also regularly talk about the research practice we participated in together, as well as other forms of research practice surrounding the topic of a/b.

I generally experience these conversations and our positioning in relation to each other as encouraging and strengthening of my anti-a/b voice.

I do not wish to imply that ours is a relationship free of challenges.

There have been and continue to be points in our relationship where I experience my father's meaning-making and actions as colliding with my own. These are moments which challenge my feeling of being in a supportive relationship with my father. Many of these moments of collision are related to the statements my father makes about aspects of my life and/or a/b; his making statements in itself being a shift from the approach of asking questions about a/b like how he had within the research conversations. This is a shift in approach that I read as suggesting my father sees himself as an expert, as an authority over the workings of a/b in relation to my life. I do not want my father to claim an expert position in relation to me; for him to think he knows me, or a/b better than I do.

Because of my re-positioning and my increasing knowledge about a/b, I am able to identify a/b's presence in the shaping of such a meaning-making. I can see how

a/b wants me to believe my father is trying to position himself as an expert. A/b is aware that I am so opposed to being positioned in this way in relation to anyone - including my father. A/b knows that I will take whatever actions required in resisting such a positioning. In terms of my relationship with my father, my actions could include resisting sharing my insider knowledge about the workings of a/b, and finding ways to distance myself from him. A/b would also very much like my father to think he has it (a/b) 'worked' out, and that he no longer needs to ask questions. There is advantage in my father's assuming he has an understanding of a/b because this allows a/b to take up a different guise and go more easily undetected in my life.

Being re-positioned in relation to my father and aware of the actions he took in the past to encourage my voice to grow stronger and more available helps me to use my voice to speak out about statements my father makes that I experience as assumptive and positioning me in ways that I do find helpful. This is not a matter of me telling my father that he is wrong to say what he has said, but is instead my pointing out the differences in our meaning-making and how I experience what he is saying to/in relation to me. While I do not wish to experience these or any moments of collision in my father's and my own meaning-making and positioning, I am glad that we encounter these moments. Not only do such moments allow me to test my voice out, to learn to use my speaking and authority without abusing it in a relationship with someone who I know wants to support my separation from a/b. These moments also remind me of important and continual the process of positioning and re-positioning is and how important it is

to and for me to be positioned alongside my father in a supportive collaborative relationship.

CONVERSATIONS WITH MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY

REFLECTING ON THE BODY OF CONVERSATIONS MEMBERS OF MY FAMILY AND I SHARED TOGETHER

In this chapter I have sought to make visible the dominant discourses surrounding my parent's meaning-making in our research conversations together.

The discourses that I first noticed and in turn chose to make visible and speak to were shaped by and through my positioning as a researcher, daughter and former-captive of a/b. I then, as a sign and as part of facilitating a re-positioning of myself noticed, made visible and spoke to alternative discourses and positioning I saw to be available to myself and to members of my family.

What is notable and interesting about my re-positioning that this chapter makes visible, concerns the shifts in my experiencing and constructing of my parents positioning and actions; not only their positioning and actions in terms of our past together, but also the positioning and actions I see them taking now and into the future. When I say actions, I am also referring to their deciding to participate in this research with me. Where previously I had experienced my parents and I to be positioned in discourses and performing actions that invited oppositional stances, I was instead noticing that they too, like me, struggled to resist being positioned in

certain discourses, and that many of their actions spoke to and of care and love for me.

Another interesting point this chapter highlights relates to the speed in which I re-positioned myself and/or saw these alternative discourses in relation to individual members of my family. As I stated earlier in “Conversations with my father”, I found myself re-positioning in relation to my father much more faster than what I did in relation to my mother or my step-father. It is worth considering how I was able to re-position myself in relation to my individual parents might be related to the different degrees of space and isolation a/b had managed to claim or create over time in my life and in my relationships.

Given I lived with my mother and step-father when a/b’s voice was the loudest, theirs were actions that a/b had access to manipulate on an every day basis. Their presence and actions were also a continual threat to a/b’s on-going existence in my life. A/b thus sought to position me against and as far from my mother and step-father as possible; it knew that growing our separation (and isolating me from either of them) would enable it to grow its strength in my life. A/b had less access and/or need to manipulate my father’s words and actions in relation to me; being positioned on the fringes of my life when a/b’s voice was growing protected my father from much of the intensity of a/b’s strength and ability to position him and I against each other. I propose that this relationship my father and I had before the research helped us to step into a research relationship much faster and made it much easier for us to speak together about our experiences in relation to a/b when it came to the research conversations.

Finally it is an important point to note that this chapter makes visible how re-positioning is a continuous, on-going process that involves a multiplicity of threads. I know that there are aspects of my parents speaking and shifting positioning connected to their reading of the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You* (Maisel et al., 2004) which I have either not managed to address, or have not addressed as fully as what I might have preferred. I also know and want to point out that the discourses and meaning-makings I have highlighted in this chapter are only a selection.

Even now as I re-read and write a summary of this chapter I find myself noticing many more alternative discourses and positions surrounding me and members of my family in relation to each other and in relation to a/b.

CHAPTER FIVE

BEYOND THIN DESCRIPTIONS AND THE PAIN A/B INTRODUCED

Reading this research now, I realise that it was out of immense pain that this research was born.

I realise too, that while this immense pain was significant in the shaping the existence of this research, this pain was not the only factor driving this research. Amongst many other things, curiosity, need and hope also shaped my doing this research.

I began this research out of pain but also out of curiosity: curiosity about my own and members of my family's meaning-makings and experiences in relation to a/b and curiosity about how we were positioned in relation to a/b as individuals and as members of a family.

I also began this research out of personal need: a need to locate a space to give voice to what I had heard, felt, believed and lived through in my journey with a/b and a need to make my personal visible and political.

Finally, I began this research out of a sense of hope: hope for re-positioning of myself in relation to a/b and in relation to members of my family and hope for re-positioning in the lives of my family members.

By first using autoethnography, and then calling upon an ethos of participatory action research together with bibliotherapy, I created a series of communicative

forums. These forums enabled and encouraged us to explore the pathologising and internalising ideas around a/b, and how/why we were positioned in relation to these ideas.

Of the many ideas that were discussed, the most dominant ideas made visible linked with discourses of individualism, mother-blame and responsible parenting, science/medicine, mental illness, weight and body image; discourses which called either myself or individual family members into positions of responsibility and/or shame/blame for some if not all of a/b's presence and mechanism.

These were discourses and positions that at times served to isolate us from ourselves and one another; creating a situation supportive of the growing of a/b's strength and presence in our lives rather than growing our resistance to it.

Making visible these ideas (and this kind of languaging) around a/b and how these ideas positioned us as individuals and as members of a family has enabled us to challenge the ideas and the language; to shift the focus point around a/b to make possible a re-positioning of ourselves in relation to it, and in relation to each other.

Through my own involvement as a co-researcher and participant in this research, I have experienced a re-positioning in my life in relation to myself, a/b, members of my family and research. I see and experience myself as more easily able to access positions of agency and authorship in my life. These are positions that speak to as well as further enable a strengthening of my anti-a/b voice; positions that sit me alongside members of my family as an adult-daughter, woman and member of the wider community. Positions that I had not seen as so available for me to take up prior to my, and members of my family's reading of the book *Biting the Hand that*

Starves You (Maisel et al., 2004) and our engaging in co-research practice together.

An important to note about my own and family member's re-positioning is that it is as much temporary as it is on-going, unsettling, multi-layered and complexly intricate. There are still many moments when I experience members of my family call me into positions that I want to resist. The difference for me now is that I am more able to identify available and less available discourses and discursive practices. I also have a stronger voice which I use more readily to position myself as an authority in my own life.

Perhaps what is also notable is that a/b continues to be a problem that 'defies logic' (Evelyn Scott, 2007); a problem that looks to disguise and deceive even the most informed, knowledgeable, collaborative, and supportive communities of care. Even research such as this, which I believe has helped to support and begin to enable a re-positioning of my self and members of my family – my community of care, is not in itself an 'answer' or a solution that might stop the problem of a/b invading any other person's and/or family's lives and relationships.

Like any research, this research has encountered difficulties and moments of challenge. Also like any research, this research has taken place within a particular socio-cultural context; a context within which particular ideas (such as those from feminist, post-structuralist and social constructionist paradigms) in existence have helped to stabilise the ground under my own and the research participant's feet and support our talking, listening, thinking, reading, writing, reflecting and re-positioning.

While I am reluctant to claim this research is an answer to a/b, I do believe that there are a number of aspects and practices incorporated into this research that future researchers may find useful to draw upon or develop further when looking to grow knowledge of people's meaning-making and experiencing of a/b.

The particular practices of research that I am thinking about are those that create space for a multitude of voices, stories, knowledge, experiences, meaning-making, and positioning; practices such as autoethnography, PAR and bibliotherapy. Research that connects people to communities and exposes the richness of people's lives and relationships is research that has the potential to help a person, a family and a community to shift and grow their anti-a/b practices so they can together resist a/b's efforts.

At least, this is what I think because this is what I have experienced in my doing and participation in this research with members of my family.

In hindsight I wish I had prepared time and space to allow for members of my family to talk about how they experienced being participants in this research. Hearing and making visible their experiences of aspects of this research could add another level of richness to this research, and could also potentially provide some future directions for researching with family members who have journeyed on the sea of a/b together.

As I write this final paragraph, I realise how differently I feel about myself, my life, research, members of my family and a/b. The many challenges I faced in, and in relation to this research fade from my view. I am stronger now. My life is

rich with multiple stories, multiple relationships, multiple experiences, positioning and re-positioning.

I am me, Paula: Woman, adult-daughter, feminist and researcher. I am me, Paula: the anti-a/b activist. Most importantly, I am me, Paula: alive and everyday working at growing my surviving skills and knowledge. I am no longer the sailor from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge 1798/1996), imprisoned into a life as a shadowy hallowed figure. I am freer; more able to seek out new alternative positions in my life and in relation to members of my family and a/b; freer to tell and live out new, more preferable stories. Stories of hope, possibility and spirit nourishment. Anti-a/b stories. Stories like this one.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Letter of introduction/invitation



Paula Scott
72 b
Morrinsville
Road
Hillcrest
Hamilton

3 Ngaere Avenue

Hamilton

Participant

[Pick the date]

Dear Family member,

As you know, I have been working on the writing of a research proposal as part of my Masters in counselling degree at University. The tentative title of this research is ‘positioning and re-positioning of individuals and families /b: an auto-ethnographical informed study’. Auto-ethnography is a kind of ‘self-narrative’. It is a way of research, writing and method that connects stories we as individuals might tell about our lives with the social and cultural world (s) in which we live. In this research I am interested in exploring the following areas:

- Relationships in the midst of the diagnosis of a/b:

How were relationships between individuals and the family shaped by the presence of a/b?

- Changes to relationships:

How/why have relationships changed between individuals? The family?
In relation to a/b?

- Changes to relationships and the future:

What do these changes mean for individuals and the family with regards to their future relationships?

We previously discussed this research and what it might look like and how you can be involved in this project, as a person who will part of my own story as well as hearing how a/b shaped relationships in your life. We spoke about my intentions for this research to include each family member reading sections of the book *Biting the Hand that Starves You*. We talked briefly about how the reading would be followed by audio taped discussions between the participants and myself. That in these discussions we would be reflecting on my areas of research interest (mentioned above) as well areas of interest you nominate as a participant. At the time you spoke of the possibility of agreeing to be a participant within the work this research that I am going to be doing.

I write you this letter to formally invite you to be a participant in this project, which has the approval of the Ethics Committee of the School of Education.

If you were to take up this invitation to participate, you would participate in the following activities:

1. Meet with me and in this meeting we would:

-collaboratively establish some hopes or questions you would like to explore through this research.

- construct a contract which details your consent to participate. In this contract we would mention the hopes/questions formulated in the prior procedure together.

2. Read section one of a book titled *Biting the Hand that Starves You*. This book will be supplied to you by David Epston (co-author of the text). I anticipate that the first section of this book may take a day up to one week to read.

3. Re-meet with me after you have completed reading the first section of the book. In this meeting we will:

- have a discussion of approximately one to one and a half hours in length. This discussion (and subsequent ones) will be audio-taped.

- discuss four very 'loosely guiding' research areas of interest that I have proposed. (See page 1, paragraph 1)

- discuss what things came forward for you from the text relating to your own hopes/questions as identified above.

4. I will then copy our audio taped discussion and deliver this tape to you at an agreed upon time/date. I ask that you listen to this tape and identify some aspects of this audio-taped discussion that you would like to revisit.

5. We will then arrange to meet again and discuss these aspects you have identified. We will also talk about how aspects sit with regards to the areas of interest you identified in the beginning stages of the research.

6. We will then move on to read section two of the book. I anticipate that this second reading could take from one day up to two weeks to complete.

7. Re-meet again with me after you have completed reading the second section of the text. In this meeting we will repeat the discussion procedures mentioned above. (see points 3-5).

8. After I have drafted a summary of our discussion, I will give you a copy of the summary. I ask that you read this and indicate any part of your stories/voice that you see as needing altered and/or removed. You will have two weeks in which to do this. I will then make any required changes.

9. Following these alterations, I will present you with a final copy of the written work for you to check the information. If you agree that what has been written is an accurate representation of your perspective. I ask that you sign an agreement that gives your consent for this to be included in the study and that you acknowledge that no further changes to your story/information can be made. The information you have given will then be used alongside my auto-ethnographical work.

Some important points to note about consenting to be a participant in this research:

1. Your participation in this research must be voluntary.
2. Your consent to participate in as a participant engaging in a research relationship. This relationship stands as separate and in addition to that of our family relationship as mum-daughter, dad-daughter, step-father-daughter. This means that you say what you want to say, not what you perceive that I as your daughter might ‘want to/like to’ hear.
3. Your consent to participate is alterable. Please note that you can withdraw/decline to participate in this study. If you choose to withdraw/decline to participate, this will not have any consequences for our personal relationship(s) or the completion of the study. The study has an auto-ethnographical section that is my responsibility and is outside of the research we do together.
4. You may consent to the inclusion and/or exclusion of aspects of your stories/conversations. You have the right to state that some aspects of our conversations remain confidential and unpublished. You can exercise this right in writing, and can do so at any stage up until a given date within the research up until the time you have signed the final contract of consent.
5. Given our relationships as family, your consent to participate in this research means that confidentiality is not possible as I am identifiable as the author of the study. You can choose to use a different first name if you wish.
6. Consenting to participate in this research project means that you understand that your involvement may potentially shape you and your relationships with others. This could be from the reading of the text; discussions; reflecting and reading of the written research document. I have contacted Jenny Snowdon, counsellor with Family

Works Northern group, to be available for counselling if this were something that you may wish to do. Her phone number is 07 8544413.

7. Consenting to participate in this research also means that you acknowledge that I will be selecting and including material from our discussions/reflection meetings for particular reasons. You understand that this selecting/inclusion is not intended as insult or as denial of your story and/or voice.
9. This research will be carried forward in further future research projects and article writing. The information that you consent to give to be included in this research may also be included in these future works. In signing the final consent form you are acknowledging that you are aware of this, and that you have agreed to it.
10. If you would like to discuss any part of this letter or the study itself with someone other than myself, you are welcome to contact my supervisor – Dr. Elmarie Kotzé at the University of Waikato on (07) 838 4466 ext: 7961.
11. As programme director of the Masters of Counselling at the University of Waikato, Dr, Kathie Crocket is also available to answer any questions or queries about this research on (07) 838 4500 ext: 8462. If at any point during this research, you should have any kind of dispute or conflict in regards to the study, you are welcome to contact these two people also.

If you feel that after reading this letter and the introduction chapter to the text ‘Biting the Hand that Starves You’ that you would like to participate in this research project then please let me know. You can do so in person, by phone or by email.

We can then agree on a suitable time in which to discuss the hopes you may have for your participation in this research and put these hopes within a written contractual agreement that acknowledges you are giving your informed consent to participate.

You are more than welcome at any stage to bring forward any questions you might have about the research. If there are further points you wish to discuss, then please let me know in person, by phone or alternatively, by email. We can then proceed to organise a time in which to explore any queries you may have.

Appendix B – Consent Form 1

As a participant in this study, I understand that I will: (please tick)

- Co-construct a contract agreement detailing my consent to participate in this research.
- Form some hopes and/or questions that I would like explored through the research. I understand these will be included within the above mentioned contract agreement.
- Participate in the reading of the book 'Biting the Hand that Starves You'. I understand that this reading will be done in two sections.
- Participate in audio-taped discussions following my reading of the first and then the second sections of the above-mentioned text. These discussions will explore four areas of interest for Paula as researcher, as well the hopes and/or questions that I have identified.
- Listen to and identify aspects from the above audio-taped discussion(s) that I wish to revisit. My participation in this procedure will occur post-reading and discussion about the first section of the text, and then post-reading and discussion about the second section of the text.
- Participate in two audio-taped discussions where the above aspects I have identified through my listening to the former conversation(s) will be explored with Paula. I will explore these aspects in relation to the wider research interests and my own hopes and/or questions I have identified.
- Read the drafted copy of the summary of my conversations drawn from the above procedures in which I have participated. I will then make visible any changes that I believe are required that relate to the representation of my story.
- Receive and check a further drafted copy of the summary of my conversations.
- If I agree, sign a final agreement that acknowledges I consent to the representation of my story as it stands. In signing this agreement, I will not be able to request any further alterations.

Please circle Yes or No:

- I know and agree that the research will be about positioning and repositioning of individuals and family in relation with anorexia and bulimia.
Yes / No
- I am aware that the opportunity to ask any questions around this research is ongoing up until the signing of a final agreement of consent.
Yes / No
- I know and understand that my agreement to participate in this research means that I will be engaging in a research relationship, and that this relationship will stand as separate and in addition to that of the mother-daughter, father-daughter, stepfather- daughter relationships I have with Paula. Any decisions or choices I wish to make relating to this research and working together in this will not harm the relationship.
Yes / No
- I may withdraw any and all information that may relate to me, without any given reason, at any stage up to and including the 14th day after my receiving of the written document summarizing the content of the conversations in which I was a participant.
Yes / No
- If this is the case, I will notify Paula in writing, within this period.
Yes / No
- I agree to participate in the construction of my hopes, intentions and questions for the research, reading of the text, two discussions based around my reading, two discussions reflecting on my listening of these discussions and a reading over a summarization of the conversations/discussions. That I am aware that these discussions/conversations will be audio-taped and that selections of these discussions/conversation will be transcribed.
Yes / No
- I am aware that conversation material that I have consented to being included in this research may be used in further research/articles.
Yes / No

Participant Response:

.....
.....

Participant's Name

Participant's Signature

.....
Date

Appendix C – Working research contract agreement

Working research contract agreement for 2007-2008 between

[]/research participant and Paula Scott/researcher

This research relationship between the fore mentioned persons is based on Paula Scott's research work around 'Positioning and re-positioning of individuals and family members in relation to anorexia and bulimia (a/b)'. This document stands in addition to that of a signed informed consent contract, which details the exact specific tasks/expectations, rights and responsibilities required of the participant through their involvement in the research.

The purpose of this contract agreement is to clarify the areas/questions/hopes that the participant has for their involvement in the research. This contract will also include any other additional information that the participant and the researcher would like to make visible prior to their engagement together in a research relationship.

I, , agree to frank and open discussions around the issues relation to a/b's development and influence in relation to our (mine and my daughter Paula) lives.

Within these frank and open discussions I would like to see the following questions/areas explored:

- [hopes and dreams]

I understand that these questions will be explored alongside those that have been proposed by Paula. These I have read within the letter of information about the research that Paula has provided to me.

I personally do not wish, prior to my own contributions, be made aware or have the opportunity or knowledge of other participant's involvement/accounts/stories.

I, [name], agree to represent my [parent], [name] voice in the most accurate way that is possible. I have read and agree to visit the areas of interest/questions/hopes that [name] has identified and stated here in this contract agreement.

I have provided and will continue to provide [name] with the space to ask questions about the research up until the signing of the final consent form of agreement.

We BOTH agree to be honest, constructive and respectful in our discussions together.

If for any reason either of us was to feel that our [parent]-daughter relationship was becoming estranged or shaped in ways that we did not find preferable, we agree to seek the assistance of the third party support person that has been made available for the course of this research.

Participant _____ Date _____

Participant _____ Date _____

While their questions and areas of interest were worded differently, it was clear to me as a researcher that each of my parents wanted to know more about what might be commonly understood as “the causes”.

Appendix D – Final Consent Form 2

Please tick

- If chosen to, I have read through the drafted summary of the three conversations/discussions that took place between myself (participant) and Paula Scott (researcher) on _____ (dates).
- I accept that this draft summary is an accurate and fair representation of the conversation(s) content.
- I have been given the opportunity to alter any part of this summary, and have done so if I wished to.
- I have been given the opportunity to delete any part of this summary and have done so if I wished to.
- I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions relating to this draft summary and the study itself and have had these satisfactorily answered.
- I am aware that I in signing this document, that I am agreeing to the representation of my voice/story as it now stands. That I will be unable to alter this decision once I have signed and dated this document.
- That I am aware and understand that in consenting to in the inclusion of this information in this research, that the same information may also be used with further research/writing.

Participant Response:

Participant's Name

Participant's Signature

.....
Date