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**“But I still love him”: Women talk about love and violence, and
counsellors respond**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
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By

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Abstract

This feminist research enacts a new materialist performance of theory/practice that investigates love-entangled-with-violence in intimate heterosexual partner relationship. The study investigates the double dilemma of a woman's love-connectivity to her partner that refuses to be unfelt and unthought, despite the disturbance of violence, *with* the counselling conundrum of how to effectively and ethically respond. The data materials were generated in two cycles of group interviews. The initial waves of data were drawn from narratives told in interviews with women whose intimate partners had subjected them to physical abuses and coercive controls produced through accretions of surveillance, accusation and constraint. These narratives were haunted by intensities of love dis-join-ted. Consequently, the women engaged with counselling or therapeutic programmes. As researcher, I wanted to learn what women had to say about their experiences of therapy and to take these readings of therapy to a group of counsellors in collective documents. In a second wave of interviews, a group of counsellors offered practice accounts of justice-doing, cut together-apart with women's struggle, refolded into ethical considerations for finding safety. In that sense, both the counsellors *and* women-in-danger traversed uncertain territory. Collaborative therapeutic practices, such as those the counsellor group described in this research, act as apparatuses for interference and contestibility, and hence, for change.

The study's originating questions were about how power/knowledge and domination (Foucault) is exercised in heterosexual partner relationship. The theoretical arc of the study took an early turn towards new materialisms (Barad) and the affective potentialities of human-nonhuman assemblages (Massumi). Entities such as vehicles, guns and a knife, queered the trajectory of the study towards differentiating encounters with the thing power of clusters of actants other than and including humans (Bennett). The analysis of the research materials emerges through a Baradian diffractive approach, which maps the effects of difference. Taking Barad's proposal for the inseparability of matter-

discourse, the study sometimes maps affecting moments for the researcher-self onto the theoretical positions of the thesis. The contributions of this thesis are for counselling practices that attend to matter↔discourse, including other-than-human bodies. A new materialist iteration of narrative therapy, the culmination of this research work, offers shifts in conceptual accounts of affect, and how to address what matters. These differences-in-the-(re)making are themselves indeterminate and ongoing.

Dedication

For my young ones, Pete and Tania, Andy and Kim,
my brother Kevin,
and my parents, Fred and Shirley, who taught us by their example to get involved
in our communities in whatever way we could.

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Colleagues, friends and family members have cared in various ways that have materially en-courage-d me by providing footholds for staying with the project. Each of these people have taken up a passionate hope that the emergent new materialist thought-practices that have animated my life and work will make a difference in the world. We are many: Eugene, Wendy, Maria, Moalia, Rachel, Susanna, Stuart, Kou, Jan, Jo, Alicia, Leah, Kate, Bronwyn, Vani, Kaoru, Adriana, Viv, Alan, Janette, Chrissie, Rose, Hiruni, James, Gayle, Erica, Pam, Michelle, Suzanne, Judy, Angela, Lucy, Alison, Alex, Russell, Warwick, Jan, Karen, Aimee, Frans, Sashi, Hetal, Pradeep, Shelley, Laurel, Stu, Lorraine, Susan, Elaine, Benita, Cherie, Keith, Louise, Judy, Peter, Colin, Julz, Jeannine, Romola, John, Donald, Paul, Jane, Justine, Diane, Kim, Michael, Jean, Mhairi, Celine, Catherine.

The planet we inhabit, in all its complexities – known in Māoridom through Papatūānuku and Ranginui – has been vibrantly inspiring through this period of years, as I've walked the tracks of various local bush locations, and am enlivened by the bountiful flora and fauna of this land.

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Chapter 1

Starting places

Introducing the study

My research has a social justice foundation and is deeply rooted in my professional work as a counsellor. As my title signifies, the study aims to contribute to counselling practices that address the intersection of love and violence in heterosexual partner relationship. In my professional work as a counsellor and in incidental meetings, I have met women who said they still loved a man who had subjected them to significant acts of violence. A claim to still love a man who might be in jail for a conviction of attempted murder of her presents an enigma and an ethical dilemma to the woman, to me, and to other professionals, who encounter and engage with her as she grapples with all the complexity of her situation. When a woman tells a counsellor “But I still love him”, there emerges a complicated interplay between a counsellor’s values, principles and guidelines for safety (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020), and a woman’s autonomy to continue a relationship with an intimate partner. The responses and intentions of family members and friends, anti-violence group programmes, counselling services, Police, legal and medical professionals are ones I share: that women not be subjected to violence in any form, and that women are supported in their efforts to find an alternative and preferred life. However, one of the possible effects of making these intentions explicit is further struggle, between a woman and those who worry about her safety and her future, and in a relation of ambivalence to her own “good advice to herself” in respect of safety and a life freed from coercive control (Stark, 2009a).

Unsettling questions

Before I began an enactment of research work, I experienced many agitating moments in my engagements to address violence against women. The settings for these encounters were primarily in professional settings in group

programmes and family therapy, and less often through private/personal conversations. Some such moments were so shocking that they registered more than others. The materiality of these stories was a vivid evocation of the danger women were living in. For the most part, a pronounced unease was produced in my body when women said, “But I still love him” after recounting events in which rough sex, blood, breath, bones and skin were evoked. Although I had not encountered new materialist literature and affect theory before I began my study, I noticed my body registering the intensities in the room as women spoke to me. As I was present to these affecting performances of violence↔love stories, I wondered how I and other counsellors might respond (ethically and effectively) to the conundrum of continuing love when there is ongoing injury to women’s bodies and ever-increasing control of women’s lives by intimate partners.

The following unsettling questions, and the therapeutic purposes they signified, refused to be overlooked:

- What stories do women tell about violence and love in relation to their intimate partners?
- How does power play out in these relationships?
- Does counselling and do group programmes bring about change? How?
- What are the limits and what are the possibilities for therapy?

Although these questions remain an originating wave force through the research, they have taken on a new materialist indeterminacy. The questions themselves became open to the departures and arrivals of things and happenings that put me and the study in the “middle of divergence” (Jackson, 2017, p. 8). I have entered an uneasy truce with the gaps, oscillations and improvisations I have enacted within a study that draws on a qualitative method.

Becoming feminist researcher

Throughout this research, I have lived with the question of what makes this research feminist. Does method have anything to do with it (see Jackson, 2017)? Is it about feminist perspectives (Reinharz, 1992)? In other words, does the location of the researcher in relation to feminisms, feminist theory and practices,

take the research towards the sort of social change and chance that will draw on women's experiences, and address issues that women want addressed? How does this research go about that?

In an earlier qualitative research project (Snowdon & Kotzé, 2012), I met separately with three mothers living apart from their children. I chose to interview each woman by herself based on the following articulable positions: my insider status (Reinharz, 1992, p. 260); my interest in listening to the woman's story with a singular attention; and my novice status as a researcher. I had experienced my own and other mothers' reluctance to speak out about living apart from their children. In so many ways, mothers at the edge of their children's lives had experiences of having to defend themselves against an assumption of being a 'bad mother'. For this reason, I chose individual interviews to generate the data materials. In the present project, I could see many advantages for women and counsellors to meet each other in group settings because group conversations have the potential for more influence by participants and, thus, the asymmetry of researchers' relationship with participants can be somewhat addressed (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005). I believe focus groups or collective conversations fit well with feminist intentions to render a research process more democratic, more complex, and more unpredictable (Wilkinson, 1998).

Collective conversations

Collective conversations hold an appeal for me as a researcher. They are complex beasts (as I have found in meeting with groups of women for other purposes). There is the possibility for struggle and negotiation to be heard, but also an aliveness within the to-and-fro that is made possible with fellow travellers of the subject matter. Various researchers, cited in Wilkinson (1998) found that the complexity of collective conversation that emerges from the research starting point makes for more and more diversification of material, in groups. This is made possible through the "production of polyvocal texts" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 888), different voices contributing to meaning-making

intra-action as others' stories evoke a richer account of one's own. The enactment of this study invites a committed involvement by people for whom there is direct experience of the matter under investigation, and acknowledges a subject position to speak from.

Negotiating meaning through language

Language, and how it is used, has been abundantly productive for feminist perspectives and action. That said, in the field of work to address violence against women, words have sometimes been elusive to women who have been violently abused (Ringrose & Renold, 2014). The risks of limited language about gendered abuse and violence include: invalidation and minimisation by others of that abuse (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 2005; Gavey, 2005; hooks, 2005; White, 1995a, 2004); the pathologising of women's acts of resistance (Coates & Wade, 2007; Wade, 1997, 2007); and a deficit view of women's acts of self-harm rather than as expressions shaped by her meaning of the original abuse (Hydén, 2005; White, 1995). Research into at-home violence can make a difference by disclosing hidden experience; finding words and an audience, and using language effectively and ethically for change. In one such study, Margareta Hydén's (2005) findings of Swedish women's action to go public about violent abuse by intimate partners began with naming and speaking about their experiences of that abuse, and finding their accounts of resistance .

The words *violence* and *love*

I do not condone and minimise violence and so I use the term *violence* in this thesis deliberately. There are many ways that women's lives are violated, subjected to brute force, coercion, threat, oppression, constraint, and myriad waves of force that they cannot stop, no matter how they resist. I understand other writers' preference for words like *abuse*, because abuse implies the ongoing use of violating tactics and sometimes, in this thesis, I use the word abuse for the violations of women's bodies and lives. I can trace my preference for the term violence to early and subsequent reading of Allan Wade's work

(Coates & Wade, 2007; Todd & Wade, 2003; Wade, 1997, 2007). In particular, Wade and Linda Coates make a plea for language that does not obfuscate and conceal what violence is. As Wade does, I have a commitment to find stories of resistance that double with any event of violence. I, too, take the position that actions+narratives of violence and injustice implicitly hold the first-person story of resistance to that violence (Byers & Newman, 2019; Carey et al., 2009; Hydén, 2005; White, 2000). In contexts of violated heterosexual partnering – and therapeutic response – I hold concern about an over-emphasis on the third-person violence story that can obscure women’s *opposition* to violence, and the principles, values, commitments, aspirations and hopes women hold in opposing violence and becoming more fully alive (Richardson & Reynolds, 2012).

One expression of the purposes and promise of intimate partnering is love. In two movements of this thesis, I find acknowledgments from the women and counsellors I researched with and from neuroscience researchers that it is more difficult to articulate love than to describe violence and a fear response. Despite this difficulty, I wanted to hear from women what matters to them when they enter into intimacy with a man. In Chapter 8, I assemble selected data materials into women’s articulations of love in action, evocative accounts of partnering and parenting love. Earlier, in Chapter 3, I briefly discuss a neuroscience proposal for love responses that draws on a discussion of the complexities of love responses associated with two neuropeptides, oxytocin and vasopressin (Dębiec, 2007). Further contributions by Dębiec, and other neuroscientists (Dębiec et al., 2014) offer neuroscience explanations of the ‘emotional brain’ in how bodies act in affective and affecting ways.

I use words relating to *therapy* and *counselling* somewhat interchangeably in this thesis. Narrative therapy brings the word therapist into the thesis, but my own professional practice situates me as a counsellor, associated with a professional body (<https://www.nzac.org.nz/>) and in community with other counsellors.

Tracing the turn(s)

Not long before I turned 50, I completed the University of Waikato counsellor education programme, one that stepped me across new thresholds into poststructural philosophical positions and narratively-informed therapeutic practice. I had come to this programme from a career in early childhood education in which I had learned something of Vygotskian concepts and practices for scaffolding learning across the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978, 1986). In making my way towards a vocation in counselling, I undertook undergraduate study in philosophy. My selection of papers in ethics, logic, classics and critical reasoning provided an incremental and progressive movement towards the possibility for thinking with a number of poststructural philosophers whose thought informs my engagement with counselling practice. Coming as I did from experimental and collaborative practices of team teaching and a curriculum named *Te Whāriki* – woven mat – (Lee et al., 2013; Ministry of Education, New Zealand, 2017), I found the University of Waikato’s counselling programme’s poststructural philosophical positions intellectually animating. In the following section of this chapter, I write a short condensation of the visions of narrative therapy that inform and shape my practice as a counsellor. The complexities and particularities of narratively-informed therapeutic practices have been generously circulated in literature, so my intention here is to provide a panoramic view.

Practices and philosophical positions in narrative therapy

Michael White and David Epston, originators of narrative therapy, were inspired in their reading of anthropological and philosophical literature to engage with stories people were bringing to therapy (White & Epston, 1990). White and Epston believed that people tell multiple versions of stories about events in their lives, and some stories gain dominance, thereby subordinating the telling and meaning of other stories. In this sense, stories are not neutral and innocent in how persons make meaning of the events of their lives. White was notably influenced in his approaches to therapy by Michael Foucault’s analysis of

power/knowledge and discourse, and the opportunity in therapy to question – *with* people – ways of life that get taken for granted (White, 1995).

One important re-verse-al for modern western thinking that narrative therapy offers is in the form of externalising conversations. Externalising the predicaments and dilemmas of persons' lives is a refusal of the isolating and totalising practice of objectifying persons as the problem: rather, the problem is the problem (Monk et al., 1997; White, 2007). When the linguistic move is made in therapy to describe a problem in language that is as close as possible to a person's experience, the possibilities for examining its history and effects can begin to open up (Madigan, 1999; White, 2007). Persons and their counsellors can become increasingly interested and attentive to the real and constitutive effects of how power/knowledge is exercised, to the point where it may be (more) possible for a person to state a position on these effects. In narrating more details of particular events in their lives, therapy becomes the site for persons' protest and resistance to oppressive cultural practices (Madigan, 1992; White, 2002, 2004). As White said in an interview:

It is impossible for us to arrive at a vantage point from outside of culture – and therefore outside of language and known ways of life – by which we might review our culture. However, this fact does not condemn us to blindly reproducing culture, without any hope of refusing or protesting those aspects which we experience as problematic. (1995, p. 45)

For this reason, narrative therapy situates the lives of persons, and the problems they encounter, within contexts and relationship in every day life. In that sense, narrative therapy recognises *both* unique experience *and* wider contexts persons are navigating in ways that are constructed socially. Social constructionism does not privilege the idea of a self-contained person whose responses to the world are fixed and stable, and might be understood in modern life by concepts such as personality. The challenge of writers like Vivien Burr, Kenneth Gergen, Sheila McNamee and John Shotter (Burr, 2015; McNamee & Gergen, 1999; Shotter, 2017) and the Just Therapy team (Waldegrave et al., 2003) is to see knowledge as specific to time, place and cultural practice. These endeavours are not presented as certainties; rather they are reminiscent of Michel Foucault's "cautious stumbling manner" (1972, p. 17). Foucault writes of his method as:

... preparing – with a rather shaky hand – a labyrinth into which [one] can venture... opening up underground passages, forcing [discourse] to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which [one] can lose [one]self... (p. 17).

Foucault's plea is, "Do not ask me who I am and do not ask me to remain the same" (p. 17). Not entirely, but to some extent, a social constructionist approach proposes that we – collectively – make it up as we go along in relation to political, economic, material structures and natural phenomena. As a counsellor, I have learned and continue to learn that the risk of essentialised, naturalised views of personhood is that they can quickly collapse into the practice of pathologising and psychologising *persons* for the problems they nominate in the counselling room.

As co-author and collaborator, a narrative therapist believes in the possibility of alternative and preferred storylines that constitute preferred identity claims. To this end, narrative therapists decentre (Morgan, 2006; White, 2007) their own knowledge of cultural meaning and circumstance *and* take up an influential position. On White's terms (1995), a decentred and influential position is for discovery rather than a directive mode that promotes the prior knowledge of the therapist. The influential position, especially in counselling to address any forms of violence, calls on the counsellor to negotiate for changes that make a difference: "To not take a position is itself an act *of* violence, implicitly condoning the injustices suffered by the client" (Larner, 1999, p. 48). The question is *how* to address the power relation in therapy by taking a decentred position, whilst also exercising an ethical responsibility to scaffold conversations that discover as-yet unfamiliar potential (Duvall & Young, 2009; White, 2007).

Narrative therapy offers another significant shift for meaning-full re-authoring conversations. Narrative therapy seeks to unearth alternative stories of preferred action and identity; hence, an archeological metaphor as one useful way to conceive of the painstaking retrieval of these alternative stories (Monk et al., 1997). White drew on Vygotskian concepts of scaffolding (from what is known and familiar to what is possible to know) to build and substantiate lesser-

known alternative stories (Duvall & Young, 2009; White, 2007). These are stories of preferred action and intention. Thus, narrative therapists enquire into the commitments, values, principles, hopes, passions, purposes and beliefs that have informed the steps a person has taken to overcome the difficulties of their lives (Drewery & Winslade, 1997; Kotzé et al., 2013; Monk et al., 1997; White, 2007; White & Epston, 1990; Winslade & Monk, 2007). Narrative therapists are interested in how persons came to act in these purpose-full ways by enquiring about those who have inspired these values and unique skills for living through re-remembering practices (Hedtke & Winslade, 2004; Snowdon, 2017; White, 1988). In this way, narrative therapists become co-authors with persons to trace a plotline of active participation in relation to significant others. Accounts of courage, kindness, resilience, love and hope do not go unnoticed in narrative therapy, so narrative therapists engage further with people to write and record these resurrected stories into therapeutic documents, staying as close to a person's language as possible (Crocket, 2010; Newman, 2008; Penwarden, 2018).

Recent iterations of narratively informed therapy have incorporated neuroscientific knowledges (Beaudoin, 2005; Beaudoin & Zimmerman, 2011; Carey, 2013; Zimmerman, 2017). Jeff Zimmerman's (2017) argument is that therapeutic encounters with neuro-science affords narrative therapy new opportunities for incorporating "affective complexity" (p. 13) into our work. Zimmerman makes the claim, "*it's not just discourse*" (p. 14) that produces human response. Zimmerman's interest is in bringing back (human) bodies and memory to narrative therapy (p. 18) by becoming versed in current knowledge of how the human brain orchestrates response in persons and their therapists. Other narrative therapists follow the affective turn (Denborough, 2019; Monk & Zamani, 2019) in ways that focus on human responding.

As the research has unfolded in my life, and my work as a counsellor has continued, I find opportunities for revitalised and radicalised re-thinking, "of scintillating leaps of the imagination" (Foucault, 1990, p. 326) for narrative therapy. This study has brought me to a reiterative vocabulary of the mangle of

discursive↔material elements that bodies inhabit, of which therapy is a part. I have moved in my language and thinking towards wider configurations of entities, affinities and intensities. In Chapter 2, I go further into material-discursive-philosophical territories of *affect* with Brian Massumi (2002) and in chapters 5 and 6, propose that nonhuman bodies in a given configuration have thing power (Bennett, 2010). I bring more specificity to these new materialist iterations of narrative therapy in my final chapter (10).

The world is ever-changing

I have made it a way of life to think-practice the poststructural philosophies and relational practices I was introduced to by the Master of Counselling programme I wrote about above. To that end, I adopt a respectful and critical stance that asks how persons' lives are produced through cultural conditions across historical and present time, with a view to what a future may hold. During the research period, these philosophical and practice positions have been radically extended by material feminist influences.

Counselling practice necessarily puts a focus on language but, following Barad (2008), this study goes some way towards contesting the way matter/bodies have been rendered "passive and immutable" (p. 120) by a focus on language and culture. The world is ever-changing, and all matter↔discourse plays a part in *what* becomes possible. Bodies, human and nonhuman, have capacity to act (without words!) as becomes most intensely evident in catastrophic events. As humans work to make sense of knotty difficult events, accounts of what happened, and an easy assumption of meaning, can begin to be examined (Foucault, 1978, 1980; White, 1997). An exposé of what gets taken to be 'true' can be re-evaluated in light of ethical and principled positions persons may hold. In this sense, a poststructural position opens the field for political action at the level of everyday life, as well as in broader contexts, and does not depend on certainty and unchangeable conviction. What follows is an account of how I enacted these theoretical-practice positions and took up the path of this study.

Situating my research in an Aotearoa New Zealand story of responding to violence through a group programme

Across many domains of my life, I have participated with others in collective talk, and find myself committed to continue with ways of meeting people that enact an on-the-ground activism and solidarity. The following story recounts my work to address the effects of violence against women. One appreciation of group programmes that many women have spoken to me about is the opportunity to meet other women with insider knowledges of the conundrum of loving men who have subjected them to unspeakable violence. These group forums were sometimes a first opportunity for women to find words and safe witness for the pain and multiple effects of their partnering experiences.

Putting theory to work

Between 2006 and 2010, I worked for an agency that offered a 12-week group programme approved under the *Domestic Violence (Programmes) Regulations* (1996) for which women had their attendance funded. For nearly every week of the programme, an A3-sized *Power and Control Wheel* was hung at the front of the room, and the same sized *Equality Wheel* at the back of the room (see <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/training/wheels.html>) The programme manual directed facilitators to discuss and record the stories of women's experiences of violence in their partner relationships. These stories were then made available in written form for the women's personal folders. The programme used guided activities such as drawing or visualisations of abuse, and DVD dramatisations to educate women about the process of gaining a protection order (<http://www.justice.govt.nz/courts/familycourt/publications/pamphlets/applying-for-a-protection-order-english>). The programme arose from understandings of bi-cultural practices that were expanded on and modified considerably after I was no longer working in the organisation. Some of the practices include karakia (invocations of blessing to begin and end meetings) and mihimihi (interchanges of introduction). The programme was also psycho-educational in ways that

focused the attention of the group on what Tod Augusta-Scott (2003) calls the “the power and control story as a grand narrative” (p. 204).

Weekly feedback from women about our programme, told us that they gained a sense of relief to know that they were not the only ones for whom experiences of violence at home had produced harm, and that they enjoyed meeting other women and telling their stories of what had happened to them. All that said, I began to wonder if, and in what ways, the programme was limiting of women’s *future* prospects. The compelling immediacy of familiar violence narratives left little room for giving voice to what, in narrative therapy terms, are called alternative stories, stories of courage, determination, ingenuity, hopes and commitments (Carey et al., 2009; White, 2000). The programme, as it was written in the manual, with its spotlight on the *Power and Control Wheel*, also had the possible effect of re-traumatising the women, a risk identified by Michael White (2004) in his article of working to address the effects of multiple trauma.

In the following accounts of practice, and the research with Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotzé that investigated our feminist stance, Rachel McKenna and I were putting theory to work (Crocket et al., 2009). The language of the *Power and Control* and *Equality* wheels were starting points for new realisations for the women in the groups; for what might have been overlooked in their experience and resistance of violence, and to inspire a vision of more equitable partnering relationship (Morris, 2015). By using these materials *with* critical thinking about their effectiveness, we incorporated Foucault’s provocations to address power/knowledge in relationship as they have been adopted in the practices of narrative therapy (White, 1995, 2007; White & Epston, 1990). Our interest, as feminist counsellors, was to move the practices of language negotiation into more collaborative territory from a position that might have been experienced by women as imposing and interpretive of meaning.

My colleague, Rachel McKenna, and I made two moves to enact difference. The first difference was to put both the Duluth *Equality Wheel* and the *Power and Control Wheel* side-by-side at the front of the meeting room. Our intention in

showing both wheels throughout our series of group meetings was to keep future possibilities for partnering in plain sight, alongside our acknowledgement of, and language for, what women are subjected to when male partners use violence. The second difference we enacted was to gain permission to write a modified programme, and to trial and evaluate its delivery. We collaborated with a University of Waikato-led research project into the new programme's efficacy. The women of the initial group reported to the evaluators and one article was published (Crocket et al., 2009).

In the revised programme, both group facilitators met with each woman before she joined the group. We no longer used the language of "assessment" and tick-box sheets, which enquired only about a woman's experience of violence and control. We began to use White's micro map for scaffolding responses to trauma (2004; 1995). This map works from the idea that people can become re-traumatised: if the story of trauma reinforces any negative conclusions a person holds about her/his identity and life; if this is also combined with an escalation of a sense of shame, of vulnerability, of hopelessness, or of desolation. The use of the micro map for scaffolding responses to trauma invites people to reflect on their responses to abuse, on what they give value to, and the skills and knowledge they hold. This way of speaking about experience brings forward stories of personal agency (B. Davies, 1991). We used this conversational structure for women to speak of their experiences: (a) in words that they themselves use; (b) in ways that do not bluntly ask about the past, rather, tentatively find out what women think will be useful for the counsellor to know in order to have worthwhile conversation; (c) to enquire in a way that made it possible for the women to access different and preferred storylines, ones that put them in touch with what mattered to them (Morse & Morgan, 2003); (d) to elicit any stories of how women had responded when partners used violence against them, and; (e) what it meant that they had taken even the smallest actions to resist the violence (Wade, 1997, 2007).

In our first meetings with a woman, Rachel McKenna and I used the narrative therapy map of outsider witnessing, also called *definitional ceremony* (White,

2007). Following introductions, one facilitator spoke with the woman and the second facilitator took a listening-only position. Both facilitators listened for the woman's experiences, turning points, and hopes, and for the ways she had come through any experience of partner violence she chose to speak about. In a second phase of the meeting, the facilitators conversed with each other while the woman took an audience position. Briefly, in this middle part of the meeting, the facilitators used four shaping intentions to acknowledge the woman's stories: specific expressions that "encapsulate aspects of the original telling" (White, 2000, p. 64); any image of the woman's commitments, aspirations, passions (these re-tellings were not so much solid conclusions as possibilities); recounting of resonating moments in the facilitator's own history that began to connect to the woman's expressions and experiences; lastly, the listening facilitator acknowledged how the woman's story had contributed to movement in her own life and practice. At this point in the meeting, the first facilitator asked the woman what expressions she had heard from the witness, how these stories lit up further stories in her life, and what had moved her in hearing from the other facilitator. We found that these starting conversations were animating and surprising to women we met with. They told us that they had lost sight of their own capabilities and confidence but they could glimpse these possibilities again. They were surprised to know that their lives might make contributions to ours. And they looked forward to meeting with other women whose passions for justice and love of their children might be like theirs.

It was in these group settings that I was shocked into noticing that women's stories of criminal violence and day-to-day coercive control by intimate partners were sometimes followed by her saying, "But I still love him". In these moments of registering my own shock, I began to wonder what we, as professionals, were overlooking in our efforts to address the violence. And was it this gap, that opened the aperture of my thinking to material feminisms?

Thinking otherwise with material feminisms

Doing this research gave me the opportunity to begin reading material feminist writing (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008). These starting chapters made sense to me because of the way women's bodies and more-than-bodies were implicated in the violence and love narratives that had ignited my commitment to this research. A material feminist coupling of discourse with materiality using the double arrow – materiality \Leftrightarrow discourse – resonated with my own sense that bodies cannot be overlooked in matters of love, and the lived effects of violence. Barad (2008) argues for the performativity of matter *and* language: “[P]erformativity is actually a contestation of the unexamined habits of mind that grant language and other forms of representation more power in determining our ontologies than they deserve” (p. 121). Barad's vision as a posthumanist feminist scholar has prompted me to examine thought and practice habits for how a new materialist narrative therapy response to heterosexual intimate partner violence can make a different difference. The ontological turn that new materialist enquiry signifies, is not a re-turn to oppositional realist-relativist divides; rather, it sees the human as “emergent in a relational field” (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010) co-existing with nonhuman actants in the world (Bennett, 2010).

My reading of new materialist literature (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008; Barad, 2008; Hekman, 2004, 2008; Kirby, 2008; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008) queered the trajectory of the research and the thesis. The originating wave of the research (and I, as researcher) had human bodies and human ‘agency’, and how women's part in partnerships was exercised/thwarted, as a focus of attention. New materialist reading engaged me in an entangled research practice, an expanding and unsettling inclusion, of human *and* nonhuman mattering in the materiality \Leftrightarrow discourse intra-actions that emerge as the thesis.

A shift towards philosophy and away from method is advanced by post-qualitative scholars, Lisa Mazzei (2017) Alecia Jackson (2017) and Elizabeth St. Pierre (2018). For Jackson, a post qualitative enquiry relieves the researcher of

the “imperative of knowledge production and a conventional dependency on procedural method” (p. 666). Following Deleuze, Jackson experiments with what mutates, rather than what is planned, deterministic, or linear. Mistakes become integral to the work of thinking, an “opening to the unthought” (p. 667). Mazzei proposes that post qualitative research go to “concepts that emerge in the nexus of problems that demand our attention” (p. 677) and that problems, desires, utterances which emerge in research are understood as multiplicities, congealments, swarms of being/doing (Barad, 2010; Bennett, 2010) that are not discrete entities awaiting discovery. Taking up this challenge for conceptual work, St. Pierre advocates for post qualitative enquiry that is long on preparation, an immersive “reading, thinking, writing, and living with theory” (p. 604). St. Pierre contends that trying to measure, systematise, and *enclose* the complexities of persons’ lives in research will invite a “kick-back” from what was unintelligible, unrecognisable and emergent within the research assemblage (p. 604). I half knew this resistant force was at work from the very start of my study, as wave after wave of unforeseen asides and disturbances tried to teach me that the container does not hold (Snowdon, 2017). Layer upon layer, the new materialist (re)reading I engaged with seeped into my bones, and began to provoke a more experimental thought+writing practice for this study than the qualitative research container I had embarked upon.

What I have found is that accounts written into the hundreds of pages of transcription are not stopping points in timespacematter but provocations for what else may emerge. New materialist enquiry extends beyond (human) empirical and discursive borders: the configuration that is “But I still love him” research necessarily includes the complexities and intensities of bodies, things, wordy tomes and articles, desires and abstractions, events that affect participants and researchers. I work with a stark example of unpredictability in Chapter 5 as I encounter the wicked thing-power of guns/knives+persons. Over and over again, I double back into the data materials as they overlap into/with my embodied sense of politics and ethics across timeplace. Matter slices and dices its way into the writing work; vehicles, guns and knives become altering agents that speak into the thesis. Previous counselling and other conversations

with women about violence had not prepared me for research conversations about guns or knives. Another convergent wave of diffraction: until this period of my life, I had experienced minor scrapes in cars, but no car I owned had been the target of repeated malicious attack as occurred during this study. These human-nonhuman encounters were strange and alien outsiders and entered the research ensemble only *when they did*. At the point of disturbance, it was up to me to palpate the potentialities and vitalities they presented. This research has become an investment in (be)longing in the world, and called on wave after wave of fortitude; for women participants as they spoke and heard each other speak the unspeakable; for me as fellow traveller; in the transcribing wave of listening+writing; in conversations with my supervisors; in reading+writing words that reconfigure with other research, and counselling engagements with intimate partners grappling with love and violence.

The arc of the thesis

From its inception, this study investigates how power is exercised and how it might be possible to respond therapeutically. There is a call for justice-doing (Reynolds, 2012) when women face the conundrum of love-entangled-with-violence and say to counsellors, “But I still love him”. In this study, I make an ongoing commitment to acknowledge the lives of women as they grapple with this conundrum, recognise the pain and the thwarted hopes that is unsaid in “But I still love him”, and attend to what I and other counsellors might do in response.

The following chapters of this thesis flow towards an opening for how counselling might effectively respond to the knotty problems and complexities of women’s intimate partnerships with men. In Chapter 2, *Theoretical positions*, I write from a feminist positioning for the study, and for the lives of women in this and future timespace. In Chapter 2, I also work with the potentialities of new materialist concepts of diffraction, intra-action, entanglement and affect. The provocations and unpredictabilities of love/violence are highly affecting. I

elaborate a relational materialist reading of affect in Chapter 2, which diffracts through the materials selected for Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9.

Chapter 3 is an engagement with a literary assemblage. The boundary-making process I made with literature emerges in three streams. The first stream follows my originating interest in how women's lives are affected by violence and research into how resistance to violence is performed. A second stream of selected research is an encounter with neuroscience. In particular, I have followed neuroscientists whose interest is in researching fear response, and a second group who differentiate romantic love, sex drive and affiliation. A third stream of literature gives an over-view of the work of therapy in response to intimate partner violence.

In Chapter 4, I outline the qualitative research design I followed for this feminist study. I encountered moments of pause that disturbed any fixed idea of method I had begun with. I was presented with a live(ly) awakening to attend to a wider assemblage of human and more-than-human collectivities, rather than a stable structure and timetable, in order to live(research) with the possibilities that the interruptions offered. Although various moves from the outside were destabilising, I maintained a making, undoing and redoing ethic that entangles with the hope and commitment of women partners, counsellors and supervisors I met with in each reiteration of this study.

Chapter 5 is entitled *The gun and the knife*. In this chapter, human and nonhuman entities are understood as expression and capacity within a given cluster of actants (Bennett, 2010; Pickering, 2017; Roberts, 2012). Hearing stories of a gun and a knife in two group settings opened the research participants to the unthought. At each of the many encounters I have made with these volatile (data) materials, my body has registered its disturbance. Intra-active with the private stories of the group conversations was the public horror that shot through New Zealand as a nation when a gunman killed 51 people and severely injured 49 others in two New Zealand mosques. The news of this event created a

shockwave in which the thing-power of guns became a force to be grasped, yet ungraspable in its ferocity.

Chapter 6: *How cars and a bus come to matter*. The main players in this section of writing are Alice and Sam, two of the women participants, philosopher-historian Michel Foucault, and more than one car. My own presence is a peripheral diffraction. I use fragments of data with Foucault's analysis of power/knowledge relations to see how the thing-power of the car enters specific configurations in which domination is exercised.

In Chapter 7, *Voice and violence*, the opening poetic form takes the text immediately to what the women said about the (im)possibility of dialogue in their intimate partner relationships. Russian scholar, Mikhail Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) interest in *response* informed the work of this chapter. Working out how to use words together as partners was a hope the women had lost. What happened in the group interviews was a different matter: all ten women participated with each other in dialogical performance. I work with two specific narratives of know-how, lifted from the data, to materialise these mo(ve)ments of respectfully and carefully having a say.

A specific slip-slide in this thesis has been in cutting/together apart (Barad, 2007, 2014) the words spoken by women in interviews, transcribed, 'rescued', and formed into tightly disciplined forms of poetry that become *Love – promise and purpose – exploring materiality/discourses of love* in Chapter 8. The poetic arrangements of (prior) enunciation emerge as prose response in which my own lived involvements are installed with the data. These overlaps follow Hillevi Lenz Taguchi's (2012) diffractive analytical approach: "to read the data from our own bodies as researchers" (p. 267). Poems serve to perform a diffractive move in the writing itself. In this move, the original waves of the qualitative study diffract through different apparatuses to produce the question(s) of what the study is capable of rather than what it is.

Chapter 9 engages with narratives of counsellors' practice in response to collective documents brought from the women's groups. I situate the counselling work in collaborative and activist practices. In this study, counsellors call for therapy that takes its time. As for women in the tangled pull of love, violence and leaving, so it is for counsellors they engage with. This is territory of undecidability, *and* a call to ethical justice-doing (Reynolds, 2012).

Chapter 10: *Reverberations*

The final chapter addresses the possibilities for thinking diffractively for therapy, and how counselling thought-practice might be (re)configured. One move of a new materialist therapy is in how to attend to bodies and more-than-bodies. My interest is in therapy that extends the notion of affect into its broadest liveliness; emergent properties and intensities that overlap in movement and rest to make things happen.

This thesis would be incomplete without the article *And I still love them: On touching loss* (Snowdon, 2017)(Appendix A). In this article, I work with new materialisms and a narratively informed practice of re-membling (Hedtke & Winslade, 2004; White, 1988, 2007). The events of three deaths in my family infolded and unfolded into the work of my research, and into my body. The three beloved people of my family I write into the article have both stayed with us, and left us. They (dis)continuously move and rest with(in) us genetically, spiritually, and in our stories of them. Their inspirations, admonitions, persuasions, passions and support form a kind of love that was not without its miss-steps and pain. Traces of both love and violence thread through our family's collective histories, bringing us back to the "but" of staying, for the promise and purpose of love. Staying \Leftrightarrow leaving escapes the confinement of the apparent binary of these terms. To leave is not a complete and absolute finality, and staying beyond the disturbance of others' leavetaking is to inhabit a reconfigured world.

So it is for women who have tried to stay and love men who have abused and controlled their bodies and their lives. The women's invitation to counsellors is to stay the distance for justice-doing and solidarity (see Reynolds, 2012). In this

thesis, I propose that an ethical position for counsellors is to hold space for women (and their partners) in the reasonable hope (Weingarten, 2010) that there is a democracy to come for heterosexual partnering (Morris, 2015) through our work together.

Chapter 2

Theoretical positions

[I]t matters deeply to all political agendas how we theorize...

Kathrin Thiele (2014)

Introduction

In this chapter, I take a transmigratory (ad)venture into the theoretical positions which entangle with the data materials of this study. Although this chapter only occupies the borderlands of possible experimentation for a counselling response to violence in heterosexual partner relationship, in this chapter we glimpse the horizons. I begin with a feminist (activist) stance for research and practice, a place to stand – turangawaewae – from which to move and extend. Then follows an emergent position in feminist theory that takes matter seriously, whilst retaining the lessons learned during the linguistic turn.

Feminist positions

... [research] might be thought of as a more and less well interwoven braid of threads of narratives... a braid those threads stray and interweave... a braid that varies in thickness and which we are always picking at, repairing and creating. (Drewery, 2005, p. 319)

I have long held commitments to feminist ways of thinking, talking, writing, living and futures. These commitments intra-act with my research purposes.

- What makes this a feminist endeavour?
- Which feminisms support this study?
- What values and commitments do I hold in locating the research in feminist ethico-onto-epistemologies? (I further explain an ethical onto-epistemological stance below)
- What dilemmas are present to this particular material feminist research?

These questions interface, overlap, braid together, diverge and flow through emergent apertures in the research work: they diffract with selected narrative

accounts of the women participants+counsellor participants I met with for group interviews.

I use the word feminisms to signify any active commitment and struggle against all forms of patriarchy and sexism: Therefore, writing and speaking that conforms to and supports practices that support structural inequality and exploitation of women are not feminist (Moi, 1997). Feminist approaches also have to do with finding ways to critique what is taken for granted (see Wright, 2009). One dilemma for me as a feminist researcher has been to see what is not so obvious, and to take a not-knowing stance towards what I find strange and alien. In that sense, a differentiating question I hold as researcher is: how do I invite *myself* to sift through the many sedimentary layers of shared conversations about partnering that I have been part of in family, friendship, neighbourly and professional talk? Given my prior knowledge, and following Diane Gehart, Margarita Tarragona and Saliha Bava's (2007) proposals for collaborative inquiry, it has become increasingly important to me that *this* feminist research contributes in some way to an ethical and effective call to action (pp. 384-385).

Locating this research project as feminist included: *how* selected groups of women did research work with me (see for example, Gehart et al., 2007; Levin, 2007); how the women had a say in which storylines of love and violence were spoken of (about which I write in Chapter 4); all with a view to making a difference that makes a difference, at the very least, in the lives of women who say "But I still love him" when violence was used against them by male partners.

Michel Foucault (1982) makes a claim for the importance of thinking when he asks that we "stop treating thought – this essential thing in human life and human relations – lightly... [Thought] is something which often hides itself, but it always animates everyday behavior" (p. 33). That said, Susan Mann (2012) proposes that a feminist stance has never been just about thinking; it is about the kind of action that works toward social change in, and for, the lives of women. Elizabeth Grosz (2005) goes further:

Feminist theory is not the struggle to liberate women, even though it has tended to conceive of itself in these terms...; it is the struggle to render more mobile, fluid, and transformable the means by which the female subject is produced and represented. It is the struggle to produce a future in which forces align in ways fundamentally different from the past and the present... a struggle to mobilize and transform the position of women. (p. 193)

Grosz suggests a move away from the idea that persons are agents of “the very forces that constitute us as subjects” (p. 193). She argues that to conceptualise the subject as agent returns us to the metaphysics of cause/effect, in which a person can become the victim of another’s actions. Grosz prefers instead the Nietzschean idea of a multiplicity of active forces which make the “human possible and at the same time positions the human within a world where force works in spite of and around the human, within and as the human” (p. 187).

The influence of poststructuralist philosophies on human science research in past decades may mean the following foundations for feminist research methods are taken for granted. However, I wish to make it explicit that I adhere to an epistemological stance that:

- defines knowledge as particular rather than universal;
- rejects the neutral observer of modernist epistemology;
- defines subjects as constructed by relational forces (see Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavropolous, & Kirby, 2003).

This research is “*for women*”, and the knowledges that it aims to contribute are “grounded in women’s *experiences*” (Ramazanoğlu & Holland, 2002, p. 16).

Locating the research in Feminist Standpoint Theory and Material Feminisms

When I began this research, a vast women-centred literature presented me with a dilemma. What to read? Where, then, to locate this research and my own positions? To that end, I have been selective: This project, my preference for poststructuralist theory, and my own subjective position as a Pākehā New Zealander, heterosexual woman, take me towards Feminist Standpoint Theory (for a starting place, see Harding, 2004) and Material Feminisms (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008).

Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist Standpoint Theory has a place in this project because:

- the experiences of women who say “But” in reference to their love for a partner are implying the oppression (violence) that was part of their experience;
- the standpoints women take on their experiences in partner relationship become political when they are spoken aloud;
- particular women’s knowledges are situated in particular circumstances and, by choosing to speak with women about their experiences of love and violence, this study privileges women’s perspectives and vantage points.

Susan Hekman (2004) takes a similar stance to Lynn Hankinson Nelson; that it is “not individuals but communities who know” (Hekman, p. 234). This fits with theories of social construction of knowledge (Burr, 2015). Furthermore, Hekman reminds the reader that, “knowledge is situated in the material lives of social actors” (p. 235). Feminist Standpoint Theory has come under scrutiny in recent times, and Hekman poses the question of how to select from the multiplicity of viewpoints/standpoints available to women in order to achieve some sort of theoretical and practical usefulness. Hekman’s question is a serious question for this study, and for how to respond in therapy when women who have been hurt by partners say, “But I still love him”. Given professional codes of ethics, do counsellors (and should counsellors) put safety first in their therapeutic enquiries? How should they speak about safety and justice and freedom? How might it be possible to investigate women’s understandings of love? How will this research invite women into communities who know *with* each other? These are questions I address in Chapter 9.

Nancy Hartsock is a leading voice for Feminist Standpoint Theory. She defines a standpoint as more than mere interest or bias, rather an engaged position. Hartsock (1998) argues compellingly, from early Marxist theory of two-party opposition, that persons in dominant positions in a society are prevented by

their privileged material position from seeing as fully as those they oppress. Marx maintained that the labouring class was better positioned than those of the ruling class to understand their own relations with each other and the nonhuman world, based on the centrality of their labour to the functioning of their society. Although it would take effort on the part of the labouring class to reach expanded understandings of human relations beyond those prescribed by the ruling class, Marx nevertheless maintained that the social positioning of labourers would enable them to access this standpoint more easily than their employers. Hartsock proposed that investigating women's lives could offer a critique of gender dominance in societies; hence, a feminist standpoint. Gayatri Spivak (1990) claims that privilege can act as a kind of insularity to seeing others' knowledge, and to having one's view listened to:

... what I really want to learn about is what I have called the unlearning of one's privilege. So that, not only does one become able to listen to that other constituency, but one learns to speak in such a way that one will be taken seriously by that other constituency. (p. 42)

The next step in this chapter is a brief digression. I take the word *digression* from Brian Massumi's (2002) interest in writing that accommodates and revels in the possibilities of departure.

Digression: Becoming difference

Meet Terence Crowley, who reexamines his position – and standpoint – in relation to what he calls the patriarchal “lie of entitlement” (Crowley, 2005). Unlearning privilege is no easy task, as Crowley attests. In his eloquent personal essay, Crowley outlines a long commitment to overcome taken-for-granted racist, classist and sexist positions that shaped the dominant masculinities he did not want to perpetrate in his own relationships. Crowley's civic and day-to-day care in relationships with women and other men notwithstanding, he was confronted with the ways a white straight male entitlement had insulated and isolated him from “threats of any kind” (p. 304) at the point when he stepped forward to work with the Men Stopping Violence organisation. One confrontation was that he was not exempted from a year-long training for the work with Men Stopping Violence, something he found himself angered,

confused, indignant and outraged about, given his many prior involvements in community and religious activism. A second mo(ve)ment (Davies et al., 2006, p. 92) of confrontation came in the form of an awakening to his own abusive and controlling behaviour in relation to women, and the prospect of being accountable to women for the effects of his actions: “Each week, I sat with those intense feelings of vulnerability, fear, and confusion as the reality of women was brought into the room... each week, I used my theological, psychological, social, and political training to concoct new ruses that would allow me to jump outside that system of accountability” (p. 306). Crowley was “moved by the honesty of other men not to lie” about the ways they used masculine entitlement “to break ranks” with the kind of consolidation of power that being a man confers. According to Crowley, “Privilege is always paid for by those it subjugates” (p. 308). He believes that men can stop the lie of male superiority by refusing to act as if it is true. He concludes that transformation is possible, and invites men to step up together to challenge the lie of entitlement.

Materialities matter to Feminist Standpoint Theory

A second pillar of Feminist Standpoint Theory on Hartsock’s (1998) terms is that human relationships are structured and limited by material conditions (see also O’Brien Hallstein, 1999). Hartsock goes on to say that where there are oppositional experiences of living, there will be “partial and perverse” (p. 229) understandings of the other, both strange and harmful, which she conceptualised as “inversions”. For instance, the proletariat can see the truth about how society is structured through the lens of their experience of systematic exploitation. Developing this theme further, Hartsock believes well-resourced groups can use their privileged positions to structure relations in ways that benefit and continue their dominance. This means that those in subordinated positions must struggle for new visions and re-visions of living. Implicit in the disparity between those in privileged positions and those in subordinated positions is that the dominant group takes comfort in its position, and works to continue its dominance. Catriona MacLeod (2006) writes from South African and from radical plural feminist perspectives along similar lines:

While men's and 'white's' enmeshment in the patchwork of patriarchal and neo-colonial power can be acknowledged, this does not mitigate the fact that they have a higher stake in maintaining institutional and domestic power relations within which they occupy dominant positions. (p. 377)

In other words, gender is a relational and structural category in standpoint theories (O'Brien Hallstein, 1999). This theory says that women see how cultures provide a repertoire to act female-ness, and how they may want to refuse these calls as outsiders within (Collins, 2004). In MacLeod's analysis of Foucault's conceptions of power/knowledge, a "bipolar position of men or colonialists as possessing power, and women and the colonized as powerless, ceases to be an option. Instead, we are all enmeshed in power relations that are neither stable nor unitary" (p. 377). (Later in his life, Foucault rejected an early adherence to a Marxist view and merely described these viewpoints, their confluences and divergences. I discuss Foucault's and other views on the difference between power relations and the use of domination in Chapter 6.) Women standpoint theorists place a stick in the sand, saying we must start somewhere in the matter of subordinated positions for women and, with O'Brien Hallstein, we might well start with caring, and put that alongside reasoning and argumentation (in which Standpoint Feminists seem, to me, to be well practised!).

Original foundations for Feminist Standpoint Theory contend that women have an important contribution to make in all domains of living (family life, work, research) due to their central place in giving birth, raising children, providing the necessities of life within family, including the ways women contribute indirectly through work outside the home, supporting other women, men and children through professional enterprise and, more latterly, through academe. These beginning points for thinking through a feminist standpoint invite a deconstruction of the old ways of seeing; that is, to see differently the overlooked and undervalued participations by women in society. Dorothy Smith (2004) deliberately does not use 'feminist' standpoint to describe her work; nevertheless she argues that "women's standpoint returns us to the actuality of our lives as we live them in the local particularities of the everyday/everynight worlds in which our bodily being anchors us" (p. 264). Smith goes on to say that

women's standpoint "folds concepts, theory, discourse *into actuality*" (p. 264). She discusses the kind of tacit knowledge – "the secret underpinning of everything we do" (p. 266) – that is a matter of *doing*, practices that are brought to knowledge (of a different kind) through telling. Such mo(ve)ments towards embodied social action are reflected in my research and therapeutic practice, where a subject position becomes discoverable in the very act of narrating events.

Bronwyn Davies et al. (2006) remind us, with Foucault, that once a new way of seeing has been opened up, the old "silent habits" (Foucault, 1981, p. 456) and murmurings of thought become more visible and, therefore, open to re-vision. This is not to say that a single privileged standpoint becomes available to "women" across the board. Those who are marginalised by the workings of patriarchy – women, people from ethnicities other than white, differently abled people – may be able to see blind spots, gaps, things that have been left out (Collins, 2004; Houle, 2009; Macleod, 2006; Saul, 2003; D. E. Smith, 2004) in ways that are not available to privileged insiders. They do not have the same vested interest in preserving the status quo, and may be argued to have greater impartiality for the purposes of science.

Feminist Standpoint Theory has undergone robust to-and-fro over the decades since Hartsock's, Harding's and Smith's first writing. Principally, and in conjunction with other feminisms, there has been rigorous reworking of how to talk of "women" without categorising, essentialising and universalising (Cranny-Francis et al., 2003). Feminist standpoints recognise the immense diversity of women's experience and seek to promote justice, and welcome difference without the kinds of evaluation that count difference as a signifier of inferiority; rather, feminist standpoints celebrate the contribution of different womanist experience to the performance of knowledge (Braidotti, 2003).

Feminist Standpoint Theory gave me mo(ve)ments of challenge in the research interviews. As Terence Crowley found, I became aware of the privileged positions I am afforded as a white woman with education and independent

income; as a woman from a different age meeting with younger women; as a woman with close family connections. As Crowley found, I also brought unique knowledges and prior commitments that were of significant help in meeting the women and fellow counsellor participants for the interviews. Nevertheless, I recall, with some discomfort, moments of pause and realisation of how entitlement works in my favour. Jennifer Saul (2003) may offer a way out of this conundrum in suggesting that a feminist standpoint can be taken up by anyone who is prepared to “start their thought” (p. 245) and, albeit partially, offer hospitality to the standpoints of others. Harding (2004) sees it as defeatist to abandon the work of feminist standpoints when one identifies from within dominant groups. She proposes dialogue across groups, the collaboration of many diverse perspectives in finding places of standpoint. I concur.

Personal and political

This research work is thought work: “to undertake to think something other than what one has thought before” (Foucault, 1989, p. 455). The mission and visions of the research were to meet halfway with women who have learned first hand about love and violence in intimate partner relationship, and to meet fellow counsellors who have grappled with these dilemmas in their professional practice. In this sense, the thought-practice (Thiele, 2014) of the research is both personal and political.

Pause: For solidarity

The following account of women finding their way with personal-political action resonates with my research work because of the intra-active narrative arc of violence and love. The story is situated in Argentina with a group of mothers called Las Madres (Leseho & Block, 2005). These are women whose children were taken from their lives in military uprisings in their country. The first thread of resonance comes in a kind of awakening: “When our children were kidnapped, we began to know a lot of things” (p. 177) and “we began to walk, and began to talk, walking, each one with the other” (p. 177). Despite the regime of absolute discouragement Las Madres were met with by authorities, they continued

to congregate. They listed their lost loved ones. They persisted in their action. “[I]t’s political... everything we touch because everything is near the people, near the country, and everything that happened must be talked, must be known” (p. 178). At the time the above testimonies of (feminist) political activism were spoken to Johanna Leseho and Laurie Block in late 2003, Las Madres had been turning up for twenty-seven years. And speaking. What Leseho and Block listened to and listened for was

the voice amplified and broadcast, loud and strong for a specific purpose. It’s a voice in struggle; a voice with a goal. In the context of the Mothers, they are not just protesting against their children’s death, they are carrying out their children’s socio-political agenda as a way of making their deaths meaningful. (p. 178)

Feminist action is knowingly partial and open to possibilities. It asserts a voice in context, by way of resistance and direct action. When stories like those of Las Madres overlap and ripple through the research, the contributions to other women’s lives diffract and entangle across timeplacematter. In meeting with women and practitioners who grapple with “But I still love him” stories, my hope is to follow and precede other feminist researcher-practitioners as we find resonance and freshness in what has previously seemed out of reach.

Material feminisms

Material Feminisms have increasingly found a place in this study. From my point of view, there is a case for articulating reality as changing sets of embodied positions, always in relation to others, in the manner of Hekman’s (2008) social ontology. Briefly, Hekman draws on Gilles Deleuze’s focus on experience and practice (the complex interplay between life and language), and Foucault’s ongoing analyses of how discourses shape lived experience – materially. Words have real effects (see also McNamee, 2003). In discussions with friends, teachers and students, I have noticed what I believe is a mis-reading of postmodern philosophies which pits material realities *against* discourse, introducing a binary

that material feminists are writing to undo. Under Hekman's analysis, Foucault "articulates the complex interaction between the elements of the dichotomy" (p. 101), in order to trouble the dichotomy, a position with which I agree. In the entanglement of materiality and discourse, how shall we become other than what we were?

For Foucault, it is impossible to detach the discourse of bodies from the bodies we inhabit... But it is also a central aspect of Foucault's theory that the relationship between bodies and discourse that structures our lives could be arranged differently. (Hekman, 2008, p. 101)

As Donna Haraway (1985) puts it, the time has come to resurrect an "understanding of reality informed by all we have learned in the linguistic turn" (p. 88). In their introduction to a collection of essays on Material Feminisms, Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (2008) make a plea for a shift from talking *about* the body to recognising bodies *as* active forces, something that Grosz (2005) also investigates. I believe this move to inhabit the body – without abandoning words – can shape innovative practices of therapy to influence the lives of intimate partners, since there are traces of this symbiosis in the conversations that gave rise to this research.

In the following sections of this chapter, I engage with the potentiality of new materialist concepts of diffraction, agential realism, intra-action, entanglement and affect. Twists of reconfigured language enact – to some extent – the ideas that unfold below.

Diffraction

There is a great deal of focus on diffraction in new materialist writing; and for good reason. Physicist and feminist scholar, Karen Barad, builds a cogent argument that extends on Haraway's (1997) proposal that diffraction offers a way out from repetition in the name of reflexivity (Barad, 2007, 2008, 2014). Both Haraway and Barad agitate the well-established tropes of reflection, and its parallel method, reflexivity, in favour of diffraction. Barad (2007) proposes that "diffractions are attuned to differences – differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world" (p. 72). To move beyond

sameness and replication into territories of difference is apt in thinking with narratively informed therapy; an intra-action I discuss further in chapter 10.

The relational nature of difference

Barad points out that diffraction occurs everywhere in the world and can be understood as “fundamental constituents that make up the world” (2007, p. 72). Experiments with diffraction became particularly important in the field of physics during the ‘wave versus particle’ debates about how light works. Although particles may be thought of as matter, waves are not *things* as such. Waves are disturbances in a medium, such as water; they are movements or oscillations. This means that waves overlap and combine. In doing so, waves alter; they are enhanced or diminished as they radiate out, resulting in increasing or decreasing intensities. The interference patterns that emerge from a barrier such as an opening in a seawall may be seen in the changed shape of waves into concentric half-circles. In an example of laboratory-controlled experimentation (Barad, 2007), rays of light passing through strictly monitored slits did not conform to sharply boundaried shadows. Instead, the diffracted monochromatic light source produced blurred edges; the pattern produced dark lines inside light zones and light lines in dark zones.

Take an example in everyday life at the intersection of a road and railway tracks. The warning lights at the level-crossing flash, the bells ring and the barrier arm goes down across the road. A car is metres from the moving train as it moves along its tracks. A man is standing on the footpath at the pedestrian stop sign as the train clatters its way along the railway tracks in the bright sunshine. The engine is pulling numerous freight containers through the level-crossing. The connecting metal components shriek. The gaps between the carriages reveal a weirdly static view of stationary vehicles and people standing on the other side of the crossing, buildings, roadside trees, and sky above. The man standing beside the car is wearing a loose light-coloured t-shirt and jeans. The wave action of the air displacement made by the freight containers and gaps between them play

out on the fabric of the man's t-shirt. The cotton ripples across his body each time the slit between carriages opens.

The specific multiplicities that come to matter in this diffraction pattern include the speed and size of the train and its carriages, the size of the gaps between them, the buildings and trees in the vicinity, the already existing breeze and sun-warmed temperature of the day, where the man stood, the fabric of his t-shirt, the placement of cars and other people in relation to the railway track. As these specificities come together in the spacetime-matter of the train moving across the intersection, waves map out their pattern on the t-shirt the man is wearing. In another time-place, a different train going at a different speed and drawing fewer carriages would map a different pattern.

In the example I write above, the world does not stay the same when elements of interference enfold and overlap across others. There is an entanglement here, in which the details are important. Being attentive to the specificities is one point that Barad insists on (p. 73), and this takes me to Barad's conception of the apparatus. The apparatus is important because diffractive analysis investigates both *what is produced* and how diffraction *serves as condition and possibility* for what matters.

Apparatuses

Ian Hacking: Another kind of observation is what counts: the uncanny ability to pick out what is odd, wrong, instructive or distorted in the antics of one's equipment" (cited in Barad, 2007, pp. 144-145).

It is vitally important to think of apparatuses as active in how spacetime-matter is (re)configured. Barad calls on Niels Bohr in her stance. Apparatuses are not neutral, passive, or static observing structures, that possess some inherent property that acts on the world unilaterally. Apparatuses are specific arrangements of embodied conceptual phenomena that can not be confined to laboratory set-ups or, in the case of this study, qualitative research designs.

Hence, the interest of new materialists in *post*-qualitative enquiry that reaches beyond the limits of the set-up.

For Barad (2007, 2008) apparatuses are boundary-making practices but not in the sense of universalising, ahistorical abstractions. She rather takes a position that specific agential intra-actions perform cuts from which emerge boundaries and properties of phenomena and articulations of meaning. This is not to say that meaning is either arrived at in totality, nor fixed once and for all. Ambiguity and contestation may set in motion further (re)configurations. Also, on Barad's account, knowing is a matter of intra-action. Knowing does not come from outside or above the fray; rather, human and nonhuman networks participate in knowledge-making performance (an example of which I write in Chapter 5, *The gun and the knife*).

Barad (2007) continues: "Meaning is not a property of individual words or groups of words but an ongoing performance of the world, while lively matterings, possibilities, and impossibilities are reconfigured" (p. 149). Words do not have fully determinate meaning that can be picked up and used in representative ways. Neither do nonhuman entities wait aimlessly for agency, historicity and meaning to be "bestowed from the outside" (p. 150). Barad's thesis is that matter and discursive practices are dynamic performances in the making/already becoming. A diffractive analysis does not and can not fix the subject *or* the process in advance because this relies on separations that pre-exist the encounter (specificities of the apparatus). Nancy Tuana (2008) takes Hurricane Katrina to be an "emergent interplay" (p. 191) at work in the world. She writes that "Seeing through the eye of Katrina reveals no hard-and-fast divide between natural and social" (p. 192) and proposes the apparatus of *viscous porosity* to argue the impossibility of sifting and separating the nonhuman phenomena of a hurricane from what is humanly induced, whilst attending to what may be differentiated in the cause of justice-to-come in the city of New Orleans. On Tuana's account, indigenous peoples' intra-actions with the land, the river and plant life of the Mississippi perform change that emerges and shapes both materiality and discursive practices.

Foucault (1977) uses the word 'apparatus' in his analysis of how power is dispersed and exercised to shape 'docile bodies' using the prison setting as exemplar apparatuses of observation, discipline and production. For an example of apparatuses of observation, Jeremy Bentham's architectural device, the *Panopticon*, allows for the possibility of constant surveillance of a confined individual from a central tower. A material arrangement of bodies – human and nonhuman – the Panopticon operates what Foucault calls micro-physics of power (p. 26) that are exercised through "dispositions, manoeuvres, tactics, techniques, functionings" (p. 26). Foucault recognises that there are (temporary) inversions, moments of instability, conflict and multivocal resistance to apparatuses of observation and discipline, thereby producing knowledge. Because of the material arrangement of the cells and the observation tower, the guards are present in their absence, and oppression is present in their absence. In the data materials of this study, the participants and I grappled with the slippery conceptual and materialised territory of how women were made objects of moves to silence her in the partner relationship, and how apparatuses of observation and discipline encroach on goodwill between partners (see Chapter 7, *Voice and violence*).

It may seem obvious to say that parts of the world, including within human materiality↔discourse, are at all times intra-acting with other parts of the world. The task is to specify how a differential sense of doing/being is enacted in spacetime-matter for the purpose of justice-making.

For Barad (2007, 2008) apparatuses are congealments of agentic being/doing. Rearticulations are called forth in the apparatus *as it* intra-acts with other apparatuses, trading across timespace in the ebb and flow of what comes to matter. Such stabilising/destabilising cannot but take the empirical world seriously. Guns, knives and cars *do* things, conjointly with human actants, in ways that do not precede the moment in which a swarm of actants act (Bennett, 2010).

Matter, like meaning, is not an individually articulated or static entity. It is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site possibly awaiting signification; nor is it uncontested ground for scientific, feminist, or economic theories. Matter is not immutable or passive. Nor is it a fixed support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse. (Barad, 2007, pp. 150-151)

Boundaries do not sit still; the disturbances, rearrangements and reworkings of this study attest to this.

Agential realism

Steve Shaviro: We need to stop telling ourselves the same old anthropocentric bedtime stories (in Barad, 2007, p. 132).

A departure from the subject/object distinction is central to new materialist writing. The move is a philosophical one that critiques the opposition/separation of human and nonhuman, materiality and discourse, nature and culture – and the thinking that supports this kind of binary-making. Following Niels Bohr, Barad (2001, 2003, 2007, 2008) proposes that “*we are part of that nature that we seek to understand*” (2007, p. 26). In her 2007 seminal volume, *Meeting the universe halfway*, Barad uses classical and quantum physics to argue for a fundamental inseparability of epistemological, ontological, and ethical considerations – ethico-onto-epistemology – “the study of practices of knowing in being” (p. 185).

Barad adopts Bohr’s theoretical↔material position, which he calls “agential realism” and develops a contemporary notion of agential realism from his starting points to say that “physical and conceptual apparatuses form a non-dualistic whole... [p]hysical and conceptual constraints and exclusions are co-constitutive” (Barad, 2001, p. 95). On this point agential realism has relevance to research of all kinds. Agential realism sees no inherent delineation between object and an independent observing agent. Any cut that is made is constructed and only holds meaning when its specificities are sufficiently described.

Agential realism actively reinstates matter to the materiality↔discourse nexus. Barad makes the point that matter is not passive, mute and reliant on human

representation. Barad's agential realism (2007) is performative in the sense that it is an engagement with "matters of practices, doings, and actions" (p. 135). Matter becomes an active participant whilst producing an understanding of how discursive forces come to matter. Taking such engagement seriously does not mean the death of the human (p. 136); it is rather a liberation from the exceptionalism of the human *and* simultaneously being accountable for the human part in constituting the world in its becoming. The nature culture border is actively configured and reconfigured in agential realism.

Differences matter in agential realism. The weird brilliance of agential realism is that it cuts/together apart (Barad, 2014); it produces strange doublings. It is lively, not nihilistic or relativist. Agential realism does not imply a flattened sameness but embraces the difference within, differences that are not fixed or unitary, but contingent – "differences-in-the-(re)making" (p. 175). These are differences formed through intra-activity.

Intra-action

Intra-action is another Baradian neologism that further signifies the inseparability of matter \Leftrightarrow discourse. In speaking with Adam Kleinman about intra-actions (Kleinman, 2012), Barad reiterates her position that entities materialise *within* relationship. The starting points for entities in agential realism are not given or fixed differences. So intra-action is not about single entities coming together in interaction. Rather, intra-actions enact entangling-differentiating in one move. That is to say, different intra-actions constitute phenomena in the moment (timespacemattering) by excluding others, but not in an immobile or immobilising way (p. 80). The world is all-ways always on the move.

Apparatuses intra-act with other apparatuses, folding, unfolding, refolding, into subsequent iterations. Different intra-actions in configuration with specific apparatuses produce different phenomena. The position Barad consistently

adheres to is that matter not be seen as a mere support for language (2001, 2007, 2008).

Entanglement in New Materialisms

New materialist writers use the word 'entanglement' in ways that are crucial to this study. For instance, Barad (2007) says that "*diffraction is a matter of differential entanglements... not merely about differences, and certainly not about differences in an absolute sense*" (p. 381). What comes to matter in terms of difference is a practice, an ethico-onto-epistemology *as it is performed*: That is, we are part of the world in an ongoing articulation of the entangled nature of differences.

Barad (2007, 2008, 2010, 2014) offers a thoroughgoing introduction to quantum entanglement for readers outside the field of physics. A point she makes is that entanglements are not understood as composites (2007, p. 271) or unities that erase difference (2014, p. 176) or the intertwining of entities that constitute undifferentiated blends (2010, p. 265). To assist the reader, Barad discusses Erwin Schrödinger's well-known thought-experiment of a cat placed in a box with a radioactive atom to show that the fate of the cat is entangled with that of the atom. The cat's life/death depends on the decay of the atom; there is no situation in which the cat is part alive or part dead. The cat is alive until the cat is dead, and that depends on the moment of decay of the atom. There is a mutual intra-action in play; an ontological indeterminacy of either outcome.

A second point to grasp about entanglement is that material and discursive enactments of knowledge-making practices – such as research and practice in any field of endeavour – are contributors to and part of the phenomena we seek to describe. Discursive performances and material phenomena "do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other" (Barad, 2008, p. 140). The position of researcher, for instance, is co-implicated in interviews; not as observer, but as part of the ongoing reconfiguring of what comes to matter (see Chapter 6 in

which cars, including my own, are iteratively entangled with the research). Barad describes this enfolding of materialisation as “matter-in-the-process-of-becoming” (p. 140). Entangled systems do not determine or explain the terms of the other as the cat \Leftrightarrow radioactive atom entailment above shows. New materialist research recognises an enactment-entanglement of participant(s), researcher(s), affect with data materials, theory, placetime (Mazzei, 2013).

Barad’s (2014) insistence that entanglement is not a unity rests on how an entanglement is specified (2007, p. 271). As Schrödinger (1935) asserts: “the best possible knowledge of a *whole* does not necessarily include the best possible knowledge of all its *parts*: (p. 555). Jane Bennett (2010) also urges an “attentiveness to the out-side” (p. 17) with a view to addressing how complex actants modify, become modified, and perform emergent properties within an entangled system. The weirdness of quantum entanglement does not mean mutually implicated systems constitute unity: Rather, the subject/object distinction is called into question in favour of specified engagements that are articulated and articulable through intra-action. In counselling practice that addresses the conundrum of violations of love in intimate partner relationship, the concept of quantum entanglement vests responsibility in the counsellor to co-articulate the material \Leftrightarrow discursive specificities of persons’ lived experience. It is from such experimentation that new performance can unfold.

The conceptual contribution of entanglement to this study of love and violence in heterosexual relationship comes to matter in the following ways:

- In intimate partner relationships in which love and violence produce the words, “But I still love him”, love is made explicit and violence implicit. Love and violence are mutually referenced. That is to say, loving actions and violent actions in a relationship are mutually exclusive, but may not be known as loving or violent until there is some reckoning to be had;
- An utterance such as “But I still love him” differentiates love from violence. The word ‘but’ performs the differentiation. Violence – in whatever form it takes – is not part love. The potential to materialise a discernment that this is/was not a loving action (White, 1995, pp. 82-90)

is signified by the word 'but'. To notice the 'but' of what is said by women whose partners have been violent towards them is to use the pivot point of language as a diffractive apparatus to perform a knowledge-making practice;

- Entanglements do not erase differences; rather they offer the potential for differentiation. A knowledge-making practice in counselling – in which persons can collaboratively “derive alternative meanings of their experience of abuse” (White, 1995, p. 84) with a counsellor – can afford a person possibilities for re-evaluation and re-view of what may have been experienced as intertwining. Exposing entanglements as *not* composite offers the potential to differentiate violence as instances of exploitation, tyranny and cruelty. Such exposition extends the lexicon of persons' articulation of events;
- Further, it is not possible – thinking with entanglement – for traces of past (love and injury) to be erased: “The world ‘holds’ the memory of all traces; or rather, the world *is* its memory” (Barad, 2010, p. 261). Drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze, Todd May (2005) puts it this way, “... experiences do not simply drop away when they are over; rather, they accrete in us, they sediment into a thickness that orients us in some ways and not in others” (p. 43). Love and violence both are memorised and enfolded into partner relationship in the accounts offered in this study. In the data analyses that follow in chapters 5,6,7 and 8, it emerges that the past can neither be changed nor fixed: what is called for is a reworking of the material effects of what has been and what becomes possible. Barad (2010) again: “There can never be complete redemption, but spacetime-mattering can be productively reconfigured” (p. 266) and perhaps this reconfiguring is what women hope for when they speak of continuing love;
- The women participants of this study speak of love and violence as a “strange doubling” (Barad, 2014, p. 173) as though they occupy a borderland that does not have sharp borders. Therapeutic work in this territory may be a matter of life and death so to work with the concept of entanglement is to work for *differencing*, ongoingly.

Responsibility is by necessity an asymmetrical relation/doing, an enactment, a matter of *différance*, of intra-action, in which no one/no thing is given in advance or ever remains the same. Only in this ongoing responsibility to the entangled other, without dismissal... is there the possibility of justice-to-come. (Barad, 2010, pp. 264-265)

Entanglement in intimate partner relationships, and in therapy, is not only what is *told* but what is *produced* in intra-action. *What* shall we pay attention to? and *How* is change produced?

Affect

Each time that I've tried to do theoretical work it has grown out of elements of my own experience: always in relation to processes which I saw unfolding around me... some autobiographical fragments. (Michel Foucault in an interview with Didier Eribon of the leftist Parisian daily newspaper *Libération*, 1982, Translator Thomas Keenan, p. 35).

In this section, I discuss human and nonhuman bodies' capacity to enter into relations of movement and rest; that is, to materialise the *potential* to affect and be affected, to find what a body can do (Bennett, 2010; Manning, 2007; Massumi, 2002). Affective human-nonhuman assemblages are complex cellular networks, where knotty, unevenly distributed emergent properties form alliances to modify and be modified: elements of a conglomeration overlap into each other to make something happen. According to Massumi (2002), affect, in its continuity, is an "integral expression of the world's amalgamated liveliness" (p. 220). It is affect that enlivens, and holds the world together through connecting impulse and momentum.

Affect and human bodies

Affect – as I use it in this thesis – precedes and surpasses emotion: "Emotion is affect plus the awareness of that affect" (Manning, 2007, p. xxi). Emotion includes the notion of movement (motion) and there is no doubt that bodies move and respond to physical and social forces, and have subsequent effect on other bodies. At the point in which intensity of experience is registered and partially rescued from oblivion in language – for instance, when an expression of

emotion is named – the multiplicity of an affective assemblage is narrowed to a personalised and contextualised content. For Massumi (2002), affective intensities are a-social but not pre-social in the sense that response arises out of context and there is always a trace of what has come before (p. 30). Affective arrangements are swarms of potential, out of which emerge responding or corresponding expression.

Massumi proposes that affect is also prior to intention: in other words, autonomic, pre-subjective and, as Anne Hickey-Moody (2013) puts it, “a visceral prompt” (p. 79). Bennett (2010) writes about the affective trajectory of vibrant matter in ways that resonate with Massumi’s idea of “readiness to arrive” (2002, p. 20) and incipience, the undeveloped beginning or tendency. Bennett’s position draws on Jacques Derrida’s alternative of the unspecified promise. Such a position means that moments of intensity may not be directly accessible nor articulable, whilst not quite out-side experience either.

Affect and all (vibrant) matter

In Bennett’s (2010) eloquent treatise on the vibrant materiality of human *and* nonhuman bodies, she deliberately does not limit affect to human sensing and structures, promoting instead the kind of “impersonal affect” (pp. xiii-xv) that is produced through human and nonhuman efficacy. Bennett argues that bodies continuously and correspondingly affect and are affected by other bodies: one acts and another suffers that action. The passage of movement is two-way, although variable. To that end, affect can be understood as impingement, critical point, bifurcation, interference, momentary suspension, disruption, amplification, vibration, oscillation, turning point, excess, struggle:

[A]ffectivity cannot be restricted to what is currently felt or otherwise apprehended. The reach of affective disclosure outruns what is consciously registered at a given moment so that there ‘is’ at all times more ‘in’ affectivity than one is presently aware of or actively in touch with. (Slaby, 2017, p. 8)

In the following section, the theoretical positions I have posed above are brought to bear on a lived narrative to show the extent of affect beyond a human-centric concept of 'emotion'.

Digression – Affect at work

These rooms have been her week-day place for a number of years: a utilitarian configuration of spaces offers health-related services. A splash of colour and an occasional flourish of art offset the admonishing messages that adorn the walls. Closed doors, a pull-down window grille, the small grey orb of a security camera staring down from the far corner, and signs saying Staff Only. Here, you can have your blood tested and x-ray images done. Closed double doors to the left lead into an adjoining, but separate, medical centre.

To the right of the large square entrance room is an enclosed suite of smaller rooms, and towards the left a blood testing service with its own waiting space. The fluorescent lighting nearly matches the bright sunlight coming through the glass frontage and entrance door of the building: one way in and one way out. In the small suite of rooms that includes a counselling room, the waiting area consists of three blue vinyl hospital standard chairs in a row, and a basket of well-thumbed magazines. An L-shaped reception desk dominates the space, behind which is a kitchen utility area, closed off with a nondescript blue curtain.

This afternoon, by coincidence, the radiographer, dental technician and beautician are not present as they usually would be in this part of the building. The phlebotomist is present. The counsellor and the phlebotomist keep to their own corners, for the most part. She has had blood tests done by the phlebotomist on two occasions, but there is rarely more than Good Morning between them.

The counsellor is waiting for a woman to arrive for a 4 o'clock appointment. She locks her office door to go through to freshen up in the bathroom, and returns to begin some cleaning and tidying in the shared space, to fill in time.

Into this capsule of walled-in space comes a boy-man who is bigger and taller than the counsellor. He stands on the other side of the reception desk and tells her he is on holiday and names the secondary school that he goes to. He takes a number of business cards from the desk top stand, all of her cards and a selection from the available others.

Now he sits on the middle chair, keeps eye contact with her. She does not notice that his hands move to his trousers, unzip his fly, begin to masturbate, until he says:

Will you suck me off miss? Will you suck me off miss? He stands up. He moves towards her. He shows her his penis. A stub of naked body in the middle of a fully covered boy-man.

Now *she* moves. Towards him. She raises her hands to his chest. She pushes him with more force than she knows she is capable of. Her hands are flat. There is strength in her fingers, wrists and pectoral muscles. She tries to turn him around. She wants him *out, gone!* She doesn't want the woman to arrive for her appointment and see what is happening.

He stays where he is.

She leaves. She walks through the door, out of the small waiting room, positioning herself where she can now exit the building if she needs to. She moves towards the door of the medical lab hoping to see the phlebotomist, perhaps use his phone (her phone is in her locked office) but he is occupied with a patient.

A man and child are sitting in the phlebotomist's waiting area. She does not want the child affected by this incident. And yet she acts to raise an alarm, that has the potential to alarm the child.

She raises her voice. Projecting her voice across the space, she addresses the boy-man with emphatic authority: **Do you want me to call the Police? Because that's a crime!**

The woman's measured heart beat sets off at break-neck speed while she speaks across the empty space of the entrance room to the boy. The expression of the heart and voice are registers that were not present when the affective amplification is a crowded field of potential. Expression is selective. Thought presses in: *Where is a phone? Get him out of here: someone is due to arrive. If he won't leave, get yourself out of here.*

The man waiting with his child for blood tests looks up from his magazine and meets her eye. He stays seated. *Why is the man not helping me: now I see he is with a child. I hope the child doesn't notice what's going on...*

The round Cyclops eye of the surveillance camera captures the moment when the boy-man leaves the building, after which the counsellor returns to her kitchen to wash her hands and drink some water. No part of this last sequence can be conjured up in her memory. She later sees the footage from the security camera and still cannot recall seeing the boy-man leave. Her mind memory of this short moment in time has been erased; the only trace is held by the digital machine.

Minutes later, the phlebotomist comes through to where she is standing and asks the counsellor if she is okay. He puts his arm around her shoulder in a gesture of solidarity.

Mapping affect in action

The struggle of the situation described above is one in which different players act and suffer the action of others. There is palpable disruption and impulse – affect as bifurcation. Trajectories and intentions veer off into new becoming, as performances of human and nonhuman actants diffract across timespacematter. I include in the congregation of players who suffer the action of others the reader of the account given above. I acknowledge the affecting potential of this telling to

jolt and disturb those beyond the immediacy of the event. Waves of affect ripple like electric current beyond and into the world in its becoming (Barad, 2001).

The surveillance camera records the sequence as a short ten minute event in total. It registers with the woman as longer – a disorienting moment (out) of time in which she finds herself being out-side herself in the very circumstances that she is “more intimately in contact with [her]self and [her] vitality” (Massumi, 2002, p. 35). The affective potential and performance of pushing the boy-man overtakes the woman. Her beliefs and structures of professional conduct are eclipsed by a different life-in-the-making. Here is a moment of connection that defies common sense, entangled across timespacematter (Barad, 2010) with the woman in Alan Jenkins’ (2011) article when she acts to resist the intrusive advances of the man on the bus. In Jenkins’ account, the woman on the bus carries a long history of being sexually violated and finds herself (again) in a situation of potential danger. Seated on the nearly empty bus, the woman’s body responds from a multiplicity of distilled and unstilled sensations, a conscious/autonomic borderland, as a man approaches to sit beside her. She raises the man’s hand from her knee and says, “I found this on my knee, whose is it?” (p. 40). The man bolts from the seat and leaves the bus at the next available opportunity. For the woman in the workplace and the woman on the bus, the immediacy of active response is more tendency than cognition (Massumi, 2002). The out-of-place sexualised advances in public settings incite both disorientating (affecting) and bifurcating moments; each woman does something unexpected, and each man suffers the action *she* takes. In both situations, these are intra-actions of radical departure and discovery: affective potential actualised; propensity to become other. The un-sense-able impulse sets off a “serial unfolding of events” (Massumi, 2002). For the woman on the bus and the woman in the workplace, there is an unthinkable moment in which she grasps the potential to act. The edge of undecidability becomes decisive as an excess of change-ability takes over. Both accounts tell us that vitality is all-ways in movement, unpredictable and capable of the shock of the new.

When the boy-man has gone, the counsellor crosses the threshold into the suite of rooms and the recessed kitchen area to wash her hands. She senses the water's cleansing coolness, and the vanilla smell of the liquid soap. This action calms and soothes her. The outer room is infused by the now absent boy-man's ghostly intrusion. She is relieved that her room has been locked throughout the troubling event. Something about that blue wooden barrier has somewhat walled it off from the full affect of what has played out. In the near future, the room is re-vitalised for its counselling purposes through a ceremony of blessing and cleansing.

Re-turning (to) the present, the phlebotemist takes a quiet moment to come through to check that all is well. The woman takes en-courage-ment from his gestures of care and solidarity; yet another unexpected act, set off within the affective assemblage. Her heart has calmed; it is no longer drumming in her chest. She prepares to make tea – refreshment – for the woman who will arrive shortly. The built space of the woman's workplace looks – to all intents and purposes – un-affected. The sunshine of the late afternoon is bright and warm for the four o'clock consultation. The woman and her counsellor drink tea and engage in counselling work. The continuity of the professional relationship is safeguarded. In that hour, no one misses the business cards; the round eye of the surveillance camera watches as it always does.

The surveillance footage records a digital message that identifies the boy-man to the Police: the woman tells the Police officer who interviews her that she hopes the boy-man will find help.

Ongoing (re)opening to further chapters

In venturing with Feminist Standpoint Theory and Material Feminisms through this chapter, I have engaged with material↔discursive positions that thread throughout the thesis. Taking up this challenge was not something I knew I would do when I began this study; the realisation of a possibility. Rather, it has

been as Barad (2010) suggests: “the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsibility” (p. 265). The inventive possibilities for counselling practice to address intimate partner violence depend on thinking other-wise, and I believe Feminist Standpoint Theory and Material Feminisms offer reconfigurations in the making.

Chapter 3

Engaging (with) a literary assemblage

[Trees] don't dance, from the root up, wishing
to travel a little, not cramped so much as wanting
a better view, or more sun, or just as avidly
more shade...

the dark rings
of the years slowly and without a sound
thickening

Can you imagine? (Oliver, 2004, p. 14)

The writing of this chapter takes the present study into a shared enactment with published research and practice writing. Borrowing from Mary Oliver's imagination with trees – with dark rings slowly thickening – I trace the movements and emergence of the thesis across years of engagement with writers and counsellors whose own commitment to addressing the conundrum of love-entangled-with-violence has informed their work.

I acknowledge that violence perpetrated by humans affects the land, water, air, flora and fauna of our planet and, differently, the lives of people throughout our world. All genders and configurations of intimate partnering are affected by violence. That said: the immersion and participation of this research enacts a boundary-making device *for* and *with* women in home settings who speak of love for a male mpartner who has been violent.

This chapter engages with specific assemblages of literature. Because the problems and dilemmas of violence against women are vast and far-reaching, the (ongoing) potentiality in the available literature is too. Within the multiplicities and abundance of writing in this field, I select the studies most relatable to mine. Hence, I, as researcher-in-the-world of *this* study enact boundary-making cuts that are, nevertheless, not absolute separabilities. I begin with materials that address the context of violence that the study is situated in: intimate partner

relationship between women and men when a woman expresses continuing love for her partner following his use of violence. I also read selected studies for a neuroscience view of romantic love and fear memory to investigate what may be useful discursive accounts of affective response in partner relationship. The third body of writing pertains to therapeutic approaches.

At-home violence

Violence against women occurs in every country in the world and, in a majority of cases, women are more at risk in their intimate relationships than anywhere else (Fanslow et al., 2010; Fanslow & Gulliver, 2015; Fanslow & Robinson, 2011; Gulliver & Fanslow, 2015; Johnson, 2008; Piispa, 2002). In New Zealand, reported violence in domestic relationships is predominantly assault by men (Michelle & Weaver, 2010; Seuffert, 2002) and is a criminal offence, as are wider contexts of violence that affect the lives of women, more so as the seriousness of assault increases (Fyers, 2018). I acknowledge that women are perpetrators of violence against others, but a concern at continued violence against women lies at the heart of this study. On 26 June 2017, New Zealand Police investigations into 'family violence' reached a record high. Of relevance to this study, key statistics show that one in three New Zealand women has experienced physical/sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime and almost half of family violence deaths occur between intimate partners (The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017).

In New Zealand, The Domestic Violence Act (Domestic Violence Act, 1995) stipulates that domestic relationships that fall under this act are between spouses, family members, those who ordinarily share a household, and/or have a close personal relationship. Although the terms *family violence* and *domestic violence* locate home as the site of intimate partner abuses, they are terms that disguise who does what to whom (Goldner, 2004; Michelle & Weaver, 2010). The most recent data summaries available through The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse show that, in 2017, 89% of 5461 applications for Protection Orders were made by women, and 10% were made by men, a finding that

continues to show the gendered difference in reported violent crime (The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2017).

Gendered positions

Violence against women by male partners, on Evan Stark's (2009b) terms, is much more about malevolent violation of human rights than it is about episodic assault. He is of the view that men who use coercive control of women partners' lives exploit, constrain, dislocate and quash women's dignity, decision-making and creative capabilities. Because coercive control is exercised repeatedly in everyday life – to curtail a woman's autonomy, liberty, and democratic position in the relationship – it does not achieve the same kinds of direct aid response that partner assault attracts. Stark goes on to claim that coercive control of women's lives is a "liberty crime" that is "invisible in plain sight" (p. 1513). In Stark's (2009a) account of his advocacy and forensic social work with women, he found them to be courageous resisters of the tactics men were deploying to coerce and control them; they noticed, questioned and complained about what men had done to them. It was not that they lacked capacity to enact their life projects but that they were deprived of opportunity to do so. For this reason, Stark (2009a) advocates that it is time to prioritise freedom alongside safety. In his view, autonomy entails negotiating independence around decision-making, freedom of movement and association, protection from harm, a chance for "equal personhood" (p. 171), a measure of free time and self-direction – including decisions about money – and, freedom of bodily integrity (p. 242).

The gender symmetry debate

Mary Allen's (2012) book on narrative therapy for women transitioning from abuse to safety is situated in Ireland. This research prioritises the voices of ten women's experiences of intimate partner violence and lays out the contexts in which they rebuilt safety for themselves and their children by separating from their partners. Allen has a useful section on the gender symmetry debate which began with American surveys by Straus and Gelles (cited in Allen, 2012, pp. 38-

39) of women and men in 1975 and 1985 that suggested violence was perpetrated equally by wives and by husbands ('wife' and 'husband' were the designations of these Family Violence Surveys). According to Allen's review of further research, there followed "100 empirical studies which suggest equivalent rates of violence for both sexes" (p. 39). Critics of these findings found that the standard questions of the survey omitted to ask about sexual violence and controlling behaviours, thereby limiting the participant responses to conflict in the form of arguments, verbal threats/aggression and physical force. Of relevance to my study are Hamberger's (2005) findings that the majority of reported rates of heterosexual partner violence are bidirectional, but that women are more adversely affected (p. 144). Allen cites early and later studies that differentiate typologies of violence (for example Johnson, 2010). These studies found that Johnson's most controlling form of partner violence, *Intimate Terrorism*, is most often perpetrated by men (70-87% depending on context) and *Violent Resistance* is used by women to defend themselves (90%), thus (re)establishing an argument for asymmetry. Allen's conclusion on this debate is that:

Women who experience IT (*Intimate Terrorism*) are attacked more frequently, the violence is less likely to stop, they are more likely to be injured and to suffer post-traumatic stress syndrome, to use painkillers and to miss work. They are also more likely to leave their partners and to find their own residences or to go to other places of safety when they leave. (p. 43)

Women are also more likely to experience fear than their male partners and, in one cited study, more than half the women said that forms of emotional abuse were "the worse thing" (Watson & Parsons, 2005, in Allen, 2012, p. 47), a claim that intra-acts with Stark's (2009a) findings on coercive control.

Two women in Allen's study referenced the introduction of weapons to their partner's repertoire of abuse: one a shotgun, and the other a golf club. One of Allen's research participants, Brenda, said the guns were "like the point of no return": she believed the use of the guns to be a deliberate ploy to provoke fear in her: "... he told me in the past he would blow my brains. He told me exactly how he would do it" (p. 49). Another participant, Frances, spoke about her

partner's death threats using a golf club as a "weapon". Frances tells how her partner "forced sex on me that night... he had said that he was going to get a shotgun actually, and shoot me" (p. 50, ellipsis in original). These few lines of text stood out to me because stories of guns and other physical weapons do not feature often in the literature I sourced, although beyond Anglo cultures, this may not be the case.

Post-separation gender asymmetry

The question for another study on gender asymmetry was: What happens *after* women (and their children) leave a violent home situation? I include this study in the selected literature for two reasons. Firstly, the theoretical lens for the study examines how power is exercised. Second, the authors highlight the affecting entanglement of women's and men's sexual-emotional investment in partner relationships, especially when there has been marriage commitment, children born to the couple, and some length of time together.

Canadian researchers, Lorraine Davies and Marilyn Ford-Gilboe (2009) surveyed 309 women post separation and found that leaving a violent partner relationship does not mean the abuse will stop (see also Piispa, 2002 in Finland; Robertson et al., 2007a, 2007b, in New Zealand). The Canadian study found that women who are mothers give consideration to their children in both leaving *and* staying decision-making. Because of dominant discourses around joint parenting post-separation, women must continue to negotiate with fathers unless men take no interest in maintaining a link with their children. Hence, the complexities that face mothers in their leave↔stay decisions and the possibility that mothers will face more abuse after leaving than non-mothers.

A discrepancy of income across genders is another factor in whether women can make a clean break from partners. Davies & Ford-Gilboe, (2009) found that when men are better financially resourced, they are more likely to "use the opportunities provided by the separation process to continue coercive control" (p. 29). This finding (of increased risk of abuse after leaving a partner who has

higher socioeconomic status) is in contrast to women's risk of abuse *in* a relationship where there is low status employment and less financial security. Davies and Ford-Gilboe (2009) also researched the influence of a "continuing sense of love for their former partners, grief at the loss of their dream for 'a happy life with a loving partner'" (p. 30), fears around safety and worry at what lay ahead in a newly made life. According to Davies and Ford-Gilboe, these named emotional responses in women entangle with men's expressions of "anger and resentment at their former wives" (p. 30). In short, there are continuing ways women and men are "emotionally invested" (p. 30) post-separation. For these authors, the perspectives of women during the live-in relationship and post-separation are "a trustworthy indicator" (p. 30) of how power is exercised in asymmetrical ways. Women, whose accounts of at-home coercive control were most intense, were more likely to report harassment following separation. Women make strenuous efforts to rebuild and restore their lives more easily when there can be a "clean" break. Davies and Ford-Gilboe call for acknowledgement of the phenomenon of continued violence post-separation, public sanctions against that violence, and support for women in "reclaiming a sense of self" (p. 38).

Silencing tactics

Not all materialised violence is in the form of physical assault. In the selected literature where love persists beyond violence, women refer to a range of silencing tactics that constitute the relationally destructive tactic of men's ongoing refusal to talk *with* their women partners and negotiate *within* the partner relationship (Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Power et al., 2006; Ramirez & Monk, 2017; Rasool, 2013; Singh & Myende, 2017; Stark, 2009a; Towns & Adams, 2015). That is to say, apparatuses for physical *and other forms* of abuse by male partners in heterosexual partnerships are dynamically/ongoingly materialised through constraints and dominating tactics that produce what Minna Piispa (2002) terms "mental torment". Women who have been hurt by systematic control of their lives by male partners may not call it mental torment but often seek out counselling services to address depression/anxiety before

disclosing the trauma they have lived through (for example, de Juan, 2016; Wade, 2007).

Descriptions of these tormenting tactics come in many forms: intimidating facial gestures that some women call “the look”, and other shaming gestures; smashing property; threatening to leave, threatening suicide, threatening the welfare of pets, threatening to take children; pressure to join, cover up, and/or blame, following illegal activity; put-downs; name-calling; geographical isolation, controlling who she can see and speak with and other limits to community/ family involvement; minimising abuse by downplaying the effects of hurtful or oppressive actions; taking or controlling money; implying that his partner is ‘mad’ (Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Kuennen, 2014); the need to be ‘corrected’ as an expression of care (Borochowitz & Eisikovits, 2002). Many of the coercive controlling tactics named above show the extent and force of repeated impositions on women’s lives by their male partners (B. Davies et al., 2002; Hill, 2019; Stark, 2009a). Even if there is no immediate physical consequence for women of exploitation and micro-management of their lives, their bodies are affected: they are “scarred, shaped or marked (consciously or unconsciously)” (Hook & Wolfe, 2018, p. 872).

The place we call(ed) home

As the indigenous people of this land have taught us (NiaNia et al., 2019; Wilson et al., 2016), place is part of identity. From a Māori worldview, Professor Mason Durie calls for matters of spirituality, bodies, whānau/family and cognitive/emotional expressions to be all-ways part of professional thinking-practice through the use of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 2001) which translates as The Four Walls of the House. *Te Whare Tapa Whā* has become widely adopted, and further extended, especially in the health professions of New Zealand (Durie, 2011). I include these commitments to attend to physical (material) dimensions of living for how a place, which is home, comes to matter.

A University of Auckland study into twenty Māori women’s views on safety in the context of intimate partner violence found that home as place was of importance

to the women participants (Wilson et al., 2016). Their concept of home included the tribal marae and traditional land: mountain (maunga) and river (awa). These connections to place provided women with a place to stand – turangawaewae – and animated the women’s determination to actively and ongoingly do “what you know you can” (p. 712) to safeguard their lives. Much of this article narrated the ways the participants’ *doing* extended to the lives of children and other women. In one story, women had banded together to make a garden (pp. 712-713), a story both joyful and generative. The women’s labour to prepare the ground and to plant food plants had an outcome of practical and companioning support for neighbouring women.

In a Canadian study, Woodhall-Melnik et al. (2017) propose that one way to advance women’s aspirations for stability, following home violence and disruption, is through strong social networks, and provision by municipal authorities of affordable housing. According to this study, home is a word that women use to mean refuge, a place of calm, routine and safety, “being able to live without fear” (p. 264). What mattered to all 41 participants was a measure of permanence, financial independence and affordability, safety, consistency/predictability, and comfort. Many of these aspects of stability mattered to their children, some naming the new place “home” for the first time in their lives (p. 263).

Tasmanian academic, Hazel Easthope (2004) examines the double construct of home as physically built places that are also felt and interpreted; homes are places of complex social connection where people actively do things, and hold “locational capacity” (p. 129). Easthope discusses the affecting connection of persons with homes. She cites other research into the ways homes become the sites of emotional expression – such as sorrow, anger, love – and how these performances are “deposited, stored and sorted to create a powerful domestic geography” (Gurney in Easthope, 2004, p. 134). The point Easthope is making in different language is one that Bennett (2010) also makes: that human beings and things “slip-slide into each other” (p. 4). For a house to become a home, it must be inscribed with meanings that change over time. Hence, the statement of the

boy in the Woodhall-Melnik et al. study above who finally came to call a place “home”, only when it had *become* the kind of significant place to be in that he now inhabited, safely and securely.

Resistance as affecting performance

There is agreement in literature which addresses the problem of violence that people always respond to forms of oppression (Baker, 1997; Hydén, 2005; Piispa, 2002; Wade, 1997, 2007; White, 2000, 2002, 2004). For instance, Margareta Hydén highlights the significance of fear as a form of resistance: “The fact that the woman is frightened means that she rejects the man’s violence, without necessarily having any well-prepared strategy for how she can avoid being re-exposed to it” (2005, p. 172). Hydén’s study found that violence against women in Sweden, prior to the 1970s, had become so in-grained that women hesitated to go public about the violence to which they were subjected. Hydén’s research asks why women’s resistance to men’s violence in the home was overlooked, by women themselves, and by others. One of the points she makes is that resistance may only be recognisable when it is “the right kind of resistance” (p. 171); the kind of resistance that is explicit because it is seen and heard, and stops violence from happening.

In their research with young women around refusal of date rape, Celia Kitzinger and Hannah Frith (1999) encounter the misrecognition of women’s repertoire for saying ‘no’. The young women of their study made use of complex and finely attuned delays, hesitations and implied refusals to decline a man’s advances. These subtle acts of speaking resistance did not conform to ideas of “emphatic, direct and immediate no’s [sic]” (p. 309). Kitzinger and Frith note that in other circumstances of relating when women decline and resist by using qualified dissent, their expressions are understood as refusal but, in the context of unwanted sexual advances, their use of the same vocal cues are seen to be “inadequate and insufficiently communicative” (p. 309). The authors take the position that it can be unhelpful to ask women about non-direct refusal strategies using a kind of third degree mode, for two reasons: firstly, that a

woman may experience her refusal as insufficient; and, secondly, that it excuses a man's claim not to have understood her 'no'. Across timespace, a line in the Hydén (2005, p. 171) study reads: "Well, if he wasn't getting the message about what you wanted, you should have demonstrated it more clearly". Both studies see it as unjust that women's acts of resistance are unseeable when their strategies to resist do not stop violence being done to them. When acts of resistance go under the radar in this way, there are legal implications: evidence of resistance to, and the effects of violence, is difficult to obtain when there is no physical mark (Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Stark, 2009a).

In a collective biography of feminine subjectivities that uses Foucauldian perspectives of power/knowledge and resistance, Bronwyn Davies et al., (2002) include a story of gang-rape. Both the narrator of the story and the woman who is raped, resist the violence – but, differently. The narrator describes the pivotal moment when she realises the other woman is being gang-raped. The woman who is being raped screams; "not a 'no' but a scream" (p. 304). Listening from the verandah of the house, the narrator notices her body tighten: "She sat still... She tightened her body and pulled her legs closer together. She looked at [her boyfriend] and he went inside" (p. 304). Soon after, the narrator and her boyfriend leave the party. The woman inside the house who is subjected to rape by more than one man, resists, but cannot stop the violence. In Foucault's terms, the rape of the woman is a force that bends, breaks, destroys, and "closes the door on all possibilities" (Foucault, 1982, p. 220). *Despite* her scream as resistance, she cannot escape. The analysis of this shocking story in the Davies et al. text proposes that actions that resist a dominating force will break, disturb, and spread the waves of that force, *and* may not stop the violence.

Mis-recognition of resistance

When a woman suffers any form of oppression and domination, she may not quite register the asymmetry of the event, but may, nevertheless, fear further harm or reprisal, and incredulity from others (Carmody & Carrington, 2000)

and/or the mis-recognition of her actions to stop the violence. Michael White (2004) makes the following observation from therapy:

[W]hen people's very responses to the trauma they are going through, including the very actions that they take to prevent it, to modify it, to resist its effects, are disqualified or rendered irrelevant, the outcome is usually a sense of personal desolation and a strong sense of shame. (p. 48)

Women speak of confusion when a partner demonstrates the capacity for both love and harm. The indeterminacy of these circumstances produces shame and embarrassment at having been the victims of their intimate partners' violence. Women use words like 'fool' and 'stupid' to describe themselves, especially when they return to the relationship after a time of separation (Baker, 1997; Enander, 2010; Hyden, 2005; Logan et al., 2015; Towns & Adams, 2000). In Shahana Rasool's (2013) research group, one woman said: "I endure it because who would want me now [that] my whole life is messed up?" (p. 61).

This important point about resistance is further explored in the section of this chapter that engages with selected therapeutic literature.

Reasons to stay ↔ leave

Living at the cutting edge (Robertson et al., 2007a, 2007b), research commissioned by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and conducted through The University of Waikato, investigated women's experiences of the New Zealand legal protection systems. The first pages of the Robertson et al. report are dedicated to the 212 New Zealand women and children who had died (at the time of publication) from the violence of partners and fathers *after* legal protection was sought. It is disturbing and troubling that the justice systems intended to protect women and children were ineffective in the lives of each of these people. In a related report, *No way to live*, Lesley Laing (2010) investigates the effects on women of trying to stop violence against themselves and their children through the Australian family court system. These reports and other research (Enns et al., 1997; Goldner, 2004; Kim & Gray, 2008; Michelle & Weaver, 2010; Seuffert, 2002) say that sometimes a woman's decision to stay in a partner relationship is based on justified concern that she will be less safe

when she leaves and, in many cases, separating from her partner results in escalating forms of violence. The following section traverses research into what complicates a woman's decision to leave.

Complexities

A woman told University of Auckland researcher, Alison Towns:

... we don't want to be unlovable. We want more than anything to be lovable... I think it's our desire for me anyway, my desire and need to be lovable, maintained a status quo unquestioningly... and allowed my partner's behaviour to degrade... because for me to question it would be to either risk his wrath which is scary or become one of these things that I think is so undesirable. (Towns & Adams, 2009, p. 744)

Women may believe that to be "stropky" is "ugly" and likely to risk the opprobrium of *all* men (Towns & Adams, 2009, pp. 744-745) but especially a man who is an intimate partner. This presents a dilemma for women who want to question their partner's violent and domineering action, and to leave. Various studies find that women ongoingly attempt to help and appease their partners (Carotta et al., 2018; Power et al., 2006; Towns & Adams, 2000) especially in situations where men are active in trying to reestablish relationship with women they have hurt by offering: promises to change; acts of kindness; declarations of love; requests for help in relation to Police action; appeals for sympathy; and challenges to a woman's account of the violence in the hope of not being blamed (Carotta et al., 2018).

For some years, Alison Towns and Peter Adams conducted research in a New Zealand context on love-entangled-with-violence in partner relationship (Adams et al., 1995; Towns & Adams, 2000; Towns & Adams, 2009, 2015). The following diffracted condensations are threaded across timespacematter between the 2000 Towns and Adams study and my study. These themes have persisted across the twenty years since they conducted their research:

- waves of hatred *and* love when violence is happening – "I hated him, I hated him with a vengeance and I hated myself even more, for sitting there" (p. 561) – that is re-verses by a partner's persuasive apology – "...

letting that be the truth between us that he was sorry and that I know he didn't mean it" (p. 561);

- simultaneously holding the possibility that he has it in him to be "the lovely man", while "really abhorrent behaviour" is occurring (p. 566);
- women not telling anyone about the extent and content of violence, on the grounds that they should have known better than to get into the relationship in the first place – hence the difficulty for leaving;
- suffocating surveillance tactics coupled with accusations of infidelity that are (initially) rationalised as love;
- women's ongoing attempts to help and please their partners – "If you love him enough he'll change" (p. 573) – and if the abuse continues, women's belief that they should try harder.

Nobody else's business

Another response to the question of why women stay is that violence against women partners has been, and continues to be seen as, a private matter (Kurri & Wahlström, 2001; Logan et al., 2015; Power et al., 2006; Towns & Adams, 2009; Wilson et al., 2016) despite reported efforts by women to get help, beginning with approaches to relatives and friends, and then by calling police, doctors, helping agencies (Goldner, 2004; Piispa, 2002). Wilson et al. found that men believe it is "no-one's business what a man does behind closed doors" (p. 716). This kind of isolation works as a double jeopardy for women subjected to violence and control. They are kept apart from people who might support their welfare by implicit and explicit injunctions from partners not to tell. And they may not yet embody the knowledge and desire for a sense of connectedness to family/whānau and friends, which Wilson et al., (2016) reported as "a major factor" in feeling safe (p. 711). There is a two-way account of this connectedness in the Wilson et al. study. The women in their research group spoke of a stronger sense of safety when they are contributors to the welfare and care of other women; thus making it their business to check on friends, sisters, cousins, daughters, mothers and aunties (p. 712).

Wavering

Research into the ways women say, “it wasn’t really his fault”, highlights the discursive positions for women who want to absolve a partner of violence (Rasool, 2013; Stark, 2009b; Towns & Adams, 2000; Towns & Adams, 2015). One participant told Towns: “he behaved so appallingly... it was so abhorrent *I thought, you know, it wasn’t really him*” (2000, p. 566). Julia Wood (2000, 2001) also found that love and violence narratives such as *it wasn’t the real him* lead a woman to think that things will get better, that she is responsible for making the relationship work, and should accept bad times in her partner relationship. One of Carol Gilligan’s (1982) research participants, who had suffered a great deal at the hands of her boyfriend, said: “I’m still in love with him, no matter what he has done, and that really confuses me, because I don’t know why I still do” (p. 124). An 18-year-old woman from South Africa, Aynada Vilakazi (2011), bereft at a much older man’s treatment of her, wrote, “Sadly, in my heart you still have a place” (p. 85). Vilakazi recognised the persuasion of the man’s “delicious deception”... his charm and “flashy car”, his expensive clothing and “sweet beautiful words” (p. 85). She was aware that the man would have “easily replaced” her with “another young girl like me” (p. 85). And yet, “this young girl [who] wanted to be loved” (p. 86) also knew that the man was a corrupting influence in her life, “just a perve” (p. 85). In an Australian study (Power et al., 2006), a number of participants downplayed the cues that their partners’ actions were abusive. These authors propose that women in their study stayed in relationship based on a desire to belong in an idealised monogamous sexual couple relationship. An expectation of warmth, respect and safety, produced “a confusing dissonance” (p. 180) for one participant, Angela, when the man she moved in with began to use violence. More than one woman in the study interpreted men’s nonphysical controlling actions as “devotion” or “flattery” (p. 181), in part because the abuse was not physical assault. Following this trajectory in the study, the authors name the “double-edged sword” of jealousy and “constant attention” as slow, insidious coercive control by a partner. “Rather than signalling danger, these behaviours can be experienced as positive signs of love in the initial stage of a relationship” (p. 181) that subtly marginalise women from other circles of social relationship. According to Power et al., when women

invest their hopes in the possibility of partner relationship, this can mask surveillance actions by a man as caring attention; hence, the difficulty of discerning what constitutes loving relationship and what is abuse.

‘Enduring love’ as reason to stay

Margaret Kearney (2001) analyses thirteen studies of “enduring love” from which emerge four themes. Early in the relationship, abuse seemed “unreal and aberrant”, a narrative arc that embodies identity claims, such as: “I wasn’t the type of person, you know, [to] just walk out and leave... I’d rather do a lot of things to sort out the problem and work it out” (p. 275). A second strand is characterised by the utterance, “The more I do the worse I am” (p. 276). The accumulated effects on the women of the unpredictability of their partners’ requirements and their own sacrifices were an embodied immobilisation, limited economic alternatives, and the relinquishment of career and other cherished memberships in life. As one said: “I could not move and I used to think, ‘My God! I am going crazy, this is crazy, my life is crazy, and there is nothing I can do about it’” (p. 277). The studies report that women went to great lengths to anticipate and minimise risk to themselves and their children, and to hide the abuse from those around them (including children and the women’s own parents) in order to mitigate retaliation from the abusing partner. The third theme brings a turning point for women: “I’ve had enough” (p. 277). In saying, “I’ve had enough”, women enter a borderland of transition. This was realisation territory; they no longer tolerated the abuse they were being subjected to: “an accumulation of hurt and disillusionment that finally outweigh[s] the hope of improvement” (p. 277). Women’s moves to no longer tolerate the abuse emerge through intervention from *outside*, as may be the case when a woman finds fulfillment beyond the partner relationship, in work, for example. And from *inside* her home, as for instance, when threats to her children’s lives enter the assemblage. The fourth phase described by Kearney is when women venture out to establish life beyond the partner relationship. Kearney’s findings say this is a dangerous move to make, due to unpredictability of many kinds: an escalated risk of homicide; children’s responses to changes in their lives; financial precarity; and different

social positioning outside coupledness. No longer just enduring to survive, women who reach for life outside the violent partner relationship become uniquely positioned to persist in making a life. Kearney strikes a cautionary note in her paper about what cultural or other contextual materials may have been selected out by authors of the thirteen studies, and I see this is a valid caution. She ends her paper by pointing out that women may be censoring what they say to health professionals on account of fear of reprisal by partners, and a perceived lack of interest from health care professionals, which is produced by restrictions on their available time. She believes attention should be paid to women's health and the ways that violence in partner relationships demoralises and immobilises women's lives, leading to depression and substance use.

'Wifely duties'

Each of the following selected studies contributes to an infinite multiplicity of understanding in how women may be more poorly positioned to separate from married partners when religious discourses come into play. Religious discourses, and cultural valuing of marriage, are influential in some women's decisions not to separate from men who are violent because, in Christian marriage, women and men take vows to accept the other for better or for worse. Cheryl Potgieter and Sarojini Nadar (2010) expose the workings of a particular online advice column that promotes sexism and patriarchy under the guise of religious and pop-psychological benevolence. The column explicitly invites women partners to take up submissive positions in their intimate relationships and suggests that "men cannot change and therefore it is women who must change" (p. 49), thereby entrenching the possibilities for asymmetry in the couple relationship. Potgieter and Nadar's critique is that the online dispersal of sexist ideas promotes women's submission and upholds the possibility of coercive control by men. Even when religious discourses are not overtly endorsed, they contribute to a cloak of silence about intimate partner violence by popularising an image of happy, well-dressed respectability. Religious discourses also endorse practices of sacrifice and forgiveness (Rasool, 2013; Towns & Adams, 2015) that compel a woman to love her abuser and to suffer rape without naming it rape because the

rapist is the man you are married to (Gavey, 2005). Women who suffer marital rape may be cast as deserving or provoking of the man's violence (Buchwald et al., 2005; Gavey, 2005; Towns & Adams, 2015). According to T. K. Logan, Robert Walker and Jennifer Cole, (2015) three things silence the partner who suffers. These are: cultural indeterminacy about "real rape" and norms about privacy in family life; the importance of sexual intimacy to partners and the question of where the boundary to nonconsensual sex lies; and coercive control as a subordinating force designed to impair the autonomy of a partner. Although these authors do not specify the way sexual violence is gendered in the 172 articles in their systemic review, much of their analysis attends to nonconsensual sexual violation – rape – of women's bodies by men and raises these dilemmas:

- sexual intimacy entangles with sex as "wifely duty" (p. 112);
- women's struggle to speak about and name nonconsensual sex as rape;
- the problem of assumed consent when the relationship becomes permanent, and that; nonconsensual sexual violence can become so frequent it is seen to be normal;
- when sexual violence is perpetrated by a partner one lives with, the level of distress is accumulative, infused with fear;
- sexual violence is associated with assault; and, finally,
- a trajectory of increased violence is associated with stalking, before and after separation.

Some of the complexities of sexual violence in intimate partner relationships have been well canvassed in Logan et al.'s paper. These authors suggest a number of directions for future research. One that I thoroughly agree with is to no longer use a yes/no question about whether a woman has been subjected to sexual coercion: "A dichotomy cannot and does not begin to capture the level of terror and bodily incapacity women experience during sexual violence incidents" (p. 125). Another proposal is that research should attend more closely to how frequent, how severe and for how long a woman has suffered sexual abuse in order to determine the trajectory of coercive control in her situation. Yet another recommendation is to gain more knowledge of how sexual consent works in established partner relationships, and whether women have capacity to give consent in a context already marked by coercion and threat. These authors also

believe it is important to ask women about their efforts to resist sexual violations. All of these complexities culminate in the importance for Logan et al. of paying enough attention to women's own stories so that they begin to have a sense of being heard, no longer silenced.

Professional perspectives beside therapy

Women struggling to change and/or escape violent home situations consult with medical, legal, social work and therapeutic professionals. Unsurprisingly, lawyers are writing to change their profession's response to "But I still love him" claims by women in these situations (Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Kuennen, 2014). Epstein and Goodman are particularly interested in women's experience being heard and given legitimacy; as for instance, when there is brain injury and women's accounts of their experience are affected by confusion/inconsistency. A professional who knows how brain trauma interferes with communication can be alert to the plausibility of her story in a different way. Kuennen warns against stereotypical thinking that "continues to eclipse women's actual experiences" (p. 982). She makes the case that when legal and other social systems reduce partner conflict to a binary of physical violence versus no violence this obscures the complexity of relationship. Kuennen wants the *intention* of a partner to dominate/control the other to be considered, and physical aggression *within a larger pattern of coercion and control* to be legally considered to be abuse. In addressing continuing love by a woman partner, Kuennen proposes that women in intimate partner relationships, whether they live with partners who use violence or not, maintain a commitment to partner (and children) and hope that the relationship can work. In her comprehensive review, Kuennen questions the way love is a consideration for separating couples in 'nonabusive' relationships, but is not deemed to be a legitimate factor in leave \Leftrightarrow stay decision-making when there has been violence. Kuennen's exposition on the conundrum of love in abusive partner relationships cites an earlier study (Smith et al., 2013) that found that "when an abused woman feels understood about her love for her abusive partner she will be more receptive to learning about mutual mature love" (p. 990). Kuennen concludes her review by reminding the reader that a

founding feminist tenet is to listen to the voices of women: in this context, she proposes that if women say they value love, *and* want to be safe in their relationships, this intent must be taken seriously.

Love, fear, memory – encountering neuroscience

The following section of literature explores the potential for neuroscience findings on romantic love and fear memory to inform this study. I bear in mind the possibilities for how love and fear may be understood: biologically; as neurological phenomena; cognition; emotion; behavior; attitude; as social construct informed by culture.

A neuroscience take on affective response

The literature I have consulted for review of a neuroscience view of love make a differentiation between the evolution of love as sex drive, romantic love, and attachment. This differentiation has become possible through functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The information derived from fMRI scans of a human brain is useful for *decoding* the patterns of voxels (like pixels, but 3D) that tell neuroscientists how intensely and where in the brain a person is processing information (Schiller, 2011).

According to Helen Fisher, Arthur Aron and Lucy Brown (Fisher et al., 2005), mammalian and avian species have developed three different, overlapping brain systems (also called mechanisms and networks) for reproduction purposes: sex drive motivates an individual to seek a range of partners; courtship/romantic love motivates an individual to focus on a specific other; and attachment, also called affiliation, evolved to keep partners together long-term, for the purposes of raising young.

Fisher et al.'s (2005; 2006) primary focus is on how human romantic love differs from sex drive and affiliation. Romantic love is described in the following ways: focused attention on the loved person; increased energy; mood swings; pounding

heart beat; sweaty palms; changes in habits to impress or maintain contact; fixated thinking about the other; sexual desire and sexual possessiveness towards the loved one, yet “craving for emotional union supersedes the need for sexual union” (Fisher et al., 2006, p. 2175). The researchers claim that romantic love is “tenacious” and “exceedingly difficult to control” (p. 2181). These researchers maintain that sex drive can be redirected to another mate and, thus, distinguishes sex drive from the durability of romantic love.

I consulted a different stream of writing to investigate the development of a disposition towards longer-term attachment love. *Affiliation* is the word used in the selected articles on longer-term love. The meanings associated with affiliation include forms of accompanying, reciprocity, maternal care, development of trust, cooperation, capacity to find enjoyment in interactions with others, acquisition of attachment memory, altruistic and affectionate behaviour (Depue & Morrone-Strupinsky, 2005; Weinstein & Capitanio, 2005; Young, S. N. et al., 2005; Zak, 2005; Zizzo, 2005).

Fisher et al's, (2006b) research group comprised men and women, aged 18-26 years, who described themselves as intensely in love. The researchers interviewed each participant and asked him or her to rate the length of time and intensity of feelings they felt for their loved one. Participants brought a photograph of the loved person and an acquaintance about whom they were emotionally 'neutral'. Findings were based on fMRI scans of the participant looking at the photographs in sequence with a count-back task, repeated six times. The task consisted in viewing a number such as 8421 and counting back in increments of 7. The count-back task diverted the participants' attention away from the person in the photograph, so that the fMRI could trace where the brain response was located as the person viewed the photograph again. Fisher et al.'s research found that activated brain systems overlapped for sex drive, romantic love, and attachment but, nevertheless, showed different activity. These authors also note the circulation of oxytocin and vasopressin, with dopamine pathways that elevate the reward regions of the brain. In summary, a neuroscientific explanation is that romantic love affects a number of reward systems of the

brain, such as activity in the dopaminergic pathways. This “stimulate[s] a cascade of reactions” (Fisher et al., 2006b, p. 2177) and elevates sexual arousal and performance.

Fisher et al., (2006b) conclude that romantic love, as they define it (see above), is a primary motivator for humans and is “difficult to control” (p. 2181). Another drive in humans, thirst, is impossible to quell, whereas it is possible to defer romantic love and sex drive, and to develop pathways towards affiliation. The Fisher group of researchers believe that the complex state of romantic love, as they define it, is a motivation towards building and maintaining intimate relationship in the long term.

Other actants: Nanopeptides

According to Jacek Dębiec (2007), in the biological sciences, love has been more difficult to study than fear. The neural networks for fear response have been “well-preserved in the course of evolution” (p. 2580). However, in the 21st century there have been advances in this field of study, by associating affective states, behaviours and attitudes with biological phenomena that are observable using brain imaging. Dębiec reviews the role of nanopeptides – nine amino-acid peptides – in modulating maternal bonding, aggression and fear, in particular oxytocin and vasopressin. These molecules are structured identically apart from one different amino acid (Leucine in Oxytocin and Arginine in Vasopressin) situated in the same place in each structure. Both of these peptide structures are synthesized in the hypothalamus of the brain, stored in the posterior pituitary gland, and circulated from there to specific sites in the nervous system. Both nanopeptides are implicated in courtship and reproductive and birthing responses. A neurochemistry explanation of the important part these peptide circuits play in enduring adult-adult pairing was found in a study of life-long bonding between prairie voles (study also cited in Fisher et al., 2006b). In his discussion of the phenomena of monogamy in mammals, Dębiec widens the scope of complexity of bonding to include ovarian and testicular hormonal involvement. He concludes that there is a critical role for nanopeptides in

mammalian social behaviours and memory consolidation and reconsolidation. Memory consolidation occurs when cascades of molecules are activated to stimulate and modify synapse connections in the brain to form a learned response (p. 2584), something that I will return to in relation to fear memory below.

In more recent writing, Dębiec et al. (2014) have assembled a book that revisits philosophical and neurological viewpoints on the “emotional brain”. Dębiec’s chapter (Dębiec, 2014) points to the current wide interest in affective neuroscience. He notes the progress that has been possible in “unveiling molecular and circuit mechanisms associated with affective processes” (p. 155). Of interest to my research is the neurobiological explanation that fear response occurs in two pathways: an immediate autonomic response that can be activated before an awareness of actual danger is registered; and a second more complex response that is conscious of fear itself.

Fellow writer in this volume, Joseph LeDoux (2014), situates responses that are ‘felt’ in bodies as “motivation, reinforcement, and arousal in the context of survival circuits” (p. 58). He provides useful diagrams to show that language, memory, environmental stimuli, the responses of the Central Nervous System, and body feedback are implicated (and inseparable) in emotional expression. I believe that recognition of these entangled embodied complexities is more useful for my study than a narrower concept of mental states or feelings that come to be named fear, sadness, anger, disgust. I am not proposing that a felt response is not a thing: what I want to promote is curiosity at what bodies do, in response to the world, and how closely bodies (not just brains) are implicated in what, until recently, were spoken about as mental entities.

A fear response

The part of the mammalian brain that detects and predicts risk is in the limbic system, which operates as a collection of collaborative functions. The limbic system includes and connects:

- the hypothalamus, located above the pituitary gland, a very small and significant portion of the brain. It is the link to the nervous system and the endocrine system;
- the amygdala (two almond-shaped amygdalae);
- the thalamus, which is a relay station for sensory information (not smell);
- the hippocampus (also a pair and located in each hemisphere of the brain).

Neuroscientists have found that this system regulates autonomic nervous response and memory (Schiller, 2011). Coordinated fear responses provoke a mammal to attend to cues in the environment in order to predict risk, and avoid or minimise potential exposure to the threat. These responses are reflexive, instinctive and configured in complex and tight networks of neurons. As a learned response, fear is efficient and adaptive, in that it is quickly acquired and persists as a predictive force for future use. Fear is an important warning system but can be affected by traumatic events to the extent that (fear) memory loses its adaptive value. The group of scientists whose work I studied has been looking for ways to understand the trace of fear in the human brain in order to find effective ways to “update” old fear memories with non-fearful information (LeDoux, 2011; LeDoux, 2015; Schiller, 2019; Schiller et al., 2008; Schiller, Monfils, Raio, Johnson, Ledoux, et al., 2010; Schiller & Delgado, 2010)

Daniela Schiller, in conversation with Kim Hill, (“Memory and Fear,” 2013) and in a later presentation (2019) explains that fear memory is not an accurate recording of an event, but one of many versions. On her account, memory is updated each time it is retrieved. When memory is re-activated, it is destabilised. It is in this moment that memory can incorporate new information, thereby changing the dynamic fragments of memory into reconstructed memory. There is a possibility that memory becomes more adapted to circumstance as it incorporates more information over time: neuroscientists call this change reconsolidation (Brunet et al., 2011; Schiller, Monfils, Raio, Johnson, LeDoux, et al., 2010; Schiller & Phelps, 2011). The intensity of fear memory can reduce over time, as it will when the neurons incorporate new information, if that new information tells a person s/he is no longer at risk of harm.

It is possible to strengthen memory intentionally, as one might for an exam, for instance. Memories such as these are retrieved, reactivated, rehearsed, restored, and the connections remain stable. It is worth noting that content of exam learning does not carry the emotional content of traumatic events (although the prospect of the exam itself may produce anxiety). In the case of what is referred to as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the experience of distress remains; one neuroscience explanation is that the memory (connectivity of the neurons) returns when there are “reactivation cues” (Schiller & Phelps, 2011, p. 5) to which mammalian bodies respond in learned ways. Therapy to address PTSD may aim to have persons relive what happened to activate the original fear memory or to suppress or inhibit the memory. LeDoux, who works with Schiller, advocates for a different therapeutic response, one that will work to change the original fear memory through slow processes of retrieval, re-writing and over-writing the old memory (LeDoux, 2011; LeDoux, 2015). One of the effective options for therapy offered by LeDoux involves engagement with the body. He speaks about the success for rape victims who engage in the sport of wrestling, as a mode of therapy. In tandem with LeDoux’s proposal, a recent paper by Schiller (2016) suggests that the body impulse to go running may produce similar beneficial effects on reconsolidating memory to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.

An important contribution by neuroscience to my study of women’s expressions of love in the face of violence, and fear as response, is that neural pathways are adaptive to events – to the extent that persons react quickly to danger ‘without thinking’, as affective performance to stimuli. Accounting for this action is after-thought: that is, explanation comes later (Dębiec et al., 2014; LeDoux, 2014). Schiller’s group proposes that the complexities of the limbic system mean that memory is unstable and will change according to information input. Schiller’s research interests include how effective therapy can contribute to preferred change in brain states (Schiller, 2019; Schiller, Monfils, Raio, Johnson, LeDoux, et al., 2010). In her 2019 presentation, Schiller advocates the use of imagination for memory reconsolidation. This is an intriguing opportunity for extending on

therapy that traverses a person's hopes and dreams. It opens a portal for interviews with a future self, such as a practice that has emerged in narrative therapy called *insider witnessing* (Heath et al., 2017).

Articulations of therapy

In selecting from available therapeutic material, I have chosen to highlight ethical positions and practices that are important to what is at stake in my study. The selected literature begins by situating practice in the contexts of people's lives. It then traverses: early and recent discussion of affect and named embodied felt states; working with women in groups; finding resistance stories when lives have been violated; and, finally, debates about neuro-science influences in current therapeutic practice.

Bringing the world into therapy

It is narrative therapist Michael White's (1995) contention that therapy will contribute to the 'thingification' of persons (p. 43) if the therapist does not attend to the contexts in which people find themselves, including in the therapy room. White's position, in an interview with Lesley Allen called *The Politics of Therapy*, rides the wave of the linguistic turn. Understandably, White prioritises language and culture in how he conceptualises context.

So much of White's generous contribution to therapeutic theory+practice carries the influence of Foucault's extensive body of work. In the Allen interview, White (1995), discusses the effects of dominant cultural structures in therapy, and how these might be subverted. For instance, White critiques the modern phenomena of classification of the (human) body through scientific and psychological language. He proposes that pathologising practices have the effect of marginalising, totalising and objectifying persons in ways that do not take account of the context in which a person's responses are produced. According to White, therapy should enquire into events and the settings in which persons find themselves struggling. Not to undertake a wider discursive search risks the

probability for persons to blame themselves and/or others, and has the effect of reducing a person's repertoire to act. Twenty-five years on from the 1995 interview, ready classification through diagnostic language has become a phenomenon so ubiquitous that I believe counsellors must learn to traverse these territories. What remains useful in White's critique is his passion for therapy that does not perpetuate hierarchies of generalised knowledge(power), opting instead for co-authoring the local specificities of events in persons' lives, and the meaning they ascribe to these events. White also believes that therapists must address injustice, including the unjust outcome perpetrated by therapists who misrecognise acts of protest and refusal for what they signify, that is: to find continuities of hope that things might be different and discontinuities that are witnessed in a person's "refusal to visit on others the abuses that have been visited on them" (White, 1995, p. 7). To investigate White's point about context, I read research by Gayatri Shah et al. (2016). The authors interviewed six British psychotherapists to find out how they work with women to address the effects of violence perpetrated by intimate partners. Although Shah et al. asked the participant psychotherapists for their views on gender and societal influences in how violence was produced in women's lives, only one participant paid attention to sociopolitical contexts. It is clear that the authors hold different views from their participant group, as this concluding statement shows:

The study highlights that as therapists, when we fail to recognize the relationship between the outside world and our clients, we risk giving women too much responsibility for the lives they live. Services, policymakers, and service commissioners need to carefully consider this when formulating targets for client outcomes. (p. 104)

The authors propose that women and men need therapy that "holds a systemic understanding" of women's need for safety, and men's confusion about their violence (p. 104). They also advocate for therapy that explores love, sex and intimacy.

Movement towards discernment

When people break their lives from the very negative stories of their identity, and when they have the opportunity to stand in a different territory of their life, they start interpreting their experiences of abuse as exploitation, as tyranny, as torture, as violence. (White, 1995, p. 84)

In an interview entitled *Naming abuse and breaking from its effects*, Michael White and Christopher McLean (1995) discuss the possibilities in therapy for people to name abuse and break from its effects. This interview addressed affective states and the usefulness of inviting persons to take an active role in coming to (new) understandings of the potentialities of their emergent expressions of outrage, joy, despair. White advocated specificity as a way to (re)build “a capacity to discern, in one’s life, actions that are of a loving nature from actions that are abusive or exploitative” (p. 89). White and McLean delve into the complexities of the response of ‘anger’. White questions the ease with which the contexts that produce anger are obscured and raises the possibility of recasting women’s ‘anger’ as outrage and passion for justice (p. 91).

All of this psychologising of personal experience... are invariably pathologising of the lives of those people who have been subject to abuse, and, in so doing, divert attention from the politics of the situation. As well, so many of the interpretations of this sort discriminate against women’s ways of being in the world and champion dominant men’s ways of being in the world. (p. 92).

In White’s work with women who had lived through recurring histories of abusive relationship, he found that interpretations of women’s ‘motives’ for entering into these partner relationships had the double effect of women taking responsibility for violence perpetrated by someone else, and of persevering in relationship with this person. White believed that the difficulty for women of discerning what are exploitative and controlling actions from those that are loving, at the outset, rendered women vulnerable to confusion *and* ongoing violence. After all, the discursive (and material) context for partner and family relationships is the myth of the “safe haven” of home.

White (1995) described his therapeutic practice of fostering discernment, beginning with a thorough-going shared interest in the real effects of the abuse

at a day-to-day level that a woman may be objecting to, alongside the ways she may have acted to care for herself (and others). Juxtaposing these plot lines means a woman can state a position more clearly on what she judges to be loving and what she sees to be abusive. The fog begins to lift.

An outcome of White's practice with women who were subject to violence was women's determination to step out from the isolating effects of what they had thought to be private hell. White reports to McLean that he saw women begin to "make it their business to challenge abusive practices that have often been carried across generations in their families... and provides [both men and women] with direction in the furthering of this work" (White, 1995, p. 96). These movements across timespace constitute *migrations of identity*, according to White. The migration of identity journey can be mapped visually across time to show the ups and downs of adjustment, in movement across a period of ambiguity and confusion, towards reincorporation of new and preferred identity. One practitioner, who took up the challenge to address the problems surrounding expressions of anger in women's lives, is Julie Sach. In a series of group meetings with women about the meanings of their expressions of anger, Sach (2006) found that a woman's anger may be "a form of response to what is being disrespected or disallowed in her current life. Her anger may represent what she is not prepared to give up and consequently what it is that she cherishes, believes in and hopes for"(p. 34). Both White and Sach found that a history of "past hurts" evoke/provoke responses in women they met with in their practice. Both asked what these responses were, and what these steps are about; what is precious to them that women are trying to safeguard at the time? This double-storying practice throws doubt on the idea that the women were passive recipients of the violence they were subjected to, and signals the beginning of a storyline in which they were acting in accordance with what they value. An outcome of Sach's group meetings with women were the ways women changed their repertoire of expressions of outrage, preferring ways in which they themselves were not participating in violent action.

Women meeting in group settings

Narrative and other collaborative therapies have a history of commitment to finding and extending communities of care with the people they engage with. The following selected literature researched therapeutic practices with women in group settings. I include these accounts because they are narratives of relational practice that goes beyond one-to-one engagements, and diffract across timespace with my research preference for meeting my participants in small groups.

Each group practice described in these participatory research projects began with meeting a woman by herself before she joined the group (Crocket et al., 2009; Feinsilver et al., 2007; Levin, 2007). All three studies began the first meeting with this kind of question: *What do you think is important for us to know about you and your life experiences?* The intention is to establish the therapist as a enquirer, someone whose skills in participation are primarily to produce the conditions for dialogical exchange; something that persons do *with* each other as distinct from a unidirectional interrogation mode. In the Crocket et al. study, my colleague, Rachel McKenna, and I had previously followed a prescriptive checklist modelled on the Duluth Power and Control Wheel for “getting to know” women’s experiences of violence and control in their partnering with men, but we found that these “did not invite new knowledge forward” (p. 34). Hence, the turn towards conversation that was more open to whatever a woman wanted to say. From the first meeting, we were interested to know about the smallest actions that might have significance for women who were taking the step of attending the group programme. One of the opening lines of enquiry we asked was about the actions a woman may have taken towards safety, in mo(ve)ments that signify turning points.

In each of these studies, the participant-researchers took their time. Levin proposes that when people (women, in this case) are repeatedly not heard or respected by others, “they become disillusioned and disconnected from their own abilities to act” (2007, p. 122), and may, therefore, stay with partners who subject them to violence. She believes firmly that therapists who adopt an

ongoingly curious, respectful, learner position contribute to generative conversations. She advocates a “not-knowing” approach (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) that is open to hope, connection and the animation of *knowing together in therapy* from a choir of voices inside and outside the therapy room. The women in Levin’s (2007) study helped the therapist-researchers to understand that:

[t]herapists fail to hear their clients when they try to understand them and their problems too concretely (as factual, statistical, or diagnostic representations), too enthusiastically, too expertly, or too quickly. (p. 121)

Another practice position in the first meeting with each woman was the listening stance of a second facilitator in two of these group practices (Crocket et al., 2009; Feinsilver et al., 2007). One therapist facilitated the first part of the conversation as her colleague(s) listened. The talking pair would then pause to hear reflections from the listeners. These conversations provoked unexpected trajectories for further conversation and interest, an outcome that produced considerable surprise for the women. When the women met as a group, the therapist-facilitators held an ethos of meeting “as if for the first time” (Feinsilver, p. 277), so as to circumvent the risk of assuming too much from the meeting with her in her home. Of relevance to my study is the importance for therapy of “making room for and allowing ample time for each voice...[and] inviting the women’s humor, strengths, and resiliencies [to heighten] their sense of agency” (Feinsilver et al., 2007, p. 282). A sense of community belonging was generated through the acknowledgement the women offered each other. Each of these studies shows therapeutic value to the women who joined the groups. They wanted therapists to know that they valued being listened to, believed, feeling safe, and accepted without judgement. By making community with each other they established “a sense of freedom from the past and hope for the future” (p. 285).

Shaping therapeutic stories of resistance to violence

The selected literature in this section addresses violence against women and women’s responses to that violence.

Breaking silence: wāhine Māori speak

Telling is (an act of) resistance to the original violation and tactics of silencing that may or may not have been made explicit by a perpetrator. Hayley Marama Cavino's (*He Rau Murimuri Aroha: Wāhine Māori Insights into Historical Trauma and Healing*, 2019) research with mana wāhine unearthed a long genealogy of resistance to and disruption of silence along maternal lines. For Cavino, it is important to recognise the whakapapa or genealogy of women who have led the way in opposing violence, to guard against a loss of that memory (p. 55). Cavino proposes an ethical stance that: sees relationship as central (p. 56); re-members ancestors' wisdom; speaks out to "make gender oppression visible" (p. 55); seeks change that will "reconnect and transform the belonging of those within the whānau that have been most affected" (p. 55); understands the importance of time – as opportunity and interconnectedness for "never-ending beginnings" (p. 55) and that past-present-future are interwoven; and, recognises courage, love and belonging with others in addressing violence (pp. 56-58). Cavino locates her research in community and history. This research embodies stories that address gendered violence and the consequent impacts on iwi/hapū/whānau (tribal and family groups), always in relation to colonisation and past violations that continue to influence the lives of wāhine Māori. My interests in this short piece of writing are two-fold: Cavino's work is for the lives of women; and highlights imagination, change, courage, honesty, modesty, celebration, love, belonging, and whānau. As with Cavino's findings, Wilson et al.'s, (2016) research holds a compelling sense of wāhine Māori love/aroha for their children and other women. These researchers caution against standardised safety plans. They propose finding strategies that are unique to women's contexts and (re)build on existing strengths and resilience: they believe it is unhelpful to focus on deficits. Wilson et al. also take from their participants' narratives the importance of attending to physical, cultural and spiritual knowledges. They believe one way for Māori women to rebuild confidence and sense of safety is to physically return to tribal lands as a way to extend and materialise their sense of place (home).

Protest/refusal/acts of resistance

Allan Wade (1997, 2007) and Michael White (2004) both advocate therapeutic approaches to people's experience of oppression that call on persons' acts of resistance. Wade's use of the word *small* in his 1997 title, *Small acts of living*, is both literal and ironic. Many acts of resistance to violence are nearly imperceptible movements of eyes, mouth, hands; these acts are subversive modifications of the conditions of everyday life that deliberately do not escalate danger. That said, any act of resistance to violence cannot be said to be small: its significance is profound "regardless of what it may appear to have accomplished" (Wade, 1997, p. 32).

Wade has developed and expanded his early work into Response-Based Practices (2007), an approach that has become widely known and adopted in various culturally safe and inventive ways (Brown, 2013; Donovan et al., 2019; Richardson/Kinewesquao et al., 2017; Salter, 2018; Todd & Wade, 2003; Yuen, 2007). The central assumption of Response-Based Practices is that persons are never accomplices to oppression, tyranny and violence. Rather, they resist in ways that are overt and/or covert. According to Wade, a person's affective performances, such as despair and fear, are "direct comprehension of the conditions that oppress" (Wade, 2007, p. 64) emanating from which are acts of resistance that are prudent, inventive and determined. Besides knowing the conditions that oppress, persons calibrate their resistance in ways that express indignation and seek justice. Sometimes, as Wade points out, it may be dangerous and impractical to protest overtly, so "small acts of living" are called for (Wade, 1997). Wade proposes that *any* act through which a person "attempts to expose, withstand, repel, stop, prevent, abstain from, strive against, impede, refuse to comply with, or oppose... may be understood as a form of resistance" (Wade, 1997, p. 25). As well as past and current strategies of resistance, Wade believes that resistance to oppression comes in the form of imagined futures, futures that may be radically different from the oppression a person is living under.

Wade (1997, 2007) claims that acts of resistance continue in the wake of violence and subsequent suppression of dissent by the perpetrator, although this kind of situational knowledge can be exhausting (2007, p. 65). Wade comments on acts of resistance that appear to be self-destructive. He does not believe in romanticising the pain of acts of resistance that are potentially self-harming, nor does he underestimate the meaning a person may subscribe to such action. In his accounts of (re)building stories of resistance, Wade shapes conversations with people that resurrect the specificities of their tactical awareness. Wade assembles the detailed ways that persons protect their dignity, conceal thoughts and intentions, imagine possibilities, and openly act to defy what is being asked of them, even if these acts of resistance do not stop the violence.

A study into response-based practices with indigenous Canadian peoples (Richardson/Kinewesquao et al., 2017) draws attention to the violent actions of perpetrators whilst, simultaneously, eliciting the responses of those the perpetrators have harmed, and exploring prospects for recovery. Richardson/Kinewesquao et al. begin with twin questions: “who is doing what to whom?” and “how is the victim responding?” (p. 241). The activism work described by Richardson/Kinewesquao et al seeks details of the structural and domestic conditions in which violence is produced. The authors are intent on unearthing everyday acts of resistance on the assumption that there is always resistance to oppression.

A woman walks down the road wearing two different shoes on her feet. It turns out that the man she lives with takes one shoe from each pair of her shoes and puts them in his car before he leaves for work. This is an isolation tactic designed to keep her at home. She wears an odd pair, and leaves the house. (A re-told story from Richardson/Kinewesquao et al., 2017, pp. 241-242)

These authors take the view that acts of resistance may be mis-recognised – seen to be “symptom or erratic behavior” (p. 242) – and may not stop the violence from happening. The authors’ project of finding safety for women depends on dismantling the operations of oppression, calling perpetrators to account, careful use of language so as not to minimise violence, and celebrating resistance.

Lessons from Response-Based Practices include these: when a person acts to resist violence – as s/he always does – these acts are on a spectrum from actions that are hard to discern to more overt and noticeable actions; when a story of resistance emerges into articulation, violence becomes more visible and, therefore, it becomes increasingly possible to call perpetrators to account; eliciting the specificities of a person’s active response to violence expands the knowledge of professionals; and as therapists work with persons to (re)build a story of resistance, they can more readily recognise that there is violence to be resisted.

Acts of acknowledgement

Michael White’s (2004) transcribed presentation to a gathering in Palestine addresses itself to the restoration of what he calls a “sense of myself” (p. 46) by finding narratives of resistance to recurring trauma. White begins his therapeutic engagement with people by inviting them to tell him whatever they want to share about the trauma they have lived through. White simultaneously listens for “signs of what the person has continued to give value to in life despite all that they have been through, and for any expressions that might provide some hint of the person’s *response* to trauma” (p. 48). According to White, it is likely that people who live through ongoing oppression will face disqualification, ridicule and diminishment of what they give value to *and* how they respond to violations of what matters to them. They protect and may keep secret those aspects of life that are precious. Over time, this protective mechanism becomes familiar. In White’s view, the work of therapy in relation to lives violated is to hear what persons want to say about the harm that has been perpetrated, *and* to actively listen for the trace of what is valued, so as to substantiate story-lines of preferred identity. White’s intention in seeking the double story is that what persons give value to in life, provides purpose, meaning, and ideas for how to proceed. As White is hearing the stories of tragic events in a person’s life, he takes note of where in their accounts there may be an expression of feeling, or “affective tone” (p. 49).

Threaded through White's entire body of writing is his interest in acknowledging what matters to people, and how these continuities of hope may have been inspired (1995, 2000). Unearthing continuities of determination in persons' lives begins in the initial engagement and extends into a practice of outsider witnessing (1997, 2000, 2004, 2007) in which a wider audience is invited to give testimony to the commitments, purposes, visions and aspirations that have sustained a person through the dark hours of their lives. Witnessing conversations, where listening and speaking are taken in turns was the initiating practice I described in Chapter 1, and is a variation of the reflective conversations in Feinsilver et al.'s (2007) initial conversations. The intentions in both these bodies of therapeutic work are to *meet* a person and her story with interest and attention; to stay close to her language/story; to recognise what she values; and to say aloud how her narrative resonates with and shifts the understandings, thoughts and future actions of listeners. These mo(ve)ments are two-way: speakers and listeners become listeners and speakers; and what emerges are possibilities for making significant contributions to the lives of others; and to materialise change in some way.

Crossing borders

Activist practitioners and writers who situate their work in post-structural philosophy believe that therapy is a sociopolitical participation with people in which therapists are called on to address privilege and power differentials in their work (Allen, 2012). Nidya Ramirez and Gerald Monk write about Ramirez's narratively informed practice with women escaping violent family and partnership relationships, across the Mexican borders into southern states of America (Ramirez & Monk, 2017). Ramirez centres her therapeutic work on what is absent but implicit in the women's stories, giving weight to the material and cultural contexts for their situations. From her work with mainly Spanish-speaking women, Ramirez articulates the multiple political and economic limitations on the women's lives in the homelands they have left and the places they migrate to. She reminds the reader of the portrayal of undocumented

immigrants as “dysfunctional, dangerous, and inferior” (p. 28). Four years on from publication, this rhetoric persists in the US about certain immigrants, deliberately exacerbated rather than addressed at the level of government influence. What emerges in the precarious contexts that undocumented migrant women inhabit is the metaphor of the “thin edge of barbed wire”, adopted from Chicana feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa (Barad, 2014, also engages with Anzaldúa about crossing borderlands). In Ramirez’s therapeutic engagement, the thin edge of barbed wire signifies the violations of life that have produced historical suffering for these women, and currently leave them fearful and isolated, without community support and resources.

The lucid theoretical articulation of Ramirez’s therapeutic positions align well with the Foucauldian positions I adopt for my study. Ramirez and Monk (2017) write about how power is care-fully exercised in therapeutic work to resurrect stories of courage, cultural pride, personal agency, resilience and persistence in the face of multiple obstacles. In her work with women to find these storylines, Ramirez deciphers both privileged and subjugated narratives. These alternative accounts validate the women’s actions to challenge oppression without erasing the complexities of their experience. Ramirez does not resort to pathologising or disqualifying the expression of guilt that one woman, Silva, speaks about to Ramirez. Instead, Ramirez finds out about the contexts in which guilt is produced in Silvia’s life in relation to her children who remain in Mexico, her current risk of deportation, and the difficulty of maintaining financial support for her mother and children. Silvia and Ramirez unearth a story of continuing communication with her children across geographical distance, and connect her to her opposition to sexual and domestic violence, a position that sustains a different life for Silvia, despite continuing occupation in the borderlands of her circumstances as an undocumented immigrant woman.

Counsellors’ response-abilities

The last word in this subsection goes to Mary Allen’s (2012) examination of women’s transitions out of violent partner relationships. In the final two

chapters of her book, Allen gives a theoretical rather than practice view of narratively informed therapy. She makes the point that for women (and their children) finding safety is not a one-off event (p. 119). Women may carefully calibrate their responses to social service practitioners when they know that social service involvement may lead to more violence at home. But, according to Allen, when professionals take a women's situation seriously, when they make information available, when they recognise women's active strategic resistance to violence, when they know the territory of this work, a robust long-term safety can be negotiated for, and women (safely) leave.

The affective turn

Therapists and therapy researchers have become interested in a phenomena that is known as *The Affective Turn* (Denborough, 2019; Monk & Zamani, 2019; Wetherall, 2015; Zimmerman, 2017). At first glance, (re)new(ed) interest in affect may seem odd for a professional field that asks the question, *How do you feel?* and to whom people turn "to talk about their feelings". It all depends on what we are talking about. When I use the word *affect*, I am not using the word interchangeably with the word *emotion*. The meaning I attribute to emotion is the qualified, recognisable and articulable 'felt' point that emerges from the whole potentiality of affect. I follow Massumi (2002) in saying that affect is the continuous vibration of the world, and e-motion is the registered impulse of the body as resonating vessel, in feedback loop with the world (pp. 25-30).

Much of my thinking about human and nonhuman responding to the world-in-its-becoming, has been influenced by Massumi's earlier rather than later writing (2002) and Jane Bennett's (2010) interest in the affecting performance of human+nonhuman ensembles. Neither Massumi nor Bennett limits their philosophical positions on affect to human bodies. Massumi sees affect as enlivening of all matter and being: "the edge of virtual where it leaks into the actual... that seeping edge is where potential, actually, is found" (p. 43). For Bennett all bodies are kin; and actants can never be said to act alone. Further, in

any *ad hoc* arrangement of bodies, (emergent) properties are not evenly distributed in what they can make happen. Ruth Leys (2017), another writer in this field, critiques the body-mind split that is advanced by affect theorists (including Massumi) who, she believes, go too far in the direction of calling habitual movement of bodies anti-intentional. One example Leys gives is of skilled pianists who are no longer aware of the innumerable movements of their fingers but who, nevertheless, are intentional in their performance. According to Leys, an anti-intentional theory of affect relies on a false dichotomy that (continually) separates meaning from physical effects/expressions in bodies. Leys has more interest in Jane Bennett's (2010) political stance *and* vision of "an affect not specific to human bodies" (p. xii) than in an affect theory that discards ideas, debate and intention in favour of materiality: that is, Leys does not align herself with that kind of divide. Margaret Wetherall (2015) also sees affect as the "very complicated and mostly seamless feedbacks [that] occur between accounts, interpretations, body states, further interpretations, further body states" (p. 152). She advocates for affective-discursive practices that have directionality, context and meaning. For Wetherall, discrete moments of response are linked in chains of meaning, and mobilise bodies in intricate (distributed) ways. Wetherall does not want affect to end up being "the dominant actor" (p. 159) directing her attention instead to affective practices, to:

... a moment of recruitment, articulation or enlistment when many complicated flows across bodies, subjectivities, relations, histories and contexts entangle and intertwine together to form just this affective moment, episode or atmosphere with its particular possible classifications. (p. 160)

Bennett's (2010) view coincides with Wetherall's and Leys's interest in intention. Bennett's vision is for a democracy in which a public can include nonhuman actants, although she is also saying that not all actants in a given assemblage are all-ways participants to the same degree of vitality. Hence, an ethico-political position is called for that can account for discursive-affective practices and material phenomena. As Barad (2007) puts it, "the forces at work in materialization of bodies are not only social, and the bodies produced are not only human" (pp. 33-34).

Wetherall (2015) discusses the history of psychological interest in emotional states, and critiques the limits of ideas that have informed humanities practices for decades. Leys (2017) also questions the validity of basic emotions and affect programmes, as they are called. She rejects the idea of discrete emotions that have corresponding facial expressions. Her interest is in how an emphasis on language and meaning has neglected the materiality of bodies, and she embraces biology in this debate. So-called *affect programmes* identify core emotions, which are said to be universal and are natural kinds: anger, joy, surprise, fear, sadness and disgust. These six emotional states have been expanded to include trust and anticipation, and elaborated into coloured wheel form that therapists/life coaches can use in practice (see for example, Chadha, 2020; Karimova, 2020). The emphasis in these resources is on simplifying a vast emotional range of human responses. This kind of categorisation is literally presented in linear formation. Karimova presents the following example:

unpalatable object⇒poison⇒disgust⇒vomit⇒eject poison

An immediate problem with Karimova's adaptation is that it places cognitive appraisals ahead of emotional responses, which then evoke behavioural reactions, arriving last at the functional directive. My reading of neuroscience literature does not put the cognitive appraisal at the second place in this sequence, and may not register the "subjective reaction"/emotion before the body uses a vomit mechanism to eject the poison. In other words, these "tools" for self-awareness to "pinpoint an exact emotion" (Karimova) run the risk of being prescriptive from false premises, no matter how carefully a therapist uses them. What may be helpful, though, is the intention of their writers that people attend to their body states, reach for language to describe them, and become curious about what they signify.

Narrative therapy and neuroscience influences

David Denborough (2019) writes a lengthy article in which he proposes that narrative approaches to therapy can be understood as affective practice (he adopts Wetherall's term). Denborough does not lose sight of intention and

context in his script, drawing on considerable material from Michael White's narrative practice and interviews. In his article, Denborough cites affect theorists (including Leys and Wetherall), and narrative practitioners whose therapy is shaped by neuroscience (for example, Zimmerman, Beaudoin, who follow Daniel Siegel). Denborough's quest is to show that narrative therapy is (emotionally) moving of people's lives, including the way a therapeutic engagement affects therapists' lives. One contribution Denborough makes is to remind the reader that White resisted the dividing practice of elevating expressions of emotion above other expressions of life (p. 21). White's position – given in his own words in Denborough's article – is that it is important not to split emotion from meaning and action, and that there is movement (action) and meaning in any felt intensity. The selected excerpts do not mention bodies, so the emphasis, in the early part of the paper, is on what words do, and how important it is to attend to cultural and political contexts.

Other writers have an interest in how human bodies respond, and how neuroscience can inform therapy (Beaudoin & Zimmerman, 2011; Monk & Zamani, 2019; Zimmerman, 2017). Zimmerman clearly states that he privileges emotion in his work, and he sees emotion as “bodily based emotional (chemical) reactions” (2017, p. 14). He also makes the point that “*it's not just discourse*” (p. 14) nailing his colours to the mast, with emphasis. Zimmerman and Beaudoin both see the benefit of what they call affective re-experiencing in their work. In this practice, the idea is to follow a person's embodied experience (Zimmerman's influences in this practice are LeDoux and Siegel, 2017, pp. 15-17). Zimmerman uses his accumulated knowledge of brain anatomy and systems to explain how he has developed his neuro-narratively informed practice, and poses the following question: “Is ‘neuro’ currently establishing a hegemony over our field?” a question that echoes with concerns raised by Denborough (2019), Jill Freedman (2019), and Tom Strong (2019). Freedman's concerns are that brain knowledges may distract from wider relational considerations. Strong believes that neuroscience offers therapists new concepts and bodies of knowledge for their work but does not align himself with the idea that neuro-mechanisms *cause* psychopathology. Strong is suspicious of the turn back towards privileging an

inner focus on neuro-cognitive functioning (p. 65), a move that goes against narrative and other post-structural therapies' attention to social contexts for the problems that people struggle with. Strong's question about what neuroscience offers and what it constrains is a worthwhile one to consider. Karen Young (2019) writing in the same issue deftly straddles the new with established approaches to therapy. She advocates the invitational approach of questions that are novel and of interest to people (p. 56). Zimmerman (2017) concludes his paper by reminding the reader that therapists must ask questions rather than assume or interpret:

Only clients can say if these ideas are being used in a way that continues to privilege their own experience. No interpretations or assumptions about knowing how they are really feeling are being made; as is usually the case in narrative therapy, it is about asking questions and creating experiences to facilitate their own knowing. (p. 24)

Michael White was an advocate for the kind of discovery Zimmerman is advancing and he clearly articulated this position in an interview with Michael Hoyt and Jeff Zimmerman in 1998 (White, 2000). Two examples follow of White's caution against interpreting or assuming too. The first is a description White gives of his own practice of considering how he might "change some aspect of my contribution to a therapeutic conversation if I had the opportunity to start all over again" (White, 2007, p. 7). The second is a philosophical position that White lived out:

[T]here is nothing about narrative practices that exempts us from the reproduction of power relations, and one that encourages us to embrace a responsibility to structure into our work processes that might be identifying of these relations of power, and that might contribute to the monitoring of the real effects of these power relations on the lives of the persons who consult us – and, as well, on our own lives and work... It is this scrutiny of our work that makes it possible for us to assume an ethical responsibility for the real effects of this work in the constitution of life. (White, 1997, pp. 232-233)

Women who consult counsellors when their lives and bodies have been subjected to violence rely on counsellors to take up responsibility not to replicate the dominating and coercive controls they have been subjected to, whilst finding ways to negotiate with women for their safety and freedom.

White also took an interest in body expression (1995). In a discussion with Ken Stewart about discourses of psychotic experience, White takes a firm stance against the imposition of medical language of psychiatric diagnoses. Later in the Stewart interview, White deconstructs his hard line on professional language by saying that “we always have labels of one sort or another” (p. 119) White’s concession that we always have some kind of label aligns with Beaudoin’s (Lainson, 2019) intentions to use knowledge strategically with people in non-pathologising ways. Beaudoin speaks about the helpfulness of having a neuroscience explanation of memory, and being watchful of “affect-infused experiences” (p. 75). In her therapeutic engagements, Beaudoin sometimes offers explanation from a neuro-biological perspective, but only when persons have an interest in knowing what these might be. The tone of Lainson’s interview with Beaudoin is thoughtful and inclusive, and centred on Beaudoin’s therapy work, not on brain theories. In speaking about her approaches to people suffering the effects of trauma, Beaudoin’s approach is sometimes to reactivate (without re-traumatising) a memory in order to “articulate a more coherent account of the intensely painful experience” (p. 77). This therapeutic work coincides with the proposals of Schiller and her neuroscience research (Schiller, 2011; Schiller, Monfils, Raio, Johnson, Ledoux, et al., 2010; Schiller & Delgado, 2010) on reconsolidation of memory – an updating of the version of a memory can change its affect.

Gerald Monk and Navid Zamani (2019) enter this discussion on the affective turn in their review of recent literature. They raise concerns about the disembodied practices of therapists whose primary interest is in the *text* of what people say; that is, away from body experiences. They advance the proposition that poststructurally-informed therapies prioritise language/culture over materiality, perhaps to the detriment of their practice. Monk and Zamani agree with Zimmerman when he argues for purposefully attending to emotions. The authors claim that we don’t talk or write about emotions and “we don’t take care to make sure they are present in the room with us” (p. 6). Monk and Zamani’s reading of the selected literature theorises affect as embodied human emotion, although some of the writers they cite go well beyond this concept to encompass the “as

yet unthought out and unenacted” (Massumi, 2002, p. 134) ever present. Therefore, it is not about whether “emotions, affect or feelings” are present in the room. They are. It is a matter of first noticing, as Beaudoin proposes above. Another practitioner who notices and responds in ethical and effective ways to the affecting performance in a therapeutic engagement is Alan Jenkins. Jenkins describes his work with fathers during a conference presentation with minimal reference to the brain (Jenkins, 2017). Rather, he threads the stories of affecting and affective performance – his own and other men’s – into fascinating crisscrossing stories of men’s lives and his interest in what is important to them. Threaded through these enquiries are Jenkins’ accounts of moments of *affective attunement*, which he and another man know are mutually important (at 21’20” for instance). Jenkins speaks about the potentialities of feeling states that register in his body, as for example, when he tells the audience of the “boom that hits me, a slight panic” that comes over him when a man expresses a strong distaste for having to meet yet “another f**king head-shrink”. In one slide, Jenkins brings affect and politics into entanglement, again using storytelling and theorising effortlessly. Without resorting to language that might distance his audience, Jenkins connects the conference participants to his work and his own responses, including in the way his body is present. There is a generativity and humour in Jenkins’ presentation that enlivens (affects) the possibilities for others’ practice in their shared field of endeavour.

Some concluding comments

In 2017, I referenced a large deciduous tree in an article I wrote to acknowledge the lives of three members of my family who had died within a two-year period (Snowdon, 2017). I find it surprisingly resonant to read again the Coda of that piece of writing. I include it here to signify the appreciation I have of all the work of researchers and therapists who have preceded me into this study. Their work informs the ongoing questions of research and therapy, inspires a call for justice, and evokes the patience of trees when we are not sure of where it might be possible to go next.

The large deciduous tree outside the room my father once occupied is springing to life again, five years on from the day we accompanied his body along the corridors towards the waiting hearse. The same tree kept sentinel when we trod the same corridors with my mother in early December 2014, in the company of many of the same people – their community and ours in these late chapters of their lives. And yet, the tree is not the same. Its branches stretch a little further into a cloud-studded sky; no doubt its roots have found their way a little further into the soil beneath the building; its girth is imperceptibly wider.

Taking an adventuring spirit into therapeutic work – as my parents did in the enterprises of their lives – I take inspiration from the steadfast determination of the tree to both stand ground and reach beyond its past. The call to us, as therapists, is to challenge and work beyond settled orthodoxy in our practice and what informs that practice (White, 2000a, 2000b; White, 1995). And to find, with people who consult us, a loving responsiveness to the human and non-human world in which we are embraced. (Snowdon, 2017, p. 237)

Chapter 4

Research design

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in two phases: the first were meetings with women who have lived through violence in their heterosexual partner relationships and hold a story of continuing love for their male partners. The second phase involved me in meeting with a group of counselling colleagues to discuss the dilemma of working with women who say they still love a man following violence in the partner relationship, whilst holding an ethical position for her safety.

Ethical process

Prior to recruiting, and meeting with participants, I gained ethical approval for my research from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato. My ethics application was, of necessity, a wordy document. Because my field of research is with human participants within the fraught territory of violence between intimate partners, I took care to thoroughly lay out the ethical practices I would undertake as a researcher. In the ethics application, I provided a history of my professional experience as a family therapist and group facilitator, and my commitment to attend to cultural diversity. I nominated a cultural consultant to support the research. I wrote about how I would draw on those years of work to produce the conditions for confidentiality amongst group members. I also explained in my ethics application my position on the limits on confidentiality that apply when there is serious danger in the immediate or foreseeable future to the participant or others”, that I would seek to do this in consultation with the participant, and in consultation with my supervisors (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020, guidelines 6.2.c; 6.2.d). Also in the interests of women’s safety, I first made a commitment to undertake this research with women who were no longer living with the

intimate partner who had subjected them to abuse. To address the potential harm to participants that might arise in the group interviews, I undertook to be watchful and responsive in the moment-by-moment interactions of the research conversations, to meet regularly and be accountable to my academic supervisors, and to seek extra meetings for consultation if difficult situations arose.

As an ethical commitment not to coerce women into joining the research, I made a commitment to spend adequate time in my first meeting with each participant to gain informed consent for her participation. I undertook to talk through the ways I would safeguard her privacy and anonymity in the thesis – for example, though use of a pseudonym that she herself would choose – and to introduce her to the interview schedule. I outlined my intention to invite every participant to check and amend each transcript of her group conversation, and to be clear with each participant the timeframe for the right to withdraw any of her contributions. I was clear about the limits on access (that participants not copy or circulate transcripts), and my commitment to keep these materials secure.

I informed the ethics committee of the time commitment I was asking from prospective participants. I wrote into the ethics application the probable content of the interviews, including my interest in knowing what experiences the women had had in counselling. In wanting to research their accounts of therapy, I planned to ask women participants not to identify their counsellors to me; rather, to describe therapeutic practices they had found useful or not so useful.

In my ethics application, I made careful plans for where I would place my invitation-to-join-a-research-project posters (Appendix H), advertising that was extended, following a further ethics application, to leaflets for distribution in medical centres (Appendix I). I informed the ethics committee that I would explain to participants the ways I would eventually present and publish the research. I attended to conflicts of interest, and what my professional association calls “multiple relationships” (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020, section 5.11). This point in my ethics application applied particularly within the small community of counselling colleagues to which I belong: I made a

commitment to take care to recruit counsellors to the counsellor group with whom I have neither a supervision relationship, ongoing friendship, or close collegial relationship. Finally, I undertook in my ethics application to provide a procedure for resolution of disputes, should they arise.

Phase One

Women's groups

I interviewed seventeen women in one-to-one introductory meetings. These meetings were primarily to establish an ethic of whakawhanaungatanga – kinship and reciprocity (Te Wiata & Crocket, 2011) for the work of this study. On the matter of informed consent, there is potential for partial understanding. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) point out that:

Your account of your aims and methods, and the way you present yourself in terms of multiple aspects of identity and social location, will be critical in negotiating the engagement of your participants, and in how they respond to you... Even if you conscientiously offer information, you cannot be sure of what people think they are consenting to. (p. 157)

I was care-full, in my first meetings with women, to spend as much time as they deemed was necessary to come to as clear an understanding as we could reach about what the research commitment would be, how and where the group interviews with other women would be held, how long those interviews would be and what I would do with the recordings and transcripts. In tandem with an ethic of partnership, I had a purpose in finding out whether each woman was living separate from her partner (an ethical position for safety, Appendix B), and to determine her willingness to engage with the research topic. The changed circumstances for seven of the initial seventeen women were such that my eventual group meetings were with ten of the seventeen: two groups of three and two groups of two.

Finding each other

My initial proposal was to find and meet with groups of women as they started out in adult life; that is, in the early 20s age group. My plan was to negotiate with the manager of health services in local tertiary education institutions to put a poster in the waiting room that outlined the research topic and how to contact me (Appendix H). In a later move, I would provide leaflets (Appendix I) to medical and counselling practitioners so they could mention the research if they saw a good fit between a woman's previous partner situation and the research topic. The leaflets and posters invited prospective participants to contact me by phone or email. Upon completion of my ethics application and approval, and confirmation, I followed through with the above plans. My carefully thought through and negotiated plans for recruiting younger women did not yield the number of participants I sought.

What dis-joint/crossroads had the study arrived at? Was it now (im)possible to proceed as planned? My careful plan (design) for recruitment did not hold. At this point, I looked to what was excluded in the initial cut (Barad, 2014): that is, women who are older may want to join a research group, and may be invited through institutions other than tertiary learning centres. Following consent to amend my ethical proposal, I took posters and flyers to medical surgeries and counselling agencies, within and beyond the city limits. An opening-up to come.

Counselling colleagues connected to agencies called 'domestic violence service providers' in New Zealand introduced me to women who wanted to join the research groups, and the study regained momentum.

Introductory meetings

The introductory meetings were a negotiation of meeting and meaning. I had in mind that this initial meeting would be the opportunity for each participant to find a relational footing for future talk that relies on the trustworthiness of my ethical stance as a researcher. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) rightly attribute to the researcher the responsibility to understand the exercise of power in the

researcher/participant relationship, and to act ethically and responsively in all aspects of the generation of data. From the very start, I was not a detached observer or informer, but a contributor who shaped and was shaped by what was said in each conversation (Gehart, Tarragona, & Bava, 2007).

I enquired of each woman about how long she had been separated from the relationship in which violence took place. I wanted to know how possible it would be for her to reflect back on those experiences with minimal chance of re-traumatisation (White, 1995). I also asked each woman whether she had been to counselling or attended a group programme with other women.

I wanted to establish with each woman as firm a commitment as possible to attend the three group meetings I had planned, and to talk about her interest in writing any thoughts and stories that emerge from the conversations with other women. I gave each woman a handcrafted notebook to write in, as a marker of significance of her participation – her gift of time and stories – and the value I place on anything she might say and write for the research. This was given at the first meeting of each group. Four of the participants made use of these writing materials for research purposes.

I was mindful of the possibility that the content of the group conversations might activate unwanted disturbances – questions or memories – for the participants. I negotiated with each woman that either she or I would notice any troubling response or memory that might surface in the group interviews. I offered to meet her privately, should this happen, and to negotiate a possible referral to counselling if she wanted to take this up (Appendix B).

A focus on Focus Groups

Sharlene Hesse-Biber and Patricia Leavy (2011) trace a brief outline of how focus groups have been developed and used since their inception in the 1940s. One purpose for focus groups is in political and market research, sometimes

under the broad goal of evaluation of products and services. Secondly, focus groups have been used for academic research purposes with people who are outsiders to norms of social acceptability, such as drug users, people living with AIDS, and for groups who face challenges to do with fertility, cancer, and bereavement. George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis (2008) link Foucauldian theory with focus group interviewing. They turn their attention to the work of Paulo Freire's 'study circles', which were used for "imagining and enacting the emancipatory political possibilities of collective work" (p. 378).

I chose to use group interviews because Freire's methods and intentions have resonance with my own optimism that people live "both 'in' the world and 'with' the world and, thus, can be active participants in making history" (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008, p. 379). Braided with Freire's work for educational opportunity, focus groups emerge from feminist group discussion and consciousness-raising groups of earlier waves of feminist movement (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008; Wilkinson, 1998) and can offer research group members a chance to respond *with and to each other* in ways not available in one-to-one interviews. It follows from this that, in group interviews, the authority or influence of the researcher is somewhat decentred or decreased (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011; Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, 2008; Wilkinson, 1998) promoting more democratic and modest positions for the researcher during the data-generation conversations. This is a position I am willing to inhabit, as it fits with the collaborative approach I am inspired to work towards (Gehart et al., 2007; Levin, 2007). I have experience of working with women in groups and, in these forums, developed relational and observational skills for noticing the intra-actions of group members with each other (Crockett et al., 2009).

Group interviews create multiple lines of communication. Engagements with peers may sometimes be privileged over those with the researcher (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008). I welcome nomadic wandering for its possibilities. I embrace the diverse and hodgepodge provocations that come about in conversations about what matters to people so, to some extent, I anticipated

surprise in the group interviews that traverse love and violence territory. Emerging from my experience of a small research project for my master's degree (Snowdon & Kotzé, 2012) and my work with groups of women to address violence (Crocket et al., 2009), I believed it likely that the stories generated in the present research groups would be diverse *and* convergent. The opening questions for our investigations (Appendix D) were material configurations in which the groups were becoming “perpetually open to rearrangements, rearticulations, and other reworkings” (Barad, 2007, p. 134).

The groups

I met with the first small group of women (Kim and Mary) three times, for at least an hour each time. I made the transcripts available to them, and wrote a letter to them after the first and second interviews. These letters acknowledged the woman's contributions to the interview *verbatim*, with a few additional linking lines from me. This pattern was modified with the second group (Bea, Ashleigh and Jean) to include a fourth meeting, and the non-attendance by Jean for two of the four meetings. A third group formed (Kaye, Sam and Alana) for the initial group interview, followed by individual interviews. In the fourth group (Alice and Judy), I continued to meet with Alice after Judy relocated to a place too far away to be with us. I compiled two collective documents with the women's words which went forward to the counsellor group for their response (Appendices K and L). These documents are shaped from what the women said was useful and not so useful in their engagements with counsellors and group programmes that address partner violence.

What was unforeseen by me (and perhaps by women of the participant groups) was the kind of disturbance that came about when one of the groups of three met for the first time. As one of the women spoke, another came alongside her in her story – words and tears flowed – and the third participant, Alana, found herself adrift from the current force of the storyline, becalmed in the shallows as bystander. This had effects for the group, as Alana's subsequent hesitations and refusals meant she did not meet with the others again. At the time, I did not

detect this 'no' for what it may have been (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). I registered the legitimacy of the reasons for absence given by all three (car trouble, sickness for children, lawyer appointments, family members visiting from overseas) without a full appreciation of the measure of (non)alignment that had taken effect in the meeting of all three.

The importance of place

I discussed, with my supervisors, the use of a room to meet with groups of women. Consistent with my interest in material feminisms, I believe that physical settings can materially shape 'meetings' in therapy (Fenner, 2011; Snowdon, 2011) and I wanted to extend that intra-activity to providing a materially comfortable setting for meeting research participants. In another strand of thought about meeting places, I was reluctant to meet participants for the women's groups on their home turf for the initial one-to-one meetings. In such settings there are many possibilities for interruption, distracting sounds, and lack of privacy in shared flats or family homes. That intention was overturned in the case of four initial meetings. I used the skills I had learned in home-based family therapy (Snowdon, 2011) to negotiate for the privacy we needed, and all four meetings proceeded smoothly.

Although there is a great deal of emphasis on the discursive and relational aspects of therapeutic and qualitative research work, much less is written about material environments. Patricia Fenner (2011) adopts a musical metaphor for the importance of physical setting, when she writes, "Place is foundational to experience in the same way as the key signature in a musical score anchors all thematic material and subsequent modulations" (p. 852). The usefulness of this metaphor to the point I am making, is that people enter a room and 'read' its capacity to welcome them, in tandem to the ways they are welcomed relationally by their host. Following Kim Dovey (2010), Fenner identifies the convergence of material, social and expressive elements in meeting places. How accessible and familiar is the place where participants will meet? What does it look like? What is the furniture like? Is the temperature warm/cool? Is there distracting noise? In

the end, all the women's groups met in agency settings they had known before, and the practitioner group met in a well-appointed community centre after business hours when we were the only occupants of the building, thus safeguarding anonymity and privacy for that group.

Transcribing

Transcribing is a first step in data analysis (Bailey, 2008). In the process of transcribing, a new iteration of the participants' performance of telling came into view: This listening action was the second round of attention I gave to the research materials in preparation for data analysis.

Active listening means more than just physically hearing or reading: rather, it is a fully engaged practice that involves not only taking in information via speech, written words, or signs, but also actively processing it – allowing it to affect you, baffle you, haunt you, make you uncomfortable, and take you on detours... (DeVault & Gross, 2007)

Transcribing for this project did not require a detailed conversation analysis of form (Peräkylä, 2008); rather, transcripts were an invitation to pause in the gap of whatever moments seemed odd, oblique, affecting and irregular (Levy et al., 2016). In encounters with the pages of transcript, my supervisors and I spent time doing what Lisa Mazzei (2014) writes about: we lingered in moments of reverie; we found the deferred presence of love in an act of violence; our thought spread in unpredictable and productive emergences (Mazzei, 2014, p. 742). Bodies, things, concepts, words enacted the research assemblage: a lively speaking, listening, hearing (including by the recording machine), writing/transcribing, reading, and re-telling of the women's stories.

Susan Levin (2007) promotes active listening although she prefers the word "hearing". On her terms, hearing means the negotiation of understanding when persons are engaged in an interchange of words. She says that "[h]earing is not a unidirectional or receptive-only activity" (p. 111). In the interview and, then, the transcribing process, as I listened to each participant speaking, I was influenced in multiple ways: as listener/hearer; as writer of spoken words; as woman with resonant and dissonant histories of heterosexual partnership; as reader of

literature, both fictional and academic; and, as writer of a thesis. Although Levin's proposal is situated in therapeutic intentions, I have adopted this listening/hearing stance for my research work because of the tenuous territory of the content.

Voice as speech / writing

In the interests of maintaining a power/knowledge relationship (Foucault, 1982b, 2000; Larner, 1999), it was important to me that the participants have an opportunity to comment on aspects of the research that she had contributed. I directly asked each participant to say how accurately the transcripts had captured what she wanted to say. Following each group interview, I wrote letters to each woman who attended. These letters lifted passages of transcript of the woman's contributions; I asked how well the letter corresponded with her intended meanings. I invited each woman to write into the notebook I had given her when we met, and to select any written narratives she wanted to offer as research materials. Some of the written materials were read aloud in the groups and became part of the next transcript.

The narrative content of the group interviews is critical to this study. In particular, the research investigation gives significant attention to what may be meant by 'love', and the effects on women's lives of how love intra-acts with violence. The group interviews investigated women's experiences and accumulations of love-entangled-with-violence (see Chapters 5,6,7 and 8) with the intention to study the "particularities of the entanglements at hand" (Barad, 2007, p. 74). During the group interviews, both the women and I found our interest piqued by the stories we heard from others in the room, by the differences that sometimes surfaced and by the connectivity that became possible in compassionately witnessing each other's pain and commitments (Weingarten, 2003).

And now, I introduce the second cycle of group interview with counselling practitioners.

Phase Two

Interviewing a Practitioner group

My original plan for recruiting counsellors was reconfigured. Apparitions of delay queered whatever naïvety had once informed my confidence about recruiting for this study: I was spooked by the thought of endless waiting for counsellors to self-select and contact me. Instead of advertising through a counsellor e-newsletter, I approached counsellors directly through my own extensive practitioner networks, using an email invitation (Appendix C[i]). One counsellor who received the invitation nominated another possible member of the group for the final group of six. In that sense, this group was collectively-selected.

The criteria I used for finding practitioners for the counsellor group centred on their therapy with women who had come to counselling to address the effects of partner violence within a heterosexual relationship. I also asked the counsellors whether they had heard women say some form of “But I still love him” in these situations. I did not, in the end, send my email invitation to any male counsellors as I did not know of any who were specifically working with women in this particular field. Consequently, the counsellor group was also a women-only group.

Six counsellors responded affirmatively to my invitation and met with me for two group interviews that lasted ninety minutes. Negotiations for informed consent, and for group meeting times, went smoothly: all six counsellors attended both interviews; the room was reliably available and a good size for a group of seven to see and hear each other; and conversation was animated. As I had anticipated, the interviews became an opportunity to find a collegial shared interest in furthering counselling practice through research, specifically for counselling that addresses the dilemma of women’s lives *and* counselling practice when love-entangles-with-violence.

Without any planning on my part for age diversity in such a small group, we met across a thirty-year age range, as Māori and Pākehā, lesbian and straight women, with different religious views. The different therapeutic approaches in the group ranged from post-structural, humanist, Kaupapa Māori, and psychodynamic theoretical positions. From these starting points, the counsellors began to tell their practice stories. Different accounts of practice began to diffract through the apparatus of our theoretical, cultural and sexual identities, religious and age diversities. Each counsellor listened intently, and from inside our selves and our practice positions, becoming differently responsive to the conditions of possibility/limitation that could provoke new thought (Davies & Gannon, 2013).

Talking across the room – spatially separate and vocally entangled

I purposefully invited the practitioner group to speak to each other, as well as to me, in the group interviews. I had learned in the women's group interviews that it was helpful if this invitation was explicit, so that by the time I was meeting women in the third participant group and the counsellor group, there was a more lively listening-and-responding to each other than had been the case in earlier groups. As I have said above, our theoretical and practice positions were manifestly different in some ways. No 'right way to go' emerged in the conversations. Nevertheless, there was much encouragement of each other to speak, reflectively comment, and enquire further, that did not rely only on me.

Side-track for a moment: I take the view that the 'we' who meet each other halfway in this study are not the plurality of a number of autonomous unified humanist 'I' selves. Rather, this research grapples with the skin-encased provocation of material↔discursive (re)configurations that is the world in its becoming. In the words of Foucault (1980),

... a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. (p. 194)

These “deployments of power are directly connected to the body” (Foucault, 1978, p. 151) and, therefore, have material force. Foucault’s poststructural view, which I have adopted for the ‘we’ that is the practitioner group, does not downgrade the views and contributions of counsellors who hold a humanist position on self; rather, I see these meetings as the way in which

part of the world becomes determinately bounded and propertied in its emergent intelligibility to another part of the world, while lively matterings, possibilities, and impossibilities are reconfigured. (Barad, 2007, p. 149)

Voices speaking

Dialogues continued after transcribing when I wrote to each counsellor with the following introduction and acknowledgement:

In this letter I will piece together what you said in the first interview. If there is a long piece of speaking I won’t use quotation marks for your words, as we can take it that I am directly bringing your narratives into this compilation. When I have inserted my own (missed!) question, I will use quotation marks.

Thank you (name of practitioner), for your valuable contributions to the research. I’m so pleased you were able to join the group.

The written re-tellings in the documents (White & Epston, 1990) were intended to, and had the effect of, knitting utterances and meanings together somewhat. For me, as a researcher and counsellor practitioner, “knowing is never done in isolation but is always effected (sic) by different forces coming together” (Mazzei, 2013). It follows that knowing together, in a particular place and time, has a specificity *and* multiplicity that is never fully replicable. Nor is it tidy. Davies et al., (2004) propose that text is messy (following Denzin, 2000), and that “we are always present in our texts” (p. 365). I elaborate on the messiness this study *both* encountered *and* engendered in Chapter 6, *How cars and a bus come to matter*.

A writing voice

Inviting a writing practice

In my research design, I invited all the participants to write thoughts and impressions that emerge from the spoken conversations. This invitation included each counsellor who joined the study. I had in mind that the final fifteen minutes of the interview time would be given to writing. My participants had other ideas and contexts within which pen and paper writing in the group did not feature. Four of the women participants, and three of the counsellors brought journal entries back to the following interviews where they were read aloud, and all of the counsellors wrote electronically to me following the second interview.

I turned to writing as a mode of expression in this research for its possibilities: “writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery” (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008, p. 484). Writing, as I invited it in the research, is not about representing what is already known; rather, writing can disrupt the already known, implying it takes the writer somewhere new. Susanne Gannon (2006) introduces the value of writing that is fragmented, scrappy and sparse, provocative of memory. Gannon includes Roland Barthes’ (1977) lines: “I abandon the exhausting pursuit of an old piece of myself” (p. 482), a line that is helpful to the kind of invitation to write that I wanted to offer to each woman connected to this study through her lived experience and/or professional response.

Cornelia Schadler (2019) brings a new materialist experimentation to writing practices within a research cycle. Schadler performs an enactment of research in her paper through referencing practices. She describes how she traces specificities through all aspects of the research work, in a re-building process of “re-enactment notes” (p. 224). For Schadler the data *and* the form of the data are actants in re-building the complexities of the research. As these non-linear contours are traced, there emerges “*a specific past enacted in present processes of becoming within the phenomenon of research*” (p. 225). In this way, the original waves of data diffract into further data materials. Writing research follows

conventions that make the sedimented histories of that referencing work available to an audience, a vital boundary-making process inhabited/enacted by the researcher.

Writing practices: collective documents

I was co-editor of two collective documents written in consultation with two of the women's groups (Appendices K and L), and a responding collected acknowledgement from the counsellor group to the women participants (Appendix M). During the final interview with two of the women's groups, I collected words and stories from the women's accounts of what they considered was helpful and not so helpful in counselling or anti-violence group experiences, into a document that would bridge between their group and a research group of counsellors. I explained that any and all contributions they made to the collective document would be anonymous and would only be written in with their permission. I wrote their contributions down and read them out to check that each woman's words were as she intended them to be recorded. To some extent, the participants' experience of counselling and group work were focussed on the happenings and effects of violence, and less on the dilemma of continuing to love the partner who had hurt them. Together we pieced together the histories of their therapeutic experience, following a 'creating together' ethic (Anderson, 2007a, 2007b; Bloom, 1998; Gehart et al., 2007).

Both collective documents were given to the counsellor group at the start of their second meeting and the counsellor group undertook a written consultative process after the second counsellor group interview from which I assembled an accumulated acknowledgement to each of the women of the study (Counsellors' Collective Response, Appendix M). A copy of this collective response was posted or delivered to each individual woman as a real letter, on real paper, that she could hold in her hand. The Counsellors' Collective Response articulated the practitioners' appreciation, acknowledgements and learning from the women. My intention was that we, as practitioners, acknowledge the specific ways the women's words and accounts made a difference to our practice, particularly in

relation to thinking outside what we routinely think, thus extending on the limits of our understandings thus far. Michael White, in a presentation of his practices to address the effects of trauma, suggests that this kind of acknowledgement is not an attempt to point out positives, but is a “factual account of the ripples ... which had touched the life of others in significant ways” (White, 2004, p. 56). My argument for how the research process itself contributed a wave of ripples of acknowledgement is that the weight of paper actualises the counsellors’ intentions in ways that the ethereality of electronic messages do not.

In the following chapters, I write an experiment with material relationality and potentialities using a diffractive analysis. The onto-epistemological stance I am taking in Chapter 5, *The gun and the knife*, Chapter 6, *How cars and a bus come to matter*, Chapter 7, *Voice and violence*, and Chapter 8, *Love – promise and purpose – exploring materiality ↔ discourses of love* departs from ideas like ‘data’, which Norman Denzin (2015) declares to be dead, in favour of “narratives of passion” (p. 203). In moving toward narratives of passion, the hierarchy of researcher/participant that suggests a priority for the observing subject, and human/nonhuman can be flattened somewhat. I, as researcher, enter the fray. Human participations are tangled and mangled with a gun and a knife, cars, a bus, literature, violence and resistance.

Chapter 5

The gun and the knife

Things are not simply ‘there’, inert... (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016, p. 97).

“... a posthuman orientation seeks to notice, as much as possible, the workings and doings of *all* agents as an assemblage” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2016, p. 105).

Introduction

I have been living with the data materials/narratives of the woman participants for some time. Re-reading theirs and others’ accounts of guns and knives reanimates a visceral shock in me that folds back into the group interviews and outward in different directions. I am reminded that ‘now’ is a convergence, a crossing point, a resonance with(in) other aggregations of doing and being, an account that I will examine with close reference to Jane Bennett’s (2010) lucid book, *Vibrant matter*. I have adopted Bennett’s treatise for this purpose because, as she herself puts it:

... the starting point of ethics is less the acceptance of the impossibility of “reconciliation” and more the recognition of human participation in a shared, vital materiality. We *are* vital materiality and we are surrounded by it, though we do not always see it that way. The ethical task at hand here is to cultivate the ability to discern nonhuman vitality, to become perceptually open to it. (p. 14)

Life is messy and hard – at least, some of the time – for human and nonhuman participants. According to Bennett, and I agree, we are called to conjoint action in complex clusters of distributed agency, agency not limited to human participation. It is this last point that I elaborate at length in this chapter.

Thing-power

In every conceivable situation, human and nonhuman forces coalesce in specific and localised ways. The trouble with therapy may be that it has elevated talk to such an extent that nonhuman living beings, constructed objects, structures, items, stuff, are relegated a kind of nothing status.

For Foucault, the effects of discourse and structure on (human) bodies is a central theme, although his extensive oeuvre (writing and interviews) does not specifically differentiate nonhuman capacities to act. Bodies, if they are human, are making a comeback in the field of counselling (Danielsson & Rosberg, 2015; Frank, 2007; Karageorgiou, 2016; Percy, 2008; Snowdon, 2017; Zimmerman, 2017) and have long been of importance to feminist movements (Bordo, 1993; Grosz, 1994; Mortimer-Sandilands, 2008; O'Brien Hallstein, 1999; Saul, 2003). The extension that Bennett (2010) offers is to see human actants in tandem with *all* possible other actants, including nonhuman ones that exert thing-power in a “knotted world of vibrant matter” (p. 13).

Human and more-than-human entities are, therefore, different expressions and capacities for acting: “human being and thinghood overlap... the us and the it slip-slide into each other” (Bennett, 2010, p. 4). Bennett’s point is that things, including objects like guns and knives, make agentic contributions to that which emerges (with)in/disturbs human-nonhuman ensembles. To single out one element from others in the uncertain choreography of a given situation is to severely limit and/or elevate its status, and to risk non-attentiveness to that which is out-side these limits or elevations (p. 17). *All* players have influence and capacities to modify or be modified. The challenge for a new materialist researcher is to “cultivate heightened sensitivities” (Roberts, 2012) to the creative tension of human and nonhuman players in an assemblage. Rather than reach for explanation, measurement or capture, Bennett’s approach is a matter of seeing what the object *does* rather than what it *is* (p. 60).

In the case of a tough material like metal, a human-centric view that says the object in question is inert/passive material takes no account of how the object affects other elements, including human bodies. It is starkly obvious that a gun is an actant with other actants – it has efficacy and can *do* things – when it is fired at an animal body or a target, for instance. The sound is startling, the shot is potentially fatal, the residue spills into the surrounding space.

Without being activated, it also does things. Its *potential* to do something is also thing-power, although it does not carry this potential on its own. The gun's emergent properties are part of the agency of the cluster into which it coalesces. A gun carried by a human has latent capabilities, a kind of "inner direction principle" (Bennett, 2010, p. 77) and these evoke responses. Bennett is not claiming (and I go along with her) that elements of an assemblage can realise a goal: rather, she follows Henri Bergson in proposing that there is *some* directing power at work in an agentic confederation, an effort which follows a trajectory, in the manner of searching and groping towards possibility; a "drive without design" (p. 79). Trajectory, used in this way, does not imply inevitability or surety: *ad hoc* groupings of human nonhuman bodies are "suffused with an uncertain stance toward a future whose relations are up for grabs – *we do not know what a body can do*" (Roberts, 2012). What we do know is that bodies affect other bodies.

Affect

Tom Roberts (2012) offers a succinct place to start thinking about affect (beyond therapeutic concepts of emotion that centre on human 'feelings') as "the full viscosity of a body submerged in the push and pull of its material milieu" (p. 2517). Affect is a measure of change, a disturbance, an interruption, an awareness, an intensity, a register of what moves (within) a body's capacities (Hickey-Moody, 2013; Massumi, 2002). This applies to how so-called inanimate bodies vibrate and modify other bodies. Bennett adds that it is important to reach beyond a human-centric view of affect and to theorise "a kind of geoaffect

or material vitality” (2010, p. 61), to see affect as the active principle in all bodies, human and nonhuman.

Whether elements in an ensemble *appear* to be highly responsive or not to other elements, they are – at some frequency – re-making and becoming other than what they were in response to inputs from the out-side. Bennett (2010) and Roberts (2012) both assert that a human subject can no longer defend a monopoly of anthropocentric influence: their call is to re-situate, entangle and intersperse human bodies and intentionality with other-than-human actants. Both also point out that relations are folding, dissolving, diffusing and (dis)configuring and reorganising as an assemblage affected by the out-side. Seen in this way, complexities of acting bodies cannot be reduced to *the doer* and *the deed* (Bennett, 2010, p. 28). Nor can there be an easy charge of blame leveled in one direction. A concept of agency, attributable to a (single) human subject who can effect change, starts to come undone. On these terms, prevention of harm or violence requires a profusion, a swarm, of cooperative effort, of multiple capacities, to affect (change) and be affected by the out-side.

Two stories haunt the data materials of this study. One account tells of a gun and another of a knife. Both give stark recognition to the notion that things can assert a particularly strong efficacy in partner violence settings. I discuss these accounts using Bennett’s conceptualisation of vibrant materiality. In my view, Bennett’s (2010) contribution aligns well with indigenous worldviews (Crocket et al., 2017) and with movements that seek justice through attention to economic and physical contexts (Waldegrave, 2003). Bennett’s particular contribution to how we might think about the “capacity of *any* body for activity and responsiveness” (p. xii, emphasis mine) is to raise the status of things – alongside human influences – within an ecology of actants.

Agency revisited

Bronwyn Davies’ (1991) conception of agency and John Winslade’s (2005) clear exposition of positioning have been starting points for my thinking about how

persons take up (preferred) identity from within available discourse. These articles are unapologetically directed at human relating, whereas this chapter of my thesis is highlighting the possibilities of *things* to also act agentially. A recognition of and receptivity towards distributed agency does not mean perfect equality, a claim that resonates with Foucault's (1982) assertion that power/knowledge relationship is constituted through "multiple forms of individual disparity" (p. 224).

I investigate Foucauldian concepts of power/knowledge in chapter 6, *How cars and a bus come to matter*. In an extensive body of writing and interviews that explore the power/knowledge nexus, Foucault argues that the exercise of power works differently from a conception of the humanist subject in possession of a form of power that is unidirectional, hierarchical and negative. On Foucault's (2000) terms, persons are not inert and consenting targets of what is done to and around them: rather, "there is no power without potential for refusal or revolt" (p. 324); a person has a capacity to act even in the face of violence and domination, "however little his (sic) freedom may be" (p. 324). In the stories of the gun and the knife that follow, women act with implicit knowledge for survival (B. Davies et al., 2002) taken from repertoires for how to conduct themselves when they sense that their lives are not safe or free. The gendered domination that is asserted in their partner relationships arises from

repeated, minute accretions of every day practices that can generate sedimentations of lines of force that may also be understood as a state of domination. (Davies et al., 2002, p. 312)

Both women in the following narratives act to resist in ways that might be described as under the radar. Both women have a sense of acting autonomously, of governing their own conduct in calculated ways.

It is not possible to discern the purposive behaviour of the man(-and-the-gun) in the first story that follows. What is more to the point is the way the woman is constituted by a single, vividly evoked, event. In the second story of a knife under the pillow, another woman describes repeated action by her partner, over time, and how she is positioned to respond.

Before I continue with a wider view of agency on Bennett's (2010) terms, I want to make clear that Bennett is not trying to completely horizontalise the world of human/nonhuman actants (p. 104): rather, she is of the view that movement across channels of communication of actants calls for "interinvolvements and interdependencies" (p. 104) that traverse the material *and* social order. Likewise, philosopher Andrew Pickering (2017) turns our attention to the practice, performance and agency of actants in the world, a dynamic dance that doesn't (always) follow a human plan. In earlier writing on distributed agency, Pickering (1993) notes the asymmetry of emergent agency in human-nonhuman endeavours in science. His metaphor of the 'mangle' cuts cultural elements and materiality into "an *open-ended* process with no determinate destination" (p. 579). Bennett (2010) also points to the uneven way power is distributed (see also Foucault, 1980) within any given conglomeration of connection:

Assemblages are living, throbbing confederations that are able to function despite the persistent presence of energies that confound them from within. They have uneven topographies, because some of the points at which the various affects and bodies cross paths are more heavily trafficked than others, and so power is not distributed equally across its surface. Assemblages are not governed by any central head: no one materiality or type of material has sufficient competence to determine consistently the trajectory or impact of the group. (pp. 23-24)

Bennett and Pickering claim that things, such as guns and knives, tangle/mangle varyingly with bedrooms, beds, pillows, human partners and arguments, in ways that act with agential force. Bennett's (2010) concept introduces two aspects that are useful to my analysis of women's stories of a gun and a knife. Bennett follows Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) coupling of the "*machinic assemblage*", that includes bodies, actions and passions, with the "*collective assemblage of enunciation, of acts and statements, of incorporeal transformations*" (p. 88). Material \Leftrightarrow discursive configurations extend the places we might look for agential force beyond human capacity to act.

As indigenous traditions and spiritualities have long presupposed, humans are inseparable from the natural order of things (Kulnieks et al., 2013) and the constructed environment. The view of how nonhuman things work together *with* human intervention challenges the notion of human superiority to act, especially

as human actants are ourselves mobile clusters of nonhuman (foreign) materialities. Actants within a given conglomeration can be drawn to different affiliations across spacetime, giving rise to a dynamism that cannot be controlled or predicted by human actants even as their intention and influence also comes to bear on an outcome. Unintended consequences, as well as intended outcomes, can be set off by any actant in the assemblage. A sense of smell, for instance, relies on olfactory nerve cells that respond to molecules emitted from the outside.

Having established an argument for distributed agency across human-nonhuman confederations, how is it possible to call for accountability from persons who enact forms of violence, oppression and negligence? Alan Jenkins' work to invite responsibility in the aftermath of abuse by boys and men is well known to therapists (1990, 2006, 2009). Although his work and writing are situated in human relationship, his stance for reparation and renewal recognises that "in abusing an individual, you destroy something or damage something within a community" (2006, p. 161). In terms of accountability to communities, Bennett's (2010) example raises the question of accountability in relation to a power blackout in North America and the readiness of officials to absolve themselves of any responsibility for the 2003 event. She does not abandon an ethic of responsibility for how actants can, and should, own their part in cascades of events and their effects – and how it might be possible to then act for re-form in the assemblage. Bennett's conclusion sidesteps a notion of blame in favour of a more investigative stance: "a theory of vibrant matter presents individuals as simply incapable of bearing *full* responsibility for their effects" (p. 37). She goes on to issue an invitation to understand moral outrage that might have at its heart a just cause without legitimising vengeance, and a call to act for "nobler ends" (p. 38). In summary: human actants and their intentions contribute to the choreographies that make up the data narratives that follow, but humans are not singularly influential in these events.

A story of a gun

The first argument, out came the gun. And I thought, what's he doing? 'cause I could smell that smell. We'd been in bed, and I can't even remember what it was about. It would have been something silly, probably. I could smell it and I got up to see what it was, and he was just sitting there cleaning his gun. I just went straight back in the bedroom and pretended I was asleep. I can still see it quite vividly in my mind. And that feeling. It was just terror. I was terrified. I thought, oh my God, I have to be really quiet and not make a sound at all, nothing, just be asleep, for goodness sake. I really thought he was going to shoot me, I did.

And he didn't actually do anything to make me afraid. It was *me*. It was *me*. That terror. As soon as I saw that gun. With not growing up around guns. I thought, oh my God, is he gonna clean that and then shoot me, and clean it again? Yeah, I was scared. I hated having that gun in the house.

The characters in this drama are intimate partners, a woman and a man. The night time scenes where the action takes place are a bed in a bedroom, and an unspecified other room in their home. Act one is an argument. The current of this argument is (likely) still vibrating in the house, and in the bodies of the woman and her partner, even if the discursive content of it could be described as "something silly". The power of an argument vibration surges into what happens next; a wave force that has already produced effects and action.

The man vacates the bed, leaves the bedroom, and the woman waits. She thinks "what's he doing?". It is a smell that alerts the woman to get up.

Enter the gun.

The odour of the oil used to clean the gun asserts itself particularly strongly into the assemblage. It is the smell rather than the gun itself that starts something. Sometimes a sense of smell ignites an immediate sense of danger. The warning of smell can be instinctive, primitive and immediate when odours carry warnings of rot, death and toxicity. Gun oil is a penetrating compound, with a capacity to flow into tiny places in order to protect the metal components of the gun against corrosion. Because it has a low evaporation point, the molecules of gun oil have a volatility and motility that "hit our sense apparatus to give notice of the presence of an out-side" (Bennett, 2010, p. 57). The efficacy of gun oil molecules'

movement across space enters the smell receptors in the woman's nose and are then transmitted across the olfactory nerve into the brain. The woman gets up to "see what it was" and discovers that the man is cleaning a gun. The presence of the gun tilts the arrangement sharply and sets off a chain reaction.

It is easy to see that the gun and gun oil are not passive stuff, divided off from human agency and intention in this chain. The gun has historical and cultural meaning which does not have to be directly the woman's experience to have effect. The materiality of the gun oil and the metal machine also evoke affect – molecules enter her body through sense of smell and sight, and splay out in manifold ways to produce terror. In this way, the gun becomes an altering agent, as one of numerous vibrancies that become operative in this assemblage.

Even if the gun is not fired, it acts as a threat. To understand this better, Bennett (2010) takes up Jacques Derrida's notion of *messianicity* as a kind of unfixed promise of possibility. Although the gun is never activated as a weapon against the life of the woman, it is an unfulfilled menace in the confederation of a night-time home setting, an intimate partner relationship into which an argument intrudes, and the smell of danger that "[tantalizes] and holds [her] in suspense" (Bennett, 2010, p. 32). Bennett's point is that there is directionality about thing-power. In the case of the gun, the *thing* evokes the woman's immediate response even if the *man's* intention is not to terrorise. It is possible that the man plans to use the gun violently against his partner, and it is possible that he has no such intention. The focus is on the potential and actual effect the gun holds, whether it is fired or not. The trajectory that the swarm of actants takes may not be understood by the man as he sits and cleans his gun with oil, but it is patently efficacious.

The idea that it is possible to attribute simple cause to one actant over others is unhelpful in the complexity of material↔discursive entanglements (Barad, 2007; Bennett, 2010; Pickering, 1993, 2017; Roberts, 2012). Although they have both been participants in the argument, the man's association with the gun/gun oil can be differentiated from the woman's reception of it. Bennett's proposal is

that what makes any event happen relies on multiple *contingent* elements coming together. The strivings, trajectory and generative causality in which the coagulation moves could have been otherwise. Anything can slip-slide past, over, and into, another doing thing. Hence, an insistence in new materialisms on trying to find one's way in networks of multiple actants.

Effects of human and nonhuman actants within a given ensemble are not linear; they assemble and fracture in unpredictable ways, as the appearance of the gun demonstrates. A 'silly' argument in the night-time bedroom could not have been foreseen by the woman narrator to lead in the direction of terror. Had the man not left the bed and taken out his gun to clean it, the conflictual tension of the argument may have subsided – and may well have subsided for the man as he sat and cleaned his gun: Not so for the woman.

The woman retreats to the bed/room. She pretends to be asleep. She performs a stillness and quietness beyond sleep: she pretends to be non-living – already dead – in order not to be acted upon by the threat of the-man-with-the-gun. Her response can be said to be in relation to how the assemblage has tilted towards violence, beyond what an argument alone can do. Her body's porosity takes the gun seriously. The vivid terror that the gun excites in her body emerges as a dramatic actant, an urgent emergent call to (in)action. The thought that the man might use the gun against her acts as both resistance and accommodation (Pickering, 1993) to keep her body still and quiet: "I thought, oh my God, is he gonna clean that and then shoot me, and clean it again?"

By her account, the woman is both scared of the gun and hates it. It has become an actor in the drama; a presence in the house and intimate partner relationship. The gun cannot be sidelined and forgotten. It is in the frame – for better or for worse. The metal war-machinic \Leftrightarrow discursive dimensions of the gun silence the woman's explicit protest that night, but her thought and felt rejections of the gun are a continuing presence in the assemblage. It is towards the gun that she directs her fear and hatred. According to Pickering (2017), nonmodern societies have traditionally rejected a Cartesian separability of human/nonhuman agents,

believing – as the woman of this drama demonstrates – that “nonhuman agency remains ever present, to be feared and continually warded off” (p. 141).

The trajectory shifts: The woman singles herself out. As speaking subject, she remonstrates, “It was *me*. It was *me*”. Although, in the moment of the gun’s appearance, the woman fears further harm or reprisal, and acts decisively, in the group interview, she may fear incredulity from others (Carmody & Carrington, 2000) and/or mis-recognition of her action to respond. She absolves the man-and-the-gun of any part in her body’s terror response. In tandem with whatever is compelling the woman to exempt her partner from any responsibility in the drama, other women express shame and embarrassment at having been the victims of their intimate partners, using words like ‘fool’ and ‘stupid’ to describe themselves and their actions (Baker, 1997; Enander, 2010; Hydén, 2005; Towns & Adams, 2000). The woman separates her response to the gun from the part the man plays: “he didn’t actually do anything to make me afraid...” whilst reprising the line “is he gonna clean that and then shoot me?” Margareta Hydén (2005) highlights the significance of fear as a form of resistance: “The fact that the woman is frightened means that she rejects the man’s violence, without necessarily having any well-prepared strategy for how she can avoid being re-exposed to it” (p. 172).

In the following section, the nonhuman actant in the story is a knife. The timeframe is longer, and there are very different discursive elements that limit and incite the woman’s actions. Her fears are less explicitly at the forefront of this story.

A knife under the pillow

My underlined, colour-marked, flagged copy of the book containing Foucault’s *Two Lectures* (1980) asks “how things work at the level of subjugation” (p. 97). I turn to its pages to work with a story of a knife under a pillow. Here is a story of how a woman undertakes to live with continuous forms of dominance, over years. Davies et al. (2002) collectively take up Foucault’s challenge and, in his

words, “try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts” (p. 97). Using these text-interrogation strategies, I read the following narrative to show the gradual discursive↔material constitution of a subject through a swarm of vibrant interferences.

Sex had to be when he said. Five times a day if he said it, and there was no saying no. And if I did say or give any indication that there was a no, then I would have two, three, five hours of him berating me... I didn't know how to say no. And I didn't know that I was allowed to say no, or even thought this in my mind. I just tried to resist... Like moving away from the situation, I've got a baby to feed, or whatever. Trying to deflect or distract.

In saying that, I did sleep with a knife under my pillow for years and thought that if I have to kill him, I will... if he got violent in bed and tried to rape me or kill me, then I would have the knife there to kill him first. That was sort of the dynamic of our relationship. It was the bedroom that I think was probably, that's where I kept the knife, so that maybe was reflective of that was the place that was potentially the most dangerous area.

As with the story of the gun, this assemblage is situated inside the woman's home. The bedroom becomes a focal point, although here it is not a place of retreat; it has become a place of danger. The woman knows there is a knife in the bedroom and articulates its part in a potential killing.

In this story, the man's sense of entitlement – to exploit the woman's body at any time he wants sex – is a continuous subjugation of her body, attention and time. On her account, the man enters the space the woman occupies, and enters her body: her capacity for saying no is severely limited. He calls on her obedience to his demand. She *had* to comply *when* he said. Davies et al. (2002) name this “the forced choice” (p. 303). Within a context of intimate partner relationship, going along with sex can seem to be reasonable, inevitable, to be desired. An acceptance of the taken for granted inevitability/desire of sex in intimate partner relationship lends some legitimacy to the man's claim for sex. However, there is ambivalence in the woman's complicity, at least to the frequency of the man's insistence. “There was no saying no” because the upshot of trying to refuse meant she would be berated “for two, three, five hours”. This implies the

possibility of an eventual capitulation to his demand – there was no saying no. Gradually, progressively, the woman has come to know that the berating won't stop until she acquiesces.

The woman is caught between (at least) two lines of force here. Sex occurs when the man says it will be: he insists on taking possession of her body for his own purposes; she (partially) yields in order to reclaim the two, three, five hours in which she may be subjected to his berating if she says no. Her 'no' is by way of hesitation and delay, an indication, deflection or distraction (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999): "I've got a baby to feed". Although the woman adds her own line of resistant force+submission by way of hesitation and delay, the line of force emanating from her partner is more explicit. Davies et al. (2002) write that discursive↔material lines of force (as happens when sex occurs at a man's say-so) position a woman in such a way that she "cannot be indifferent or impervious to them" (p. 302). One reading of the rationalities at work in the ongoing demand for sex by the man, is his claim for conjugal loyalty at any time. Here the man's moral authority is a line of force embedded in familial practices that obscure and limit the woman's non-consent and non-compliance. Davies et al. assert that a state of dominance can be generated in the sedimentation of *ongoing and everyday practices* that may be argued for using patriarchal discourse: we see this in how the woman is situated with limited repertoire for refusal and revolt.

By saying that she *would* use the knife if he tried to rape her, she implies that she has not used it, and that she has worked out how to assent to the man's sexual demands. Is this a case of the woman actively positioning herself as the right kind of partner, who is desirable to the man, even as his advances are too many to be wanted?

Although she does not name her partner's sexual force as rape, the woman's description fits with Foucault's (1982) assertion that action that bends, breaks, destroys and "closes off all possibilities" (p. 220) is violence. When a woman says there is no saying no, there is no open "field of possibilities" (p. 221). The woman is directed or governed to act in accordance with the man's sex drive. It is he who

determines what the woman will do – a kind of saturation of the partner relationship with his constant (non-negotiated) provocation. To not call this rape fits with dominant minimising ways of viewing what the man is doing to the woman as “just sex” (Brown, 2013; Gavey, 2005).

This situation produces something of a mangle; a weird double-movement. The man’s sexual rapaciousness has had the consequence of pregnancy and the woman can now, with limited legitimacy, take up her commitments as a mother to turn down his sexual advances. The repetition and ordinariness of the demand for sex by an intimate partner entangles with pregnancy, and raises the question (with Davies et al., 2002) of freedom. At what point has the woman’s influence and say-so about sex with her partner been immobilised or blocked? What steps are open to her to modify the field of power relations? As mothering identity and commitments intra-act with partnering and sexual identity, a mode of reversibility becomes possible. Although the woman expresses an initial doubt in the efficacy of her refusal – “I didn’t know that I was allowed to say no, or even thought this in my mind” – there is a subsequent account of effectiveness to her strategy of moving away to feed a baby.

Celia Kitzinger and Hannah Frith, (1999) conducted research with 58 young women in relation to saying no to unwanted sexual advances. Saying no in clear and direct ways was one possibility but, overwhelmingly, the research showed that saying no is complex, fraught and indirect. They take a position on the necessary and sufficient place of the word “no” itself, arguing that an emphatic enunciated “no” should not be – and is not – the only way to refuse. They found that acceptances “occur quickly and without delay” (p. 309) whereas refusals are deferred, hedged with qualifiers, and/or alleviated by apologies or token agreements (p. 301). The woman in our story downplays her refusal(s) on the grounds that she does not know she is “allowed to say no”. Her strategy for saying no is more artfully aligned to deferral and token agreement, and may be accepted by the man for this reason. It seems he can be placated by the indirect no.

Drawing on Bennett's (2010) conception of vibrant matter, the woman, man and baby can be said to be part of an *ad hoc* grouping that includes nonhuman elements; a bed in a bedroom, a pillow, and a knife. The woman indicates that there is some form of functionality here when she implies that the situation she describes has longevity: "I did sleep with a knife under my pillow for years". Going along in this way doesn't imply smooth sailing. The configuration of actants is both modified and maintained over time. The pillow, for instance, is likely to be a constant actant, and the knife an introduced one.

In the bedroom, the woman's pillow takes centre stage. The pillow gains thing-power (Bennett, 2010) as a cover-up for the presence of a knife. The pillow, with its hidden knife, opens the field of possibility for a differently distributed agency in the woman's life. That the man has never discovered the knife under the pillow presupposes that he does not ever make the bed. A gendered entitlement in the partner relationship in which women are assigned tasks like making the bed, is worth noticing as an element in the assemblage.

To the knife, then.

Knives are useful implements in kitchens where they are part of cooking paraphernalia. Different sized knives take on different tasks. There are blunt cutlery knives for spreading butter on toast, and eating prepared meals. Small sharp knives cut up vegetables and fruit, and larger ones may carve a roast. Some households have serrated knives for slicing bread.

Knives are metal objects. Some have handles crafted from wood or other substances. Something about metal suggests impregnable matter despite the empirical evidence that metals are latticed arrangements of crystals that are full of holes (Smith, 1960, in Bennett, 2010, p. 59). Holes notwithstanding, the woman co-opts the thing-power of the knife as both an adamant 'no' and a covert 'no', should she need it in the bedroom. In so doing, the knife has become embedded in the partner assemblage, as a potential actant.

Having migrated from the kitchen to the bedroom, the knife has a lively presence in the woman's knowing, and its own lively presence as a metallic conglomerate of particular hardness and sharpness. It has its own point for being under the pillow "for years" as an altering agent, as the woman's ally. To view the knife as a passive thing is to understate its readiness to provoke a response, and to effect change, in the hands of the woman. In this sense, the knife retains an incalculability (Bennett, 2010, p. 63) that relies on *ad hoc* invention on the part of the woman. The arrangement of purpose that is knife-pillow-woman relies on the element of surprise that lurks at the edges of this story. At the point when the woman takes the knife to its hiding place under the pillow, the impulse of her 'no' response to the man gains a vital (distributed) strength that enters the material↔discursive ensemble. The knife adds in-built drive to the deflection and distraction techniques she also carries out

There is obvious discord in this assemblage. An inharmonious and ominous future emerges in the woman's utterance: "if I have to kill him, I will". The knife under the pillow introduces further instability. At any time, the man may discover the knife and take it up for his own purposes. He may physically overpower the woman at the moment of her deployment of the knife, usurping her own realisation of a plan to use it. Bennett turns to Henri Bergson to make the point that it is futile to ordain a specific future in advance. "Life expands and transcends its own being" (Bennett, 2010). It seems the knife was never discovered by the woman's partner, and never used violently in the bedroom. To that end, there was a finitude to the knife's live-ly hands-on potential as protector of the woman's avoidance of sex, "when he said".

An argument for distributed agency is useful in this cluster. Neither the woman nor the man is 'in charge' of the knotted vitalities and (un)predictabilities of their bodies, the bedroom, the bed, the pillow, the knife, the baby that must be fed. The knife as intervener in their lives is a silent figure in the grouping, vital because of its *location* in the ensemble. Despite my own out-sider sense that the knife is in the wrong place – a bedroom is not a place for knives and their purposes – for the woman, the knife is in the right place *for* the right time. Its affiliation with the

woman produces different conditions of possibility. The (potential) trajectory of the knife under the pillow is movement *away* from the woman's partner's insistence on sex "when he said". The woman who keeps a knife under the pillow for years activates a reconfiguration from which an unforeseen future can emerge.

(In)stability and (dis)continuity

A life of unmitigated chaos is unsustainable. As Pickering (2017) points out, human and nonhuman creatures (such as birds and ants) build edifices that introduce some measure of stability into community and everyday life. Pickering names these 'islands of stability': "At some level, we all need to find and maintain human-nonhuman configurations that are relatively predictable" (p. 141), ones that can be relied on to some extent. However, he warns, arriving at a state of stability is not "a once-and-for-all achievement" (p. 140).

Islands of stability or continuity present a mesmerising possibility when so many discontinuities are at work in the world's becoming. It is important to have something to hang on to that gives a sense of substance or predictability: birds, ants, trees and humans set off in daily life believing there is some structure to be found. Hence, the shock when something like a gun disturbs any sense of knowing what is going on and what one might expect to happen next. Bennett (2010) and Pickering (2017) both assert an uneven topography of agency. Diverse actants coalesce and collide, diverge and rearrange. A privileged site for agency is hard to argue for when distributed agency can be moveable and multi-directional. Humans are "populated by different swarms of foreigners" (Bennett, 2010, p. 112), an array of different bodies and cells. Bennett and Barad (the latter in interview with Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012) raise questions in relation to human mastery in the world at the exclusion of nonhuman actants that has been the argument of this chapter. Bennett's view of human efficacy is a modest one: "encounters with lively matter can chasten my fantasies of human mastery, highlight the common materiality of all that is, expose a wider

distribution of agency, and reshape the self and its interests” (p. 122). Faith in a future, and in the possibilities for love and liveliness may be a radical response to unpredictable events – a kind of continuity to base a life on.

Throughout her book, Bennett (2010) implies that it is *how* one might pick one’s way through swarms of vital materiality. Human and nonhuman actants are *doing things* – we/they are active, whether seen or unseen – and this (un)stable fact is where we must begin. In chapter 10, I will return to *how* it might be possible to incorporate a more intentional stance for discovering the efficacy of nonhuman actants in therapeutic justice-doing.

The following chapter continues a new materialist interest in how things matter. A bus and a car become important to Sam and Alice as means of escape from violent events as I address the research question of how power is exercised in intimate partner relationship.

Chapter 6

How cars and a bus come to matter

We can see only parts of this structure; there is no unifying vision or complete essence possible, rather we're left with dribs and drabs of truth, inflected by our time, position and instruments of perception.

Alice Fulton, Fractal poetics: Adaptation and complexity, *Science Reviews*, 2005. <http://alicefulton.com/books/isr2005.html>

Two narratives of violence-entangled-with-love feature in this chapter. In each account, Alice and Sam are subjected to physical force, and both use a vehicle to escape the scene. My intention in this chapter is to use a Foucauldian analysis of power/knowledge, domination and resistance to address the research question of how power is exercised in intimate partner relationships. Foucault does not directly refer to non-human so much as to human bodies and institutions, but his analyses of power/knowledge and the subject usefully precede new materialist writing, one plank of which seeks to challenge the privileging of language over matter.

Thing power

The research materials of this study include numerous intra-actions with vehicles as what Jane Bennett characterises as actants (2010). Using two selected interview narratives, I enact a diffractive methodological approach, actively responding *to* and *with* specificities, observing patterns and where the effects of difference emerge (Barad, 2014; Kaiser & Thiele, 2014; Lenz Taguchi, 2012; Mazzei, 2014; Thiele, 2014). In this approach, described in chapter 2, it becomes possible to investigate the distributed agency of the bodies of women, men, a car and a bus, in co-constitution with available discourses of love, violence and partnering. My intention is to attend to specificities, and to account for the cutting together-apart (Barad, 2014) an aperture produces (which does not separate in absolute terms); rather, this working of narrative fragments will experiment with “traces of what might yet (have) happen(ed)” (p. 168).

Sam's story

Sam's story starts with repeated and degrading racial name-calling of her by her partner that she verbally protested each time. In the event that she chronicles next, her partner assaulted her so forcefully that her jawbone was broken. Sam explains the extent of this physical injury:

From the right side of my ear drum almost down to the right side of my jaw was cracked. It was cracked from my left, so in the middle of my jaw there was a mini crack in my jaw here... on the left side of my chin I had tree root fractures, so many offshoots or cracks in there. I've got a plate in there at the moment, it's got 10 to 12 screws down the bottom, and on the top just to keep the top jawline mended. I've got about four screws up there too.

On the day of the assault, Sam was cleaning a flat in her apartment block, using a "little plastic broom [for cobwebs]".

I actually thought he was going to rush at me so I just hit him in the side of the face. Then I thought he was going to attack me again, because he was shocked, and I struck him again. After that he close-fisted me with his powerful hand, his right hand, punched me in the left side of my lower chin. That rattled me. I'd never been knocked like that ever, ever before. I felt like it took me ages to drop to the ground.

I maybe blacked out for a little second. Like, what happened! I could feel my mouth wasn't right and kind of opened up my mouth and some blood splattered on the ground. So I went into the bathroom and he was there, crying the whole time: "Why did you make me do this?" and I just pulled out my lower lip and I saw my whole gum lining and my teeth kind of split.

I was like, man, my jaw's broken, it's not right, I've got to go do something... It doesn't feel right, so I'm going to put myself on a bus and catch a bus all the way to the hospital. Which I did.

He was running after me, telling me to stop, and a bus just came, just like that, which was perfect timing I think; somebody was watching over me. I got on the bus and he was on the bus with me, and while on the bus, even in the bus, he'd go: "Don't tell the doctors, don't tell the doctors". I was, like: "I've had enough of lying, I can't lie anymore". He was quite angry in my ear but trying to be silent because we were in public. And then this beautiful Australian lady, as she was getting off the bus, she actually complained about my husband to the bus driver.

What happened was I was trying to look out the window while he was in my ear, and then I heard him going: “Oh are you a hero, are you a hero?” At first, I’m thinking he’s talking to me. I was so disoriented. I thought, who’s he talking to? Then I realised he was talking to a woman outside... Then I finally just tuned in and she was, like: “You’re just a bully and you should leave her alone”. He goes: “Well, you should just mind your business”, and he was giving the angry voice to her. She was, like: “That’s a nice lady and she should just leave you; you should leave him, lady”. She was talking to me and I was trying to hush him, I was, like: “Thank you very much”. I was saying [to husband]: “Leave her alone, leave her alone, she’s just doing the right thing”.

I was telling him that and he ended up getting off the bus and I was, like, oh phew, he’s going to get off the bus and leave me alone, I’ll have some peace while I’m going to the hospital. But the bus driver – he’d actually closed the door – and then my ex-partner came running back around and knocked on the door, and he let him back in again, the bus driver. So I was just, like, oh no. And I think the bus driver was scared, because I was right behind the bus driver.

In the fragment of storytelling above, materialities↔discourses intra-act in ways that give attention to what human and nonhuman bodies do and how they act (Bennett, 2010, p. 28). This affords the bus “thing-power” (Bennett, 2010; Jackson & Mazzei, 2016). The human driver *with* the vehicle’s ignition keys, accelerator, steering wheel, dashboard, fuel-injected engine, spark plugs, battery, muffler and exhaust pipe, axle, tyres, brakes, shock absorbers, windows, doors and metal covering become actants (Bennett, 2010; Latour, 1996) that collectively move the enclosed machine and its passengers away from the originating scene of violence.

In a dramatic turn in Sam’s story, her partner gets off the bus and we, the audience, breathe a sigh of relief with her: “oh phew, he’s going to get off the bus and leave me alone, I’ll have some peace while I’m going to the hospital”. However, when her partner knocks on the closed door, the bus driver reopens the doors to let Sam’s partner back in. Another wave of compromise to Sam’s relief and safety is enacted in the moment the bus door opens to re-admit her partner. This momentum, intra-acting with the presence of men who are bus driver and partner, is carried forward (in the bus) to future timespace in the

hospital where it initially limits what Sam is prepared to say about her partner's assault to medical staff.

Alice's story

And I said to him "This is not working, I'm going around to my friend's, she's around the corner at McDonalds, I'm getting out of here", kind of thing. And he basically was, like, "You're not going", and he held me down on the bed and wouldn't let me get up. I had to kind of force him off. I don't remember whether I walked or whether I ran but I must have gone to my car rather quickly, and I remember driving down the driveway and seeing him in the rear-vision mirror, like, running after me, bawling and crying.

The rear-vision mirror affords Alice a backward view in which the dichotomy of going/staying is troubled. For Alice, the car provides a condition of possibility for escape that flows from her determination to "force [her partner] off" when he has held her down on the bed and told her she is "not going".

All the human and nonhuman matter that goes to make up the occupied car and bus are necessary for their active participation in these stories of leaving and remedy. Alice says she has to "force" the first moment in her escape, *and* it is the car she turns to, in order to leave a particular situation. As Sam does to "put" herself on a bus, Alice intra-acts with the car's active momentum in order to access help.

In the following section, I rework selected lines of both these stories with French philosopher and social commentator, Michel Foucault's, analysis of power relations.

Examining power/knowledge/discourse

In this section, I trace a history of intra-action of human and non-human bodies, and the discourses that inform resisting practices. I follow Foucault's

genealogical and archeological methods towards a disclosure of material↔discursive practices (Hekman, 2009). The stories told by Alice and Sam demonstrate that power relations shift as persons exercise power/knowledge as strategy, rather than as a commodity that they possess (Foucault, 1977, p. 26): power/know-how exists in action in particular situations.

Webs of unequal relationship

This research project is particularly attuned to the gendered micro-practices of heterosexual partner relations. What has emerged in the data materials are stories that go against the grain of what Davies et al., (2002) name the “inevitability of current patterns of domination” (p. 295). Alice and Sam’s partners both make moves to retain their control (domination): Alice’s partner tries to prevent her from leaving; and Sam’s partner is intent on stopping her from disclosing his assault. Alice’s partner holds her down on the bed and says he is not ‘letting her’ go. Sam’s partner physically “close-fisted [her] with his powerful hand, his right hand” and broke her jaw, then followed her when she acted to seek help. Both women actively resist the violence they are subjected to even as they are caught in “the web of unequal relationships” (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983, p. 185). For women in this study, webs of unequal relationship are materialised in heterosexual partners’ bodies, and financial statuses: Alice and Sam describe the force of this on their bodies.

Alice’s manifestation of “force” (her word) is to “resist the grip” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27). She does this by saying she is getting out of there, forcing her partner off her, and going to her car “rather quickly”: before driving away in the car. Sam first tries to preempt an “attack” by hitting her partner with the cobweb broom. After his assault, she acts to assess her injury and seek medical help by catching a bus to the hospital. Sam’s relief that her partner has left the bus may have been temporary, but it signifies her preference to be “left alone”, and to find some “peace”. Power as strategy is thus exercised from ‘below’ (Foucault, 1978, p. 94) as an inversion of the locus of power: and both car and bus are part of the

configuration of actants that materialise the women's resistance to the violence they have been subjected to, in forms of escape.

Despite asymmetry in the relationship in which Alice's partner holds her down on the bed with force, and tells her she is not permitted to leave, Alice refuses to submit. She becomes an active subject. In a moment of fracture of sedimented layers of the partner relationship, Alice demonstrates that her body is not only an element of power, it is also an effect of power; it is the "point where power is manifest" (Hekman, 2009, p. 445). Alice, Sam, the car and the bus are not merely an "inert or consenting target" (Foucault, 1976, p. 98) at any point in these volatile encounters. They are simultaneously undergoing *and* exercising power. Alice and Sam – as constituted through power/knowledge – are, through their active know-how, vehicles of power. The car and the bus are vehicles of power in the sense that they are intra- activated and activating of the women's moves to make a getaway.

Physical capacities

The materiality of a man's body in heterosexual partner relationships is another matter of interest in my study. I believe this is glossed over in Foucault's analysis when he says that "power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with" (1978, p. 93). Men's musculature and size can be a threat in itself and may be viscerally *felt* by a woman as capable of exercising greater force than her own body. Following her partner's assault, Sam knows, without doubt, that her husband's "powerful right hand" has the capacity to seriously injure her. In Alice's situation, the force of her partner's intention and materiality requires her to exert an opposing intention and material force – and to enlist the materiality of the car – in order to leave. My argument is that, for women who are smaller and less muscled than their male partners, Foucault's proposal that power is not the "strength we are endowed with" minimises the fact of men's physical capacity, and what it takes for women to

adapt and strategise their own positions in the partner relationship when they are subjected to physical abuses.

Repeated accretions

Davies et al. (2002) point out that Foucault's analysis of power/knowledge has not fully embraced forms of oppression on the ground. I, too, have found that relationships of violence are not always understood to be produced through economic, political and coercive mechanisms. Although physical abuse continues to be researched, many researchers call for more recognition of coercive control and non-physical forms of threat to women partners (Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Hill, 2019; Stark, 2009a). A state of domination is enacted in "repeated, minute accretions of everyday practices" (Davies et al., 2002, p. 312). In Chapter 7, *Voice and violence*, I work with the women participants' repeated citations of how control is exercised by male partners to silence women's speaking participation.

Alice recalls a conversation with a friend who said: "it's not a relationship, it's a relationship". This descriptive shift offered a validation of how Alice experienced forms of oppression in her everyday material↔discursive life. One tactic taken by Alice's partner was not leveled directly at her, but at other women: Alice named a certain misogynist practice her partner used as "calling people all sorts of things". And the effect on Alice was, "I felt it in my body somewhere. It had a huge impact on me". Alice went on to say that "growing up there was a lot of criticism and aggression, and verbal abuse, but there wasn't any swearing". Hence, one of the alerts to this huge bodily affect was her partner's use of swearwords, such as "slut". According to Alice, another layer of the name-calling and its 'huge' affect is that it was directed at family members.

I went for counselling and I started acknowledging that there was a *thing*, there was something. Basically I must have decided to start acknowledging, it got so bad, I *felt* so bad, that I started acknowledging that thing in me that started way back that said, this isn't good. I actually decided to listen to that.

In Alice's narrative, there are forces that work as accretions in the sense of coming from innumerable points in the spacetime of the relationship.

Each instance acts on her body, saturated, through and through, with shock and disturbance, until, eventually, a way out can be found. Alice's response at a local (body) level, rather than an all-encompassing opposition, resonates with Sam's story of protesting the racist name-calling her partner perpetrated:

Sam: First of all he'd always called me really bad names, like a black c, a black animal, a black dog, a black mutt, and whenever he'd say, like, a c-word I'd say, I'm not that word, apologise to me, he'd always apologise. But it was still going on for six months, calling me those bad names, and I think the first time I started sticking up for myself, after six months of the foul language, I actually just yelled back to him: "Stop calling me those names, you foul mouthed Australian!" Then he actually stopped calling me names after that.

These strategies of body response and speaking back by Alice and Sam arise out of a wider anonymous field. According to Foucault, a move by persons to exercise power/knowledge is not the result of a "choice or decision of an individual subject" (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). While Alice and Sam have each acted in specific ways, within the limits of her setting, the accumulations and propagations of strategy she employs have "their base of support and their condition elsewhere" (p. 95). Neither Alice nor Sam can be said to have invented or formulated the initial and eventual strategies they took up to leave in the car and the bus, although both of them may claim a decipherable intention, specific to the situation.

On oppression and resistance

The distinction between dominance and power relations is important to this study. Alice and Sam are both women who question the way their bodies are subjugated, obstructed and belittled. Although their partners act to repress, prevent and prohibit their autonomy, both women found adapted ways to assert a position that "does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination" (Foucault, 1977b, p. 141). The use of violence/oppression in intimate partner relationships does not allow for the kind of relationship where both relational partners are freely capable of action. When Alice and Sam's partners used brute force to shut down or constrain the possibility of their

resistance, this can be said to be a situation of domination. A power relationship, on the other hand, opens up “a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions” only when the other person is “thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts” (Foucault, 1982, p. 220). Try as they did, Alice and Sam’s partners could not completely constrain and contain the women’s responses, and prevent the possibilities that they each took up. Both Alice and Sam maintained themselves as capable of present and future action.

In the narrative fragment in which Alice speaks of leaving in the car, she reports that she could see her partner following the car down the driveway, “running after me, bawling and crying”. He re-acts to Alice’s moves to leave (with the car as her co-actant). One view of his performance is that he wants to maintain the familiar state of affairs. From tactics of intimidation and physically holding Alice down, he is now hailing Alice through his expressions of “bawling and crying”. The word ‘bawling’ evokes a sense of urgent pleading. In this storyline, Alice’s partner takes up a different strategy as he continues to ask her not to leave. Her compassion is called on. Looking back through the rear vision mirror of the car, Alice knows the crying response of her partner.

Alice returned to the partner relationship this time, but eventually left and did not return.

Sam’s partner also cries and follows her. Into the bathroom. Into the bus. Into the hospital. His interest in following Sam – on her account – is not one of concern for her injury, but of the possible consequences *he* might face, since she now wears the effects of his violence on *her* face. Sam’s attention to her body, and what it needs, takes precedence for her. Her focus with getting medical help acts as resistance to the clamour of the outside world and his actions are not foregrounded: “I was so disoriented... I finally tuned in”.

At the hospital, Sam reported the assault to the Police. Initially, they said:

Look we can't really charge him because you struck him first, and I was, like, "even if I was copping six months of abuse and I finally stood up for myself? that doesn't mean anything?" and he goes, "No, because you hit him first and you admitted to hitting him first. We can't charge him..."

Both me and my sister we were heartbroken, we were shocked, we just couldn't believe it...

I just played it calm, played it cool, and then one of the other younger [cops] was just, like, "I've actually recorded everything and I'm going to go back to my office. I'm going to type up some things and we might go from there." They actually rang me that night. He had actually typed up a domestic violence protection order for me and was going to go and serve my ex with it. And he did it that night, or the Sunday, so they did it very quickly.

By the time I met Sam in New Zealand, her jaw was healing. She had come to this country at a relative's urging, and was trying to reconcile her longing to return to a man who had seriously injured her.

Power is productive

Both stories told in this chapter track changes in the moment and action (spacetime matter) of resisting partners' physical restraint, followed by admonitions not to leave and not to tell. These mo(ve)ments (see Davies et al., 2006) constitute moments in partner relationship in which Alice and Sam make moves and know themselves differently as actants. In this sense, the narrative signifies a productive moment in the power/knowledge relation. Sam's first attempts to stop her partner's verbal abuse by using the cobweb broom, and her singular attention to her own needs following his assault, including by taking the bus, constitute moments of indeterminacy that open up to possible change. Sam notices her relief when her partner gets off the bus and leaves her in peace. She also makes a pivotal (new) move in the hospital: she reports the crime to the Police: she no longer conforms to the practice of lying. A matrix of transformation becomes (more) possible with each modification of the power relation (Foucault, 1978, p. 99). In his essay, *The Subject and Power*, Foucault investigates the intentionality of this productive role of power: "The exercise of

power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; it is a way in which certain actions modify others” (1982, p. 219). Once again, Foucault makes the point that power does not exist except when it is in play. He points out that enslaving others does not constitute an example of a power relationship. A power relation does not rely on consensus, or giving up freedom, although it may well include the negotiation of agreements and consents.

The car and the bus – each a nonhuman materiality – possess “thing-power” in ways that are not fully examined in Foucault’s analysis. Although the car and the bus are conjoined in Alice’s and Sam’s escape from their respective situations, they are without intentionality sans human driver. In this sense, cars and buses are vehicles of propulsion *in alignment with* a human driver *in the direction* s/he wants to go. Therefore, the car/bus is productive of power/(knowledge-as-a-machine), a necessary and contingent element in the possibility of escape; necessary, when there is distance to be covered in a short time frame, and contingent, in the sense that the vehicle must rely on the driver. As Bennett (2010) puts it, one can attribute drive to something like a car – no pun intended – “without insinuating intentionality or purposiveness” (p. 32).

Subject positions

Late in his life, Foucault (1982) states that his objective during the preceding twenty years has been “to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 208). Foucault sees this occurring in three ways: expert knowledges have positioned the human being as an object of study and as a potential contributor to an economic system; secondly, the human subject is constituted through what he called *dividing practices* by which a person is “divided inside himself (sic) or divided from others” (p. 208); and thirdly, in the ways a person “turns him- or herself into a subject” (p. 208). I am not in a position to elaborate here on the three modes of subjectification at length. I will say, however, that in my conversations with women who say, “I still

love him”, I hear the trace of ambivalence. When love-entangles-with-violence, women are divided in themselves about their own responses.

Networks of discursive practices, therefore, produce social realities in complex ways. For instance, legal, economic, and health discourses intersect to constitute objects of knowledge – such as coupledness and violence. These discursive formations produce the possibility for subject positions. A woman may call herself a partner or girlfriend in relation to coupledness and, if violence is used in the relationship, she may encounter the categories of ‘victim’, ‘survivor’ or ‘protected person’ as subject positions. In order to take up a subject position, she will act from within cultural repertoires of what ‘victims’ of violence do. When a woman says “But I still love him” in relation to a man who has used violence to harm her, there is potential for (mis)recognition of her subject position. Much depends on the “capacity of others to read the category she has been subjected to” (Davies et al., 2006, p. 99). Put another way, it may go against the grain to hear a woman say she still loves a man who has used violence against her. All the more reason to enact research that traverses and contests this affective terrain, with alternative counselling responses in view.

Foucault sees a wider field of play in how power is exercised through techniques of normalisation, “not by punishment, but by control, methods that are employed on all levels and in forms that go beyond the state and its apparatus” (1988, p. 89). Foucault’s notion of bio-power is pertinent to my study because it intersects with counselling ethics for safeguarding lives (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020, s 3.4 core value of Responsible Caring; s 4.5 ethical principle that promotes safety and wellbeing; guideline s 5.1, Safety).

Bio-power

Foucault asserts that the state does not have a monopoly on promotion, measurement and intervention in human lives; rather, there is a diffuse and shifting interplay of forces at work, and this includes discursive forces that act on

counsellors when they meet with women whose partner and family loves are entangled with violence. In some measure, Foucault takes a sceptical view of the effects of bio-political norms on modern life. He comments that it “culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it” (Foucault, 1978, p. 136). Taking a more optimistic view, Johanna Oskala (2012) suggests that bio-power is “essentially protective of life” (p. 71) in the form of social controls that attend to health and wellbeing. In this sense, bio-power can be understood as productive *and* restricting. Foucault links bio-power with economic values when he writes, “... the mechanisms of power are addressed to the body, to life, to what causes it to proliferate, to what reinforces the species, its stamina, its ability to dominate, or its capacity for being used” (p. 147). When a woman tells her family, friends and counsellor that she still loves a man who does her harm, and they respond with admonitions and safety plans, the forces of bio-power are in play. The intentions of people who care for her include the preservation of life, and their commitments to her future wellbeing. In Sam’s story, an unknown woman complains to the bus driver about Sam’s partner. She takes up a stance that is intended to be protective of Sam’s life and safety:

[S]he was, like, “You’re just a bully and you should leave her alone”. He goes “Well, you should just mind your business”, and he was giving the angry voice to her. She was like, “That’s a nice lady and she should just leave you; you should leave him, lady”.

Sam reciprocates by defending this woman’s action, and thanking her.

Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge and Barad’s meditation on agential realism can be thought with and through each other. That is to say, the apparatuses of bio-power take Niels Bohr’s physical-conceptual domain to include the material↔discursive operations of power/knowledge. Disciplinary power – and its extension into bio-power more generally – “orders the body, fixes and constrains movement” (Barad, 1998, p. 99) in diffuse and disparate ways that are linked together. Barad’s claim is that Foucault did not fully appreciate and articulate the inseparability of apparatuses and subjects in the way that new materialist theorists now do. That said: Barad (2007) – as does Foucault – finds that agency is an enactment, across space, not what someone or something has. Agency disturbs and changes possibility. It is doing/being, intra-

actively performed: hence, the inseparability of *agencies* in spacetime. It is incumbent on the ethical practitioner to find the particular and existing possibility for acting responsibly in the moment, for the world's becoming.

The saga of my own car

I add the following story to Alice's and Sam's because there are many threads of narrative and other-than-human materiality that come to bear on the lives of the women I have researched with – and my own – that have ruptured any early ideas I had of a smooth ride, not least of all in relation to cars.

During the period of this research, the car I owned was the target of four malevolent attacks. (Friends had begun to suspect that a neighbouring man, who was subjecting his partner and children to ongoing abuse, was targeting my car.) These four events had the intention and effect, by their perpetrator, to perturb the day-to-day running of the car. Doubtless, they carried other intentions directed at me as owner and driver of the car. But without voice and words, I can only speculate on what these intentions were. Nevertheless, these coordinated actions and intentions represent a “coming together of forces/drives/intensities that produce something” (Mazzei, 2013, p. 108). The third of the four attacks on my car was not immediately obvious as malicious. The first thing I noticed was the empty indicator on my fuel gauge a morning after I had refilled the tank with petrol. I detoured to a filling station, inserted the nozzle, and the pump began its work. Petrol gushed out across the forecourt. It was now obvious that the fuel line had a hole. I drove straight to the automotive repair centre that had been servicing my car for ten years. After the mechanic had completed the repairs, he handed me the oil-rich, blackened, short length of rubber piping he had replaced. The replaced fuel line had been deliberately slashed (most probably with a knife). I returned to my day-to-day professional and personal activities – and my use of the car – taking for granted that, when I turned the ignition key, the car would run smoothly and reliably.

Disturbance/unmooring/Do I dare disturb the universe?¹

Adopting Barad's (2007) meditative question, I ask myself "What fantasy of distance is this?" (p. 396). Just days after the incident in which my car's fuel pipe was slashed, I was weeding the garden. Getting my hands dirty. I had been increasingly concerned about partner violence towards a mother and children living in my neighbourhood.

The neighbouring house squats in silence in the spring sunshine, except for a tap dripping audibly. No children's voices or mother's admonitions. The dripping tap overlaps with months of concerted neighbourly worry for the children and their mother: what has happened to them to produce this daytime silence? and to leave a tap dripping for hours?

I call the Police. The Police attend the house I identify in my call, and later a policeman visits me to report that all is in order. Not long after, comes a directed volley of swearing and shouting through the vertical wooden slats of the fence.

In the moment of being shouted at, the bile rises in my mouth, my heart thuds a drumbeat in my chest: I am overtaken by fear. I retreat to my home, lock the sliding glass door, and take myself through to the back room to sit on the bed, and calm myself. What the body of the car has been subjected to is multiply and manifestly entangled with *this* moment of reconfiguring in *my* body. The composure with which I had gone about addressing the physical marks on the car, having the repairs done and paid for, emerges as a body (a)new: Now my body is shaken and (differently) alert to the violence of each earlier forceful attack on the glass, metal and rubber tubing of the car, as it is to the volume and tone of the sound waves and words that disturb the air of the late summer garden.

All bodies, including but not limited to human bodies, come to matter through the world's iterative intra-activity – its performativity... Differentiating is not about radical exteriority but rather agential separability. That is, differentiating is not about othering and separating

¹ (Eliot, 1974, pp. 3-7)

but on the contrary about making connections and commitments. (Barad, 2007, p. 392)

Subjects and objects are “permeated through and through with their entangled kin”, according to Barad (p. 393), whose words, published in 2007, write my storyline, a world away, in 2014: “the other is not just in one’s skin, but in one’s bones, in one’s belly, in one’s heart, in one’s nucleus, in one’s past and future” (p. 393).

Being alive is always a matter of responding; “affect is what moves us” (Hickey-Moody, 2013, p. 79). I encounter the swearing and shouting within an entanglement of prior moments and events. Now, I am in touch with my car in a quite different way, entangled with it in an ongoing responsiveness that had earlier been somewhat distanced. The pulse of my heart – in that moment of fear – is a salutary reminder of Barad’s proposal that each of our enactments “reconfigures the world in its becoming – and yet they never leave us; they are sedimented into our becoming, they become us” (p. 394). Now I am in touch, as a researcher, in a quite different way. Prior to the swearing and shouting event that shook me out of complacency, I had met with women participants for this study: women in the groups had jointly listened and carefully asked questions of each other about how other lives can be affected by violence, and continuing love, through what Alice calls the “obvious, obvious red flags”:

Alice: You feel it and you absorb it, and then something stronger just takes over.

I earlier attended to my car, absorbed something of the blows the car sustained, and took decisions and action to rectify what needed restoration. I took (partial) accountability for the marks on the body of my car.

In the moment of fear, I found new accountability and responsibility for what matters, *and* “what is excluded from mattering” (Barad, 2007, p. 394). The materiality and discursive practices of the women in the research groups, and mine – including the agential realities of cars – are not in a “relationship of externality to each other” (Barad, 2007, p. 152). Rather, as Barad proposes, we need to take the material world seriously and understand how discourses and

materialities emerge out of/are conjoined in all their fullness, all becoming different as a result of manifold intra-actions. The cross-fire shouting event achieved what no lying awake at night with the women's stories was quite able to do; it set in motion that which becomes impossible to unknow: we (human and other-than-human) are not separate entities and, as a researcher, I cannot observe life around me without disturbing it, and being disturbed by it: "knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from *a direct material engagement with the world*" (Barad, 2007, p. 49). It is not possible to be a "benign facilitator of discovery" (p. 97); rather, there *is* disturbance, and it matters.

A different car – a different methodology

I am now the owner of a different car. I have had to adjust to the space and configurations of the newer vehicle that conveys me into the day-to-day commitments of my present life. The windows of this car are quite different and the blind spots have caught me by surprise, at times. I have had to learn to look for a different colour and registration plate when I seek the car in a car park with other cars. This car and I have gained a measure of safety from random acts of violence that was not the case in my former situation.

I have begun an uneasy relationship with the physics of diffraction. I am compelled by and drawn to a community of material feminist writers who find ourselves shaken up by the mind-bending task of understanding Karen Barad's densely written invitations to meet the universe halfway (not just in the 2007 volume). I read and write to understand what I long ago left behind in relation to the hard sciences, in order to tunnel through the entanglements of human endeavours in love and justice.

that home is not a safe place and an ethos of partnership is a distant dream. “A hunger for more profound conversation can be a gnawing misery” according to Theodore Zeldin (2015, p. 54) and there is a sense of despondency at the edge of what this study found. The ten women who speak through this thesis articulate their disturbance at: a loss of response; repeated tactics of disinterest/avoidance of her; the stifling of speech that emerges from forms of domination; in short, an absence of dialogue from which other forms of violence emanate.

The struggle and hope to speak

Violence against women does not always produce immediate physical injury (Enander, 2010; Goldner et al., 1990; James & MacKinnon, 2010; Johnson, 2008; Laing, 2010; Piispa, 2002; Seuffert, 2002; Stark, 2006; Towns & Adams, 2000; Wood, 2001). The women in this study spoke in many ways of the obstacles to dialogue in their partner relationships.

The utterances that introduce this chapter reappear and speak again as the chapter unfolds, in repercussion of Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1986) analysis of the importance and persistence of the ‘word’...

... which always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely). (p. 127)

The chapter then explores how the women’s struggle to converse with their partners folded differently into the interview conversations in moments of knowing how to go on *with each other* – and with me. In a further re-folding of written words, as the chapter continues, the women emerge with author-ity to speak, their utterances author-ised beyond previously known limits in partner relationship.

Later in this chapter, the women’s utterances are written beside names. In doing this, I honour the specificities of their descriptions and materialised histories even as I recognise the collectivity of voice that they engage across spacetime; with *embodiment* and *collectivity* of voice (Mazzei, 2016). I

maintain the *'and'* in deconstructing this matter of voice and presence: we are material beings who get together and each of us speaks from available discourse. Bakhtin's (1986) analysis of speech genre does not subscribe to a view of the utterance belonging to a single speaker either. Nor does he see the utterance fixed in a moment in time. Dialogical engagements emerge from what *has been* said in anticipation with what *will be* said, in concert with other speakers. There is emergent intelligibility *and* unintelligibility in the performance of ongoing agential intra-action; in this case, as human speech and gesture.

For Barad (2007) discursive practices – including speaking practices – take on specificity and work to reconfigure the world by enacting boundaries and meaning (p. 148). For both Barad and Bakhtin, meaning is neither the property of single words or groups of words, nor can an utterance arrive at finality. In research, words written in a thesis are material↔discursive events, as are words spoken in all the encounters of research work. A spoken utterance is carried on breath. Speech production in the human body emerges from the conglomeration and vibration of air through the lungs, larynx, epiglottis, mouth, tongue and lips. Pitch and tone come about through variation of the body-apparatuses of sound-making. In multiple ways, an utterance is a/live force, a linguistic↔material movement of thought, gesture, speech, between persons and in relation to nonhuman bodies. Words are an expression of meaning-making in and of the world. Words “come from other words, in recurring waves, rising and falling from the linguistic any-point of the superposition of sound and speech, and of silence and noise” (Manning & Massumi, 2014, p. 41). Words become affective and affecting performance that emerge through selection out of a “pressing crowd” (Massumi, 2002, p. 30).

Massumi (2002) points out that intensities (affect) carry traces of past action and context, folds of conserved and repeated pasts that open to the future, “with no present to speak of” (p. 30). A body holds these traces in ways that are sometimes not articulable; hence, autonomically reenacted. As Massumi puts it, “begun but not completed” (p. 30). The lines that make up the poetic form that begin this chapter retrospectively speak to the conserved and repeated exclusion

from partnering hopes the women held: they wanted to talk with their partners and found dialogue out of reach. As they speak in the group interviews, incipient knowing/not knowing is selected for expression, and actualised. Affect continues: the bodies of speaker, listener and reader are drawn into the flow of pain and implicit hope that emerges from the women's participation in the research conversations.

The danger(s) of coercive control

In New Zealand, the legal definition of domestic violence includes repeated physical, sexual, and what is called emotional or psychological, abuse. The latter tactics of control produce what has been called *mental torment* (Piispa, 2002) and include stalking, the injury to relationship of infidelity, lying, threatening phone calls, name-calling, attempts to humiliate, criticism of a partner's appearance, destruction of property, denying access to money, keeping tabs on another person's movements and phone use, non-negotiation, and everyday restrictions that prevent the other from seeing family and friends. From the women I researched with, comes agreement on this point (and with Piispa's study). Overlapping with other research materials cited above, Evan Stark (2009) writes from his own practice about what men do that enacts coercive control of women. His descriptions warrant an extended quote:

It is common in my caseload for men to stalk their partners before or after separation; harass them at work; park outside their job; hold children hostage when a partner goes to the hospital; repeatedly call them at work or at home; leave threatening messages on their cell phones; show up at their new residence at odd hours; perform periodic "house checks" or "inspections"; break in and leave anonymous "calling cards"; demean them to business clients, co-workers, and family members; cancel or run up debt on their credit cards, forge their names on personal checks, and raid their bank accounts; show up unexpectedly at social or family gatherings; move in next door; take a job in the same workplace; appear spontaneously at the children's school or soccer game without notice; check their mail; hide outside their apartments; and hire or solicit friends to watch or follow them. (pp. 130-131)

The accounts by women participants in my study evaluate tactics of lying, surveillance, accusation and constraint as more damaging to partnering and to a

woman's sense of participation than being physically struck. The following passages draw on specificities from women in my study:

Jean: When somebody else is controlling what's going on in your life, who you see, where you go, all those things, you just lose your whole individuality... You know, you do all those things. You bend over backwards, you do things. Like the house used to have to be perfect. Clean, spotless.

Kaye: When I left him, he did the whole stalking thing. He stalked me wickedly. He would follow me to work. He would try and ram me off the road. He would stalk me while I was at work. He ended up being trespassed from my work. He would stand behind trees on my section and pretend that he wasn't there. He would ring and threaten suicide. The police ended up hearing it and they sectioned him to [hospital]. What else? Oh, he's listened to me have sex outside my bedroom window. I didn't know that until months later and then he told me he got off of that sort of thing and I was like, oh what! Mentally, I felt imprisoned in my own life, I really did... I personally find, from my experiences, the emotional and mental and psychological is so much worse. It's had more damage on me than any physical. Physical, that shit heals in days, weeks. Emotional takes a fucking lifetime.

Alana: You go cheat on me, you emotionally hurt me, that side of things, I'm an absolute wreck. But you physically hit me, you can do whatever you want to me, as long as it's not my face – the minute you touch my face, I ring the police. Partly because I can't hide it. I cannot hide the face. I can hide little bruises, like up here and stuff like that, but you can't hide a lot of facial bruises.

Bea: He was coming: he was chasing me. And I thought, I'm going to get in first 'cause my first husband used to say to me, if you ever hit me back, it better be a good one, and I thought, right, this is gonna be a good one... I was never afraid of him physically after that. It was all mental, emotional abuse after that. 'Cause I guess he knew I was going to fight back if he tried to physically do anything to me.

Jenny: But the other tactics continued?

Bea: Yeah. All the controlling stuff. I went into the garage, I was actually so close to having a breakdown, I was actually going to the doctor. And I got into the car in the garage and I don't know what made me look, but there was a blackboard. He'd put a blackboard up in the garage, and he had dates and times of the time that I'd spent with my girlfriend. He'd been spying at me from the factory... he would accuse me of having affairs.

Jenny: So was there infidelity in your marriage?

Bea: At the end. His infidelity, not mine.

Jenny: Would you say infidelity is another form of violence against the relationship or not?

Bea: Well yeah, it is. You make promises to each other, one way or another, whether you're married or whether you choose each other without a ceremony, and anything that damages that relationship's abuse.

Ashleigh: D enjoyed doing what he was doing so much 'cause he knew that none of it was happening and none of it was true what he was coming out with. He just enjoyed doing it. He loved it.

Jean: Tormenting.

A sense of shock pervades these women's accounts that a male partner will hurt their bodies and, more significantly, try to control their lives in assumed and degrading ways. Each of the ten women participants made many attempts not to provoke a partner's further violence. A finding of my study is that one apparatus through which a woman tries to adjust to a man's demands, and act on her own commitment to continue in a partner relationship, is to censor what she says. In declining to speak or having her conversational participation curtailed, silence becomes one strategy of power/knowledge by a woman, designed to prevent further violence by an intimate partner.

Violence and cover-up

Michel Foucault's (1980) proposition is that power/knowledge relations

don't take the sole form of prohibition and punishment, but are of multiple forms; ... that there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised. (p. 142)

During the group interviews, I noticed a recurring predicament of how each woman was silenced by a fear of reprisal by her partner intra-active with a reluctance that he face criminal consequences if she reports his violence to the Police. One constraint against speaking was in the form of being asked to or incited to lie about body injuries that a woman had sustained. Sam told the group: "The police came. I was speaking to a police lady and she was asking 'Are you physically abused?' and I would say 'no'". When Alana heard Sam's account, she spoke about her own history of *not-saying*: "You lie to the police. I remember he threw my head into a ranch slider when we were living in town and it was all

lacerated down the side, down here, and the neighbours called the police. I remember saying ‘no, nothing happened, I slipped’”. Chapter 5 features Sam’s story of how her jaw was broken when her partner assaulted her. What emerges from that violent event are cascades of human/nonhuman intra-action during Sam’s bus trip to the hospital. There comes a critical/bifurcation/turning point in which the lying strategy no longer holds for Sam. She reports what has happened to the Police. The way Massumi (2002) conceptualises the singularity of such a moment is in how a body’s resonance with multiple levels of potential comes to a point of selection. Massumi proposes that a moment of “volition and cognition” starts to differentiate:

expectation and suspense, body depth and epidermis, past and future, action and reaction, happiness and sadness, quiescence and arousal, passivity and receptivity... not as binary oppositions, but as resonating levels (p. 33)

The expression-event is an emergent specificity. The intensity of this event is accompanied by the experience of the event; it cannot but be experienced. It catapults Sam into invention – “I’m going to actually tell my family now... I’ve had enough of lying”. Turning points are, as Foucault proposes, “all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised” (1980, p. 142).

Even though there is resistance threaded through the above accounts of physical violence (and women’s and men’s efforts to conceal them) a stark asymmetry in who can have a say, and to what extent, is produced by downplaying (Kaye’s word) what is happening.

Jenny	Why do you think lying is somehow a violence?
Alana	It’s keeping things from people that actually care.
Kaye	It’s downplaying what’s really happening. It’s downplaying the truth of what’s really going on, to keep the peace.
Alana	Yeah.
Sam	Or for me, it’s not making me look like a failure.

Alana, Kaye and Sam have their reasons for declining to speak about the abuse they are subjected to in their partner relationships. These reasons may be influenced both by the scepticism their accounts are met with (see Epstein &

Goodman, 2019) and by the consequences of telling it like it is. In different group interviews, the women participants speak of times when they censor what they say to partners, to familiar people who might have reason to be concerned for their safety and wellbeing, to professionals such as counsellors, and those in the Police and justice system. Women may also (know that they will) face a discrediting response to *how* they speak up about violence. If their bodies are affected by physical assault and/or long-term harm by tactics of control, coercion and threat that come under the umbrella term of psychological abuse, women's accounts of what has been done to them may be mis-recognised and discredited because of the fragmented or dispassionate way they tell the story (Epstein & Goodman, 2019). Multiple factors come into play. The hearer may not have (enough) knowledge of intimate partner abuse to know why her narrative is told the way it is, something that Gaile Pohlhaus calls "willful hermeneutical ignorance" (Kidd, Medina, & Pohlhaus, 2017, p. 17). Women subjected to intimate partner violence may sense this and withdraw from speaking further. Women may (rightly) believe that they are at greater risk when they decide to leave their partners and seek judicial help (Robertson, Busch, D'Souza, Sheung, et al., 2007a) as has been the case for women petitioning the court for Protection Orders in New Zealand. Another dilemma that incites women to downplay infidelity or other partner violence is eviction if she is a co-tenant or faces having to leave a jointly-owned home (P. N. Smith, 2017). Materially (discursively) the cover-up of violence takes different trajectories when women partners' lives are affected by violence, although there may come a time when the cover-up becomes redundant, as was the case for Sam above.

Voice inhibited: "His opinions and his ways counted more"

The following sections of the chapter follow the contours of women's vocal performances as they describe limited positions to have a decision-making voice with their partners, to say 'no', and to disagree. These positions are entangled with a male partner's financial position in the domestic arrangement, as well as materialisation of what a body-voice can do if it is bigger and stronger. From a Feminist Standpoint, a male partner's position is discursively privileged through

ideas (including religious ideas) of ‘submitting’ to him, including sexually, as was the case for the woman in Chapter 5 who kept a knife under her pillow. In response to the violence of curtailment and surveillance by their partners, the women of this study spoke of responsive resistance (Wade, 1997) that took the form of moving away or wanting silence: “My opinion didn’t count. I didn’t have anything left to say”.

In any situation where silence or moving away results from exchanges between people, it is important to investigate how privileged positions are operating (B. Davies, 1991; B. Davies et al., 2002; L. Davies & Ford-Gilboe, 2009). For instance, what is the discursive↔material force of gendered privilege in heterosexual partner relationships when a physically injured woman is asked ‘are you physically abused’ and she says ‘no’? I asked Bea specifically what effect there was of a differentiation in body size:

Jenny Tell me how big was he? ‘Cause you’re what, five three [160 cm]?
Bea Oh I’m five foot [152 cm].
Jenny Five foot, yeah.
Bea And he would be probably five eleven [180 cm]. And quite a big
 guy.

In this exchange, Bea and I were acknowledging what is intra-active in a partner relationship when one body is materially taller, more weighty, more muscled and, therefore, physically stronger. I wanted to know what effect this situation has on voicing a viewpoint when partnering has been affected by violence. Specificities such as size of bodies matter and enact affective violence in heterosexual partner relationship by maintaining non-linguistic inequity within everyday taken-for-granted hierarchical relations (Hook & Wolfe, 2018). Combined, and overlapping, with other arrangements in the relationship, a man’s bigger body is a potentiality: it *can* set in motion further (re)configurations of the relationship when overlaid with actions of diminishment. Including diminishing voice.

A materiality of distance

Distance can be geographical and materially intra-active in how voice is stopped. Six of the ten women participants lived, for at least a time, in rural settings with some form of estrangement and remoteness from significant family and friends. Using Barad's (2007) terms for causal intra-action, living at significant distance from community and amenities becomes "an ontological performance of the world" (p. 149). As was the case in Bronwyn Davies' account of a marriage (see *Plateau Four*, Wyatt et al., 2011), the women of this study were minimally consulted in decisions to live in remote locations and suffered disconnection from significant social networks. On their account, this isolation from even the simplest of daily needs and conversations was difficult to navigate and difficult to speak up about.

Mary: I didn't have a telephone, I didn't have a car and I lived out in the middle of nowhere. I was moved out into the country 40kms from anyone with no access to a telephone, I didn't have a cell phone, I didn't have nappies, and was left where if I could get into town I was in there in a state of begging.

The asymmetry of this situation is starkly put. To have neither a vehicle to physically convey you beyond the driveway of your home nor the means to convey your voice outside the confines of your immediate home setting was, for Mary, an imposed isolation, a violation of voice and agency. Not having a car, telephone or nappies are emergent material↔discursive performances of the partner relationship she had earlier entered into. In the timespace of speaking about the situation in the group interview, Mary unfolds an articulation that, on her account, was not possible in previous lived moment(s) of affective intensity (Massumi, 2002). Mary's and the other women's stories in this chapter intra-act an iterative experimentation with the proposition that limits to expression in a partner relationship form an aperture for further abuse of women's lives.

(Dis)agreeing: An ambivalence

In the research interviews, the women explicitly and implicitly alluded to the relationally destructive ploy by their (male) partners of ongoing refusal to talk

about and negotiate every-day and every-night life: this is a tactic that is as equally effective at closing the door (Foucault, 1982) on a power relation as physical abuse. In the interviews, I raised the question of how partners might find ways to respectfully disagree. I had in mind the kinds of disagreement that continue the circulation of power/knowledge, rather than producing violence and/or silence.

Entering the dialogue as an outsider/insider to the lived experience of the women's dilemma of how and when and whether it is possible to say 'no', I posed a question in the form of an hypothesis. I did this on the basis that an hypothesis seeks further possibility for that which is not-yet-said, on the premise that what might be said is also unfinalisable (Rober, 2002, 2005). What if both partners were to engage in conversation in which there may be disagreement with a view to being heard, and influential in what might happen next? I asked:

I'm talking about partner relationships where people have a say, *both* have a say... And they can certainly disagree, it's not about we all have to come to the point of agreeing on everything.

My intention was to investigate what invitations and hospitality (Davies, 1991; Drewery, 2005; Hydén, 2005) might have been available to women to speak candidly of their views in ordinary conversation with their partners. What follow below are six luminous and unambiguous responding utterances by the women on how they found themselves outside the notion/practice of putting forward a point of view, especially if it diverges from an intimate partner's point of view.

One woman after another spoke to situations in which there were prohibitions on saying that produced not saying and unsaying (Trinh, 1988) that have been their experience of violated intimacy and partnering. These limits fall under the description of: resorting to "obedience"; being talked over, "nothing left to say" and, thus, no longer talking; not knowing that speaking in disagreement "even exists"; having experienced that saying the wrong thing might set something

[more violent] off; the “silent treatment”; “no compromising”. Theirs is a story (still) played out in a malign way: at home.

Alice: I don't know what that's like; the idea that you can be mutual, or respect each other being different and stuff... he loved that I was so obedient to him.

Judy: If there was any hint that I was not agreeing, he would talk over me, so that just made me think, well, my opinion doesn't count. I didn't have anything left to say.

Kim: I guess I've never seen that in operation, so I wouldn't even know. It's sort of like exploring what feels okay for me still. Yeah, I've never really seen that in action. I haven't seen anyone, I haven't been in anyone's home, I haven't seen that to even know whether that even exists.

Bea: I never knew ever what was going to frigging happen... The stupidest little thing would set him off, and I would say something and I'd think, oh God, I've just said the wrong thing, and nothing would happen. But the stupidest little thing would set him off, one word. So yeah, unpredictability, you just never knew.

Ashleigh: I was never allowed to express anything. Nothing. And if I did I'd get the silent treatment, it could be for up to two weeks. If I expressed anything that he deemed that made him look bad, no matter how I would try to think about approaching it without making him feel bad but it was always just a no-no. We never talked about anything.

Jean: His opinions and his ways counted more, so if you tried to have an opinion on that, or say anything about that, or try and change it, or add your bit to it, there was no compromising. There was no, oh hey, if we do dah dah dah. It didn't work like that.

Alana: You couldn't do anything. To this day, I can't. Even dad said, “does he have that strong a hold on you that, to this day, what he says is what happens?” We used to end up fighting because I'd just say nothing. You'd just agree with him, oh yes, you're right, yeah whatever.

The narrative arc of these utterances demonstrates how cultural practices of male privilege/domination work to maintain an established and taken-for-granted hierarchy in heterosexual partner relationships (Morris, 2015). They also offer a clue to how an 'outside' utterance – such as mine was – may introduce a thought-possibility of experimenting with relationship differently across timespacematter. By inviting dialogue in the group interview on the thorny matter of disagreement, my question diffracts the limits on speaking that

the women had encountered with their partners. The women's candid engagement with my line of enquiry, selections of which are written above, are situated in discourse (Byrne & McCarthy, 1999; Foucault, 1972, 1989; Winslade, 2005) and actualised in the group conversations. As the women participated in the research dialogues, their participation is performed as (retrospective) resistance to the position call offered by intimate male partners. The women begin to take up the word that "existed in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions... and make it [their] own (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). As the to-and-fro emerges in the interviews, the women's utterances become place-markers in a chain of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986) that contributes to and generates a polyphony of voices in dialogue.

Dialogue

In this section, I investigate further with Russian scholar, Bakhtin (1895-1975), for a reading of what the women are signalling in these materials.

Bakhtin uses the translated word 'utterance' in much the same way Foucault uses 'énoncé' (1994). That is, words are not simply free-floating sounds; they carry a social purpose and force, a "stimulus to action" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 86), an illocutionary force. Speech emerges from cultural contexts, carrying intention and recognisability that are not the sole invention of the speaker, but whose expressive intonation of an utterance may well be unique in the moment. An utterance relies on and replies from within a range of possibilities to what has already been said, in anticipation of what might come next. In other words, an utterance belongs within a wider speaking community. It is borrowed from past users, and bequeathed to future users.

Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 91)

Dialogues (spoken and written), in which utterances are alive with invention and intention, confer author-ity on those responding in the to-and-fro. Bakhtin observes, however, that utterances with greater authority will "set the tone"

(1986, p. 88), a point that I return to below. Thus, there are degrees of assimilation *and* singularity in persons' speech, as is the case with the utterances from the data materials above that begin the chapter and diffract through the text as the chapter unfolds. Each woman speaks from within specificities that materialise as meaningful articulations of the phenomena we have been interested to know (more) about.

On the possibility of partnering in dialogue, and mutual respect for a different point of view, three braids of overlapping expression emerge from the research materials (see the poem "I'm saying" that begins this chapter):

Braid one:

- I don't know what that's like [respectful dialogue];
- I guess I've never seen that in operation, so I wouldn't even know;
- I haven't seen that to even know whether that even exists.

Braid Two:

- His opinions and his ways counted more, so if you tried to have an opinion on that, or say anything about that, or try and change it, or add your bit to it, there was no compromising.
- He loved that I was so obedient to him.

Braid Three:

- He would talk over me... I didn't have anything left to say;
- I was never allowed to express anything. Nothing... We never talked about anything.

The selected utterances for each of these braids were made in different group conversations by women who had sometimes heard other participants speak to my line of enquiry about different viewpoints, and sometimes had not. As I arrange them here, I show how they resound with Bakhtin's proposal that an utterance echoes and reverberates within a "corridor of voices" (Bakhtin, 1986). From the meeting of these particular expressions emerges a layering of similar and singular description, intonations of (unique) response to others' participations in the dialogue.

Direct respondents are being addressed in these utterances (Bakhtin, 1981; Bakhtin, 1986; Rober, 2005). As researcher and speaker of this particular line of enquiry, I am addressed by the women as they speak; as are the other women of the group interviews. So, too, are the women's male partners whose forms of control in the partner relationship have "set the tone" for silence. The effect of

partner prohibitions on speaking is a denial of dialogue. Hence Bakhtin's (1986) analysis of the importance and persistence of the "word":

... which always wants to be *heard*, always seeks responsive understanding, and does not stop at *immediate* understanding but presses on further and further (indefinitely). (p. 127)

On Bakhtin's terms, each expressive intonation seeks to go further in understanding. A moment of listening acknowledgement offers the word a future. The word wants to be heard, and alongside other utterances in this research, the word can *now* be heard. Implicit in the spoken words written into this chapter are the women's emergent and affective performance of participation. Time folds: efforts by each woman to be heard (with) in a partner relationship seek responsiveness in the group interviews. As other women listen, they actualise what it is like to have a different point of view respected: they "see [interest and dialogue] in operation" (Kim). No-one talks over the other in the way Judy describes her partner's mode of over-speaking. Together, the women talk about so many aspects of their lives. They hold opinions. In the group meetings, it was this very engagement that I intended. And it is my hope that the embodied and affecting performance of dialogue in the groups will provoke multiple potentials for the women's futures.

Under Bakhtin's terms, others, past and future, are addressed in an utterance. How might one conceive a discursive context for partners' dialogues? For instance, men, in relation to the women they live with, are addressing a partner *and* a wider audience in their utterances. My conjecture is that male culture produced by patriarchy is being addressed in the speech action of men whose utterances – wittingly or unwittingly – shut down a response from women partners and women do not have access to what may be possible to do in these moments. The utterances of braid one above:

- I don't know what that's like;
- I guess I've never seen that in operation, so I wouldn't even know;
- I haven't seen that to even know whether that even exists

suggest that Kim and Alice, and the men they formed partner relationships with, were at a loss to know *how to go on* in dialogues of responsiveness (Bakhtin,

1986; Rober, 2005; Winslade, 2003). Individual women are not the originators of this uncertainty and hesitation. Accumulated actions (material↔discursive) lay down the conditions of possibility in situations where women like Bea “never knew ever what was going to frigging happen” and may, like Kim and Alice, have not known that respectful disagreeing with a partner “even exists”.

The second braid materialises modes of (unearned) male privilege:

- His opinions and his ways counted more, so if you tried to have an opinion on that, or say anything about that, or try and change it, or add your bit to it, there was no compromising;
- He loved that I was so obedient to him.

The phenomena of assumed advantage that become normal and normalised in the everyday and everynight lives of men and women partners are central to research by Bob Pease (2010) and Brian Morris (2015). Even if a man does not recognise his assumption of superior points of view, his inhospitality to the opinion of a woman partner has effects, one of which is a silencing effect. One of Morris’s research participants, Sandra, protests this effect and contends that “The only thing which needs to happen is that men and women are coming together and talking together” (p. 209). Sandra’s hopes diffract through timespacematter with Jean’s effort to participate with an opinion, to “add her bit”. In a different group interview, Alice uses the word “obedient” to signal her recognition of the conferred dominant position of her male partner. The unsaid of Alice’s protest is that she, too, yearns for the mutuality and embrace of difference that does not assume obedience to a taken-for-granted male authority; for the sake of peace, a woman will comply with a man’s position.

An overtly excluding tactic is described by the women in Braid three:

- He would talk over me... I didn’t have anything left to say;
- I was never allowed to express anything. Nothing... We never talked about anything.

Dialogue is at risk when one person closes the possibilities for meaningful and respectful engagement. Glenn Lerner (2015) implies that not be “*astonished*” by another’s unique and different worlds, words, and suffering, risks the loss of dialogue. Judy’s claim of being “talked over” and Ashleigh’s of not being “allowed to express anything” precludes dialogue. Far from an invitation of astonishment,

there is not even a starting point to talk together. Imposed silence does not invite difference, coordination and partnering. As Ashleigh insists, the violence of “not being allowed to express anything” is an act of exclusion that stops participation: it does not make (enough) room for the woman’s voice, and for whatever practical, embodied knowledge the woman has of how to go on in the partnership. Taking this point further: one diffractive outcome of the imposition by men of their opinions/assumed privileged on the lives of women partners is that men come to suffer the action of women’s withdrawal. They too are affected by the loss of multiple potentialities for dialogue. Stopping the to-and-fro mo(ve)ments of the relationship depotentialises a future creative involvement by both partners.

In the interviews, Alice, Judy, Kim, Mary, Bea, Ashleigh, Jean, Sam, Kaye and Alana move towards a *practice* of involvement and participation, in which interlocutors are continually creating the possibility of *knowing how to go on* in the ‘chain’ of dialogue: “Any utterance is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69). Over the course of the research conversations, each of the women named here are audibly and visibly becoming dialogical (Seikkula, 2011) with the question of how partners might talk together. In taking up a disposition of involvement and candour, they respond to each other’s movements in the conversation. They take turns. They listen to each other. They each invite and assume what Bakhtin calls “a responsive attitude” (p. 76).

Yes, we can!

What the women described in their home lives with partners was their partners’ imposition of an authority to determine rightness and wrongness. Research by Tore Dag Bøe et al. (2015) makes use of Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1981) conception of the spoken word as answering, responding and anticipating across past, moment and future, with each utterance. What these researchers found that has relevance to the following sections of this chapter is the importance of an invitational attentiveness for dialogue to go on. Far from *not knowing what to do*, much of the storying of the interview conversations was exploratory, criss-crossing the room

with questions and different perspectives. The conditions of possibility that began from my first meeting with each woman and subsequent gatherings with each other produced dialogical practices and a different freedom to speak. In the focus group forum, women speaking (and sometimes disagreeing!) was accomplished with respect and care, as the following engagement between Alice and Judy shows.

Alice offers a purposeful interruption

Judy and Alice meet me for their first group interview. Not far into the conversation, Judy tells a story of an event in her marriage that had happened ten years earlier. Judy describes the lead-up to going to bed, one night, as “horrible, nasty shit” to which she responded by “just hopping out of bed and going to the spare room”. She had thought she might “retaliate with words”, but didn’t. Judy’s partner came to the spare room and forcefully told her to “get back to bed, hurry up, and get back to fucking bed”. Judy refused. “I just laid there, like on my side, curled up. So he laid into me. He stood above me and absolutely nailed into my leg... started punching”.

On her account, the violence of being physically punched scared Judy. The appearance of their daughter intervened; Judy’s partner took their daughter back to bed. Judy takes up her story:

Then he left me there. I was just in agony, crying, and about twenty minutes or so later he came in and picked me up and carried me back to the bedroom and he made me have sex.

Judy describes feeling “sick”. Her partner “didn’t think he’d raped me; he was making *up* to me”. Nor did he recognise his actions as violent. Judy continues: “I said to him you *were* violent. You’ve just hit me about ten fucking times”.

Judy’s utterance “you *were* violent” exposes and protests her partner’s violent hitting/punching whilst (simultaneously) not activating a reference to rape. I ask Judy what her position is on whether this was rape:

Jenny: What about you, Judy? Would *you* say he raped you?
Judy replies with simple conviction: “He did”.

As Alice and I bear witness to this terrible story, Judy takes up language that names the violence for what it is. With her partner, however, Judy’s judicious saying/not saying *both* anticipates the possibility of further violence *and* declares an objection to abusive action. The unsaid of rape diffracts Judy’s earlier stated belief that her husband does not see his action as rape, but of “making up” to her for his previous verbal and physical abuse.

Judy’s story reverberates with other women’s stories of sexual violence and resistance. Open defiance and protest may threaten further attack. A woman may know that to overtly name violent sex, “rape” – sexual exploitation without consent, against her will and wellbeing – may be a dangerous move (Buchwald et al., 2005; Gavey, 2005). Language matters and matter matters. Persons who are wrongfully harmed, as Judy was, may represent their story in ways that resist further violence on the grounds that the perpetrator of that violence wants his violence concealed and does not want to take responsibility for it (Coates & Wade, 2007).

The next morning, Judy asked her partner, “Can you help me out [of bed]?”. She continues her narrative with Alice and me, to explain this request. “I could barely move, and I had to milk the whole herd [of cows] on my own. I had to draft cows out and then do other shit and get them all in”. In her petition for help to get out of bed, Judy opens a space for her partner’s possible restitution. In the unfolding drama, there is a lack of response from him, and dialogue is suspended.

In the interview, Judy’s story breaches the boundaries of what our women-bodies know-and-don’t-know about shouting, punching and rape. When the space/place of cruelty is the bedroom, a place of potentiality for rest and loving expressions of sexuality, the bedroom becomes a place of danger. Through the apparatus of Judy’s story, we are catapulted towards felt intensity.

A research conversation (re)animates dialogue

“Dialogue is by no means a safe or secure relation” (Emerson in Rober, 2005, p. 386). This is worth remembering. When Judy addressed her partner about his violent treatment of her, she was met with disregard: After “he laid into me... he left me there”. “He made me have sex... he didn’t think he’d raped me”. Although she persists in trying to initiate response, there is an absence of answering participation from him.

The utterances Judy and Alice offer each other next are dramatically (re)sourced (MacIntyre, 2013), and constitute, under Bakhtin’s (1986) terms, knowing how to go on in dialogue.

Judy	I couldn’t tell anybody, I hid my bruises from him because I didn’t want to make him feel guilty.
Alice	Did you say you didn’t want to make <i>him</i> feel guilty?
Judy	Yes. Stupid eh.
Alice	No, that’s not what I meant. I was just noticing what he did and what you did.

Alice’s moment of acknowledgement is a mutual search for ways to meet each other in a practical and embodied way. Alice cannot know the full affective potential (Massumi, 2002) of her question “Did you say you didn’t want to make *him* feel guilty?” and the following statement that she was “noticing what he did and what you did”. What Alice said – *and* how she said it – offers compassionate witness (Weingarten, 2000, 2003) to Judy’s dilemma and resourcefulness. Alice is purposefully acknowledging of what Judy has been through and seeks to understand Judy’s action to hide her bruises. In a singular moment, Alice’s body is activated to respond with a question, an affecting performance which materialises a solidarity between Alice, Judy and me.

The pain of the original event – the physical injury and immobility that a person must navigate as Judy did – are compounded whenever there is a lack of compassionate response from the perpetrator and/or bystanders. Women like

Judy may be in agony, and cry. They may also try to hide what is going on, and not know why.

Ten years after her long night of pain, Judy finds she can tell somebody her story and is met with a responsiveness in Alice that was not forthcoming from her partner. Alice does not unquestioningly accept a conclusion that Judy is “stupid” to hide her bruises and protect from guilt a man who struck her with such force, then raped her. In this way, Alice’s question disturbs the long and terrible silence that surrounds this event. She refuses to be an accomplice to the lack of compassionate response; nor does Alice agree that a violent abuser of her newly-met interlocuter be absolved of his crimes.

Embodying participation

Judy tells her story and Alice is compelled to speak. A moment of radical amazement passes through me at the attunement of Alice’s engagement. I am an actively affected witness with/in this dialogue. Both insider and outsider to Judy’s story and Alice’s question, the resonance and dissonance of Judy’s account begins to reverberate in the embodied histories of my own partnering experience, and the many other accounts of violence against women partners I have heard. Writing about affect, Massumi (2002) proposes that affect arises unbidden “to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is” (p. 35) and this is how I theorise what becomes of Alice and me as we engage materially ↔ dialogically with Judy.

On Bakhtin’s terms (1981, 1986), both Judy and Alice would speak differently in different circumstances: That is, Judy’s account is not only determined by the dialogical situation (the interview questions and the place we meet) but also by her audience, those she addresses in the present, past and future. As partner in *the present(ing)* conversation, Alice contributes a different chain-link in the storyline and, therefore, to a possible different-future-version of Judy’s story.

Emotional response emerges from multiple intensities as differentiated “captured” expression, functioning as disorientation and disturbance (Massumi, 2002). Something remains unactualised and elusive in that captured moment, as unanswered potential. I register waves of outrage+compassion+fear at the trajectory of violence-upon-violence that Judy has endured. Like Judy, I feel sick. Each time the story is in front of me, it is *in* me; knotting my insides, and breaking into other moments of my life without notice.

I find that “[t]here is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then” (Barad, 2014, p. 168). I listen to Judy’s voice as she speaks; I listen again and again, to the recording; I stare at the words in the transcript; I sink into my body’s visceral recoil and tension at what is done to her. I want not to have heard this story. The disturbance does not go away with time. Sometimes it intensifies. Kaethe Weingarten describes moments of vulnerability that produce connection, made possible by the willingness of listeners: “voice is contingent on who listens with what attention and attunement. Voice depends on witnessing” (2000, p. 392). Alice and I know in our bones that moments such as the one Judy has been speaking about, are too onerous and painful to do alone.

For now – a placemaker

This moment in the research has a vital luminosity that has not faded since it came about. It carries a sense of exceeding the terrible events of violence Judy describes, and the lack of response by her partner that followed. When women try to leave the scene of “horrible nasty shit” for the refuge of the spare bed, as Judy did, they may not know they are raising the temperature. What looks useful and functional for (future) harmony, may be redundant, or dangerous. The story is disturbing and shocking to Alice and me, and to my supervisors, and may evoke this affecting mo(ve)ment in future readers. It is fraught with danger and pain. It raises our hackles and we wonder what to do. Judy’s telling, however, brings to life a moment of (com)passionate interest as we actively respond to and connect to her, and to what she is saying. We offer no moral platitude; we

join with Judy in rewriting history in a profound moment of respect and safe passage; dialogue in action.

Kim protests

In one of Kim's utterances above, she makes it known that she has not ever seen safe disagreement "in operation". She situates this not-knowing specifically in her partner relationship whilst using the word 'never' for expressive intensity: "I've never really seen that in action". In the following selected fragment, however, Kim engages me in an exploratory disagreement; exploratory in the sense that she imagines a different response by her interlocutor(s) in this setting. Stating a different point of view has been partially made possible by the other interview participant, Mary, and me, as attuned and attentive listeners. Kim has come to believe that we are prepared to be different listeners to her utterances. For Kim, this invites her to be a different narrator and interlocutor.

- Jenny That's my question. How come love continues – and we're recognising it does – when you've been subject to... Even last night and yesterday, a kind of unreliability? M says he will arrive at 12 and arrives at five, bringing dinner. There were things you had a deal with him about, and were let down. But you're saying that love does continue...
- Kim Yeah, I feel inside of me there was a shift and I think it's because I think you're telling me what to do. From that, it's like even that, when you were reading out what I said, it's like, oh, she's telling me what to do. I've got to be protective of this.
- Jenny When you hear that now, do you hear me summarising what you said earlier?
- Kim No. I hear you telling me what to do. That's what it feels like.
- Jenny So might that be happening in a counselling context? [Kim: Yeah.]
That you're hearing the counsellor telling you what to do?
- Kim Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I just want to reflect on that.

In my turn, as I ask questions of Kim, I am reaching for some clues about a continuity of love in the face of unreliability. (Other accounts in the interviews with Kim and Mary include strong claims about the injurious effects of unpredictability and I am curious about how Kim can simultaneously account for her commitment to love with an expression of dismay at her ex-husband's recent act of unreliability as a co-parent). Kim makes a dialogical move to critique my

participation as a researcher – as it resonates with a counselling experience – both of which have evoked a protective response towards her intimate partner(ship) arising as protest at a relational tactic that she objects to: “being told what to do”. A little later in the interview, Kim speaks about a conversation with her daughter in which they both identify their objection to being told what to do. Kim tells her daughter: “I feel the same way, yeah, I’m connecting with you here... [your father] constantly tells me what to do”. Kim then tells Mary and me, “The whole relationship was about getting told what to do”. Respectful differing is offered and received in the dialogical moment between Kim and me above in ways that Kim says were not available to her in her partner relationship. In her engagement with me, Kim takes a stand for her own position in a clear, direct manner. Such difference and differing is vital and life-giving if an emerging story lays claim to how persons “become uniquely abled on account of all they have been through” (White, 2007, p. 75), a starting point for which may be noticing what one no longer wants to put up with.

Not one but many silences

Mary takes the thread of dialogue above into related territory. She speaks of differentiating what she will say and with whom she will say it, in order to safeguard her own and her children’s lives:

We’ve always got to be on guard ‘cause we give our power away when we give away information... there’s things that are guarded, definitely, that probably never get told to a counsellor and never get told to anyone but friends or someone who is trustworthy.

Mary makes the point that friendship may offer a more trustworthy response than she can expect in forums such as counselling: “there’s things that are guarded, definitely, that probably never get told to a counsellor and never get told to anyone but friends or someone who is trustworthy”. Mary speaks with others by the use of the word “we” in this utterance. In addressing her comment to me, a counsellor, Mary invites me to take note of her lived experience and that of others who engage with counselling. She may harbour a hope that my listening will translate to action and consequent change in how counsellors can engage

with women in this territory of love and violence in partner relationships. Michael White (1995) addresses the question of accountability for how power is exercised in therapy:

I think it's an error to believe that therapy can ever be totally egalitarian, because the very structure of this context builds in what might be referred to as a power differential. To blur this distinction... would make it possible for therapists to ignore the special moral and ethical responsibilities associated with their position. However, taking this into account, I do believe that we should do what we can to make it very difficult for that power differential to have a toxic or negative effect" (p. 70).

Responding with and inviting a spirit of enquiry is vital to dialogical (ethical) practice. I contend that this principle of therapeutic enquiry applies in partner relationship. Morris's (2015) companion thesis on relational subjectivity in heterosexual couples adopts a *Just Therapy* model of partnership accountability in which "The best judges of injustice are the groups that have been unjustly treated"; to that end "women are accorded the role of guardians of gender equity" (Tamasese & Waldegrave, 1994, p. 55). In response to what Kim and Mary are intimating: when power is exercised from a position of therapeutic privilege in counselling work, accountability for addressing power should be taken up by counsellors. And, when power is exercised from a position of gender privilege in partner relationship, the accountability for addressing male privilege should be taken up by men.

I take a Foucauldian position in understanding Kim's and Mary's discernment of how power is being exercised when they "get told what to do" and, subsequently, how they work out to whom, and what they will say, about their lives. Foucault does not see a strict boundary between what is said or not said. Rather, he is of the view – as Mary seems to be – that there are differing ways and places to say and not say things. Foucault (1978) writes about how discretion is exercised by persons – "the things one declines to say" (p. 27) – as part of an overall strategy: "There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses" (p. 27). Foucault has in mind, that power is not evenly distributed. As Foucault (1978) puts it, "Relations of power-knowledge are not static forms of distribution, they are 'matrices of

transformations'... subjected to constant modifications, continual shifts" (p. 99). Knowing this, my position as a feminist narratively-informed researcher and counsellor is that power is in play when it is exercised both ways, as distinct from moves that seek to dominate or force or silence the other. To be deliberately open to the participation of others is in the spirit of dialogue (Anderson, 2007; Anderson, 2012; Rober, 2005). To meet each other (and the universe halfway, (Barad, 2007), is an ongoing justice-doing "because we have not delivered on a just society" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 19). One such action for justice is to witness and engage with active resistance by persons who are subject to forms of oppression that may silence them (Wade, 1997; White, 2004; Winslade, 2017). John Winslade proposes a celebration of the myriad ways people act to thwart oppression as a "project of becoming" (p. 20) as persons ongoingly invest in and invent new ways of living, rather than "a journey to the promised land" (p. 21).

Invitations to conversation

I consider the emergent findings of this chapter to be pivotal in this thesis. Perhaps I would say that, given that my professional practice is one where talk between people is a principal mode of expression. Barad (2008) contests "the excessive power granted to language" (p. 121) and I agree. In this thesis and in this chapter, I want matter to matter, and I want it to be understood that words actualise partnership as/with/by affective performance.

The *discursive practice* of dialogue is what is at stake, not a linguistic representation. Taking Foucault's analysis in how discourse is connected to material bodies, Barad extends on his proposals in her posthumanist performativity thesis. Foucault (1978) writes that: "far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another... but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion" (p. 152). Words and bodies intra-actively *do* things. "[W]ord and world are tied to each other" (Barad, 2007, p.

144) in ways that do not stand still. Finding what is awry, capricious, distorted, on track, dynamic and creative in (the apparatus of) conversation starts with the kind of noticing that emerged from this study.

The ten women in the participant groups all speak to the inhibitions and constraining conditions they faced in their efforts to talk with their partners. In various ways, they all faced multiple controls on their speech, which produce a lack of responsive/dialogical possibility. Waves of different accounts of these limits radiate and spread into the group conversations, into transcripts and letters, into supervision consultations, and chapters of the thesis. Interference patterns begin to emerge. Not-knowing becomes know-how: affective and affecting performance of respect cuts/together with historical narrative. We materialise and embody the word(s). Some of the women's stories – for instance, Judy's story of a long night of pain – are met (halfway) with a listening and acknowledging response that may have been yearned for from a partner. On Bakhtin's (1986) terms, the chain of utterances that follows will converge and diverge along different trajectories. It is my hope that each of the women are now finding forums for respectful dialogue, and that this study can credibly promote ways to address the kind of talk between heterosexual couples that is inclusive, just and connecting.

An absent but implicit yearning for dialogue intra-acts with the conundrum of "But I still love him". Perhaps the women who participated in my study were (already) new materialist in their stance of responsiveness, and in their attention to what matters. In the following chapter, "matters of concern, and matters of care are shot through with one another" (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 69); I turn to the women's narratives of love.

Chapter 8

Love – promise and purpose – exploring materiality/discourses of love

“...the possibility of hearing the mumurings, the muted cries, the speaking silence of justice-to-come” (Barad, 2012, p. 216)

Introduction

This chapter explores love(-entangled-with-violence). For the women who contributed to this study, love starts something. Love begins where relationships with partners started for the women; *the first flush of love*. Mo(ve)ments of love for children and their fathers carry love onward. Loyalty to family emerges. Paradoxically, physicality and smell linger beyond separations. The space of poetry also invites lingering: a lingering with one’s own histories of love; an extension of thought; an affecting pause; a therapeutic breathing space.

The women I researched with had separated their lives domestically from their partners. They spoke of love for partners held at a distance, entering a kind of void in which the past has not passed. Women’s stories spool into the space of the interview rooms in tangible, visceral affecting performances: in a moment of affecting attunement, it seems we who are present each feel a loss of love’s potentiality. We are looking at the inside of intimate love in partner relationship from the outside: “[I]n the thick web of its specificities, what is at issue is its unique material historicalities and how they come to matter. Elsewhere, in here” (Barad, 2014, p. 176). The women’s stories are haunted by what has been excluded, undone, un-just, disrupted, a state of transition, crossroads, indeterminacy. The world we are making holds the trace of memories; love (promise, purpose) re-materialised.

The trajectory of the research conversations began with narratives of violent events, and how these had affected the women’s relationships with men. In

subsequent meetings, time and talk was given to articulations of what the women had hoped for in their lives with men. The placement of this chapter, then, follows these contours. I have taken what is logically implied in the 'but' of "But I still love him": that love has a continuity that preceded the violence, was enmeshed in the relationship's twists and turns, and has outlived the violence, as this chapter further explores.

In the following pages, the lines of poetry speak starkly of women's knowledges of love. Using poetic forms (haiku and tanka) as aperture, the rescued words of the women participants are both confined and spread in evocative ways (Linnell, 2004; Mazzei, 2014; L. Richardson, 2002).

Rescued speech poetry

The practice of rescuing speech is well known to narrative therapists (Behan, 2003; Crocket, 2010; Newman, 2008; Speedy, 2005) and incorporated into therapeutic documents (Epston, 1994; White & Epston, 1990; White & Morgan, 2006; White, 1995). Laurel Richardson (1992, 2002) used found poetry in research writing and analysis, as does Sarah Penwarden (2018) in more recent research with therapeutic intent. The rescued speech poetry in this thesis has a different aspiration. In rescuing selected data materials and writing them into poetry, I hoped to distill and encapsulate a communal narrative of what the women participants have come to call 'love', inspired by the onto-epistemological shift in new materialist writing.

I have adopted the Japanese poetic forms of haiku and tanka. The discipline of using limited syllables in three lines (five-seven-five) and five lines (five-seven-five-seven-seven) conveys significant moments in timespacematter through poetry in a strict boundary-making practice. I have adhered to these forms in making the cuts for the rescued speech forms that comprise this data selection. Following Karen Barad, I do not see these cuts as "absolute separations" (p. 168).

Rather, they work on the text to re-present an “iterative (re)configuring of patterns” (p. 168) of the women’s narratives.

The poetry in the following pages is not a singular event. As words were spoken, then written in transcript, read by the women, cut and pasted into a new document for re-working into poetry, and then recast in poetic rendering, they take form in ways that mean “there is nothing that is new; there is nothing that is not new” (Barad, 2014, p. 168). In this sense, dis/continuities are alive and well in *both* the radical break of the poems with their original utterances, *and* their indebtedness to those utterances (B. Davies, 2018).

Barad’s (2014) descriptor for this ongoing iterative (re)configuring is ‘dynamism’. The haiku and tanka lines’ appearance on the page infuses each short line with force. The words (particles) and their arrangement (wave) represent the wave/particle duality into the optics of what poetry can do that prose does not. Time is also out of joint in this rendering of love narrated. Narratives of love in this research reach across decades. Moments of speech are dispersed to sound waves – electronically recorded – and scribed to screen and paper. Further breaking apart these moments of speech, I rescue specific utterances in ways that find a node of meaning: a juncture; a meeting point; a fork in the road; a convergence.

Witnessing

The ultimate touchstone is witness (Whyte, 2011).

Interspersed with the communal narrative that emerges in the haiku are witnessing expressions drawn from my lived experience of partnering with men. I adopt outsider witnessing practices from narrative therapy (White, 1995, 2000, 2007) to respond to the rescued poetic expressions with free verse. My acknowledgement is shaped through a focus on expression, image, resonance and transport. These four categories invite the audience to attend closely to the specific expression of the first teller, and to respond in ways that connect one’s own histories with those of the first teller. As a witness, I am not at arm’s length

from the dramatic material the poetry presents. I take up Wyatt's and Davies' Deleuzian sensibility and claim, that "ethics rests on openness to the other and the possibility of oneself becoming different, of coming to know and to be differently" (Wyatt et al., 2011, p. 106). The haiku and free verse are differentiated in two ways: the rescued speech poems appear in a larger font size; and the witnessing responses are placed below.

Ethico-onto-epistemology

I enter this junction, as researcher and writer, with my own history of partner relationship (love and violence). The cuts I make in the text are crossings into what is recognisable to that history. A question posed by Crocket et al. (2004) is of relevance here, "Whose concerns should be privileged most"? (p. 65). A researcher is entering into dialogue with participants, other researchers in the field, academic writers, supervisors, editors, future readers and, in my case, other counselling practitioners, people who consult me for counselling and professional supervision, and multiple others who have influenced their lives, *ad infinitum*. To that end, I take an influential, authorial position. We (writer, readers, counsellors) attend to the words of the women singly/collectively to discover how they make *us* different. In doing so, I take up a particular ethical position.

Kathrin Thiele (2014) asks how we might enact an ethical position in a post-humanist world riven by "the ubiquity of difference(s) played out globally as increasing inequalities and processes of exclusion" (p. 202). What critical consciousness does an ethico-onto-epistemology call on? What can a study of knowing-in-being do? What *should* we do that makes a difference? I join with new materialist and feminist researchers in believing that the becoming of the world calls on us to contribute in differently ethical ways: perhaps, as Thiele proposes, "an opening up of the whole engagement with difference(s)" (p. 204) whilst paying attention to "'matters' that are always at stake" (p. 205). Forms of safety and freedom are matters that are always at stake for women whose male

partners use violence to dominate them, and for counsellor who care for these women (and their children). My study disturbs any assumption that, when love interrupts violence, love will end. This isn't necessarily the case, although, there is an argument to be made that violence will always trouble and injure relationship and those subjected to its force and dominating tactics.

In Chapter 2, I give an account of the phenomenon of diffraction which owes a debt to Donna Haraway's (1997) and Karen Barad's (2007, 2008, 2014) early and ongoing elucidation. Applying the phenomenon of diffraction to the data materials selected for this chapter shows that the potentiality that is love goes around the violence in patterns and consecutive waves. Love persists; perhaps in fragmentary forms. When love is hit by violence, it diverges and overlaps with violence to produce diffraction patterns. In this chapter, I investigate the effects of interference(s) and difference(s) of love before/amidst/in/beyond/despite violence; of how the question of love is both the object of investigation and its apparatus of investigation.

In using experimental poetic text, this chapter takes the study toward (im)possibilities that were obscured in the sometimes hurried, harried, diffident, humourous, provocative intensities of violence-focussed speaking in the groups, reinscribed to thousands of lines of transcript. When counsellors hear from women about violence, it may be difficult to linger long enough to hear the persistent remnants of love. How shall we grant love its beauty and perversity, a love that endures for women partners who suffer the abuse of their male partners?

[L]iving compassionately requires recognizing and facing our responsibility to the infinitude of the other, welcoming the stranger whose very existence is the possibility of touching and being touched, who gifts us with both the ability to respond and the longing for justice-to-come. (Barad, 2012, p. 219)

And now to poetry.

I've never felt like
this for anyone, the way
I feel for him.

I just knew that I
wanted to be with him for
the rest of my life.
I knew it from the first time
I laid eyes on him. Like wow!

We hang on to that
first flush of love, and you just
want it back, you keep
going... back to where we were.
Thinking about the other.

Witnessing response: "I wanted to be with him"

Knowing
this flash of recognition;
wanting to be with a particular
someone
for the rest of my life.
Real-ising.
The feeling for him
is so particular-ly
for *him*.

This feeling-knowing-thought
came over me
so suddenly.
The very sight of him was compelling.

I hardly ever
sleep in my room
because it
was *our* room.
I've tried.
You start
op'ning up again;
You've got this hunger in you.

Witnessing response: "it was *our* room"

a man in my room for the first time
at first, i can't sleep
we breathe together
i hold him
we sleep.
over time, it becomes *our* room.

he is gone from my life
again i can't sleep

the room a crypt.
the bed a grave marker (to what we had
lost). absent.
i miss his body in the night.

I get up in the dark
and roam around in other
rooms.
Eat toast and vegemite.
As though I am hungry.

the loss of *us*,
the room that made so much
of what it meant to become a couple

I sleep with the door open. I
haven't slept with the door
closed for such a long time. Am
I waiting for him to come back?

The only thing I
know I still miss is just his
physical appearance
and physical parts of him
like his smell, his eyes, his hair.

One of his blankets
(Lynx Africa. That's his scent)
makes you remember.
That whole smell thing... the only
thing left now. I still miss it.

Just the way he smelt –
strong sexual attraction –
It was just instant.
It wasn't that that kept me there:
it was my house, having kids.

Witnessing response: "That whole smell thing"

How a blanket smells.
The tantalising reminder
of his presence and smell.
A last lingering sense.
Smell memory.

An absence whose scent has remained.

You've got those beautiful kids
made with love in the
beginning, before it all
turned to crap. I know all this.
You just try harder... to please.

He was at her birth.
I held her and then he held her.
She calls him daddy.

Good mem'ries of *us*.
He was there through the whole birth.
A bond together.

Witnessing response: "Those beautiful kids made with love"

To hold a new baby
at *this* moment of welcome
Becoming mother
to *this* beautiful baby.
He held her.

Making memories of *us*.
A bond.

He's an amazing partner
An amazing dad.
Hard to let go of.

About our future:
He does want our family;
playtime with our kids.

Witnessing response: Small and ordinary moments
of everyday and everynight life

Hard to let go of the dream
materiality (mate/reality)
that makes up family and future.

Unique and repeated events of family life
Feeding a small child breakfast.
Walking to the letterbox.
Playtime with children.
Throwing a ball.
Going to the park.
Pushing a swing.
Having a child sit on your knee.
Sitting beside the bed of a sick child.
Deciding what to put in the shopping cart at the supermarket.
Watching tv together from the couch.
Kissing goodnight.

Hard to let go of the small and ordinary moments of everyday and everynight life
that are unseen and unspoken to when violence starts to be what is seen and
spoken.

I made a promise;
I think he's finally seen
true loyalty and love.

I gave him a life
and the opportunity:
I gave him the door.

I gave him a place.
If I care about someone
I'm very loyal.

Witnessing response: "I gave him"

I gave.
The gift of care.

The door through which he might enter
A place of shelter and loyalty
The gift of a life.

A promise.
I gave.

In bed; it felt great.
I opened up to him and
let him in.

Witnessing response: "I opened up to him"

an audacious, reckless, sexy relationship
a man who was probably never going to settle down
exquisite madness
in bed; it felt great
unable to breathe without thought of him
a tangle of limbs.
in each other's arms,
we were made close/closed.

Madness of a different kind.
If only the moment would arrive when the yearning would end.

He says he loves me.
I just want to hear his voice –
want to talk to him –
being on the same wavelength;
a connection of people.

You care what happens:
Love goes hand in hand with
caring. That love thing.

Probably a love:
something still deep within us
remembers. Deep down.

Witnessing response: “I just want to hear his voice”

He lived out of town. I used to phone him.
Just to hear him speak. Just to hear him laugh.
Once, I heard a woman’s voice behind his: he said sorry.
I put the phone down, and it rang, and rang. I didn’t answer.
This time I didn’t want to hear his voice in case it told me lies.

For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression *will* emerge and be registered consciously. One 'wills' it to emerge, to be qualified, to take on sociolinguistic meaning, to enter linear action-reaction circuits, to become a content of one's life – by dint of inhibition. (Massumi, 2002, pp. 30-31)

Love is one linguistic articulation of the potentiality and connectivity of what is set in motion for intimate partners. The indeterminacy of the word love is constituted through immensity, intensity and incipience; there are tendencies toward the other that cannot but be shocked by forms of violation that interrupt the trajectory of love's promise.

Love cannot be relegated to the past as though time stops/sits still. There is no getting rid of the anticipation and promise of love, altogether. Past, present, future are "not in a relation of linear unfolding, but threaded through with one another" (Barad, 2010, p. 244) in ways that disperse to produce disjointedness and disorientation. Love matters – when an intimate partner body has been affected by violence – because love remains a condition of (im)possibility that haunts the present-future.

It is not as though there are no discontinuities for intimate partner relationships, as embodied by women and men. There are. Each event of violence produces affecting performances that, once named and qualified, rise to the surface of consciousness and inhibit the multiplicity of possibilities for love. In these moments of pain and harm, time may (seem to) be suspended and one's response personalised. In these moments, one may be momentarily caught up and disconnected from the amalgamated liveliness that holds the world together (love). In these moments, one registers a loss of invitation and opening to vitality(love) and, this in itself, produces the sensation of pain.

In this chapter, I have given acknowledgement to women's determination not to walk away from loves that have been and continue to be highly affecting. The active refusal of the women of this study to give up on love's vast potentiality – pastpresentfuture – reveals love as indelible trace and continuing conundrum.

The particular expressions of a lost intimacy may be reduced for women when they re-enter the vast stream of life with re-animating loves and purposes. The trace of violence also remains, and it is at moments of critical consciousness that women may seek therapy.

Chapter 9

“Tell me again”: Narratives of counsellors’ practice in relation to love ↔ violence

Esmé: Inviting a woman to say it again – rather than me saying it – is really useful. *Tell me again what’s been going on.*

Introduction

I meet with six women counsellors: Esmé, Jay, Lisa, Sally, Tracey and Vanessa. We talk through the counselling practices they have taken up in meeting with women partners to address the dilemmas of love-entangled-with-violence. The waves of words we enact as a group – to-and-fro – become a lived ethical mo(ve)ment, an “active force of this world – and thus always/already implicated in and concerned with world(ing)” (Thiele, 2014, p. 203) by which I mean active practice and vision for what may become possible.

The hope I hold is that noticing how counsellors *already* practice ethically to address the effects of violence can be expanded further to “think-practice” the world differently (Thiele, 2014). Thought-practice in the sense I am using it here aligns with Karen Barad’s (2007) study of “knowing *in* being” – onto-epistemology – which claims that knowing and being are mutually implicated and that humans do not stand apart from each other and from the world in our knowing; we are *of* the world. Counsellors take response-abilities to ‘clients’ and colleagues seriously: we are involved and affected by what matters in our work (Reynolds, 2012; Winslade, 2017).

Not all of the counsellor group have come to therapeutic professions through post-structural programmes, but each of them was clear, in her own way, that the counsellor must attend to how power/knowledge is being exercised in the therapeutic relationship (White, 1997, 2007; White & Epston, 1990). In the group, there was a consensus that it is the counsellor’s responsibility to

recognise counselling as a site of intellectual (and other forms of) privilege and to “quietly [indicate] our willingness to enter if we are invited” (Te Wiata & Crocket, 2017, p. 74). The position the counsellor group takes is that relationship-building may begin with an approach by a woman, and may be nurtured by the counselling in how she extends hospitality and, then, the counsellor must wait and listen and observe.

I introduce each section of this chapter with material from two documents collected from what women wanted counsellors to know was useful and not so useful in their experiences of engaging with therapy (Appendices K and L) and bookend each section with responding acknowledgements from the counsellor group. Some of the end pieces are taken from a third document assembled and written collaboratively with me at the close of the counsellor group meetings (Appendix M) and some from the counsellor interviews. Throughout the chapter, when I select lines from the three collective documents, I indicate which appendix document the lines are taken from using the letters K, L and M.

Moving beyond the enclosure

Therapy and research are particular sites in which power must be addressed and, not to do so, is itself a violation (Larner, 1999; White, 1997). Michael White (2000) writes at length about counsellors’ responsibilities to invite a “bottom-up accountability” to monitor the effects of our interactions with people (p. 137). He states quite strongly the peril of attempting to “obscure, to ourselves, the fact of this power imbalance” (p. 137). In assembling the collective documents (K and L), I invited the participant women to make their local knowledge and experience explicit in recognition of how persons seeking counselling and participating in anti-violence group programmes are discursively positioned in power/knowledge relations with counsellors.

With/in the women’s groups, I set in place two apertures for speaking: I consulted the women about what counselling practices had been useful and,

what not so useful, in addressing love-entangled-with-violence. To add material weight and longevity, I gave a paper form of the two collective documents to each of the six counsellors at their second meeting. In response, the counsellors all contributed to a written acknowledgement (Appendix M) that I delivered, also in paper form, to each woman participant.

Until we feel safe

In this study, women participants wanted counsellors to know that “Sometimes there are things that are really hard to talk about” (L). In the wake of how hard it can be to talk, women may “Guard and protect stories until they feel safe to tell”; and may “Censor or condense what they say in case there are repercussions” (K). Intra-active with this caution, are women’s hopes to be honest and “put it all out there” (L) in talk that exposes the violence.

Hospitality – manaakitanga

The counsellor group acknowledge women’s hopes to “feel safe”.

A clear commitment to listen is one of hospitality to the knowledge and person of the other (Anderson, 2007; Hoffman, 2007; Levin, 2007; Tomm, 1988). “Just listen. Just hear me” are sentiments Jay discerns in women’s hopes for counselling that can engage with “where [a woman] is at”. Tracey follows Jay in telling the story of meeting a woman who was uniquely skilled in “really checking out who I was and how I would respond”. Long, patient work together emerged from these checking out moves by the woman, and Tracey’s responses: “To start with it was just this much. Our relationship. And how I might respond to her... takes quite a lot of listening”. Jay again: “The story is very slow, and trust is built over a long period of time, and then the slow revelation of the beginning of that level of violence, and then the depth in the current situation”.

Tracey describes her practices of hospitality for making a safe space: “To start with I’m listening, listening”. Tracey asks herself, “What am I prepared to listen

to?" A preparedness for listening actualises an intention. Tracey recognises that her preparedness to listen alerts her to the uncertain moment ahead; that there may be critical points to attend to, momentary suspension, turning points, and struggle – for both the woman, as she speaks, and for Tracey, as she listens.

Attentiveness and interest bring the listener into close contact with the wider potentiality of expression of another person. Taking a curious position on what words and other expressions might mean when they come from differing experiences of life means that therapists recognise their outside-ness to the knowledge and life of the other person. Harlene Anderson and Harry Goolishian (1992) took up a practice of not-knowing in their therapeutic work that has informed collaborative therapeutic practice since. To listen from a not-knowing position is to adopt a learner stance, and to decentre one's prior knowledge in favour of what is known and spoken by the other (Morgan, 2006; White, 2007). Such a stance can accomplish a knowing-*with* position (Shotter, 2004) that does not diminish the therapist's participation as a listener-questioner in the dialogue (Anderson, 2005). It is this kind of hospitality/*manaakitanga* that the counsellors describe in their group interview.

A slow pace

Jay makes a claim that a slow pace is called for when counsellors engage with/in the entanglement of love+violence in intimate partners' lives. In close listening to women over time, Jay has become finely attuned to the potentiality for women's fear when they meet a counsellor. She speaks as 'client':

I think fear... What's going to happen if I put this out there? How does this person respond to what I've spoken about? Can I trust them? Can I trust what they do with this information?

Vanessa agrees with Jay about a slow pace: "It does take time".

In the moment when the group settles on this point, Vanessa speaks again, and our thoughts spread in a new direction. "They're ready to talk about it... By the time they get to see us, it's like right here [pointing to her lips]". Pause to recall

narratives we have each been witness to in which long lines of story matter spill and spool across timespace. Yes, that's right. It is impossible to confine our work into neat boxes. Jay's commitment to stay with(in) the "flux" of "what might be presented tomorrow" is on-the-ground knowledge of the territory of violence in partner relationship. Counselling work entails professional interest in and attention to expression, to words, and to what is listened *to*, as Tracey has pointed out.

Re-turning to Collective Document 2:

"There was nothing I told her that she just did not understand. Yeah, she just got me... She just let me talk" (L).

To meet the other and witness her story in this care-full, respect-full way, is to be *with* her (Shotter, 2004) and to act ethically in a spirit of partnership, participation and kinship for whatever protection is called for (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020; Te Wiata & Crocket, 2011). In later writing, John Shotter proposes that we live "immersed within an oceanic world of ceaseless, intra-mingling currents of activity" (2017, p. 39) in which we are each involved and affected by othernesses, in a shareable world. To listen, to meet, to participate in relationship – over time – communicates respectful care-full wit(h)ness.

Bookend:

Counsellor group acknowledgement: "I have appreciated being reminded [in the women's documents] of the importance of listening with care, making no assumptions" (M).

Thinking "it might be too much for her"

Women who seek counselling to address violence may wonder if the counsellor can handle what she tells them. They may think "it might be too much for her" and "I have to be really careful about what I share with my counsellor, s/he's really fragile" (K).

A two-way account of the therapeutic relationship

The counsellor group acknowledge women's care.

Tracey asks a question that may arise for a woman meeting her: "Does this counsellor have any idea, or is she just an innocent sitting there going ah ha, mmm hmm?" Tracey's question invite the counsellor to take up a position that is participatory. To accept the wero (challenge) of counselling that addresses violence, calls on a position that is influential. When a woman reads a counsellor's affective performance as "fragile", she may withhold speaking about the specificities of her situation and censor what she says in deference to the counsellor's "innocence".

Jay reiterates this dilemma for women meeting a counsellor: sometimes a woman's question is, "*Can you bear this terrible story? I need to know you're going to be okay*". Women and their counsellors are entering into life-shaping practices that change what is possible for women's lives (and those of their loved ones) and therapists' lives (White, 1997). For therapists, the care that women afford their counsellors when they ask themselves, *Can you bear this terrible story? I need to know you're going to be ok*, is a mark of respect mangled with fear: An edge of uncertainty constrains what a woman may say – to counsellors, church pastoral workers, Police, family members, concerned neighbours.

The women of this study also worry that they themselves will be okay: "What will happen if I speak particularly 'dark' thoughts, who will become involved?" with reference to child protection, Police, other authorities (K). These tangles of difference are not a blend of separate parts, but perform a thick web of specificities (Barad, 2014). Speaking a terrible story is no easy thing. There is risk and vulnerability in speaking about abuse and oppression. Esmé has found that women she meets with are looking for someone who does not preempt her listening with judgements and prior evaluations:

They've tried to speak up about it and someone just simply says, I couldn't imagine him being that horrible to you, what on earth are you on. And then they finally piece together that they need to talk to someone who's going to listen without that.

Hence, a woman may be asking if the counsellor recognises, without scepticism and dismissal, her unique (localised) story within wider meta-narratives of patriarchal tyranny enacted against women (Brown, 2013; Epstein & Goodman, 2019). When a counsellor treads cautiously and slowly, the therapeutic engagement can create a timespace for the spill of words that Vanessa spoke of above (subsection *A slow pace*); *and* the space for suspicion, apprehension and whakamā, tentativeness, discomfort, a passage that women go through before stepping over the threshold to speak about violence.

The concept and practice of radical listening comes alive in the research narratives offered by Tracey, Jay and Esmé (see Weingarten, 2010). They stake a claim for a listening stance that does not judge, or try to preempt the next steps as a woman talks about intimate partner violence and continuing love. Weingarten proposes listening for what is absent and taking a pause when words are not forthcoming. And one gets a sense of a patient, welcoming stance from what Tracey, Jay, and Esmé say about their practice.

Bookend:

Voices from the counsellor group respond to the layers of care written into the two documents offered by the women's groups:

I have really appreciated the honesty and openness to me, a stranger, of what the women in the groups have offered. And the courage it would have taken to share those words and entrust them to our group. (M)

Know that your words have equipped me more in my work as a counsellor, as it is important to ensure we are more informed about how best to support you in what you have or are experiencing in this area of partner violence. (M)

It's like you're not alone any more

The women's collective sense of finding themselves supported and no longer alone emerged for them in group programmes and in counselling engagements. Five (re)iterations of how important it was for the women to be witnessed and recognised follow:

- “It’s like you’re not alone any more. I guess for the first time someone’s actually hearing what you’re saying”(L);
- hearing the stories of other women in ways that invite “a sense that you are not alone”(K);
- “knowing you can ring and say something’s happened and I need another appointment”(L);
- “I so value being the absolute centre of someone’s world for a moment”(K);
- “[Reading the transcripts of the research conversations] is validation too. We all hear each other say these things. It’s very healing”(L).

Addressing loneliness; finding community

The counsellor group animate the potentialities of therapy as companionship and community, whilst grappling with the added complexities for women of going ‘public’.

Esmé speaks about her therapeutic practices: “All I think I do in those situations is I give permission for [women] to really listen to their own hearts and know what’s needed deep within *themselves*”. The complexity of listening is animated a/new in Esmé’s practice. She highlights the potentiality for a woman to listen and notice *her own* experience and to (at least, partially) rescue it from oblivion into language. Esmé’s embodied practice intra-acts with Susan Levin’s (2007) distinction between listening and hearing, extending hearing to include an active intention to understand the other’s expressions. Levin proposes that hearing is not only about receptivity. She believes there is work to be done in negotiating meaning with a speaker; hence, a bi- or multi- directional action. To listen and to hear is to *actively* participate in reconfigured opportunities for a woman to “speak herself into existence” (Davies, 1991, p. 42), and, in Esmé’s words, to “really listen to their own hearts and know what’s needed”. Intra-active with Esmé’s therapeutic intentions, a woman in one of the groups said that writing in journals was useful: “You can piece some things together” and “get to know yourself” (L).

In her counselling practice, Lisa notices the potentiality for loneliness in women’s lives when they decide to separate from a violent partner. They have

navigated the violence of their partner relationships in private space before they reach beyond the domestic setting to ask for support. At the point when they decide to leave a current partner, women may see the opportunity for addressing loneliness by entering into a new partner relationship as preferable to the unfamiliar complexity of navigating change with therapeutic, medical, legal and judicial professionals. As she speaks, Lisa moves from stating the quandry women face into imagined first-person thought-statements:

[Women are] wanting someone else to be there so “I can do this. So that if someone else came along, I could safely jump to that. So it’s like one relationship to the next. That is like an opportunity, kind of thing. But if not, if I was going to be on my own, alone, so where’s the back-up here?”

On Lisa’s account, a woman may think a new partner will recognise her worth as a competent person in ways not available from professionals. Given their misgivings about approaches to a professional, and the loneliness that leaving a partner may produce, the appreciative expressions that begin this section speak to the difference it can make when counsellors enact respect and availability.

Lisa’s question on behalf of women, *Where’s the back-up here?* makes a valuable contribution to therapeutic thought-practice for how we engage with women to take the step into unfamiliar unpartnered borderlands. When women long for back-up, they are highly attuned to the risky situations in which they find themselves. When a woman juxtaposes her potential loneliness with the value of “being the absolute centre of someone’s world for a moment” in counselling, she enacts a receiving wave of connection that coexists with the wave of therapeutic attention enacted by the counsellor. The materialising of Lisa’s contribution produces a reconfiguring lively moment in the research. As researcher, I arrive at a new realisation of the enormity of what women do when they decide to expose the violence of their home situations *and* say “I still love him”. Telling one’s stories to other women with insider knowledge, and finding oneself at the centre of another person’s attention, is an antidote to actual and potential loneliness. The risk of enacting this telling with a wide range of professionals remains.

The counsellor group speak of how they navigate with women the trickiness of family/agency/legal/medical obligations. Each of the counsellors actively solicits (further) knowledge with women in their endeavours to listen out for what was odd and different, because *not* to do this changes nothing. The above selection of data materials addresses ethical practice from core counselling commitments to social justice and responsible care for the wellbeing of others (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020). Ethical practice is active *doing*. It materialises potentiality for safety *and* community. The bookend for this section traces lines of rescued speech poetry from the counsellor group conversations. These lines materialise selected oscillations of participatory involvement by the counsellor group that recognise the importance for women of finding communities of care.

Bookend:

Finding community

It's so cliché isn't it, to think about support.
But actually, it's huge.
A whole lot easier
than if there isn't that support.

It was the women's group that she said was her saving grace –
she stayed connected with that group for years.
They support each other and let each other know
where they're going, doing things.

Knowing that there are those other allies or supports.
A different story – an alternative story.
Here are some supports that possibly can help you through that stuff.
Here are some of the ways, some supports, some possibilities.

There used to be support groups,
but are we losing some of that?
I don't hear people talk about
women's support groups like they used to.

Community.

It's just so simple to say support.

But actually it's a really big deal, feeling supported.

Building up those supports.

The words and care of women in relation to the counsellors they meet come alive with possibility in this section. These possibilities intra-act territories of connection with the stance of counsellors as they exercise professional knowledge and care.

Being told and not being told what to do

"I think some of us do need to be told what to do sometimes". Being told what to do disperses through Collective documents 1 and 2 as sometimes useful to women (L) and sometimes not (K).

Working the problem together

In the counsellor group, Jay speaks in the voice of women she has met who are uncertain about what a counsellor has to offer: "Just listen, just hear me, this is where I'm at – don't tell me; no, do tell me". Jay then offers her account of "staying with the flux for her, and having no idea about how that might be presented tomorrow". Jay's practice narrative demonstrates that uncertainty lies in both directions of the therapeutic relationship, perhaps especially, when violence is part of the storyline. How counsellors participate from decentred and influential positions (White, 1997) will inform how women participate in continuing dialogues. For instance, silence on the part of a woman can be a

protector if the counsellor has not indicated a willingness to wait, a kind of “slogging patience” (Reynolds, 2013, p. 2).

In a second wave of working the problem together, Sally speaks about addressing “missing gaps [in] information”, as an enactment of ‘telling’ by a counsellor:

There’s a piece in there around listening for... I’m not sure what to call it. Missing gaps for information, or people’s right to know certain things – how they’re protected or it’s not their fault, or that the law is actually this process.

Sally’s and Jay’s commitment to working the problem together with women, addresses the power relation by the kind of listening that assumes there is more to know and the counsellor may have contributions to make (Anderson, 2005). On this note, Lisa joins Sally to speak about community-held knowledge that may be useful:

It shows how important information is... I’ve always worked in agencies with social workers, so there’s always been another person, in another role as well, which, sometimes, if you get the right people, that’s really helpful... Not to say that you can’t do it yourself, but within there is a role already that can support what you’re already doing with a client. So it’s that collaborative approach, as well, and building up those supports... that safety network... Your own networks... If they’re trusting you to find the right people that they can trust as well, so it’s kind of putting all that together, which can really support them to feel more empowered to be able to make choices. Or see they’ve got choices around things. Because you don’t know what you don’t know. Once they do, it can open up other responses to what’s happening.

Picking up on Lisa’s proposal that part of the therapeutic engagement is to find a “safety network” that can support a woman to address the effects of violence in a partner relationship. Tracey enlisted the contribution of other professionals too:

I actually took someone to a policewoman in the West Auckland community. They were well resourced in West Auckland for violence, they had a wonderful policy. [The policewoman] ran through with this woman, all those things; he’s charming, it’s most dangerous when you’re about to leave, so if you are planing to leave you need to go and not look back. All of those things were built into the exit.

Tracey’s move of including a policewoman into a woman’s safety network may introduce a moment of “don’t tell me; no, do tell me”, but, coming from a

different professional perspective, it invites a different reading than if her counsellor had brought these warnings. In a later iteration of these thought-practices of finding and building support networks, Lisa re-returns to the importance to women of being trans-formed by an invitation to decide. Lisa describes her practice of informing a woman of possibilities:

So I guess part of being informed kind of allows space to make some decisions you didn't think you could make decisions about... "someone is validating that I do have permission to make a decision about this"... Here are some of the ways, some supports, some possibilities. Not telling her which to do, but allowing her to know what's out there, and talking through some of that stuff, but leaving it to her to decide what to do.

Jay's, Sally's, Lisa's and Tracey's contributions are to a wider know-how within networks of people and possibilities. For the women participants, this know-how included the possibilities offered by "reading related to experience" (L). On this last point, my own counselling practice has taught me to engage and invite women into a reading (and writing) element of storymaking.

Resistance to "being told what to do"

Women in this study sometimes name their experience as "being told what to do" by professionals. They also speak candidly of adopting a stance of "being on guard" in response to 'being told what to do'. Esmé found this to be the case in her counselling work:

I think there's something around not taking over. There's a point when you're talking with someone that if you take on and overdramatise the abuse... they want to minimise it... They've just told you all sorts of bad things but they don't want to hear it back. So playing with the idea of inviting them to say it again, rather than me saying it, is really useful – Tell me again; what's been going on? – so that *they* can say it, rather than me repeating it to them.

Esmé's practice of inviting a woman to "tell me again" offers an affective performance of grappling with the different contingencies that the love+violence entanglement brings, with an understanding that there will be no easy answers; that to tread cautiously and slowly in step with women will eventually support a

less guarded position for a woman and usefully draw on professional pathways for a woman's future possibilities.

In the moment of engagement Esmé describes above, she enacts a curious and collaborative orientation towards a woman's story that can embrace what may be possible to know of the history of a woman's struggle. From this listening/hearing stance emerge the potential articulations of a woman's intentions, purposes, visions, commitments, beliefs, aspirations (Morse & Morgan, 2003; White, 2007).

As a group, the counsellors caution against knowing in a hurry what is happening and how safe a woman's life is outside the counselling room (something she cannot be sure about either), and this enacts another wave of uncertainty. A starting question might be: *What would be useful for me to know about your situation so that the conversation can be worthwhile for you? How safe will you be 'til next time we meet? What do you need in place?* Lines of enquiry such as these, incite a mutual interest in knowing specificities of a woman's situation: it is not possible to know where a conversation will go; rather, a modest orientation takes a co-created narrative towards potentialities and possibilities. Also, a justice-doing counselling response expands beyond talking; it simultaneously attends to discourses↔materialities (Richardson et al., 2017; Richardson & Reynolds, 2012; Waldegrave et al., 2003). Somehow, women and their counsellors must move towards seeing what exerts a pull in a new direction.

Lisa has found that women who are mothers carry an added layer of caution about what they will tell a counsellor. They are "a bit more aware of what could happen if they reveal too much". Lisa is referring to mothers' *and* counsellors' positions in relation to agency protocols on reporting violence in family situations to the government child protection agency. Both mothers and counsellors hold the possibility of children being removed from the care of parents. "They're making a decision about how much they say to you". Lisa observes a calculability on the part of women as they *decide* what stories they will give voice to with a counsellor, and to what extent they will elaborate their accounts.

Finding the exit

The counsellor group were cognisant of risk for women in their lives outside the therapeutic room, and what this entails for the counsellor in finding what Lisa calls “that safety network”. Sally wants to know more about the safety aspect, too: “I might want to hear a little bit more about, of their safety, or how they’re making sense of this”. Sally co-researches with women for

places where they can go for safety. And then I was thinking that often when women are talking about leaving, my concern as a counsellor is that that’s often when the greatest violence happens. [*Other voices*: Indeed]... they may get killed, so having that responsibility that if I’m going to move towards or engage around helping them story their agency to leave the relationship, then I need to know that all the things are in place for their safety and that they’ve got a plan in place.

Sally continues with specificities, “engaging in stories about what this might look like: Do you have a second set of keys or have you put some money aside? So I was thinking it’s quite a dynamic, there’s a lot that goes into this”.

Waves of professional knowledge follow in the wake of Sally’s starting points. Different ethical predicaments emerge from the counsellors’ practice accounts as they traverse the tricky territory for women when staying is dangerous and leaving presents a greater risk (L. Davies & Ford-Gilboe, 2009; Robertson et al., 2007a). Esmé: “*And* the moment she leaves, is the next most dangerous of times. So I’m thinking, are women thinking it’s safer to stay?”. Esmé speaks from her practice about women’s efforts for continuation of their partner relationship and the negative effect of these efforts to their lives:

They’re trying to figure out how to make sure they stay together, and could that be counting against them for finding safety outside a relationship and putting up with stuff that shouldn’t be put up with?

The complexities of therapy to address love+violence entanglements start to emerge in these practice narratives. The struggle for counsellors and women addressing violent situations entails uncertainty, groping to know what to say, and getting lost (Lather, 2007). Women and their counsellors are navigating “the tensions between socially just practice, regulatory requirements ... and a

willingness to step away from certitude” (Crocket et al., 2009, p. 33). Getting lost and holding a not-knowing position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992; Rober & Seltzer, 2010; Robertson et al., 2007a) invites a consultative stance, a discovery, a working alongside. An engagement of indeterminacy, on Barad’s (2007) terms *does not* blur abuse with love: the uncertainty here is *which* possibility for action, in a given moment, is taken up by a woman (as she is accompanied by a counsellor) and which possibility for speaking and action a counsellor will take up on behalf of a woman’s life.

Doing justice work

Sally speaks a number of times in the counsellor interviews about justice-*doing*: of acting for change in the form of safety.

I can hear women say “how much I’m struggling with the violence or the abuse” and, depending on what I’m hearing, and how much she still loves this person, then I might be asking questions about how we juggle these multi ideas... Which one has the weight in the room right now? So I’m still holding on to this. But I want to know that I’m also coming to the piece that I might want to hear a little bit more about, of their safety, or how they’re making sense of this. Then it might be that they might even come to the meeting with a very clear idea that something life-threatening has happened.

In secondary school settings, Sally worked to support the lives of young women who were “really fearful for me to take them home” because they “were going to get the bash” (from father). Sally would stand her ground, and be “very clear about [her] processes”: “Is mum there that I can talk to and do I need to stay until dad is home?” Sally would inform school colleagues, her “backup”, of what she was engaged to do, and would be “very clear about needing to see [the student] at school the next day”. The upshot of these actions was that other students were brought to meet with Sally when they also ran into problems of abuse at home. Sally came to understand that “they knew I would act on something”. Jay finds resonance in Sally’s account, saying: “In retrospect, you can see the process unfolding but in the moment it’s safety, and trust, and action... They took action and so I can trust that if I bring this, there’s going to be action”.

Sally's and Jay's engagements to materialise the dilemma of acting for safety diffracts into timeplacematter in my own practice in which I too am overtaken by a feminist standpoint and outrage at the violence to which women are subjected. Drawing on what I have learned from Michael White's (1995) interview about how one might therapeutically address the confusion that is produced by forms of exploitation that masquerade as 'love', my intentions are unwaveringly that the work of counselling begin to discern, in women's lives, what actions in a partner relationship were of a supportive and caring nature and what were exploitative and abusive. In one such moment of intensity, I recall saying "My hope is that this abuse of you will stop", an utterance that constitutes a bifurcating affective performance for change. In such a turning point, a woman may find solidarity with her own articulation of the hope that the violence will stop. These are therapeutic purposes that actualise a/new language of resonance (Kotzé et al., 2013) that seek to offer a woman words she may not (yet) have available (Paré & Lysack, 2004) so that women may begin a migration of identity (White, 1995).

Bookend:

The counsellor group in this study are mindful of what it might be like (for a woman subjected to violence at home) to meet a counsellor. One counsellor was thinking about this when she said: "Some women may feel judged by others already. So that experience could affect them feeling ok about sharing what they think". In their collective acknowledgements, the counsellors write: It is important to us that we "allow that space for you to be cared for, which may feel unfamiliar, but also may be something you are missing and would really like to have" (M).

If you get stuck you need a question

In this study, women were interested in

The kind of questions that go further “so that you find your own answers”; “if you get stuck you need a question and “time spent looking at options”(L).

What women found unhelpful were the times when a counsellor “[didn’t stay] with what’s important at that moment (K). “What I needed to hear was ‘what’s that about? tell me a bit more about that’” (K).

An immersive and emergent ethics starts with specificities, engagement with an other person, in anticipation of an unknown and creative evolution. It is a call to think outside the limits of what is known and familiar, to act other-wise-ly, and to be open to difference, in others and ourselves. To take this ethos of possibility and hospitality further is not an approach that tries to resolve the problem of difference into sameness; rather, it is a thought-practice that can witness difference without losing sight of what matters, and what is at stake.

Staying with what’s important

Vanessa believes an ethical enactment of therapeutic-‘staying-with’ is “your physical presence, you’re not diverting eye contact, I guess, you’re holding that, comfortably, not awkward”. I begin with Vanessa’s ethical commitment to physical presence, a presence and listening stance that a woman may experience very differently from the intra-connected multiple other locations of her life. The body of the counsellor is not diverting eye contact; rather, she is closely attending to what the woman brings through the door in her own body and stories. When a counsellor meets a woman whose stories begin with “But I still love him”, the counsellor takes up an ethical responsibility for enacting presence and possibility. On Vanessa’s terms, she holds that space of possibility comfortably and watchfully.

Looking at options

The participant women's hopes for "time spent looking at options" traverses timespace with Sally's and Esmé's hopes to bring forward their own and a woman's questions in their counselling practice. Sally speaks of

... grappling with what we do in theory, in our positioning of our work; the trickiness of working... in a really respectful way to bring forward [women's] questions.

Sally recognises the leap that might be in front of a woman who wants to make changes in her life, and the counsellor's part in helping to explore what is possible:

To change your life at that turning point is a really frightening moment because it might be unimaginable. "If I'm not in this relationship, where will I be, where will I be living, , who's going to help me with the kids, how am I going to navigate this backwards and forwards?" I might imagine exploring what the possibilities of that might be and what are other women's experiences, so it becomes more possible. It would be an enormous leap to say "I don't want this anymore but what am I going to go to?".

One important move in Sally's practice is to recognise the fear response of women who face the possibility of leaving. There is danger in staying *and* unknown, unimaginable risks in leaving. Sally sees the connection between the "frightening moment" and the discursive-materialities that make up a change to a partnering relationship. Sally asks, on behalf of women, about the practicalities of leaving: *where will I live; who will help* with parenting responsibilities; as well as what matters socially, *will anyone even pay attention to me?*

Esmé's line of enquiry "what else is going on?" opens up the specific contours of a woman's lived experience: "what's going on in your life today?". Esmé also asks a woman

how long has she pondered over this love and had she thought about leaving and how long has she been playing or teasing with this idea of leaving. And what are the blocks to this leaving – what are the things that keep her there, keep her staying?... That's when a lot of the threads of what keeps her there are able to be drawn to the surface.

Esmé asks a woman about the time she has given to pondering love in the partner relationship, about leaving, *and* “the things that keep her there”. I support Esmé’s question about the *things* that keep a woman staying. A line of enquiry that recognises the mattering of *things* troubles the idea of ‘love’ as singularly a ‘feeling’. Esmé invites women to draw on paper. Her practice intention is to see an “in the present moment view of what they are actually trying to hold”. Jay’s practice position on this dilemma of what a woman is “trying to hold” comes from insider knowledges of times when she too had wanted help:

What I was thinking, as well in my own life, if I can say: that idea of when there’s violence, of being completely shattered, so you don’t actually know anymore what you think.

What Jay offers the study, in this moment, is a way to see the intra-connections of counsellors’ bodies and histories as they work with women to address the shattering effects of partner violence.

Attunement to the out of sync moment

Narratives from the counsellor interviews traversed the territory of waiting and indecision within diverse situations. Lisa gives an account of women wanting to leave who “aren’t sure *how*, so they see themselves in a place of deciding whether they want to stay or not. And I think when you’re talking more in counselling that becomes a bit clearer about what they actually want”. Esmé describes her practice of asking,

Can we talk about what might be possible? In that one hour we found at least one tiny little step to reduce the violence within that home by something she felt capable of doing right away.

Conversely, therapy may produce a discomfiting disturbance. Esmé explores with women “what their idea of this love was within this relationship and as they kind of unpacked that, they had a deeper idea of what they’d conjured up or idealised, but also their need”.

I thought along those lines when I thought about the tangle that women get in, this position of trying to understand their love and why they can't separate easily, and get him out of their hair.

When partners are in jail, Esmé meets with women who “can begin to start to see, and have time without, and then begin to unpack what they thought they wanted or what they thought they really were going for”. Esmé raises the possibilities for women to see “their idea of love” differently during times of a man's physical absence. She also brings forward an ethic of accountability in her practice:

I also brought in another question for her, and this is the bit, I think, that got her. I said I wonder, what does the person who's done all these things miss out on if we don't face them with their stuff?

In this way, counsellors can bring attention to the intra-connected complexity of the partnering entity: what has a man subjected his partner (and their children) to and what are the ongoing effects of his violence? in what ways, can he be invited into accountability? what does he miss out on, and what does a woman miss out on, if he is not invited into responsibility? When women reach a stuck place, and cannot imagine what is important to them any more, how do a counsellor's questions and staying-with stance make a difference?

Lisa speaks for women who grapple with the dilemma of wanting *not* to love a partner who has subjected them to abuse, and Jay notes the delay for women whose decisions to leave are part and consequence of an unfolding and refolding of ongoing formations, in time:

Lisa: “I might know for me it's best for me to leave, but I still love them” ... I feel like sometimes there's this underlying belief around if “I want to leave I think it's best I shouldn't love him anymore. But because I do, then what's best doesn't feel right. Almost like I couldn't follow through with that, because the feeling doesn't match, hasn't quite caught up with what I know. It's like I'm waiting for this to happen and then it'll be okay to leave”. Maybe it's that kind of working through the emotion part before some make the decision, because it's like I'm ready now because I don't feel like I love him anymore. So there's a delay in action.

Jay: The decision is made but the leaving, if they leave, is way out there. That time-line can be quite different, it might be years between that decision, making that decision, and the actual different time; that happens a bit further down the track.

Bookend:

In this section, I have inserted text from the practitioner group that references counselling practices of being physically present, staying with, and asking questions. One counsellor's response to the women participants' documents included, "I have appreciated being reminded of the importance of listening with care, making no assumptions, and creating a group space where you may express what is important, freely." And another wrote, "When our sensitivity is low, and when we don't observe the subtleties of womens' responses to us, what you are saying to us helps us to provide that unconditional space of listening and attending" (M).

It's unhelpful when emotions get "dampened down"

The women who contributed to the second document to be taken to the counsellor group wanted counsellors to know how unhelpful it was when their "strong intentions and emotions get 'dampened down'" (L). One counsellor's response acknowledged the times when "we don't observe the subtleties" (L) of women's expressions and was mindful of the counsellor's responsibilities to "provide that unconditional space of listening and attending" (M).

When counsellors meet with women to address partner violence, the conversation will unfold indeterminately. Neither a woman nor her counsellor can know what intensity may emerge in the telling of her story and the intra-active differences that may be performed. The counsellor group recall that women they meet with are affected by acts of violence that evoke strong emotion: a partner may be "trashing everything", "putting locks on every door", taking the car, you've got no freedom, he takes your money, "but you can't seem to leave and you don't know why". If a woman's access to money and a car are taken away, she does not have the immediate means to leave, and she does not own a key to the locked door. She is kept prisoner to these material(discursive) constraints. To be excluded in this way from spatial freedoms to move,

reconfigures what may be possible to think: you *don't* leave and you *can't* leave. The containment enacted by doors you can't unlock, no money or vehicle, and the "trashing" of things you own will bring about visceral responses, the potentiality of which may be partially articulable. Women participants in my study invite counsellors to attend to "strong intentions and emotions" and not dampen them down, to meet halfway in a kind of connect-ability with the profusion and confusion of these body states.

At one point in the first interview, the counsellor group engage in to-and-fro with the dilemma of finding clarity in the confusion of love-entangled-with-violence that raises the animating force of anger. Tracey proposes that "If you think about this fight-flight business in our primitive brain, I do think that out of the numbness, and if suddenly the person's allowed to get that anger going, that they've got the ability to leave". As women find words for this personalised content, the emotion can be contextualised and situated. For a woman and her counsellor, the story she is telling can find a connecting thread of experience. The counsellor's enactment of listening and attending to the out-side experience of the woman's world has the potential to modify and be modified in the process.

In taking up a decentred and influential position (White, 2007), the counsellor is affected *with* and *by* the story of injustice and dominating force that "trashing everything" might mean. A woman may be talking about property damage, as well as what she will need to do to restore order in her home, and to restore her own body from the autonomic and visceral recoil that follows in the aftermath of her partner's action to "trash everything". Events such as having everything trashed and/or being locked in one's home with no access to car or money, reconfigure the possibility for future fear/anger/distrust responses in women's bodies, and in their stories of not knowing why they don't leave. These affecting performances of strong intention and emotion call on counsellors to walk the talk of our own (strong) intentions to hold the story we are hearing alongside the complexities of ethical and legal responsibilities for women's (and children's) safety.

Another specificity of strong intention and emotion for the women participants of this study is sexual expression. Tracey named intimate partner sex as a “fantastic physical coming together” and Jay spoke of “wild passion, excitement, violence and trauma”. Jay understands the potentiality of affect when she says “there’s no simple answer, but it’s very powerful when that sexual attraction is part of the violence and part of the long pattern”. These counsellor observations intra-act with neuroscience findings that love responses have more complexity than fear responses. The latter are efficient, adaptive and well-developed for self-preservation (Dębiec et al., 2014). In a moment of excitement, sexual attraction and fear, a complex set of body responses are set in motion that may be interchangeably named, depending on the circumstances. Women whose experience of love+fear responses are produced by repeated events of “wild passion, excitement, violence and trauma”, may hold a discursive position that the intensity produced in violent enactments is a showing of “proper emotion”. When a human is subjected to repeated acts of violence, the version of fear memory that is consolidated each time becomes more learned and connected through the neural pathways (Schiller & Phelps, 2011). When a woman associates her fear response with how her body responds in sex, she may come to think of violence as a reactivation cue to the “fantastic physical coming together”, and a man’s demonstration of violence as familiar emotional intensity.

My position, following Massumi (2002) is that response is all-ways alive in a living being as part of the amalgamated vitality of the world, although it is in moments of intensity that human awareness emerges from that potentiality. In the moment of naming a personalised and contextualised expression of response to the world, a person registers specificities of their experience with/in the fuller unspecified affect that precedes and surpasses that turning point. If a person *believes* her body is viscerally responding in ‘love’ or anger or fear, the discursive influence of that belief is part of the discernment process therapy engages with (White, 1995).

Counsellors' ethical angst

In moments of reflecting on their practice, counsellors hold the space for listening and attending without 'dampening down' the (two-way) affective performance that women want counsellors to stay with. Counsellors are hearing more than stories *about* strong intentions and emotions. As women engage with a counsellor, "strong intentions and emotions" may materialise in the timeplace of the counselling room. It follows that women's affective performances of "strong intentions and emotions" will mobilise responses in their counsellors. Difference is performed in these articulations of felt movement, and women want their counsellors to take notice. Jay tells a story of being affected by a cascade of events that was set in motion following the rape of a young woman:

Jay: I remember working with a young woman who had been raped. He got through her window and she was raped. She then had the courage to actually go through the court process, but what happened for her was the whole town seemingly to her, then would actually cross the road.

Esmé: Ostracised her.

Jay: The fallout for her was incredible. And my part in that, sitting behind her in the court process and then finding that continuing on after that. Talk about, what part does the woman play in carrying on the story. That was my part, what part did I play in that aftermath for her by walking alongside her in that process. The whole inward reflection in your own ethical angst.

Jay's partnership and participation for protection in the young woman's life follows ethical guidelines and legal procedures (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020, s 4.3; Ludbrook, 2012). She takes steps to protect the young woman (Code of Ethics s 5.1.a and b), to challenge the injustice and abuse the young woman has been subjected to (Code of Ethics s 5.2.f). As Jay put it earlier: "[Women] need to find out that you can hold them and also that you're going to be ethical". Jay acts for justice "alongside" the young woman who has the courage to take her case through the court system. Jay sits in the court room behind the young woman, and walks alongside her in the fallout that continued on after the court case. In this sense, Jay acts in pastpresentfuture alongside the young woman. A number of questions emerge as I diffract this story through layers of my own engagements with women to address the effects of abuse: What did it take for the young woman to bring her case, and for Jay to also engage with the

judicial process? Did the young woman and Jay, her counsellor, foresee the ostracising performance of “the whole town” when and after the young woman decided to prosecute the case? What discourses of community life act to silence ‘victims’ rather than pursue justice in cases of rape? What repercussions follow Jay’s presence in the court room, sitting behind the young woman and walking alongside her?

Jay names her response to her work for justice and its aftermath as “ethical angst”. In describing it so, Jay does not dampen down the visceral prompts from her own body that are produced by what the young woman continues to be subjected to and the ways these shifting boundaries affect Jay herself: the initial rape, the court process, and the consequent action by “the whole town” to cross the road.

Centering ethics was the nub of the matter in this part of the group interview, and responds to the participant women’s call to not dampen down the way “strong emotions and intentions” alert women and their counsellors to what matters in this work. The question is: what are the multiple ethical positions that diffract through particular engagements with women who say “But I still love him”? Sally situates counselling work in a context of cultural influence, and counsellors not apart from these influences: we are in the midst of the “trickiness” of what women who consult us are dealing with. As Sally does, Michael White (1995), believes counselling should “bring the world into therapy” (p. 50), a feminist view that makes the personal political. Sally is intent on alerting the interview group to cultural and collective imperatives. Far from burdening people with how culture ↔ materiality come to bear on their lives, this kind of grappling can free persons to dissent to the conditions in which they find themselves, and invite a more distributed responsibility for restoring justice.

Sally’s thought is that the vi(ru)olence of gendered partner trouble is “endemic” in our society. Sally’s call to action that “there needs to be more going on” beyond the efforts of individuals overlaps through timespacematter with Foucault’s (1985) commitment to work hard, “to begin and begin again, to attempt and be

mistaken, and go back and rework everything from top to bottom, and still find reason to hesitate from one step to another” (p. 7). I become curious about what Sally might say further.

Jenny: I’m interested in whether there’s a line in the sand about violence, where you would say: recognising this is violence, this is never going to be okay? ...

Sally: Is that where our ethical position has to be really transparent? The responsibility to bring forward the effects of all those relationships whether it’s with violence or love – conflicting ideas – and my holding, knowing that I might have my own belief systems around whether that can survive or not, but the work itself staying positioned in an ethical way so that the person, the woman, has the opportunity to explore and make some choices. I don’t know if I can morally say for someone else what their action will be, so I have to hold that but, in my mind, I still grapple with whether it’s my feminist ideas, or if someone can survive alongside violence... it exists, so we all have a relationship to it. Of course I could hope that the violence doesn’t exist. It’s not good for me culturally, it’s not good for them culturally, it’s not good for us collectively. But this is what we live with day to day.

Sally’s transparent ethical position and Jay’s experience of ethical angst respond to unequal relations of power/knowledge in home and community settings. Both Jay and Sally take a stand on domination and abuse through their enactments of therapy, advocacy and support: in Sally’s words, “it’s not good for us”. Taking a stand may be described as the counsellor centering their position in an influential way, although it would be as useful to say that the counsellor is an active participant in the distribution of (collective) response-ability for justice-doing and protection. Therapy and research that listens out for “conflicting ideas” runs the risk of becoming mired in endless complexity. Hence, Sally’s interest in knowing and *holding a position* whilst maintaining women’s opportunities to “explore”. I take Sally’s and Jay’s contributions to mean that it is becoming all the more urgent that counsellors enact en-courage-ment, and stand *together with* women for justice to come.

Bookend:

Jay’s observation that women need to find out whether a counsellor can be relationally and ethically attentive meet halfway with women’s admonitions “not to dampen down strong emotions and intentions”. Women who have lived

through violence in intimate partner relationships may be uniquely-abled to recognise what John Shotter calls *witness*-thinking as distinct from *aboutness*-thinking (Shotter, 2017, p. 39) in their counsellor's practice. One responding message from one of the counsellors to the women participants reads: "What courage it takes to confront and resist the practices of violence. I have enormous respect for you all" (Appendix M).

Unfinished business

It is clear that addressing the problems and effects of violence between heterosexual partners in our country is a work in progress. This study is one participation in thinking our therapeutic response widely and other-wisely. Women want to live with men and want the endeavour of intimate relationship to be safe and respectful. Counsellors who practice ethically and effectively do not overlook the mandate to work for that safety and respect: we remain opposed to any forms of abuse women are subjected to *and* we lean in with women for as long as they want us to, in order to deliver on justice. When the difficulty for a woman of leaving a violent home setting is compounded by the tangled pull of continuing love, we may ask her to "tell me again".

Chapter 10 Reverberations

The shape we see is the line the pen has drawn onto the map but it is determined only by the state of the tide at any given time. Beyond this everyone has a layer of continental shelf. (Colquhoun, 2016, p. 25)

Introduction

The territory of this study is fraught. The bodies of the women who joined this research carry multiple traces of the violence they have been subjected to: closed-fist assault that results in multiple breaks in a woman's jaw bone, broken teeth and blood spilling on the floor; punches that "nail" into her leg; rape and the lack of recognition or compassion for the pain that follows in the aftermath; sex "when he said", "there was no saying no"; being forced down on a bed; being chased by a man who is so much bigger than she is; being called names, "like a black c, a black animal, a black dog, a black mutt"; being subjected to swearing and shouting; stalking tactics that produce a feeling of being "imprisoned" in her life; threats of suicide; accusing a woman of cheating even though "he knew none of it was happening"; his cheating and his lies about it; a woman's cuts to herself that signify her distress at his cheating; being denied access to money, car and phone that curtail a woman's freedom to contact other people and compromise her care of a child because she cannot buy nappies for her baby; and, surveillance that is carried out by spying on her day-to-day movements with dates and times recorded on a blackboard in the garage. Unpredictable verbal (re)actions by partners form another significant wave force that has the effect of controlling women's part in intimate relationship. The violence of silencing tactics is performed in how these enactments curtail any potentiality for response: "I never knew what was going to frigging happen"; "His opinions and his ways counted more"; "He would talk over me"; "I'd get the silent treatment... for up to two weeks"; "I'd just say nothing"; "He'd have the last say, the final say... everything revolved around him".

Love, too, can be fraught and indeterminate territory in human relating. The complexity of love is even more fraught when the entanglement with abuse

produces an accumulation of fear response in the same body that grasps at the potentiality of love. An affective performance of love animates the lives of intimate partners materially-discursively; partners reach towards the other in ways that produce tensions of continuity and discontinuity. The poetic forms of Chapter 8 of this thesis condense the women participants' narratives of longing for, and purposes with, their intimate partners. Love inhabits the myriad event-connections (Massumi, 2002, p. 217) of their lives together, a viscosity that refuses to be unfelt and unthought, despite violence. A woman finds herself wanting to be with a man "for the rest of [her] life". The "first flush of love" is compelling; "you just want it back"; "something still deep within us remembers". Love opens up a sense of aliveness that is enacted sexually: "In bed; it felt great". When the partners separate, the shared room may no longer be a place in which she wants to sleep; she misses his smell, his eyes, his hair, his Lynx Africa scent, his blanket. Children become an intricate (love) connectivity with partners: "You've got those beautiful kids made with love in the beginning, before it all turned to crap"; "he was at her birth... he was there through the whole birth"; participating in "playtime with our kids". Early love opens the door to future opportunity, of doing/being together. In this study of love-entangled-with-violence, incipencies, immensities and intensities of love with a partner suffer the interruption of acts of violence and control. Thus, the momentum of love is dis-join-ted, but, according to the women of this study, continues to haunt their present lives as a condition of (im)possibility.

Whether the focus is the actuality of violence or the potentiality of love, the narrative fragments in these opening paragraphs are confronting and affecting. As the words were spoken into the interview groups and now materialise on the page, an excess of the original intensity of women and men partners' affecting performance escapes into present time. They overleap the kind of sanitising distance that lets a listener off the hook. These fragments insist that matter matters and shifts attention to "practices/doings/actions" (Barad, 2008, p. 122). When women say to counsellors, "But I still love him", *and* name the violations they have been subjected to by male partners, counsellors engage with the

viscerality of stories we are hearing. Counselling work in this territory is on the knife edge of what is terrifying for a woman, *and* what she yearns for.

What neuroscience offers therapy

How does matter come to matter in this study? One turn I made, early in the research, was towards neuroscience explanations for how bodies respond in situations such as those the women participants recounted. Neuroscientific accounts of fear response and the regions of the brain associated with fear memory have reached at least some measure of agreement but, because love is more difficult to study than fear, there is more work for neuroscience to do, according to Jacek Dębiec, (2007, 2014). The agitation and immediacy of fear response, and the directionality of a love for a partner, were both of interest to me. What I learned that was relevant to counselling practice came partially from the neuroscience literature on fear memory. Neuroscientists believe that brain connectivity changes when different versions of memory are reconsolidated (Agren, 2014; Schiller, 2019; Schiller & Phelps, 2011). To achieve a new version of memory, a retrieved memory is reactivated and destabilised. The point of retrieval is the time in which it is possible to incorporate new information and to re-write an updated version of memory, something that alters neural pathways in the brain. Staying with this hopeful knowledge, in a new materialist iteration of therapy, I adopt the proposal that *“to think something changes the thing that thinks it”* [emphasis in original] (Pitts-Taylor, 2016, p. 20). My study raises a vital question for those who study “the emotional brain” (Dębiec et al., 2014): In situations of partner violence, how does fear of future violence not over-ride complex visceral-emotional states called love?

It follows that therapists have an ethical obligation to thought-practices that change the body that thinks; that modify meaning *and* matter; that are like “an electrical current sent through a neural network: it vibrates and merges with other currents to affect and be affected” (Bennett, 2010, p. 32). New materialist counselling approaches can extend on narrative therapy by incorporating the

details of materiality more intentionally into stories of preferred identity and aspiration. The double arrow hyphen – materiality↔discourse – extends on narrative practices that describe landscapes of action and landscapes of meaning/identity (White, 2007). In narrative therapy, the therapist takes an active interest in what has happened in persons’ lives, how they have been moved in any way to respond to the events they describe, *and* how they have taken a stance for cherished beliefs, values, principles and commitments. The shift I propose is towards a therapy that enables a lively connectivity with worlds *and* words. When preferred narratives are the outcome of counselling work, persons can think differently about themselves, their relationships, and what matters. This change can change the thing that thinks it.

Matter matters

A new materialist perspective towards intimate partner violence responds to Karen Barad’s scepticism at the way language and culture have been granted excessive power to determine what is ‘real’. Barad writes, “Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters... the only thing that does not seem to matter anymore is matter” (2008). I take up this challenge in my study. The contribution I am making is to bring attention to human and nonhuman bodies and, thus, to extend the field of therapeutic endeavour: language still matters, discourse still matters, culture still matters – *and* matter matters.

In their expressions of longing and terror, the women of this study know that physicality remains a volatile connectivity with the man they have loved and left. For example, smell is a tendency to persist that comes to matter in this study:

Just the way he smelt;
Lynx Africa. That’s his scent;
That whole smell thing... the only thing left now. I still miss it.

It is also smell that alerts a woman to potential danger in her home. In the wake of a night-time argument, the woman’s partner leaves the bedroom. Some time later, the woman wonders what the man is doing, “‘cause I could smell that

smell". The gun oil the man uses to clean his gun sets in motion an unforgettable visceral response in the woman's body:

I could smell it and I got up to see what it was, and he was just sitting there cleaning his gun. I just went straight back in the bedroom and pretended I was asleep. I can still see it quite vividly in my mind. And that feeling. It was just terror. I was terrified... I hated having that gun in the house.

Using the second of these data fragments, I respond from the stance of a new materialist narrative practitioner. The waves of sound that speak the words "just terror" reverberate as waves of sound against my own ear drums, and I am alerted to how my own body responds in this moment. I slow my breath. I consider the different elements of the story that present "hot spots": , in particular, the words that name terror. My purpose is, of course, guided by a hope to reduce trauma, and so I decide to focus on the gun as the agent of the terror. I notice that the smell of gun oil and the sight of the man-with-a-gun are particular agential moments in which the gun exerted thing power. The nonhuman things of gun and gun oil alert the woman to consider how her body may be acting on behalf of her own safety, but this story is yet to emerge. The narratives that are co-authored with my therapeutic questions reconnect a woman to the messages *her body* is telling her and are shaped to the particularity of her story. My counselling hope is that *this* new materialist enquiry will build the woman's trust in her body as a reliable actant, which wants to safeguard her.

- Earlier on you said that you had no previous experience of guns. When you smelled something and got up to see what it was, what did your nose tell you?
- Was it in that moment that your nose alerted you to the possible danger in the house?

These lines of enquiry may lead to realisations that the woman's body has been precient in knowing there was potential danger in her home. She may not have previous experience of the particular smell of gun oil but, as I wrote in chapter 5, human and nonhuman bodies may instinctively and immediately respond to odours that carry warnings of rot, death and toxicity. It is not only the woman's nose that prompts her; she is then alerted to what she sees.

- What did your eyes then tell you when you reached the other room?
- What is it about a gun, do you suppose, that raises that terror?

- What meaning do you make of how immediately you felt that terror?

I develop this strand of enquiry further in dialogue with how a woman replies from her own standpoints and knowledge.

- I'm curious too about how much you hated having the gun in the house. In what ways was this awareness an ongoing reminder to you?
- And what did your body want you to keep noticing?

These questions provide scope for validating how a woman registers her highly attuned responses to potential violence. New materialist narrative therapy proposes that emotion is affect *plus* the awareness and naming of personalised and contextualised expressions. The woman's history of life with her partner, the house they live in, the gun and gun oil, all actively play a part in the present expression of terror in the woman's body.

- When you think back to the next move you made – of going straight back in the bedroom and pretending to go to sleep. How did your body know to do that?

The narratives that unfold through these lines of enquiry are validating of the ways the woman's body has viscerally prompted her to respond in a situation of potential danger. As co-editor of the narrative, my enquiries may culminate in a question that specifically reconnects a woman to the reliability of her body:

- What is it like to now consider that your body may be acting on behalf of your safety?

As I demonstrate above, the shift to a new materialist (re)iteration of narrative therapy attends to the vibrant intensity of nonhuman elements like Lynx Africa, a gun, and gun oil, in affiliation with human bodies. I have demonstrated with my questions above how the body of the counsellor can address (other) bodies directly, so that the performances of bodies can be narrated differently.

Affect

I have written a section in Chapter 2 on affect. At this point in the thesis, I argue for therapeutic thought-practices that do not limit affect to "feeling" states. I outlined in Chapter 2 a theoretical position in which affect precedes and

surpasses emotion and I showed, in Chapter 5, how states of terror are situated in a woman's body, provoked by materialities↔social events such as gun oil and a night-time argument. There is a case to be made for finding articulation of any affective/affecting intensity, such as fear, anger, sorrow. The argument I make is that these expressions of liveliness are awarenesses that arrive "out of the pressing crowd" (Massumi, 2002, p. 30) of potential capacities to respond. The point I am making is that there is more going on in the cellular networks of lively bodies than what surfaces in the personalised moment of emotion. I follow Jane Bennett's (2010) claim that bodies continuously, variably, and correspondingly, affect and are affected by other bodies: bodies enact movement and other bodies suffer that action. In tandem with these concerns of material effects, I insert an opportunity for further research that arises from my study.

Opportunity for further research

Two elements of violence-entangled-with-love that have not been well studied in my research concern the materiality↔discursive practices of financial control and substance abuse, including the use and effects of alcohol. I did not specifically enquire into these elements of participants' partnering experience and they were not nominated, with the exception of Mary's account of her considerable loss of assets and financial freedom, a diffractive interference pattern that radiated from life in a remote part of New Zealand with a man who used drugs and alcohol. I believe Mary's provocation issues an invitation for new materialist research, especially as the financial disparities of men's and women's lives post separation has already been part of previous feminist research I undertook (Snowdon & Kotzé, 2012). Anecdotal and popular media reports of how substances like alcohol affect the bodies and relationships of people in our society raises this question for a whole branch of counselling work. According to a New Zealand study carried out ten years ago (Casswell et al., 2011), the impact of heavy use of alcohol by another person in one's life has not been well researched; hence, the opportunity that this gap in my study presents. One of the findings of Casswell et al.'s study is that safety, security and sense of satisfaction

are all compromised more in correlation with the closeness of relationship to a person whose use of alcohol is described as “heavy” (p. 1092). The claim for loss of relational safety and security in Casswell et al.’s research intra-acts with how violent action operates in partner relationships, so the possibilities for using this research apparatus is promising.

The time has come (again) to re-turn to the conundrum of “But I still love him”.

Re-turning

The conundrum that set this research in motion is not faced by women partners who say that love has ended. In configurations where women articulate an ending – “no more; no longer; it’s over; the door is closed” – there can be finality: a limit has been reached. For the women of my study, however, the conundrum emerges as love-continuing, even as a woman comes to points of articulation of her distress, fear and anger that her life and body have been violated. The re-turning work of this study to address the conundrum of “But I still love him” is a dispersing and re-diffracting work (Barad, 2014). Barad describes discoveries in physics in which particles sometimes manifest wave behaviour and light sometimes manifests particle behaviour (Barad, 2007, pp. 81-85). Similarly, there are times when violence can seem to act like love. Knowing this may be the case, gives my study a starting place for turning over and over again the conundrum women face when what they believed was loving attention turns out to be coercive control and other forms of violence. For instance, significant research has found that modes of control by partners that begin with flattery and jealousy may initially be seen as interest and protection (Hill, 2019; Logan et al., 2015; Power et al., 2006; Smith et al., 2013). Even when women describe their partner relationships as controlling of their freedoms, and emotionally hurtful, they may continue to “try to make it work”. My study finds that a woman may “bend over backwards” to keep the house spotless. She may believe there is “no saying no” to sex, and may fear an unpredictable response or reprisal if she gives voice to different opinions from that of her partner.

A new materialist counselling response

Questions about love and violence in women's lives overlap with questions for counsellors. Nollaig O'Reilly Byrne and Imelda Colgan McCarthy (1999) suggest an ethical position towards utterances like "But I still love him" that does not "substitute a dominant discourse with its suppressed other but [will] embrace their juxtapositioning as an ambivalent structure" (p. 97). A new materialist iteration of counsellors' response to women's moving narratives (waves) of love and violence includes the possibility for reversals and re-verses(re-worded) positions. Waves are on the move: waves coexist, amplify, fold and bend to produce crests and troughs. Competing moves are part of all manner of human-nonhuman relating. That said, connecting and diverging moves across intimate partnership landscapes are more starkly apparent in a situation where love and overt forms of violence collide, because harm is intended and produced when partners use physical and coercively controlling violence. In any work to address the effects of violence, the imperative to put safety first can lead down the path of directing other people's lives. The dilemma for counsellors is *how* to work the ambivalent structure. Many therapeutic approaches and practitioners work effectively and ethically by responding to apparently competing strands of meaning. These therapeutic practices take account of persons' situational knowledges of and resistance to oppression (Anderson & Gehart, 2007; Carey et al., 2009; Duvall & Béres, 2011; Wade, 1997, 2007; White, 2000, 2004). The dilemma for counsellors who engage with women in the conundrum of "But I still love him" is how to hold a principled position – that the violence is wrong – whilst respecting the ambivalent positions a woman is grappling with.

As this thesis has made explicit, when women speak to counsellors about the conundrum of "But I still love him", counsellors, too, face a conundrum. Working for safety and justice is an ethical responsibility. The code of ethics of the professional association I belong to promotes responsible caring, social justice, protection, and any reasonable steps that challenge violence and abuse (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020, 3.4; 3.6; 4.3; 4.5; 5.1.a; 5.1.b). These are values, principles and guidelines that a counsellor must weigh alongside core

values of partnership (3.2) and respect for persons' autonomy (3.3). Chapter 9 intersperses women's commentary on their counselling experiences (collected in Appendices K and L) with ethical positions taken by counsellors as answering response. In the folds of these engagements, counsellors navigate with care to find safe passage with the women they work with. To re-turn: Being safe at home matters and reaching for safety is a justice-doing practice (Reynolds, 2012; Richardson/Kinewesquao et al., 2017; Winslade, 2017) and an enactment of feminist politics (Crocket et al., 2009; Epstein & Goodman, 2019; Feinsilver et al., 2007; Hydén, 2005; Levin, 2007; Macleod, 2006). In partner situations of love-entangled-with-violence, the counsellor's conundrum is how to attend to a woman's safe future life *and* work out with her what she means when she speaks of love.

In my study, the counsellor group spoke about therapeutic practices that enact words *and* worlds. The six counsellors made it their business to find out about practicalities (material circumstances) in women's current situations, and the possibilities for future safety and freedom. In the counsellor group meetings, specificities of place, time and the therapist's body posture were named as examples of materialities that matter.

Vanessa speaks of her physical presence: "You're not diverting eye contact. I guess you're holding that, comfortably, not awkwardly". Vanessa's close attention starts with what her own body *intentionally* does to enact manaakitanga and to materialise a listening and watchful presence. A new materialist stance attends to words with interest and attention *and* shapes a practice that intentionally activates the body of the counsellor: in this case, to hold eye contact. What Vanessa describes is an active participation *as part of* the world, a way of specifically making eye-contact to signify attention to the woman's body and her story.

In her counselling work, Esmé asks about *how long and how often* a woman may have questioned the actions of her partner, and how these actions affect her. The search for different knowing is described by Karen Barad (2007) as a "material

practice of engagement with the world in its differential becoming” (p. 89). For a counsellor who is committed to making a difference, it matters *what* knowledge is produced in the counselling work. As the counsellor enquires into the relevant history of a woman’s thought about the partner relationship, a timeline unfolds, and the woman can begin to articulate the effects of violence on her life. In this way, the narrative of *how long and how often* a woman may have questioned her partner’s actions becomes differently known. By taking up these provocations, therapeutic convers(at)ions begin to materialise the possibilities for change.

Moving out of a violent setting enacts a disturbance that, like waves, can overlap with continuing love. What matters for new materialist counsellors is how a question works diffractively to open up different pathways; from which emerge *what* matters, *how* it matters, and *for whom*. In the counsellor focus group, Sally described her practices of responding to women’s fear at having to leave an established home. Women have asked Sally the following questions: *Where will I be? Where can I live? Who will help? Will anyone even pay attention to me?* Once these questions are voiced in therapy, the counsellor is jointly responsible in finding just outcomes. The woman and her counsellor, the counsellor’s questions and what the questions bring forward, all become part of the configuration of the therapeutic work. The therapeutic assemblage and its attention to timeplacematter has the potential to address the violence, a woman’s present housing instability, and future social loss. *Who will help?* It may take a collective effort to find a new house, negotiate a tenancy or mortgage, pack, move or purchase household furniture, and settle in. Women may help each other (Wilson et al., 2016) or turn to municipal authorities (Woodhall-Melnik et al., 2017). *Will anyone even pay attention to me?* Therapeutic practices of outsider witnessing (White, 2000b, 2007) are one way group facilitators meet with women, to pay care-full attention, and support companionship (Crocket et al., 2009; Feinsilver et al., 2007; Levin, 2007). The question of who will pay attention raises the risk to a woman of moving to live with a new partner who may also subject her to violence, as Lisa found in her counselling work. Women, who are trying to address this potential loneliness, have said to Lisa:

“If [another man] came along, I could safely jump to that”. So it’s like one relationship to the next. That is like an opportunity, kind of thing. “But if not, if I was going to be on my own, alone, so where’s the back-up here?”

When women ask *Where’s the back up here?* and *Will anyone even pay attention to me?* counsellors are called on to respond ethically and effectively. In new materialist terms, these questions fold into each other, and sink into the bodies of women and their counsellors. New materialist counselling asks *what is being made to matter?* and *how does that mattering affect what is possible to do, say, think?* These are thought-practices that perform departure+continuity. That is to say: new materialist counsellors are indebted to how we have done things in the past *even as* these practices cut together-apart with the innovations that take us into futures. It is familiar practice to respond to questions posed by women facing the conundrum of love-entangled-with-violence from core counselling commitments to social justice and responsible care for the wellbeing of others (New Zealand Association of Counsellors, 2020), as well as to materialise the potentiality for safety *and* community. An immediate ‘answer’ is not the point. We stay with the trouble, meet the moment, ride the waves of speaking where they catch and falter and come to (new)life. Counsellors and other professionals do this actively and ongoingly, knowing that we do not arrive at justice once and for all. The call is to be open and alive to each meeting, each question, each intra-action (Barad, 2007, pp. x-xi). For the women in this study, violence does not cancel out the wave of love that exerts an affecting ambivalence to stay and “work things out” or, as above, to move from “one relationship to the next”. Leaving can look like failure but staying is not simple. The conundrum of leaving violent partner relationships involves bodies and their passionate expression through sex. One departure in this thesis is to address bodies (human and nonhuman) directly, knowing that bodies/*things* leave their trace. The stories threaded through this study show how things like the smell of body-wash that surprises you when you enter the bathroom, security cameras, doors, cars, buses, guns and gun oil, knives, pillows, and bedrooms, perform an active role in human lives. Memories of ‘the good times’ and the bad times make unexpected reappearances. The familiar body-place-thing can assert a pull to return to a (still loved)partner who has enacted violence.

Building knowledge is a further material↔discursive contribution of my study. Counsellors Lisa and Tracey described their practices of working within professional networks to extend women's knowledge of what to do, where to go, and people to call on for support. As example: Tracey once took a woman to meet a police officer in response to the woman's dilemma of "don't tell me; no, do tell me" (chapter 9). The move Tracey was making for the woman's life was an altering one because another professional perspective entered the therapeutic arrangement. Lisa, too, believes that "being informed allows space to make some decisions you didn't think you could make". Lisa does not elaborate on how she negotiates to offer information but one way information can be passed on is through pamphlets and other prepared written materials. Pamphlets may be displayed in counselling waiting rooms, or offered directly by a counsellor. From a new materialist perspective, when pamphlet titles materialise as part of an assemblage, their prompts may enter into a woman's conscious thought as useful knowledge and resource. The vibrant matter (Bennett, 2010) of paper, colour, written words and images has the capacity to intervene within the counselling arrangement to contribute to knowledge.

The enactments of justice-work described above are material performances: they show how thought-practices materialise in specific ways to make a difference in the world. The body of the counsellor makes an ethical and affective contribution to counselling. The questions the counsellor asks are altering agents in the counselling conversation. Questions and shared information have the potential to re-shape a story much as waves will disturb and change the medium they move through.

Revisiting entanglement

Is there any way to study [entanglements] without getting caught up in them? (Barad, 2007, p. 74)

The conceptual contribution of entanglement is critical to my study. I argue that finding patterns of difference through Barad's expositions of entanglement can open up possibilities that address love-entangled-with-violence: that it may be possible to name violence for what it is; that, through care-full engagement processes, it is possible to find determinacy and resolve – in the moment – and take steps accordingly.

Like Schödinger's cat, stuck in the box with the radioactive atom, the entanglement persists (chapter 2). An entangled state exists for Schödinger's cat because its fate is tied up with the fate of the atom. I reiterate here what entanglement means, on Barad's terms: that entanglements are not understood as composites (Barad, 2007, p. 176) or unities that erase difference (Barad, 2014, p. 176) or the intertwining of entities that constitute undifferentiated blends (Barad, 2010, p. 265). As separate entities in the box, the cat and the atom are unstable assemblages that form a system in which it is possible to differentiate the cat and the atom from the other, but not to determine the outcome of their intra-action. *At the point* when the atom decays, the cat will die. Until that moment, the cat remains alive. It cannot be part dead and part alive. Entities, such as the cat and the radioactive atom, cut-together/apart in ways that join and dis-join *within* an event (Barad, 2007, 2010). What comes to matter is how the entanglement is specified, articulated or "measured" (Barad, 2007; Schrödinger, 1935). Measurement is achieved by working out how actants/actions become differentiated. Not until the observer opens the box (and is now also entangled in the assemblage) is it possible to say whether the cat is dead or alive. In the moment of opening the box, a moment of differentiation becomes possible. So it is with counselling. Love can be 'seen' to be *not* violence when counselling work performs a re-viewing task. A new materialist iteration of narrative therapy extends on Michael White's initiatives with women to discern and name abuse and break from its effects (White, 1995). My study follows Barad's insistence that "knowing is a direct material engagement, a cutting together-apart, where cuts do violence but also open up and rework the agential conditions of possibility" (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 52). When women engage counsellors to work the specificities of the love-violence entanglement in

ways that make the structures of the entanglement evident (Barad, 2007, p. 73) there will be disturbance. *And* new openings diffract from these ruptures. For this reason, it is vitally important that counsellors give sufficient attention to *what* is enacted, what becomes possible, and how to think about response-ability. To find difference is consequential to knowledge-making practices; a new materialist iteration of narrative therapy offers a diffraction apparatus that is both shaping and attuned to difference. The iteration of therapy I propose in this thesis attends to what bodies *and* language do. And what becomes possible to do is to read “texts” through each other, diffractively, to produce new patterns of thinking-being.

The condundrum of “But I still love him” mutually references love and implied violence. The “but” performs a pivot point of potential indeterminacy. The “but” acts as a narrowing device, a diffractive apparatus, through which it may be possible to discern what is signified by ‘love’ and, equally, what, specifically, is absent and protested. When a woman meets with a counsellor and begins to differentiate acts of love from acts of violence, they (both) enter the entanglement as differentiating agents to radically re-work what has marked the partner relationship and how it has marked a woman’s body and memory.

The potentiality of justice-to-come (Morris, 2015) is not the empty promise of salvation and liberation, once and for all. Entanglement does not mean interconnectedness (unity) or absolute separations; rather, an ongoing response-ability to re-work each unfolding of the dilemma. Therefore, I propose that a new materialist iteration of therapy unfolds in boundary-making processes that are radically open to indeterminacy *and* decidability. When a woman and her therapist attend to specific materialities ↔ discourses of affecting violence, a woman can begin to discern and ‘decide’ what alternative and enlivening reconfigurations of belonging with the world she will enact; a move towards what is to-come.

An indeterminate therapy

From the outset, the implicit call to me from women who said “But I still love him” has been for ethical and effective practice that exposes violence and takes account of the multiplicity of women’s alternative stories. My sense of getting lost (see Crocket et al., 2009; Lather, 2007) goaded me into action to find and extend on (then unknowable) possibilities for therapeutic practice. In the current timeplace of completing my thesis, I reach an iterative reconfiguring that I believe responds to that call. I work from a fragment of the interview materials that has not already appeared in previous chapters. I purposefully bring this fragment into the final chapter of my thesis to show the possibilities for a new materialist-narrative therapy approach because the story it performs is the love↔violence condundrum writ large. The move my study is making for therapy builds on White and Epston’s (1990) reading of Foucault’s analysis of how “deployments of power are directly connected to the body – to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures” (1978, p. 100) and I extend the body connection to the thing-power of non-human bodies (Bennett, 2010). To do this, I intersperse an unfolding story from the data materials with lines of enquiry that enact a new materialist (re)iteration of narrative therapy. I present Kaye’s story, in which the reader encounters the bodies of a woman, a man and a baby, birth, betrayal, a blade and blood.

The notional therapeutic responses I intersperse with Kaye’s lived account of partner love-entangled with violence could have gone in many directions. The pathways they trace are neither a “right” way that other counsellors should follow, nor do I approach Kaye or what she is saying with an idea of talking her into something or out of something. As a counsellor, I hope to meet Kaye in her story, halfway, with my interest and involvement. In this way, I am taking up a stance that narrative therapists espouse: that of not-knowing quite what the other person knows about her life (White & Epston, 1990), whilst exercising my participation in the conversation by shaping an ethical enquiry (Brown, 2007; Crocket et al., 2009; Morse & Morgan, 2003; Salter, 2018; White, 1995). This is

enquiry that attends to the feminist intentions I hold, and addresses the power/knowledge relationship (Larner, 1999).

Re-diffraction

Not long after my daughter was born, not even six weeks... I sat outside
and cut myself up. I had cuts all over my chest, my wrist.
I had blood everywhere.
It's not just that one incident. It's all of them. It's all of them.
It's every time he's walked out on me.

This text materialises the viscosity of a woman's body and the thing-power of a cutting actant. And goes to the heart of the matter.

Thought-practices from a new materialist narrative therapy approach

The therapeutic move I am proposing works to co-create the conditions of possibility. To engage with Kaye's account, I seek to follow the specificities of her situation to the fullest possible extent so that articulations of affect may emerge. Here Kaye can say "what really was going on", beyond what she had found expression for before. The therapist is attuned to the miss-take, the out of sync moment, the mo(ve)ment of bodies (Davies et al., 2006), any elevated body response (Massumi, 2002; Wetherall, 2012), and the escape from a story that no longer fits (Frank, 2017).

I return to earlier spacetime coordinates in Kaye's life. Kaye's first partner relationship lasted a number of years "before [she] broke free". Things came to a turning point when the New Zealand child protection service "turned around to me and said, 'If you go back to him one more time, we will uplift your child'. So I cut it off for good... I'd been out of love with him for a couple of years, but it's not 'til after the fact that I realised that". Kaye names a bifurcating moment in the relationship when she "cut it off for good". This move follows a provocation from

the child protection service. In Kaye's move to separate from her partner, the child protection service enters the assemblage, and its action produces an aperture for Kaye's next move. Kaye foregrounds "being out of love" with her partner for a couple of years. She enacts a cut; "for good".

Kaye makes meaning of her decision to separate her life from a man she has been "out of love with" for a couple of years. Even though she does not explicitly name the potentiality of her child as actant in this re-configuration of their family life, a counsellor may want to enquire further about her mothering commitment, the hopes she has for different futures for her child and herself, and for the active part she played and will play in how these futures might be enacted. One possible therapeutic contribution is to draw on Kaye's knowledge and purpose as a mother:

- What, in particular, affected you so much when you were told your child might be uplifted?
- What was it in the threat that shifted your position?
- What did that threat set in motion?
- What was the good you were holding on to or hoping for in that moment of cutting it off?
- What did you have to think and do to cut off from your partner?

Other lines of enquiry trace how Kaye had come to know she "had been out of love" with her partner "for a couple of years". The following questions attend to Kaye's body as vibrant actant:

- At what point did your body tell you that you were out of love with him? What was happening at the time?
- *How* did your body tell you?
- What was your body doing differently that you started to notice and led you to know you were out of love with him?

A new convergence

Kaye's begins a new partner relationship when she is some months pregnant. Her commitment to the new partnership is characterised by determination: "I never once, in the whole time I was with him, even when he was in jail, never once cheated on him, ever. I was so in love with this guy, I still am". Kaye's partner did not return her commitment and fidelity.

It's not just that one incident. It's all of them. It's all of them.
It's every time he's walked out on me.

In the data fragment, the body of the man has walked out. He has done this on more than one occasion so an accumulation of absence haunts Kaye's story. What unfolds in this and an earlier rendition of Kaye's story is that, by his absence, *this* time, and *every* time he's walked out, the man is "putting the knife in". The evocation of the knife is visceral, even though it is not yet actualised, as though a knife is entering her body. In the imagined counselling engagements that follow, I trace some possible lines of enquiry that attend to materialities↔discourse:

Counsellor: You said that you never once cheated on him, ever, and that you love him. How come you held on to this love through every time he's walked out on you?

Kaye: I don't know. As fucked up as this sounds, I still want to be with him. I still want to find ways to make it work. He'd walked out before. Same bitch. I was fed up. I was so mad. [Pause.] Why did I do that? I'm not too sure. She shows him her tits and he goes. And every time he goes, the knife goes in. Him going was like putting the knife in... again.

Counsellor: What was it about that day?

Kaye: I think I'd finally found that kind of... I don't know. I thought he loved me. Even though he walked out like that, even before that day.

As the commitment and purpose of Kaye's hopes for partnership unfold, the different directions for the therapist's response start to spread out. The counsellor's acknowledgement of Kaye's hope "to make it work" overlaps with her responsibility to Kaye's injury and pain. What matters to Kaye about a

commitment to “never once cheat on him” that makes what her partner does so painful to Kaye? Where has she known this kind of commitment by partners? It is important to notice whether any line of enquiry may arrive too soon, or offers a diffractive curve that re-turns to the matter at hand.

Counsellor: What does the betrayal of him walking out to be with the other woman do?

Kaye: Every time he goes, the knife goes in.

Counsellor: And the way his walking out on you “puts the knife in”? How did you-using-the-blade connect to “him-putting-the-knife-in”? ... can you say some more about whether it does connect in some way... ?

The line of enquiry I suggest here is to see whether or not the virtual knife of her partner’s betrayal has a connection with the actual blade that Kaye cuts herself with. The thing-power of the actual knife to wound Kaye’s body is preceded “every time” her partner walks out and he’s “putting the knife in”. My suggested line of enquiry asks Kaye if words and things are entangled in *the effect* they have on her body.

Counsellor: Where does that knife go in?

Kaye: Into my heart.

The heart of the matter.

Kaye’s expression of pain is succinctly laid out in the story she tells, and her enactment of the knife cutting her chest diffracts through the grating of the man’s action to walk out. The full potential of Kaye’s pain and its meaning are headlined. Her implicit invitation to the counsellor is to stay with this pain and the way its expression has materialised in the violence of cutting herself up, and to connect with what more can be articulated from the origins of this passionate story. A new materialist enquiry has an interest in a body-centred enquiry that includes nonhuman bodies. What is the capacity of any one of these bodies to act and to respond? The blade that cuts is “inextricably enmeshed in [this] dense network of relations” (Bennett, 2010, p. 13). The thing-power of the blade and blood are altering agencies. When the blade is picked up by the woman’s hand, it

becomes operative. When the blade comes into close contact with the woman's chest, the various forces in this assemblage enact the cuts, and her "blood is everywhere". And, because the configuration is one of *distributed* albeit *uneven* agency, the counsellor asks about the capacity of the blade to mark the human body, the directionality the actant sets in motion, and the response a human body takes on these emergent outcomes. The counsellor may enquire along the following lines:

- To what extent does your body remember what the blade did?
- When you think about your chest and wrist being cut, how did your skin respond at the time?
- And when you smelled the blood everywhere, what effect did that have?
- What was the point when your body insisted the cutting stop? What part did the blood have to play?

These lines of enquiry follow a Baradian view that "discursive practices are themselves material (re)configurations of the the world" (Barad, 2007, p. 151), and extend on Foucault's analysis of sociohistorical conditions for knowledge/power practices. Kaye's encounter with the knife is an encounter with a man who entered her life and now walks out, again. In this constellation, there is no rational plan. The man's action to walk out sets off a cascade of not-fully-predictable encounters. The blade held by the woman turns on her chest, blood everywhere, mute testament to all the preceding actions that are "putting the knife in". The human and nonhuman actants are thrown together in this event and the borders between them are porous. The call and response of the story takes its own momentum, and differences begin to emerge. The pressure of bodies goes beyond the here and now, so a further question can be put:

- How have you been listening to your body since that day?
- How does your body want to be looked after and cared for?

In these questions, the counsellor is using the apparatus of the enquiry to see what exerts a pull in the direction of care(love) a woman may have for her-self, for life, for a future. The continuous variation that is made possible in the counselling is not about fixing, reducing or extracting answers. Rather, the intentions of a new materialist iteration of narrative therapy are immersive and integral to a widening world of possibility. The disruption of what has been well

rehearsed is necessary for the new, *which did not exist*, to unfold. This iteration of counselling is not an apparatus of capture, although it may bring persons closer *and* further from the known. What this study reiterates is that the dominance of recognition and representation is problematic if it subordinates difference. A starting place of respectful and democratic partnering in therapy (Larner, 1999) can provoke the un-thought and not-yet-knowing through the receptivity of all elements of the configuration. My study provokes divergence and difference, a re-turning work, a departure, rather than arrival and conclusions. The call is for counsellors to follow the agitations of a woman's narrative *and* the chancy, scrappy, unthought, dis-joints of what is going on beneath the skin and in the gut.

As my whole study has shown, this is not work at a safe distance. Counsellors (and researchers) are not out-side or above the fray. The complications of bodies (materialities↔discourse) surface as language that stutters. Women seek counselling when accumulations of violence turn dreams into nightmares. Therapy provides a timeplace where long-told stories can meet the unanticipated question of the counsellor half-way. An ethic of care not to re-traumatise persons remains (White, 2000c, 2004). I argue that bodies cannot cognitively *decide* against an affective response when conditions in the world produce this response.

Re/imagining theory with new materialisms

My study of love-entangled-with-violence with women who say "But I still love him" has reached its crescendo in a new materialist (re)iterative narrative therapy. In order to bring my reader with me in this improvisation of practice, I have re-traced how matter comes to matter in this study, and the language I have adopted for this purpose. In chapter 2 of this study, I articulated layers of sedimented feminisms that diffract through my research. Karen Barad (2007, 2014) proposes a methodological shift from thinking with reflection – as for instance, mirror images, seeing objects as they are from a distance – to diffractive performativity in which all bodies, human and nonhuman,

“participate in (re)configuring the world” (2007, p. 91) and differences emerge through intra-action. Diffraction is both a physical phenomenon in the world and, for the purposes of this research and consequent iterations of counselling, a thought-practice that is attuned to differences that matter. Diffraction, on Barad’s terms, has to do with “the way waves combine when they overlap and the apparent bending and spreading of waves that occurs when waves encounter an obstruction” (2007, p. 74). In chapter 2, I took an example of diffraction from everyday life. As a man waits at the roadside for a train to pass through a level crossing, the wave action of air displacement between the carriages plays out in visible ripples across his t-shirt. The rhythmic movement of the man’s t-shirt intra-acts with the passage of the train in specific ways. The speed of the train, its proximity to where the man is standing, the size and fabric of his t-shirt, all come to matter in how the diffractive pattern is made across his body. The implications of diffraction for a new materialist iteration of narrative therapy may not seem at first glance to be a radical change in the practice of enquiry, but are shifts in *how* therapy materialises. Narrative therapy is well known for a questioning stance that attends to the specificities of what is happening in the cultural contexts of persons’ lives (White, 1995, 2007) and to the potential for finding alternative and preferred stories; enacting difference. White’s notion of a therapy of indeterminacy is hinted at in early interviews (2000) while, at the same time, he does not shy away from discerning what ideas are informing therapeutic practice. In order to address the power/knowledge relation, narrative therapists aspire to a decentred and influential position (White, 1997a). Narrative therapists intentionally decentre their prior knowledge and monitor the witting and unwitting effects of their part in conversations whilst contributing to the potential for lives to be other than they have been (an influential position). In a new materialist reiteration of therapy, the counsellor’s intra-actions are material engagements *as part of the world*. The counsellor builds the diffraction apparatus of therapeutic lines of enquiry in order to actively participate in reconfiguring the world(s) the counselling traverses. In a new materialist iteration of therapy, the counsellor’s questioning participation acts as potential bifurcation, variation, provocation. The question seeks specificities. It narrows the flow of the narrative through an aperture that

produces an arresting moment from which the trajectory of the story can bend and alter.

From its inception, narrative approaches to therapy have attended to the cultural contexts in which people live (Duvall & Young, 2009; Madigan, 1999; White, 1995e; White & Epston, 1990). The *Just Therapy* team in New Zealand have also long advocated for justice in material terms, and earned a respected place alongside narrative therapy through this stance (Waldegrave et al., 2003). A new materialist iteration of therapy raises the status of nonhuman actants enmeshed in the “swarm of vitalities at play” (Bennett, 2010, p. 32), in conjunction with human actants and the discursive strivings and vibrations that infuse a given situation. The complexities that make up any given configuration, such as the territory of this study into intimate heterosexual partner relationship, call on the therapist to encounter the unexpected; the fragments, miss-takes, digressions, places and objects, elevated body responses, the anti-gravitational force that pulls a story out beyond its usual orbit. A new materialist therapy attends to the out-side: who and what else is part of this arrangement? What capacities does this actant have? How does this actant mark the bodies of other actants? How does this part slip-slide into other parts of the network?

The women of this study find themselves not-knowing and silenced in matters of consultation and negotiation in the context of their partner relationships. The challenge has been laid before us, as professional practitioners. Following Foucault in *What is enlightenment?*, I propose that our task in counselling is to work from an attitude, ethos, and philosophy “in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them” (Foucault, 1984, p. 50). Michael White expounds on Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge in therapy in much of his early writing (Madigan, 1992; White, 1995, 1997, 2000; White & Epston, 1990). In particular, White (1995) states that persons “do not have to be entirely complicit with dominant culture” and proposes that “we should make it our business to ensure that we are not so”

(p. 45). A new materialist configuration of narrative therapy reads Foucault's critique and White's imperative through the viscosity of affecting bodies.

What practices does a counsellor call on to meet with persons grappling with competing desires around love and violence? How will a counsellor bring herself alongside a woman to engage safely enough to work for her future safety? I insert the word 'enough' here in recognition of an imperfect stance for justice-doing inspired by guiding intentions that can be "rough around the edges" (Reynolds, 2012, p. 21). Counsellors who are willing to step into indeterminate and fraught therapeutic territories with a "willingness to step away from certitude" (Crocket et al., 2009, p. 33) can bring their responsiveness *and* uncertainty to the potentialities, limitations and affecting dangers of where to next.

Counsellors listen, and so do clients. Space to "really listen to their own hearts" is a practice intention that counsellors spoke about in Chapter 9. Inviting women into self-listening about what is happening when love and violence entangle in their partner relationships comes through questions, pauses and, in a narratively informed practice, of writing therapeutic documents (Morse & Morgan, 2003; Speedy, 2005; White, 1995). The move this study makes is to explicitly engage bodies in therapy, in ways that extend on the discursive explorations of narratively informed practices.

There is certainly work to do. In that sense, this thesis is both a beginning and a culmination of work. Diffracted through this thesis, I have explicitly and implicitly situated myself-as-researcher-counsellor in the world as it has come to meet me. I take up Karen Barad's insistence that "what is on the other side of agential cuts is never separate from us" (Dolphijn & van der Tuin, 2012, p. 69). Questions of how to practice ethically persist alongside the continuing violence this study has been grappling with so my claim is that counsellors can not enter this field of endeavour and remain unaffected. We can, however, stay with the trouble.

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Appendix A

And I still love them: On touching loss



And I Still Love Them: On Touching Loss

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In this article, the author performs a re-membering practice that incorporates a relational materialist theory. It traces the disturbances that follow in the wake of three deaths in her family. Written in an autoethnographic voice, the article is a polyphonic composition of the narrative therapy approach of re-membering entangled with the spacetimematter of silence, speaking, sitting, staying, presence, absence, loss of momentum, dreams, trees, books, cardiac pace-makers, writing, breath, ashes, murmuring, suffering. Thus, the dispersed agencies of bodies, human and non-human, reinvigorate a linguistic practice and the author's personal and professional life.

Keywords: re-membering, materiality, silence, intra-action, diffraction, love

Key Points

- 1 In this article, I work with musical imagery and strands of poetry to craft a re-membering account of a continuing relationship with three significant members of my family who have died.
- 2 The article's diffractive structure and content traces the *effects* of loss with/in the author's family life.
- 3 In narrative therapy re-membering conversations, stories of loved ones are folded into continuing relationship between the loved one and the bereaved.
- 4 Human and non-human bodies come to bear on how re-membering practices are discursively crafted: the material nature of the world comes to matter.
- 5 Space time and matter are inseparable in new materialist theory – represented as spacetimematter: The article's improvisation of places, moments, and bodies proposes that re-membering practices pay attention to this inseparability of spacetimematter.

The past is never closed, never finished once and for all ... there is no taking it back, setting time aright, putting the world back on its axis. There is no erasure finally. The trace of all reconfigurings are written into the enfolded materialisations of what was/is/ to-come. Time can't be fixed.

(Barad, 2010, p. 264)

Overture

This article is an elegy of loss and re-membering. It traces a journey I have made into terra incognita. The once known and familiar of family life was irrevocably altered for my siblings, sons, nephews and nieces, and me, following three deaths in our family. A different stillness came over us in the southern hemisphere springtime death of my father in 2012, the mid-winter sudden heart-attack that took the life of my brother's wife in 2013, and the early summer death of my mother in 2014. Whilst I managed to maintain my engagement with everyday life, therapeutic work, and community responsibilities, my health slipped into chronic unwellness, and my doctoral research lost momentum. That I have regained a measure of good health, and my practice and research work are proceeding is, in part, an outcome of the re-membering work of this writing.

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Re-membering conversations (Hedtke, 2003, 2014; Hedtke & Winslade, 2004, 2005, 2016; White, 1988, 1997, 2007; Winslade & Hedtke, 2008) offer possibilities for therapeutic conversations that are 'predicated on the assumption of ongoing presence' (Hedtke & Winslade, 2005, p. 206) of those now deceased. In contrast to ideas that say the bereaved must 'move on' and arrive at 'closure' in key relationships of their lives, White (1988, 2007) was influenced by the writing of a number of people – notably Meyerhoff – in proposing that it is possible to bring forward and say 'hullo' to legacies and memories that can actualise persons' preferred identities (see also Hedtke & Winslade, 2005). Furthermore, as Hedtke and Winslade (2016) point out, memory transcends death (p. 73): 'grief is about at least two people, the living and the deceased, and counselors need to learn about both of them' (p. 78). White (1997, 2007) also took this position, pointing to the inseparability of significant persons from each other in an 'association of life' (White, 2007, p. 129) through shared values and commitments.

Time folds back and forward in re-membering conversations. There are moments that reach back into lived experiences that are touched by loss, to re-locate and re-incorporate¹ relationships with loved ones. Other moments move forward in time to inhabit the voices and legacies of persons of significance. The work of this article is to ride the waves of re-membering practices as therapeutic journey into what White (2007) calls 'purposive reengagements' with such figures (p. 127). To move across time is to enfold an 'as if' motif – a subjunctive grammar – into re-membering practices (Hedtke & Winslade, 2005, 2016). Although the writing of this article does not specifically include this grammatical variation, I too engage in 'as if' language practices in my counselling work, in order that multi-voiced stories of preferred identity may emerge. As such, therapeutic re-membering conversations are intentionally crafted to richly describe and honour the mutual contribution of persons in association with each other (Hedtke & Winslade, 2005, 2016). These ensembles go beyond who-when-where-and-what-happened narratives. Being thus transported introduces a fugal layering of notes of continuing relationship, an altered attunement to the lives of others.

Movement 1 – Materiality <-> Discourse

It is an assertion of this article that human *and* non-human materialities come to bear on how re-membering practices can be discursively crafted. Narrative approaches to therapy have an interest in exploring the landscape of action – events in the specificities of people's everyday lives – and in the meanings people make of these events. In this article, I propose therapists take a further step in recognising the dispersed agency or *thing power* (Bennett, 2010) of non-human actors in re-membering stories.

As we work in the territories offered by the various post-modern turns – linguistic, discursive, cultural – feminist theoretical physicist, Barad argues we should not lose sight of the significance of matter by prioritising language. Rather, Barad (2008) insists that materiality and discourse are conjoined, mutually implicated, and articulated and, therefore, neither has privileged status. To that end, the autoethnographic composition of re-membering in this article takes up the challenge of finding the serenade in dreams, trees, books, silence, cardiac pace-makers, heart-beat, heart stopping, rhythm, writing, breath, ashes, murmuring, suffering.

Each of these rearrangements of the world in its becoming, come to matter. The writing of words in this article traces the material disturbances of the deaths of my parents and sister-in-law into my life. One example: the account of my mother's dying in

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this article implicates a cardiac pace-maker. Pace-makers have been researched, designed, crafted, and assembled by skilled engineers, for the purpose of regulating heartbeat. When a pace-maker is implanted in a human body, the body's heart and the pace-maker's components and electrical impulses produce a performance. Space, time, and matter are enfolded in daylight and dark, a hospital bed, an armchair, through movement, sound and silence. The re-remembering work of this article ascribes to the assemblage of the pace-maker a specific *thing power* that makes a difference in the body and life of my mother, Shirley. In storylines beyond the scope of this article, the pace-maker also reaches into the lives of members of Shirley's family. As my sister and I read to know more about pace-makers, our lives and stories ride the waves of space and time to entangle with the loves and lives of Katy Butler (2010, 2013) and *her* family. She and we materially participate across these diffracted moments in knowledge-making.

Movement 2 – Diffraction and Difference

By using new materialist theory, this article moves away from familiar modes of seeing (reflection) toward the optics of diffraction. Reflection, as Haraway (1997) and Barad (2007, 2014) have identified, forms a mirror image of an object, thus producing repetition. Greater wave complexity occurs in refraction: light rays are bent as they pass from one medium to another causing visual variance. As an example of how therapy can be theorised through the metaphor of refraction, Larner (2015) offers a refractive dialogical attunement to the words and meanings of the other in ways that invite persons to re-imagine ourselves through the porous membrane of otherness and difference. Diffraction is yet more complex. As with reflection and refraction, diffraction involves change in direction but, with diffraction, waves pass through apertures or bend around obstacles leaving change(disturbance) in their wake. Diffraction of waves of water through a single opening, for instance, creates curved ripple patterns beyond the opening. Diffractive optics are shape-changing and reconfiguring, thus offering a wider scope for innovation than replication.

Even as I try to write this journey sequentially, I don't believe life's detours go in straight lines. The experiments with diffraction in this writing appear in content *and* structure. As Barad (2014) puts it, 'there is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then' (p. 168).

To that end, I have queered the timeline by interfacing my reveries of my father's life with a diffracted contemplation on my mother's heart, creating a crescendo in the closing section to honour the life of my sister-in-law. Such relational materialist approaches to knowledge-making practice (Hultman & Lenz Taguchi, 2010) are attuned to difference, and map 'where the *effects* of differences appear' (Barad, 2007, p. 72). In a relational materialist account, human and non-human materialities are affecting and emerging differently *with* each other, in each moment. Intra-action is a term used in materialist writing to signify the non-privileging and inseparability of agencies. This proposes that agencies are not separate entities inter-acting with each other. In other words, agency is not what someone or something *has*. It is an enactment of changing possibilities. As part of the larger arrangement of the universe, we cannot respond to the 'other as if the other is the radical outside to the self' (Barad, 2007, p. 178). We are constituted and entangled together in each movement of the world in its becoming. We meet the other halfway. In one sense, bodies – human and

non-human – can be understood to transpose properties with each other, which, as Lerner (2015) proposes, happens with words and meanings in dialogical encounters.

Secondly, deviations in content are enacted, as the diffracted overlapping waves affect – and are affected by – the multiple forces and bodies entangled in the narrative. Just as there has become for me an embodied sense that time is out of joint, there is a thickening web of how my self within many relationships, including in my body, has become undone: ‘the self doesn’t hold; the self is dispersed in an un-doing of self as a result of being threaded through by that which is excluded’ (Barad, 2014, p. 178). I am living many lives: some of which I read in other people’s writing; some of which are made up by other’s people’s stories of me; some I tell myself; all of which braid through spacetime-matter.

Movement 3 – Starting Sometime/Somewhere

In my work as a counsellor, and in friendship relationships, I have encountered a double dilemma with women who have been harmed by violence in their partner relationships by men they continue to love. The ethical positions for me – and my colleagues – in working for safety for these women and their children, sometimes sits uneasily alongside the work we do to deconstruct an embodied continuing love; as it does for the women who consult us. In mid-year 2012, I began doctoral research work through the University of Waikato (*‘But I still love him’: Women talk about love and violence*) to investigate women’s accounts of how this continuing love in the face of violence works, and counsellor practice in response.

The beginning of the research work coincided with the departure of my younger adult son and his partner to Switzerland. I could not stop the nighttime terror I felt for them in finding a home in an unfamiliar bureaucratic environment, driving on another side of the road, new languages, and distance from family. As it happens, my concerns for my son and his partner were displaced. Nevertheless, my body recorded and deposited these disparate distanced human/nonhuman notions materially. The account I am forming of this line of flight is that the overlay of learning cannot always over-ride so-called primitive reflexes of mammalian life forms (see Pedroso, 2008).

Time folds in on itself: I am returned to childhood, to recurring night-time dreams. In one dream, I am pursued across rough ground, unable to open my mouth and throat to call for help. In another dream, I am in thick viscous matter, unable to move. In the latter stages of my marriage, I dream that I am repeatedly calling ‘Help me!’ to my partner. No response is forthcoming from him, although he is well within hearing distance.

My earlier dream-time silencing, and the later response of silence from within a marriage, is something I have become curious about in my work as a counsellor and researcher. A woman in my second research interview group said, ‘There is one thing that was done to me that I’m probably never going to deal with because I *can’t* say what it was’. Following Trinh (1988), I propose that silence is not absence, although it may be read as such: persons may *intentionally* not say, or unsay, or work with undertones of meaning. The interaction with the idea that not saying means ‘it’ is not dealt with, may yet be important to my research. In my own life, too much saying on some fronts, and not enough on others, may keep me from leaping off what Barad (2012) calls ‘calculable paths’ (p. 208). From within a family where drama was played down, I trod a path of public equanimity – perhaps, Barad again, taking ‘action-at-a distance’ (p. 208) – in the dying, deaths, and funeral services of my parents and my sister-in-law.

Poet and novelist Michaels (1997) borrows from geoscience to describe as plate-tectonic shifts the movements that occur in family relationship following significant events: one can find oneself suddenly closer or apart. I also go to Barad's (2008) layered writing to undo some of the sharp edges of what we, as family, embodied in the spacetime-mattering of touching the world, other worlds, and words, of becoming a re(con)figured family. We said things to each other. We deliberately not-said things. We cut together apart (Barad, 2014) in ways that did and didn't move beyond the here-now and then-there (p. 168). As Barad says, and I have found to be the case, matter is dispersed with (in) the reconfigurations of discursive practices, and 'does not entail closure' (p. 168); there are all-ways 'traces of what might yet (have) happen(ed)' (p. 168).

Interlude I Writing re-membering

How then might it be possible to undertake therapy that traffics in the myriad interferences – including material ones – that death instigates? How to be *in* the moment of memory, immersed and inseparable from it? How might it be possible to bring the world into therapy in ways that go beyond orthodoxy?

What this article proposes is that lines of enquiry that shape re-membering conversations will include strands of material *and* discursive significance. A re-membering account is oriented in the following ways: What storylines contribute to a continuation of relationship? How can important persons become protagonists in the stories we write and tell? Where does relationship continue to live, including in relation to materialities of what people have known together? How do re-membered persons continue to support the precious long-held values of those who live on? and How do loved ones and the bereaved contribute – including materially – to the other's life?

This article is itself a performance of writing re-membering. So one implication for therapists is to co-author written re-membering accounts whilst also asking ourselves: What is the merit, and what could be lost in crafting these stories through writing? Moments of writing can be shaped in face-to-face meeting, and witnessed in subsequent meetings.

The following questions offer a practice example with a bereaved person, in which materiality is diffracted into meaning: *Will you introduce me to your father? Were there moments of his earlier life that stand out for you? If I were to meet him, what might I see? What might we come to know about his achievements, interests, and aspirations? What artefacts of his life speak to you? And how do these objects speak to you of what was important to him? What stories can you tell about how your father came to contribute to your life, including materially? What does it mean to you that you share your parents' genetic legacies? What did your father appreciate about your contribution to his life and the lives of others?*

The scope of this article is not to fully reprise the narratively informed practice that then invites the outsider witness of others (White, 2007). Suffice it to say that further questions emerge in the invitation to read aloud any written re-membering accounts at subsequent meetings, and for persons to be acknowledged in these retellings. *When you are audience to your written words, what particular expressions stand out to you? Why that particular part of the story?* And so emerge new diffractive moments in place time and matter of what has been precious in the lives of loved ones and the bereaved, and opportunity for the therapist to write therapeutic documents in response. Another wave of writing.

Re-membering My Father, Fred



FIGURE 1

The author's father, Fred Snowden (photograph taken in 1969, by S. Snowden, used with permission of the family)

Fred was often described as 'tall, dark, and handsome' (see Figure 1). The sinews and muscles of his body were lean and long, and his skin olive-hued. In the first 75 years of his life he was physically active by day. He walked outdoors: up and down sloping landforms; in forests; urban landscapes; gardens. He held an interest in plants, particularly in trees and food plants. In the penultimate home garden he made with my mother, he grew 39 fruiting trees. My parents' flourishing garden was fed with concoctions of composting material derived from kitchen vegetable matter and organic liquid fertiliser made in a home-constructed metal tank. This latter innovation was a stretch for my father, whose abilities to execute construction or renovation were reluctant performances.

My father read voraciously: books on geography, biography, history, politics, and current affairs. He had the newspaper delivered to him every day and read the pages up until the final few days of his life. He retained a love of Latin into the last years of his life. His well-chumbed Bible was beside his bed for more than 60 years, and he opened its pages every day. Yet the dominating narrative that follows him through eight decades of life is that he is 'a man of few words'. In the latter five years of his life, my father lives in a residential home for older people, participating in our family life as a quiet centre of gravity. An unnoticed force within the family. He sits in his armchair when I arrive each Sunday morning. He smiles widely, and accepts the small food offering I bring. Always, he says thank you. Always, he insists we share a piece.

We sit. We say little. Reminiscent of Speedy's (2015) attention to the horse chestnut in her neighbouring park, we stare out the window. Notions of talking are lost to us, with the exception of our interest in the mature deciduous tree that grows beyond

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the window. We watch its seasonal changes and we note the weather's influence, in brief sentences. Like Frankl's (1946/2006) interlocutor in the concentration camp, the tree as living being is both friend and animator of life:

Pointing through the window of the hut, she said, "This tree here is the only friend I have in my loneliness." Through that window she could see just one branch of a chestnut tree, and on the branch were two blossoms. "I often talk to this tree," she said to me. I was startled and didn't quite know how to take her words. Was she delirious? Did she have occasional hallucinations? Anxiously I asked her if the tree replied. "Yes." What did it say to her? She answered, "It said to me, 'I am here – I am here – I am here, eternal life.'"

(p. 69)

As it was for the woman in Frankl's story, the tree awakens and enlivens our time together. I buy my father a book of photographed trees with an introductory essay by conservationist Dr David Bellamy (Matthews, 1993). We leaf through the book often, a comforting doubling of Fred's long-held interest in flora and photography.

My visits with Fred are hushed encounters. Throughout his life, he has been painfully modest in his estimation of the life less ordinary that he has lived. His formal education was peripatetic and truncated. At 16 years of age, Fred embarked on a working life in the Guardian Trust office in Auckland. His interest in law was ignited there, an aspiration that did not eventuate. Instead, he lived in Papua New Guinea from his late twenties to early forties, immersed in religious and cultural discourses and environments that called on very different participations than those of his upbringing. The ways my father met the infinite othernesses of tropical flora, fauna, climate, and culture in the 16 years of his sojourn in Papua New Guinea were mixed. He befriended indigenous people in all the places he lived; he was a reluctant preacher, organised storekeeper, intrepid traveller, fond and grumpy father, and skilled loadmaster for the local aeroplane services. In other words, he touched into the lives of others (human and non-human), and himself, in a multiplicity of ways. According to Barad (2012): 'every finite being is always already threaded through with an infinite alterity diffracted through being and time' (p. 214). Fred's love of Papua New Guinea, its landscapes and its people, retained its hold on him throughout the second half of his life.

Wyatt (2005) begins his funeral tribute to his father by suggesting that his father would have been 'embarrassed about the attention that he's getting today' . . . and suspects 'he would have loved it too' (p. 726). I can only guess at Fred's response to the appreciative stories told of him at his funeral. My brother and niece speak of the long commitment to justice for marginalised people that has threaded through Fred's life, his involvements alongside my mother's with people who sought refuge in New Zealand, from Vietnam in particular. For many years, Fred voluntarily offers budgeting support for people who have run into trouble with their finances, travelling the roads of rural New Zealand to fulfill this commitment.

The day after my father's funeral, I submit my application for ethical approval for my research. Ten days earlier, I arrive to visit my father as I do each Sunday morning. He is unwell. I stay all day. I return the next day and the next, and sit again, sometimes with my laptop open. The finishing work on my writing is braided into intervals when only my father and I are in the room. His body is occupied with drawing breath; I tell myself that he would want me to meet my deadline. He too has a deadline approaching.

My mother's presence and absences punctuate the days. The people who have had daily involvement with Fred enter the room to take care of him. One of them, a Punjabi woman who has befriended us over the years, bends and tenderly places a hand on his shoulder: 'Oh Fred, you are so sick'. Another afternoon passes. My father holds my hand. In early evening, one of my brothers arrives and suggests we go out to eat. I tell Dad that I will be back. His eyes are closed. I cannot be sure that he hears me. He grips my hand tightly. It feels very wrong to leave.

The last evening. I am with my father, mother, and brother. We murmur against the backdrop of my father's laboured breathing, bid him goodnight, and leave again. When we three are called two hours later, we return to the candlelit room where my father's body is now at rest. The bedclothes are straightened and a single red camellia has been placed over his heart. My mother and brother pay their respects and take their leave. I stay.

Over the following 10 hours, I do not leave my father. He and I have no words to say. We are making a future memory of our pasts.

Soundings: Saying, not Saying, Unsayings

Sounds are disturbances in every sense. The pressure of sound sets off the movement of particles through a medium like air, in repeating wave patterns of high- and low-pressure. In terms of sound and silence is there really a dividing line? When we speak as though there is a dividing line, what are we saying about the murmuring complexities of disturbance(s)? Are we suggesting that those disturbances to which we pay attention exist, and those we dismiss do not? Whether we attend or not, we are constantly drifting in and out of touch with other and self, including with alien selves to whom we offer limited hospitality, indeed hostility, associated with a sense of personal failure to measure up to standards of normalisation (Foucault, 1978; White, 2002).

Trinh (1988) proposes that 'silence as a language of its own has barely been explored'. Silence, as other to speech, may be seen/heard as lack. How is it that speech and words have come to dominate the spacetime-mattering of modern lives? Is it really the case that silence (whatever it is) makes blank and distance? Are we – modern persons with noise-making, word-recording devices readily at hand – caught in an excluding logic that says there is sound *or* silence, something *or* nothing. Not to declare in words that one loves another may be seen – in (de)fault – to contribute to a lack of love. Alternatively, as I am finding in my research, to declare that one still loves a person who uses violence may be to court danger and attract urgent cautions and/or the silence of disapproval.

In the 10 hours before the funeral director arrives, I am one disturbance of many in my father's room. I am a body that breathes. I am animated force and he the still centre into which I overlap. I am indebted to my father, and perhaps he is to me, in the sense that our histories entwine, and in the sense that possibilities continue in these night hours. I enact the ordinary, small, and sacred gestures of waiting and watching through the night and into the morning: in 'silences filled with what is left unspoken... there is pain and love, and everything in between' (Rober, 2005, p. 395), a dance and dialogue that meets the universe halfway (Barad, 2007).

Interlude 2 Materialising practice

A narratively informed therapy seeks to trouble what is taken for granted. I return to the storylines of time with my father's body to diffract my intentions into practice. In a humanist reading, one body could be read as active because it is breathing and moving, and another as inactive because it is resting and silent. In a relational materialist account, human and non-human materialities are affecting and (e)merging differently with each other in each moment. The weighting of my waiting with my father can be read in a more horizontal way as each materiality – my father's, the bed, chair, walls, the darkness of the room, the tree that stands sentinel beyond the closed curtains, and my body movements – simultaneously come into play. All of these intensities co-exist and co-ordinate, and are becoming anew in each moment of spacetime-mattering, whilst retaining partial originality.

The following example questions for materialising practice put an emphasis on place and matter across time: *What was it like for you to get the news that your father had died? What was it like to see the camellia on the bed when you returned? Where did you sit during those hours? Or did you not sit, but move around the room? Tell me about that. What was your sense in being with him in the dark of that night-time? What was it like for you to open the curtains in the morning and see the tree that had been a companion to your father over the time he spent in that room?*

The many criss-crossings of these musings have resurrected what is *both* not lost, *and* not actualised before, allowing another's stories to become half mine (Larner, 2015, p. 165). As Hedtke (2014) implies, until there is opportunity for folding these stories back into the lives of the living (p. 12), they remain muted and absent. The diffracted re-memberings above have indeed enlivened my father's presence in ways that have turned out to be therapeutic. In re-authoring my father's life and presence, in many re-membering conversations of which this article is part, my own purposes have been re-animated. One immediate purpose was a commitment to attend to my mother (see Figure 2).

Shirley – A Mother's Heart

Early morning. 5.55 am. I am with my mother, Shirley, as she breathes out for the last time. On numerous times during the past five days, I have watched and waited for another breath. Five times in the preceding 10 months, my five siblings and I had wondered if she would slip away 'this time'.

The first of these times followed a family event. We had taken a borrowed wheelchair to the cardiac ward: the monitoring patches had been removed from Shirley's chest and back, and we wheeled her out into the warm summer sunshine to a waiting car. Shirley wore a hat, long-sleeves and dark trousers, and a finely-woven woollen shawl in vibrant warm pink.

Gathered at the cemetery lawn were members of our family and the parish minister of my mother's church. We positioned Shirley in a central spot beneath a shady tree to witness my father's ashes being interred beside his mother's. Organising this event had been Shirley's project for a number of weeks; there were readings to select, words to say, people to include: in the understated manner she was known for, she later remarked that it went well.



FIGURE 2

The author's mother, Shirley Snowdon (photograph taken in 2012, by D. W. Snowdon. Used with permission)

A little later in the day, after a shared meal, I pushed the wheelchair up the paths to the hospital entrance, and through the doors and lifts to the cardiac ward. Retracing our earlier steps. We retrieved Shirley's night-dress from the bedside cupboard, visited the bathroom, and one of the nursing staff came to adhere the monitoring patches to her chest and back again. The expressions of my mother's body spoke her great relief that she was now resting. During that night, the monitors recorded that Shirley's heart stopped beating long enough to raise an alarm.

An account of entanglement of human/non-human intra-actions that started Shirley's heart beating again: A story of 'no saying no' to a pace-maker

Shirley's heartbeat was increasingly irregular and disorganised from her late 40s. At that point in her life, she committed herself to a lifestyle that included limiting her intake of saturated fats and preparing all her food without added salt: she walked or rode a bicycle regularly in preference to driving the car: she spent many hours in her garden: she sang in choirs, attended concerts, and learned to paint in watercolour. These approaches to her health and wellbeing paid off until the last five years of her life, when she was diagnosed with atrial fibrillation and cardiomyopathy, commonly known as heart failure. Heart failure is a condition in which the heart no longer beats often or strongly enough to supply sufficient volume of blood (and, therefore, oxygen) to the brain and other parts of the body.

The last chapter of her life became a struggle for Shirley, a merry Fantasia dance with pharmaceutical medications, their side-effects, and contra-indications (including tiredness, shortness of breath, fluid retention in her lower limbs, the greater likelihood of stroke). Shirley, who had engaged with community events and social groups throughout her life, was now confined more to home. She gave her doctor written lists of symptoms. She nodded her head in agreement with him as he prescribed new pills, only to find her body saying no to the side-effects she later experienced from medicines that had

held such promise. She cut her pills in half, privately refusing the doctor's dosage, eventually returning to the doctor's rooms to try again. The journey was fraught with resistance, compliance, the 'no' that doesn't work, the 'yes' that hopes for something better.

In the autumn of 2012, cardiac specialists suggest that Shirley have an artificial pace-maker inserted. A pace-maker is a small flat cylindrical battery-operated device that can coordinate the electrical signaling between the chambers of the heart, speed up a slow heart rhythm, or regulate abnormal heart rhythm by stimulating the heart muscle. It is placed under the skin at the collarbone. Wires are sent into one or two chambers of the heart, depending on the heart condition to be remedied. The battery life of recent pace-makers is estimated to be eight to 10 years.

During the night that followed our family gathering in the sun-filled cemetery to remember my father's and grandmother's lives, Shirley's pace-maker did what it was designed to do: it sent the electrical signals to my mother's exhausted heart, and the beat began again. Such a re-starting is not an innocent event. In a painstaking account of the enactment of a pace-maker's signals within the ageing body of her father, Butler (2013), her mother, brothers, and their friends, inherit a future of less and less health predictability for Butler's father. As she tells it, the accumulations of these losses signify a series of fault lines and missed-understandings that produced a man unrecognisable to himself and others who have known him through his life. Reminiscent of Butler (2010), the pace-maker inserted in my mother's upper chest, brought my mother, my sisters, my brothers and me, another 10 months of purgatorial waiting. Until the moment in time when she breathed out for the last time, there were months, weeks, days, and nights of her life that Shirley's body could not decide for herself to say no to the pace-maker's tireless impulse.

Modern (western) medicine has 'pushed the fatal moment of many diseases further outward' (Gawande, 2014, p. 26), including the trajectory of congestive heart failure. Gavrilov explains human dying thus: simple systems, such as windup toys, function reliably until a significant component wears down or breaks, and then the toy simply no longer works; complex systems such as the human body, have layers of back-up (an extra kidney, extra teeth, brain plasticity) that 'allow the machine to keep going even as damage accumulates' (Gawande, 2014, p. 33). Had I had this metaphor earlier, I could have thought my way rather differently through the accumulations of shift and change that marked my mother's last four years, and the final year in particular. My mother did not relinquish her refusal of the multiple diminishments that congenital heart failure imposed on her, struggling through each day and night to maintain the integrity of her life. And I still love her for the legacy of determinedly feminist living she demonstrated throughout her life, and in her dying.

It is not only in stories/themes/discursive resonance that people's lives are joined to those of others. Material feminists insist that 'knowledge is situated in the material lives of social actors' (Hekman, 2004, p. 235). In diffractive re-membering practices, spacetime-matter emerge through participation in the world. In this rendering, another's life lives on, overlapping, spreading, and combining, differentiating with others' ongoing encounters with the world in its becoming. These woven specificities are not a 'blending of separate parts or a blurring of boundaries . . . what is at issue [are their] unique material historicalities and how they come to matter' (Barad, 2014, p. 176). As I introduce my sister-in-law in the final re-membering narrative of this article, a shiver of terror passes through me. And yet beautiful, 'as it may become' (Winslade & Hedtke, 2008, p. 10).

And I still love them

Above and below the way is known, but here we're blind (Michaels, 1997)

My brother proposes marriage to Bronwyn a week after they meet. Subsequently, on a bright summer day in Cambridge New Zealand, they marry. Twenty-seven years later, Bronwyn suffers a sudden cardiac death at age 52 (see Figure 3).



FIGURE 3

Bronwyn Snowdon, wife of the author's brother (photograph taken in 2006, by K.S.Taylor. Used with permission)

Not only for my brother and my nephews, a gaping hole opens up. The ground swallows us. We are trying to find Bronwyn as we meet together to tell our stories of our life with her (see Hedtke & Winslade, 2004; White, 1988) and she, perhaps, is trying to reach us. We piece together our words, stitching our memories together as 'cumulative selection' (Michaels, 1997). Glass of wine, preferably pink and bubbly. Hot pink, matching lipstick, big jewellery set in contrast to black and white attire. Fine coffee. Excellent home-baked Christmas cake. Big throaty laugh. By her own description, 'a good bossy teacher' and school musical director.

I take up a watchful position of my brother (and, to a lesser extent, his sons). I've done this before. I was nine years old when my brother joined me to live away from our parents' home and attend a 'proper' school, in a classroom. We travelled in a Cessna 180, single propeller aeroplane, over jungle-clad Papua New Guinean terrain from the delta region of the Fly River to Tari in the Southern Highlands province, altitude 2167 m (7110 ft). Three times each year, we had the opportunity to speak to our parents using shortwave radio transmission. Without proximity to our parents, I very quickly adopted a sense of responsibility for my brother's – and a year later, a younger sister's – wellbeing. At Bronwyn's death, I find myself again with my eyes on

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where my brother is, how he is, and what might be called for in any given moment. When our family disperses after the funeral, the phone rings often, and the affect of our collective shock and sorrow flows between us.

My brother's body-mass falls away in a matter of weeks. It is as though without Bronwyn's body, his own decreases. His clothes hang from his shoulders, and he no longer takes up the larger presence he has presumed in past family gatherings. He embodies Barad's (2008) understandings of the production of power 'in the fullness of its materiality' (p. 128). He, in particular, is intra-active with/in the discursive effects of the family re/configuration following Bronwyn's death, and (re)materialisations of our bodies. Something has sharpened, and softened.

I stand on the sidelines, sometimes sit beside him, and I listen: there are waves of words and murmurings, punctuated with affect. So much in our lives has been disturbed. We are beings reaching into an entangled void, in which so much matters. It turns out that declarations come easier from my brother than they do from me. He re-returns to an earlier way of relating to me that had been lost along the way as I take a position of accompaniment alongside him (Weingarten, 2004, 2012). The re-versing and re-turning of my brother's stories overlay with and re-state themselves, tethered to the material and remembered worlds of our histories and futures.

Unspeakable Suffering

We are back with saying, not saying, and un-saying: Frank (2001) proposes that suffering presents persons with a sense that 'something is irreparably wrong' with one's life and 'this reality is what you cannot "come to grips with"' (p. 355). While one may experience dread through the irreparable wrong of suffering, it is unspeakable: 'Suffering involves experiencing yourself on the other side of life as it should be ... We suffer the absence of what was missed and now is no longer recoverable and the absence of what we fear will never be' (p. 355). What can I say? What can my brother say? According to Barad (2012), '*Touching is a matter of response. Each of "us" is constituted in response-ability. Each of "us" is constituted as responsible for the other, as the other*' (p. 215). If he is saying that he has gone to the edge of the abyss, perhaps I am saying that this is where we find compassion: we meet halfway. If I ever did, I no longer subscribe to the dramatic up-close-and-personal touching togetherness depicted in modern media. Rather, I am drawn to an everyday everynight endeavour, to Barad's (2012) 'possibility of hearing the murmurings, the muted cries, the speaking silence of justice-to-come' (p. 216). I am learning anew what response-ability can be. I hear my brother's longing for what he cannot come to grips with. He cannot but still love his beloved companion, out of touch in one way, yet still in touch through his response with the infinitude that she has become.

Finale

Aftershocks have cut into our family life following the farewells of my parents and Bronwyn. Not least of all I have been beset with health problems, and have only recently engaged with practitioners and practices effective in addressing these cumulative debilitations. These remind me of the infinity of continuity and discontinuity that intra-actions of the human/nonhuman kind can produce: the inseparabilities of

And I still love them

difference and how they are becoming; (in)stabilities; exclusions; approach/silence/retreat. I continue to hold to a commitment to stay close by, to ongoingly acknowledge, meet, and stand with all who touch my life, here and now, then and there. Also, the time has come

to think again of dangerous and noble things ...
I want to be improbable beautiful and afraid of nothing,
as though I had wings.

(Oliver, 2006)

I have research work to do.

Coda

The large deciduous tree outside the room my father once occupied is springing to life again, five years on from the day we accompanied his body along the corridors towards the waiting hearse. The same tree kept sentinel when we trod the same corridors with my mother in early December 2014, in the company of many of the same people – their community and ours in these late chapters of their lives. And yet, the tree is not the same. Its branches stretch a little further into a cloud-studded sky; no doubt its roots have found their way a little further into the soil beneath the building; its girth is imperceptibly wider.

Taking an adventuring spirit into therapeutic work – as my parents did in the enterprises of their lives – I take inspiration from the steadfast determination of the tree to both stand ground and reach beyond its past. The call to us, as therapists, is to challenge and work beyond settled orthodoxy in our practice and what informs that practice (White, 2000a, 2000b; White, 1995). And to find, with people who consult us, a loving responsiveness to the human and non-human world in which we are embraced.

Endnote

¹ Note that the Latin word *corpus* means *body*.

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Appendix B

Invitation to join a focus group – Women’s group

Doctoral Research Project: *“But I still love him”*: Young women talk about love and violence.

Name of Researcher: Jenny Snowdon

Supervisors: Dr Elmarie Kotzé and A/Professor Kathie Crocket

Affiliation: University of Waikato, Human Development and Counselling Department

Contact: e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz m. XXX XXXX 021

Information about the research project

I invite you to join this research project:

- if you have had *past* experience of violence and/or coercion in a heterosexual partner relationship (including non-live-in relationship);
- and you would say you still love the man you have been in relationship with;
- you are under the age of 25 years;
- you went to counselling to discuss this concern.

This study explores the stories of young women’s intimate partner experience, commitments and hopes for future partner relationship, and what you believe are useful counselling questions to be asked when you talk about your experience of love and violence.

Plan for the three meetings

A group of four women will meet together, with me, on three occasions. The meetings will take approximately 90 minutes in total. This will allow for initial introductions. The conversations will be audio recorded for research use. Following each meeting, I will transcribe the conversations³ and compose a letter to each participant.

I expect the research conversations to bring forward further thoughts/questions for you, as a participant, and me as a facilitator. As a participant you are invited

³ [University Regulations 2008 regarding research ethics require all non-identifying data \(e.g. data sets and transcripts\) used for publication will be securely kept long enough to allow for academic examination, challenge, or peer review. This period would normally be at least five years. Identifying data such as consent forms and audio recordings will be securely stored consistent with these regulations. The responsibility for data storage lies with the department of Human Development and Counselling.](#)

to record and/or write reflections as part of the study. These may be one line or any length you choose. You may select to give me any or all of this written material. It is optional whether you read back any of this writing in the group.

Your rights and responsibilities as a participant

This research is located in women's experiences of partner violence. With this in mind, the research is also interested in your experience of counselling to address the dilemma of how love and violence have intersected in your life. It is possible, but not necessarily the case, that the content of the research conversations will throw up some troubling questions/memories. If either of us notices this happening for you, we will meet one-to-one. In this private conversation, I will negotiate a possible referral to counselling, so we can both take care of how we address these questions.

Consent

Your participation is voluntary. This means you may withdraw completely, or withdraw some of the material, without giving a reason, up until two weeks from the date the transcripts are available to you. If you withdraw, any information about you, and any contribution you are withdrawing, will no longer be part of the research materials.

Each participant's name and identifying information will be confidential to me. You will be introduced to the other members of your group by your given name but only your alias will be used in the research report. Please choose a name, which will be used for your contributions to the research.

Privacy and anonymity

Privacy is different from confidentiality. I take responsibility for safeguarding your privacy and anonymity, whilst the words you contribute will be spoken and written about further, by me, but not by your fellow group members. What you contribute to the research, verbally and in writing, will have a wider purpose for the benefit of others. Although it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality and privacy, I will promote the conditions for this in every possible way.

Confidentiality

As a participant in this research, you agree to safeguard the confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of each member of the research group. This includes personal information and what they say about their lives in the three conversations.

Access

I will negotiate to email a file of the transcript, or post or arrange to leave a hardcopy of the transcript in a university envelope with the HDCO Administrator for pick up; you agree not to copy or circulate these or show them to anyone else. Further down the track, you may be interested to read the completed thesis. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. From time to time, I will present parts of the research work to workshops, seminars and in articles for publication.

If difficulties arise during the research period that you are unable to talk to Jenny about, you can contact either of Jenny's supervisors, Dr Elmarie Kotzé or A/Professor Kathie Crocket whose contact details follow:

Dr Elmarie Kotzé

t. 838 4466 extn 7961

e. elmariek@waikato.ac.nz

A/Professor Kathie Crocket

t. 838 4466 extn 8462

e. kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz

Human Development and Counselling Department,
Faculty of Education,
University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105,
Hamilton 3240.

If you are interested in joining this research, I will ask you to sign a consent form.

Jenny Snowdon MCouns MNZAC



Appendix C

Invitation to join a focus group – Counsellor group

Doctoral Research Project: *“But I still love him”*: Young women talk about love and violence.

Name of Researcher: Jenny Snowdon

Supervisors: Dr Elmarie Kotzé and A/Professor Kathie Crocket

Affiliation: University of Waikato, Human Development and Counselling Department

Contact: e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz m. XXX XXXX 021

Information about the research project

I invite you to join this project if your counselling work has included work with women who continue to love a man who has used violence against her. The therapeutic setting can include group, family or one-to-one counselling. The counselling work may have occurred while the partners continued their relationship, or after separation of the partners.

In this research project, I have consulted with women in the early 20s age group. Together we have explored some of their experiences of love and partner relationship. I have asked them to talk about previous counselling conversations they have had in relation to the dilemma of how love and violence has intersected in their lives. A selection of written findings about their counselling experience will be brought to the counsellor group. Similarly, participants in the practitioner group will have an opportunity to send back research material in the form of a written collective acknowledgement to the women’s groups, through me.

Plan for the two meetings

I plan to meet with a group of six counsellor practitioners, on two occasions. The meetings will take approximately 90 minutes in total. This will allow for initial introductions. The conversations will be audio recorded. Following each meeting, I will transcribe the conversations⁴ and compose a letter to each participant.

⁴ University Regulations 2008 regarding research ethics require all non-identifying data (e.g. data sets and transcripts) used for publication will be securely kept long enough to allow for academic examination, challenge, or peer review. This period would

I expect the research conversations to bring forward further thoughts/questions for you, as a participant, and me as a facilitator. As a participant you are invited to record and/or write reflections as part of the study. These may be one line or any length you choose. You may select to give me any or all of this written material. It is optional whether you read back any of this writing in the group.

Consent

Your participation is voluntary. This means you may withdraw completely, or withdraw some of the material, without giving a reason, up until two weeks from the date the transcripts are available to you. If you withdraw, any information about you, and any contribution you are withdrawing, will no longer be part of the research materials.

Each participant's name and identifying information will be confidential to me. You will be introduced to the other members of your group by your given name and only your alias will be used in the research report. Please choose a name, which will be used for your contributions to the research.

Privacy and anonymity

Privacy is different from confidentiality. I take responsibility for safeguarding your privacy and anonymity, whilst the words you contribute will be spoken and written about further, by me, but not by your fellow group members. What you contribute to the research, verbally and in writing, will have a wider purpose for the benefit of others. Although it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality and privacy, I will promote the conditions for this in every possible way.

Confidentiality

As a participant in this research, you agree to safeguard the professional confidentiality and privacy of each member of the research group. This includes personal information and professional narratives that are told in the course of the two conversations.

Access

I will negotiate to email a file of the transcript, or post or arrange to leave a hardcopy of the transcript in a university envelope with the HDCO Administrator for pick up; you agree not to copy or circulate these. If you live outside the Waikato geographical region, I will arrange to send a copy of the transcript by track and trace courier delivery. You may be interested to read the completed thesis. An electronic copy of the thesis will become widely available, as the University of Waikato requires that a digital copy of Doctoral theses be lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. From time to time, I will present parts of the research work to workshops, seminars and in articles for publication.

If difficulties arise during the research period that you are unable to talk about with me, you can contact either of my supervisors, Dr Elmarie Kotzé or A/Professor Kathie Crocket whose contact details follow:

[normally be at least five years. Identifying data such as consent forms and audio recordings will be securely stored consistent with these regulations. The responsibility for data storage lies with the department of Human Development and Counselling.](#)

Dr Elmarie Kotzé
t. 838 4466 extn 7961
e. elmariek@waikato.ac.nz

A/Professor Kathie Crocket
t. 838 4466 extn 8462
e. kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz

Human Development and Counselling Department,
Faculty of Education,
University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105,
Hamilton 3240.

If you are interested in joining this research, I will ask you to sign a consent form.

Jenny Snowdon MCouns MNZAC

Appendix C (i)

Email invitation sent to prospective counsellor participant

Dear (name of counsellor practitioner)

I was talking to (name of counsellor practitioner) and she suggested I send this invitation to you. See what you think?!

The purpose of this email is to invite you to join a research group. Previously, I have met with small groups of women who have experienced violence in their (heterosexual) partner relationships. All have faced the dilemma of continuing love for the man from whom they have separated. Have you met professionally with **women** who have faced this dilemma either in group or one-to-one counselling? The therapeutic work may have occurred while the partners continued their relationship, or after separation of the partners. Your work with women through these dilemmas may be current, or as part of your previous practice.

What I am asking

I plan to meet with a group of six counsellor practitioners, on two occasions. The meetings will take approximately 90 minutes in total. This will allow for initial introductions. The conversations will be audio recorded. Following each meeting, the interviews will be transcribed: you will receive a copy of the transcript to check that it is accurate; and you will receive a letter that outlines the contributions *you* made to the interview.

I expect the research conversations to bring forward further thoughts/questions for you, as a participant, and me as an interviewer. As a participant you are invited to record and/or write reflections as part of the study. These may be one line or any length you choose. You may select to give me any or all of this written material.

In my consultations with the women's groups, we have explored some of their experiences of love and partner relationship. Also, I have asked them to talk about previous counselling conversations they have had in relation to how love and violence has intersected in their lives. Written findings from their discussions about counselling experience will be brought to the counsellor research group. Participants in the practitioner group will have an opportunity to send back a collective acknowledgement to the women's groups, through me.

Are you interested in meeting with other counsellors in two group interviews to assist me in my research?

- Maybe. If maybe: please call and ask your questions so that you can arrive at a definite decision.
- Yes. If yes: please indicate in your reply, three weekday evenings, starting 7pm, in early March, when you are available to meet for 90 minutes. (Not Monday 14 March). Also, if you are saying yes, you will sign a consent form, following some one-to-one

discussion with me. Please send me a phone number so that we can make arrangements to talk through the consent process. I am happy to come to your office for this purpose.

- No
Please reply by 12 February, whichever decision you have come to. I will certainly not be offended if you are not in a position to accept this invitation. And if you are willing and able to join the research, I very much look forward to our conversations.

Warm regards
Jenny Snowdon
m. 021 2XXX XXX

Appendix D

Interview schedule – women’s focus groups

First meeting

Introductions

Agreements to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Knowledge of violence

- How would you describe ‘violence’?
- What effects of violence have there been in your life?
- What effects did the use of violence have in your partner relationship?
- What responses did you make when your partner used violence?

Discussion about power relations

- I say “the use of violence” when I am talking about how some actions close the door on another person’s actions, harm or exploit the other without thoroughly recognising them as a person. What would you say are the possible meanings when someone says “use of violence”?
- What would you say are the possible meanings for “power”?
- How do you believe power relations work – specifically in partner relationships?
- How would changing your language about violence make a difference to your life?

Relating to other people

- When you say aloud that you still love the man who used violence against you, how do people around you respond? What do they say and do?
- What do you then think, say, do?

Time for reflective writing

Reminder about our agreement to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Reminder of the next meeting date and time

Second meeting

Introductions

Reflections on what has been thought about and written since the first meeting

Revisiting agreements to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Preferred relationship with a partner

- How would you describe ‘love’?
- What beliefs and commitments did you hold for partner relationship before your partner used violence against you?
- Describe any changes his use of violence has made to your beliefs and commitments.
- How do your beliefs and commitments go with your meaning for ‘love’?

- How does power relate to love?
- How would changing your language/thinking about love make a difference in your partner relationships?
- How do you experience continuing love for a man who has harmed you? For instance, are there embodied experiences of this love that you could describe?

Time for reflective writing

Reminder about our agreement to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Reminder of the next meeting date and time

Third meeting

Catch up

Reflections on what has been thought about and written since the first meeting

Revisiting agreements to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Counselling experience – specifically when you sought counselling for the effects of your partner’s use of violence

- What did you tell the counsellor?
- What didn’t you tell the counsellor? i.e. Were there stories about your partner relationship that you censored in your counselling conversation, but would have liked to talk about? If yes, why did you hold back? What would have made it possible to talk about that aspect of your experience?
- What, if anything, was helpful in your counselling conversations?
- What, if anything, was not so helpful in the counselling?

Discussion about what will be written into a collective document for counsellor group.

Reminder about our agreement to continue to protect each other’s privacy and confidentiality

The meeting will end with a time of acknowledgement.

Appendix E

Interview Schedule – Counsellor group

First meeting

Professional practice: counselling with women whose partners have used violence against them

- Given that we are talking about counselling for women whose partners have used violence against them, what do women talk about when they come to you for counselling?
- When you hear a woman say that she still loves a man who has used violence against her, how do you shape therapeutic conversations in response?
- What effects are there for women when you respond in this way?
- What ethical dilemmas do you face when a woman says she still loves a man who has harmed her? How do you proceed?

Time for reflective writing

Reminder about our agreement to safeguard privacy and confidentiality

Reminder of the next meeting date and time.

Second meeting

Introductions

Reflections on what has been thought about and written since the first meeting

Are there questions from last time that you want to re-visit?

Revisiting agreements to safeguard privacy and confidentiality.

Responding to clients' experience of counselling

- When you read the documents from the women's groups, what catches your attention? Why that particular expression?
- What have you learned from the women's collective documents that you didn't know before?
- What will you do differently now that you have heard from these women?

A collective document of acknowledgement will be sent back to each woman in the women's focus groups. A draft of this document will be circulated by email to the participants in the counsellor focus group with an explanation of time frames and how amendments can be negotiated.

The second meeting will end with a time of acknowledgement.

Appendix F

Consent Form – Women’s focus group

Doctoral Research Project: *“But I still love him”*: Young women talk about love and violence.

Name of Researcher: Jenny Snowdon

Supervisors: Dr Elmarie Kotzé and A/Professor Kathie Crocket

Affiliation: University of Waikato, Human Development and Counselling Department

Contact: e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz m. XXX XXXX 021

Rights and responsibilities as a participant

This research has come about through Jenny’s personal and professional conversations with women who have said they still love a man who has used violence against them. As a participant who has had these experiences, you too may be curious about what is going on when love continues after violence.

What you are agreeing to:

- To attend three meetings with a small group (up to three other women and Jenny). These meetings will take a maximum of 90 minutes of your time, at fortnightly intervals.
- At the first meeting of the group, you will be given writing materials to record any reflections that arise during the first two focus group meetings. These reflections may be one line or any length you choose. It is not possible to say what time commitment this will take. You may select to give Jenny any or all of this written material. It is optional whether you read back any of this writing in the group.
- To contribute to a collective document, based on the questions planned for the third meeting of the group (see Interview Schedule: Women’s Focus Groups). The collective document will be forwarded to a focus group of counsellors.
- That the conversations be audio-taped and transcribed. You will be provided with the transcripts, individual letters sent by Jenny after the first and second meetings, and the document sent to the counsellor group.
- That you have a right to negotiate amendments or additions to what is written about your contributions to the research.
- To safeguard the confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the other members of the group.

Privacy and confidentiality

You will choose an alternative name for the purposes of protecting your privacy and anonymity. You are asked to accept a duty of care and confidentiality for what you will hear from other group members. That is, you agree not to talk outside the group about the other women of the group, or what they say about their lives. Although it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality and privacy, Jenny will promote the conditions for this in every possible way.

Written materials

Following the first and second meetings, Jenny will write you a letter that traces some of the themes of your own speaking and writing. Following the third meeting, Jenny will write a collective document that will be forwarded to a group of counsellors. You will have the option to read the transcripts, documents sent to you, and the document that the group will send to the counsellor focus group.

Consent

I have received an invitation/interview sheet about this research project and have spoken to the researcher, Jenny, who has further explained the study to me, and what my rights, responsibilities and contributions will involve. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that if difficulties arise during the research period that I am unable to talk to Jenny about, I can contact either of her supervisors, Dr Elmarie Kotzé or A/Professor Kathie Crocket whose contact details follow:

Dr Elmarie Kotzé
t. 838 4466 extn 7961
e. elmariek@waikato.ac.nz

A/Professor Kathie Crocket
t. 838 4466 extn 8462
e. kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz

Human Development and Counselling Department,
Faculty of Education,
University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105,
Hamilton 3240.

I agree to participate in this research and understand that I may withdraw completely, or withdraw some of my material, at any time during the data collection period.

Name:

Chosen name:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher signature:

Appendix G

Consent Form – Counsellor focus group

Doctoral Research Project: *“But I still love him”*: Young women talk about love and violence.

Name of Researcher: Jenny Snowdon

Supervisors: Dr Elmarie Kotzé and A/Professor Kathie Crocket

Affiliation: University of Waikato, Human Development and Counselling Department

Contact: e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz m. XXX XXXX 021

Rights and responsibilities as a participant

This research has come about through Jenny’s personal and professional conversations with women who have said they still love a man who has used violence against them. As a participant who has offered counselling to women who have faced the dilemma of how love and violence intersect in their lives, you will be asked to talk about your practice. You will also be asked to reflect on women’s experiences and hopes for counselling that address this dilemma.

What you are agreeing to:

- To attend two meetings with a small group (five other counsellors and Jenny). These meetings will take a maximum of 90 minutes of your time, at fortnightly intervals.
- At the first meeting of the group, you will be given writing materials to record any reflections that arise during the two focus group meetings. These reflections may be one line or any length you choose. It is not possible to say what time commitment this will take. You may select to give Jenny any or all of this written material. It is optional whether you read back any of this writing to the group.
- To contribute to a written acknowledgement that Jenny will send back to the women of the first focus groups.
- That the conversations be audio-taped and transcribed. You have the option to read the transcripts.
- That you have a right to negotiate amendments or additions to what is written about your contributions to the research.

Privacy and confidentiality

You will choose an alternative name for the purposes of protecting your privacy and anonymity. You are asked to accept a duty of care and confidentiality for what you will hear from other group members. That is, you agree not to talk outside the group about the other people of the group, or the professional narratives that become known in the course of the two conversations. Although it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality and privacy, Jenny will promote the conditions for this in every possible way.

Consent

I have received an invitation/interview sheet about this research project and have spoken to the researcher, Jenny, who has further explained the study to me, and what my rights, responsibilities and contributions will involve. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and these have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that if difficulties arise during the research period that I am unable to talk to Jenny about, I can contact either of her supervisors, Dr Elmarie Kotzé or A/Professor Kathie Crocket whose contact details follow:

Dr Elmarie Kotzé
t. 838 4466 extn 7961
e. elmariek@waikato.ac.nz

A/Professor Kathie Crocket
t. 838 4466 extn 8462
e. kcrocket@waikato.ac.nz

Human Development and Counselling Department,
Faculty of Education,
University of Waikato,
Private Bag 3105,
Hamilton 3240.

I agree to participate in this research and understand that I may withdraw completely, or withdraw some of my material, at any time during the data collection period.

Name:

Chosen name:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher signature:

Appendix H

Poster – recruiting women’s focus group participants

“But I still love him”: Young women talk about love and violence

I invite you to join this women’s research project if:

- you have had *past* experience of violence and/or coercion in a partner relationship with a man (including non-live-in relationship);
- you would say you still love the man you have been in relationship with;
- you are under the age of 25 years;
- you have been to counselling to talk about your experiences of love and violence.

If you believe your experiences can contribute to this research, please contact me to talk about the possibility of joining the research.

Name of Researcher: **Jenny Snowdon**

e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz

m. XXX XXXX 021

This is a Doctoral Research Project and has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix I

Leaflet for distribution by medical or counselling practitioner at Student Health Services

Attached note to practitioner:

Thank you for assisting me to find participants for my research. I ask that you mention this research only to women who are separated from the partner who has used violence. In other words, I want to recruit women for whom time has given a longer perspective, so will not recruit participants for whom the effects of violence are fresh.

Department of Human Development and Counselling
Faculty of Education
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton, New Zealand



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

“But I still love him”: Young women talk about love and violence

I invite you to join this women’s research project if:

- you have had *past* experience of violence and/or coercion in a partner relationship with a man (including non-live-in relationship);
- you say you still love the man who used violence against you;
- you are under the age of 25 years;
- you have been to counselling to talk about your experiences of love and violence.

If you believe your experiences can contribute to this research, can we talk about the prospect of you joining the research?

Researcher: **Jenny Snowdon**

e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz

m. XXX XXXX 021

This is a Doctoral Research Project and has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee



Appendix J

Advertisement to recruit participants for counsellor focus group

*“But I still love him”:
Young women talk about love and violence*

I invite you to join this project if your counselling work has included work with women who continue to love a man who has used violence against her. The therapeutic setting can include group, family or one-to-one counselling. The counselling work may have occurred while the partners continued their relationship, or after separation of the partners.

If you believe your experiences can contribute to this research, please contact me to find out more.

Researcher: **Jenny Snowdon**
e. xxxxx@waikato.ac.nz
m. XXX XXXX 021

This is a Doctoral Research Project and has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee

Appendix K

Collective Document – 1

Counselling and group programmes to address violence in partner relationships when women say they still love those partners

When women seek counselling to address the effects of violence in their partner relationships they may:

- Guard and protect stories until they feel safe to tell;
- Censor or condense what they say in case there are repercussions.

What women say is useful

- Speaking one's stories when these are heard in a non-judgemental way.
- Hearing the stories of other women in ways that invite "a sense that you are not alone".
- Being asked open questions.
- The chance to sit and explore.
- Being centred in the counselling work: "I so value being the absolute centre of someone's world for a moment, that counselling dynamic". (See below for the distinction between this and blurring of boundaries).

What women say is not so useful

- Assumptions: not staying with what's important at that moment. "What I needed to hear was 'what's that about, tell me a bit more about that'".
- Mandatory attendance, which invites women to "try to hide and be good".
- Wondering if the counsellor can handle what I tell her/him: Thinking "it might be too much for her" and "I have to be really careful about what I share with my counsellor, s/he's really fragile".
- A forceful reaction to parts of the story: Wondering what will happen if I speak particularly 'dark' thoughts, who will become involved (e.g. Oranga Tamariki, Police, authorities). Warnings and a "wanting-to-protect type thing".
- Being told what to do.
- Blurring the boundary lines.
- Feeling excluded in a group if facilitators don't recognise this is happening.
- When ongoing effort does not produce change.

Appendix L

Collective Document – 2

Counselling and group programmes to address violence in partner relationships when women say they still love those partners

What women say is useful:

- Invitations to be “honest and put out, give out, as much information as possible. Sometimes there are things that are really hard to talk about” and “I honestly don’t see the point in having counselling if you’re not going to just spit it all out, put it all out there”.
- The kind of questions that go further “so that you find your own answers”; “if you get stuck you need a question – the right question, of course”. For example: *Is there another way that you could look at this?* And “time spent looking at options”.
- Continuity: “Knowing you can ring and say something’s happened and I need another appointment”.
- The importance of the counselling relationship itself: “There was nothing I told her that she just did not understand. Yeah, she just got me... She just let me talk”; compassion, care and empathy.
- Being heard: “It’s like you’re not alone any more. I guess for the first time someone’s actually hearing what you’re saying”.
- That the counsellor is a woman.
- Reading related to the experience – “It’s like a light bulb moment, all those books.
- Reading transcripts of what has been said. [This acknowledgement related to the present research experience but diffracts into the wave of speaking about therapy.] “This is validation too. We all hear each other say these things. It’s very healing”.
- Writing reflections; “Writing this stuff down has been *really good*”.
- Journals, mood diaries, sleep diaries: “You can piece some things together” and “get to know yourself”.
- Groups could be a good way to talk, although this comes with a caution: “I think it would be easy in a group situation for the quiet one, unless they were pulled in, to be left out on the edge where they’ve always been”.
- Being told what to do can sometimes be useful: “I think some of us do need to be told what to do sometimes”.

What women say is not so useful:

- When counselling is not effective, following on from counsellor suggestions; when ongoing effort does not produce change.
- When strong intentions and emotions get “dampened down”.

- No follow up: “Anytime I’ve had counselling nobody’s ever suggested following up to see how you are down the track” and “I wanted her to say, righteo, I want to see you in two months time, is that all right with you? We’ll make an appointment now, write it on the calendar, and we’ll get back to you in two months for a follow up”.

Appendix M

Counsellors' Collective Response Document

To the women of the research groups from the counsellor group all of whom were also women

I have really appreciated the honesty and openness to me, a stranger, of what the women in the groups have offered. And the courage it would have taken to share those words and entrust them to our group.

Know that your words have equipped me more in my work as a counsellor, as it is important to ensure we are more informed about how best to support you in what you have or are experiencing in this area of partner violence.

The words you have spoken are also familiar ones, as i have heard them from other clients! Your voice, as are theirs, are important to hear, as they can empower not just you, but those around you by validating women who are going through this. They can also be powerful words to those who engage in violence towards their partners, as it brings forward the voice of women – united together. They challenge a wider cultural perspective of violence and widen awareness. Thank you!

Another counsellor wrote to you: What courage it takes to confront and resist the practices of violence. I have enormous respect for you all.

A huge thank-you to each of you as women who have given your time and words in trying to understand more about what is helpful and not helpful from counselling, around the complexities of being abused, while wanting to be loved.

I have appreciated being reminded of the importance of listening with care, making no assumptions, and creating a group space where you may express what is important, freely.

I guess the "not so helpful" list pertains to all the errors as counsellors we might fall into when we are time and outcome driven. When our sensitivity is low, and when we don't observe the subtleties of womens' responses to us, what you are saying to us helps us to provide that unconditional space of listening and attending.

One of the counsellors talked about an experience where women had been helped "to walk into a group programme", and their sadness that their partners had not been given this support. They were saying "it would help me, it would be useful if what I'm getting he also was offered". Thank you.

Thank you for the commitment you have given to this research and, therefore, the lives of women you and I may not meet in person. I would also like to acknowledge what this may have meant to your own life.

The counsellors who joined in this research were unanimous in wanting you to know how important this work to address the effects of violence is to them, and

how much they care for women (and men, and children) who come to meet with them.

We are mindful of what it might be like to come into the room and meet a counsellor: one of the group thought there might be a degree of "How much do i feel safe to say about myself and how will they feel about me if i say certain things?" As one of the counsellors said, "some women may feel judged or have been judged by others already. So that experience could affect them feeling ok about sharing what THEY think".

We are mindful that many women partners we are meeting with are caregivers of children and family members, so it is important to the counsellor group that we "allow that space for you to be cared for, which may feel unfamiliar, but also may be something you are missing and would really like to have". We have very much appreciated what you have offered us.

Mauri Ora
from Jenny and the counsellor group
(whose names have also been anonymised):
Vanessa, Lisa, Esmé, Sally, Jay, Tracey