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Shame and Resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders

A thesis

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Samantha Brennan



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Abstract

Shame can be a powerful and evocative experience. Shame can contribute to the development of mental illnesses, such as depressive, anxiety, and eating disorders. Shame can also contribute to social problems, such as violent crime. However, shame is experienced by almost everyone. While shame causes serious psychological and social problems for some people, others experience shame with no lasting negative effects. Research is needed to discover why and how some people are devastated by shame while others become resilient in the face of shame. This study fills a necessary gap by linking the study of shame and resilience, and providing a comprehensive qualitative understanding of these important constructs.

An in-depth study of shame has never before been undertaken in a New Zealand social context. As New Zealand is a multi-cultural nation and the experience of shame is culture specific, it was necessary to narrow the investigation to one particular sub-culture. Pākehā New Zealanders were chosen as the target population for the research. Developing understandings of shame and resilience, and their expression in Pākehā culture, can benefit all New Zealanders, as the cultural practices of the dominant culture can profoundly influence other sub-cultures. However, it is important to note that while the study is located in Pākehā culture, it is not specifically a cultural study. Therefore, the findings do not provide a definitive and exhaustive account of the cultural experiences of shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders.

The study blended social constructionist and phenomenological epistemological influences. This allowed for participants' lived experiences of shame and resilience to be investigated, while recognising the power of social and cultural discourses to affect participants' experiences and their interpretations. Seventeen participants were interviewed. The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

Participants experienced shame as being: invariably negative, powerful, hidden, enduring, often debilitating, sometimes unremarkable, physical, and social. While most participants constructed shame as unhelpful and useless, some participants, and I as the researcher, remained open to the possibility that shame can have social benefits. Shame may be useful for bringing attention to a threatened social bond, which can then be attended to and restored. While

countless situational triggers for shame were identified, the more significant source of shame was identified as being judgement. Specifically, shame was linked with judgements targeted at one's identity, or that threatened the security of one's relationships.

Resilience is complex and significantly influenced by cultural values. Participants contrasted a false cultural ideal of resilience, as rugged, individualistic toughness, with true resilience, which is developed in supportive relationships, over time, through struggle.

Responses to shame were divided into two broad categories. Participants' natural responses to shame were to avoid, escape, or succumb. These responses are understandable, and sometimes protective in the short term. However, when these responses occur without awareness and conscious choice, long-term psychological and social problems can occur. The more resilient responses to shame are to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change. Acknowledging shame and actively engaging in the struggle with shame can ultimately promote resilience.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Shame is an evocative topic. It is seldom discussed openly, and when it is spoken about, conversations may become emotional very quickly. To introduce this topic, I have chosen a few particularly emotive quotes from the interviews that were conducted as part of this research study. Reflecting on shame, participants said:

John: I just think it's so big. I think it's the motivator, I think it's the killer, I think it's the thing that breaks marriages, I think it's the thing that continues to make humanity [suffer] over and over and over again. Blame, shame, point the finger, disconnect, lack of intimacy, lack of vulnerability, have to hide, keep safe.

Lucy: [Sigh] Oh, it's just the worst... [Laughter]. The worst feeling you can ever have I think. Emotional distress is hard to process and experience, but shame - I would have to qualify that as the absolute worst emotional experience

These quotes will be repeated later in the thesis, and the significance of these and other contributions from research participants will be explored in depth.

However, even at first glance, the depth and darkness of the emotional experience of shame for these participants is apparent. For many people, shame is a significant motivator. Often unspoken and unexamined, its influence can have a profound effect on a person's ability to thrive in life.

Shame has historically been an under-recognised trigger of poor psycho-social functioning. However, the proposition that shame is an underlying factor in mental and public health issues is receiving growing attention, as supported by a number of quantitative and qualitative research studies. Recent studies have identified shame as a contributing factor in anxiety disorders (Fergus, Valentiner, McGrath, & Jencius, 2010), post-traumatic stress disorder (Beck et al., 2011), depressive disorders (Gilbert et al., 2010), and eating disorders (Unikel, Von Holle, Bulik, & Ocampo, 2012). Shame has been found to negatively correlate with a person's level of physical health, and shame appears in the psychological literature as an important influence in trauma, for both victims and perpetrators (Persons, Kershaw, Sikkema, & Hansen, 2010; Sweezy, 2011). Because of the significant power of shame to influence negative psychological and social outcomes, research that aims to better understand shame is certainly worthwhile.

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Shame is a complex construct and the current research base is lacking in a clear consensus regarding its nature, definition, and expression. However, it is clear that shame is largely social in nature, arising from and interpreted within particular social and cultural contexts. Understanding shame's context is central to understanding shame. The present research study is based in New Zealand, and is focussed on investigating shame within a New Zealand context. Currently, there is a lack of research specifically addressing the experiences of shame for New Zealanders. Shame is presented as an important variable in several quantitative studies regarding issues of mental health. For example, shame is presented as a factor that stops women reporting domestic violence and as a factor that correlates highly with severed relationships among sufferers of traumatic stress (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011; Dorahy, 2010). These and other similar findings highlight the relevance of shame in a New Zealand context. The present research fills a void in the research by specifically addressing shame among New Zealanders and by contributing an understanding of New Zealanders' experiences of and responses to shame.

However, when considering shame in a New Zealand context, it is crucial to remember that there is no single, universal cultural experience among New Zealanders. New Zealand is a multi-cultural nation, made up of Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Islanders, Asian immigrants, and several other diverse sub-cultural groups. As it is impossible to effectively cover such a wide variety of cultural experience of an already broad topic, it is necessary to narrow the focus of the investigation to a particular cultural group. The present study is grounded in the specific cultural experiences of Pākehā New Zealanders. As Stephens (2010) argues, it is useful and necessary for people from advantaged, dominant cultures to examine their own cultural experiences. By examining the “unexamined norm,” we are able to raise awareness of our own cultural identity. In recognising the results of the research as specific to the Pākehā cultural context of the participants, we are able to critically reflect on this cultural experience and ensure that conclusions from the research are used appropriately. As the dominant culture has a profound influence on the sub-cultures around it, investigating shame in Pākehā culture will begin to create understandings of shame and its effects that are relevant to many New Zealanders.

Current research suggests that virtually everyone experiences shame; however, for only a small number of people, shame becomes a causal factor for debilitating social and mental health problems (Brown, 2010). A clear and consistent conclusion of the resilience literature is that 50 to 70 per cent of children under adverse conditions typically fare well (Jain, Buka, Subramanian, & Molar, 2012). Thus, resilience is not just an abstract concept, but the genuine possibility of a good outcome, even for those people who experience significant risk factors. Resilience is a complex topic. While a solid research base addressing resilience exists, the topic remains contentious. An in depth examination of resilience will contribute a unique perspective to a valuable conversation about this topic. Like shame, resilience has never been explored specifically in a New Zealand social context, and this research will bring new understandings about the experiences of resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders.

Shame and resilience are both worthwhile topics in their own right. However, this study links the two constructs in an effort to uncover the resilient response or responses to shame that result in a healthy level of functioning, rather than any of the numerous psycho-social problems that have been linked to shame's influence. The resilience literature suggests that even in the face of significant risk factors, given the right circumstances, people can thrive. Shame is a risk factor, which can affect anyone. An in depth, culturally grounded investigation into how some people manage to thrive in the face of shame (among other risk factors) will give insight into both shame and resilience, which can ultimately be used to influence the understandings and practices of both professionals and laypeople.

Research Intent

As outlined above, this study covers a very broad topic – shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. It is important to be clear that the primary aim of the study is to explore understandings of shame and resilience, with the ultimate goal of uncovering the resilient response or responses to shame. Qualitative research necessitates careful consideration of the participants' cultural contexts, and New Zealand is made up of numerous sub-cultures. In order to ensure that the research findings and conclusions are genuinely relevant to the

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research participants, and are correctly interpreted from within their specific cultural context, the target population of the study has been narrowed to Pākehā New Zealanders. However, this is not primarily a cultural study. The research is located in Pākehā culture, but it does not provide an authoritative and distinctive account of the Pākehā cultural experience of shame and resilience. The study has not been designed for that purpose, and it does not have the scope to cover the cultural aspects of the research comprehensively. Arguably, the title of the thesis could be more accurately rephrased, “Shame and resilience among *some* Pākehā New Zealanders.”

Exploring shame, resilience, and the resilient response to shame, is an enormous task, even within the narrow cultural scope of the present study. Because this is the first investigation of its kind in New Zealand, I have deliberately chosen to conduct a wide-ranging investigation. I have endeavoured to explore general understandings and common experiences of shame and resilience, and to integrate these findings into a discussion that specifically links resilience to shame. However, in order to conduct such an extensive study, to some degree, depth has been sacrificed in favour of breadth. The study uncovered a number of specific, narrow areas, that are interesting and important to investigate, which I was only able to briefly and superficially explore. These areas have been described in the implications sections of the findings chapters, and in many cases, future research directions have been outlined.

Personal Statement

As a qualitative researcher, I resonate strongly with the following quote by bell hooks (1994): “I came to theory because I was hurting. . . . I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend – to grasp what was happening around and within me. Most importantly, I wanted to make the hurt go away.” Shame is a topic with intense personal meaning to me. I first encountered shame research by stumbling across an online presentation by Brené Brown (Brown, 2010). As I listened to Brown speak about shame, her ideas strongly resonated with me. For many years, I had been finding my way out of my own web of shame, and slowly, I have begun to heal from shame, embrace vulnerability, and build connection and community in my life. Brown's talk gave language to that process and helped me to understand the process as well as the meaning behind it. Her own candour and

vulnerability communicated empathy and left me feeling less alone in my fear of disconnection. Ultimately, I was encouraged to continue the journey towards vulnerability and freedom from shame. I feel that it is important to recognise this as a motivation and value behind my research, which has influenced the entire research process.

Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, the thesis will begin by examining the relevant research literature. Chapter 2 will explore the shame literature, first by widely examining a range of relevant shame literature, and then by carefully considering literature that is specific to a New Zealand social context and Pākehā culture. Chapter 3 will then explore the resilience literature, providing a broad introduction to research surrounding resilience. Specific factors that have been found to affect resilience will be explored, and the scant literature that links shame and resilience will be introduced.

Following the shame and resilience literature reviews, chapter 4 will outline the research design. This chapter will clearly list the research aims and questions, describe the theories of epistemology and emotion that have influenced the research, and explain the specific methodology and method that was utilised. Ethical considerations related to the research process will be explored, and the reflexive nature of qualitative research will be acknowledged and discussed.

Chapters 5 through 8 will present the research findings. Each chapter will present findings related to a specific topic or question, and within each chapter, the significance and implications of the findings will be discussed. Chapter 5 will provide an introduction to the research findings, exploring the participants' understandings of shame, primarily focussing on shame's basic characteristics. Chapter 6 will discuss the sources of shame, addressing situational triggers for shame along with more generic, widespread sources of shame, which are common across a wide variety of specific situations. Chapter 7 will introduce the findings related to resilience. Participants' descriptions and understandings of resilience will be briefly described, and then the chapter will shift towards a discussion of factors that affect the development of resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. Chapter 8 will explore participants' responses to shame, ultimately concluding in

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a discussion surrounding the long term effect of various responses on participants' resilience.

Chapter 9 will summarise the findings chapters and revisit the shame and resilience literature, highlighting the contribution the present study has to make toward the greater landscape of psychological research. Finally, chapter 10 will conclude the thesis by drawing final conclusions, reflecting on methodological issues, and providing recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Shame Literature

Shame, for many people, is an evocative topic. The very mention of the word can stir up emotions and surface memories, which are often intensely unpleasant. Merriam-Webster defines shame as “a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety” (Shame, 2012). As mentioned in chapter 1, the painful experience of shame is recognised in the research literature as a trigger for a variety of psychological and social problems, ranging from depression to violent crime. The focus of the present study is on investigating shame from within the specific social and cultural context of Pākehā New Zealanders. To accomplish this well, it is necessary to review a wide collection of shame literature, which will influence the understandings and ideas that are brought to the present investigation.

It is worth noting that the literature addressing shame is predominately empirical, quantitative research from a Western (usually American) perspective. It is useful to review this literature and consider the conclusions of all previous research. It is also necessary to remain aware of the theoretical and contextual differences between past research and the present, qualitative, New Zealand based study. While considering the perspectives of previous researchers is crucial to ensuring that the topic is thoroughly reviewed, a healthy scepticism must be maintained about their relevance to the unique socio-cultural context in which this study is grounded.

Mismanaged Shame

A central proposition of the research is that mismanaged shame results in significant psycho-social dysfunction. The mismanagement of shame is in its own right a complex topic, with various theorists proposing explanations for the process of exactly how shame leads to problems such as depression, anorexia, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), or violence. The two predominant states in which mismanaged shame has been found to exist are internalised shame and externalised shame.

Internalised shame.

The first and most prevalent state of mismanaged shame is internalised shame. According to del Rosario and White (2006), shame in its legitimate form is a transient feeling of discomfort that is experienced when one’s identity or self-

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image is threatened. In contrast, internalised shame occurs when shame exists at a trait level, leading to on-going feelings of incompetence or inferiority. It is commonly recognised that in individuals with high levels of internalised shame, shame exists in a chronic state, and increased levels of shame are more easily triggered than in individuals with lower levels of internalised shame. For example, Claesson, Birgegard, and Sohlberg (2007) found that individuals with high levels of internalised shame showed a tendency to respond with feelings of shame to triggers that were expected to be positive, such as praise or encouragement.

The shame literature suggests that internalised shame is associated with mood disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders, a finding that is not surprising given that these mental illnesses share a negativity in interpreting life's events that is also common among individuals with high levels of internalised shame (Fowke, Ross, & Ashcroft, 2012). Claesson and Sohlberg (2002) investigated internalised shame and suggested that being met with indifference, neglect, or rejection from caregivers during early childhood was strongly associated with high levels of internalised shame. Similarly, Chan, Hess, Whelton, and Yonge (2005) found that traumatic backgrounds were associated with both internalised shame and with symptoms of borderline personality disorder among female university students. As this research is correlational, no causal inferences can be drawn. However, it is clear that internalised shame, early childhood maltreatment, and psychiatric symptomology are related, and one possible explanation is that internalised shame results from maltreatment and subsequently leads to the development of mental illnesses such as depression or anxiety disorders.

Externalised shame.

There is less research in the literature that addresses externalised shame than internalised shame. Nonetheless, the externalisation of shame is a phenomenon that is both common and dangerous. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) argue that the externalisation of shame occurs when an individual is unprepared to cope with feelings of shame. The individual refuses to acknowledge feelings of shame and instead, on a subconscious level, transforms his or her shame into anger or rage. According to these and other researchers, externalisation of shame

leads to social problems such as violent crime, as well as mental health problems such as narcissistic personality disorder. Externalised shame is common among perpetrators of crime and involves blaming others, rather than taking responsibility for one's own actions.

The Adaptive Value of Shame

When confronted with the consequences of mismanaged shame, it is tempting to view shame as an entirely negative construct. Some theorists (e.g. Brown, 2006) have proposed that shame is bad, and that eliminating shame from society would have an entirely positive effect on levels of mental health. However, other researchers propose that shame has an adaptive value.

Nathanson's affect system theory sheds light on the potential adaptive function of shame (Van Stokkom, 2002). Nathanson proposes that shame serves as a modulator for the positive affects of joy and interest (Nathanson, 1992). Negative affects may be triggered by any sudden impediment to the positive affects. Thus, when joy and interest are interrupted, shame is a possible result. Nathanson found that even infants exhibit signs of shame when they are confronted with the limits of their abilities. A possible protective function of shame emerges from these results; shame may be useful for recognising and defining one's limits, and therefore protecting the self against physical and social dangers. Shame can signal a possible threat to a person's social bonds and may act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour of all kinds.

Moore (1997) proposes that shame is originally a protective mechanism, but it can also exist as a danger to the self. Moore argues that shame must be balanced with pride. If shame is experienced in the absence of humble pride, a generalised state of shame can emerge. This can take the form of either internalised or externalised shame. Chronic shame alone, not balanced by humble pride, can leave an individual feeling weak, inattentive, defective, lacking in control, degraded, or exposed. However, according to this view, when shame and pride are well balanced, people possess a humble awareness of their limitations and are equipped with self-respect, along with respect for others and for the boundaries of society.

Coming to Grips with the Terminology

The shame literature is filled with terminology that can sometimes be ambiguous or even conflicting. At the heart of the conflicting terminology are fundamentally conflicting theoretical opinions. The first and greatest conflict that appears in the shame literature concerns the difference between shame and guilt.

Shame versus guilt.

As mentioned earlier, the dictionary definition of shame is “a painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety” (Shame, 2012). Dictionary definitions of guilt include “the fact of having committed a breach of conduct especially violating law and involving a penalty,” “the state of one who has committed an offense especially consciously,” “feelings of culpability for imagined offenses or from a sense of inadequacy,” and “a feeling of culpability for offenses” (Guilt, 2012). Definitions from the psychological literature will soon be addressed; however, because the study is aimed at uncovering understandings of these concepts among laypeople, it is fitting to begin with standard definitions. While shame is clearly identified as an emotional experience, definitions of guilt are broader, encompassing the legal state of being guilty rather than innocent, as well as feeling legitimately guilty for offenses and feeling misplaced guilt for imagined offenses or shortcomings.

Academic researchers, like laypeople, consider shame to be an intensely unpleasant emotional experience; however, many researchers further clarify the definition of shame to add that it occurs as the result of a severed or threatened social bond (e.g. Brown, 2006; Scheff, 2003). The difference between shame and guilt is a widely contested topic in the psychological research. Brown clearly and simply distinguishes the two terms by arguing that guilt is the moral acknowledgement that “I have done a bad thing,” whereas shame is a more sinister attack on the self in the form of “I am a bad person.” This view is reflected by numerous so-called “guilt theorists” who argue that guilt is the appropriate emotional response to wrong-doing, and shame is an unhelpful and uncalled for emotional response that triggers symptoms of depression, anxiety, or rage. Tangney and Baumeister (cited in Van Stokkom, 2002) are examples of guilt theorists, taking the view that guilt is a helpful and constructive response to undesirable behaviour while shame is an unhelpful and inappropriate

condemnation of the self as a person. Baumeister (1998) argues that guilt results from a positive concern for a valued relationship, while shame is a self-oriented emotion, focussing on one's own internal distress. Tangney (1995) found that shame was related to anger arousal, suspiciousness, resentment, irritability, a tendency to blame others for negative events, and indirect expressions of hostility. In contrast, in Tangney's study, "shame-free" guilt was inversely related to externalization of blame and expressions of anger, hostility and resentment. As Tangney (1995, p. 1142) concludes, "Shame may represent the darker side of moral affect, while guilt may not be that bad after all."

Shame and guilt versus remorse.

Van Stokkom (2002) attempts to clarify the relationship between shame and guilt by describing shame and guilt as "closely related emotions in many respects" (p. 340). Like Bratihwaite, Van Stokkom relates shame specifically to moral failures or transgressions. Guilt is presented as the simple acknowledgement of a moral error or transgression. In contrast, shame is presented as a severe attack on the person's self-image - a sense of inferiority that involves the person's entire being. Guilt theorists Tangney and Baumeister (cited in Van Stokkom) relate guilt to empathy and reparation, and relate shame to avoidance or rejection of responsibility. Van Stokkom agrees that guilt is the more "moral emotion." However, he argues that guilt also involves limited affective experience and limited potential for empathic connection with the victim, and does not incite the offender to reconsider his or her identity. Thus, Van Stokkom concludes that in contrast to both guilt and shame, remorse is the most desirable and useful emotion for perpetrators of crime.

"Shame's guilt disproved."

In direct contrast to the guilt-theorists' take on shame as a destructive and entirely negative experience, Deonna and Teroni (2008) wrote an article powerfully titled "Shame's guilt disproved." These authors rebutted criticisms of shame as an emotion that is focussed on pleasing others and conforming to their standards. They argued that shame is instead responsible for holding one accountable to one's own internalised value system. In this article, shame is deliberately distinguished from "shaming," an act of humiliation which is likely to result in either rage or self-condemnation. Shame is instead constructed as a

compass for one's integrity. Deonna and Teroni (p. 71) write, "Shame is the painful tribute we pay for being made aware of the need to pursue [the aim of self-reform or self-enhancement] and thus continue to recognise ourselves."

Shame as a master emotion or a basic affect.

Shame is proposed by Scheff and Retzinger (2000) to be a master emotion. A master emotion is said to be one that is involved in nearly all daily activity. Shame comprises shyness, humiliation, modesty, inconvenience, discomfort, failure, rejection, insecurity, aggression, compassion, and many other emotions and experiences. Shame is considered to be highly reflexive, and can easily give rise to feedback loops (for example, when one feels ashamed of being ashamed).

Elison (2005) proposes that shame is a basic affect, which is elicited by personal devaluation and evolved by social selection. In contrast guilt is presented as a term which points toward any one of a range of affective-cognitive hybrids (cognitively assessed emotional conditions). Elison criticises traditional understandings of guilt as being too simplistic, while simultaneously criticising traditional understandings of shame as not being simplistic enough. Elison's presentation of shame is that of a simple affect, with a universal antecedent of perceived devaluation. Guilt is presented as a socio-legal condition, which is able to be associated with a variety of affective and cognitive combinations, through the process of socialisation. Elison argues that when someone says "I feel guilty," because guilt is not in itself an emotion, the person is essentially saying "I feel how one typically feels when one is guilty." However, the actual emotional experience of guilt can be profoundly varied. Thus, it is difficult to draw any conclusions about guilt, when it is such a varied and individual experience.

Adding a further, conflicting opinion into the mix, Belsky, Domitrovich, and Crnic (1997) oppose the view of shame as a master emotion as well as that of shame as a basic affect by presenting shame instead as a secondary emotion. These authors argue that shame, guilt, and pride, each of which are secondary emotions, only emerge during or after a child's second year, and are dependent on cognitive processes, rather than existing as pure, affective experiences. These authors also emphasise the importance of socialisation on the self-evaluative emotions, arguing that none of these emotions exist on a basic level, without the influence of socialisation processes.

The perceived distinction between shame and guilt.

Moore (1993) presents a unique view of the difference between shame and guilt. The guilty self is presented as in-tact, albeit isolated, while the shamed self feels disreputable, helpless, and out of control. Moore's distinction constructs guilt as a signal of repressed shame – the feelings of regret and remorse are driven below the emotional surface by the individual's desire to maintain self-respect.

Elison (2001, cited in Elison, 2005) found, in empirical research, that participants did not clearly distinguish between the constructs of guilt and shame, which were found to be strongly correlated on self-report measures. However, these findings only suggest that there is not presently a clear distinction between the understandings of shame and guilt for study participants. It may still be useful to discover and promote a greater distinction.

Pride.

A discussion of the terminology associated with shame research would not be complete without addressing pride, which is proposed to be a crucial construct that is inextricably linked with shame (Retzinger, 1991). Pride is defined by Merriam-Webster as the quality or state of being proud, expressed as inordinate self-esteem, a reasonable or justifiable self-respect, or delight or elation resulting from some act, possession, or relationship (Pride, 2012). In the academic literature, Scheff (1990) describes pride as an intact bond with other human beings, while shame represents a severed or threatened bond. Humble pride (the respect of self and others) balances with acknowledged shame (the awareness of and responsibility for one's wrongdoings) to create healthy psychosocial functioning. Alternatively, narcissistic pride (arrogance and domination of others) can combine with displaced shame (particularly with externalised shame) to cause destructive, and often criminal, behaviour.

A constructionist perspective on a semantic debate.

It can be clearly seen that the shame literature is filled with contradictory opinions on terminology. Empirical researchers continue to seek out the "truth" about shame, guilt, and other related constructs. However, qualitative research has the advantage of being able to explore complex concepts, considering all understandings to be relevant and useful, even those which appear to be starkly divided in past research by contrasting linguistic constructions. Research that has

focussed on the dangers shame can pose to one's identity and self-image (through the internalisation of shame) and to the safety of the self and others (through the externalisation of shame) have influenced the direction of the present research, and promote caution in exploring the issue of shame. Likewise, the arguments made in support of "shame's honour" by Deonna and Teroni (2008), along with other research supporting the adaptive value of shame, influence the present research to be open-minded and receptive of the beneficial aspects of shame. The discourses of past academic researchers, as well as the social constructions of the study's participants, together create new, adaptable understandings about shame – a topic with immense value stemming from its social power.

Theories of Shame

The discussion thus far has centred on the basic terminology used in the shame literature. A number of theories specifically relating to the issue of shame will now be addressed.

Shame from a developmental perspective.

As shame is a common and complex experience with a widespread impact, it is not surprising that it appears as a prominent concept addressed by the literature of developmental psychology. The most well-recognised mention of shame in the developmental literature exists from within Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2004). The constructs of shame and guilt are directly referenced in the second and third stages of development (autonomy versus shame and doubt, and initiative versus guilt). However, with an awareness of the prevalence of shame and the social context of shame, links can be seen to shame in each of the developmental stages. Infants navigating the stage of trust versus mistrust will experience shame welded with mistrust if the social bond with their caregiver is severed by lacks in reliability, care, or affection. Shame is also intrinsically related to the unfulfilled developmental needs of each of the other stages: autonomy, initiative, industry, identity, intimacy, generativity, and ego integrity.

Developmental researchers have long recognised the complex evolution of shame, which is considered to be influenced by both cognitive-developmental factors and socialisation processes (Stipek, 1983). As Mills (2005) notes, shame is an extraordinarily complex experience, which has been documented to exist

from birth, but which develops in cognitive interpretation throughout childhood and into early adulthood. This on-going development of understanding regarding shame is important to bear in mind in the present study, as participants often discussed shame relating to childhood experiences. It is likely that participants' interpretations of their early shame experiences will have changed as they have moved through childhood and into adulthood.

Reintegrative shaming in the restorative justice literature.

Another worthwhile theory to examine, given its impact on the issue of shame, relates to reintegrative shaming as it appears in the restorative justice literature. Restorative justice is a process which involves bringing together the victims and perpetrators of crime along with friends and loved ones, as well as representatives of the state and the community. The aim of the gathering is to decide what to do about a criminal offense. Restorative justice conferences are intended to restore victims, restore offenders, and restore communities. The goal is restoration rather than punishment. Principles of restorative justice include a focus on the key values of respectful dialogue, making amends, caring and participatory community, taking responsibility, remorse, apology, and forgiveness (Braithwaite, 2000).

In the restorative justice literature, shame emerges as a central concept relevant to understanding criminal behaviour and reforming criminals. Ahmed (2001) proposed that an individual's propensity to crime and an individual's criminal behaviour are related to his or her style of shame management. According to this view, shame that is stigmatising is counterproductive; however, reintegrative shame – the deliberate and respectful shaming of acts of injustice - is important for crime prevention. Ahmed argues that acknowledging and discharging shame is vitally important to progressive social movement.

Ahmed (2001) presents styles of shame management, which centre on the acknowledgement and possible displacement of shame. Acknowledging shame involves feeling the emotion of shame and taking responsibility for one's shameful behaviour. The healthiest response to shame is to acknowledge shame without displacing shame. When one can accomplish this, it is considered that shame has been discharged. Shame problems (and, in some cases, criminal

behaviour) result when shame is displaced rather than discharged, either through internalisation or externalisation.

Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) cite evidence that people who are unable to experience shame or remorse for harming others have a significantly greater risk of harming others again in the future. This inability to acknowledge shame amplifies one's capability for wrongdoing because one's personal actions are dissociated from their consequences. The consequences must be directly and deliberately linked to the person's actions, and the person must become motivated to accept responsibility for those consequences, in order for the positive effects of reintegrative shaming to occur.

Reintegrative shaming theory (Braithwaite, 1989, cited in Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005) holds that in order for shame to be useful rather than stigmatising, disapproval of wrongdoing must be displayed alongside actions that support the bond between the offender and the authority figure involved in the reintegrative shaming process. Rather than condemning the offender as a bad person, which proponents of this theory believe would lead to stigmatisation and ultimately increase the chance of recurring offenses, reintegrative shaming is respectful. Reintegrative shaming involves respectfully disapproving of bad behaviour while regarding the person as essentially good. Reintegrative shaming is most successful when close friends and family members are involved (Braithwaite, 2000). The love and respect fostered in such close relationships ensures that the act of shaming a person for an offence is completed in a reintegrative (respectful) way, which is said to ensure that the dignity and essential goodness of the person is upheld. Braithwaite (2000, p. 195) writes, "My argument is that conduct should only be subject to shame when doing so will increase freedom and non-domination."

Braithwaite (2000) cited Japan as an example of the successful use of reintegrative shaming in the rehabilitation of criminals. Japan relies heavily on reintegrative shaming through restorative justice. Braithwaite credits Japan's impressively low crime rate, as well as the fact that Japan is the only country which has recorded a steady decrease in crime over the past half century, with the country's use of restorative justice practices. In contrast to Japan, Braithwaite notes that modern, individualistic Western cultures are high in stigmatizing shame (as evidenced through their heavy use of punishment). Braithwaite highlights

improvements in recent decades, in which parenting and educational standards within Western cultures have begun to reject forms of punishment that are high in stigmatizing shame. However, there is no evidence cited to reveal the effect this apparent shift away from stigmatisation has had on societies.

Braithwaite (2006) investigated shame as related to the attitudes toward rape among citizens of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. During peacetime, rape rates in Bougainville are extremely low. However, following the end of the Bougainvillean civil war, an epidemic occurred in which rape, a typically rare and scandalous phenomenon among Bougainvilleans, became commonplace among soldiers who had served in the war. After an 18 month period of ethnographic research in a village in Bougainville, Braithwaite concluded that during peacetime, rape was simply unthinkable among Bougainvilleans. This “unthinkableness” of rape is explained by the close and respectful interpersonal relationships in the village, which cause rape to carry a high risk of detectability and resultant disconnection. The public and widespread shame which falls upon the perpetrator and his community following the discovery of rape is intensely unpleasant, and serves as an effective deterrent to the crime of rape. This widespread understanding of the shamefulness of rape serves as a protective mechanism for the communities of Bougainville. Similarly, Braithwaite (2000) proposed that early in life children in Western cultures are socialised with a concept of the shamefulness of murder. Therefore, murder becomes unthinkable to most people. In the words of Braithwaite, it is the associated shamefulness of murder, rather than the legal punishment, that puts it “off the deliberative agenda for responsible citizens” (p. 286).

According to Braithwaite (2006), the dramatic increase in the rates of rape and other violent crime following the end of the civil war can perhaps be explained by the removal of shame from violence that occurred during the war. Because violence (including both rape and murder) were normalised by servicemen during the war, the associated shame decreased. Thus, soldiers returned to their home communities with vastly different morals and social norms than when they left. A new subculture of soldiers existed, in which rape did not carry the harsh consequence of shame and subsequent disconnection.

Braithwaite (2006) presented restorative justice conferences as a means of restoring the shamefulness of rape, along with the protective functions of this

particular shame, among soldiers following wartime. Braithwaite described a primary purpose of these conferences as being painful to the perpetrator. Restorative justice conferences are intended to “break down the segregation of audiences so that combatants cannot get away with being a Rambo in the bush, a lamb at home; a pillar of respectability in church on Sunday, a serial rapist on Monday” (p. 9). Family members of both the victim and the perpetrator attend the conference, and the perpetrator is confronted with the disapproval and vicarious shame of his relatives hearing about the rape. According to Stokkom (2002), the most successful outcome for victims attending restorative justice conferences is the receipt of a genuine apology. In order to offer a genuine apology, the offender must accept moral responsibility and drop all defences. The shame that Braithwaite describes being revealed at these conferences does not come from the act of rape itself, but from the social response of others’ to the act, which triggers an interpersonal disconnection that can ultimately result in the offender feeling a shame for his actions that was not previously felt. In this case shame may be helpful – an adaptive deterrent to rape.

The restorative justice literature provides an expansive collection of discourse related to shame and its significance. However, the shame referred to among criminologists is primarily shame resulting from one’s own actions. It is important to consider that shame is also commonly experienced as the result of the actions of others (for example, in rape victims, etc.) or as the result of intrinsic, personal sources (such as appearance, etc.). The shame experienced by victims of crime and moral transgressions is a complex topic to understand. Research suggests that initially, such shame is generally hidden by aggression, including anger, contempt, and indignation (Van Stokkom, 2002). However, when the aggression eventually subsides and feelings of pain and anxiety are expressed, shame often appears.

Forgiveness and reintegrative shaming.

Forgiveness is a concept which is closely linked to shame, and is worthy of further examination. Forgiveness and shame have been proposed by Braithwaite (1989, cited in Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005) to be interrelated. However, this has been challenged in later research, which found them to be very minimally correlated. Quantitative research has found forgiveness to have a

bigger effect than reintegrative shaming and stigmatisation. Among other implications, this highlights the hopefulness that even disastrous and stigmatising overreactions to the misdemeanours of others can be repaired through forgiveness

Other criminological theories.

Due to the shame that is associated with crime, many other criminological theories are also relevant to explore. Subcultural theory explains a link between shame and criminal behaviour by proposing that when a person is rejected by mainstream society due to undesirable characteristics or behaviour, the result is a status problem for the person. This may be resolved by joining a criminal subculture, which approves of the characteristics or behaviours that are rejected by mainstream society. Because disrespect begets disrespect, the person who has experienced stigmatising shame from a society will begin to reject the society along with its rules and values. The criminal subculture provides the social acceptance and basic respect that the person has been denied (Braithwaite, 2000).

Another theory, control theory, proposes that behaviour is governed by what an individual wants most at a given time (Hirschi, 1969). Human connection is a driving force for most people. Thus, when bonds are strong between society and the individual, the cost for deviant behaviour is high, and it is less likely to occur. When such bonds are weak, people are less motivated to maintain social norms and are more likely to submit to the attractiveness of deviant behaviour. Braithwaite (2000) suggests that individuals who experience reintegrative shaming from their families and society will hold a stronger bond with society, and will therefore be more motivated to maintain social norms. Conversely, individuals who experience stigmatising shame will be less likely to experience a bond between themselves and society and more likely to engage in deviant behaviour.

Shame as related to theories of parenting styles.

While not directly linked to shame in their original formulation, Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) considered the parenting styles described by Baumrind (1967) to be strongly influenced by the issue of shame. The three parenting styles are described by Baumrind as authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. Authoritarian parenting is strict, domineering parenting, which emphasises blind obedience and punishment. Authoritarian parenting generally results in obedient,

conforming children, who are less happy and less successful than their peers (Maccoby, 1992). Permissive parenting, often referred to as indulgent parenting, involves a lack of boundaries. Permissive parents often are considered as more of a friend than an authority figure, being very nurturing, but having low expectations for their children. Permissive parenting results in children with low levels of happiness, poor academic outcomes, and problems with authority (Maccoby). Authoritative parenting is democratic parenting, in which children are provided with clear, reasonable, and consistent guidelines, but are offered forgiveness and nurturing consequences rather than punishment. According to Maccoby, authoritative parenting results in children who are happy, capable, and successful.

Ahmed and Braithwaite argue that authoritarian parenting is parenting that is high in stigmatising shame, permissive parenting is parenting that omits the communication of any sense of shame or guilt for wrongdoing, and authoritative parenting is parenting with reintegrative shame – firm, respectful disapproval of wrongdoing, with reintegration into the family bond being a core value. Authoritative parenting is regarded as the healthiest parenting style, leading to vastly improved outcomes on a variety of measures over both authoritarian and permissive parenting. Authoritative parenting is sometimes described as inductive parenting, because a goal is often the induction of remorse for bad actions, through respectfully employing natural consequences and reasoning with the child (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005).

Theories of emotion.

It is worth noting that there are many broader theories of emotion that have relevance to the exploration of shame. A number of these theories will be introduced and explored in chapter 4, which describes the research design. Emotion theory will be considered alongside other theoretical influences of the study, as the understanding of emotion on a theoretical level is crucial to the analysis and interpretation of the research findings.

The Social Context of Shame

A powerful quote by Jean-Paul Sartre (cited in Elison, 2005, p. 6) illustrates the relational nature of shame: “Yet although certain complex forms derived from shame can appear on the reflective plane, shame is not originally a

phenomenon of reflection. ...it is in its primary structure shame before somebody.” Psychological researchers commonly refer to shame as a severed or threatened social bond. Scheff (1990) contrasts this conceptualisation of shame with pride, which represents an in-tact social bond. Underpinning the shame literature is the unwritten assumption that being connected in healthy relationships is essential for healthy, law abiding, functioning. Numerous researchers (e.g. Cullen, 1994; Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997) support the link between social support and social cohesion with reduced violence. Furthermore, it is clear from the research on reintegrative shaming that the best restorative justice outcomes come from situations in which offenders experience shame in conjunction with the love and respect of their family members. Stokkom (2002) describes a vicarious shame that is experienced by relatives of an offender who attend a restorative justice conference. This vicarious shame is considered to be a sign of the strength of the social bond between the offender and his or her family. While some researchers depict shame as an ominous reflection of unhelpful social pressure (e.g. Gilbert, 2003), discussions of shame never occur in isolation from discussions of social processes. Thus, when interpreting the present research, it is vital to remember that shame is a phenomenon that is social in nature, and which cannot be considered in isolation from its social context.

The Cultural Context of Shame

Shaver et al. (1992) and Rosch (1978) (cited in Elison, 2005) researched cross-cultural experiences of basic affects. These researchers found shame to be one of six basic emotion categories, which were roughly equivalent across multiple cultures. (The others were fear, sadness, joy, anger, and surprise.) In contrast, guilt, considered to be a more complex construct, was found to hold much less cross-cultural consistency. Interestingly, Wallbott and Scherer (1995) found that there is a much greater distinction between shame and guilt in Western, individualistic cultures than there is in collectivistic cultures. Furthermore, shame is found to be much less prevalent in the discourses of Western cultures, where shame is hypocognised (not frequently acknowledged or labelled), in contrast to China, a collectivist culture where shame is hypercognised (frequently acknowledged with many labels). A body of evidence exists which suggests that the complexity of the shame experience has expanded over time. Shame has

evolved from a simple construct, representing the emotion associated with guilt, to a much more complex and less clearly defined construct, representing a range of emotional experiences associated with a variety of situational triggers. The present research is focussed on a cultural context in which shame has not previously been investigated – Pākehā culture. Being of Western origins, Pākehā culture is one where shame is likely to be hypocognised. Local research suggests that shame is common and pervasive, but it is mostly left unacknowledged.

An Introduction to Pākehā Culture

Before more deeply examining shame specifically in the context of Pākehā culture, it is useful to begin with an introduction to Pākehā culture itself. Black and Huygens (2001) discuss the nature of undertaking psychological research that is based in Pākehā culture. These authors point out that the dominant culture in a society is often taken for granted. This can cause a number of problems. It can create the impression among dominant group members, in this case Pākehā New Zealanders, that we do not have a “culture” of our own. Because the culture of privileged, “white,” European New Zealanders forms the basis of New Zealand society, including almost all of its institutions and practices, Pākehā people can become “culture blind.” This means that we are unable to see our own ways as being cultural. Rather, Pākehā people have a tendency to view our ways as the norm, and to label outside influences as “cultural,” “ethnic,” or “different.”

McIntosh (1989) also highlights concerns about members of dominant cultures and races being unable or unwilling to consider their positions of power and privilege. McIntosh points out the tendency of privileged people to try to help other people without intending to give up any of their own power or status. She argues that work that is intended to benefit others is often work that is intended to make “them” become more like “us.” This perpetuates the belief that the dominant culture is the ideal, which dismisses as irrelevant the unique values, heritage, and insights of other cultures.

Regarding the present study, it is my intent to study shame and resilience, intensely powerful and illuminating constructs, as they apply to New Zealand culture. However, as Black and Huygens (2001) point out, there is not one New Zealand. New Zealand culture encompasses the cultural experiences of Pākehā, Māori, Pacific Islanders, Asian immigrants, and several other sub-cultures. To

attempt to understand the topic at hand as it applies in a New Zealand context as a whole would do a disservice to the topic, and to each of the many cultures that contributes unique cultural influences to New Zealand. It is clear that the cultures that would be most disadvantaged would be the non-dominant cultures, such as Māori culture, which would likely be overlooked and made to conform to Pākehā “norms.” Therefore, the research has been clearly grounded in Pākehā culture. This ensures that the research is relevant to the particular group of people that is being targeted. Also, with Pākehā/European New Zealanders being the dominant culture in New Zealand, understanding shame and resilience as they apply to Pākehā New Zealanders can reveal understanding about how shame and resilience are managed and considered within most of New Zealand’s social and cultural institutions. Furthermore, specifically targeting Pākehā New Zealanders will allow for a careful analysis of the specific cultural influences on shame and resilience among this group. Bringing to light aspects of Pākehā culture will serve all New Zealanders, by creating more widespread recognition that Pākehā culture is indeed a “culture” – one of many cultures in New Zealand that is worthy of value.

Black and Huygens (2001) presented a list of cultural markers that apply specifically to Pākehā culture. These are cultural features that have been found to be present in Pākehā New Zealand, some of which are common to many Western cultures, and some of which are uniquely Kiwi. These cultural features include independence and individualism, ordered lives, uniformity, monocultural and monolingual education, idealising the past, viewing children as empty vessels, the common experience of going on holiday, knowing that family is “there” (rather than “here”), and “short families” (which refers to the Pākehā tendency to define family narrowly as including those few family members that one has an on-going relationship with). Each item on this list represents an in-depth cultural construct. The list is not exhaustively reflective of the cultural experiences of Pākehā New Zealanders, but it is mentioned at this point in order to highlight some aspects of Pākehā culture that may emerge from the research process as being important cultural influences to the study’s participants.

Shame in a Pākehā context.

As mentioned previously, a number of local quantitative studies highlight the relevance of shame in a New Zealand context. For example, shame is highlighted as a factor that prevents women from reporting domestic violence, and as a factor that correlates highly with severed relationships among sufferers of traumatic stress (Dorahy, 2010; Fanslow & Robinson, 2011). In addition, Lala (2000) investigated the role of guilt and shame in obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and found clear links between guilt and compulsive behaviours in a non-clinical sample of New Zealanders. These and other quantitative studies show shame to be an important and often powerful construct among Pākehā New Zealanders, but none of these studies have specifically examined the cultural context in which shame was being experienced and measured.

A very small number of qualitative studies could be found, which shed some light on the uniqueness of shame experiences for Pākehā New Zealanders. Plumridge and Thomson (2003) conducted a local study aimed at uncovering reflexive understandings of the self among female New Zealand sex workers. In their analysis, these researchers explored shame as it appeared in the discourses of the research. Plumridge and Thomson concluded that shame was influential for these New Zealanders. Shame was found to be the key to motivation; it was linked to the adequacy of the social discourses which were being drawn upon. If the adequacy of a woman's "story" was called into question, she would begin to feel shame, which would ultimately act as a catalyst for her to change her way of conceptualising her situation (through the changing of actions as well as conversations) into a new construction that was less socially threatening.

Crowe (2004) conducted an interesting and highly relevant exploration of shame among women who have been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD). Crowe introduced shame as the feeling of being exposed, which results in the diminishing of one's self worth. This diminishing of self-worth was linked to the so-called "symptoms" of BPD. The research concluded that rather than existing as a discreet mental illness, the symptoms which are currently recognised as BPD may actually reflect a variety of similar but characteristically unique shame responses. For example, Crowe proposed that self-harm exists as both an expression of shame and a source of shame for women whose identity has been threatened by inhospitable development environments. Likewise, each of

the symptoms of BPD can be linked to disturbances in the development and regulation of shame.

It is important to note that Crowe's (2004) work is heavily influenced by guilt theorists (e.g. Tangney), who identify shame as an attack on the self (rather than as the result of bad behaviour, which would be constructed as inducing guilt rather than shame). The most notable aspect of Crowe's work is its clear recognition of shame as existing within a particular social and cultural context. Crowe defines the experience of shame as a physical sensation that occurs as a response within a particular socio-cultural context. Shame occurs as the result of transgressing against culturally and socially determined norms. In the case of the present research, it is important to remain aware that the shame being investigated is unique to the cultural and social environment of Pākehā New Zealanders. Physical experiences of shame hold high cross-cultural similarity, but there may be unique aspects to the phenomenological experience of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders. More significantly, sources of shame are substantially culturally dependent, and the present investigation pays close attention to the specific social and cultural environments in which shame is generated for Pākehā New Zealanders.

Recently, Dorahy and Clearwater (2012) conducted a New Zealand based study investigating shame and guilt in the context of adult, male survivors of childhood sexual abuse. These researchers described in their findings a chronic shame that inhibits one's ability and willingness to connect with others, and in particular, inhibits help seeking among survivors of childhood sexual abuse. Dorahy and Clearwater described a new construct labelled "self-as-shame," which reflects their participants' descriptions of their identities as being infused with shame – of believing that they embodied the very notion of shame. The research participants in this study all identified themselves as European New Zealanders. While Dorahy and Clearwater did not take particular note of cultural factors that may have influenced their participants' experiences with shame, their results highlight some issues regarding shame in the specific cultural context of Pākehā New Zealanders. Firstly, they highlight the issue of childhood sexual abuse as a source of shame within New Zealand culture. Secondly, they highlight the pervasiveness of the shame experience for some New Zealanders. In the case of

these participants, shame was so completely internalised that their identities had been fundamentally fused with shame.

A final note regarding shame in the specific cultural context of the Pākehā New Zealander regards a quote from cultural anthropologist Helen Merrell Lynd (cited in Deonna & Teroni, 2008, p. 65), who writes, “To confront shame makes possible the discovery of an integrity that is peculiarly one’s own and of those characteristically human qualities that are at the same time most individualizing and most universal.” As a researcher, I am inspired by this quote. It is my hope that by grappling with issues of shame within Pākehā culture, discoveries will be made which illuminate the “peculiarity” of New Zealand’s integrity. Some discoveries may be brought forth that unite Pākehā culture with those cultures around it, and some which emphasise its uniqueness. While the research is not designed to produce a definitive account of shame in Pākehā culture, it may identify some specific, cultural aspects of the shame experience for the study’s participants. The new discoveries that emanate from the research process will ultimately increase knowledge and understanding, fulfilling the goal of research and providing a platform for further research and discovery.

The influence of Māori cultural understandings of shame.

While the study is clearly grounded in Pākehā culture, it is fitting to recognise the influence of Māori understandings and indigenous customs on the cultural identity of New Zealand’s European settlers. Metge (1965, p. 1) points out the relevance of Māori culture to Pākehā New Zealanders in the following quote:

Māori society is emphatically part of New Zealand society as a whole. Māori and Pākehā cultures are not completely separable, mutually exclusive or conflicting entities. For though they derive from ancestral cultures widely removed from each other, Māori and Pākehā today share not only a common territory, to which both are equally attached, but also large areas of common history, knowledge, and experience. Moreover, each has assimilated something of the cultural heritage of the other. While the Māori side has inevitably had to make the greater adjustment and accommodation, Pākehā culture as a whole owes something of its character to its interaction with that of the Māoris, past and present.

It is important to remain open minded, considering Māori cultural concepts as they apply to the study’s participants. Thus, a brief exploration will be conducted

of shame as it applies within a Māori context. Literature addressing shame among Māori is scarce, but a small number of sources could be found.

An antiquated account of Māori culture as experienced by a Pākehā comes from Maning (1863), who provides unique insight into historical Māori culture by giving an account of his immigration to New Zealand as one of the first Pākehā settlers. Maning reflects on how his understanding of Māori culture shifted over time, as he let go of his perception as an outsider of the Māori people being savages, and began to consider himself part of the whanau, appreciating the honour and integrity of the Māori warriors, within the unique moral code in which they lived. Maning (1863, p. 1) writes, “But those were the times! – the ‘good old times’—before Governors were invented, and law, and justice, and all that.” Maning describes that in those times, Māori society depended only on shame to regulate behaviour. Māori were dependent on their social bonds for survival, and thus carefully attuned to shame as an indicator of a possible break in social unity. Among friends, people were treated with great honour, respect, and loyalty – a signal of the deep bond resulting from depending on one another for survival. The account of Maning is dated, and as an outsider, his understanding is likely to have been limited. However, his work does provide a useful introduction to the historical roots of the Māori construct of kinship, which continues to strongly influence the values of modern Māori, and has also, in many cases, had an impact on the cultural experiences of Pākehā New Zealanders.

Metge (1964) provides a more recent account of Māori culture, writing about kinship among Māori. Metge reports that while a great deal has changed in modern Māori culture, *whanaungatanga* (kinship) remains strongly influential. Metge (1964, p. 46) writes, “Māoris never turn a relative down.” Like in the time of Maning’s (1863) writing, responsibility to one’s family is still seen as a core value among modern Māori. While it is not explicitly written in the source, it appears as if shame still functions as a regulator of this value, emotionally motivating Māori people to preserve their heritage and remain loyal in the eyes of their relatives.

Sachdev (1990) elaborates on the emotional processes at work in maintaining kinship by describing the Māori term *whakama*. Whakama has no direct translation into English, but one of its meanings is described by Sachdev (p. 434) as the loss of honour in the eyes of kin or friends. Another related, but

subtly different, meaning of whakama is feelings of inferiority, inadequacy, diffidence, and self-doubt in social situations. Whakama is loosely linked to guilt, but as with shame, it can be felt regardless of whether genuine wrongdoing has occurred. Sachdev (p. 435) lists Pākehā words and phrases that have been used as an attempt to describe whakama. These include shyness, shame, embarrassment, modesty, innocence, feeling at a disadvantage, suffering in comparison, and being conscious of differences.

Whakama can be experienced by individuals or groups, and is often the result of awareness of a disadvantaged state, conflict and uncertainty, or acts of wrong-doing (even if the act is unintentional) (Sachdev, 1990). Whakama can be a shared experience, in which close friends or family members of someone who has done wrong experience whakama vicariously on behalf of the other person. Whakama can also be experienced as a group, such as a hapu or iwi. Historically, group whakama occurred as the result of battle losses. In the present day, it generally occurs as the result of offence or loss of status. On some occasions, references have been made to the whole of the Māori community being whakama because of its disadvantaged position in New Zealand society and its loss of power to the Pākehā. It is also possible that Pākehā New Zealanders may feel some degree of shame or whakama related to their historic role in colonisation of the Māori people. Smith (2011) makes reference to this form of shame and guilt, which she proposed is experienced by only some Pākehā, who have begun to understand the discriminatory effect that colonisation has had on Māori.

Sachdev (1990) describes several different behavioural manifestations of whakama. These include blocking, whereby a Māori is blocked of normal cognitive processes and unable or unwilling speak or express emotion. Māori terms for this include *he wahanguu*, which means ‘a silent mouth’ and *ka whakatekoteko i a ia ko te tangata whakama*, which means ‘making himself into a carved figure.’ Another possible response is the withdrawal from friends and relatives. This usually occurs with individual whakama when it results from being dishonoured in the eyes of other Māori. Another response to whakama is referred to by the term *pouri te ngakau*, which literally translates to dark intestines or dark heart. Sachdev (p. 438) refers to this as a state of heightened tension and constant brooding due to un-avenged affronts. The final two responses to whakama are flight, in which an individual runs away from the group, either

permanently or only to return for retribution, and suicide. These responses are less common, but their intensity reflects the extreme importance that Māori society, past and present, places on honour. Sachdev (p. 442) concludes that Māori society's values of interdependence, altruism, and the sensual (as opposed to Western values of autonomy, individuality, and the intellectual), combined with the Māori truth that the well-being of the group is more important than that of the individual, cause shame to be an especially powerful force among Māori. Living in community with Māori, who experience shame in this unique way, will likely have an influence on the cultural experience of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders.

Summary and Conclusions

Shame is a complicated topic, encompassing a broad range of understandings. A review of the academic literature has revealed a number of different conceptualisations of shame. Each different perspective is socially constructed within the social and cultural context in which it was developed.

The participants in this study are unique individuals, grounded in a particular socio-cultural context in which shame has not previously been researched – a Pākehā New Zealand context. It is crucial to remember that the understandings of shame gained through the research are intrinsically linked to this context.

Shame is a very relevant topic, affecting humanity on a deep and powerful level, integrating itself into social exchanges of all kinds. This research aims to uncover more understandings of shame, to grapple with questions about how they relate to understandings of other issues, and to embrace the complexity that accompanies an investigation into such a contested and emotive topic. Brown's (2006) research proposes that speaking about shame is critically important to developing shame resilience. In addition to the aim of increasing understanding related to shame, this research project also allows for conversations about shame to begin. The study gave participants the opportunity to speak to the issue of shame, to contribute discourse and create meaning around their experiences with shame, and ultimately, to strengthen shame resilience through engaging in the research process. Likewise, it is hoped that the publication of the research findings will stimulate conversations in the academic community. This may

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increase awareness of shame among professionals so that we are better prepared to acknowledge and address shame among the people and communities with which we work.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Resilience Literature

Resilience is a concept that has been studied more widely than shame, by numerous researchers from a variety of theoretical paradigms. The dictionary definition of resilience is “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change” (Resilience, 2012). At first glance this appears simple, but on closer inspection, even this seemingly simple definition carries with it a host of ambiguity. Questions arise surrounding what exactly is recovery, and how “easily” does one have to recover to be considered resilient. Psychological researchers have invested much energy in understanding the meaning of resilience, with each researcher defining it, and sometimes redefining it, within the context of his or her own particular research aims.

Bonanno (2004) defines resilience as the capacity to resist maladaptation in the face of risky experiences. Bonanno studied resilience in the specific context of individuals who have experienced significant loss or trauma. Bonanno’s specific conceptualisation was reflective of those individuals who could maintain relationships and functionality during the period following a traumatic experience. Bonanno argues that resilience is a fundamentally different concept from that of recovery. Recovery involves returning to healthy functioning following a period of maladaptation. In contrast, Bonanno presents resilience as being a stable equilibrium - an ability to endure a traumatic event and its aftermath with no evidence of psychological maladaptation.

Roisman (2005) cites Bonanno’s (2004) definition of resilience as the capacity to resist maladaptation in the face of risky experiences. However, Roisman points out the flexibility of resilience as a construct, concluding that Bonanno’s definition is one possible conceptualisation of resilience, but by no means the only one. Roisman introduces the concept of resilience as a process, or as “a family of processes that scaffold successful adaptation in the context of adversity” (Egeland, Carlson, & Sroufe, 1993, cited in Roisman, 2005, p. 264). Roisman (p. 264) defines resilience as a family of loosely connected phenomena involving adequate or better adaption in the context of adversity, pointing out that for some individuals, resilience occurs in the face of some forms of adversity and not others. For example, a child might prove to be highly resilient in the face of a natural disaster such as a flood or earthquake, but less able to adapt to a different stressor, such as the loss of a parent. Similarly, Peters, Leadbeater, and McMahon

(2005) construct resilience as a dynamic process, encompassing the broad experience of positive adaption within the context of significant adversity.

Roisman (2005, p. 264) also contributes a discussion on the topic of recovery, which he classes as a special case of resilience that emphasises the achievement of successful adaptation following a period of maladaptation or developmental difficulty. This directly contradicts Bonanno's (2004) argument that resilience is represented by a stable equilibrium of psycho-social functioning. Like Roisman, Jain et al. (2012) present a strong argument that resilience does not equate with invulnerability. Resilient individuals experience normal stress in response to distressing triggers; however, they are able to "bounce back" and recover in a constructive manner, achieving "normality" again within a period of months or years following the stressful trigger (Luthar, 1993, cited in Jain et al., 2012, p. 108).

Montpetit, Bergeman, Deboeck, Tiberio, & Boker (2010) note that a distinct divide exists in the resilience literature. Some researchers conceptualise resilience as an individual personality trait (i.e. ego-resilience). Other researchers portray resilience as a dynamic developmental process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000).

As McKim (2005) notes, the discourses surrounding the topic of resilience are fraught with inconsistency. There is significant discrepancy in the operational definitions used for the term resilience by various researchers, creating challenges for operationalising the term for the present study. This issue will be returned to later. At this time it is useful to turn attention toward one clear consensus that exists in the resilience literature.

The Prevalence of Resilience

Much of the current resilience literature specifically focusses on resilience among children or young people. A clear and consistent conclusion of the resilience literature is that 50 to 70 percent of children under adverse conditions typically respond well (Jain et al., 2012, p. 108). While the attention of psychologists is often focussed on risk and risk factors, resilience researchers have found that most individuals, even those who are exposed to significant stressors, retain a healthy and adaptive level of functioning.

Jain et al. (2012) studied resilience among youth exposed to violence. These researchers found compelling evidence that in spite of exposure to violence, a trigger typically associated with psychological disturbances such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety, some young people managed to successfully adapt over time. These individuals were able to resume a healthy level of functioning without ever experiencing significant psychological issues. Tolan, Gorman-Smith, and Henry (2003) argued that exposure to violence, while a trigger for psychological, academic, and behavioural problems among young people, is non-deterministic. Most victims and witnesses of violence develop into healthy, caring, and confident adults (Bernard, 2004)

A very similar argument can be made regarding shame and its ill-effects. Shame has been linked to a wide variety of psychosocial problems; however, shame is also non-deterministic. Research suggests that virtually everyone experiences shame (e.g. Scheff, 2003; Brown, 2006), yet a relatively small percentage of people experience the debilitating effects of internalised or externalised shame that can be expressed through violent behaviour, addiction, depression, and other psychological and social problems. Shame can lead to a host of psycho-social problems, but it does not necessarily do so.

Factors Affecting Resilience

Psychological research has revealed clear predictors for specific forms of psychopathology. For example, a lack of social support, low intelligence, and lack of education (among other factors) have been found to predict PTSD among young people, while factors such as maternal anxiety, child ill-health, and lack of family cohesion have been found to predict childhood depression (Bonanno, 2004; Najman et al., 2004). It is logical to assume that if such risk factors predict maladaptation, the inverse of the risk factors would in turn produce resilience. This assumption has been confirmed and extended by a community of resilience researchers.

The presumption of the study by Jain et al. (2012, p. 108) was that developmentally appropriate protective factors exist, which at risk or high risk youth are able to tap into, to tip the balance from, vulnerability in favour of resilience. In fact, researchers have found evidence that protective factors are a

better predictor of resilience than risk factors are of disturbance (Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 2001, cited in Jain et al., 2012, p. 108).

Factors affecting a person's resilience can be broadly split into two categories. The first category is that of individual factors, which includes factors such as hardiness and other individual personality traits. The second category is labelled by Roisman (2005) as "environmental" factors. This category encompasses those factors that are external to the individual, including examples such as high-quality relationships, socio-economic status, and group membership.

While it is natural and useful to consider these two categories separately, it is necessary to remain aware of the complexity of resilience. Using the factor of high quality relationships as an example, it is possible that internal factors, such as the personality trait of introversion versus extroversion, influence an individual's ability to form high quality relationships. As a result, the two categories described above may be less distinct than it first appears.

Individual factors.

First, individual factors will be examined. The discussion of factors below will focus on those factors that are individual in nature and have been found by resilience researchers to be predictive of high levels of resilience.

Hardiness.

Many resilience researchers have contributed to a discussion on hardiness, an individual personality trait that is considered to influence the process of resilience. Bonanno (2004, p. 25) presents three specific dimensions that comprise hardiness: a commitment to finding meaningful purpose in life, the belief that one can influence one's own circumstances and the outcome of events, and the belief that one can both learn and grow from positive and negative life events. Researchers have found that hardy individuals are able to use coping skills more confidently and therefore more effectively than non-hardy individuals (Bonanno). They are also able to maintain a broad perspective when appraising the danger of threatening situations, thereby minimising the perceived danger of a situation and maximising their own ability to overcome the adversity of the situation.

Maddi (2005, p. 261) conceptualises hardiness more simply, writing, "the resilient response may require little but the person's own ongoing efforts in life to

continue effectively.” Maddi presents hardiness as the courage and motivation to address stressors accurately, rather than catastrophizing or denying them. Maddi argues that hardiness leads to productive problem solving and the ability to transform a potential disaster into an opportunity for growth.

Some question exists in the resilience literature as to whether individual hardiness can be reliably distinguished from positive emotionality, another individual factor which predicts resilience. Erbes et al. (2011) found that hardiness could be significantly distinguished from both positive and negative emotionality in a sample of United States National Guard soldiers. However, hardiness did not predict resilience (specifically defined in this study as the absence of symptoms of PTSD or depression following deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan) any more or less reliably than positive emotionality.

Self-enhancement.

Many researchers have noted that high self-esteem is linked to resilience. However, some researchers have extended this observation by examining the link between self-enhancement and resilience. The self-enhancing bias is the tendency of an individual to enhance his or her own self esteem by emphasising the positive features of the individual and the groups to which the individual belongs, and also by reinterpreting negative features to put them in a better light (Self-enhancement, 2009). Bonanno (2004) argues that self-enhancement, while not an obviously healthy response, is an adaptive way of responding to stress, which enhances personal well-being and promotes resilience. Lonngvist, Leikas, Verkasalo, and Paunonen (2008) researched self-deception via self-enhancement in more detail. These researchers found that self-enhancement, whereby individuals perceive themselves and their characteristics more positively than others, is highly adaptive, leading to increased self-esteem and greater perceptions of well-being. In contrast, when studying the Self-Insight Index of self-enhancement, on which an individual's perception of a trait was compared to an objective measure of that trait, Lonngvist et al. found conflicting results. Some evidence exists that individuals who engage in self-insight self-deception are more adaptive and hold greater mental stability than those who are more realistic in their appraisal of their traits. However, self-insight self-deception is also associated with impaired occupational success and being perceived as hostile and arrogant by others.

Bonanno concluded that in the face of significant adversity, the benefits of self-enhancement outweigh the possible negative effects (e.g. potential narcissism), proving self-enhancement to be a resilient response for individuals in high risk situations.

Coleman (2011) conducted a study investigating the influence of the specific emotions of guilt and revulsion on the self-serving bias. This rare incidence of the convergence in the research literature related to the constructs of shame and resilience is worth highlighting. In Coleman's study, participants who were induced to feel guilt (which for the purposes of the study was defined synonymously with shame and contrition) were found to make less self-enhancing judgments of their successful answers in a test situation and showed less evidence of self-protective judgements regarding failure in the testing environment. The results of this study, combined with other research concluding that the self-enhancement bias is positively correlated with resilience, suggest that shame may inhibit one's ability to achieve resilience.

Repressive coping.

Another unexpected individual factor that has been found to predict resilience is repressive coping. Repression, traditionally a psychoanalytic construct, refers to a primitive ego-defence mechanism (Freud, 1915). Repressive coping involves refusing to allow distressing mental content to enter one's consciousness, thus reducing the anxiety associated with the distressing content.

Smeets, Giesbrecht, Raymaekers, Shaw, and Merckelbach (2010) found that repressive coping was inversely correlated with symptoms of PTSD among American university students. These authors attribute the positive outcomes associated with repressive coping as being a result of the adaptive benefits of using a subconscious and habitual emotional regulatory mechanism. Likewise, Eagle (2000) observes the positive correlation between a repressive coping style and successful adaptation in the immediate face of a traumatic experience. However, Eagle argues that repressive coping can take a long term toll on one's physical health due to the increase in somatic symptoms which tends to occur simultaneously with the decrease in mental anxiety that results from repression. Eagle calls for the benefits associated with repressive coping to be carefully considered against its downfalls. Contrasting this perspective, Coifman, Bonann

Ray, and Gross (2007) found repressive coping to be a clear protective factor. In a study designed to investigate individual differences in responses following bereavement, Coifman et al. found that among individuals who had experienced a bereavement, as well as among control participants, the use of repressive coping was associated with fewer symptoms of psychopathology, fewer somatic complaints, fewer general health problems, and increased psychological adjustment over the use of other coping mechanisms.

The term repression is sometimes used interchangeably with suppression, but recent researchers have shown clear differentiations between the two constructs (Myers, Vetere, & Derakshan, 2004). Suppression refers to the conscious resistance of unpleasant mental stimuli, while repression is an entirely unconscious process. It is unclear whether the literature linking repressive coping to resilience is specifically focussed on repression, or whether suppressive coping could also be correlated with increased levels of resilience.

Another closely related construct is dissociation, which refers to the process of splitting off from one's consciousness a coordinated set of activities, thoughts, attitudes, or emotions (Dissociation, 2009). Fairbairn (1949) argues that repression is a special case of dissociation, being the dissociation of unpleasant mental content. However, Smeets et al. (2010) found that extended dissociative experiences held a strong positive correlation with PTSD symptoms, while repressive coping held a clear negative correlation with symptoms of PTSD.

Flexible coping.

There is brief mention in the resilience literature suggesting that flexibility of coping styles is positively associated with resilience. Galatzer-Levy, Burton, & Bonanno (2012) found that individuals who use multiple coping mechanisms and multiple strategies for emotion regulation are more resilient than those with a more limited range of defences. Galatzer-Levy et al. conclude that the ability to focus one's attention on a difficulty when required, combined with the ability to turn one's attention away from the same difficulty when useful, leads to greater psycho-social health and resilience.

Positivity.

A significant amount of literature supports a link between positivity (encompassing laughter, optimism, and other positive emotions) and resilience.

Bonanno (2004) concluded that positive emotionality fosters resilience on both a cognitive level (through the reduction of negative thoughts) and a social level (through the increase in social support available to positive people).

An interesting extension of the discussion on positive emotionality, based on the principles of cognitive theory, is presented by Mak, Ng, and Wong (2011). These researchers observed that resilience tends to correlate positively with life satisfaction and negatively with depression. Cognitive theory proposes that depression results from negative beliefs about the self, the world, and the future (known as the negative cognitive triad). Citing the established inverse relationship between depression and resilience, Mak et al. extended this premise of cognitive theory, postulating that resilience results from a positive cognitive triad (PCT), which consists of positive beliefs about the self, the world, and the future. While it cannot be specified whether the PCT is an expression of pre-existing resilience, or whether resilience results from the positive core beliefs that make up the PCT, it is clear that positive cognitions are an important factor that contribute to the effect of resilience on well-being. This result has significant implications for practitioners seeking to increase the resilience of their clients. For example, Gillham et al. (2006, cited in Mak et al, 2011, p. 615) found that cognitive behavioural interventions have been effective in increasing the resilience of at-risk children.

Other individual factors.

Several other individual level factors are mentioned in the resilience literature, many of which are linked in principle to other factors. For example, an easy-going temperament has been linked to high levels of resilience, with this being explained by the increased ability of individuals with easy-going temperaments to access social support. High levels of intelligence have also been linked to high levels of resilience. This could be accounted for by the fact that academic outcomes are often used as a measure of resilience; however, some research also suggests that problem solving skills, which are more common in individuals with high intellectual ability, are integral for resilient functioning.

Environmental factors.

The social context of resilience is highlighted in the following quote by Janelle Kumar (Watts et al., 2006, p. 16), “Resilience is more than just the ability

to ‘bounce back’ naturally, with no help or any influence from one’s environment.” Kumar argues that resilience is a process rather than a discrete psychological state, and that the process of resilience is influenced both by an individual’s environment and by how the environment responds to the individual’s needs. Therefore, a thorough discussion on the factors which influence young people’s resilience must not remain limited to individual factors, but must also consider the substantial impact of environmental factors.

Positive and supportive relationships.

Jain et al. (2012) found that positive peers and supportive relationships with parents and older adults were the two factors which had the greatest positive impact on resilience among young people who had been exposed to violence. As the link between positivity and supportiveness is well accepted, for the purposes of this discussion these factors will be considered together. Wight, Boticello, & Anshenel (2006, cited in Jain et al., 2012, p. 121) wrote, “The role of supportive relationships in the positive development of children is well documented for health and mental health.” Parental support, family cohesion, parental attachment, and the simple presence of a parent are factors that are typically found to be associated with protection against adverse outcomes in a general sense. Tusaie, Puskar, and Dereika (2007) found that the perceived support of friends was a moderating factor for psychological resilience among adolescents. Notably, Afifi and MacMillian (2011) researched children who had been maltreated and found that the environmental level factors of stable family environments and supportive relationships were more consistently correlated with resilience than any individual level personality traits that were studied.

Walsh (1998) considered a family systems perspective on the protective nature of family relationships among young people. Walsh observed a trend among Western cultures to view the family unit as dysfunctional, and generally, a source of adversity for children. Walsh presents as a commonly accepted belief that some especially hardy children thrive in spite of their dysfunctional upbringing, but that this is mostly achieved by severing ties with the family of origin. Walsh contradicts this perspective by proposing that individual hardiness is a characteristic that results from a broader, family-level resilience. Family

resilience is proposed to be a naturally-occurring property, which can be nurtured and mobilised by both mental health practitioners and policy makers alike.

Participation in meaningful activities.

While positive and supportive relationships is the most well documented environmental factor affecting resilience, some evidence has also been found that participation in meaningful activities increases resilience among young people. Meaningful activities can include sports, drama, arts, and church groups, among others. Brooks (2006) suggested that participation in such activities fosters resilience through strengthening the young person's sense of competence, as well as increasing contact with caring and supportive adults.

Collective efficacy.

Jain et al. (2012) found a small but positive association between collective efficacy and resilience. Collective efficacy is similar in nature to the individual factor of positivity, but collective efficacy operates on a community level. Collective efficacy reflects the positivity of the groups to which one belongs, particularly referring to a group's belief that they can influence the events they are experiencing and shape the course of the future (Bandura, 2000). Bandura speculates that perceptions of efficacy influence resilience directly, but also through affecting other related factors such as goals and aspirations, perceptions of difficulties, and opportunities in the social environment.

Resilience in Pākehā Culture

There is little literature that addresses resilience specifically in a Pākehā cultural context. A single study was found specifically linking resilience to Pākehā culture, which investigated resilience among young Pākehā. McCreanor, Watson, and Denny (2006) investigated the richness of family experiences for adolescent members of Pākehā culture. These researchers found that young Pākehā's family environments were typically reported to be supportive and caring. Young people in Pākehā culture were found to frequently and meaningfully connect with family members, and so it was recommended that any interventions designed to promote resilience among young Pākehā were designed with an openness to including and working alongside young people's families. This fits with the literature described earlier, which describes positive and

supportive relationships as a strong protective factor that influences the development of resilience.

While no other literature directly references resilience in Pākehā culture, some literature has described features of Pākehā culture that could be interpreted as relating to resilience. Phillips (1996) wrote specifically about features of Pākehā masculinity, suggesting that rugby has become popular in New Zealand because of its physical roughness. Phillips suggests that rugby is considered to be a game for hard men, who suppress their feelings and ignore physical pain. This may be reflective of a physical toughness that is valued among Pākehā men, and that may influence their interpretations and understandings of resilience. Fougere, Novitz, and Willmott (1989) propose that in the past, rugby has served as a mirror for the values and experiences of New Zealand society as a whole. However, these authors suggest that this connection may be diminishing, perhaps revealing that the strong cultural ideal of physical toughness among Pākehā men may also be less prevalent than it once was.

Black (2010) also acknowledges that constructions of the “Kiwi bloke” identity include a strong focus on rugby, sport, and rugged adventure. Interestingly, no research could be found that addressed cultural ideals of Pākehā women. However, Black also references other defining features of Pākehā culture that apply regardless of gender, such as innovation and being the underdog. Generally speaking, this may suggest that Pākehā value being adaptive and resilient in the face of adversity.

Shame Resilience

Brown’s (2006) Shame Resilience Theory was the first mention in the academic literature of resilience specifically grounded in the context of shame. Brown’s results depicted four strategies, which participants revealed as the cornerstone for successfully and resiliently dealing with shame experiences. These strategies each exist on a continuum, making it possible for different people, as well as the same individual at different times, to be capable of varying levels of each resilience strategy.

The first continuum, the vulnerability continuum, represents a person’s acknowledgement of their own personal vulnerability. Brown (2006) found that shame experiences are most debilitating when they are unexpected. When people

recognise and accept being vulnerable in a situation, they are able to respond more resiliently in the face of shame, as they are prepared for shame as a possible emotional reaction and are not caught off-guard. The second continuum is the critical awareness continuum. Brown argues that being aware of the cultural and social forces that shape one's experiences, and being able to assess one's experiences in the context of those forces, is protective when being confronted with experiences of shame. The third continuum, the reaching out continuum, is closely related to the environmental factor of positive and supportive relationships, which is perhaps the most commonly cited protective factor in the resilience literature. However, Brown's argument places the emphasis on the ability of an individual to reach out to others and empathically and vulnerably connect with them, rather than the simple presence of people in one's life who are willing to be supportive. The fourth and final continuum presented by Brown, which is unique to shame resilience, is that of "speaking shame." Brown argues that being resilient to shame is highly dependent on one's ability to speak about shame. Individuals must develop fluency in the language of shame in order to articulate their experiences and therefore find the support and empathy necessary to disempower shame's attack on one's self. With Brown's research in mind, it is my hope that by providing an opportunity to "speak shame," participating in my research has been an empowering experience for interviewees.

Van Vliet (2008) later studied shame and shame resilience, like Brown, using a grounded theory methodology. Van Vliet constructed shame as an assault on the self and shame resilience as the subsequent rebuilding of the self. Five components were presented which together facilitate the rebuilding of the self and the resilient response to shame. These five components are connection, refocusing, acceptance, understanding, and resisting. Connection occurs when an individual receives support by communicating with family, friends, professional helpers, and/or a spiritual higher power. Refocusing occurs when an individual actively turns his or her attention away from the shame experience and toward a broader perspective, encompassing future goals and action oriented behaviours that are often focussed on self-improvement. Acceptance involves putting an end to denial and avoidance, and acknowledging the experience of shame for what it is. Acceptance involves acknowledging and accepting the situation as well as the feelings involved, and expressing the feeling associated with shame.

Understanding involves seeking to make meaning of the shame experience. The individual must process the circumstances which lead to the experience of shame, and must ultimately separate the self from the shame being experienced. Finally, resisting occurs when one actively resists the present and future attacks of shame. This is achieved through rejecting negative judgements about the self, asserting oneself, and challenging others.

Summary and Conclusions

Resilience, like shame, is a complex construct. A broad review of academic literature has revealed a variety of different theoretical perspectives on the topic. Definitions of resilience vary, but they converge on the idea that resilience encompasses some form of adaptation or recovery in the face of adversity. Resilience is the genuine possibility of a good outcome that is affected not just by the form or severity of the hardship being faced, but also by a number of other protective factors – both on an individual and an environmental level.

While it is certainly worthwhile to study resilience, it is important to remember that it is a broad construct, operationalised in many different ways by many different researchers. As Rosiman (2005, p. 264) notes, “much care should be taken not to reach overly general conclusions about this family of protective processes on the basis of any single operationalization.” Likewise, Tremblay (2005) puts the complexities of studying resilience in perspective by pointing out some of its difficulties. For example, Tremblay notes that aggressive behaviour is highly resistant, and therefore resilient to any intervention designed to reduce it.

At this point, it is necessary to return to the issue of operationalising the term resilience for the present study. Much of the research that has been reviewed is quantitative in nature, restricted by the constraints of positivism, which requires precision in defining and measuring resilience as a variable. However, the present study carries with it the advantages that qualitative research provides when studying a construct as complex as resilience. In this regard, the inconsistencies that surround resilience discourses, while troubling to quantitative researchers, can be constructed in a more positive light. Resilience is a concept that does not yet have a clear and agreed upon definition within psychological research, making it a malleable construct which is readily open to the influence of further social discourses, including those provided by this study. Rather than specifying a

precise definition of resilience, the research reflects resilience in its complexity, a concept which is flexible and open to interpretation. An aim of the study is to seek out the participants' understandings of their own resilience, allowing them to contribute a voice to an issue relevant to their lives.

Chapter 4: Research Design

This chapter will address many issues related to the research design. First, a concise list of research aims and questions will be presented. Next, the chosen methodology and its theoretical underpinnings will be examined. This will include a discussion of theories of emotion as they pertain to the present investigation of shame. Finally, the research method will be described. Understanding the research design is crucial to interpreting the research findings, as the design outlines some of the context through which the findings have been identified and analysed. It has been previously discussed that shame and resilience are culturally grounded constructs, and that an investigation of these constructs should involve a critical examination of their cultural and social contexts. It is important to note that I am not a blank-slate observer of the participants and their cultural experiences. I, too, am a member of Pākehā culture, and I have brought my own social and cultural experiences with me to the research experience, which has affected every aspect of the research process, from the choosing of a topic and formulation of questions to the interpretation and analysis of the findings. The chapter will conclude with a brief, reflexive statement regarding my own cultural identity.

Research Aims and Questions

The research aims for the study are twofold:

- To conduct a culturally grounded investigation into Pākehā New Zealanders' experiences of and responses to shame.
- To generate interpersonal and academic discourses which expand upon current social constructions of shame, and ultimately result in the re-construction of shame as a manageable experience.

The first of these aims has been well established from the beginning of the thesis. A great need exists for research that investigates shame and its responses. Better understanding the social complexity of shame will equip us to be better prepared, as a society, to deal with it in healthy and constructive ways. Maintaining an active awareness of the participants' cultural influences appropriately grounds the study in its cultural context and ensures that the findings are reflective of the participants' social location.

The second aim can be plainly restated as getting people talking about shame. The influence of social constructionism on the research will soon be discussed. However, for the purposes of interpreting this research aim, it can be understood as maintaining an active awareness of the power of conversations and written material to influence the constantly developing understandings of shame. Meaning is made when I converse with participants about their experiences with shame, as I write about shame in this thesis and elsewhere, and as you read and engage with the discourse I am presenting to you. It has been my goal as a researcher to maintain a constant awareness of the power of discourse. Where appropriate, I have endeavoured to use that power for positive purposes. I want participants and academics alike to realise that shame is not an insurmountable obstacle to mental health.

The specific research questions for the study are as follows:

- How do Pākehā New Zealanders experience shame?
- What are the sources of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?
- How do Pākehā New Zealanders respond to feelings of shame?
- What are the more resilient responses to shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?

While these questions are straightforward, their answers, in many instances, have not been! Ultimately, this list of research questions can be summarised as an endeavour to understand shame, as well as its experience, causes, and effects, and to understand resilience, particularly as it impacts on shame. The ultimate goal is to discover the resilient response or responses to shame, which can help people who are stuck in shame and crippled by its negative effects.

Theoretical Foundations of the Research

In order to enter a discussion regarding the methodology most appropriate to the above research aims and questions, the theoretical foundations of the research must first be explored. This exploration will first address the epistemological underpinnings of the research. Then, theories of emotion will be introduced and explored.

Epistemological theory.

Shame and resilience are both complex, dynamic constructs, for which universal definitions or understandings do not exist. Simplifying, categorising, and generalising are appealing research endeavours. However, in my opinion, it would do more harm than good to oversimplify the issues at hand. A goal of the present study is to seek to understand the concepts of shame and resilience from within the complexity of their contexts. While the benefits of past quantitative, positivist research will not be dismissed, we must remain open minded and alert for new understandings that arise from the academic literature as well as from the responses of the research participants.

The epistemological foundation of the research was influenced by social constructionist theory. Social constructionism is a set of ideas regarding the basis of knowledge, which is considered to be social in origin (Gergen, 1985). Language is considered to be the medium through which knowledge is actively constructed. Gergen (1999) stresses that the construction of knowledge through discourse is an active and on-going process, which must be understood through the discursive lens of the current social and cultural context. It is important to note that social constructionism is not a set of beliefs, as subscribing to an inflexible belief system would defy its foundational assumptions (Gergen, 2011). Rather, it is a collection of ideas in the form of conversations, which allow for flexibility and the possibility of transforming the theory itself, as well as the topic being explored through it. As Brinkmann (2005) notes, social constructionism is a reflexive process. Knowledge is used to create more knowledge. This process is moderated by the strength of social processes, which determine the prevalence of a particular form of understanding over time (Gergen, 1985).

Social constructionist researchers are concerned with identifying and understanding social processes. As Potter and Wetherell (1995) note, the research questions of social constructionists are often phrased with *how*. In the case of the present study, the aim is to understand *how* Pākehā New Zealanders experience shame, *how* Pākehā New Zealanders respond to shame, and *how* Pākehā New Zealanders' responses to shame ultimately affect their resilience. A core issue of the study involves identifying and understanding the social processes associated with the understandings of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders. This, combined with social constructionism's flexibility in retaining the malleability of complex

constructs such as shame and resilience, make a social constructionist theoretical background particularly suited to the present study. Furthermore, social constructionism emphasises the mediating role of culture in perceiving the world (Black & Huygens, 2001). Thus, informing the analysis of shame and resilience with constructionist ideas has allowed for the careful consideration of the unique influence of Pākehā culture on the participants' explorations of these concepts.

While social constructionism has had a clear impact on the research aims and methodology, it is not the only theoretical influence of the study. It has been clear when conversing with participants that the constructs of shame and resilience are malleable, but they do not have unlimited flexibility. Participants have communicated shame as a deep and personal emotional experience. It is often felt powerfully, and sometimes words cannot fully express its intensity. Throughout the research process, I have opened my eyes more readily to approaching the objects of interest from a realist perspective. Over the course of the research process, phenomenology has had a growing influence on my investigation and the interpretation of the findings.

Phenomenology can be considered a means of knowing that begins with the phenomenon itself. A phenomenological investigation of shame assumes that shame exists, in and of itself, prior to any discussion, consideration, or interpretation of its experience. Cohen and Daniels (2001) argue that the central goal of phenomenology is to “get at” the world that existed prior to our conceptualising it. They argue that we must begin with the naïve, pre-theoretical, pre-thematised, pre-reflected upon world of the subject. The approach is suited to the present study because participants have described clearly tangible, lived experiences of events and emotions. In many cases, participants spoke about avoiding talking about shame, and some participants had never before spoken about shame to another person. Their experiences were in many ways raw, and the research aims and questions were best fulfilled and answered by capturing the essence of the rich and often painful sensation of shame, as well as the empowering sensation of resilience.

I noted earlier that the research questions are phrased in terms of *how*. Understanding how the participants' experiences unfold and are influenced by their social and cultural contexts is an important part of the research. However, another central goal of the research is to understand the lived experiences of the

participants. I want to understand the participants' experiences with shame – what it feels like, how it came to be in their lives, and how they deal with it when it is there. Likewise, I want to understand their experience of resilience – what it is really like for them in times when they have overcome adversity, and what happened inside of them to make them able to overcome situations that seemed insurmountable. I want to know whether their responses to shame have helped them or hurt them – what the tangible impact of those responses was on their quality of life. These desires to understand the internal world of the participants are also reflected in the research questions, which clearly contain an element of seeking to discover the participants' lived experiences, an endeavour that reflects the phenomenological influence of the research.

While a phenomenological approach begins with the experiences of others as the basic building block of data, phenomenology does not discount the influence of the researcher in the process of investigating others' experiences (Cohen & Daniels, 2001). Phenomenological researchers assert that the experiences of others can be known. Although we can never completely know another person, we can make a genuine effort to enter their world and understand their experiences through their eyes. Phenomenology values “betweenness” and interconnectedness. As a researcher, I was able to engage the participants in intimate dialog, and through our shared exchanges, I came to know some of what it is like to be them.

Constructionism and phenomenology, while distinct, are a compatible blend for the present research study. I sought to understand participants' experiences of shame and resilience. These constructs are tangible. Shame, in particular, is clearly felt on a deeply personal level. Wetherell (2012) describes feelings as phenomenological events; however, Wetherell also argues that emotions are clearly bound to social processes. The present study addresses shame as a complete experience, encompassing shame as a feeling, as an emotion, and as a physiological affect. The role of social and cultural discourses in influencing our experiences of shame and resilience cannot be denied. Constructionism and phenomenology are both core tenets of the research. The phenomenological influence recognises the value in understanding the participants' lived experiences with shame, and of developing resilience. The constructionist influence amplifies the significance of participants' social and

cultural contexts. It also acknowledges the power of language and discourse in affecting participants' previous understandings of their experience, as well as in influencing future, developing understandings of shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders.

Theory of emotion.

It is useful at this point to turn from a discussion of broad epistemological theory, toward a dialog regarding specific theories of emotion that have relevance to the present study. Emotion theory is specifically relevant to the investigation of shame, and will hold important implications for the interpretation of the findings related to shame.

A number of theories of shame were presented in chapter 2. For example, Eilson (2005) introduced shame as a basic affect. Similarly, Kaufman (1993) argued that shame is a primary emotion, which exists as the root cause of many forms of psychopathology. Eilson and Kaufman fall into the category of basic emotion theorists – a group that is recognised as producing the predominant body of scientific research on emotion (Russell, Rosenberg, & Lewis, 2011). There is considerable diversity among the details of specific varieties of basic emotion theory. However, basic emotion theorists generally agree that there are classes of emotions that capture hardwired, centrally organised syndromes of coordinated emotional responses (Russell et al.).

Tracy and Randles (2011) compared a number of different variations of basic emotion theory. It was found that most researchers in the field agree that basic emotions are those that are discrete, have a fixed set of neural and bodily components of expression, and have a clearly identifiable evolutionary purpose. Past research has produced conflicting results as to whether shame meets these particular criteria. As discussed in chapter 2, many researchers differentiate shame from other, similar emotions (i.e. guilt, humiliation, shyness, etc.); however, this differentiation is often ambiguous. Some researchers propose an adaptive function for shame (e.g. Deonna & Teroni, 2008), but this is not a universally recognised conclusion. In the 1960's, Tomkins's affect theory originally proposed six basic affects, and this theory was later expanded to describe nine basic affects, including shame (Sedgwick & Frank, 1995). Tomkins argued that shame is biologically driven and expressed through hard-wired, brain-

behaviour links, such as through discrete facial expressions. However, the biological basis for shame's inclusion as a basic emotion has not been clearly established. In fact, in a meta-analytic review, Lindquist, Wager, Kober, Bliss-Moreau, and Barrett (2012) concluded that there is little evidence that discrete emotion pathways can be consistently mapped in the brain. This finding not only questions shame's inclusion as a basic emotion; it calls into question the existence of basic emotions altogether – when their definition requires distinct neural pathways.

I have outlined basic emotion theory because, as Russell et al. (2011) observe, its contributions are central to emotion research discourse. The contributions of the theorists who have described shame as a basic emotion are valuable in that they serve to position shame as a universal and powerful aspect of emotional experience. However, basic emotion researchers include a biological approach to the study of emotion that is incompatible with the aims and methodology of the present study. While my findings may suggest shame has some qualities that could be constructed as aspects of a basic emotion, the theory itself does not fit with my own conceptualisation of emotion. I have argued that emotion (specifically shame) exists as something that can be powerfully experienced and tangibly embodied. However, I also argue that emotion is inextricably tied to the discourses that surround it and the social and cultural contexts through which it is experienced. Basic emotion theory does not account for this full and complex manifestation of emotion.

A number of researchers have attempted to fill this gap in emotion research, proposing alternative conceptualisations that account for the more complete and complex experience of emotion. As briefly introduced in the previous section, Wetherell (2012) has explained emotion in a way that includes a distinction between affect (bodily responses or reactions), feelings (subjective phenomenological experiences), and emotions (culturally bounded prototypes of affect). Wetherell describes emotions, such as shame, as affective practices – classes of recognisable, patterned activity that actively organises affect and emotion. According to this viewpoint, affective practices encompass an embodied experience along with a psychological presence. Emotions, as argued by Wetherell, are action oriented. They register evaluations of events based on social and cultural processes and push a person toward particular types of social action.

This theory has relevance to my own research, as it recognises the embodiment of emotion while also paying careful attention to the cultural and discursive practices that help to shape emotion. Furthermore, the action orientation of emotion as studied as an affective practice may be useful in explaining how shame motivates people toward particular responses. However, the aim of the present study is not to investigate the specific structure of shame, breaking it down into the distinct components of affect, feeling, and emotion. While the action orientation of participants' shame experiences will be considered, this will be done as a part of a broader investigation of shame from an experiential, rather than a structural, perspective.

Another theory of emotion that is compatible with the methodological approach of the present study is Burkitt's (2002) theorisation of emotions as complexes. Burkitt acknowledges that feelings (such as the feeling of shame) are recognisable bodily and psychological experiences, but he also argues that emotions are defined through social and discursive processes. As Burkitt writes (p. 153), "Emotions are complexes because they are products of both the body and discourse yet are reducible to neither." Burkitt posits that feelings are not reflected by language, nor are they created through language. Rather, feelings are completed in language. According to this viewpoint, an emotion is first experienced as an embodied feeling. Then, it is defined and understood through linguistic interpretation, and finally, it is expressed through social action. Burkitt's theory allows for the ambiguous nature and interpretation of emotion, as is found in previous research and will be further described in the present study's findings.

It is particularly interesting to note that Burkitt's (2002) work recognises the profound power of emotions, as well as the social nature of all emotional experiences. Through social relations and actions, Burkitt proposes that emotions can affect a range of possible outcomes. It is acknowledged that in some cases, emotions seem to be occurring drastically out of place from their context. However, when carefully examined, a relational context is often uncovered. Burkitt (p. 152) writes:

So even where there is a long, winding, and obscure route from the relation (or the loss of a relation) to the feelings it inspires, the route is nevertheless there and is traceable. That is, if one is looking for it.

It is a goal of the present study to investigate the complexity of participants' shame experiences, and where appropriate, to search for the "long, winding, and obscure" history of the participants' experiences with shame.

A final theory of emotion to be introduced is that of emotion as a psychological construction. Russell (2009) proposes that emotions exist not as clearly delineated objects or processes, but as the product of a variety of processes that encompass, but are not limited to: physiological changes, bodily expressions, behavioural actions, cognitive associations, social interactions, and linguistic categorisations. Like Burkitt (2002), Russell allows emotion the freedom to be experienced and interpreted ambiguously, rather than attempting to confine its existence to particular structures or clearly delineated patterns.

Each of the mentioned theories of emotion has relevance to the interpretation of this study's findings. Basic emotion researchers have provided discourse that illuminates the commonality and power of emotional experience. Wetherell's (2012) theory of emotion as an affective practice has provided clear recognition that emotions are socially and culturally grounded constructs. This theory aligns with my own viewpoint that emotions are clearly embodied phenomenological experiences, but which are also heavily influenced by discourse, social interaction, and cultural practices. Burkitt (2002) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the complexity of emotion – including the phenomenological existence of emotion, the linguistic construction of emotion, and the active product of emotion. In my opinion, Burkitt's theory of emotion best supports the previous shame research, and fits well with my approach to the present investigation. However, I am also mindful of Russell's (2009) reminder that emotions are complex, ambiguous, and cannot be discreetly categorised or definitively explained. Russell writes (p. 1263), "My account does not allow for the concept of emotion to determine the boundaries of the domain to be explained." It would not be wise for a previously defined theory to limit the scope of new research and possibly prohibit the identification of a new and useful perspective on the topic of shame. Thus, the aim of the present research remains broad, allowing participants to explore their own conceptualisations of shame,

free to describe and interpret their own emotional experiences without theoretical constraint.

Methodology

The primary methodology for the research was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis allows the theoretical flexibility to blend the constructionist and phenomenological influences, which have been described above. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that a “named and claimed” thematic analysis allows researchers to adapt the methodology in a way that suits the particular topic at hand and the particular research goals and aims. The use of thematic analysis as the research methodology has allowed for themes to be identified that answer the research questions and explain the participants’ experiences of shame and resilience. Within the identified themes, interpretations have been made about the underlying influences of participants’ experiences that can help explain and understand their experiences, including social and cultural factors.

While thematic analysis is the chosen methodology for the study, this particular thematic analysis has been influenced by many of the principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis. Foucauldian discourse analysis is a methodology with the foundational premise being to explore the relationship between language and subjectivity and its implications for psychological research (Willig, 2008). This is applicable to the present study, which is aimed at uncovering depth of understanding about the constructs of shame and resilience, which can be influenced by processes of social construction. A core issue of Foucauldian discourse analysis is its focus on power. Foucault (1991) argues that power is everywhere, diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge, and understandings of “truth.” The process of Foucauldian discourse analysis involves looking closely at the social actions that are accomplished through discourse and facilitate the interchange of power. Shame and resilience are constructs that are typically associated with power, most notably being the power to influence life outcomes. Understanding shame and resilience, by necessity, involves understanding the social interchange of power that occurs in discourses related to shame and resilience. Thus, Foucauldian discourse analysis, where appropriate, has influenced the interpretation of data within the broader methodology of thematic analysis.

Method

In order to gather texts for analysis, interviews were conducted. The transcribed interview texts provided discourses for analysis. The discourses constitute shared conversations between myself as a researcher and the participants. Participants have expressed meaning that resides within themselves and their experiences, but understanding was expanded and further meaning was actively created through a process of social interchange. Ultimately, the participants engaged in a process of self-reflection, enabling shared meaning to be made of their experiences.

Participant recruitment.

Participants were recruited via a combination of methods. Fliers and brochures advertising the research were placed in the hubs of various community organisations – libraries, supermarkets, counselling centres, and doctors' offices. A website promoting the research was created, which was used to advertise the research and recruit participants, as well as to communicate the research findings to the community. In addition, an article advertising the research was published in the *Rodney Times*, a local newspaper that services Rodney, Auckland. Most participants heard about the research through reading this article, and often, potential participants subsequently visited the website and completed a contact form. Some participants contacted me on my mobile phone number, which was published in the article. A small number of participants heard about the research through word of mouth and contacted me directly to volunteer for the study.

Participant selection.

The criteria for selecting participants were adult Pākehā New Zealanders, aged 18 or older, who resonated with the topics of shame and resilience and were willing to discuss their experiences. It was originally anticipated that approximately 20 participants would be interviewed. After completing 17 interviews, it was apparent that I had already obtained an abundance of rich data. Similar themes were beginning to emerge regarding the issues of resilience and responses to shame, as well as similar general understandings of shame. This signalled that data saturation had been reached. At this point, data collection was paused while I began to analyse and interpret the results. When it became clear that I had sufficient data to thoroughly cover the research objectives and provide

more than enough material to discuss in the thesis, I concluded the process of recruiting participants.

Participants.

Seventeen participants were interviewed for the study – 11 women and 6 men. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 64. With the exception of a single 19 year old participant, all other participants were aged 30 to 64. The distribution of ages in this range was reasonably even.

All participants responded to advertising recruiting Pākehā New Zealanders, and all participants identified with this cultural group. However, at the start of the interviews, I asked each of the participants to describe, in their own words, their ethnic identities. The responses were varied. Some participants were relatively recent immigrants to New Zealand from Western countries, who identified as New Zealanders of European descent but referred to their birth culture when asked about their ethnic identities. These participants identified as British, Northern American, and South African. New Zealand born participants identified themselves as Pākehā, Kiwi, New Zealand European, White, or simply as New Zealanders. One participant wanted to be identified as a Pākehā Aotearoan. Another participant described himself as a Kiwi and identified with Pākehā culture, but revealed that he came from Lebanese and Maori descent.

An interesting pattern emerged, whereby nearly all of the participants worked in some form of helping profession. Participant occupations included teachers, health care workers, counsellors, therapists, and clergy. As a group, the participants were educated, insightful, and resilient. They were keen to reflect on their experiences, willing to share vulnerable personal information, and able to contribute valuable opinions and analysis to the topics at hand.

The participants each clearly and ably communicated their experiences with shame. Many participants reported experiences of feeling extreme shame, chronic shame, or both. As participating in the research would have appealed to people for whom shame is or has been a particularly salient issue, it is important to note that the findings of the study are not necessarily generalisable to a broader population of Pākehā New Zealanders. However, in fitting with the advantages of qualitative research, this study is able to contribute a depth of understanding and insight about shame in a Pākehā cultural context for a group of people who have

been particularly influenced by its experience. Given that most of the participants had previously, consciously processed their experiences of shame, and had made progress in overcoming it as an obstacle to their well-being, these participants were able to provide precious insight into what it takes to build resilience, and how shame can be handled positively.

Interview process.

I responded to each potential participant who made contact, in order to confirm the participant's eligibility and thank the person for their response. When participants were still needed for the study, an interview time and location was arranged that was mutually suitable for both the participant and the researcher. Interviews usually occurred in participants' homes, or offices in some cases. Interviews generally lasted for approximately one hour. Prior to the interview time, an information letter was sent to each participant, which is included as *Appendix A*. This letter introduced the research and outlined the research aims and process.

Interview content.

The interviews were participant-focused and open-ended. An interview guide has been provided in *Appendix B*, listing the broad questions that were covered during the interview. However, this served as a flexible guide rather than a definitive script. The interviews began with me introducing myself, the topic, and my personal background, which has influenced my choice in the particular topic. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research and asked to sign a consent form (included as *Appendix C*). Participants were also asked to indicate if they wished to receive a summary of the research findings at the completion of the research project.

Following the introduction, the focus of the interview shifted to the four themes outlined in the interview guide. The goal of the interviews was to gather information relevant to participants, and to give participants an opportunity to contribute to an issue of relevance to them. Therefore, within the broad constraint of the research topic, I allowed the participants to direct the interviews. I listened reflectively and asked clarifying questions, which allowed for the mutual exploration and understanding of topics that were important to the participants.

At the conclusion of each interview, I checked in with the participant's present feelings, ensuring that the participant was not left feeling upset or distraught by any of the issues that had been discussed. The future research process was outlined, including the timeline for receiving and approving the interview transcript and the deadline for withdrawing from the study. The participants were again given an opportunity to ask questions about the research.

Data processing and storage.

The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder, and stored in a password protected folder. Following the culmination of the research, electronic and paper copies of the interviews and transcripts will be stored in university archives for a period of five years. Confidential contact details for participants will also be stored, with the other data, for a period of five years.

Follow up procedures.

The interviews were transcribed by the researcher, and a copy of the transcript was sent to the participants by post or by e-mail, as agreed in the interview. The transcripts were usually sent within one month following each interview. Participants had the opportunity to make changes to the transcripts, or to withdraw their participation in the study, for a minimum of three weeks following the sending of the transcript. The letter that was sent to participants with their transcripts is included as *Appendix D*. Two participants took the option of making changes to their interview transcript. The others, either through a direct response or lack of response, consented or implied consent to use their transcripts without change.

Following the completion of the interviews, the participants were each sent a letter of thanks for their participation, which included a \$30 Warehouse voucher as a thank you gift. This letter is included as *Appendix E*.

At the culmination of the research process, the participants who wanted to be informed of the results were sent a brief summary of the research results. This included a discussion in non-technical terms of the research findings and their limitations and implications. This letter is included as *Appendix F*.

Analysis.

A careful analysis of the interview transcripts was undertaken. This took the form of a thematic analysis. The interview transcripts were coded in NVivo 10. The primary analysis was “theoretical” in nature, meaning that the coding of the data was driven by the specific research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The highest level themes, which ultimately informed the divisions of the findings chapters, were determined by the research questions themselves. Within those themes, some sub-themes were identified in a more inductive, or data driven, manner. The theoretical approach allowed the research to remain focussed on its original goals of understanding shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders, and seeking out the response or responses to shame that foster health and resilient psycho-social functioning. Moving toward a more inductive analysis within the larger, theoretically driven themes allowed for participants’ understandings of the topics to be openly explored, while minimising the influence of pre-conceptions and pre-existing theories.

The six phases of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) were followed. These phases are:

1. Familiarisation with the data.
2. Generate initial codes.
3. Search for themes.
4. Review themes.
5. Define and name themes.
6. Produce the report.

Throughout these six phases, the analysis process was on-going. As codes were generated and themes were identified and explored, I continued to ask questions of the data. The initial research questions were foremost in my mind, along with questions regarding the social and cultural factors at work in influencing participants’ experiences, and questions regarding the theoretical location and significance of the findings. Interpretations of the data were made. The freedom to interpret allowed for meaning to be explored and expanded upon in depth. However, the interpretive nature of the analysis also allowed my own perceptions of the participants and their experiences to be interwoven into the research findings.

As discussed earlier, where appropriate, the analysis was also informed by Foucauldian discourse analysis. Rather than employing the full Foucauldian discourse analysis, which includes a detailed emphasis on linguistic use and a discussion of the power relationships of social institutes, I allowed the analysis to be informed by the abbreviated six steps of Foucauldian discourse analysis described by Willig (2008). Willig's stages of discourse analysis are reflective of the fundamental principles of Foucauldian discourse analysis, which include a focus on the social construction of power relations and an understanding that discourses are intrinsically related to the subjectivity and practices of those who create them. Willig's abbreviation of the discourse analysis process leaves out the traditional Foucauldian focus on the historicity and evolution of discursive formulations over time, which is outside the scope of the present investigation. Foucauldian discourse analysis was not applicable to all of the identified themes, but in some instances, particularly where interchanges of power were apparent, these steps were particularly useful in enabling the formation of useful analytic interpretations.

The six steps of Foucauldian discourse analysis that informed the analysis within some of the identified research themes are as follows:

1. Discursive constructions.

The first stage of analysis involves identifying all of the explicit and implicit discursive constructions of the objects of interest. In the present study, *shame* and *resilience* were the primary objects of interest.

2. Discourses.

The next stage focusses on identifying the differences between each discursive construction of the same object.

3. Action orientation.

Upon closer examination of each discursive construct, the action orientation of the various discourses associated with each construct is revealed. The action orientations of the discourses highlight the social function that each discourse is trying to achieve. This also reveals ways in which a particular discourse of a construct is related to other discourses of the same construct and to discourses of other constructs.

4. Positionings.

The positionings stage of analysis focusses on identifying the *subject positions* that are implicated by the discursive constructions and their discourses and relating action orientations. The term subject position encompasses the social location of each subject of the text, the rights and duties that are assigned to the subject within his or her location, and the subjectivity of experience (thoughts and feelings) of the subject.

5. Practice.

This stage of analysis involves making a link between discourse and practice. The analysis here focuses on how the discursive constructions and resulting subject positionings either open up or close down possibilities for social action. The question is addressed: “What can be said or done by the subjects from their particular positions within these particular discourses?”

6. Subjectivity.

The final stage of analysis investigates the subjective experiences that are allowed or disallowed by the various discourses. The question is addressed: “What can be thought, felt, or experienced by the subjects from their particular positions within these particular discourses?”

Ethical Considerations

The above research methods reflect the manner in which some basic ethical principles were upheld. Participants’ names and contact details were and will be kept confidential at all times. The data provided by participants is treated as private, with all effort made to protect participants from being identified by information and quotations that are used from the participant interviews. Names and other identifying details were changed in the publication of the findings. In some cases, in order to ensure participant anonymity is preserved, more than one pseudonym was used for the same participant.

The participants’ right to informed consent was upheld by providing information about the research objectives, both in the initial information letter and in the introduction to the interview. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the research throughout the research process and were provided with a summary of results following the completion of the research analysis.

Participants were clearly and formally asked for consent, and were provided with the contact details of the convener of the University Research and Ethics Committee, whom they could contact with any concerns about the research.

In addition to these basic ethical principles, it is vital to consider the potential risk of harm that could be experienced by participants resulting from their participation in the study. During the research interviews, the participants were asked personal questions about sensitive subjects (shame and resilience). Shame, in particular, can be an intensely unpleasant emotional experience, and asking participants to recall and communicate about their experiences of shame can cause some level of emotional distress or discomfort. While this risk was relatively minimal, I was aware of it at all times.

In order to mitigate the risk of discomfort or distress, I engaged sensitively with participants at all times, looking for signs of distress, and checking in with participants about how they were feeling during and after the interview. Participants were given more time to discuss their present experiences when needed, and were given the opportunity to ring me for follow-up support if necessary. Participants were also provided with the contact details for Lifeline and Youthline, two telephone counselling services that provide round the clock support for people experiencing emotional distress.

Another ethical consideration regards the principle of beneficence, by which researchers are obligated to not only avoid doing harm, but also to actively promote wellness. When discussing stigma and resilience among high risk youth, Watts, Kumar, Nicholson, and Kumar (2006, p. 14) write: “The Youth Council would like you to remember that notes, assessment and professional opinions from years ago should not be viewed as being ‘Holy Writ’, or a definitive indication of who we are. . . . People need to recognise that we are not our notes – this is about respecting our uniqueness.” Atwool (2010, p. 51) echoed this sentiment and reported that it is vitally important for vulnerable people to “have a say” and to be able to voice their opinions and contribute to decisions regarding their futures. It is a fundamental goal of this research to meet participants’ needs for uniqueness and sovereignty – to give a voice to people who have had significant experiences with shame, allowing them to tell their own stories and to create their own unique understandings and meaning from deeply personal

experiences. In respecting this need for uniqueness, the power and dignity of the research participants is upheld.

Limitations of the Study

In another light, it is vitally important to remember that the research results are reflective of those individuals who have been given the opportunity to tell their stories through this specific research experience. The research has occurred in a specific context, in a specific time and place, with a specific, narrow focus. The results were interpreted through the personal lens of the researcher and influenced by my own ideas, beliefs, and experiences. To use the results of this study to make broad generalisations would be a failure to recognise participants' uniqueness. It would undermine ethical principles and betray the needs of those whom this research is intended to help. The risk of such overgeneralisation are mitigated by remaining aware of the study's limitations, keeping discussion grounded in the specific social and cultural context of the participants, and cautiously evaluating conclusions that are drawn from the study with the good of the participants as a primary focus.

It is important to note that while the study is designed to investigate Pākehā New Zealanders' experiences with shame and resilience, only a small number of participants were interviewed. These participants were those for whom shame (and sometimes resilience) had been a particularly salient issue at some point in their lives. Thus, it is possible that the participant sample may be significantly more influenced and motivated by shame than others might be. As noted previously, in addition to having personal experience with shame, volunteers tended to come from helping professions. Many participants had experience helping others with shame as well as dealing with their own experiences of shame. Also, the participants who chose to volunteer for the study were all willing and able to communicate their experiences with shame. Given findings that will be explored later regarding the hidden nature of shame and the additional shame that comes alongside talking about shame, it is worth noting that this ability and confidence may be unusual, and may not be representative of all Pākehā New Zealanders who have been deeply affected by shame.

Reflexivity

As a qualitative researcher, it is important to recognise the reflexive element of the research process. The research participants have, consciously or unconsciously, brought their histories, culture, and social backgrounds with them to the research experience. Interpretations and insights that they have contributed have been processed from within the complexity of their cultural and social contexts. Likewise, as a researcher, I am bringing my history, cultural context, and social background with me to the research experience. While I have endeavoured to connect with the participants in understanding their stories as they have experienced them, my own experiences and preconceptions have undoubtedly influenced this process.

As this is a culturally grounded investigation, it is particularly important to mention my own cultural background. I was born in Saint Louis, Missouri, in the United States. My family is white, originally of European descent, but my family has lived in America for at least four generations. My ancestors came from Germany, Sweden, Wales, and Austria-Hungary. I first came to New Zealand in 1998, at the age of 16, with my parents and sisters. We lived in Auckland together for two years, where I completed high school and then began university studies. At the end of 2002, I again moved to New Zealand, this time to the Hibiscus Coast, north of Auckland. I made this move, to my Kiwi husband's homeland, shortly after getting married. Over time, I have adopted New Zealand as my home, and it has adopted me. I have two Pākehā children. Now divorced, I have consciously constructed our small family of three as a Kiwi family. It is important to me that my children know where their home is and that we are, as much as possible, united in our cultural identity.

While I would refer to myself as both a Kiwi and a Pākehā New Zealander, I do so with some hesitation. I tend to clarify this claim by calling myself an adopted Kiwi. I identify with the participants of my study in that New Zealand is my home; it has shaped my cultural context for the past decade. However, I also noted during the interviews that many of the participants, particularly older participants when reflecting back on their childhoods, described experiences of a New Zealand that felt very foreign to me. This is partly because of the inevitable changes to any culture over time, but the experience was intensified by the fact that I have still lived in New Zealand for a relatively short

time. I am grateful to hear stories of the history of my adopted home, but I am aware that I cannot fully understand what it was like to live in New Zealand during those times. Nor can I fully understand how the unique experience of being raised in New Zealand would affect the participants' experiences, outlooks, and interpretations.

When engaging with participants and analysing the data, I have been aware of both my identification with the culture I am studying, and my distance from it. Acknowledging this is important when considering the research findings. The findings represent a merging of the stories told to me by participants, and my own interpretation of their experiences. It is hoped that highlighting this awareness will allow the findings to be considered and interpreted from within the appropriate context.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter outlined the research design, including the research aims and questions, the research methodology and its theoretical foundations, the specific research methods, and some ethical issues regarding the research process. A fundamental goal of the research is to investigate shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders, seeking to understand the experience of these constructs from within the complexity of their social and cultural contexts. Specifically, the resilient response to shame is being sought - a positive way of managing shame that fosters healthy psychological and social functioning.

The research is informed both by social constructionism, which recognises the power of discourse to influence and create new meaning about the objects of study, and by phenomenology, which recognises that meaning can reside within participants lived experiences of the constructs being studied. The research has furthermore been informed by a number of emotion theories. In my opinion, the complexity of shame research is best acknowledged in Burkitt's (2012) theory of emotions as complexes and Russell's (2009) description of emotions as complex, psychological constructions. I have chosen thematic analysis as the primary methodology, due to its theoretical flexibility and interpretive power. Where appropriate, Foucauldian discourse analysis has informed parts of the analysis. Its focus on power relationships is particularly suited to the study of shame, an inherently powerful construct.

It is important to remember that the research design influenced findings that represent the experiences of the specific research participants, combined with my own interpretations of these experiences. The findings must be considered within their appropriate social and cultural contexts.

Chapter 5: Understandings of Shame

A wealth of rich data was provided by the study's participants. The discourses resulting from the interviews provided great depth of insight into the participants' personal experiences with shame. This chapter will introduce the study's findings by first exploring shame in a general sense. The chapter is dedicated to answering the first research question: how do Pākehā New Zealanders experience shame? The primary focus of the chapter will be on identifying and exploring a number of characteristics of shame that were identified in the investigation. Following on from this, I will briefly present previous theoretical understandings of shame that were expressed by some participants. Findings related to the constructiveness of shame will then be introduced, which will be expanded upon throughout the remainder of the findings chapters. Finally, I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the findings related to Pākehā New Zealanders' experiences of shame.

Characteristics of Shame

A number of discourses describing specific characteristics of shame were revealed in the analysis. Shame was found to be: invariably negative, powerful, intrinsically human, hidden, enduring, debilitating, physical, and social. Each of these characteristics of shame will be explored and discussed in depth.

Invariably negative.

As I reviewed the data and examined the characteristic of shame, the theme that most obviously predominated was that of shame as an invariably negative emotion. Elisabeth introduces her experience of shame as an invariably negative emotion in the following exchange:

Researcher: You could start with that, if you'd like to tell me what you interpret shame to mean.

Elisabeth: I don't even, I haven't even really given that much thought or considered it. I think probably shame to me is a feeling of inadequacy, or inferiority, or doubting self, or ... I think it carries a lot of accusation and weight to it. It's not a nice feeling. That would be my definition - not a nice feeling. [Laughter]

This text provides substantial insight into the subjectivity of the shame experience for this participant. Elisabeth's construction began with ambiguity as she announced that she had never previously considered the definition of shame.

However, as she spoke, and a new construction began to unfold, she settled on defining shame as the one characteristic that she was sure of – that shame is not a nice feeling! In this discourse, shame is positioned as universally negative, with the right to cause other feelings (of inadequacy, inferiority, or doubt), but the clear limitation on shame's influence is that it encompasses only negative experiences. Another humorous, yet telling, instance of this discourse occurs in the following exchange with Lucy. To contextualise the quote, it occurred during the later stages of the interview, after an in-depth exploration of the participant's experiences with shame, when the focus was being shifted onto the participant's understanding of resilience.

Researcher: So we've spent quite a bit of time talking about shame. How are you feeling about that?

Lucy: [Laughter] Uh, yeah, pretty okay.

Researcher: I have some questions on resilience now.

Lucy: [Enthusiastically] Oh good!

Lucy's uncomfortable laughter when reflecting on the conversation about shame as well as her exclamation of relief when presented with the new topic both serve to illustrate shame as a negative and uncomfortable topic of conversation. Shame is positioned as able to cause discomfort as long as it exists within the forefront of the conversation. Lucy's response of joy at the prospect of changing the topic reveals insight into the subjectivity of the shame experience for Lucy on a more widespread level. Lucy's reaction suggests that joy may return only when shame disappears; joy and shame do not coexist.

Liam expands the negativity discourse when he says, "But yeah, like I said, shame is quite a sort of a, it's quite a negative emotion, it kind of drags you down." In this quote shame is constructed firstly as an emotion, but furthermore it is constructed as a "negative" emotion. The negativity ascribed to shame is constructed as being active, invading other areas of Liam's life and dragging him down into further negative, subjective experiences. In this discourse Liam is positioned reflectively, in that he has the right to observe, understand, and describe his experiences with shame. However, he is also positioned as the passive and helpless receiver of shame's negative influence, whereas shame is afforded the right to "drag you down," thus expanding its control. Jennifer echoes

Liam's sentiments. When asked how she would describe the emotional experience of shame, Jennifer responds: "I think it just like pulls you down really. Like a big blanket over your head or something." Again, shame is constructed as a purely negative influence. It possesses the ability to negatively affect a person's entire being; its influence "pulls you down" into a low emotional and social space. Max expands the construction of the low space by saying, "I've done quite a lot of shameful things in my life and been to quite a lot of [pause] low places I guess and it still affects me now, you know, in my day to day life sometimes." This quote contrasts the others in that shame is associated with the speaker's own actions, which ultimately cause him to experience shame's negativity in the "low places." This contrast will be explored in detail in later chapters; however, the important point to highlight now is that regardless of whether a person's actions bring about shame or whether shame is the result of circumstances or others' actions, shame is an unpleasant feeling. Whether shame is a sinking force or whether it lurks waiting in the depths, shame is universally associated with being "down," in a subjective location where negativity dominates.

Others expanded upon the negativity discourse by providing rich and emotive descriptions of shame as a horrible subjective experience. Luke tended to speak stoically about shame. When asked about the emotional experience of feeling shame, after a long pause, Luke reflected, "I guess there's a certain amount of pain and hurt." In the context of his usually stoical account, this direct mention of pain and hurt struck me as telling. Luke's recognition of the painfulness of shame serves to illustrate the pervasive horribleness of the shame experience. Lucy sheds further insight onto the matter in the following excerpt:

Researcher: How would you describe the emotional experience of feeling shame?

Lucy: [Sigh] Oh, it's just the worst... [Laughter] The worst feeling you can ever have I think. You know, emotional distress is hard to process and experience, but shame, I would have to qualify that as the absolute worst emotional experience - for myself anyway.

Lucy's account positions shame as the worst of all human emotions, having the right to cause more pain and destruction than any other feeling. Caleb expands on this by reflecting: "It's so horrible; it's so powerful. It's almost like as soon as you can talk about it, it's already probably not shame, you know. As soon as you can

name it, it's probably turned into something else... less dreadful.” Caleb constructs shame as being so horrible and dark as to exist only in a vacuum of social silence.

Kathleen reflects on her experience of feeling shame and says:

It's horrible. It really is horrible. No-one will ever understand what you feel unless they feel it themselves. It's, it's just horrible. [. . .] I'm due to have an operation. And I, I, I literally would rather have an operation than, [...] go through [pause] that. That feeling - it's worse than an operation. True.

Later, Kathleen again says:

Shame is a terrible emotion. It is. It's a terrible, terrible emotion. See, anger I can get up and over that and, and [pause] feeling sad, or, you know, all sorts of other emotions. But shame makes me paralytic, in myself - it just stops me moving. I can't comprehend. I can't even physically do things - I've gotta sit and think about it. And it also makes me wish that it had never happened. And I would rather have an operation than go through shame. It's the only way I can explain it.

Here, shame is described as an emotional experience so severe in its intensity and horrible in nature that even the physical and emotional anguish of an operation is preferable. Lucy echoes this positioning of shame as the most horrible and uncomfortable experience possible by saying: “But you know, I would much rather experience physical pain than shame, or even, you know, deep grief. [Pause] Which I have experienced.” While it is possible for shame to exist in less intense forms, these participants’ discourses clearly converge on the conclusion that shame is a universally negative experience. It can be a horribly painful emotion – worse than any other emotion and worse than physical pain. For these participants, shame is dreadful. It occurs only in emotional depths and darkness, and its negativity pervades into the entirety of its sufferer’s existence.

Powerful.

A second characteristic of shame, observed less directly but arguably more potently than shame’s invariable negativity, is shame’s powerfulness. Similar descriptions of the unhindered and brutal power of shame are readily apparent in each of the interviews. The domain of shame’s power is constructed differently in different places within the discourses. Shame’s dominion includes the power to attack one’s identity, the power to affect one’s entire future, the power to confuse,

the power to drain one's energy and resources, the power to injure, break, and destroy, the power to motivate decisions and behaviours, the power to isolate, and the power to control and manipulate other emotions.

The power to attack one's identity.

Lucy introduces the discourse of shame's power to attack one's identity in the following excerpt:

Researcher: How do you think your experiences of feeling shame have impacted your life?

Lucy: I think they really affected my self-esteem. And my self-confidence and all those things are related - my sense of what I can achieve.

Lucy constructs shame with the power and authority to influence one's self-esteem, self-confidence, and sense of achievement. Liam expands on this concept in the following quote. He is reflecting on his immediate and long term responses to shame.

I obviously do sort of think, I've gotta do better, resolve to do better, but I don't know how much I really believe that. I mean I get in a sort of negative frame of mind at the time. Yeah, [...] maybe over time you sort of come out of the, of the sort of mourning phase or whatever it is, and get into a bit more of a sensible state. But I think certainly in the early stages, I must, *I feel quite negative, about myself; well obviously, I guess that's what shame is* [emphasis added]. I probably indulge in a depressive state for some time, and then hopefully it just kind of wears off, hopefully without leaving too much of a stain that I don't really realise is there that then affects how I then act from then on.

Liam's references to being in a "negative frame of mind" and feeling "quite negative about myself" illustrate shame as being not just a negative experience in itself, but also holding the power to inflict its negativity, specifically on the identity and self-concept of its subject. Liam goes so far as to define shame as feeling negative about himself. The speaker in this quote is in a weak and vulnerable social position. It is important to note that shame's power over its subject may be limited, as evidenced by Liam's statements that feelings of shame wear off over time, and he is able to return to a "sensible state." However, the use of the word "hopefully" in this quote is telling. Liam says that "*hopefully* it wears off, *hopefully* without leaving too much of a stain [emphasis added]." Thus, while shame's social control is limited by the factor of time, it appears that shame itself

retains the power of controlling when the negativity of experience will begin, when it will end, and how much of a “stain” it leaves on one’s identity as it passes. The self is constructed as a helpless victim, with little power to do more than hope that shame will eventually dissipate.

The power of shame to attack one’s identity is expanded upon by John, who says that shame makes someone feel irrevocably flawed and broken:

Shame causes us to feel irrevocably flawed and unusually flawed [...]. Yeah, so I think that's, that's part of what shame does. It makes you feel uniquely flawed, that your sin is so uncommon, and your issue is so uncommon, and so you hide from humanity, you hide from everything. [...] I mean, shame makes me feel irrevocably broken.

In John’s account, shame is constructed with the power to control one’s identity to the extent where someone can believe himself not only to be fundamentally flawed, but also to be completely alone – the only person who exists in such a defective and broken state. Shame’s power then extends to controlling one’s behaviour, such that the person hides from the rest of humanity to conceal his flawed nature. In an extreme case, this would ultimately result in the person existing in a state of total social isolation.

John’s account broadly addresses the power of shame to attack one’s identity. Other participants reflected on specific instances where feelings of shame undermined their identities. Caleb reflects on the shaming influence of his teachers during his school years by saying:

It's like this amorphous badness. I just knew that I was a bad kid, but that I could have been a good kid - that was the thing - but I didn't do it. That was the thing. It was like, you're a really smart boy, but you just don't get it, or it's too bad. That's the face that I got from all the teachers, even if they didn't say it. One after the other would give me that same look, which is, you know, you're a really good kid, you're a really smart kid, but it's a shame you just don't get it. It seems like they knew what was going to become of me. You could see it in their face, it's like, well, it's a shame, you could have made it in life, but you're not going to. We know it. Yeah, we know you're not going to make it. We're not going to tell you how you could make it; we just know that you're not.

In this example, the power of shame to attack one’s identity was held by the Caleb’s teachers, who inflicted shame on him as a child through their words, attitudes, and expressions. A complex relationship emerges whereby the teachers held the power to inflict shame, and shame held the power to crush the identity

and self-concept of a young child. The child was left in an extremely vulnerable social location. The final sentence of the quote illustrates the powerlessness of the subject, creating a sense of futility around any effort to change. Shame and its resulting “amorphous badness” are able to swallow the child, as there are no available resources he can draw on to protect his own identity.

In another example, Max expands on the theme by constructing shame with the power to make one feel like a failure. The following quote occurs after Max mentions that he avoids talking about himself with his friends, because he feels embarrassed, and feels as if he has not achieved much in his life:

Researcher: So, when you feel embarrassed, it's in comparison to who they are and what they've done with their lives?

Max: Yeah, oh, more with regards to myself and what I've done with my life. I mean I do compare myself to them and that makes me feel a little bit worse, but also internally, like I know what I should have done; I know the difference between right and wrong. And um, obviously I didn't choose that. So, yeah, like internally you kind of like start to feel like a failure or like there's something wrong with you.

Later Max further reflects on the emotional experience of feeling shame by saying, “Emotionally, hmm... it can create a lot of doubt and insecurity, like mentally, emotionally. Yeah, just kind of breeds self-doubt and stuff for me.” Here, the person is constructed with the power to voluntarily involve himself with “wrong” or shameful activities. However, shame brings with it an attack on one’s identity, which appears to come by right, without warning or consent. Once shame sets in, the person’s power quickly diminishes, and shame is constructed with the power to cause feelings of failure, doubt, and insecurity.

The power to affect one’s entire future.

Another realm of shame’s power that was identified is the power to affect one’s entire future. Makayla introduces this in the following quote, in which she is reflecting on the long-term effect of shame she carries with her from an incident that occurred in her youth:

I've stopped losing real sleep over it, but it is there. And then, yeah, probably just that feeling of... maybe a little bit of feeling of anxiety. But then, yeah, you kind of live through it. I can still do all the things I need to do in a day regardless, but just carrying on.

In high school, a friend of Makayla's lost a stuffed toy in a house fire. Makayla owned an identical stuffed toy, and when asked by the friend after the fire if he could have Makayla's toy, she refused. While the incident appears relatively minor to an outsider, it continues to affect Makayla on an emotional level well into her adult life. In this instance, shame is constructed with vast, but somewhat limited power. It holds the power to cause on-going anxiety, to preoccupy one's thoughts, and to exist into the indefinite future alongside a minor, but painful, memory from the past. However, in this example, shame's power is limited in that it does not completely debilitate its sufferer. The person retains the power to "carry on" and persevere through life, accomplishing all of her normal day-to-day activities. However, her joy and enthusiasm in these activities are tainted by shame's negative presence.

In another example, Sarah reflects on her on-going experiences with shame. Sarah is a counsellor, who has devoted her life to helping others with issues related to shame. She has invested deliberate effort into understanding and changing her personal shame reactions and has actively engaged in professional research on the topic of shame. In the following quote, Sarah reflects on the on-going influence shame has in her life:

I still have, I had a massive shame reaction yesterday. Huge, and I've finally come to realise that's that depressive personality combined with that early childhood shaming. All you need is one little, and you know, and you're back there it's just an instantaneous, automatic, and I even had it last night.

In this example, shame is ascribed the power to shape the direction of one's future. Shame has been so powerful an experience for Sarah that it has even influenced her choice in career. In the above quote, shame is further ascribed seemingly limitless power to inflict itself upon a person on a day-to-day basis for the indefinite future. The person is allowed to fight back against shame and to develop insight and awareness into its nature. However, the person is unable to stop shame's attacks. Sarah's reference to "that early childhood shaming" illustrates an example of how shame and its power have entered Sarah's world.

This will be expanded upon in later chapters. Since shame is now a part of Sarah's world, it can be triggered by any "little" perception or event, which allows shame the right to re-enter the person's subjective experience in full force, bringing with it all of its associated negativity of thoughts and emotions.

A final example of shame's power to affect one's entire future is perhaps the most intense. Reflecting on the effect shame has had on his life, Max says: "Well, I'm definitely the black sheep in the family, with relatives and stuff, don't really want to know me. Like they do, they just wouldn't trust me and stuff." Max continues by explaining that his shame has affected his relationships, including one specific relationship with a girlfriend to whom he was especially close. Max continues:

Max: And we tried to run away together. I was always getting her in trouble, and she was getting into trouble at home and stuff, and she ended up getting sent to go live with her father overseas, and that was really, really, that was like the hardest, probably the biggest loss, emotionally for me, that I've probably experienced.

Researcher: So she was sent to live with her father because of your relationship?

Max: Yeah, like her parents, like they were like high society kind of, um, were ashamed to have like their daughter and... hanging out with me, and because we were so in love too. There was the dangers they obviously, were worried that their daughter was going to become like me, like follow me, and end up, just kind of, getting her pregnant and stuff young, and just, that kind of pattern and stuff. Yeah, they were just really worried about her and so they sent her to go live with her dad and yeah. And that was that.

Here, shame is constructed with the power to affect the entire future of a young adult's life. In Max's case, his romantic relationship was ended, family relationships were broken and strained, his girlfriend was relocated to another country, and Max experienced lasting feelings of grief and loss. Shame works in multiple ways in this example. Max appears to feel deep shame as the result of his lifestyle choices, which he sees as the reason his girlfriend's parents were opposed to their relationship. He also appears to hold a lasting sense of shame for the loss of the relationship itself. As introduced in chapter 2 and will be expanded upon in chapter 6, shame often occurs as the result of broken relationships, so it is not surprising that Max's memory of these events is saturated with a widespread sense of shame. Furthermore, Max attributes his girlfriend's parents' decision to

send her away to their shame - of him and of their daughter's relationship with him. While it is impossible to know whether their true motivation was shame, concern, or a combination of both, it is clear that the entire situation was flooded with shame for Max. In the wake of this shame, Max is left feeling helpless to regain control of his future life.

The power to confuse.

The power of shame to confuse is introduced by Charlotte. Charlotte describes feeling shame as a result of her mother's extremely high expectations. While reflecting on the feelings that are associated with shame, Charlotte says: "Maybe frustration as well. Yeah, frustration because you can't do it, you know. A bit of confusion probably as well. Saying how, why can't I do this? You know, what's wrong with me?" The confusion described by Charlotte is closely related to shame's attacks on one's identity. In this example, shame is constructed with the power to create conflicting experiences by way of conflicting messages coming from different sources. The self is left powerless to make sense of the confusing influence of shame, and the only explanation available requires her to internalise shame and blame herself.

Liam provides a different example of the power of shame to confuse. In the following quote, Liam does not directly refer to confusion, but his confusion is evident when reflecting on the effect shame has had on his life:

I never really know if when you do make a mistake that it's actually making you stronger, or if it is just kind of chipping away, you know? In a way, you don't really realise at the time, you're sort of damaging yourself. Which I suppose in its own way, that probably makes you feel shame if you do think that, then each time you do it, you're like, oh, you know, you're doing yourself more harm, it's a kind of negative thought cycle, that you think that you've sort of lowered your potential, and you know, you've increased the likelihood of doing something bad again, because you're consciously kind of lowering your expectations of yourself or something. Um, yeah, so I don't know. I've always sort of struggled with that emotion. Like I said, is normal after you've done something the same as normal before? Is it really normal, or is it just a new, not quite as good normal? Yeah, I don't know.

Several times throughout the quote, Liam says, "I don't know." In this example, shame is constructed with the power to act mysteriously and of its own accord. The person is left in a state of confusion, unable to sort through the emotions that he is experiencing in a way that satisfies his need for understanding. Liam refers

to not being able to discern whether life actually goes back to normal following an experience with shame. Thus, shame's confusion expands to include confusion over the long-lasting effects of shame, and ultimately, confusion lingers over whether shame itself holds lasting control over one's life and future.

A final example of shame's power to confuse comes from Kathleen. Kathleen described a number of scenarios in which she did something she felt was right, but the negative responses of others caused her to feel deep shame. In the following quote, Kathleen reflects on her lasting feelings of shame and guilt in relation to a damaged friendship:

Kathleen: And I said, "Sandy, I don't like that." I said, "Please stop it." That's all I said, as true as I sit here. That's all I said. But it was enough - and this is something else I find - that when I challenge people they really turn on me. There's something in me, and I don't know what it is, but when I challenge people they turn on me so hard that I'm so sorry that I've done what I've done. And that's part, also part of the shame. You know? Shame that I've done what I've done. If I knew now what, [pause] if I knew now the consequences of this problem, with this Sandy - who now does speak to me. She says, "Hello." But she, that's as good as it gets. That's... you know? And I'm still feeling that, I would like to have a decent relationship with her. And so I feel, still feel shamed by what I have done. And if I knew what I knew now, I would've given up the fur coat - even though it's not mine, it was my daughters. Do you know what I'm saying? It's not worth, I've found it's not worth the problems.

Researcher: So when you feel shame - or you said you feel guilty about it - do you feel like you've done something wrong? Or do you just reg...

Kathleen: Yes.

Researcher: Okay, you do think it was wrong of you to say that to her?

Kathleen: Yes. No! But it, but it, but to me, I must've done something wrong to have made her feel so bad.

Kathleen's obvious confusion in being able to answer the question of whether she had done wrong serves to illuminate shame's power to confuse. Logic and reason tell Kathleen that she has done no wrong, but shame's powerful influence causes her to feel strongly that she is at fault. Kathleen says that "there's something in me" that causes people to turn on her and reject her. She blames herself for Sandy's response and this self-blame joins with deep feelings of shame. The relationship has been damaged, and Kathleen is left confused and disoriented, struggling to make sense of the mixed messages she is receiving.

The power to drain one's energy and resources.

The power of shame to drain's one's energy and resources is introduced by Lilia. In the following quote, Lilia is referring to the shame of having been caught cheating on her boyfriend:

Researcher: How did it feel for you?

Lilia: I felt terrible. Yeah, I um, I couldn't sleep and just kept thinking about it and going over the situation and the fact that I'd hurt him, that yeah, that it was just something that I'd done to him.

Here, shame is constructed as preoccupying one's mind and consuming one's energy. Shame holds the power to prevent sleep, and ultimately to exhaust the person of her energy for life. Shame remains in the forefront of the person's mind during all hours of the day and night. The self is not allowed any rest or reprieve from shame's draining force.

In a similar example, Kathleen reflects on being "flattened" when overcome by feelings of shame:

Ah, almost, like, paralyses me. I can't, I can't comprehend. I can't, [pause], concentrate on what I was doing. I can't be the happy person I was before. I'm normally a happy person, full of fun. And I love people and I love life, but when people do that to me it's just, it like, it's like I am totally robbed of the whole lot. And it's like I'm made sad, you know? All of these, these things that, that come on me.

Kathleen constructs shame with the power to rob her of happiness and life. Shame is described as a paralysing force, while the self is positioned as being empty, robbed, and lifeless – flattened and exhausted by shame's powerful intrusion. Kathleen refers to shame as a thing that comes on her. Shame is positioned with the power to override the will, the desires, and even the personality of the person it is controlling. The person is left in the position of a victim. In this example, Kathleen is robbed "of the whole lot," including her happiness, her sense of fun, and her love for people. In place of these assets, she experiences confusion, emotional paralysis, sadness, and preoccupation with feelings of shame.

In contrast to Lilia's description of shame draining her of energy by preventing her from sleeping, some participants described shame with the power to drive excessive sleeping patterns. Peter says:

And for my individual situation, after the kids had gone, I was in disbelief. I didn't get out of bed for three months, and eventually some friends came in every day and kicked me out of bed and made me get back into life.

Peter describes feeling shame after his wife left him with their children, which has affected him long into the future. In the above quote, Peter describes shame with the power to confine him to bed for a period of months. Again, the self is positioned as a helpless victim, completely drained of the energy and desire to get out of bed and participate in life. Peter's symptoms appear to reflect clinical depression, raising the possibility that shame may have the power to cause such depression.

Similarly, Drew reflects on his ability to cope after a situation in which he was blamed by others for a negative event and experienced feelings of shame:

How did I cope? I don't think I really did cope that well. I mean I'm still alive, I haven't burnt out and died, but I got pretty close. I don't think I coped very well, like I mean, even now, if I have a difficult conversation with someone who is still pissed off - and I've got a few people who are still pissed off - I would just want to go and have a sleep. I'm just emotionally very low in energy. It's funny because physically I'm higher in energy than I've ever been, a huge amount of emotional energy for my family, etcetera, etcetera, but when it comes to this...

Drew's account constructs shame with the power to drain his resources so completely that he is left in a position of being "pretty close" to burning out and dying. Shame is able to seize life and energy, giving nothing back in exchange. Interestingly, in this construction, shame's power is limited to the specific situation in which shame is felt, which in this example involves the workplace. The person holds the right to defend his supplies of physical and emotional energy that are designated for his family or other activities. However, if shame re-enters the conscious awareness of the self, by way of a difficult conversation with an angry person, shame instantly and powerfully saps the speaker of his energy to the extent where he feels a strong and immediate need for sleep.

The power to injure, break, and destroy.

Peter introduces the power of shame to injure, break, and destroy by saying: “It’s a very powerful force. It can crush and destroy people... and things.” Here, shame is described as being fierce and callous in its power. Shame is able to crush and destroy people and things, and the self is left in a weak and humbled position, only able to acknowledge shame’s seemingly limitless power. John expands this by saying in reference to shame:

It can injure people [. . .]. I just think it's so big. I think it's the motivator, I think it's the killer. I think it's the thing that breaks marriages. I think it's the thing that continues to make humanity [suffer], over and over and over again - blame, shame, point the finger, disconnect, lack of intimacy, lack of vulnerability, have to hide, keep safe.

Attributing seemingly boundless power to shame, John constructs shame as being capable of killing – physically and emotionally destroying people’s lives. Shame is positioned as the driving force behind broken marriages. Shame is attributed with the power to push people into unhelpful cycles of behaviour, which ultimately prevent intimacy and damage relationships. The self is positioned as being strongly and dramatically motivated by shame’s destructive influence.

The power to motivate decisions and behaviours.

Peter introduces the power of shame to motivate decisions and behaviours in the following quote: “And, over that process, this whole process of the shame thing, it’s changed me, and it’s burnt away the old me and left a new me. And many of my different thoughts and emotions have been burnt away and changed.” Here, shame is constructed with the power to change a person’s entire being – to create a new person, different in thought, emotion, and behaviour. The self is positioned as being easily discarded and entirely reinvented by shame’s powerful intervention.

Sophie expands on the power of shame to motivate decisions and behaviour. She reflects on a specific behaviour that was motivated by shame. Sophie rejected an opportunity to have an affair because of the shame she would have felt in her relationships with her children and other family members as a result of the affair.

Sophie: I actually think in some ways [my children] would've been understanding, but I didn't wanna - looking back - but I didn't wanna go there. I mean I made that decision that it wasn't - the affair might have been nice, whatever that was going to be, but it wasn't... I was going to be too ashamed of it.

Researcher: So you put a stop to the relationship?

Sophie: Yeah, we stayed friends. I have no idea what happened to him and, um, yeah, that was me then, that was many years ago.

Researcher: It sounds as if shame was quite a powerful motivator for you.

Sophie: Yes, very powerful.

Here, shame is constructed as the power and motivation behind a life altering decision. The self is constructed with the power of choice, but shame represents such a severe consequence of the choice to have an affair that it alone determined the person's long-term decision. The self is positioned as being trapped by shame – unable to truly control its own future because the roadblock of shame is immovable.

John expands on the power of shame to motivate decisions and behaviours in the following quote. He is reflecting on a deliberate determination he made to change his response to one of action in emergency situations, after feeling shame about having frozen and being unable to help his father when he nearly drowned in an emergency during John's childhood. John says that now, he consciously chooses to act in emergency situations, even if that puts himself at risk, because he does not want to re-experience the feeling of being helpless, frozen, and ashamed, as he was as a young boy when his father was in danger.

I certainly didn't want to react you know, like I did at the pool side. Yeah, and I think maybe afterwards - maybe it's an ego thing. Because afterwards, the shame of not responding, even the shame of say getting beaten up - if I did respond or act, I'd rather do that because of fortifying my, who I am, that I am a person of character who will respond to those kind of situations, but yeah, could it be out of shame? Yeah.

John is open to the possibility that the shame of not responding to help a person who is in danger serves as the motivating factor for his willingness to now risk his own personal safety and act. Shame is depicted as a significant influence in the decision making process. John describes weighing up the shame of being beaten up if he risks himself to help someone in danger, with the attack of shame that would occur on his character if he chose not to help. In this case, John's desire to

be a “person of character” and the resulting shame the would occur if he did not act in accordance with this self-image, motivate his thoughts and actions in his on-going decision making processes.

Max describes how shame first emerged in his life, and the powerful impact its presence has on his behaviour. Max has a history of being involved in crime, and in the following quote he reflects on a shift in his emotions that has taken place over time, specifically referring to his emotional response to the suggestion of stealing.

Researcher: So, it sounds like the adrenaline rush has kind of changed into a more uncomfortable...

Max: Yeah, it's a different kind of adrenaline now, it's like - yuck.

Researcher: When do you think that changed?

Max: Slowly developed as I developed - developed a conscience I guess. And just some of the consequences that stealing has had on my life, or like, not just stealing but crime and things like that... lost loved ones and ... and the shame behind that, and like, what a peasant sort of thing now I view, kind of petty theft and stuff like that, I think it's really quite, you know... I think it's quite bad now [. . .].

Researcher: It's interesting that you've talked about developing a conscience. Do you feel like you didn't have a conscience before?

Max: Oh no, I didn't really have a conscience, no. Nah, not at all. It was kind of me, me, me. It still is. I still can be quite a selfish person, but not in... not in the way that I was – a different kind of selfishness. No, ‘cause, developing a conscience, I guess you slowly learn from your mistakes - uh, logically, sometimes, and then after a while it starts to get backed up by actually learning for the right reasons. It was a transformation. It started off as being like, what are the consequences of this going to be? And then it slowly manifested into... changed into, I actually don't want to do that because that's... I don't want to be a bad person, and it slowly developed, from what was in it for me, and why I shouldn't do it, because of how it affects me, to how it affects other people and how it affects, bigger than myself.

Max's construction of shame takes an interesting and complex form. Shame is described as encompassing the uncomfortable and “yuck” physical feelings that have recently surfaced in response to behaviours that violate the conscience. The conscience acts as the gateway through which shame enters into the subjective experience of the self. In this case, the conscience has slowly developed, allowing more and more shame to pass into the person's existence. The self is left in a

vulnerable position, susceptible to the growing influence of shame, as allowed through the conscience, which serves to modify the person's physical feelings, cognitive thought processes, and behavioural choices. In Max's case, the power of shame to motivate decisions and behaviours appears to be a power used for good. Shame is able to cause extreme discomfort, but also is able to control undesirable behaviour and refine the character of the self. (The possible goodness of shame's power will be elaborated on later, when addressing the constructiveness dilemma.) The self is left in a weak social position – unable to control the presence or influence of shame, but able to receive benefits from its effects.

The power to isolate.

The power of shame to isolate the sufferer is closely related to the power of shame to motivate behaviour. However, due to the common experience of isolation as an effect of behaviour motivated by shame, it will be considered as a separate theme. Kathleen describes the power of shame to isolate in the following quote. Kathleen is reflecting on her regret following attending a social function where a risk of feeling shame was realised.

Kathleen: It's a regret. I just wish I hadn't gone because then that would not have happened, and it wouldn't have made me feel... I don't want to feel what I'm feeling. It's horrible. It really is horrible. No-one will ever understand what you feel unless they feel it themselves. It's just horrible. [. . .]

Researcher: So you said that no-one will ever understand that feeling. Do you think that...? Have you ever talked to anyone about it?

Kathleen: No. You're the first person. [Laughter] No, I have never talked about it. No. No.

Later Kathleen continues:

Yes, yeah. It's not worth. The, the hurt is not worth it. I mean, you know, if you put your finger in a fire and get burnt, you're not going to keep going back and putting your hand in the fire to get burned. [Pause] And that's what I'm not going to do, cause I've had enough of it.

The power of shame to isolate that is illustrated in this excerpt is two-fold; shame holds the power to isolate a person both physically and emotionally. Shame is positioned as able to inflict such intense pain and suffering that deep regret is experienced by the person, who has placed herself in a social situation, vulnerable

to shame. In this regard, Kathleen is positioned with some power to control shame's influence, only by controlling exposure to social situations in which she perceives herself to be vulnerable. Controlled by the fear of shame, Kathleen is left isolated and alone, unable to freely engage in the social world. Kathleen is left holding very little power in response to this emotional isolation. She can connect with others by talking about shame, which Kathleen illustrates is possible by her participation in the research. However, an unspecified power has hindered her from discussing shame with anyone previously. This may be a social or cultural norm, which ultimately results in the self being profoundly cut off from social support and interpersonal connection.

The power to control and manipulate other emotions.

A final characteristic of shame's powerfulness is introduced by Caleb. Caleb says: "I agree with John Bradshaw's work that it's the master emotion; it's the one that pulls all the strings. [. . .] Yeah, shame runs the show." The reality that many of the participants came into their interviews with previous theoretical understandings of shame will be discussed later in the chapter. This particular theme, while theoretical in nature, warrants discussion now, as it clearly falls within the greater discourse of shame's seemingly boundless power.

Caleb's statements attribute shame with a new element of power, which is ultimately power to control the self, but it unfolds in a complex fashion. Shame is constructed with the power to manipulate and control other emotions. The self, in a physical sense, but more notably in an emotional sense, is duty-bound to submit to shame as its master. None of the other human emotions (anger, sadness, joy, and others) can be experienced without passing through the dominion of shame. The self is left powerless over its own emotions, experiencing all of them at the mercy of shame.

The powerful nature of shame has been explored in great depth, as it is arguably the most profound and complex characteristic of shame encountered in conversations with participants. Participants construct shame with a power that is clearly vast and seemingly limitless. The clear construction of shame as powerful, combined with the extreme negativity of the emotional experience of shame, serve to further depict it as a dangerous force, capable of manipulating and controlling with aggressive, sometimes subtle, yet always thorough methods.

Intrinsically human.

John introduces shame as intrinsically human by identifying shame as a widespread and common human experience:

So yeah, I'm very, and then in my work as a pastor, if we could find a way to set people free from shame [deep sigh]. I mean, I think that under girds most sin, most hiding, most divorces, you know? If there's an undergirding demon [laughter] ...

John's emotion, which is visible in the above quote, serves to depict shame as a widespread source of distress. John describes shame as capable of creating havoc among humanity, being the driving force behind uniquely human problems, such as divorce and other relationship difficulties.

Charlotte contributes to the discussion on the intrinsically human nature of shame by saying, "I think that it's a world-wide; I don't know if anyone in their life would ever not have experienced shame." This statement echoes the construction of shame as a wide-spread phenomenon, common to all people, everywhere in the world. Shame is positioned as being a universal experience, something that affects people everywhere, regardless of their location, culture, or situation. Shame is constructed as a clearly unique and arguably defining aspect of humanity. On the surface, this seems to be an unsurprising conclusion. Shame is one of many emotions, like joy, sadness, anger, or fear, which is common and widespread – intrinsically human. While it may exist less intensely for some people than it does for the participants in this study, it is understood by participants that it is normal to have experienced shame in some capacity throughout one's life. This understanding is consistent with much of the research. However, it is important to convey the sense of surprise, or newfound revelation, with which Charlotte and other participants spoke about this issue. It felt to me as if it may have been the first time she had considered that shame could be a universal phenomenon. The fact that the universal nature of shame was even considered worth mentioning indicates that shame often goes unrecognised and unspoken about. This leads to the following theme – the hidden nature of shame.

Hidden.

Returning to a previously quoted exchange, here Kathleen introduces the hidden nature of shame and illustrates a common experience among many of the participants:

Researcher: So you said that no-one will ever understand that feeling. Have you ever talked to anyone about it?

Kathleen: No. You're the first person. [Laughter] No, I have never talked about it. No. No.

This exchange serves to illustrate shame as a hidden entity – one which is locked deep inside oneself. Shame is positioned with the right to silence the self. A person can talk about shame, as illustrated by the fact that Kathleen and many others engaged in vulnerable discussions about shame during the research process. However, shame brings with it a force that hinders communication and causes discomfort among those who choose to discuss it. Elisabeth adds:

There's clearly a level of shame to that for me, because it's a very hidden part of my life, in that apart from my husband and maybe one other, you're the first person to hear this. [. . .] But yeah, it's never been an area, maybe it's shame, maybe it's privacy, I don't know, I don't know what sits there for me, or what it's rooted in, but I've never really felt like that's something I'm proud to talk about or share or have people understand about me or my past history. So, yes, there's quite a bit of shame there.

Elisabeth identifies a particular period of her life as being shameful because it is hidden. This serves to construct hiddenness as a defining characteristic of shame. Shame is positioned with the right to create secrecy and to prohibit pride. The self is positioned with few options other than to hide. Only by covering up shame, the self retains the right to protect itself.

In order to further explore the hidden nature of shame, we will return to an earlier quote from Caleb regarding shame: “It's so horrible, it's so powerful, it's almost like as soon as you can talk about it, it's already probably not shame, you know. As soon as you can name it, it's probably turned into something else, less dreadful.” Here, shame is described as existing only in silence – hidden away in darkness and secrets. Caleb suggests that as soon as shame is spoken about, it ceases to be truly definable as shame. Thus, true shame exists only in hidden silence. When the person is able to find and exercise the power to talk about shame, bringing it into the light, shame's power is significantly diminished. This

description calls into question whether acknowledged shame is actually shame. This new construct is positioned as being less powerful and less dreadful than shame. In contrast to previous constructions, which position shame as almost infinitely powerful, this account suggests that by talking about shame and ultimately removing the defining characteristics of negativity, power, and hiddenness, the a person holds the power to annihilate shame altogether.

Enduring.

Lucy introduces the enduring nature of shame when she says:

I had this awareness of it not ever probably going to stop [laughter], you know? That's actually not something you can just get rid of [. . .]. It is a part of myself that I acknowledge is there, and so I guess I'm talking about acceptance to a certain point.

Lucy's belief that shame is "not something you can just get rid of" illustrates shame as an enduring experience, which is not easily abandoned or surpassed. Lucy describes shame as able to endure for the indefinite future.

Sarah reflects on how shame, which she identifies as originating in her childhood, has endured and pervasively affected her life. Sarah is describing feeling shame when her new-born daughter was first handed to her to be held.

And the nurse handed me to her, and I remember seeing her in my hands and thinking, my hands are so ugly. And, and this beautiful thing is in this ugly old woman's hands. I've never told anyone this. So... global, it's what they say, global shame. It's like pick a shame, any shame - I'll gleam onto it and bring it on myself. If it wasn't that it would be, I'm too stupid, or you know, I've got a raft of them. I've got a whole lot of shames. If it's not one, it's another. And I guess that's how it works me, and I've linked it to that in my childhood.

Here, childhood shame is described as able to endure and cause suffering well into adulthood. The shame Sarah describes when holding her daughter is powerful, far-reaching, and global. Shame is ascribed the power to multiply and infiltrate into every aspect of one's life.

Debilitating.

Elisabeth introduces the debilitating nature of shame early in her interview. When asked what interests her about shame research, Elisabeth responds, "I work with and have experienced significant shame in myself and others – and have observed the, how it debilitates [*sic*] people, when they sit in

that shame.” Shame is constructed with the power to debilitate people, while the self is positioned as “sitting in that shame.” The wording of this leaves some ambiguity around whether the person has a choice in its position of sitting in shame, or whether shame forces itself up on the person.

Lucy expands on the debilitating characteristic of shame by saying: “I think, it's very, very debilitating, when it's experienced, you know at the powerful end of the spectrum. You go through from slight embarrassment right through the whole spectrum to deep, humiliating, debilitating emotional experience that's on-going.” Here, shame is described as being able to debilitate its host. However, this ability is limited, in that only severe, deep shame is able to completely debilitate a person. In less extreme examples of shame, the self's ability to function can be left intact.

Kathleen further illustrates the debilitating effect of shame by saying: “Because, when I was in my twenties, I was suicidal and depressed. And so that was sparked - depression and suicide. The first time I ever became suicidal was through shame.” Here, shame is attributed the power to induce depression and to motivate a person toward suicide. Later, Kathleen expands on this by describing how shame is so debilitating that the possibility of feeling shame prevents her from acting in the ways she would like. She says:

The hurt is not worth it. I mean, if you put your finger in a fire and get burnt, you're not going to keep going back and putting your hand in the fire to get burned. [Pause] And that's what I'm not going to do, cause I, I've had enough of it. And it's, it screws you up. You know? It does. It just screws you up. Just, with this paralysing feeling and thinking about it and... I can't concentrate. I couldn't go and do and email when I feel like I feel, and I don't sleep.

Shame is described with the power to debilitate a person through paralysing, affecting the person's sleep, and by inducing deep, emotional hurt. Shame is positioned with a variety of powers, which can combine to disempower and debilitate its sufferer. The self is positioned with few rights, other than to attempt to avoid shame through avoiding situations that lead to shame.

Physical.

Lilia introduces shame as a physical experience in the following exchange:

Researcher: What do you think of when you hear the word shame?

Lilia: The feeling I guess when you feel it [. . .]. Yeah, you get that feeling... inside.

Researcher: And how would you describe that feeling?

Lilia: I guess a tightening in the tummy, and just, sort of want to put your head down and just go, ooh [sigh].

Shame is described as being physical in nature – a feeling that expresses itself as tightness in the stomach. Shame absorbs one's attention and affects one's functioning. The self is left consumed and driven by the physical experience of shame. Makayla echoes Lilia's physical description of shame by saying: "I guess it's a feeling in my stomach, that something's not right. It's kind of knots."

Liam describes a slightly different physical experience of shame in the following excerpt:

Researcher: How does shame feel to you physically?

Liam: Well, you do feel it physically. I think you feel sort of tightened up, and in my neck and chest I suppose. You obviously, I'm pretty sure you look, you know different and uncomfortable, and you move, and you get clammy and all that sort of thing. [. . .] Yeah it just feels uncomfortable, and I guess you blush and things like that.

Again, shame is attributed the power to physically tighten the body, in this case, the neck and chest. In addition to the right to affect one's physical feelings, shame is positioned with the right to affect one's outward appearance, coordination, and physical movements.

Sophie further reflects on the physical nature of shame:

Researcher: How do you think shame feels physically?

Sophie: [Pause] I would see it as - and from my own experience - probably a flushing of the face and a [agitated sound] feeling. Oh my god - I did *that*. But when I have felt shame I have felt very flushed in the face. So it's quite a strong emotion.

Sophie's uses shame's ability to cause the physical sensation of the flushing of the face as justification to construct shame as a strong emotion. Shame is positioned as holding great strength through its ability to control the physical body.

Max describes a physical sensation of shame, which is similar to that of anxiety, in the following quote: “The heart can start beating, feel a bit nauseous. Take a deep breath, um... socially, I can kind of shut down a bit, you know, go quite quiet. But yeah, it's quite an uncomfortable feeling.” Max’s construction of shame as an uncomfortable feeling adds further weight to the greater construction of shame as a physical experience. In this specific quote, shame is positioned as the cause of a racing heart rate and feelings of nausea, which ultimately result in extreme physical discomfort. The only resources available to the self in response to this physical attack are to attempt to relax by slowing down one’s breathing, and to shut down socially while one attends to the physical discomfort.

Finally, Peter describes the physical experience of shame as follows:

Researcher: So, how does shame feel for you physically?

Peter: It is a sapping of my energy. [. . .] All your energy is drained into the swamp. And physically it's like, depressing, de-pressing physically, and I suffer,

Shame is described as a physical drain on one’s energy, causing one to suffer physically as well as emotionally. Later Peter says:

I experienced something then physically, and then, the blind shut down, bang, it just fell off that though, as I physically stepped back into those feelings just then. And even now I can feel, it's just a slight sweat breaking out. I'll have a drink, and ask another question, I don't even know what we were talking about!

Here, Peter recognises the presence of shame being alive within him at a particular point in the interview through the recognition of the physical symptoms of shame. Shame holds the power to induce sweat and anxiety, and to break one’s concentration. The self is attributed little power in response to the physical interruption of shame, other than the power to adapt to its presence and attempt to move forward in spite of the intrusion.

Social.

The final characteristic of shame to be addressed is the social nature of shame. Caleb introduces the social nature of shame when he says, “Because we're so relational... shame is I'm forced to turn on myself because I can't turn on you, because I need you too much.” Here, shame is described as existing in the relational space between the self and another. The self is positioned as being

without rights or options in interpersonal conflict, apart from the right to “turn on myself,” allowing shame to attack the self. Shame is depicted as being a by-product of the relational nature of humanity. Shame is able to exist wherever relationships exist.

Charlotte expands on the social nature of shame by saying, “It's interesting to see the effects of shame, ‘cause I think it's a major thing, and I think it's spoken out over people without people even realising how much shame is spoken over them.” Here, shame is described as being something that is actively spoken out by one person over another. Shame is illustrated as being powerful and having vast effects. The self is positioned with the right to speak shame over people, thus inflicting the negative experience upon other people. In another sense, the self is also positioned with the duty, either consciously or unconsciously, to receive shame that has been spoken out by others, without the right to defend itself.

The following excerpt is taken from a conversation in which Michelle says that her ideal way of coping with shame is to sit down with the person and sort things out.

Researcher: It's interesting the way you worded that, as going to another person. When you feel shame, is it usually in the context of a relationship?

Michelle: I can't think of a time when it wouldn't. I don't know, how would I be ashamed, with just me?

Here, shame is illustrated as a dividing force in relationships. Shame is again positioned as existing only in interpersonal relationships. The self holds indirect power over shame in that the self holds the power to repair broken relationships, thus negating shame's power.

Finally, a unique take on shame as a social emotion is provided by Liam. Liam raises the issue that strong social relationships act as a safeguard against undesirable behaviour through the shame that is experienced in relationship with people to whom one feels accountable. In the following quote, Liam reflects on a time in his life where he was removed from grounding relationships and engaged heavily in behaviour that he now deems to be shameful.

I guess, do you, or even do I... Do I ever felt guilty or felt ashamed and so you kind of almost, retreat into your shadow? You kind of put your defences up, and possibly make matters worse I guess, because the shame is making you feel so bad that your ego can't handle it I suppose, so it just starts to fight back or lash out or something. I'm just trying to think of when I've... Well maybe, maybe that period in the armed forces. It went on because you'd do something and then you'd sort of, you know when you're lying in your own bed at night with no one else there to face up to except yourself, you kind of know on some level that it was bad and so, because of that, sort of pain, you're then, pushing it down and sort of rationalising it, and going on doing more things that you think will make you feel good. They build up and actually make you feel even worse on top of each other.

Here, shame is constructed as an emotion that is felt individually, but also as one which is heavily influenced by the presence or absence of other people. When Liam was among mates, he felt no shame about the actions they were engaging in together. However, alone in his bed at night, the morals and values that were instilled in him by his father and other role models lead to feelings of shame.

Without the supportive input of responsible others, Liam coped with shame and numbed the emotion through engaging in more destructive behaviour. This, along with many other responses to shame, will be discussed in depth in chapter 8.

With regard to the present topic, the social nature of shame, this text serves to depict shame as being intrinsically linked with social relationships. Shame holds the power to affect one's relationships; however, one's relationships also hold the power to affect one's experience of shame.

Unremarkable.

Many participants described shame passionately and emotively, constructing it as a horrible, powerful, and destructive experience. However, it is worth noting that this was not everyone's experience of shame. The following exchange with John introduces a different theme – that of shame being unremarkable:

Researcher: When you think back through your own life, what do you recall about feelings of shame?

John: Not a lot. That's why I was interested in this research. I've never really... I guess, you know, as a young person, with your mates, that's more sort of juvenile embarrassment. If something happened and you're embarrassed, and then people laugh at you or something like that. That's shameful. That's more superficial shame, that's more circumstantial.

John reports not having particularly strong personal memories of shame. He recalls feeling mild shame and embarrassment associated with social circumstances in his youth, but he does not remember shame with the same depth of emotion, vivid memories, and powerful regard as most of the other participants. As mentioned in chapter 4, it is likely that many of the participants who volunteered for the study chose to do so because shame is or has been a particularly salient issue in their lives. This may skew the findings of the present story toward reflecting the powerful end of shame experiences. John's account provides a glimpse of the other end of the spectrum – someone for whom shame has been a fleeting feeling that carries little long term significance. Acknowledging this variety of experiences is crucial for contextualising the results of the study.

Participants' Theoretical Understandings of Shame

As previously noted, the participant group was unusual in that most of the participants came into the interviews with previously established theoretical understandings of shame. These understandings were both psychological and theological in nature. In order to better understand the unique perspectives of the participants, their previously held theoretical understandings of shame will be briefly explored before further proceeding with the findings.

Psychological understandings of shame.

Four of the participants were actively working in the field of mental health, while many more were engaged in broader helping professions. Most participants had personal experience with some form of counselling or therapy. The psychological themes that were identified from within the participants' theoretical understandings of shame were threefold. First, the distinction between shame and guilt will be discussed. Next, I will briefly explore participants'

understandings of the relationships between shame and other emotions. Finally, the concept of varying degrees of shame will be introduced and briefly explored.

Differentiation between shame and guilt.

Some of the study's participants were well versed on recent research related to guilt and shame. These participants tended to align their views with those of the "guilt theorists," defining shame versus guilt as "I am bad" versus "I have done a bad thing." Caleb introduces this distinction between shame and guilt when he says:

Guilt is I've done something wrong, and I can maybe get forgiveness or I could do something to amend it, but shame is I am wrong. I am bad, and it's irremedial, you cannot change it. I'm fundamentally flawed and defective. Who I am is bad; who I am is wrong, and so the only thing I can do is hide it because it's unfixable. So that ultimate kind of hiding isn't from guilt, even from fear, it's from shame.

Caleb's statements are reflective of a clear belief that shame is synonymous with negative core beliefs about the self, which identify the self as "bad" or fundamentally flawed and defective. Within this view of shame, the self is left in a powerless position, unable to do anything to "fix" the problem of shame, as it is unrelated to one's actions and instead, intrinsically linked to one's identity. The only option available to the self is hiding, which leaves the self in a lonely and isolated position.

Sarah, also firmly asserts the guilt-theorist perspective on guilt versus shame. She says:

I started seeing a counsellor, and she was a lovely woman, and over the course of about a year she kept saying, it's shame, it's shame, and I remember feeling really frustrated, because I remember thinking, so what do I do with this please? [. . .] Then I was doing my research, and it just fell into place, and I was just so excited to do it on shame. Even in the reading of the literature, I was blown away by what I didn't know, and by what counsellors and therapists and a lot of psychology doesn't advertise - mainly the difference between guilt and shame, and the root definition of the word.

Later in the dialog, Sarah explicitly defines her perspective on the difference between guilt and shame as fitting within the guilt-theorists' model. Sarah constructs her experience of learning the definitions from this perspective as being helpful and enlightening. This suggests that through defining shame as a

pervasive attack on one's character and identity, the self can be empowered to defend itself against shame. When shame is named and defined, in this case as an irrational core-belief, the self is empowered to learn and to change.

Makayla presents a very different opinion on the issue in the following quote:

Researcher: What do you think of when you hear the word shame?

Makayla: Guilt. Understanding of wrongdoing, or embarrassment of behaviour, or just things like that. Yeah, the idea of you've done something wrong, or understanding you've done something wrong as well. Because obviously, you don't feel shame or guilt if you feel that your behaviour was okay or justified, but usually you know it's... it's usually a behavioural thing. Or that's what I think anyway.

Makayla's experiences with shame specifically centred on behaviours that she regretted. She considers shame and guilt to be very closely related, if not synonymous. Within this construction of shame, the self is positioned with the power to remove shame's influence through changing the behaviours that invite its presence.

Liam presents a much more ambiguous perspective on the difference between guilt and shame. He speculates about the difference between shame and guilt when he says:

Researcher: Do you think there's a difference between shame and guilt?

Liam: Yeah, I'm sure there is. I wonder what the difference is. I couldn't quite pinpoint it. I think, guilt may be a more concrete thing in that you know you did something you shouldn't have done, whereas shame I think, will just, I don't know, more of a sense that there was something wrong about it morally or something. I'm not really sure.

Liam's thoughts on the difference between guilt and shame are fresh, rather than well established. He hypothesises that guilt may be a concrete experience, related to violating social norms and doing things one "shouldn't have done." In contrast, shame is speculated to be related to morality and a greater sense of rightness and wrongness. This perspective leaves open the possibility that both shame and guilt could empower people - to live within the expectations of society and to live within a code of moral standards. However, the lack of a clearly referenced source of accountability for either shame or guilt leaves an opening for both

shame and guilt to invade one's existence, permeating into unhelpful areas and leaving destructive effects.

Finally, Max presents his perspective on the differentiation between shame and guilt in the following exchange:

Researcher: And I also noticed earlier, you used the word guilt. I'm just wondering in your mind, is there a difference between guilt and shame?

Max: They're quite similar really, aren't they? Um... guilt and shame, they kind of go together, I guess. Like I'm ashamed of what I've done. I also feel guilty for what I've done. For me they're kind of like, hand in hand. [. . .] Except I suppose guilt is more internal, and shame can kind of like... I feel guilty about something within myself, whereas shame, quite often, can be like what other people are thinking about you and what you perceive that they're going to think about you.

Researcher: So, shame is more a social thing, and guilt more of a conscience?

Max: Yeah, I think so. Yep, that's it.

Max's perspective echoes that of Liam's in that shame is presented as a socially referenced emotion, whereas guilt is presented as an internal, morally referenced emotion. This perspective leaves shame in an uncertain position, as it is entirely controlled by the opinions, attitudes, and actions of others. The self is vulnerable to changing social stimuli of its context and relationships.

The participants' vastly different perspectives on the differentiation between shame and guilt highlight a lack of agreed upon definitions of these terms in Pākehā society.

Relationships between shame and other emotions.

Another theme that was identified from the participant interviews related to the relationships between shame and other emotions. I will now explore the relationships between shame and anger, sadness, depression, fear and anxiety.

Anger.

Lucy introduces the relationship between anger and shame. When referring to an experience where she was publically shamed in a work setting, Lucy said, "Actually, I had that visceral sort of response, sort of right low down, and I guess that's partly to do with the anger that comes with - the feeling of unfairness about somebody shaming you." Lucy relates her anger to shame

through the unfairness that was felt about being shamed. She positions shame, being an upsetting and unfair experience, as the direct cause of anger. Similarly, Michelle reflects on being shamed as a young child for wetting the bed. Her father rubbed her face in the soiled sheets. When asked about her other feelings, Michelle said, “It just made me really angry, because I tried to hit him back, but it didn't work, because he smacked me first.” Again, Michelle felt anger as a direct response to being outwardly shamed. In this instance, Michelle’s experience of shame as an injustice produced such a severe anger reaction that she physically lashed out and tried to hit her father. In both of these accounts, anger presented as a logical and justifiable reaction to being unfairly subjected to the emotional horribleness of shame.

In the next quote, Lilia reflects on the deep anger she felt, alongside shame, as a result of her parents knowing she was being abused as a child and not intervening.

Researcher: You say you still feel some shame. What else do you feel?

Lilia: [Pause] I don't know. Maybe I feel a bit angry about it, probably more to do with my parents than anything. I'm fairly sure that they knew, or had suspicions, and never....I don't know, they never said or did anything. I guess I just felt a bit let down. [. . .] I remember when I was older, Dad made a comment once when he was quite drunk. He said something about, something about something unfair happening to me as a child. Something like that, and I just thought, fuck, you knew? And he never said anything.

Here, anger is related to the disappointment Lilia felt in being let down and left unprotected by her parents. In this case, anger is a response to inaction, rather than action. As has been previously mentioned, a defining characteristic of shame is that it is hidden. The presence of shame around sexual abuse may have ensured that the abuse was kept hidden. Ultimately, this exacerbated Lilia’s feelings of anger. While it is not specifically mentioned, she could have been angry with the abuser for what was done to her. However, her most vivid expression of anger was toward her father, who knew about the abuse and not only failed to protect her from it, but also failed to acknowledge it. As a young and vulnerable child, Lilia was deeply hurt, and the shame and hiddenness of what she experienced served to isolate her – from protection from the abuse as well as from compassion and connection.

In the following exchange, Max reflects on anger being present at a time in his life when he was detached from any sense of shame. He says:

Max: I was really angry at my mum, for some reason, I don't know why, at that age, I was really, quite angry at her for a long time. I just blamed her for things...

Researcher: What did you blame her for?

Max: I don't even know what I blamed her for. [. . .] I still loved her, but I just... I think it was for my step-dad, like more than anything, because he was real strict - like ruled with an iron fist, and I'd have to do jobs and stuff for him, and he'd have perfectionist standards, like top quality standards. You'd miss something and you'd have to do it all over again, or like, and I was constantly, constantly, like I was quite scared of him. I guess, I probably wanted my mum to like, you know, stop him and say like, you know, "leave him alone," sort of thing, "go easy on him."

Like Lilia, Max speaks about feeling angry as the result of being left unprotected by his parent. Max's anger seems to be an understandable response to being treated harshly by his step-father. However, Max's experience of anger in this instance may expand deeper than this superficial interpretation. Earlier in the interview, Max revealed that during the period of his adolescence of which this quote is referring to, he felt no conscious sense of shame. As introduced in chapter 2 and will be expanded upon in chapter 6 when discussing sources of shame, shame is often associated with severed or threatened social bonds. Max describes his step-father causing a rift between him and his mother. He constructs their relationship as having been very close, but this closeness appears to have been severed, or at least seriously threatened, by the step-father's behaviour and responses toward Max. Anger is a reasonable response to the situation, but for many other people, shame may have resulted from the newfound tension in a previously close and supportive mother-son relationship. In this case it appears that to some degree, anger may have been masking shame for Max.

Sarah speaks about the relationship between anger and shame in a slightly different context. When reflecting on the painful and shameful experiences of being pulled out of school in her adolescence, Sarah notices and comments on herself becoming angry, even during the interview itself.

I just missed a year, I was at home every day. And she didn't say a word, she was crazy. What did she care? So we just stayed home and had this little life together, where she would feed me cigarettes. God, I'm angry aren't I?

Here, anger is a long term reaction, which may not have arisen until some time after the initial shame, but which has stuck with Sarah and continues to affect her and her memories of her upbringing. Anger is alongside, and arguably is the result of, shame, and it is positioned with the power to endure long into the future.

Finally, Luke introduces the idea of feeling anger as the result of seeing other people being shamed. Luke says, "When I see other people get shamed then I tend to get a bit angry and [pause], I don't like seeing the injustice of somebody being put down in front of others - especially a defenceless child." It seems that Luke's empathy for people being shamed drives him to feel angry at people who are overtly shaming others. As with most of the other examples, anger in this case is a direct response to shame and its injustice. The anger that accompanies shame in many situations may be harmful, when it leads to rage or violence, but it may also be helpful in motivating people to correct issues of injustice and stand up against shaming behaviour.

Sadness.

Mark introduces the relationship between anger and sadness with his response to a question about what emotions he felt alongside shame with regard to a shameful experience in his childhood. He says, "I felt very fearful, and sad, but I didn't... I couldn't have named it as sad back then." He notes that sadness was present along with shame, but it was experienced in such a way that lead it to be indistinguishable from other emotions until reflecting back on the situation later as an adult.

Kathleen expands upon the link between shame and sadness in the following exchange:

Researcher: So, is that how you usually feel when you feel shame? Is it always it always flattened?

Kathleen: Yes. It paralyses me. I can't comprehend. I can't, [pause], concentrate on what I was doing. I can't be the happy person I was before. I'm normally a happy person, full of fun. And I love people and I love life, but when people do that to me it's just, it like, it's like I am totally robbed of the whole lot. And it's like I'm made sad, you know? All of these these things that, that come on me.

Kathleen positions shame as able to rob joy and force the self into a state of sadness. Kathleen describes her experience as feeling “flattened,” paralysed and unable to function in her normal state of happiness. Shame removes pleasure and replaces it with sadness.

Charlotte provides another example of the link between shame and sadness. Charlotte describes feeling sad as the direct response to outward shaming she received from her mother.

Charlotte: I mean it was outspoken shame [laughter] pretty much you know. That's just not good enough. You need to try harder. That kind of stuff. Not a lot of reward, more driven-ness.

Researcher: And how did you feel about that? You obviously felt shame, but was there anything else?

Charlotte: Shame, and probably a bit more. It probably made me feel quite sad, because I felt quite unloved. Maybe a little bit of hopelessness, I guess, because you just go, oh well, I'll never reach the mark, so why bother trying. It created in me to put high expectations of myself, which were always unrealistic. So to never praise myself for the work I had done, but rather to go, it's just not good enough. So it created self-talk. Your mother's voice in your head. [Laughter] Probably hopeless a little bit, and the unloved thing. Maybe frustration as well, yeah, frustration because you can't do it, you know. A bit of confusion probably as well. Saying, how, why can't I do this, you know, what's wrong with me?

Sadness is one of the first feelings Charlotte mentions when describing her emotional response to the experience of shaming. Shame and sadness are closely related, and combine to influence future feelings, beliefs, and other emotions, such as frustration and confusion.

Depression.

Some participants expanded the sadness associated with shame to include depression. Sarah introduces the relationship between shame and depression in the following exchange, where she describes her personal experience of depression being the driving force behind her beginning to acknowledge and examine her shame.

Researcher: What makes you interested in shame?

Sarah: Well for me, it was originally because I suffer from depression and have for many years, and my mother suffered from depression, and it goes back and back and back. I spent years trying to work out why are we so depressed in my family, and the only link when I started thinking about it recently was Catholicism. [. . .] I'm an Irish Catholic, of course I feel shame. It's Irish guilt, Catholic guilt... shame.

Sarah constructs depression as the natural result of an upbringing in which shame was prolific. Shame is experienced as the root cause of depression for Sarah. Referring to her religious and cultural heritage, Sarah says, "Of course I feel shame." Shame is positioned as being the inevitable result of an Irish Catholic upbringing, and for Sarah, depression was the natural consequence of a childhood that was saturated with shame.

Kathleen also addresses the relationship between shame and depression when she says:

Shame, I believe, kills your self-respect. And I think that's why people kill themselves. Because they have no respect for themselves. Nothing. There is no self-respect. And so you may as well die. And I believe I've got half of the allocated self-respect I should have. But I would like the other half too. But I think I'm going to be ninety before I get it.

Kathleen links shame to depression through a loss of self-respect, which results in people devaluing themselves to such a degree that they think they "may as well die." Attributing agency to shame, Kathleen paints a picture of shame ruthlessly killing a person's self-respect, leaving them with nothing – no power, no hope, and no worth or value. She refers to having half of the "allocated" self-respect that she "should have." While elsewhere in the interview, Kathleen refers to specific strategies she has used to deal with her shame and increase her well-being, here, she constructs herself as a helpless victim. The statement that "I

think I'm going to be ninety before I get it," referring to self-respect, serves to construct the situation as bleak, as shame's link to on-going depression is strong.

Fear.

To introduce the relationship between shame and fear, we will return to an exchange with Mark.

Researcher: And so you've talked a lot about feeling shame, do you remember what else you felt?

Mark: I felt fearful. I felt very fearful, and sad [. . .].

Mark clearly and directly links feeling fearful with an experience of being openly shamed by others. (The circumstances of this particular shame will be described in chapter 6.) Sarah also links shame to fear, or in this case, terror. She says:

It's not about that, it's about moments where someone's noticed or implied or I feel that they've implied that I'm getting too big for my boots, and it goes right back to my mother. But she used to hit me. She had this cane. It really hurt, it wasn't nothing. It was a proper piece of bamboo, she used to hide it. [. . .] She used to really torture me with it, because she'd say, you know, where it is, and she used to call it "The Cane." And she'd say, you have to go and get "The Cane" so we had to go and get it ourselves, and it lived in this cupboard, so I was always scared of that cupboard. So she'd start, and the other thing she'd do is she would draw it out, so she'd say, "You're going to get the cane this afternoon" - not now, later. She was quite sadistic. So I would get that real, sort of terror. It's actually terror, eh? Scared of wetting yourself; it's terror. Alright, so I'll take back everything I said, okay. It's the same feeling as when... it's terror.

Both Sarah and Mark link fear and shame together in instances of physical abuse. Sarah describes the terror she felt as a child in knowing that she was about to be physically hurt and emotionally shamed. This terror is regularly relived as an adult, in situations in which someone treats her in a critical or demeaning manner. Feelings of shame and terror return in moments where they may no longer be appropriate.

John also links shame directly to fear, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

Researcher: So when you were in that situation as a child when you froze on the side of the pool, what do you think you felt in that moment?

John: Fear. Just absolute fear. Like, what if my dad died. Um, yeah, just fear. [. . .] But I think it is an innate human thing, fear. And I think shame causes us to hide in fear. There's always fear in darkness and shame causes us to be in darkness.

John explicitly links shame and fear in a direct causal relationship – shame causes fear. The fear described by John is overwhelming and overpowering, “absolute” in his words. In this case John’s fear was related to the possible loss of his father, the ultimate severing of the relationship. Fear could, therefore, be directly linked to the social nature of shame. Shame causes fear of isolation, abandonment, or rejection. John’s situation was one of life and death. He was afraid and felt shame about being unable to physically save his dad’s life in a dangerous situation. However, as John notes, fear is common and innate. It is possible that the darkness John refers to is one of social isolation. Shame causes one to hide and isolate himself. The person then lives in fear –fear of remaining isolated or disconnected.

Anxiety.

Anxiety, while closely related to fear, will be considered separately.

Jennifer introduces the relationship between shame and anxiety as follows:

Researcher: How does shame feel to you physically?

Jennifer: Well, I've had major issues over the years with anxiety, and um, yeah I think it's all obviously related to that...first 16 years of my life. It's that tension thing.

Jennifer depicts anxiety as the direct result of her childhood, which involved considerable and significant experiences with shame. Jennifer describes her childhood experiences with shame to have created a “tension thing,” which left her with chronic anxiety issues well into her mid-adulthood.

Max also depicts a direct link between shame and anxiety in the following exchange. Max was asked to describe how shame feels physically, and his answer seemed very similar to the physical sensation of anxiety. He then goes on to link his experiences of shame and anxiety.

Researcher: It's interesting, the beating heart and feeling a bit nauseous, that sounds a lot like what some people feel when they feel anxious.

Max: Oh, yeah, I do... I get really anxious sometimes. [. . .] I don't think I've ever had a full on anxiety attack, but I get quite close sometimes and start to convince myself, just from triggering a thought that triggers a thing from the past, and I'll start to like, you know, like my brain will just go a little bit, start ticking a bit too much, and I'll start convincing myself, what if I'm crazy and I'm going to be like this crazy person forever, and what if I can't change and then it just gets more and more irrational. I've got to take deep breaths and try and think about hope and stuff like that. [. . .] But yeah, it can get pretty out of hand sometimes.

Max describes feeling anxious when recalling things in his life that he is ashamed of. In Max's case, the anxiety becomes so severe that he begins to think irrationally and feel as if he is going crazy. In Jennifer's and Max's experiences, shame is positioned as being powerfully capable of penetrating one's entire being, overwhelming the person with serious and long-lasting physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety.

The relationships of shame with anger, sadness, depression, fear, and anxiety are each distinct. However, in all cases, the other emotions are described as being very closely related to, if not directly caused by, shame. This serves to further cement the construction of shame as an extremely powerful entity, which brings with it a host of other negative emotional experiences that permeate a person's being, often leaving him or her exhausted or debilitated.

Degrees of shame.

Jennifer aptly introduces the proposition that shame exists in varying degrees when she says: "I mean, there's shame and there's *shame*, isn't there? I mean, some people would be ashamed if they dropped a glass of wine on the floor." Jennifer points out that shame can exist in severe forms or in more mild forms. Lucy echoes this idea when she says:

I think, it's very, very debilitating, when it's experienced, you know at the powerful end of the spectrum you go through from slight embarrassment right through the whole spectrum to deep, humiliating, debilitating emotional experience that's on-going.

Lucy differentiates between mild shame, labelling this as embarrassment, and severe experiences with shame, which she links to humiliation and describes as debilitating. These excerpts serve to highlight shame's flexibility; it affects people on different levels in different situations. It could be argued that shame's power is restricted by the power of the circumstance that produced shame. However, this cannot be certain. Jennifer described spilling a drink as something almost certain to produce only mild shame; however, others may, for whatever reason, consider such a mistake to be truly humiliating.

John further expands on the concept of varying degrees of shame. He points out the possible dangers of even minor experiences with shame when he says:

You know, if something happened and you're embarrassed, and then people laugh at you or something like that. That's shameful. That's more superficial shame, that's more circumstantial. It can injure people though. Those moments can be shame reinforcers.

John constructs shame as powerful, even when it seems to be superficial. He depicts this degree of shame with the ability to injure people through reinforcing earlier, pre-existing feelings of shame.

Max refers to varying degrees of shame when he says: "There's different degrees of shame I guess. Shame can sometimes be, I mean in small doses, it can't help you, I mean, maybe sometimes it can... it can be an awareness." Max reflects that small degrees of shame can be helpful, but deep, all-encompassing shame is invariably negative. Likewise, Liam says: "I suppose [shame] can be positive or negative depending on... If it's an overdose it can become negative, but a little bit of it could be positive maybe." This quote further cements the idea that shame can occur in varying degrees or "doses." Like Max, Liam depicts shame with the potential to be a positive encourager in mild forms, but as a decisively negative influence in extreme forms. Thus, the concept of shame existing in varying degrees may have interesting implications for the constructive dilemma, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Theological understandings of shame.

A number of the participants held previously considered theoretical opinions on shame that stemmed from theological understandings of shame. Each of the participants who identified religious or faith based understandings of shame identified with Christianity. Some of these participants actively critiqued both the benefits and the shortcomings of their churches and religious practices with regard to the issue of shame.

Caleb introduced a Christian perspective on shame by saying, “As far as I can tell, the whole Christian faith story hinges around a redemption from historic shame - the Genesis thing.” Here, shame is positioned as being a core component of the Christian faith. Caleb’s speaks about the “Genesis thing,” a reference to the first book of the Bible, where the story of the Christian faith begins. Humanity sins, bringing separation between itself and God, and ultimately requiring a redemptive sacrifice to restore and repair the relationship between God and his children, which has been broken through shame. John elaborates on the Christian perspective on shame when he says:

I think it's a profound and very big... I don't know why we fall. It's so innate in humanity. I mean is there ever going to be a fix for it? It's like, right back at the very beginning, it was there. Shame was there; shame was present.

Here, shame is described as an innately human characteristic, as identified earlier in the findings. Shame is positioned as being present right from the beginning of creation through to the present time. The speaker questions whether there will ever be a fix for shame, serving to illustrate shame as a powerful and dangerous entity, which the self is powerless to fix.

Later John continues:

I mean, for me, as a Christian, I think it's the original sin. [. . .] Shame causes us to hide is my belief, and hiding from life, which is what they did, so they hid from God. [. . .] And we hide our shame....we put our little fig leaves over our shame. We wear our masks to church. [. . .] So, their shame caused them to hide themselves, and one thing I'm very, I find interesting about that picture, is God tells them, you know, well one, I wonder if they hadn't hid from God, if they'd run **to** God, if they'd run to life, I wonder what his response would have been. I wonder if his response would have... I think his response would have been, "I always knew you were going to do this, but I forgive you." I think it was their hiding that caused God out of graciousness to exit them from the garden because they could no longer be connected to life.

John describes shame as the driving force behind an innate tendency toward hiding, which is common among all of humanity. John refers to the story from Genesis in which Adam and Eve hid after disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit. Shame is referred to as the cause behind Adam and Eve's hiding – the power behind a destructive pattern of behaviour that would repeat itself throughout all of history. John constructs shame as causing people to hide from life and from God and, ultimately, to be removed from life and God, not because of their own sin or wrongdoing, but because of the resulting shame. John hypothesises that if Adam and Eve had run toward God rather than away from him, the relationship would have been much more easily repairable. John depicts a gracious God, who would have been eager to forgive Adam and Eve, if only they had turned to him in spite of their shame. This theological discussion introduces many ideas, which are echoed in other contexts throughout the research. Themes involving specific responses to shame, such as hiding or acknowledging shame, will be discussed in detail in chapter 8.

Caleb continues to describe a theological understanding of shame in the following quote. The following quote follows a description of the psychological process of internalising shame, which Caleb refers to as "turning on yourself":

So you have to wind up turning on yourself, which is what Adam and Eve did - turned on each other and turned on themselves. What happens to, Christians, who I love so much, when they have a shaming God who judges them and is shameful [. . .] They have to do this contortionist thing inside themselves to find a way to worship and love this God who shames them openly. And it becomes weirder and weirder the things they have to do to do that. If God's ashamed of you, where can you go? Then you are screwed; you are. And that simplistic interpretation of the fall, the fall of man, the split between what I could be and what I really am, becomes shameful rather than growthful potential. So, you know, what's the language? Oh, I can't even think of it, it's been so long since I used it, but [pause], original sin. You're ultimately selfish in everything you do, and everything that you say, and everything that you think. Only this God who gets someone to die on your behalf somehow releases you from that, but you still are that, you just got forgiven. So the stories get stranger and stranger.

Caleb describes how Christian teachings can often result in the internalisation of shame. People believe in a judgemental and shaming God, and then align their identities and beliefs about themselves with the judgements and shame that comes from Christian churches, and ultimately is believed to come from God. In this description, shame holds power to debilitate, to affect one's perception of the self, and to distort spirituality into unhealthy thinking. However, religion, in this case Christianity, and its churches and institutions also hold enormous power to influence and control through the deliberate and potent use of shaming.

Michelle contrasts this description with a personal story of how her faith and her belief in a personal relationship with God has helped her deal with personal issues with shame:

Researcher: So it sounds like your relationship with God was quite a big part of that - feeling shame before him.

Michelle: Huge, yeah. When I realised that he wasn't there with a big, wooden spoon in his hand ready to smack me, like Mum or Dad would have been. That he was there saying, "Alright, you mucked up, that makes me sad." If he was talking, I imagine him saying that that makes him sad, that that grieves him, that I did something that I know I shouldn't, or that I had decided that I shouldn't, and I did it anyway, and I felt sad, therefore he felt sad, like a dad does. But, he picked me up, and helped me up, and we would dump that in the reject basket and then we'll just keep going. He'd forgive me. I would learn to forgive me, eventually, like I can now, and we'd just carry on.

In contrast to the judgmental, shaming God depicted by Caleb, Michelle constructs a loving, forgiving, and gracious God, who actively comforts her and

sooths the pain of her shame. This excerpt provides an interesting illustration of the social nature of shame, which was discussed earlier in the chapter. Shame occurs in relationship, and thus, the power and effect of shame is mitigated by the quality of the social bond. In Caleb's example, the described relationship with God includes judgement, is tenuous, and is the direct source of shame, which ultimately results in pain and disillusionment. In Michelle's experience, her relationship with God is experienced as being constant, loving, and safe, and therefore, shame is able to be helped rather than exacerbated.

Constructiveness Dilemma

The study's participants brought to the research different opinions on the constructiveness dilemma – the question of whether shame can and does have a beneficial function. While the majority of the participants described shame as an entirely negative and useless experience, some participants identified possible benefits to the experience of shame.

Shame as useless and bad.

Charlotte introduces the theme of shame being entirely useless and bad. When asked if she could think of any circumstances in which feeling shame would be useful, Charlotte responds: "Useful? [Laughter] I don't know. Is shame a useful thing? No, I don't think so." Similarly, in response to the same question, Luke says, "No, I can't say that I can. To me, it's a negative thing rather than a positive one." Here, shame is depicted as being clearly negative and useless. The participants' responses indicate that neither participant had previously considered the idea of a use for shame, and the suggestion that shame could be useful was experienced as being foreign, and even amusing. Both Charlotte and Luke were able to dismiss the question without more than a passing consideration, as shame was so clearly positioned in their thinking and experiences as a negative and destructive influence.

Caleb expands on the theme of shame as being useless and bad in the following exchange:

Researcher: Do you think there are any situations in which feeling shame would be useful?

Caleb: No. No. It's the useless emotion. No, you can't learn in the context of shame. I hope that you learn in your studies about the neuroscience of it, when you're in a shame state, you're cut off from your thinking brain, so you can't make new, you can't think your way into new decisions. You can't, you don't have any options, because you're shut down. You only have that shame spiral that you're in, and so you're actually locked down. So, that's why being in a school environment, where everybody's being shamed is like, how can you learn? You can't learn when there's shame in the classroom. So, how can you learn anything really? Except if it's to avoid being injured, or being humiliated more, you might learn it. No, I don't believe there's any place where shame is useful.

Caleb's argument that shame is useless hinges on the supposition that it prevents one's ability to think clearly and learn. Caleb's description of shame as the "useless emotion" serves to depict shame as an experience to be overcome, defeated, or surpassed. Shame has no benefit. It is a hostile force, and its only effect is hurting and damaging people.

The benefits of shame.

Lucy introduces a personal benefit that has born from her own experiences of feeling shame. She says:

But on the positive side, I think my experiences with shame have motivated me to do a lot of work on myself, and probably if I really think about it... yeah, it's not the only contributing factor to doing psychotherapy, but I would say it's quite a large motivation to do it, and I think that's positive.

Here, shame is credited with motivating Lucy to better herself through personal development, and ultimately, to choose a career in psychotherapy, where she is able to redirect her painful experiences and use them to help others. Lucy describes shame as a negative experience, which has a positive outcome, due to the strength and determination that is built in the process of overcoming shame.

Likewise, the following exchange with Nina illustrates a positive effect of experiences with shame:

Researcher: Do you think shame is useful?

Nina: Well, it's given me pride. [. . .] I suppose it's better if the shame comes from within than coming from without. You know if it comes from within and you look at yourself and you think, oh I'm not really pleased with myself doing that, I think I'll change. It's different, to a group, or someone higher, saying, [shaking finger] "uh, uh, uh."

Nina credits shame with giving her pride. Here, shame is attributed with a positive power, in that it is able to motivate a person to change for the better. Nina argues that shame is better to come from within than without. Shame is the painful, but worthwhile, emotional experience that causes one to examine oneself and reconsider one's actions. A positive effect of shame is that if it "comes from within," or rather is the product of one's own conscience rather than outward shaming from others, it can motivate a person to grow stronger and to create positive changes in her behaviour.

Earlier, Caleb unequivocally constructed shame as a useless emotion. However, in the following quote, he begins to explore possible benefits to experiences with shame:

So a big deal for me is... well, Nietzsche said everybody needs a sense of shame, but no one needs to feel ashamed. It's sort of like everybody needs a sense of their own... weaknesses, but they don't need to feel ashamed about that. And, so, my weaknesses turned into, um char...you know like, as if they were terrible things. I'm fundamentally flawed and defective, rather than I'm just needy, and I just need help. Or, I don't know how to do something, and it's a bad thing, it's bad about me. Yeah. And, therapy being for me around feeling shame but not being ashamed. Having to feel it, but not needing to be it. You can't deny that it's there, but that makes... that's a big deal for me, feeling shame but not being ashamed.

Caleb highlights a difference between *feeling* shame and *being* ashamed. He describes his experience with feeling weak and ashamed, which ultimately lead to a negative core belief or life script about being fundamentally flawed and defective. This long-lasting, expansive experience of internalised shame is justifiably considered to be useless – painful and damaging without any benefits. However, Caleb contrasts this with what Nietzsche describes as a "sense of shame," which Caleb considers to mean a sense of one's own weaknesses or limitations. This introduces a healthier experience of shame – one that is negative and unpleasant, but is not damaging. This construction of shame is powerful, in that it penetrates one's being with a painful emotional experience that one "has to

feel.” However, is it also empowering. It allows for increased self-awareness and a realistic self-concept, which incorporates a healthy knowledge of one’s limitations, while also leaving one’s overall self-esteem and integrity in-tact.

Max elaborates on shame’s tendency to increase one’s self-awareness in the following quote. When contrasting shame with anxiety, Max explores the possibility that shame can, to some degree, be useful.

Anxiety is kind of like, can get quite irrational. I'm not saying to feel ashamed about yourself is rational, but [. . .] I mean in small doses, it can't help you, maybe sometimes it can. It can be an awareness. [. . .] You're supposed to not really care about what people think, but you do care about what people think about you, and it's kind of important, cause if you love people [. . .].

Max suggests that in small doses, feeling shame can increase awareness of the impact actions have on the people we love. He hesitantly constructs shame as being helpful and even healthy, positioning shame with the power to benefit a person through increased self-awareness and ultimately, strengthened social bonds. Later Max continues:

Researcher: You talked about how shame can sometimes be healthy. I'm just wondering if you can think of a time when shame has helped you.

Max: Where it's helped me... um, fuck I don't know. Say if I'm going for a job interview or something, or I'm meeting with my girlfriend's parents or... things like that. Obviously my shame or my conscious of not embarrassing myself is gonna help me not make a fool of myself, say the wrong thing, or you know, or social situations where you're meeting new people, you don't want to divulge too much because you've got that conscious thing. Like, don't say that, that's embarrassing, that would be a stupid thing to say, which you could look at it as lying, but everyone has their secrets that they like to keep, all the things that they're embarrassed of, that they won't divulge. And then there's some people that have no shame at all, and you kind of feel sorry for them a little bit in situations like that because you kind of look like a dick if you say stuff like that I guess, so yeah, just occasions like that - formal things.

Here, shame is described with the power to prevent someone from making a fool of themselves and to protect one’s self-respect. Max refers to shame motivating people to hide and keep secrets, but he presents this as a sometimes helpful feature of shame, as it allows them to represent themselves well to others. Earlier, Max says that “you’re supposed to not really care about what people think,” illustrating that self-sufficiency and independent thinking are a valued part of our

culture. However, Max illustrates an important paradox in Pākehā culture, which is that “what people think” actually is important - specifically when it comes to formal situations such as a job interview. Also, when one values a relationship and wishes to maintain connection with another person or group of people, it is important to be aware of the affect one’s actions are having on the opinions of others, and therefore the connection with others. Shame can empower a person to attend to one’s relationships by providing an awareness of when the relationships are under threat.

Liam describes feeling shame after an incident in which he got into trouble with the law as a youth. He reflects on the positive impact of being strongly grounded in his community, while noting that it was within this community that he felt the most shame.

And I always sort of remember that was quite a good, a rock, because there was all these people that expected you to behave well and set a good example and were all good role models, and I always felt a responsibility to not kind of, do stupid things, like a lot of other teenagers were possibly doing at the time, and would get in trouble and all that. Because I had all these guys that I would have to, you know, face up to, if I did, and that was a very good force for keeping me honest, if you like. So I think when this did happen, I think that was one of the places where I probably did feel the most shame, because yeah, it was all blokes, and you know, men there that gave you the sort of motivation to live right rather than being an idiot.

Here, Liam echoes Max’s suggestion that shame can sometimes be a helpful force, useful for “keeping me honest.” Liam describes feeling the most shame in a tight-knit community of good role models. This suggests that feeling shame can sometimes be healthier than not feeling shame. While the experience of shame is unpleasant, when experienced within a supportive community, it also fosters growth, accountability, and maturity.

Later, Liam describes a year during his young-adulthood, which was the first time he lived away from home. He describes engaging in reckless and wild behaviour, that in hindsight, he considers to be shameful. Liam describes stepping back and gaining an awareness of the shamefulness of his actions as the driving force behind him leaving the armed forces.

Because I left after a year, and I know one of the reasons I left was at some point, I took a step back and thought, I'm being pretty outrageous and mad... Actually I'm saying that and I'm thinking, did I actually think that at the time? Or did I actually think that, again, like a year later? I think I had some sort of sense of it, anyway, that I was going a bit crazy basically. It was an environment where that's, exactly that was what was wanted. Everybody was egging each other on to do more and more. One guy ate poo to [laughter] amuse people, so it was very... yeah it was very debauched. And there was really no limit, it was just what did you dare to do to keep up. So, I think, on some level I felt some shame at the time, but probably more so as I look back at you know... At the time, that was what we were doing to survive, and that was how we were living our lives, and so we probably didn't really stop to think about it too often.

In Liam's experience, a lack of shame was indicative of the behaviour he was engaging in being considered normal within his social group. It was not until he deliberately stepped back and reflected on his situation that Liam began to feel shame about the things he was doing, which ultimately motivated him to return to his home community. In this instance, shame helped Liam to increase his awareness of the bigger picture and the consequences of his actions, and ultimately, to make a decision that allowed him to live a more responsible life in the eyes of the greater community, and also to live in line with his own values, which he had internalised in his early years.

Finally, John reflects on the need for shame in the following excerpt:

So it's obviously been present in creation, so, what's the need for it? I don't know. The need to find our adequacy in God? I mean shame is the law at the end of the day. It's the measure. It's the thing that shows us whether we're right or we're wrong. There's no freedom in it. [. . .] Maybe shame is there to show us, as we judge ourselves and judge others, that we truly have simply a need for someone, something that is bigger and greater than us. So it shows us our own inadequacy, so that we can fall into the arms of grace.

John says that shame would not exist if there was no need for it. He hypothesises that the purpose of shame is to make people aware of their inadequacy and ultimately, to motivate people towards a relationship with God. John says that shame is the “thing that shows us whether we're right or we're wrong.” Therefore, it is useful for increasing self-awareness as well as a greater awareness of the consequences of actions on a social and global level. As Max and Liam highlighted the usefulness of shame in motivating people to attend to social

bonds, John highlights the usefulness of shame in motivating people to attend to the deep issues of identity and spirituality

Implications of the Findings

This chapter explored a number of major and minor themes related to participants' understandings of the characteristics of shame. The theoretical and social implications of these findings will now be explored.

The chapter began with an introduction to the characteristics of shame. Shame was found to be: invariably negative, powerful, intrinsically human, hidden, enduring, often debilitating, physical, social, and sometimes unremarkable. No previous research could be found that specifically explored the characteristics of shame, as I have done in this analysis. However, each of these characteristics can be linked to previous research in a broader context.

The negativity of the shame experience is as pronounced in the research literature as it is in participants' accounts. Caprara, Di Giunta, Pastorelli, and Eisenberg (2013) conducted a study exploring the management of negative affect. Anger, despondency, shame, guilt, and fear were the negative affects that were covered. This reflects a widespread assumption among researchers, practicing psychologists, and laypeople alike, that shame is invariably negative. The study's participants described shame as an invariably negative experience, in much the same way that most, if not all, research assumes it to be. The agreement on this finding is useful in that it allows for shared understanding and empathy for the negativity of an experience that can be complex and unique in many other ways. It is important to note, that "invariable negativity" as reported in the research findings refers only to the subject emotional experience of shame. To feel shame is to feel bad. This does not mean that shame is invariably useless, as the possible benefits and positive effects of shame are also discussed under another heading.

The powerful nature of shame is well-documented in psychodynamic research (e.g. Loughhead, 1992). Freudian perspectives echo (and in some cases have informed) participants' suppositions that shame results in a person feeling fundamentally flawed and defective. This creates a powerful rupture of the self with the self, which Caleb describes as "turning on yourself."

In another realm of research, Shariff, Tracy, and Markusoff (2012) describe the powerful impact of the non-verbal cues of shame and pride on social

status, which ultimately affects many areas of one's identity and life experiences. Closely related to the powerful nature of shame is the debilitating effect of shame. A wealth of research links shame to debilitating psycho-social problems such as depression (Gilbert et al., 2010), post-traumatic stress disorder (Beck et al., 2011), and borderline personality disorder (Peters, Geiger, Smart, & Baer, 2014). The long term struggles that people with many of these diagnoses suffer from serve to illustrate shame as an enduring problem for many people. Thus, shame's potential to be a powerful and enduring motivator, with the possible ability to debilitate a person, is well established.

Loughead (1992) presents a psychoanalytic formulation of shame, which argues that shame forces the true self into hiding, and a false self emerges in order to compensate for the pain of the shame experience. Garfinkle (2012) also argues that shame uniformly involves hiding. Garfinkle points out that the English word *shame* comes from the Indo-European root *skam*, which means "to cover, to veil, or to hide." While only a very small amount of research literature addresses the hidden nature of shame, the overall scarcity of research addressing shame is telling. Shame is a rarely addressed topic of research, illustrating that the hidden nature of shame exists within the community of psychological research much the same as it exists in the participants' personal worlds.

The social nature of shame was introduced in chapter 2, and is expanded upon by the study's participants. Scheff (2001) explores the social nature of shame in greater depth. Scheff argues that shame is not only intrinsically linked to relationships, but when openly acknowledged, shame serves as glue, or the driving force holding relationships and societies together. In contrast, unacknowledged or hostile shame severs relationship bonds and endangers society. The discussion regarding the social nature of shame is therefore closely related to the discussion surrounding the possible constructiveness of shame. These are fascinating and fundamental issues, which hold within them a wealth of complexity. Further research into the social nature of shame and its possible social benefits is certainly warranted.

A distinct void exists in the research literature regarding the physical nature of shame. While shame is readily described as an affect or emotion and it is well established that emotions exist as physical as well as psychological experiences, it is rare to find shame depicted as a physical state in the research

literature. Andrews (1998) provides an overview of numerous quantitative measures of shame. These measures often query the experiential, cognitive, and behavioural components of shame, along with other specific areas of interest regarding shame, but the physical experience of shame is usually neglected. The findings of the present study indicate an agreement that the experience of shame is strongly physical in nature. This conclusion also warrants further exploration in future research.

Finally, the uniquely human nature of shame will be addressed. Most researchers agree that shame is experienced by virtually everyone at some point in their lives. The rare person who lacks shame is pathologised by psychologists and given a diagnosis of antisocial personality disorder (Cleckley, 1955). While it is wise to remain sceptical about the universal and cross-cultural validity of the conclusion that all healthy people experience shame, it is apparent that shame is extremely common in Western cultures. The study's participants confirm that shame is a "normal" experience for Pākehā New Zealanders. Thus, research addressing shame in this context is widely applicable and relevant to a wide variety of social issues.

Regarding participants' theoretical understandings of shame, many of the participants' views aligned closely with established research, in many cases being directly influenced by such research. However, some exceptions to this were present. The participants did not provide a consensus of a single, universal understanding of the difference between shame and guilt. The differences in perspectives that were found in the interviews echo the differences in opinions that are present in the research literature. Some participants aligned their views with those of the guilt theorists, arguing that shame is equivalent with the belief that "I am bad" while guilt equates to the belief that "I have done a bad thing." However, uniformly positioning shame as unhelpful and useless serves to limit the constructive power that may result from understanding its purpose and redirecting its energy. Furthermore, I see a fundamental problem in the logic of defining an emotion (shame) as a cognition or core belief ("I am bad"). Many of the participants agreed with other researchers (e.g. Deonna & Teroni, 2008) in remaining open to a possible constructive function of shame. This function may be to preserve the social bonds that comprise societal and interpersonal relationships, through directing one's attention towards the status of those bonds

so that they can be actively maintained. The ultimate conclusion, from both academic discourses and participant interviews, is that shame remains a malleable construct, open to influence and interpretation from fresh research, such as the current project, which is able to offer additional perspective on the definition of shame.

The concept that shame occurs in varying degrees is important to acknowledge. This is well established in the current research literature. The most obvious example is the multitude of shame and shame-proneness measures that exist for use in quantitative studies (e.g. Andrews, 1998). However, in many cases, the validity of such measures has been critically questioned. It is vital to remember that while shame clearly exists in a variety of intensities, there is likely to be no simple scale on which to measure such a personal and complex experience. As pointed out by John, there is also no guarantee that a “minor” experience of shame will not produce devastating results. The conclusion that shame exists in varying degrees is not disputed, but caution must be maintained when applying this conclusion in research or practical settings. Each person’s experience of shame is unique, and shame is too complex to measure or predict in any clearly defined manner.

The participants clearly outlined links between shame and other emotions - anger, sadness, depression, anxiety, and fear. It is worth noting that of the four commonly acknowledged root emotions – glad, sad, mad, and afraid – the only one conspicuously absent was glad. Joy and shame appear to be mutually exclusive. As presented earlier in the chapter, participants suggested joy cannot return until shame has dissipated. This further cements shame’s construction as an invariably negative experience.

The discussion on the possible constructiveness of shame highlights the possibility that shame may be useful as the mechanism whereby social bonds are maintained. Thus, while the immediate experience of shame is never pleasant, shame could be linked to joy in the long term, if feeling shame motivates one to repair a relationship to the point where the joy of connection is revitalised.

Finally, some participants presented theological opinions on the topic of shame. Participant accounts differed, with some participants presenting their faith and relationship with God as a powerful antidote to shame, while others presented a relationship with God as a source of shame, condemnation, and judgement.

Hanford (2007) describes the relationship between religion, shame, and terror, arguing that religion's influence on shame and terror can either be constructive or destructive. Destructive religion produces toxic shame and/or shamelessness while constructive religion produces healthy shame and facilitates the critical analysis of social problems. An important conclusion from this theme involves the necessity of remaining critically aware of the powerful influence of religion on many people's experiences with shame. This influence can be positive or negative, as has been seen in the present findings and will be further examined in the next chapters.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored participants' understandings of and experiences with shame. Shame has been identified with a number of explicit characteristics. It has been found to be: invariably negative, powerful, intrinsically human, hidden, enduring, often debilitating, physical, social, and sometimes unremarkable. Shame is sometimes experienced as being different to guilt, but the descriptions of this differentiation were conflicted and ambiguous. Shame has been found to link directly to other emotions, such as anger, fear, and sadness. While joy is noticeably separate from shame, possible distant links have been explored. Shame has been found to exist in varying degrees of intensity. This intensity may affect, but does not necessarily control, the long term effects of shame. Shame has been interpreted in religious and spiritual contexts by many of the study's participants. Religion, Christianity in particular, has been identified as producing both helpful and unhelpful understandings of shame. Finally, the question of whether shame can have a constructive function has been addressed. This question cannot clearly and simply be answered, but many of the study's participants were open to a possible purpose or use for shame. It has been hypothesised that the ultimate function of shame is to attend to and maintain social bonds.

Chapter 6: Sources of Shame

What are the sources of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders? At first glance, this research question appears to be straight forward. However, the analysis of the data with regard to this particular research question has been a challenge. To begin, the data was analysed with attention to particular events and circumstances that instigated feelings of shame. Participants told many stories about their experiences with shame, which collectively formed an extensive list of situational triggers for shame. The themes that will be presented in this chapter reflect commonalities that were identified in the data – places where participants' stories converged around similar events or issues. However, the presentation of the data in this manner must not be interpreted to mean that the participants' experiences were limited to the sets of circumstances outlined below. The findings related to situations triggering shame were the most diverse of any of the specific questions being studied. Each participant shared heartfelt and emotive stories about deeply personal events which lead to their own painful experiences of shame. Some similarities were encountered, but each story was individually nuanced in emotion, expression, and experience. The complexity of analysing such rich and personal data will become apparent as the themes are explored.

In spite of the vast diversity of the data, a single unifying theme was identified when examining the sources of shame. On a meta-analytic level, a source of shame was identified that existed irrespective of the particular events or circumstances being described. This source is judgment – including the expressed judgement of others, one's internal judgments of oneself, or simply the imagined or anticipated judgements of others. Throughout the discussion of the circumstances that typically surround shame, a discussion will be interwoven regarding the relationship between shame and judgement. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the theoretical implications of the findings. This will focus predominantly on the theoretical conclusions that can be drawn from the link between shame and judgment, and the practical applications of these conclusions.

Childhood

Many participants reflected on childhood experiences when asked to describe specific incidents of feeling shame. In many ways, the specific sources

of shame encountered during childhood overlap with those which also occur in adulthood. However, the common phenomenon of most readily recalling childhood sources of shame, combined with the unusual power of childhood events to create long-term, persistent feelings of shame, make it worthwhile exploring this topic as a separate theme.

Kathleen introduces the topic by describing a pervasive sense of shame, which clearly originated early in her childhood, but continues to affect her in all areas of her life, even well into adulthood. “I’ve felt guilty all my life, which has been related to the shame. It was shameful to be told off. If, when I was young, [pause], everything was shame for me. I felt ashamed.” Kathleen describes having felt guilty “all my life,” which illustrates that her sense of shame has endured for at least as long as she can remember. She specifically references being disciplined and “told off” as being shameful. Being told off can be an ordinary childhood event, but in Kathleen’s case, she recalls memories of being told off with severe shame. She later says that “everything was shame for me.” This broad generalisation of everything being shameful brings a sense of futility. Shame, for Kathleen, became so big an influence in her life that it now affects everything she experiences. Kathleen finishes the quote by saying, “I feel ashamed.” This is not referenced to a particular event, and instead reflects a general state of feeling shame – often referred to in academic literature as global or internalised shame. Perhaps because a pervasive sense of shame was developed at such a young age, Kathleen’s entire life, including all of her relationships, other emotions, and perceptions, has been experienced through the lens of shame.

Later Kathleen illustrates the pervasiveness of her experience of feeling ashamed of herself. She is reflecting on an event (one of many similar events that Kathleen described), in which she felt deeply ashamed, in spite of logically knowing that she had done nothing wrong.

Researcher: So it sounds like in that case, you know she's the one who's done wrong, but you still feel the shame of it.

Kathleen: Yes, yes, yes. I know she has a problem. But I still feel the shame. And I came home and wished I had not gone. And so it does affect you and it affects your life. It pulls you down.

Kathleen is referring to regret she felt about attending a social function where someone treated her badly. Her on-going, frequently repeated experience is of feeling shame, regret, and remorse as the result of being treated disrespectfully or unkindly by others. Her tendency to feel shame, as opposed to anger, sadness, or other emotions, at the injustices she has experienced, could be interpreted as a long term effect of having experienced powerful shame as a young child.

Kathleen describes a number of specific examples of feeling shame in her childhood. Some of her stories, along with those of other participants, will be explored as I address specific areas in which shame commonly occurs during childhood.

Early input into one's identity.

Many of the participants referred to negative core beliefs or a negative self-concept when reflecting on sources of shame. In the following exchange, Nina introduces a straightforward example of being shamed by her father, who openly told her that she was stupid.

Researcher: You said you have been told you were stupid all your life. Where was that from?

Nina: From my father. And my father loved me. He taught me Latin; he did amazing things...

Nina's account highlights the power that a parent has over a child to negatively influence her perceptions of herself over an entire lifetime. Nina describes her father as loving, devoted, and capable. This serves to position him as a parent who is capable of both benefitting a child's life through positive influence, and also damaging the child through the negative influence of shame. Nina refers to her father as doing "amazing things," which illustrates a degree of admiration that she continues to hold for him. It is possible that it is this admiration that gives way for her father's words to so potently and enduringly inflict shame and doubt onto Nina's perception of herself. Nina may highly regard her father's opinion of her, which could account for his judgment of her as being stupid being particularly powerful in eliciting shame.

Charlotte also expresses the idea that a parent has a particularly powerful influence over a child's developing identity, which can be a shaming influence.

Charlotte says:

I'd say my biggest person of shame would be my mother, that you could have done better, that's just not good enough. A lot around school, academics and things like that. Just never quite reaching the mark, never being good enough really.

Charlotte describes her mother being a "person of shame" in her life. Here, shame is depicted as originating from within criticism and outspoken judgement.

Charlotte's experience was of her mother openly expressing a belief that she (Charlotte) was not good enough. The effect of this is further described in this later exchange:

Researcher: And with your mum, it sounds like [the shame] was coming from her rather than coming from within yourself?

Charlotte: Yeah, absolutely. I mean her verbal words were definitely, I mean it was outspoken shame [laughter]. "That's just not good enough. You need to try harder." That kind of stuff. Not a lot of reward, more driven-ness, you know. [. . .] It created in me to put high expectations of myself which were always unrealistic. So to never praise myself for the work I had done, but rather to go, it's just not good enough. So it created self-talk. Your mother's voice in your head. [Laughter]

This excerpt provides an interesting insight, revealing childhood events as not merely potent experiences of shame in themselves, but also as being powerfully able to initiate feelings of shame well into the future. Charlotte refers to her mother's shaming voice existing inside her own head, creating unrealistic expectations and self-doubt and criticism. Here, the source of shame was originally the spoken words of criticism coming from Charlotte's mother. However, over time, these words have been internalised, and shame – or shaming ways of thinking and perceiving oneself – now exist internally, as a part of Charlotte herself and of her worldview.

Caleb elaborates on the process by which early childhood shame can be internalised in the following quote. Caleb is discussing how to heal from shame when he says:

You have to restore the interpersonal bridge. Have to do it. There's no fast way to get well from shame, you have to restore the face, the interpersonal bridge that got ruptured with shame, which is, something's wrong with you - coming from usually parent figures - something's not good about you, and that bad thing has to be gotten rid of or hidden or whatever, but you can't get rid of it because it's you. So you're screwed. Either you turn on yourself, or you miss out on the love affection and care from survival figures, parent figures - you can't go without them, so you ultimately have to turn on yourself. What other direction... you can't pack your bag and go down the street to the Smith's house, and say you know, "Mum and Dad, you're shaming me so I'm going to move." So you have to wind up turning on yourself, which is what Adam and Eve did, turned on each other and turned on themselves. [. . .] And because we're so relational, shame is I'm forced to turn on myself because I can't turn on you, because I need you too much. And you're god-like, as my mum and dad when I'm really tiny, you are God, so you can't be wrong, it has to be me. If someone's wrong here, it must be me.

Caleb constructs shame as the process of turning on oneself – of accepting negative judgements about the self to be true. This is done by a child out of allegiance to his or her parents because the parents are depended upon for survival. Caleb's account positions a child's parents, or other authority figures, as having immense power over the child's future psychological well-being. Shame is originally put onto the child directly by the parents, intentionally or unintentionally. The child eventually, out of necessity, accepts this shame and it becomes an internalised feature of the child's self-concept. This internalised shame, if not specifically addressed in order to be healed and restored, is carried with a grown child throughout his or her life, affecting all future experiences and relationships. The judgments of one's parents are unconsciously echoed in the form of on-going judgements about the self, which result in chronic feelings of shame.

In some instances, shame, as received by a child from his or her parents, was directly related to a specific belief or feature of one's identity. In the following exchange, Kathleen introduces shame as being specifically related to feeling unwanted and useless.

Researcher: What did you feel ashamed of?

Kathleen: I think because, [pause] in the shame was the feeling of not being of any use and of not being wanted. So that shame came in - that added to it.

Researcher: So, you had that inner belief that you weren't of any use and that you weren't wanted. And...

Kathleen: No, no. And I was of no use to anybody for anything.

Kathleen does not specifically reference where her belief of being unwanted or useless came from. It appears not to have been directly spoken to her by her parents, but rather inferred from their actions and attitudes toward her. In this case, Kathleen has judged herself to be of “no use to anybody for anything.” This judgement has been long enduring - the source of debilitating shame for Kathleen.

In the following text, Caleb illustrates a very early and vivid memory of feeling shame as related to being unwanted.

The earliest time I can recall, and it's a funny way to talk about shame, because I wasn't humiliated [. . .]. But I was under five years old, because we lived at a certain house, and there was the red cupboard doors, and my mother and my father were talking about when they were courting and my mother supposedly chased my father to [another town]. And I'd never seen them really smile and be happy, especially not, not together. And I could see, they were telling this story and they were smiling and happy, and I knew in that moment that it was a mistake to have my sister and I. And I knew in that moment that their lives would have been better without us, and so while the shame wasn't, I knew that I wasn't wanted then, but it's not even that. Only in back-dating the memory can I realise that I knew I wasn't wanted, because in that moment I perceived it as, it would have been better for them. It was a bad idea to have my sister and I, and it put them behind the eight ball so to speak, and they almost got to a life, they had a taste of a life, but then [snap] they missed it. They missed the life. So that's a defining story for me.

Caleb describes that only in backdating the memory does he come to the conclusion that he was unwanted. The accuracy of Caleb's conclusion cannot be determined; however, Caleb's interpretation of what he heard and saw makes this an important, “defining” experience for him. Caleb's emotional experience of shame in response to this specific event was significant enough to create a long-lasting, distinct memory of an event that was in many ways mundane. Caleb interpreted the actions and expressions of his parents to mean that it “was a bad

idea” to have children, thus prompting Caleb to incorporate into his identity a sense of blame for ruining his parents life.

Caleb later says that he felt pity for his parents, being stuck in the situation of having unwanted children and not being able to take other opportunities in life. The choice of the word “pity” is telling, as its use is considered to be condescending, often implying a judgment being made that people have brought suffering upon themselves by the choices they have made (Gerdes, 2011). In addition to judging himself as being harmful to his parents’ future and unwanted, it also appears that Caleb may have judged his parents, possibly as being careless or stupid in having unwanted children. Caleb’s link between his feeling of shame and the events of his story is unclear. It is possible that in addition to internalising the shame of feeling unwanted, Caleb may have externalised shame, coping with the negativity of the emotion by blaming and judging his parents. This foreshadows some of the possible responses to shame outlined in chapter 8. It is also possible that Caleb’s pity and judgement of his parents lead to him feeling ashamed of his parents. While this is only speculation in Caleb’s account, other participants provided clear stories of feeling ashamed of their parents, which is often a strong source of shame in childhood.

Being ashamed of one’s parents.

Jennifer introduces the idea of being ashamed of one’s parents in the following exchange.

Researcher: Can you describe a particular instance when you felt shame?

Jennifer: Um... some friend coming around to my house and my mother is on the floor drunk. [Laughter]

In Jennifer’s case, her shame was related to the behaviour and demeanour of her alcoholic mother. Likewise, Sarah relates feeling ashamed of her mother, who suffered from severe mental illness:

She was barking, just barking, but with no apparent reason, and so as a child, I had just terrible shame. Sometimes she would go out just looking like a bag lady. She would go into these rages. It was always shame around being seen in public with her, and it wasn't a normal child, parent, I mean I've got two teenage daughters, and I'm shocked that they actually do go out with me. I'm still amazed that they would be seen with me, because I was told that all teenagers are embarrassed by their parents, and I always equated that to the sort of embarrassment that I felt. Now I realise that what I was feeling, and that shame and embarrassment and just absolute despair, mortification, was actually way worse than most people's experience. And so other teenagers would say, oh yeah, my mum embarrasses me and I think, oh okay. So I spent all my adolescence thinking that it was normal and that it was my problem. But actually, after I became an adult, and after she died, a lot of people had validated, who knew her then, so she was not very good at caring for herself, she didn't wash, she was very [whispering] smelly. She was a hoarder. [Whispering] We lived in absolute filth. It was just unbelievable, and it was just normal. And I was just so mortified.

Sarah and Jennifer both experienced shame related to their mothers not behaving in ways that were socially acceptable. Jennifer particularly links her experience of being ashamed of her mother both to her mother's mental illness and to the lack of good hygiene in her living environment. When describing her mother as smelly and the house as filthy, Jennifer's voice lowered to a whisper. This serves to highlight the degree of intense shame that Jennifer still feels over this particular issue. The whispering serves to cover or hide an issue that still cannot be spoken about confidently and openly.

Jennifer contrasts her experience of being embarrassed of her mother with the "normal" experience of a teenager being embarrassed by their parents. She says that in her case, the humiliation was severe. Interestingly, as an adolescent, Jennifer believed her experience of feeling ashamed of her mother to be normal. She says that she thought it was "her problem," which illustrates a degree of judgement that Jennifer held against herself for her feelings of embarrassment. In this case, judgement was not only a source of shame, but also the result of shame. In an interesting circle, Jennifer ultimately ended up feeling ashamed about her feelings of shame. Later in life, other people validated Jennifer's judgement of her mother as being unclean, which served to lessen her embarrassment. It appears that Jennifer's shame was lessened when her internal judgements shifted away from attacks her own character. Rather than judging herself to be unkind, Jennifer began to view her evaluation of her mother as an unclean and mentally

disturbed woman as an accurate reflection of the unfortunate reality. This cognitive shift, which greatly affected Jennifer's experience of shame, occurred when Jennifer's social context changed. She was no longer influenced by her mother's words and attitudes, and was receiving support and validation from other sources. This serves to highlight the social nature of shame – that its experience is intrinsically linked to its social context.

Discipline.

Many stories were recounted about participants feeling shame related to being disciplined during childhood, either at home or at school. In many instances, such as the one below, the discipline seems to have been designed specifically to elicit shame. In the following quote, Michelle describes being disciplined by her parents for repeatedly wetting the bed.

Well, when I was little, I must have been five or six, Mum had given me this big, huge, thick fringe, and it was horrible to try and grow it out, so she put it up on my head in a little pony tail, and I had two hair ties: a blue flower with a white middle for when I was dry, and when I wet the bed, I had to wear the ugly one, which was a green flower with a yellow middle. More often than not I was wearing the green flower. I've still got the blue one, and I still wore it until recently when it broke, and it was so precious, this blue flower hair tie, because I hardly ever got to wear it. Nobody else knew what it meant, but it was like a public badge of, "You wet your bed this morning; you have to wear the green one." And Dad used to yell at me and get really angry and cross because Mum had to wash the bed and strip the bed, and I had a big thick layer of rusty plastic over my mattress, every time I rolled over or moved it would crinkle, and people would come over, and they would say, "Why is your bed all wrinkly and crinkly?", but I didn't tell them. But Dad used to, when I got a bit older I think, I must have been about eight or nine or ten, somewhere around there, but Dad actually rubbed my face in it a few times. [. . .] I guess I don't remember when I was really little, I just remember the growlings, being yelled at and smacked and constantly told that it's disgusting and I was naughty. [Sigh] I definitely felt ashamed of myself, and then having that public badge on my head with that jolly hair tie. And then sometimes having to go to school unwashed, because Dad and Mum were just sick of it, and said, "No, you have to go to school stinky." So, I was embarrassed all day because I smelt like wees. Because I wasn't allowed to have a shower or a bath. Yeah, stink.

Michelle's story is one of profound humiliation, in this case as the result of something that she had no control over. Michelle describes the different hair ties, which were seemingly used as an incentive and punishment - as a public badge of shame. Despite her peers not knowing the significance of the colours, Michelle

still felt as if wearing the ugly hair tie was a public pronouncement of her “wrongdoing.” Michelle specifically describes her shame as being ashamed of herself. Later in the interview, Michelle speaks of feeling anger toward her parents. On some level, Michelle may have known that she was being treated unfairly. However, the harsh and punitive responses of her parents served to threaten her security in her relationship with her caregivers, and therefore threaten her identity and sense of self-worth.

At the end of the excerpt, it was revealed that Michelle’s parents would sometimes make her go to school unwashed, where she would then suffer shame as a result of being unwashed and “stinky.” It can be assumed that her peers’ reactions were of disgust and rejection. Even if they did not outwardly react, Michelle would have reasonably assumed and anticipated this reaction, which would further serve to threaten her acceptance and security in the social world. In this case, Michelle’s shame was related both to being judged and being rejected. She was judged as naughty and disgusting by her parents, who then withdrew love and compassionate care, leaving her to suffer alone in her shame. These judgements of herself were then echoed in her own mind, as well as by her peers at school. Elsewhere in the interview, Michelle reveals that she had a very difficult time at school with being bullied and feeling completely isolated from other children. Michelle’s shame served to isolate her from supportive relationships, while in a vicious loop, her isolation also served to exacerbate her shame.

Notably, most of the stories participants told about feeling shame related to being disciplined were related to instances where they felt the discipline was unjust – either through being disciplined for something they had no control over, as in Michelle’s case, or through being disciplined unduly harshly and without compassion. A unique and particularly interesting story was told by Liam. Liam referred to an incident in his youth where he and his mates were caught breaking windows with a catapult. Liam’s father punished him for the transgression, and Liam describes his thoughts and feelings in the following exchange:

Yeah, that was probably the crossiest he'd ever been with me. I mean I got a hiding and punished and all of that, which in some way that, that kind of makes you go part way to feel, "Well, I've paid my penalty. I only have to feel this much shame because I've been punished up to this point, you know." [. . .] I suppose in that sense, only as much shame to sort of make up for, beyond what I'd already been punished by. I wonder if he'd sort of given me a very sort of sorrowful look, and a speech about how much I'd let him down, that I would have felt more shame, probably. It's the getting walloped took the sting out of it, if you like, and having to pay for the repairs and all that sort of stuff, probably allowed you to think, "Well I made a stupid mistake, and I'm setting it right." So, that wasn't so much shame left I suppose. Maybe that's something to do with shame, it exists in the space where you kind of think you haven't really paid the price for what you've done wrong.

In Liam's account, he recalls an event in which he feels he was genuinely wrong and deserving of punishment. He felt shame about his offense, but he also believed that in being punished and paying for the broken windows, he had, to some degree, been able to make things right. It appears as if making amends to the owners of the damaged property allowed Liam's opinion of himself to be restored. Rather than judging himself harshly for what he had done, Liam's judgements of himself were of someone who had made a mistake but who was responsible in his actions afterwards. Liam constructs shame as something that exists in the gap between what a person has done wrong and what he has taken responsibility for and "paid the price." In "paying the price" for wrongdoing, one may be able to repair broken relationships, regain the respect of others, and restore one's own sense of value and self-worth. This shows that positive, respectful discipline, which in this case involved making reparations for the wrongdoing, can serve to lessen shame by lessening the extent to which one's identity and relationships are threatened.

Abuse.

Many of the participants referred to feeling shame in situations in which they were abused. This is a particularly potent source of shame in childhood due to the vulnerability of children in being unable to protect themselves from adult or older child abusers. Lilia tentatively discloses her experience of being sexually abused, and the shame she endured as a result, in the following exchange:

Researcher: Are there any other specific examples of feeling shame that you can think of?

Lilia: Um, when I was little, one of the neighbour's kids, I guess, sexually abused me. And I felt shame about that, you know, even though I was only little. It wasn't til I was older that I realised um, that I guess I thought it was my fault, that you know, that I'd done something, and that I felt ashamed about that. That I'd let it happen.

Lilia describes feeling shame about being abused, again, something that she had no control over. However, Lilia explains that she felt the abuse was her fault, and that she felt shame about what she had “let happen to her.” In this case, Lilia's shame was experienced in isolation; no one other than her and the abuser knew what was happening. Lilia's shame may have been the result of judging herself to have been at fault. She felt responsible for involving herself with something she believed to be shameful. Thus, she could have anticipated being blamed or judged by others, which may have motivated to keep the abuse hidden, therefore exacerbating her shame. This example will be explored in greater depth later in the chapter in a discussion surrounding shame resulting from feeling responsible for abuse. However, at present, it serves to highlight abuse as a significant source of childhood shame.

Physical development.

Another common source of shame that is unique to childhood is shame related to physical or sexual development. Among the participants in this study, this particular source of shame was mentioned only by women. Lucy introduces this topic by describing an incident that occurred early in her adolescence.

I can remember saying good night to my father, when I was probably about eleven or twelve, and just you know, developing, as a woman, and my nighty dropped down as I bent down to kiss him good night, and he could see down my nighty. Only I didn't realise what it was at the time, and he got really angry. Just that instantaneous disapproval that sort of seemed to arrive out of nowhere. I went to my room in tears I think thinking, “What on earth have I done?” And my mum came in a bit later on and told me what had happened, and explained that, I guess Dad had had this sort of response to me as a woman rather than his daughter and been shocked by it, and it had come out as disapproval, and of course I'd misinterpreted that. And when she explained it to me, of course it lessened the feeling, but there was definitely a sense of shame that was mixed up in that, and more probably about my body I think, than, the other experiences sort of more encapsulate something about my character or my personality probably, whereas that's more to do with my body.

In response to the initial event of her father's angry outburst, Lucy describes feeling a great deal of shame, mixed with confusion about what happened. Her bond with her father was obviously disrupted, and she interpreted her father's anger as disapproval and rejection. Lucy says that when her mother explained her father's reaction, her shame lessened. This is likely due to the support and lack of judgment that Lucy's mother displayed, combined with the restoration of the relationship between Lucy and her father, which occurred with the mother acting as mediator. However, it also appears as if a new experience of shame began at that point – shame that was specifically related to her body image. Later in the interview, Lucy expanded on other instances in which she felt embarrassment and shame about her body and her sexuality. In spite of the explanation to the contrary, Lucy may have interpreted her father's reaction as disapproval of her body, which was then internalised as a negative body image and long-lasting sense of being ashamed of her body.

Another example comes from Charlotte, who explains feeling shame among her peers for being a “late developer.”

Charlotte: I probably felt a lot of shame as a teenager in growing up, and I was a late developer, and I remember at school all the girls were talking about getting their periods and stuff, and I was like, "Oh yeah."
[Laughter] So that's probably self-shaming I suppose a little bit. [. . .]

Researcher: So in that situation with your friends, did you feel like you were shamed by them for not keeping up?

Charlotte: No, probably myself because I didn't tell them. [Laughter] I felt probably too ashamed to tell them that I was like, still a little girl.

Charlotte's shame was not as directly related to her body image as Lucy's.

Rather, she felt shame at being late in starting her period. Her friends did not know this because, in anticipation of their negative reactions, Charlotte chose to blend in with the group rather than admitting that she was not like them.

Charlotte says that her shame was related to not wanting to tell them that she was “still a little girl.” Charlotte's shame derived from her judgement of herself as being a “little girl” at stage in life when Pākehā culture values independence and maturity. Charlotte experienced herself as being different and possibly inferior to her social group.

School.

A final source of shame that is unique to childhood experiences is shame related to being at school – whether the shame came from social or academic situations. Some participants describe being abused, verbally, emotionally, or physically, by their school teachers. Others describe being bullied by peers, either in severe forms or in feeling shame as the result of offhand jokes or sarcastic remarks.

An example of shame being felt in the context of school is provided by Luke in the following exchange:

Luke: One at high school springs to mind of being shamed in front of my peers by a very irate school teacher - but he was probably justified [laughter]. But, when one teacher addressed another as to what should be done to me because of my misdemeanour that I'd been caught out with there was a corridor full of students all going to class, and the response from the other teacher was, "Cut him in half!" Which he bellowed out in rather [laughter]... Ah, yes, that was a very shameful experience.

Researcher: And how did you feel then - when you heard that?

Luke: About this, [gesturing] that tall. Just wanted to shrink between the floorboards and disappear. I'd been caught out doing something which was forbidden at school, and you expect punishment but to be shamed in front of goodness knows how many people all walking past by a teacher that, yeah...

Luke contrasts his experience of being shamed with being punished, saying that punishment would have been expected and warranted. However, his description of the event positions the harsh, shaming response of the teacher as being unjust. Not only was his relationship with the teachers and sense of security in his environment threatened by their excessive and cold response, but the public nature of the incident also meant that his status in the eyes of his peers was also jeopardised. By treating him so callously, the implied judgement on the part of the teacher was that Luke was beneath him, undeserving of basic respect or compassion.

Max provides a description of sweeping shame occurring on an epidemic level in high school. The shame Max describes is not related to any specific event, but rather to the common phenomenon of being judged and shamed among peers at school.

Like high school and shit like that. [. . .] Just the whole being judged by people and stuff. [. . .] But for a lot of people, they really don't want to be judged by other people. Like, small things they'd be really ashamed of, like girls and stuff, like how bitchy teenage girls can get, and you don't want to be on the receiving end of that, so you kind of like, try not to shame yourself out.

Max depicts shame as persistently invading a high school student's life, even when the situation triggering it is relatively insignificant in an adult's viewpoint in hindsight. Therefore, Max suggests that high school students often invest a great deal of energy in worrying about what others think of them, which ultimately is designed to maintain one's social connections and minimise shame.

The discussion surrounding childhood sources of shame has included a variety of specific situations that triggered feelings of shame. Most circumstances of feeling shame in childhood overlap with the next theme. Although it is neither a universal nor clearly distinguishable conclusion, most instances of children feeling shame seem to result from the actions of others, rather than from one's own actions.

Actions of Others

In adulthood, as in childhood, many times people feel shame as the result of others' actions. Again, it is impossible to cover every specific action that participants associated with memories of shame. However, a few notable examples will be explored.

Being shamed by others.

One way in which others' actions result in feelings of shame is when a person directly speaks words of shame and judgement to or about another person. Lucy provides a vivid example of this:

I can remember a really visceral experience. I was waitressing and [. . .] I had been tardy in getting [a customer] his tea [laughter]. And he stood up from the table as I brought it to him and said, "Oh forget that, you're so slow; it's not even worth having that tea!" Sort of, "You're useless," type of thing. I was so floored, I just stood there feeling like, oh his words, I made those words true.

Lucy describes an incident involving an irate customer's words that were spoken to her. The customer angrily told her that she was "so slow," which Lucy extrapolated to mean "you are useless." This caused intense shock and shame.

Lucy says, “I made those words true,” which is an interesting description of her cognitive and emotional response. The customer explicitly judged her as being slow. Also implied in his response is a judgment of her being the source of intense frustration and disappointment. Lucy extrapolated that response to interpret a judgement of her as being completely useless, which she then accepted and internalised, making those words true, as she responded with an intense, physical, paralysing experience of shame. While some participants describe shame as being an overpowering force that they are helpless to resist, Lucy positions herself with a greater degree of power, having chosen to accept the influence of shame.

Another example of being shamed by others is provided by Max. In the following exchange, he reveals feeling shame as the result of comments and attitudes that come from his mother and his friends:

Researcher: When you talk about shame being an internal thing, is it something that you just feel inside yourself? You know the difference between right and wrong and you've done wrong? Or is it more coming from messages from other people?

Max: It's a bit of both. I mean the messages definitely do come from other people. It doesn't have to be directly, like, they don't have to say it. You just pick it up here and there. You feel judged by people, like my mum and people like that especially. Yeah, cause she's like, cause she hears about me now, and she'll like try and tell me... this and that [. . .], it does affect me sometimes. Like just getting told sometimes in the past that I'm a piece of shit. I deserve that, but yeah, it's quite hard... especially with my mum, cause I'm supposed to be really close with her and stuff, but because of a lot of the things that I've done, we've kind of grown apart I guess. I hear a lot of... just cause she's disappointed and stuff and sometimes her disappointment comes out in anger towards me, and for a person that can be so insensitive, I'm actually, I can be also really sensitive to things like that. And friends and stuff too sometimes, just taking the piss out of me. Sometimes, after persistence, that can just kind do my head in a little bit too, because I know that they're right, in their way, and I guess I just want people's approval now, but that will take some time.

Max begins by expressing his shame in feeling judged by other people, even when they don't explicitly state their judgements. He says, “You just pick it up here and there,” which references an intuitive ability to perceive the negative judgements of others. However, it should be noted that while intuitive perception is plausible as a socially accepted means of meaning making, it would be

influenced not only by the subtle social clues of others, but also by Max's own internalised judgements about himself. Thus, it is very difficult to determine whether the shame is actually originating from others on the outside. It is likely to have resided at least somewhat in the person himself prior to perceiving outside judgement, which caused him to be particularly sensitive to the perception of being shamed. Later in the quote, Max highlights his sensitivity, admitting that he readily picks up on disappointment, anger, and rejection from others. Max says it can "do [his] head in a little bit," because he so badly desires other people's approval. He again expresses his sensitivity when he describes his sadness about not being close to his mother, to whom he feels he is "supposed" to be close. In addition to needing the approval of others, it also appears that he has a deep need for connection. This piece of the quote may also reference a cultural standard of valuing connection between parents and children, which Max feels he is failing to attain. Max also refers to being clearly and externally shamed by others, who told him he is a "piece of shit." It is likely that such clear, external instances of being shamed have been internalised. The internalised shame is now combining with more subtle sources of external shame to increase his sensitivity and exacerbate his overall experience of shame.

To further explore this theme, I will return to the previously described exchange with Luke, in which he was publicly shamed by a school teacher in response to being caught in wrongdoing. This excerpt continues from where the earlier quotation left off:

Researcher: So, in that circumstance, do you think the shame was from what was said to you, or more it being overheard by so many people?

Luke: The fact that the volume was so loud, the words that were used, and the fact that there were a lot of people around.

Researcher: So a combination of everything.

Luke: The whole lot. Yeah, not one of those experiences that you remember with any degree of, "Oh, that was pleasant." [Laughter] You think, "I wish it'd never happened." But, ah, then the fault was entirely mine, so I brought it on myself.

Luke describes the teacher's disproportionate response as being shaming in its own right, but his shame was exacerbated by the fact that it was witnessed by many other students and teachers. Rather than a simple episode of shaming,

Luke's experience was one of public humiliation. The public environment served to position the teacher with a greater degree of destructive power to inflict through shame. At the end of the exchange, Luke remarked that he brought the situation on himself. At some point, he had held power to prevent being shamed by preventing the behaviour to which his teachers were responding. However, that power extensively diminished at the hands of those in authority over him, as his shame and humiliation increased.

Lucy also described a potent example of feeling humiliated, resulting from public criticism received from authority figures. Here, Lucy describes an event at her university where she felt shame as the result of negative feedback from her professors in a public forum:

Well, I was just feeling sort of nervous and on the spot, and then I hear that I wasn't quite thorough enough and intellectual enough, and you know. Not not prepared enough, because I was prepared, but just that awful... I think it's got a lot to do with self-consciousness, and that public forum once again. All the department was there [laughter], so all the authority figures lined up, one after the other - it's not just my colleagues listening. It's that, it's that feeling of, you... and your work and your presentation being evaluated and assessed and not just your work, but yourself as a person, the whole deal, the total package.

Like Luke, Lucy describes the shame as being exacerbated by the public nature of the occasion. She felt additional embarrassment, beyond what she would have felt receiving the feedback in a private context. Lucy relates that she felt herself as a person was being assessed, not just her work, by a large group of people. It appears as if being publically judged by one staff member as inadequate, or inadequately prepared, was especially potent because Lucy may have perceived that the others in attendance would also adopt that judgement of her. Thus, the "authority figures" in this example also held an unusually significant power to inflict shame, due to the presence of so many observers and their authority over the community and the proceedings.

Being rejected by others.

Another example from Lucy introduces the topic of being rejected by others:

I guess my experiences of shame through my adolescence would have been tied with [my body image]. My first sexual experience, my first showing of myself and my body drew a comment, you know, that that related to me being overweight. And, of course you know, I just took that in as, that's, that's who I am, and that's a fair enough comment, and all of those sorts of things, that just compound the feeling of shame.

Lucy's description of this experience of shame is interesting, in that she clearly constructs the shame as having originated from her sexual partner. His negative judgement regarding the attractiveness of her body was the immediate trigger for her shame. However, Lucy describes internalising the comment and associated judgement, believing it to be a true and accurate reflection of who she was. Lucy says that her acceptance of the judgment compounded the feeling of shame. She felt shame as the result of being rejected in a particularly vulnerable moment. However, the shame intensified and expanded because she internalised the judgement, owning it as not only the accurate reflection of how anyone else would see her, but also as her own perception of herself. While this example is being used to describe shame as the result of being rejected by others, it also introduces body image as a potential source of shame. Other participants also described instances when they felt shame as a result of their body image. These examples do not fit clearly within one heading, and are instead interspersed throughout the chapter in appropriate places.

Charlotte provides another example of shame resulting from rejection - in this case, as the result of being rejected by a long-term boyfriend.

Charlotte: When my ex and I split up I felt a lot of shame, because he decided there was someone better. [Laughter] There's a lot of shame there. That probably also echoed a lot of those same feelings you know, like, well I'm obviously not good enough, I can't be what you need me to be. A lot of that hopelessness again. It echoed a lot of my mum's voice, I think.

Researcher: In that situation, do you think the shame was coming from within yourself, or from your ex?

Charlotte: No, it probably activated it in me. [. . .] I felt the shame and I interpreted that because he said he wanted to go. I don't really know how else you respond to someone who says I'm leaving you. [Laughter] Oh awesome, really glad about that, not! Yeah, that was probably quite a shaming season of life really. I had to spend my time trying to figure out if really I did have anything to offer. That shame probably created a sense of insecurity in me, like going, am I really that bad? Am I really that unlovable?

In this example, Charlotte's rejection and resulting shame created a "sense of insecurity," which caused her to actively question herself and her identity. She referenced several specific questions that she asked herself: "Am I bad?", "Am I lovable?", "Do I have anything to offer or contribute?" Each of these questions addresses foundational issues of identity. As mentioned earlier, a strong link exists between shame and judgement, and in fact, the broad issue of judgement supersedes the influence of any specific situational triggers with regard to the overall source of shame. This example provides tangible evidence of shame bringing about specific judgements related to Charlotte's identity. This reinforces the concept that shame is strongly linked to judgement. This example also provides insight into what may be the most significant conclusion of the chapter. The source of shame is judgment. Specifically, the source of shame is often negative judgement targeted at one's identity. As Charlotte asked herself whether she had any worth or ability to contribute, she wrestled with questions that are fundamental to human existence: Who am I, and where do I belong? The powerful nature of shame is understandable when considering the association between shame and this particularly significant judgement about such a vulnerable, core issue as one's identity and basic goodness or badness.

One's Own Actions

The discussion of sources of shame up until this point has focussed predominantly on shame resulting from others' actions – in circumstances such as childhood abuse or being rejected or openly shamed in adulthood. Another powerful trigger of shame is one's own actions. Shame can result from someone's direct outward actions, failure to act, or even from a subjective perception of responsibility, which may or may not be accurate. Some salient examples will be explored of shame that has resulted from, or been perceived to

result from, some action or sense of responsibility on the part of the participants themselves. As with the other themes being discussed in this chapter, the relationship between shame and judgment will continue to be explored.

Failure.

Sophie introduces the theme of shame resulting from one's own behaviour with an example that actually relates to feeling shame as the result of inaction. Late in life, Sophie feels deep shame as a result of not defending her daughter from emotional and verbal abuse by her father, Sophie's ex-husband. Sophie says:

My husband was very controlling, and he used to give our a daughter a bit of a hard - well, a very hard time - and I never stood up for her and that gives me shame now. [. . .] And now we don't talk about it and she's a very strong woman, but I do feel ashamed that I didn't stand up for her. [. . .] Because I should have protected her, and that's [failing to protect her] not what mothers do. He didn't hurt her physically. Well, he was - it was verbal, he never, it was never a physical thing, it was always verbal. And, I didn't, I didn't step in.

Sophie clearly says that she “should” have protected her daughter. “That’s what mothers do.” These statements reflect judgements Sophie holds of herself for having let her daughter down by failing to protect her. She contrasts herself with mothers in general, showing that she distances herself from the normal standard of what a loving, committed mother would do for her child, at least with regard to this particular issue. Later in the interview, Sophie speaks about how her relationship with her daughter is strained as a result of this failure. Sophie’s shame results not only from the threat to her identity and conceptualisation of herself as a good mother in her own heart and mind, but also from judgements Sophie’s daughter has made that have adversely affected the security and trust of their relationship in the long term.

In the following excerpt, Max relates a story about feeling shame as the result of perceived failure.

Max: Now that I've finally grown up a bit, hit my rock bottom and all of that, but compared to the other kids my age, I feel really embarrassed of my circumstances and stuff. I mean, I'm finishing off my home detention sentence at the moment. I did some bad things and had to go to rehab and all of that and it's just really embarrassing, like when I see my mates and stuff and where they're going now. I don't even like talking about myself because I just feel like I haven't achieved much, because of those bad choices that I made.

Researcher: So, when you feel embarrassed, it's in comparison to who they are and what they've done with their lives?

Max: Yeah, oh and more with regards to myself and what I've done with my life. I mean I do compare myself to them and that makes me feel a little bit worse, but also internally, like I know what I should have done. I know the difference between right and wrong, and obviously I didn't choose that. So, like internally you kind of start to feel like a failure or like there's something wrong with you.

More details about Max's circumstances will be discussed later, but the current quote reveals Max's sense of shame at failing to live up to his internal standards of right and wrong. His shame also results from failing to achieve what some of his friends have achieved, and what Max feels he should have achieved at his age and stage of life. In Max's case, his sense of failure leads him to question whether there is something wrong with him. This is another example of shame being associated with an attack on a person's core identity. From within a state of feeling shame, Max has made negative judgements about his foundational identity. Namely, "I am a failure," and "There may be something wrong with me."

Moral Transgressions.

Mark introduces the theme of shame resulting from moral transgressions. This is a particularly interesting issue to explore, as cultural values and religious practices have a significant influence on constructions of morality. Mark relays a story about how he converted to Christianity and immediately stopped drinking and using drugs. However, over time, he started to "slip" and be tempted into behaviours that he now considered to be immoral. Mark says:

But then when that grace started to lift after around the two year mark, when I started to be tempted in various things, or slip up, if I could hide, then I'd be back in hiding. I'd hide that from my Christian friends or from my Christian leaders, because it was unthinkable. Because I knew I was called to the ministry, so now I have this strong sense of calling to ministry, and I need to have an extra super-duper level of purity, whatever the fuck that is - purity to get to this dream, but then I was not doing it, but I had it, and then it was like slipping away from me. So then a couple of times, I got outed, so... [. . .] And there was a couple of girls I went out with, and I wound up having sex with one of them, and then it was this terrible, guilty, shameful, awful thing. And then, I don't know if we got found out, or she felt so guilty that she told the youth pastor, and then, so then I got outed. And then, amidst that somewhere, I was drinking alcohol again, and got arrested for a DUI. [. . .] So then it was that shaming thing of, oh, I've screwed up, and I'm bad, and how can I make it up? And now I'm further behind of the morality code, and maybe even Christianity isn't enough. Basically then, Christianity then became not even enough to heal me from shame, but it could heal me from shame, if only I could get my shit together, like I had. So I had this amazing experience where I was free, and now this stuff was going on, and so I just carried on.

A number of insights are revealed in this quotation. Mark relates feeling shame as the result of a number of moral transgressions. Drinking alcohol, getting arrested for drunk driving, and having sex with his girlfriend were a few specific examples Mark gave of his “slip-ups.” His sense of morality was shaped by the teachings of his Christian church, which dictated acceptable behaviour for its members.

Mark's desire to belong to this group meant that he aligned his own moral standards with theirs. Interestingly, Mark relates feeling shame to being caught or “outed” in his transgressions. It appears as if he intensely feared rejection from his Christian friends and leaders. To violate his own moral standards was “unthinkable,” but to have his violations known by others from whom he needed acceptance was all the more shameful.

The exchange with Mark continues:

Researcher: The shame in that context, where do you think it was coming from?

Mark: The shame? Well I'd already internalised it, so I could say it came from me. I didn't bring it into the world, it came from the outside, but once it becomes automatic and unconscious, it functions all by itself. [. . .] I will give some of the blame to Christianity, and the kind of Christianity I was involved in, because they didn't do anything to stop it. So you got belonging [. . .], then you got to be special and different from the rest of the world, who needed to join us, but you had to pay the price of looking good and being good, and if you didn't, then you would be shamed, and who knows, was it coming from them? I'd say it was definitely coming from me. I already had it in there, I was already shaming myself, but they, I would definitely say the brand of Christianity I was involved in wasn't doing anything to stop that process from happening. I'm sure they didn't know how. So, it really didn't matter how called or gifted you were, it meant how pure you were, and I just wasn't going to measure up. And I did get to the place where I knew that I wasn't going to make it.

Mark reveals that the specific judgement that was linked with shame in this situation was related to his level of "purity." Being judged, by himself or by others as "impure," was a significant threat to his identity in a religious culture in which purity was supremely valued.

Charlotte describes another example of shame relating to moral transgressions in the following exchange:

Charlotte: A massive one for me is, I had an abortion when I was a teenager, and that was a lot of shame. That was probably one of my biggest shame things. And I still wouldn't just talk about it freely to anyone, you know what I mean? Because I feel like people don't really understand maybe. No, and you can't really, unless you're in the situation, you can't really understand why anyone would do that.

Researcher: Is that something that you always felt shame about, even at the time?

Charlotte: At the time actually, interestingly enough, when I found out I was pregnant, my greatest shame was, I couldn't, I couldn't face going through with it because I would have to tell my mother. Yeah, because she never knew. No one even knew, just me and my boyfriend. It was funny, it was funny aye, like I think now how much power that held over me, but it's knowing that I'd have to tell her was too great, too great a shame for me.

Researcher: So you think the shame of that was the biggest motivator in the decision to have an abortion?

Charlotte: There were probably two biggest motivators. That was definitely one of them, and the other was, I had so much security in that guy, that I didn't want to lose him, because he didn't want to have the baby. And so I couldn't face that I was... it was either him or have the kid, so either way I'd have to do it on my own or lose him.

Charlotte's shame relates both to getting pregnant at a young age outside of marriage, and to having an abortion, something she considered to be immoral. Charlotte's reluctance to talk about the abortion, which is now well in the past, indicates her fear in expecting to be judged or rejected by others, who she suspects will not understand her choice. Her shame in relation to getting pregnant centred on her mother's expected reaction or judgement. Charlotte says that her decision to have the abortion was significantly motivated by her fear of her mother's harsh and shaming reaction toward discovering that she was pregnant. Her other motivation was her boyfriend's wish to terminate the pregnancy. In Charlotte's case, fear of rejection and the additional shame of being publicly discovered to be pregnant, motivated her to make a choice that also caused shame, but which was a less public and severe experience of shame. Charlotte and Mark's long and vivid remembrance of these events illustrates the poignancy of moral transgressions to create lasting feelings of shame.

Disappointing others.

Lilia introduces the theme of shame relating to disappointing others in the following exchange:

Lilia: I guess maybe when I was younger, with Mum and Dad, if I did anything that they considered to be bad, I felt ashamed and that I've disappointed them, or you know, hadn't done what I was supposed to, or....

Researcher: So the shame was related to disappointing your parents?

Lilia: Yeah.

Researcher: And that was usually when you had done something that was bad?

Lilia: Yeah, or they didn't approve of, and yeah, that they made very clear they didn't approve of!

Researcher: So, I'm just wondering, did you ever feel shame about something that you thought was okay, but they still didn't approve of?

Lilia: Yep, when I decided to get divorced, when I was older. They didn't understand what was going on, and I felt like I'd failed, and I'd disappointed them, and I felt ashamed about that. I knew for me that that was the right thing to do, and I... I felt bad that they didn't agree, but, stuck with it anyway.

Researcher: So when you felt bad that they didn't agree, what was that like for you?

Lilia: It was really hard. I guess most of my life I tried to make them happy and do things that, even if it was something that I didn't really want to do but they thought it was a good idea, I did it to keep the peace, and this was one thing that I really stood my ground on.

Lilia begins by describing shame in her younger years as the result of child's desire to please her parents. However, this shame extended into adulthood, continuing to occur in situations where Lilia's parents did not approve of her actions. She gives the example of her divorce. Her shame did not relate to the divorce itself, which she believed was the right thing to do, but rather to the disapproval of her parents related to the divorce. Her decision to "stand her ground" placed strain on the relationship, upset the peace, and resulted in feelings of shame for Lilia.

Mark also describes a situation in which he felt shame relating to disappointing others, in this case, his leader in a work situation.

So the last major shame was working in a particular place. [. . .] I couldn't be enough, I couldn't do enough, I couldn't produce enough. I couldn't get it right for this leader, I was totally preoccupied with getting it right, every minute of every day that I was awake, he was on my mind, I was trying to please him. So I felt ashamed that no matter how gifted I was, I just couldn't get it right for him.

Mark describes living in a state of intense anxiety, desperately wanting to please someone for whom he felt he could never be enough. His shame in this case related to his performance - to not "getting it right." Mark's strong desire to please and be accepted by this leader lead him to devote intense amounts of energy to trying to perform well in his job to avoid disappointing his boss. It is unclear to what degree the judgement of not being enough was Mark's perception and to what degree it was coming from the leader himself. However, it is clear that Mark's fear of disappointing this person lead to excruciating shame. Given

previous conclusions of shame being closely linked to negative attacks on a person's identity, it is reasonable to conclude that Mark may have looked to this person to affirm his identity and sense of worth. When he received destructive messages that his work and himself as a person was "not enough," he responded with consuming feelings of shame.

Hurting people.

The next theme explores hurting other people as a potential trigger or source of shame. Drew begins this exploration in the following quotation, where he is discussing feeling shame about how he managed a controversial workplace situation with a difficult employee.

Researcher: Where did the shame come from in that situation? [. . .] Was it your own feeling of maybe you didn't do things right? Or was it other people's reactions to the decision you made that caused you to feel shame?

Drew: Yeah, um, a fair bit of both. It really wasn't my decision, [. . .] but I agreed with it. It's a big decision, because I didn't want to hurt the man, but I didn't believe this was the best place for him [. . .]. But, it really hurt our people for various reasons, and there was a lot of blaming and shaming going on, and I got blamed a lot, got a lot of angry e-mails. And so, I think there's the both there. One - could I have done it different? Could I have done it better? Like if I was a better leader and was able to lead him in a different way, would that have helped with... you know? So I think it's definitely both, and then projected shame and people having a bit of a spaz. [. . .] But that's the toughest thing I've ever had to face, and mostly because it affects so many people.

Drew links his experience of shame to questions he asked himself about his competency and ability to lead. Again, this links shame to an attack on his identity. However, he also connects his experience of shame with the description of people being hurt as the result of the way the situation was handled. Thus, the shame extends further than a simple questioning of one's abilities, to encompass the shared pain of hurt people and strained relationships.

A brief exchange with Michelle highlights the nature of shame being a relational, social emotion, which often occurs as the result of hurting others, or placing strain or conflict in relationships.

Researcher: So it's interesting the way you worded that, [to resolve shame by] going to another person. When you feel shame, is it usually in the context of a relationship?

Michelle: I can't think of a time when it wouldn't. I don't know how you'd be shame... how I would be ashamed, with just me? I don't know how.

Michelle positions shame as exclusively occurring in relationships, almost always involving having hurt another person. This gives further weight to the conclusion reached in chapter 6 about shame having a social nature. Its source can be directly linked to severed or threatened relationships.

Letting yourself down; letting others down.

In the next quote, Liam introduces the theme of shame resulting from letting yourself and others down. These two seemingly different issues will be explored together because, in situations like Liam's, it is often difficult to distinguish between them.

I'm just trying to think about sort of letting my sort of standards slip. You set out with very high ideals in your marriage, and then obviously, life kind of puts you through some choppy waters and stuff, and I mean we're still together and everything and our marriage is all okay, but I wonder if, if I feel shame for [pause], like, I, I, I, kind of cheated on my wife a little bit about 10 years ago. I didn't sleep with someone, but I did some stuff I shouldn't have done in a night club with her, which kind of came out, in the, in the wash with my wife. So, I must have felt shame. I mean I probably feel ashamed talking about it right now actually. But it's been put right, I guess. But, I think I feel shame in that, from a lost innocence or something. You sort of set out with an ideal that you don't live up to. And I think there's probably that, it's that it's me that hasn't lived up to it, which is the basis for the most shame.

Liam relates his shame not only to letting his wife down by cheating on her, but also to his disappointment in himself for not living up to his "high ideals" with regard to his marriage. He speaks about a "loss of innocence," which conjures images related to mourning and grieving. Here, shame is constructed as existing within the process of grief. This grief is centred on a loss of innocence and integrity. It has been previously suggested that shame may cause someone to question his identity. In this case, shame is particularly potent, as it has caused Liam to answer the question of "Who am I?" with conclusions that are difficult to accept. Liam is faced with the realisation that his integrity and his marriage are not as ideal as he once believed. In many other instances, shame is related to

negative judgements about the self that are false, or at least significantly exaggerated. In Liam's case, while it would be possible for him to exaggerate the significance of his actions, it appears likely that his grief and shame are related to his judgements of himself that are realistic. He can no longer think of his marriage as perfect or of himself as completely trustworthy. He does not explicitly state what conclusions he has drawn, but he has clearly changed his opinion of himself after not living up to "the ideal," which he explains is the root cause of his shame in this situation.

Mark describes another powerful experience of shame, which occurred during early adolescence at school. Shame is prolific in this example in a number of ways, but, with regard to the current theme, it is particularly interesting to note the shame that is occurring as a result of letting others down. Mark says:

So there was these two teachers [. . .], and they didn't take dumb kids, they just took kids who weren't meeting their potential. [. . .] And everybody was given a demeaning nick-name. And there was these tins of washers and you put them on, like key-chains or on strings, and they were called points, and it was pure behaviourism. And you were called to account. You had to pay points for doing something wrong, or just because they were angry at the class, and we'd all have to line up. You'd be lined up, in this thing, you didn't have enough points, and if you went to pay the points, because we'd been noisy in class or something, some punishment, if you didn't have them, then you were going to get [the cane]. So you're in this line begging your fellow classmates for some points to borrow them, because you're going to be hit - physically hurt - if you don't have them, and so, the smart kids who succeed in that class were able to turn off their compassion and not help anyone. So the way to succeed was not just only to be obedient, but to not be compassionate, to just live for yourself, it was total reward system, it was humiliating to beg, it was also humiliating, it was like, am I going to give this kid some points, and then I might get beaten? Or should, if I don't, I know that he will or she will. Yeah, it's awful, it was awful.

Mark relates feeling shame not only from the public humiliation of being demeaned and abused by the teachers, but also as the result of letting down the other children in the class if he could not or did not give them points. He describes a truly awful situation in which in order to survive and protect themselves, students would "turn off their compassion." While this would protect the student physically, it could plant lasting shame, causing the child to construct his or her identity, perhaps as being smart, but also possibly as being cold, merciless, or mean. While this example relates to feeling shame as the result of

letting others down, it is worth noting its overlap with other issues such as childhood abuse and being shamed by others. The teachers in this situation held an incredible amount of power, not only to shame the children directly, but also to create a classroom culture in which shame was prolific in the interactions among students.

Merging Internal and External Influences

A number of the examples that have been discussed thus far in the chapter have shown that the source of shame is not clearly identifiable as being internal to the person feeling shame or external, brought about by someone from the outside. This section will address more examples of situations where the line between internal and external sources of shame is vague. A few notable situations in which this merging of internal and external influences occurs are when someone feels responsible for abuse, in situations where shame is felt for being different to others, and when shame is felt with regard to talking about shame.

Feeling responsible for abuse.

With regard to feeling responsible for abuse, it is important to state explicitly that, by the definition of abuse, a child or adult victim is never responsible for what was done to them. However, from within the limited perspective of the victim, this is often not so clearly distinguishable. Jennifer introduces the topic when she says in relation to abuse she endured while her alcoholic mother was drunk: “But I think like when you're younger, you feel it's sort of your fault, in a way. But, as you get older you realise that it just can't be helped.” Jennifer is referring to the abusive and neglectful behaviour of her alcoholic mother. She acknowledges that in hindsight, she sees that she had no ability to control the situation. However, at the time, she felt, at least to some degree, that it was her fault. When linked with other information she divulged during the interview, it becomes clear that at least part of the shame she felt when her friends saw her mother was the result of feeling responsible for her mother's behaviour. This reaction is fitting with the egocentrism often displayed by children. It is important to recognise that one's lifelong perception of one's identity, as well as one's long lasting experience of shame, can be coloured by false feelings of responsibility and shame for abuse that, in an adult's eyes, was clearly inflicted by another person.

Lilia also references feeling shame as the result of feeling responsible for abuse. The following exchange continues from a previous quotation from Lilia's interview, where Lilia reveals that she was sexually abused as a child by an older child.

Lilia: I guess it wasn't til I was older that I realised that I guess I thought it was my fault, that I'd done something, and that I felt ashamed about that. That I'd let it happen I guess. [. . .]

Researcher: And it sounds like your shame was coming from a sense of guilt for letting it happen?

Lilia: Yeah, yeah, and not wanting to, not wanting to say anything I guess, because I didn't want to cause any problems.

Lilia relates her shame to having “let it happen,” revealing that she feels she could have prevented the abuse and, therefore, that it was her fault. Lilia's feeling of responsibility extends beyond the scope of the abuse; she says that she did not say anything or ask for help, because she did not want to cause problems. This echoes the positioning of herself as being responsible for the abuse, as well as responsible for any consequences that would come from the abuse being revealed. It appears that both Jennifer and Lilia considered that there was something shameful about themselves or their actions, which not only allowed, but caused, the abuse to which they were subjected. This internal reaction is occurring despite the fact that the responsibility for the abuse and resulting shame is clearly identifiable, by an independent adult, as to reside solely with the abuser.

Being different.

Another source of shame relates to being different from others. This theme, even more than most, is intrinsically linked to a discussion of culture. Being “different” implies being different than “normal,” and the norms of socially acceptable behaviour, attitudes, and circumstances are defined within a cultural context. While the experience of shame may be internal and private, the expectations that illicit shame are externally defined by one's social environment.

Elisabeth introduces the idea of feeling shame as a result of being different when she says, “My experience of shame is of, when I was younger, I certainly felt a deep shame that I didn't have a father, so therefore I wasn't normal.” In Elisabeth's eyes, “normal” children had fathers, and so she was not normal because her father had passed away when she was very young. Being fatherless

defined her identity and excluded her from a sense of belonging and acceptance in her cultural environment.

Another culturally grounded source of shame is poverty. In the following quotation, Peter introduces how poverty and a loss of social standing caused significant shame for him.

I'm supposed to be having physio, but I've gone broke and I'm on a benefit, and even though it's subsidised I can't afford the 20 bucks to go. The fact that you could be in society and lose all your status and benefits and watch them just erode away, and know that you used to have all those things, and that people judge you by it. So shame is very much tied up with... you find yourself there through judgement.

Peter makes a direct link between shame and judgement, specifically referencing the judgement he perceives from others for being poor and receiving a benefit.

Peter links shame to being dependent on social welfare. Interestingly, it is possible that shame related to being on a benefit is particularly potent among Pākehā New Zealanders. “Normality” is referenced by the patterns of the social and cultural groups to which a person belongs. While it is important not to discount the ability of the dominant culture’s norms to influence shame among other New Zealand sub-cultures, it is also worth considering that shame may be intense and unique for someone, such as Peter, who had once experienced prosperity and high social standing. The expectations of his previous social circles have a significant impact on his present experience with shame.

In the following excerpt, Elisabeth continues on from her earlier quote, when she revealed that she felt shame as the result of being “abnormal” in not having a father. Here, Elisabeth expands on this, offering a culturally grounded opinion on her specific experience with shame:

I think it's expectation and assumption. I think somewhere along the line, maybe cultural influences, maybe it's weighing up what I perceive as normal as opposed to abnormal or not normal, carrying the assumption that people will judge you if they know certain things about you. [. . .] I think when I was a young person, it's definitely different now, but, culturally, you are advantaged if you're a New Zealand Pākehā in this country. And so, maybe that just made my perception of normal and abnormal more robust, as far as, I was pretty sorted if I was born into a white family, and white families had mums and dad and white families were okay. So, maybe, that just brought emphasis to my feeling of abnormal.

Elisabeth highlights the impact of Pākehā culture on her experience of shame, saying that New Zealand Pākehā are advantaged, which brings along with it an expectation to live up to that advantaged social standing. It appears as if the prevalent appearance of “sorted, white families” added weight to Elisabeth’s shame, intensifying her judgement of her own family as being abnormal or wrong.

The final example to be addressed in this section involves a rather lengthy exchange, but it is interesting and gives light to a number of issues relating to being different, cultural influences of shame, and the source of shame generally.

Researcher: And you said you've done something that you were really, really ashamed of.

Max: Yeah, me and my friends ... one night we were all on drugs and stuff and they ended up, uh, robbing people, like... with machetes. I didn't want to do it at the start, and I wish, I'm so ashamed that I didn't stay to my word. There was about eight of them all up, just robbing innocent people with a machete, saying like, give me your stuff, sort of thing, you know, threatening them and I waited in the car, for the....for the first five. I was like, no, I don't want to go to jail. I don't want to do that, and for some stupid reason like, I can't even blame them, I ended up giving in and going along with them. So then obviously we got caught, and it was just like, if I had have just stayed true to myself and um, not gone along with it in the first place then I wouldn't be like sitting here [on home detention] today.

Researcher: It sounds like you resisted for a while and then gave in. Was it giving into what they were expecting, or...?

Max: Yeah, pretty much. I've always been sort of a weak boundaried sort of person - always attracted kind of troublesome people. Up until recently... I look for different qualities in my friends now, but I've always kind of been in with the riff raff, and always kind of gone along with everything, you know. “Yeah, I'll do it.” That was the reputation I... like when I was a lot younger, that was the reputation I wanted. You know, not to be feared by people, but be like, not give a fuck what they think - that real rebellious kind of state of mind.

Researcher: So, I'm just wondering, and it's just a guess, so tell me if I'm wrong, but when you were sitting in the car deciding whether to go out and join them in what they were doing, you said you felt really ashamed of what you'd done, and I imagine at the time you even felt some shame about what they...

Max: Yeah, you know, I didn't... I really didn't enjoy it. I really, really disliked it, felt really uncomfortable. It didn't make me... I think they kind of got a kick out of it, like a power trip. But, I really, really wasn't enjoying myself at all, while I was doing it, nah.

Researcher: I'm just wondering if maybe on some level you might have been ashamed of the fact that you weren't joining in, and if that was what motivated you to get out of the car?

Max: Probably... yep, probably subconsciously that's what it was. I mean, I wouldn't have done something like that just by myself, off my own will, without encouragement.

Researcher: Do you remember that being something you felt?

Max: Yeah, like a sense of... I don't know if shame, yeah, could have. I felt almost like I had to join in with them, just, to prove myself. And if I hadn't have gone through with it, maybe I would have felt ashamed in a way... but I mean, now, like looking back, I think I would have felt quite good if I didn't. [Laughter] Yeah, but at the time, I guess I just wanted to be like everyone else and join in.

Researcher: So, in what way did you think you needed to prove yourself?

Max: I didn't want to be seen as being soft or chickening out, so I guess in that way, yeah. It was what I didn't want that made me do it rather than what I did want.

This powerful example highlights how shame is a culturally referenced emotion. At the time of Max's offence, he was associating with a criminal subculture. His conscience, influenced by his upbringing in an ordinary New Zealand home, influenced him to resist engaging in the attacks. However, his peer group, and his desire to be accepted and respected by his friends, served as a competing influence on Max's behaviour. Ultimately, his desire for acceptance, to prove himself and to not be seen as soft, was the stronger influence. Max is open to the possibility that it could have been shame that motivated him to get out of the car and join in the attacks, a decision that had life altering consequences. Now that Max is more firmly connected with his family and associating with more positive peers, he feels significant shame for having hurt innocent people and violated the basic standards of humanity that are valued in mainstream culture. This example serves to illustrate a point made in chapter 2 – that shame is oriented to the norms and expectations of one's culture, or whatever subsection of the culture with which one is associated. Another interesting point to note in this example is Max's expressed desire not to be seen as soft or chickening out. This illustrates an additional value of Pākehā culture, which is that men are to be tough, strong, and independent.

Talking about shame.

A final source of shame to be specifically explored is shame that results from talking about shame. Again, this is a feature of Pākehā culture, which values independence and composure. Sophie highlights the tendency not to talk about feeling shame in the following exchange:

Researcher: How do you differentiate between shame and guilt?

Sophie: [Pause] I'm not quite sure. You can feel guilty about something but you don't necessarily feel shameful about it. Guilty, you might tell somebody, "Oh, I feel a bit guilty about that." But I don't know if you'd talk anybody about being, feeling shameful. I'm not sure. To me it's a more private emotion.

Sophie constructs shame as a private emotion, which echoes earlier findings relating to the hiddenness of shame. Lucy expands on the social and cultural tendency to avoid talking about shame, saying that talking about shame can, in itself, be a source of shame. Lucy says:

Researcher: Do you speak about shame very often?

Lucy: No. [Laughter]

Researcher: Have you ever spoken about shame?

Lucy: Oh yeah, yep. In, in the course that I'm doing, we're required to have our own therapy. So, there's a lot more awareness about it while you're engaged in that sort of encounter, but even in my therapy, I notice a real reluctance to go near shame. I will do it, because it's therapy and it's [laughter] supposed to be helping me deal with it and integrate it, and if you don't go there, you're not going to manage it. But even going to talk about shame is, is sort of a little bit shaming. [Laughter]

Lucy references the benefits of talking about shame – dealing with it, integrating it, and managing it. However, she also notes a personal tendency to avoid talking about shame, even in her own therapy. Lucy notes with nervous laughter that talking about shame is “a little bit shaming.” This suggests that perhaps, Lucy feels exposed and vulnerable to judgment talking about an emotion that is more comfortably kept private. While shame that motivates a person to avoid talking about shame is inherently private, it is influenced by the anticipated judgements and negative reactions of others.

Implications of the Findings

This chapter identified and explored a number of broad themes, which covered a variety of situational triggers for shame. Again, it is important to note that the few examples that were discussed in this chapter do not serve as an exhaustive representation of the vast variety of situations triggering shame that the participants described. Rather, some particularly vivid examples of common themes have been reported.

Some of these situational triggers for shame have previously been specifically researched, while others have received no or minimal previous attention in psychological research literature. The most clearly established situational trigger for shame is childhood sexual abuse, which has been researched more widely than any of the other events or situations that have been linked to shame. The link between shame and childhood sexual abuse is clearly established (e.g. Feiring, Taska, & Lewis, 2002; Feiring & Taska, 2005; Nathanson, 1989). Previous research has also linked shame to other forms of childhood abuse, namely physical and psychological abuse (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998; Moran, Bifulco, Ball, Jacobs, & Benaim, 2002). Other childhood sources for shame have been less extensively researched. However, some evidence exists for a link between shame and body image in childhood (Gilmartin, 2013). Gilbert, Cheung, Grandfield, Campey, and Irons (2003) also explored shame as linked to negative factors in a child's environment that are not severe enough to be classed as abuse, such as overprotection and low levels of parental warmth.

Childhood shame is particularly potent due to the inherent vulnerability of children. Additionally, the findings have shown that some children may have a tendency to internalise shame reactions, which can then continue to influence their experiences of shame well into adulthood. It is therefore recommended that childhood experiences with shame could be the focus of future research attention.

The participants' experiences of feeling shame particularly strongly in the school environment can be partly explained by referring to Erikson's stages of psychosocial development (Widick, Parker, & Knefelkamp, 1978). Erikson argued that the developmental task of adolescence is resolving conflicts around identity and role confusion. As shame is closely related to judgements about the self that threaten one's identity, it is understandable that shame is particularly prolific at this age, and that adolescents are particularly sensitive to shame, as a

solid sense of identity is being strongly sought after but not yet achieved. The complexity of shame that occurs in school environments is another under-studied issue, which warrants future research attention.

Very little research addresses the sources of shame for adults that have been described in this chapter, which have been very broadly described as encompassing the actions of others, one's own actions, and the merging of internal and external influences. This also warrants future research attention. Brown (2006) qualitatively studied sources of shame among adults. Other than Brown's work and my own study, no other qualitative research has been found that investigated shame in this manner and context. Brown found the source of shame for women to be a web of competing and conflicting individual and social demands. In contrast, a universal trigger of shame was found among men – weakness (Brown, 2010). Brown's results are similar to those of the present study. The competing, conflicting social demands that Brown describes represent judgements or evaluations of the self, either from oneself or from others. Failure to live up to such demands can create a real or perceived threat to one's social standing and relationships. Thus, while Brown describes her work differently, the results are congruent with the findings in this study. While I did not compare shame between genders, I did discover some instances in which being tough, independent, and capable were culturally held values, for which participants felt shame if they judged themselves to be violating. However, while I agree that weakness is a viable and arguably prolific trigger for shame among men from Western cultures, I would argue that it is not the only source of shame for men. Male participants in my study also described feeling shame as a result of being unwanted, from damaged relationships, or from violating one's conscience, to name a few examples. Furthermore, shame that has been triggered by weakness can be traced, on a deeper level, to culturally grounded judgements about the significance of being weak. I propose that the root cause of shame triggered by weakness is the judgements that are made of the self as the result of being weak, as well as the impact those judgements have on one's relationships.

This chapter highlighted a number of examples where participants reported feeling deep and long-lasting shame as the result of circumstances that may have been benign to others. Chapter 8 will explore responses to shame, which will shed light on why some responses to shame tend to exacerbate future

shame, while others can lessen the power of shame and promote long-term resilience. However, one's response to shame is not the only factor that explains why some people are more profoundly affected by shame than others. Gilbert and Andrews (1998) describe "shame proneness" as an internal factor that influences both the readiness of a particular individual to feel shame and the severity of shame that is experienced in response to a particular situational trigger. A number of theories offer explanations as to why some people are more prone to shame than others. Stipek (1995) argues that during early childhood, a lack of positive mirroring from one's parents could increase a child's shame-proneness or sensitivity to shame. Similarly, many other researchers link shame-proneness to abusive or traumatic childhood environments (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998). It has been suggested that early childhood traumatic or "toxic" shame increases one's susceptibility to a range of psychopathology (Bradshaw, 1988). A similar argument is asserted by cognitive theorists (e.g. Beck, Emery, & Greenberg, 1985), who claim that potentially pathological experiences of shame result from early negative schema or core beliefs, such as the internalised belief that "I am bad," which is argued by Brown (2006) to be the definition of shame itself. When a child is repeatedly shamed, rather than positively mirrored and accepted, during his or her formative years, shame begins to saturate his or her developing sense of identity, which can then influence the interpretation of future experiences. As many participants most readily reported painful childhood memories when asked to convey experiences of shame, this could account for why some participants were particularly affected by shame in later situations where others might have felt only mild shame or a different emotion altogether.

Alternative theorists propose that shame proneness may be an inborn personality factor, in addition to or instead of an environmentally driven variable. For example, Zimbardo (1997, cited in Gilbert & Andrews, 1998) asserts that shyness, which he believes is linked to genetic, inherited traits, is essentially a sensitivity to and fear of shame. Furthermore, Kagan (1994) argues that behavioural inhibition, another factor that is closely related to shame, is a temperament difference which is present from birth. Kagan believes that some children are genetically more prone than others to anxiety and timidity. This innate temperament difference could easily extend to shame. When considering the findings presented in this chapter, it may be tempting to wonder why these

participants are experiencing particularly intense shame in these specific settings. This could be accounted for by the construct of shame proneness, which may be influenced by genetics, early childhood experiences, or both. While it is interesting to speculate, the question of *why* shame, and why such intensely powerful shame, cannot be entirely answered given the nature and scope of the present study. The focus of the present research is on understanding the current experiences of shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. While one's initial susceptibility to shame may be a factor that is heavily influenced by genetic or early childhood environmental factors, a person's ability to gain resilience is able to be influenced by future positive input. It is my aim to link the constructs of shame and resilience, in an effort to increase resilience to shame, even for people who may be highly prone to shame.

This study is the first to specifically investigate shame in Pākehā culture. I have discovered a number of triggers for shame that may be particularly relevant in Pākehā culture. Some examples are the shame of being fatherless in a culture where two-parent households are the norm, the shame of becoming poor and losing the social status one once had achieved, shame that is associated with religious teachings of morality and purity, and the shame of disappointing others or letting others down, in a culture that values achievement and personal responsibility. As mentioned early in the chapter, an enormous variety was found with regard to the particular situations that triggered sources of shame. The scope of the study is wide, covering a number of questions relating to shame and resilience. Therefore, while an important introduction has been made to the work of discovering features of Pākehā culture that exist as sources of shame, the work is far from complete. Future research could delve much deeper into exploring situational triggers for shame among Pākehā New Zealanders, and could begin to explore whether there are triggers for shame that are uniquely characteristic of Pākehā culture.

Arguably the most important finding in this chapter concerns this relationship between shame and judgement. This finding is succinctly summarised in this brief exchange with Sophie:

Researcher: And what goes through your mind when you feel shame?

Sophie: Probably, what will people think? And what will they think of me?

While the relationship between shame and judgement is even less commonly researched than shame's specific situational triggers, some previous support exists for the conclusion that shame is intrinsically linked to judgement. Gilbert and Andrews (1998) acknowledge that a relationship exists between shame and internal and external evaluations. Furthermore, these authors note that shame is not simply an internal experience; rather, it expresses socially shared information about one's status and standing in the community. This adds weight to my conclusion that the source of shame involves a merging of internal and external influences, and that shame acts as an emotional expression of a severed or threatened social bond.

As discussed, I have concluded that shame results from judgement – often, specifically, from negative judgments that are targeted at one's identity. This is reminiscent of the widely known view of the so-called “guilt theorists” – that shame is the belief that “I am bad.” This is often contrasted with guilt, which is defined as the belief that “I have done a bad thing.” With my findings in mind, it is understandable to see how this widely regarded theory was developed, and how it has gained such popularity among helping professionals. However, I believe there are fundamental flaws with this theory. Firstly, “I am bad” is a core belief, while “I have done a bad thing” is a situational evaluation. Both are cognitive responses. Using cognition as a defining characteristic of an emotion is theoretically problematic. Also, as described in chapter 2, Elison (2005) suggests that guilt is not, strictly speaking, an emotional experience; it is a socio-legal state. When someone says, “I feel guilty,” what they are typically understood to mean is, “I feel how one typically feels when one is guilty.” This makes the feeling of guilt a flexible construct - one that is largely influenced by its social and cultural context. In many cases, feelings of guilt would involve at least some degree of shame. It is worth learning from the work of the guilt theorists, particularly in noting that it is more helpful to evaluate instances of shame with situational appraisals rather than long term, easily internalised, negative core beliefs. However, it is a dangerous oversimplification to dismiss shame as being universally associated with the particular core belief, “I am bad,” and to therefore

condemn shame itself as being universally unhelpful and “bad.” Shame is painful, and it is unmistakably associated with psychosocial and social problems.

However, the root source of shame is judgement, which causes us to question our identities and evaluate our relationships. In universally dismissing the potential benefits of shame, we risk failing to acknowledge its reflective power.

Questioning ourselves does not always lead to the tragic outcome of internalised, shameful core beliefs. Sometimes, questioning our identities and connections may empower us to make positive changes within ourselves and our relationships.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored the sources of shame, covering both situational triggers for shame and sources that have been identified on a meta-analytic level. Situational triggers for shame are particularly prominent in childhood, where shame can result from the negative influence of parents, other family members, school teachers, and peers. The long-lasting impact of childhood experiences of shame makes childhood shame an area that warrants attention in future research. Shame, in childhood or adulthood, can be triggered by the actions of others, usually outspoken shame or rejection, or by one’s own actions, which can include moral transgressions, failure, or a felt sense of responsibility for disappointing or hurting other people. The source of shame cannot clearly be identifiable as either internal or external. Rather, internal and external influences merge to create a sensation of shame that exists within a socially and culturally grounded experience. On a meta-analytic level, a clear link has been identified between shame and judgement. Shame can result from one’s judgment of oneself, the expressed judgement of others, or simply the anticipation that one might be judged by others. The specific judgements identified in the participants’ discourses were often negative judgments about themselves that centred on their identities, or threatened the security of their relationships.

Chapter 7: Understandings of Resilience

The previous findings chapters have explored shame in great depth. Chapter 5 provided a general introduction to participants' understandings of shame, including a description of shame's basic characteristics as well as an exploration of psychological understandings of shame. Chapter 6 provided an exploration of the sources of shame, concluding that while shame has countless situational triggers, the source of shame is closely linked with judgement. Chapter 8 will provide an exploration of participants' responses to shame. However, in order to discuss which response or responses to shame are more resilient than others, it is necessary to first explore and understand resilience. Up to this point, the findings chapters have focussed on shame, a particular stressor or form of adversity on which this thesis is concentrated. However, understanding shame is only a part of the research objective. Perhaps the more important objective is to uncover ways of responding to shame that allow people to overcome it rather than be crippled by it. In other words, I sought to discover how people build resilience in the face of shame. Resilience is a complex construct. Coming to an understanding regarding its experience and expression is important in order to explain participants' responses to shame and other potentially painful or problematic triggers. A foundational premise of the research is that shame causes significant psycho-social problems for some people, while others experience shame with no lasting, negative effects. In other words, some people are resilient to shame. Seeking out the resilient response or responses to shame is a key goal of the research. In order to discuss this, an explanation of resilience must first be clarified. Ultimately, the study will interweave the investigations of shame and resilience to explore the issue of why some people become resilient in spite of shame, and others suffer long term, devastating consequences from shame.

This chapter will introduce resilience. First, basic descriptions of resilience will be presented. Initially, participants provided simplistic and individualistic descriptions of resilience. However, as the chapter continues, more complex issues related to resilience will be explored. The characteristics of resilience will be discussed, bringing to light some interesting tensions and touching on the complexity of resilience being something much deeper and broader than the simple chosen response of an individual. A discussion of true

versus false resilience will be undertaken, contrasting the dominant cultural ideal of resilience, as rugged individualistic toughness, with a deeper and more genuine expression of resilience, which is tied to authenticity and a willingness to accept help from others.

Following a discussion of resilience in general terms, the chapter will turn toward focussing on factors that affect resilience – in essence a discussion on how people attain resilience. The primary factor that was found to affect resilience is struggle. Participants overwhelmingly agreed that without experiencing struggle, it is impossible to experience true resilience. However, some struggles debilitate a person, having a negative effect on long term resilience. A “tipping point” is described, being the point at which a struggle changes from being a positive learning experience to a negative and destructive experience. This tipping point is affected by factors such as biology, upbringing, a solid sense of self, positive and supportive relationships, faith, flexibility, willingness to grow and change, exposure to tools and techniques, perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture, and physical health. At the conclusion of the chapter, the implications of the findings will be discussed, exploring the link between the findings of this study and previous research.

Descriptions of Resilience

Although there are a number of definitions of resilience in the academic literature, they coalesce around the notion of resilience involving some form of adapting to, coping with, or recovering from adversity. Participants in the present study were asked questions such as, “How would you describe resilience?” and “What does resilience look like?” Most participants were able to readily provide a description of their understanding of resilience. While there was some variety in these descriptions, a few central themes were dominant. Participants described resilience as the ability to bounce back from adversity. Participants likened resilience to fortitude, strength, and determination. Finally, some participants used a wall as a metaphor to describe resilience – an interesting description that will be discussed and explored.

Bouncing back.

Most participants used the words “bouncing back” when describing resilience. This was by far the most common description among the participants

that I interviewed. When asked what resilience meant to her, Lilia simply responded, “Bouncing back – getting on with it.” Caleb said, “Resilience is the inner flexibility to bounce back when tough things come.” Likewise, Michelle said, “Resilience - being able to bounce back. Being able to cope with a disaster, and to handle it, I'd venture to say well. Or, just handling it in general, being able to recover from it.” Lilia, Caleb, and Michelle all used the same language to describe resilience, and these words were repeated by many other participants. Caleb emphasised the flexibility involved with bouncing back from tough times, while Michelle positioned resilience as the outcome of coping with disastrous circumstance. She considered that resilience might mean handling them well, but then later clarified that to handle adversity and recover from it would be resilient, even if it did not always appear that one was handling it “well.”

Sarah provided another description of resilience as bouncing back in the following exchange:

Researcher: What does resilience mean to you?

Sarah: To me, I guess the word means the ability to bounce back even when things are hard or things have gone wrong. So it's that ability, and I just mean it psychologically, to psychologically be able to continue to function, and perhaps even function back at a level of I don't know, happiness, contentment, without feeling attacked or anxious. For me specifically, it's about the ability to not become depressed,

Sarah describes resilience as the continuity of psychological functioning in spite of hard or unforeseen circumstances. Sarah lists happiness and contentment, as well as a freedom from anxiety and depression, as personal markers of her own resilience. It is interesting to note that, in Sarah's opinion, resilience involves more than simply retaining a basic level of functioning. Sarah has a tendency to become depressed in response to stressful or unpleasant triggers, and she positions resilience as the opposite of depression. For her, resilience is the ability to keep going, remain positive, and continue in life without succumbing to mental illness. Sarah positions resilience as requiring a level of happiness or contentment. By this reasoning, a person who could continue with the basic necessities of life, but felt anxious or miserable in doing so, would not be described as resilient.

In a final example of resilience being described as bouncing back, Elisabeth says:

Bounce back. It's an ability to get back up, so if you've been hit down, you can stand again. I think there's a fight in resilience, to keep on keeping on, to lift your chin up, to move forward despite opposition. Bounce back is a good word for me.

Elisabeth argues that there is a fight in resilience. She portrays a conscious choice to keep moving forward in the face of opposition. Elisabeth's quote ends again with the simple description of resilience as the ability to "bounce back." These words were by far the most common of the participants' descriptions of resilience. A definition of resilience as the ability to bounce back from adversity is clearly prevalent in the discourses of Pākehā culture.

Fortitude

Another complementary, yet distinct description of resilience is provided by Lucy. In the following exchange, Lucy presents a description of resilience as fortitude:

Researcher: What does the word resilience mean to you?

Lucy: I think an inner capacity to weather something, to work through things and to face into things. The term brings up to me actually the title of a book, *Bent Not Broken*. And I think that metaphor, that image of a willow, or a branch that sort of struggles in the wind, but doesn't snap, sort of encapsulates the concept of resilience.

Fortitude is defined as the strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain with courage (Fortitude, 2013). Lucy describes "facing into things" as a key feature of resilience. This phrase evokes images of courage - the conscious choice to confront difficult circumstances head on. Lucy also refers to resilience as an "inner capacity," something that resides inside a person, enabling them to display this courage and strength when hardship arises. Lucy's reference to a branch struggling in the wind but not snapping depicts images of both strength and struggle. Strength will soon be explored as another description of resilience. Struggle will be explored later in the chapter as a factor affecting resilience, but it is worth noting now, that resilience cannot be displayed without a struggle or hardship to activate it.

Determination.

Another quote from Lucy introduces a description of resilience as encompassing determination. When asked what resilience looks like, Lucy said, “And probably a sense of determination. You know, just sheer, dogged determination [laughter].” This quote frames resilience as a simple and single-minded, determined choice to overcome whatever hardship one is faced with. The quote also evokes imagery of the choice to become resilient being fierce and unrelenting. While this image is clear and insightful, it is worth noting that resilience may not always be unrelenting. The possibility of resilience being inconsistent will be described later in the chapter, when the characteristics of resilience are described – including flexibility, fluidity, and complexity.

The next exchange with Jennifer provides an example of resilience being achieved as the result of a determined choice while Jennifer was still a child.

Jennifer: I always knew that there was no way I was going to have that for my children. Right from very young, I felt sort of an outcast in the family almost like I didn't belong in it. Whereas, my sister has got issues now, and has done from long ago, but I've just been kind of different in the family for some reason, I don't know why. [Laughter] Thank God! [. . .] All I can tell you is I always said I would never be like them.

Researcher: Sounds like a very strong determination.

Jennifer: It was very strong, yeah.

Researcher: Was that when you were a child?

Jennifer: Yeah, yep. Whereas like I said, my sister is, she's got a drinking problem, she smokes a lot, she's had multiple partners, all those things that you kind of expect people to have coming out of that situation.

In the introduction to the quote, Jennifer speaks about how she is different from her family and notably different from her sister, in spite of being raised in the same, negative environment. While Jennifer originally speaks with a sense of bewilderment about how she managed to become resilient in spite of facing difficult circumstances throughout her childhood, she later reveals that she made a conscious choice not to “be like them.” Ultimately, this determination meant that she had a very good outcome in life. In spite of struggles with anxiety, Jennifer has a stable marriage, good relationships with her children, and is free from addictions, a common plight in her family of origin. Due to these factors, Jennifer

considers herself to be resilient, whereas her sister, who struggles with addictions, is constructed as not being resilient.

Strength.

Another common description of resilience is that of strength. Sophie introduces this theme:

Researcher: What does the word resilience mean to you?

Sophie: Strength. [Pause]. Coping. [Pause]. Resilience - yeah, strength and coping I think. Yes, I would use those two.

Likewise Charlotte says: “What does resilience look like? I guess, to me, maybe the one word would be strength. Yeah, inner strength.” Sophie and Charlotte both construct resilience as encompassing strength. This strength may provide the energy that is needed for bouncing back from adversity, facing trouble with courage, and making determined choices to attain positive outcomes.

The following exchange with Jennifer expands on the description of resilience as including strength:

Researcher: What does the word resilience mean to you?

Jennifer: I think it means remaining strong throughout traumas or... living your life normally without being too drastically affected, going down the path of addiction or something like that.

Researcher: What does resilience look like to you?

Jennifer: What does it look like? I think a strength, I suppose. Like a tower of strength.

Jennifer vividly describes resilience as a tower of strength. She says that resilience involves remaining strong *throughout* traumas, which implies that the strength of resilience is constant. While it may be weakened by a trauma or hardship, according to this description, it does not disappear. Ultimately, the strength remains to get back up or carry on. In Jennifer’s case, in spite of enduring a range of traumatic experiences in her childhood, she continued to hold a strength that allowed her to continue to face her problems, rather than escape from them using substances, as is the common method of coping in her family.

A wall.

The final description of resilience is different to the others, and is perhaps more controversial. Kathleen introduces a description of resilience as a wall in the following quote:

What does resilience look like? [Pause] It's a, it's a wall. It's a wall that comes up like that [gesturing], that I can control. I can lift up and push down when I want. It's my wall, so I can do what I like with it. And that wall can be from everything being fine, "Thank you very much," you know, "I like you too, you're lovely," to dressing up.

Kathleen describes a wall, which she ultimately uses to keep people at a distance and hide her insecurity. She believes that this allows her to be seen as strong in spite of feelings of depression and worthlessness. This wall may also serve to hide Kathleen's shame. Projecting a positive image could be helpful in keeping negative judgements at bay, which would in turn reduce Kathleen's felt sense of shame. Kathleen ultimately associates being seen as strong with being resilient, as affirmation from others builds her confidence, which in turn, replenishes her sense of self-worth. By dressing herself better than she feels or acting bubbly and friendly with people she is intimidated by, Kathleen is ultimately able to improve her social standing. Kathleen's behaviour is not without flaws and troubled outcomes. The difference between true and false resilience will be discussed soon, and I would argue that the resilience Kathleen describes may actually be false resilience. She projects a façade of strength, which serves to avoid rather than resolve the conflict between her and others.

However, it needs to be acknowledged that there does seem to be some benefit from maintaining a distance from potential stressors. While Kathleen's wall may not be the most resilient response to stress, there is a level of adaptiveness and flexibility in her behaviour that is characteristic of resilience. By placing a metaphorical wall between herself and others, Kathleen is able to attend social gatherings that she may otherwise avoid and is able to maintain a degree of emotional stability that might be endangered by a more authentic approach.

Jennifer expands upon the description of resilience as a wall. When asked about what resilience looks like, Jennifer responds:

Jennifer: [. . .] or a wall or something. Like maybe a wall - being outside of it not in. Is that what you mean?

Researcher: Yeah, yeah, so a wall separating you from... the risks? In your words, what would be what the wall is separating?

Jennifer: Well, the family life, and the world as you know it. You're sort of outside of it.

Jennifer ultimately managed to survive her childhood, and the rest of her life, by distancing herself from her family and its many problematic features. While distancing oneself from supportive relationships can hinder one's ability to be connected, in Jennifer's case, her family was a harmful, not a helpful, influence. By emotionally distancing herself during childhood, and then physically distancing herself as she entered adulthood, Jennifer was able to find new relationships that provided helpful support, and she was able to emerge from a traumatic environment relatively unscathed.

Characteristics of Resilience

Participants described many basic descriptions of resilience. Resilience was overwhelmingly described as the ability to bounce back from adversity. Other descriptions included resilience as encompassing strength, determination, and fortitude, and some participants described resilience as a wall distancing themselves from hardships or risks. In addition to these basic descriptions of resilience, participants also revealed resilience as having a few notable characteristics. The next section will address the characteristics of resilience that were identified in the analysis. Resilience was found to be flexible and constantly changing - an attribute that develops slowly over time. Significantly, resilience was found to be highly complex – an issue that will be deeply explored both as a characteristic of resilience, and also as a separate topic, which will explore the notions of “true” and “false” resilience.

Flexible and constantly changing.

The characteristics of resilience as being flexible and constantly changing is introduced by Elisabeth in the following quote. Elisabeth says: “What does resilience look like? [. . .] There's a movement in resilience I think. There's a

moving forward, moving on, moving up. It's progressive, so it looks like change. It doesn't look like being stuck.” Elisabeth depicts resilience as being a moving, rather than a static, phenomenon. She clarifies this to describe resilience as moving forward, on, or up. Resilience, in Elisabeth’s experience, can be likened to growth or learning - something that occurs over time, sometimes long periods of time. Resilience is contrasted with being stuck. It could be extrapolated from this quote that if someone stays in place, they are not resilient. In contrast, someone who adapts, changes, and continues to move “forward,” in whatever way that is defined for someone’s particular circumstances, is considered to be resilient.

Lucy highlights the flexibility of resilience in the following exchange:

Researcher: What do you think resilience looks like?

Lucy: I think openness. [Pause] Openness and a willingness to... quite a hard question actually! Yeah, probably something that's always changing shape. I mean, in some really vulnerable moments, you probably don't have a lot of resilience to something. And yet at other times, maybe you do. That's not to say you're not experiencing more feeling, or being prepared to look at what's happening, but you might just be during a period of buoyancy.

Lucy describes a person’s resilience as being a fluid factor; someone may be more resilient at some times in life than others. She uses the word “willingness” in association with resilience. This is telling as it reveals a mental readiness to face hard times. Being prepared to “look at what’s happening” is another significant choice of words. Contrasted with not having as much resilience in vulnerable moments, Lucy suggests that resilience involves having the courage, in a particular moment in time, to acknowledge and address the difficulties being faced.

Like Lucy, Michelle describes resilience as being specific to particular situations. Michelle says: “If you're resilient, I don't think you can be resilient to everything. You can be resilient to one particular thing.” Michelle’s description echoes the idea that resilience is fluid rather than static. However, Lucy describes resilience as being flexible in relation to one’s personal vulnerability, while Michelle describes resilience as being dependent on the hardship one is facing. These two descriptions are not necessarily contradictory, as someone’s vulnerability, or alternatively their confidence, may be significantly affected by

the type of difficulty that is being encountered. Additionally, resilience may be affected by a range of other fluid factors, such as social support, health, access to help and support services, and others. Factors that can affect a person's resilience will be discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Develops slowly over time.

Another characteristic of resilience is presented by Max in the next exchange. Max introduces resilience developing slowly over time:

Researcher: What does resilience look like to you?

Max: [. . .] I don't know like a foot, that just, over the years, slowly hardens up and... gets harder and harder to penetrate, I guess, like, in a person, just kind of slowly get stronger and stronger, or less prone to getting knocked down so easily.

Max provides a descriptive simile, likening resilience to a foot, which starts off smooth and unscathed, and over time, having responded to a process of weathering, becomes harder and more difficult to injure. This is a distinguishing characteristic of resilience – that it develops slowly over time. Someone does not become resilient as the result of a sudden increase in strength or insight. Rather, the process of building resilience happens gradually, often invisibly, except for in hindsight, when people can look back and see that they no longer get “knocked down” as easily.

Complex

A final characteristic of resilience is its complexity. While participants used common language to describe the expression of resilience, understanding its development brought a much greater element of complexity. An introduction to the complex nature of resilience is provided by Mark. The following is a brief excerpt from a larger quotation that was introduced in chapter 6. Mark is describing the shame resulting from an abusive environment in a class at school, where children were rewarded using a points system, and physically abused when they ran out of points. Mark says:

So, the smart kids who succeed in that class were able to turn off their compassion and not help anyone. So the way to succeed was not just only to be obedient, but to not be compassionate - to just live for yourself.

Mark refers to the children that would decide not to help others by sharing points with them as the “smart kids.” While a lack of compassion would not generally be suggestive of resilience, in this particular environment, being able to “turn off their compassion” was useful for these students, who prevented being abused themselves by hardening themselves to the desperate pleas of other children who were about to be abused. This ability was adaptive and helpful for the environment that they were in, but may have had other negative effects in the long term. This suggests that an ideal, “resilient” response to a stressor may not be the most adaptive response in every situation.

Liam further explores the complex nature of resilience in the following exchange:

Researcher: And what do you think resilience looks like?

Liam: I guess it looks like, um, self-assuredness. In a way, it's an ability I suppose to sort, to bear shame or anything else, without going too much into a pit of depression by everything. So it's not necessarily, I suppose, a good thing, because it's almost a resistance to, not learning, but being affected by some things, when I guess maybe you should be affected by them.

Liam describes resilience as a self-assured resistance to being negatively affected by shame, or other difficult experiences. However, he points out that resilience can include being resistant to learning from and being affected by events, which arguably should have an effect on a person. In the case of shame, it has been discussed that the ultimate function of shame may be to provide an emotional awareness of severed or threatened social bonds. If someone is “resilient” to shame in the sense that he or she is completely unaffected by it, opportunities would be missed to develop depth in one’s relationships and to repair and restore supportive social bonds.

Elisabeth also grapples with the complexity of resilience when she describes her mother's resilience. Elisabeth cites her mother as her most prominent role model for resilience; however, Elisabeth also says that her mother's resilience has a negative side.

Researcher: It's interesting when you talked about your mum, you see her as a good role model for resilience but it sounds like that's not always a positive thing.

Elisabeth: Yeah.

Researcher: Tell me more about the negative side of resilience.

Elisabeth: Well, I think resilience, the optimistic side of resilience, in her instance, was that she always believes for the better in any situation. So for example, when she was in an abusive relationship, he was always going to change, and if she could just stick it out for just a little bit longer, she could see that change, and things would be okay, things would be perfect. So, I think the resilience in that was her stickability, her sticking it out, her just literally getting beaten down, getting back up and believing for something better. And the optimism that came within that probably made her stick around for longer than I think she should have stuck around. And probably exposed her to repetitive abuse that potentially was avoidable if she didn't fight, or keep getting back up. Like if she had just went, no, I'm not strong enough for this, and backed out, and left the relationship. In that case maybe she would have avoided a level of pain.

Elisabeth references her mother's ability to remain optimistic and persevere in hard times as the driving force behind her remaining in abusive situations. While her mother's determination to persevere in the face of this particular adversity was strong, it was not necessarily wise. Elisabeth says that it may have been more beneficial if her mother had not viewed herself as being as strong as she did, because then she may have left the relationship and avoided a significant amount of pain for both her and her children.

Elisabeth's account provides an example of resilience being a potentially confusing construct. She describes possible downfalls or negative features of resilience, being that she credits her mother's resilience with enabling her to stay in an abusive relationship. However, it is important to remember that Elisabeth is recalling childhood events. She looked up to her mother with admiration, and while her mother's decision to stay in the abusive relationship may have been an expression of strength, determination, and/or resilience, it is arguably more likely

to have been an outworking of denial, or of the psychological power that her abusive partner held over her.

Max expands on the complexity and confusion of resilience, describing a situation where resilience might not have been positive or useful:

Researcher: What do you think of when you think of resilience in terms of your own life?

Max: I've definitely developed a lot of resilience... in some areas. Used to be for my demise, but now, it's a good thing. 'Cause sometimes, my resilience would actually stop me from feeling, just from pure avoidance, and learning how to block things out. It was actually quite destructive to me because I should have been [long pause], I don't know, maybe if I was more not so resilient when I was younger, I would have snapped out of it a bit quicker.

Researcher: What do you mean by snapped out of it?

Max: Well, a lot of bad things happened, and I'd always get in trouble. I'd get myself in these dangerous situations, life or death situations sometimes, like watching people drug overdosing and me drug overdosing and knives and shit getting pulled out on me, and speeding in cars and like near crashes and near misses and stuff like that. That should have shocked me into thinking, shit, I should be more careful. But I had this resilience towards it, where I could just brush it off my shoulder and get back up and just do the same shit the next day. Yeah, that was quite bad for me. But, resilience is also a good thing too, because if I didn't have that resilience I'd probably, you know, could have just given up, and just lay there waiting to die. I could have probably ended up killing myself or something if I wasn't as resilient.

Max outlines some positive and some negative effects of resilience. On the positive side, Max describes his innate sense of resilience as his motivation to persevere in tough times and to carry on living, rather than resort to suicide as an escape from his pain. On the negative side, Max depicts resilience as preventing him from learning from mistakes. He describes himself being resilient to the shock of some dangerous situations he was exposed to and involved with. What he describes as resilience may have been more of an imperviousness to fear and danger or simply the normalisation of these experiences. Being more aware of and responsive to fear and danger could have been much more healthy and beneficial, and ultimately more resilient, for Max.

Charlotte provides another take on the complex nature of resilience in the following quote:

I think resilience has definitely been a life experience for me - a learning curve. Even though my mum's voice was probably unhelpful at times, there were times when... I mean she did a lot of, "You need to get over this now." You know, "get up and move on," kind of thing. And I have to take the tensions of that and go, am I just getting up and moving on and ignoring this? Or am I getting up and facing this and moving on?

In other parts of the interview, Charlotte describes her mother as a shaming influence, whose harsh criticism was internalised and caused on-going issues with shame and low self-confidence. However, here, Charlotte explains that her mother's voice reminding her to "get up and move on" is sometimes a positive factor in motivating her toward resilient responses. As discussed previously, there is an element of resilience that involves making determined choices toward positive and successful outcomes. However, resilience is not as simple and clear as determined choices. At the end of the quote, Charlotte points out that sometimes determining to "get up and move on" is actually just ignoring the problem. Resilience is not simply determination, nor is it denial. It is important to distinguish between resilience as a healthy continuity of functioning, and a false ideal of resilience, which may involve feigning strength and refusing to acknowledge the problems that one may be faced with. This complexity, and the tension between weighing up what truly is and is not resilience, will continue to be explored in the next section.

True versus False Resilience

In the previous section, the complexity of resilience has been introduced. A number of examples have been explored that call into question whether resilience is always beneficial. This leads to greater questions. Do all of the examples actually describe resilience, or is there a false resilience that masquerades as resilience but can have destructive long term effects? What does true resilience look like, and how can we identify and attain it?

At this point it is worth pausing to reflect on the social constructionist theoretical influence on the study. "Resilience," to a large degree, is socially constructed. It is influenced by the discourses of the culture, and it is worth pausing to consider the possibility that a debate about true versus false resilience

is a semantic debate, which is not necessarily reflective of the “right” or “wrong” construction or interpretation of a clearly identifiable, objective concept of resilience. Resilience is flexible and malleable. Participants have revealed that common discourses within Pākehā culture converge on a definition of resilience involving bouncing back from hardship, remaining strong and courageous when faced with adversity, and encompassing some form of choice or determination. However, many issues have been identified that reveal a complexity to resilience, which prevents a universally agreed upon expression and understanding of resilience from being identified. A goal of the study is to explore Pākehā New Zealanders’ understandings of resilience, with the ultimate aim of discovering the resilient response or responses to shame. This can alternatively be phrased as discovering how some people manage to face shame with no long term negative psychological or social effects. In other words again, how do Pākehā New Zealanders respond to shame in healthy ways? Thus, in the present study, I have constructed the resilient response to shame as the healthy response to shame. Therefore, resilience or “true” resilience, as I am considering it, is a healthy and positive experience of overcoming trials and hardships. It involves bouncing back to a state of healthy psycho-social functioning. It is not avoidance, stubbornness, or simple strength and toughness. These and other alternatives, which can masquerade as resilience, will be conceptualised as “false” resilience.

Caleb introduces the concept of false resilience, and its prevalence in our culture, in the following exchange:

Caleb: Yeah, there's a shit-load of false resilience, that's really bogus and sad... scary.

Researcher: What do you think is false resilience?

Caleb: Using denial, isolation, splitting, using dissociation, all the primitive defences to mask it. So, perhaps in American culture, people do both ends. People act out and be more expressive, on some kind of stupid reality TV show and act, you know, they'll act out a lot more. Where Kiwis will, this culture will more reward to go away, dissociate, hide, split, deny, project, introject, all the really, really nasty primitive defences that you can hide and just keep you more and more and more tightly bound up within yourself.

Caleb, in essence, defines false resilience as defensive ways of coping that are not healthy or helpful. He notes that withdrawal and avoidance are particularly

common defences in Pākehā culture. They can imitate resilience, as they have the effect of helping someone to cope and making them appear stronger. However, in the long term, it results in being “tightly bound,” unable to freely express one’s self and truly live and engage in the relational world.

Michelle provides another example of false resilience:

I guess there's really tough people, and I used to think of them as tough, they can handle anything - that's what resilience is. But now I see, most of the time that they're not really. Because I know how to read them better, and I know that someone who's being all tough, and I can handle anything probably isn't and probably can't. Because they're having to pretend. If I see a person and they're not able to be honest about their emotions and how they're feeling, then I don't see them as being particularly strong or able to handle it. Well, if you can't face it, identify it, talk about it, and get help when help's needed, or lean on friends for support, then, I imagine somebody will just kind of, I don't know, internally come to pieces.

Michelle challenges those with a “tough” external image. She views this toughness as often being a pretence. Michelle appears to value honesty and emotional vulnerability, and she considers being willing to genuinely engage with and express one’s feelings as a portrayal of one’s resilience. She constructs true resilience as occurring in community, through the collaborative process of engaging with and drawing support from others.

Sarah describes longing to be tough, confident, and unshakable. However, she also questions whether this would truly be a healthy response. Sarah says:

What I'd love, is to be the sort of person who goes, “Fuck them, I don't give a shit.” [Laughter] I work with people like that. They do the most strange things and they're just like, pfft, you know? And I can't do that, I'm like [in a soft, shaking voice], “Oh my god, I spilt a bit of coffee on me, did someone notice?” You know, self-consciousness. So for me the best thing would be totally un-self-conscious, and just be able to just flip the finger to anyone who doesn't agree with me - that sort of braggish self-confidence. Who gives a shit? Devil may care attitude. I'd love that, but I don't think that's healthy. I think people like that probably have their own issues.

Sarah reveals that a part of her wants to be immune to self-consciousness and weakness. She sometimes desires the “braggish self-confidence” to not care what others think. However, she does not construct this as resilience. She ultimately admits that this response is not healthy and is indicative of personal issues that

people may be covering. Ultimately, the response Sarah describes sometimes desiring, is one of false resilience.

Caleb concludes the discussion on true versus false resilience with an interesting cultural commentary on a widespread false cultural ideal of resilience.

Caleb says:

False resilience is putting Sir Edmund Hillary on the five dollar note. That he went to the top of Mount Everest, and he's a hero in this culture, as a symbol of resilience. That's fucking, going to the top of Mount Everest is a form of self-harming! It's a suicidal thing. That person's self-harming, suicidal, obviously doesn't really care about his own life or the person they took with him, and doesn't really care about his extended family, because there's nothing there. It's a pointless, it's a demoralising thing, and then people try and do it every year and die. Yeah, it's like, there's nothing there! It's cold and it's... And so, it immortalises this pursuit into rugged nothingness. I mean what is there? Nothing. Did you make it? Yeah! I fucking made it! [. . .] And there's a reason why most countries don't play rugby. It's really violent; it's really bad on your body, and lots of stuff. I understand the rugged resilience, and the false, the resilience that was needed to come to this land, and to occupy this land, but that tradition is not serving us well any more. Yeah, I don't revere it; I consider it a weakness now, and something sad.

Caleb constructs Sir Edmund Hillary's journey to climb Mount Everest as an expression of New Zealanders' fascination with and reverence for rugged, individualistic toughness. This serves as a substitute for healthy resilience, which is grounded in relational community. Likewise, Caleb points out the value New Zealand culture places on rugby, a violent and dangerous sport. He traces this cultural value back to Pākehā New Zealanders' first journeys to New Zealand, which required strength, determination, and resilience, specifically for physical challenges. However, Caleb positions this idea of resilience as being harmful to modern New Zealanders. The cultural celebration of physical contests of force and strength are positioned as archaic remnants of past challenges, which are now causing more harm than good.

Factors Affecting Resilience

A number of factors affect the development and maintenance of resilience. It is tempting to think of resilience as an individual phenomenon – a character trait that someone possesses (or does not possess). However, it is crucial to remember that resilience occurs in a social and cultural context. Some researchers differentiate between internal and external factors that affect resilience.

Individual factors include personality traits, intelligence, and genetics, among others, while external factors include influences such as community environments and supportive relationships. As discussed in chapter 3, this differentiation is rarely clear cut, as there is a reciprocal relationship between individual and community level factors, which cannot be easily disentangled. Because of this issue, I will not differentiate between internal and external factors affecting resilience in my analysis. Rather, I will consider the complexity of each factor that I discuss, including the influence of the surrounding social and cultural context.

I have divided the factors affecting resilience into two broad themes. Firstly, and most strikingly, resilience is affected by struggle. This will soon be discussed in depth; however, simply put, a person cannot develop the ability to withstand hardship without having past experience of withstanding hardship. Resilience encompasses a process of being hit with adversity, being somehow injured in the process, and learning to recover. Eventually, one's confidence grows, and a person is able to recover more easily or more fully.

The second theme to be discussed, I refer to as the “tipping point.” This includes a number of other factors, beyond the process of struggling, which affect a person's ability to achieve resilience in response to a particular adverse event. While past experiences of struggle are an important learning process for gaining resilience, the sad reality is that sometimes, past struggles cripple a person rather than equipping him or her with a new level of resilience. Factors that affect this tipping point – the point at which a struggle becomes too difficult to bear – include biology, upbringing, a solid sense of self, positive and supportive relationships, faith, flexibility, willingness to grow and change, exposure to tools and techniques, perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture, and physical health. Each of these factors will be individually introduced and briefly explored.

Struggle.

Sophie introduces the theme of resilience being developed through struggle when she says, “But mainly hardships can make you resilient, ‘cause to me, to be resilient you've got to have something to stand up against, or a reason.” Sophie considers that resilience, by definition, is being resilient to hardship.

Without a reason to be resilient, someone will never have the opportunity to develop their resilience.

Charlotte, when asked what makes people resilient, responded: “I think it would probably be coping with life's challenges, and learning to cope with life's challenges, and coming out of them well. Then, each time you just become more resilient.” Charlotte describes resilience as a learning process – a process of gaining confidence from conquering past challenges, and then being more ably prepared to face new challenges. Lucy provides a slightly different insight into the idea of resilience being affected by struggle when she says, “So maybe when you describe it like that, listening to my words, hope probably has quite a big part to play, and pain as well.” Lucy describes resilience as a positive process that is hopeful and optimistic. However, she also points out that pain has a big influence on resilience. As Sophie and Charlotte have said, Lucy reiterates that resilience cannot be developed without enduring some form of pain. Feeling pain is unpleasant, but necessary, for someone to develop resilience.

Peter expands this theme by vividly describing the pain of past life and work experiences as a source of resilience. Peter says:

Just being a counsellor, and pushing the boundaries in life and needing to understand my life experiences and suffering pain and separation and loss, and licking your wounds, and getting bitter and twisted, and then, finding reasons to just get up and carry on and have a good life.

Peter refers to pain and suffering as a crucial prerequisite for resilience. He expands this to say that when enduring hard times, he had become “bitter and twisted.” Resilience was not his first response to hardship, but it is something he was eventually able to develop. His process of emerging from darkness and bitter hopelessness into resilience involved finding reasons to continue living. Specific processes and influences that allow people to overcome adversity will be addressed later. The important issue for now is the process of struggling. Struggling can take many forms, but a struggle of some description is necessary for the development of resilience.

Kathleen again describes resilience as a response to struggle or hurt. She emphasises learning. Resilience, as described by Kathleen, is a learnt response.

Researcher: How did you become resilient, in spite of difficulties you have encountered in your life?

Kathleen: [Pause] It's a learning thing. It's a coping mechanism because of the hurt. So you've gotta learn to handle the hurt - you've gotta learn.

Kathleen describes resilience as the process of learning from pain. She says simply, "you've gotta learn." Resilience is here constructed as being necessary, as without developing resilience, someone who was found in frequent difficult circumstances would simply be unable to cope.

Returning to the following exchange, Charlotte expands upon the issue of struggle being a crucial factor for developing resilience:

Researcher: What do you think causes people to become resilient?

Charlotte: I think it would probably be coping with life's challenges, and learning to cope with life's challenges, and coming out of them well. Then each time that you just become more resilient. I think people become resilient over time, maybe. Yeah, it's funny... I think someone who maybe lived a sheltered life, would be less resilient, but I don't know if that's a bit judgmental or not. Because they may have been taught by family to be resilient. So it could be the combo of your upbringing and your having to face life's challenges.

Like Kathleen, Charlotte describes resilience as a learning process, which is directly related to past experiences of overcoming challenges. Charlotte extends this theme by postulating that someone who lived a sheltered life might not be as resilient as someone who had been through hardship. She questions her assumption, wondering if resilience can be taught without struggle. However, the overwhelming response I received from participants was that the clear reason they had developed resilience was the fact that they had struggled with some form of hardship, pain, or suffering. It is wise to maintain some degree of scepticism about the universality of this conclusion; however, it certainly applies to the participants in this study.

Michelle provides yet another description of resilience being developed through struggle in the following exchange:

Researcher: How did you develop resilience?

Michelle: I think it's just a case of coming through stuff. Coming unhinged, falling to pieces [. . .] and just putting myself back together, with their help, and carrying on.

Michelle again describes enduring a depth of suffering, not necessarily responding well in the first instance, but managing to resiliently recover eventually. Her statement that she was able to put herself back together “with their help” foreshadows other themes that will be discussed when the tipping point that affects resilience is introduced. Resilience is not a simple, individual phenomenon. It occurs in a social and cultural context, and is affected by a number of factors in one’s environment.

A final point to note when discussing resilience being developed through struggle, is that resilient responses often result from there being no other options *but* to find a way to continue positively, forward in life. Sophie phrases this simply, when referring to how and why she developed resilience in her life, “‘Cause there's no other choice, you've just gotta do it.” Sophie positions developing resilience as the result of being stuck in a situation where there was only one option. While this seems simple, in many cases where participants referred to not having any other options, it may have been more of a case of not having any other conceivable options – options which fit with their values and conceptualisations of themselves.

In the next exchange, Sarah expands the idea that resilience occurs out of necessity when there are no other options:

Researcher: It was a strong thing for you to do at such a young age, to enrol yourself in a different school.

Sarah: Well I had to go to school. I had to get an education. I had to get a job. I had to. Because my family was just, I mean there wasn't one any more. I had a big sister and a brother, and they both moved out as soon as they could, you know. So I was left, I was the last. I was on my own with my parents. My dad wasn't coping. She was actually dying, we knew she was dying, and she did, she died two years later, it took her like two more years to die of heart failure. So, what can you do?

Sarah again positions resilience as the necessary result of hardship. Her parents were unable to support her, so, at a young age, she took charge of her life and her

education. While it is tenable to conclude that Sarah's struggles prompted her development of resilience, I have some hesitation in accepting her supposition that there were no other alternatives. Again, I surmise that Sarah had no other options that she was willing to consider. Sarah's responded resiliently to hardship, when there were actually other options – staying home, abusing substances, or involving herself in crime, to name a few. Sarah's experience further signals the existence of other factors, beyond struggle, which affect a person's ability to become resilient. The discussion will turn to these additional factors soon; however, a final note on the issue of resilience being developed through struggle comes from John.

John introduces the presence of cultural influences on the development of resilience. Like many other participants, John considers struggle to be essential to the development of resilience. John critiques Pākehā culture for its refusal to allow children to struggle and suffer painful consequence, which he believes prevents them from developing resilience. John says:

One of the things that I project upon society today is that we don't let kids get hurt when they're young. Like we have cages around trampolines and stuff on the ground. I think a kid should break his arm, because I think that develops resiliency. I think it shows him where his boundaries are. I think if you don't have good boundaries, you'll never know what resiliency really is.

This quote suggests that embracing the process of struggle, while painful, will ultimately help people to develop resilience. In a society where comfort is valued and pain is feared, this is not a palatable suggestion. However, the findings of this study suggest that experiencing pain and enduring struggle are beneficial in the long term. Struggling ultimately builds resilience – a positive effect of pain.

Tipping point.

The exploration of struggle as the ultimate factor that affects the development of resilience has provided valuable insight. While struggling with adversity is necessary to being able to overcome adversity, a number of other factors affect a person's ability to become resilient. This has already been suggested in the previous discussion, and will now be expanded upon and further explored. Luke, when considering what could stop someone from becoming resilient, considers a number of possible factors. Luke says:

The fact that they have just been knocked down and shamed too many times, they haven't got the strength to get up and keep going any more. The fact that they feel as though they are dealing with everything on their own and it's all too much. [Pause]. Yeah, I guess resilience is having that attitude of, "I don't have a white flag to wave, I'm never gonna surrender." So, people who aren't gonna be resilient have obviously got a white flag at hand and they wave it fairly quickly and just give up and not try.

Luke positions a lack of resilience, as both a lack of strength and a willingness to surrender. He also floats the idea that resilience is dependent on feeling supported by others, a factor that will be explored in great depth later. Luke mentions only a few factors, other than the struggle itself, which can affect resilience. Each of these factors could be unpacked and explored; however, the important note now is that there are a number of influences on resilience. Resilience is a complex process that is affected by a variety of personal, environmental, social, and cultural components.

Charlotte expands upon the introduction of the tipping point theme in the following quote. She is responding to a question related to what could hinder or prevent resilience from developing.

Maybe when the outcomes are never helpful or good for them. Maybe they stay down, they can't get back up. I've seen situations where life is so incredibly awful for people, there's no possibility of, every time you get up, you just get nailed again. And so maybe that sense of hopelessness, or, why should I get up again?

Charlotte's description provides a useful, balanced account of how resilience is, or is not, developed. She presents a view that a person's ability to recover from a stressful event, the "tipping point," can be affected by a variety of factors – hopelessness, the degree of pain or extent of tragedy someone is faced with, past experiences, and a sense of futility. Charlotte's description provides many factors that can affect the "tipping point," and other participants provide countless more. This theme will address some particularly insightful, or commonly discussed, factors that affect a person's ability to become resilient in difficult times.

Biology.

The first factor to be introduced is biology. A number of participants believed that genetic, biological influences affect a person's ability to become resilient. Elisabeth introduces this theme in the following quote:

I think there can be biological reasons, as far as medical kind of depression or chemical imbalances that change somebody's ability to be resilient. [. . .] And again, for the reason of, the fact that I think that some people are just born with a resilience, some people, maybe just don't have that same wiring.

Elisabeth conceptualises resilience, in part, as being a feature of someone's genetic makeup. In Elisabeth's view, some people are predisposed to mental illnesses, while others are predisposed to resilience. Sarah provides a similar viewpoint when she says:

Then again, I still take responsibility for my children because I feel that if they're not resilient, and it's in their nature to not be resilient... If they are sensitive... one of my daughters is incredibly sensitive, she's really artistic. She's started just suffering from depression all by herself. Just classic, and that's when I started to think maybe this is actually genetic as well. So when I say resilient, I mean resilient to depression, because that's my thing.

Sarah compares resilience to other personality features, such as being artistic or sensitive. She says that her daughter became depressed "all by herself," something Sarah believes to have been genetic, rather than environmentally influenced. Sarah positions resilience as the opposite of depression, particularly among members of her own family. Sarah postulates that depression and resilience may both be genetically determined.

Luke expands the idea of resilience being a biological factor in the following quote. Luke refers to a natural, internal resilience, without discounting the influence of other, external factors:

I guess in the main resilience is something that comes from within, rather than from the outside. [Long pause]. Yeah, for some people they may just be naturally a resilient type of person who isn't gonna let things faze them or get on top of them. For others, it may be a simple sentence from somebody else, or something they've seen that they want to mirror in somebody else's behaviour, or a crisis event and they realise they've got a choice to make - they could go this way, they could go that way.

Luke suggests that resilience has an internal component – a characteristic of personality that allows someone to remain unfazed by trouble or pain. However, Luke highlights that biology is only one factor that affects a person's ability to become resilient. Biology mixes with other factors to provide a complex account of the development of resilience.

Upbringing.

A number of participants referred to their upbringing as a protective factor in the development of their own resilience. Liam introduces this theme in the following quote:

How did I become resilient in spite of difficulties? Like I say, I've always had a happy family, like my parents aren't divorced or anything like that. So, I assume I'm quite fortunate in that respect. I was the youngest of three boys, and I always thought I'm probably a bit, hmmm, I don't think any of us were spoilt, but I'm sure as the baby, you kind of get a sense of your own importance or something - or probably a little bit self-confident, over confident or whatever, from that. Yeah, so, from having a very secure, safe upbringing, I think is one.

Liam describes a childhood experience of a happy family, which he credits, in part, with his personal resilience. Liam constructs a secure, safe upbringing as a building block for confidence, and subsequent resilience. Similarly, John refers to his upbringing, and specifically to his father's influence on his developing identity, in the following quote. John says:

He was such a good dad. And he's still alive. He really fortified my sense of ego. He really believed in me and always encouraged me, and all that, so, so I think, if I didn't have him, I think my early years, having a positive role model was an incredible thing. I think then having the correct amount of freedom to make my own decisions and my own mistakes.

John credits his father's care and wisdom in parenting him as a contributing factor to his resilience. Like Liam, John describes emerging from childhood confident, with a secure identity, which his father helped to establish. Additionally, John acknowledges his father's positive role model, which John was able to rely on and imitate. He also attributes his resilience to having the opportunity to make his own decisions and mistakes as a young person. He refers to having had the "correct" amount of freedom. As a child, John's family allowed him to struggle, which ultimately gave him the experience he needed to develop resilience.

Elisabeth continues the discussion on one's upbringing impacting her resilience. In the following exchange, Elisabeth considers her mother's role model of resilience:

Researcher: How have you become resilient in spite of difficulties you have faced in your life?

Elisabeth: I have seen the resilience in my mother [. . .]. I've absolutely seen it modelled in her. And I've always admired her ability just to get on with life, and to pick herself back up again

Elisabeth refers to having the opportunity as a child to witness resilience in a parent. As a child, she saw her mother go through tough times and emerge, able to function and continue moving forward. This set an example for Elisabeth, teaching her that adversity is not insurmountable; resilience is achievable. In Elisabeth's case, she was able to become resilient, in part, by learning from her mother's struggles.

Exposure to tools and techniques.

Another theme that was identified as a factor affecting resilience is exposure to tools and techniques. As previously discussed, the development of resilience encompasses a learning process. Being exposed to specific insight, techniques, or methods can help to facilitating the learning that is associated with resilience. Michelle introduces this theme when she says, "I've got skills and tools now to handle different situations, which I think is what helps resilience a lot."

Monica expands upon this idea in the following quote:

I have had the privilege slash pleasure of working in contexts that are about helping others, and therefore learning techniques - as far as nursing, and carer professions, and youth work and the likes. I'm constantly exposed to tools and resources and ways of communicating and ways of thinking that are intended for me to use for others, but in essence, there's a self-help element to that as well.

Monica presents the idea that, in Pākehā culture, a number of professions centre around helping people. Any form of helping that is offered usually, in some way, promotes resilience – a return to or establishment of healthy functioning. Monica positions herself as having benefited from professional exposure to tools and resources that are designed to help. Specifically, she references communication

techniques as well as new ways of thinking, which she credits with increasing her personal resilience.

Solid sense of self.

Another factor affecting resilience is a solid sense of self. This, in many ways, extends from the discussion of one's upbringing affecting the ability to develop resilience. However, a solid sense of self does not have to be established in childhood. Anything that solidifies a person's identity, ultimately, can enhance resilience. Caleb introduces this theme, which he directly contrasts with the previous theme of exposure to tools and techniques. Caleb says:

The techniques are not the resilience. We need the techniques, and probably that's where the practical end is, because that's what we talk about, all the techniques that breed resilience in kids or bring resilience to families. So I guess it's good, but just to remember that those techniques are meant to be internalised. So that person has a strong sense of who they are, that they know how to deal with all different kind of feelings, without using denial or acting out, and they know, I'm not responsible for other people's feelings and behaviour, and they're not responsible for mine - that they get those boundaries in place.

Caleb does not discount the influence that tools and techniques have on the development of resilience. However, he constructs resilience as being a deeper process than surface level interventions can address. True resilience, according to Caleb, involves internalising a strong self-concept, and therefore being capable of enduring different kinds of struggles. Caleb extends his explanation to say that clearly established boundaries, a fundamental principle of mental and emotional health, serve to solidify a person's sense of self and result in increased resilience.

Lucy expands this theme by proposing that previous successes or achievements can add to a person's positive self-identity and provide motivation and momentum for resilience. Lucy says, "I think resilience can be built upon by feelings of achievement and, you know, that you're actually being powerful in some way." Lucy positions resilience as being enhanced and further developed by the positive feelings that come from recognising one's past achievements. Later, Lucy says, "I think there's gotta be a core belief in yourself that you can dredge up from somewhere - a positive belief in yourself." Lucy's description positions resilience as being directly affected by positive core beliefs. These beliefs can

result from past accomplishments, and they build a person's resilience by filling her with momentum, confidence, and satisfaction.

A final contribution to the discussion on resilience being affected by a solid sense of self comes from John. In the following exchange, John provides unique insight into this issue:

Researcher: What does the word resilience mean to you?

John: Resilience. Strong sense of self. Strong sense of personal identify in self and in God. Who am I?

Researcher: And what does resilience look like?

John: Resiliency looks like getting to the position of saying, "I am." [. . .] I think there's different levels to identify, and "Who am I?" is a question, but I think when we get to the point of being able to say "I am," like "I am who I am, good, bad, and indifferent." [. . .] So I think it's just getting to that place of knowing the good the bad and just going, "I am." It is what it is. I don't have to measure it by my culture, I don't have to measure it by another person, I don't have to compare myself with the Jones's next door, I am. I am, and I'm okay. And I think that's what Jesus does. I think Jesus comes to tell us we're okay no matter what. Absolute abundance, acceptance, forgiveness. I think that's the Messiah, the point. So no matter what you do, no matter what you've done, no matter what you will do, you're okay. You're always okay.

John positions resilience as encompassing a strong and solid sense of self. However, he goes further, to describe resilience as self-acceptance and self-assuredness. John describes resilience as the ability to recognise the good and bad within oneself, and being able to accept both. Resilience, as John presents it, is refusing to measure oneself against others, against one's culture, or against anything else. Ultimately, John describes resilience as imperviousness to judgments that attack one's identity. That is to say, he describes resilience as freedom from shame.

Positive and supportive relationships.

A dominant theme that was identified with regard to factors that affect resilience is positive and supportive relationships. This factor held a clear consensus among research participants, and aligns easily with findings from previous research, which were explored in chapter 3. Positive and supportive relationships take many forms. Lucy begins the discussion by providing her perspective in the following account:

Researcher: It sounds like you have quite a bit of support around you.

Lucy: Yes... taking that image of the willow, or the branch in the wind, and then it's not just a solo branch; it's well supported by a structure. [. . .] Definitely, relationships help your own resilience. You can't do that sort of thing in isolation.

Lucy positions “your own” resilience as an individual phenomenon. However, she clearly asserts that relationships are a significant help to the development of resilience. Relationships provide the support that one needs to regain strength in the face of adversity.

Luke provides further confirmation of the influence of positive and supportive relationships, when he describes how he has built resilience in his own life. Luke says:

And probably having a very supportive wife who's very understanding and lets me take a few risks and stands on the side-line and encourages me to keep going even though things mightn't look that rosy. Definitely having a supportive partner in life has helped a lot. But then, when you've got children and you've got grandchildren, for their sake, you've got to put an effort in to be able to keep going so you can be a decent role-model for them as well.

Luke's account of support he has received takes a number of perspectives. His wife has provided him with basic love and support, which encouraged him to persevere in difficult times. Additionally, his children and grandchildren provide positive motivation for Luke to continue throughout troubles “for their sake.” Luke's desires to not only be supported and encouraged by his family, but also to provide support and encouragement to them, have both motivated and enhanced his development of resilience. Family is clearly a positive factor for Luke's resilience

Community.

Elisabeth introduces the sub-theme of resilience being enhanced by community when she says, “And I think some people don't have the privilege of connection or healthy role modelling that, that I've been exposed to.” Elisabeth introduces community as able to enhance resilience by providing positive and healthy role modelling. Caleb extends the discussion on community in the following quote. Caleb is specifically describing non-shaming community groups, when he says:

A strong source of resilience for me... so family of choice, if you can't have blood family who will care for you and not shame you then to go for whoever can do that. Resilience will come when people build their lives around non-shaming families of choice, rather than just blood relationships, and that's where we've got to start heading towards.

Caleb constructs resilience as the direct result of deliberately establishing non-shaming community groups, or “families of choice.” These groups can provide care, support, acceptance, and freedom from shame.

Liam concludes the discussion on community with the following contribution:

I wasn't really a tear away; that was the only time I really got in trouble. I think one of the reasons was because when I was like a teenager and all that, I was involved in rowing, and so my dad was at the rowing club, and one of my older brothers and me. And I think it was a very healthy environment for teenage boys, because there was a lot of, you know all sorts of guys from my dad's age and older right down, the whole sort of range of men, all men, that you looked up to. And I always remember that was a kind of quite a good, a rock, because there was all these kind of people that expected you to behave well and set a good example and were all good role models, and I always, you know, felt a responsibility to not do stupid things, like a lot of other teenagers were possibly doing at the time, and would get in trouble and all that. Because I had all these kind of guys that I would have to face up to, if I did, and that was a very good force for keeping me honest, if you like.

Liam says that as a teenager, he “behaved well” and did not do the “stupid things” that other young people did. This good behaviour is constructed by Liam as accompanying resilience; Liam’s responsible behaviour allowed him to develop and mature safely, in a supportive community. Likewise, the supportive community motivated and inspired Liam to act responsibly, to right wrongs, and to follow the examples of positive role models. The power of the community to affect resilience is described as resulting from the sense of accountability that the community provided. If Liam was to become a “tear away,” or to violate the values and standards of the group, he would have had to “face up” to the older members of the group, to whom he felt accountable. Knowing this, and desiring the community’s acceptance, Liam was motivated to uphold positive values, such as responsibility and resilience.

Children.

An example of one's children's ability to affect resilience was provided by Luke in the introduction to the tipping point discussion. Lilia offers another example in the following conversation:

Researcher: What do you think causes people to become resilient?

Lilia: You have to. It was my son that made it for me. He was more important that whatever drama I was having, and I just had to really get on with it. I couldn't run away, so I'd just have to go, okay, socks up, let's just get through the day and try to make something, a plan or something to try to make it a bit better.

Researcher: How do you think he motivated you to become resilient?

Lilia: I guess I didn't want to... I didn't want it for him. I didn't want to drag him around, and I didn't want him to have to be punished for my mistakes, or for them to affect him really badly. So I just carried on. [. . .] Because it wasn't just about me anymore, it was about him too. And I wanted better for him. I didn't want my shit to affect him, well as least as possible. It always does because they're only little and they rely on you for everything, but I wanted to minimise the impact of my problems on him.

Lilia's most common response to hardship, shame in particular, is to run away. This and other responses to shame will be explored in depth in chapter 8. In the above exchange, Lilia reveals that her son motivated her to stop running away from shame. She wanted a better life for him than she did for herself, and so, to improve his wellbeing, Lilia changed the way she responded to stress. Lilia's example shows how a person's child can support her in a unique way – by providing motivation to change due to the responsibility one holds for another. Lilia knew her behaviour impacted her son's well-being as well as hers. She gained the strength and courage from this knowledge to make positive changes that improved both of their lives.

Love.

John introduces the idea of love being an influence on resilience in the following text. John is expanding on the idea that one's past experiences influence his or her future ability to respond resiliently to shame and other struggles. John says:

I would say that there's two great doorways in life to greater enlightenment, or greater awakeness, or life, I would say to the person of Jesus, but you could use whatever words you want - to sight, to seeing things as they truly are. And I think they're love and suffering, and I think both doorways are equal in their experience of you moving forward into greater understanding, greater revelation,

John echoes earlier findings, which strongly suggest that resilience is developed as the result of suffering. However, John proposes that there is another “doorway” to resilience – this being love. Caleb expands on this insight when he says:

Shame is healed... love is nature's psychotherapy. Love is God's psychotherapy. Love is unconditional acceptance. Love is the immediacy of... by the crowd we've been broken, only by the crowd can we be healed. The non-shaming face is the healing.

Caleb constructs love as the ultimate healing power for shame. If shame results from a threatened or severed social bond, love, defined by Caleb as unconditional acceptance, represents the opposite of shame. Ultimately, Caleb ascribes other people with the power to not only heal shame, but also to provide resilience. In being accepted and loved by others, one's shame is reduced. This serves to instil a solid sense of self, which has been earlier described as a factor that positively affects resilience. It also provides the support and encouragement that is needed for resilience to thrive.

Knowing you're not alone.

A final aspect to be discussed about positive and supportive relationships surrounds the sense of kinship that one develops with others. In authentic relationships with others, a person can see that they are not the only one who struggles with adversity or shame. Some participants have described developing resilience through the process of realising that they're not alone. Kathleen introduces this theme in the following exchange:

Researcher: You said that no-one will ever understand that feeling. Have you ever talked to anyone about it?

Kathleen: No. You're the first person. [Laughter] No, I have never talked about it.

Researcher: Do you think you're the only one that feels that way?

Kathleen: No, not now, because, [pause] with having my mother's group I hear the mothers talk and I think, well, gosh, we've all got stuff. You know? We've all got stuff.

Kathleen reveals that she has never before spoken about her own shame, but she has gained strength and insight from hearing the stories of others who feel shame. She describes a feeling of enlightenment and relief when she realised that she was not alone in her issues – “We’ve all got stuff!” In Kathleen’s case, even though she did not necessarily share her own vulnerabilities with the group she was involved with, she describes her resilience being strengthened by hearing and identifying with the afflictions of others.

In a similar manner, Jennifer describes strengthening her resilience by reading books about the issues she is struggling with.

Researcher: What do you get out of reading about it?

Jennifer: Well, I think it's just reading that other people have been through it. It's like when people are depressed, you can be the most depressed person, well, in my case, anxiety, I couldn't read a thing, not a thing! I couldn't read, but I read a book about anxiety. [Laughter] Because you can relate to it so you don't feel so alone.

Jennifer describes a sensation of feeling comforted and interested when reading about others who have been through similar struggles. Feeling less alone may have given her a sense of connection and kinship with others, which in turn strengthened her own, personal identity. Thus, resilience is often positively affected by the felt sense that one is not alone.

Faith

The discussion will now move from the effect of positive and supportive relationships on resilience, to faith as a factor that affects resilience. However, it should be noted that faith could be considered a sub-theme of positive and supportive relationships. It is distinguishable from the previous theme in the sense that the relationship being described by the following participants is a spiritual relationship with God. It is interesting to note that participants described both positive and negative effects of their religious practices and spiritual beliefs. Words such as church and religion dominated the conversations when people were discussing religion as a source of shame. In conversations about resilience,

words such as faith and God were more noticable. Elisabeth introduces faith as a factor affecting resilience in the following quotation:

For me, there's an element of God's craft in us, and a tapping into what he makes available to us. I think a lot of my resilience is in what I understand about God and how he sees me, and what I understand about scripture and the Bible, and promises that he works all things out for the good of me, and those kind of references to who God is. And therefore, if I get knocked down, I can pick myself up. I know that he's got it, and I trust him. [. . .] I became a Christian at 16 - that went a long way to creating resilience in me. Putting trust in a God that loves me

As Elisabeth describes, faith affects resilience in the sense that it provides many of the other factors that have a positive influence on resilience. Elisabeth describes developing a solid sense of self as the result of reading and believing biblical texts that address issues of identity. She describes a personal relationship with her creator, whom she trusts, which gives her encouragement and support. She also credits love, specifically feeling loved by God, as a source of her resilience.

Like Elisabeth, Luke also describes his Christian faith as a factor that promoted the development of resilience in his own life. Luke explains this in the following exchange:

Researcher: And how did you become resilient in spite of difficulties you may have encountered in your life?

Luke: I guess to some degree that has to do with my Christian faith. Belief that I'm not walking through life on my own, and I that I don't have to try and cope with everything on my own. So, for me, I can get away and talk to my closest friend, having a conversation without anybody else being around - I can unload in that way. And that's what keeps me going.

Luke describes that his faith has impacted his resilience through instilling a firm belief that he is not alone, and through having the constantly available support of an understanding friend.

Flexibility.

Liam introduces the next theme in the following text:

I've always been quite good, I think, at just blotting something out, or just rationalising it and just saying, you know, move on. Life is for living. Good and bad, it's all part of life's rich tapestry. I'm not too concerned about like, I've gone with the flow a lot in life. And been able to sort of, rationalise that is just like, well you've gotta live life. You can't set a plan when you're 10. There's one guy I know that had his life mapped out, what he wanted to do, and he's done all of it, and I always sort of think, I mean he's really successful and everything, but I always sort of think that surely you'd miss out in life if you just decide what life's going to be like and then go and do it and don't take things as they come. So we've lived in different countries and stuff and taken opportunities as they've come along, and they were never anything we actually intended to do. We've very much gone with the flow, sometimes. So I've developed that, sort of a skill or flaw, whichever it is, of being able to sort of... adapt, to a situation, that might not be ideal or perfect, and just get on with it.

Liam describes flexibility and the ability to be adaptive as factors that have enhanced his resilience. A particularly interesting line from the above text is, "Good and bad, it's all part of life's rich tapestry." Liam has the flexibility to embrace the struggles and challenges of life, along with its successes and joys. He also is willing to take risks, try new things, and take advantage of opportunities as they come. These are all elements of flexibility, which, through the ability to accept imperfection, allows resilience to thrive. Interestingly, Liam comments that he considers his friend who "had his life mapped out" to be very successful. However, he spoke about him with a sense of pity or dismay. Talking with Liam, it was clear that he values his own flexibility and adaptability, and considers these qualities to be more indicative of a well-lived life than the simple measure of "success."

Willingness to grow and change.

Similar to the above theme, many participants described a willingness to grow and change, which they perceived to positively affect their resilience. Lucy introduces this theme in the following exchange:

Researcher: What do you think causes people to become resilient?

Lucy: I think it's a willingness to attune inwardly, probably has a lot to do with it. And to grapple with things, not to feel defeated on things. To keep striving and reaching and developing. [. . .] And I think it's to do with helping yourself [laughter], as well as seeking help from others. I think it's definitely something that you can gain skills around.

Lucy begins this discussion by positioning resilience as the result of being willing and able to attune inwardly. To attune inwardly involves self-awareness, which requires one to be willing to acknowledge the unpleasant parts of one's self and others along with the good. Nina expands these ideas when she says:

Nina: Resilience is people who are willing to do things, you know? It's a willingness, and an ability to engage. If people feel respected and wanted, or valued, they will give. And that's a resilience, and a lot of people have got no resilience because they really don't believe. They carry shame I suppose. But if you're not willing, I don't see that as resilience. Just because you're capable doesn't mean you're resilient.

Researcher: How does being willing make you resilient?

Nina: Because you'll get there in the end. It doesn't matter what other people think.

Nina directly associates being resilient with being willing. Nina argues that if someone is willing, she will get the result she is after, in spite of opposition from others or other difficulties.

As Sarah says, resilience can include a willingness and ability to be uncomfortable. In the following quote, Sarah positions this willingness to be uncomfortable as a precipitator for resilience, which she says is often developed at a young age and instilled by parents. "I think what helps people become resilient is their parents teaching them to. I think it's about parents leaving their children to actually feel uncomfortable and learning ways to self-soothe, rather than parents always making things better." Sarah describes a willingness to endure struggles, rather than escape or avoid them, which allows a person to fully experience and learn from the struggle, and in turn, develops resilience. Sarah says parents teach resilience by allowing children to "actually feel uncomfortable," rather than rescuing them or solving every distress for them.

Similarly, Makayla, when talking about developing her own resilience with regard to the difficulties involved with parenting, says:

Resilience - when you first hear the word you think of starving people, or people who've gone through a huge disaster, years and years of abuse, and come out triumphant on the other side. And it's basically the just keep going, keep going, keep going, it's going to get better, it's going to get better - kind of mentality. That you just push through no matter what. [. . .] So for me, that resilience is being able to put aside what I want and how I want it to be easy, and actually say that I'm going to do the hard yards now because I want them to have a better life.

Makayla positions resilience as the enabling force behind being able to endure discomfort, accept a life that is not easy, and make difficult choices, trusting that they will have long term benefits. The participants descriptions centre on the idea that a person becomes resilient not just through being subjected to struggles, but by being willing to accept those struggles as opportunities for growth, rather than by escaping or avoiding all forms of discomfort.

Perspective – ability to see the bigger picture.

Another factor that has been identified as affecting resilience is perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture. Jennifer introduces this theme when she says:

Well, the older I've got, the more I've just come to realise I'm not the only person in the world this has happened to. And I'm an avid reader, so I read quite a lot about that sort of thing.

Jennifer partially credits her own resilience with the realisation that she is not the “only person in the world” who struggles. This is similar to a previous theme when supportive relationships were identified as being beneficial because they allow people to know that they are not alone. In Jennifer’s case, she has gained comfort and perspective through reading about others’ experiences with hardships. This has expanded her perspective and allowed her to perceive her own issues as normal, albeit painful, human experiences.

Likewise, Peter describes how he built resilience in his own life in the following quote: “It was the swapping over from inward thoughts to outward thoughts. From thinking about myself to thinking about the things outside of me, and when you think of things outside of you, you forget about your own personal pain.” Peter presents a widening of his perspective as not only distracting him from his own pain, but also as empowering him, in promoting his own personal

resilience. Liam also describes resilience as being subject to a person's perspective. Liam says:

What causes people to become resilient? I guess in some ways as well... like going to the gym and building up a muscle by lifting a lot of weights, I suppose some people who have had an absolutely horrific life, you know, you grew up as a child in Sierra Leone or something, or Rwanda, would be fairly resilient to the trivial things that we spoilt Westerners would think were terrible disasters. And so perspective, I'm sure would make you resilient. [. . .] How else have I developed resilience? Sometimes I try and think, you know, is this important in the big picture? What are you going to actually worry about when you're lying on your death bed? Is this a big deal or not? Is this something you're going to mourn, or just let go?

Liam positions resilience as the result of struggle, and as being proportional to the degree of hardship that a person has previously experienced. However, Liam also says that consciously expanding his perspective, and refusing to be narrowly focussed on a single problem, has helped to solidify his resilience. He refers to questioning whether certain issues are important in the long term, which affects the energy that he invests in resolving them. It is likely that this conscious attendance to the bigger picture allows him to conserve his energy, so that he has strength when needed to overcome seriously significant problems.

Physical health.

A final factor that has been identified as affecting resilience is a person's physical health. Liam describes this factor when he says:

The question is how have I developed resilience. Just trying to think if I've sort of nurtured it [. . .]. I wonder if I have done anything myself to increase my resilience. I try to stay fit and healthy and eat right and that, because I notice a huge difference if I... you know, not looking after myself, in just my emotional state. So yeah, I would be much less resilient and much more fragile if I was in a bad way physically. I've kind of come to that conclusion that I have to look after myself physically to be alright emotionally and mentally and everything.

Liam describes his mental and emotional health as being significantly affected by his physical health. He invests time and energy into fitness and healthy eating because he has experienced that being at his peak physically can affect his emotional responses and increase his ability to positively handle struggle. Thus, physical health and fitness, for Liam, is a protective factor that enhances his resilience.

The discussion in the latter part of this chapter has presented a variety of factors that interweave in the complex development of resilience. Interestingly, struggle was found to be integral to the development of resilience. However, a number of additional factors were found to affect the tipping point – the point at which a struggle tips from being an uncomfortable precursor for growth to a traumatic and debilitating calamity. These factors include biology, one's upbringing, exposure to tools and techniques, a solid sense of self, positive and supportive relationships, faith, flexibility, a willingness to grow and change, perspective, and physical health. The discussion will now turn toward exploring the implications of these findings, including those presented earlier in the chapter regarding descriptions and characteristics of resilience.

Implications of the Findings

The resilience findings have brought interesting insights to the discussion of shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. Many of the discoveries fit well with current research, but some new understandings have emerged. It is particularly interesting to note the cultural understandings that influence Pākehā understandings and expressions of resilience.

Participants clearly described resilience as the ability to bounce back from struggle. Struggle was conceptualised as a crucial factor for the development of resilience. Many participants told me that they did not believe they could have become resilient if they had not experienced hardships in their lives. A definition of resilience that was presented in chapter 3 came from Bonanno (2004), who defined resilience as the capacity to resist any form of maladaptation in the face of risk or adversity. Bonanno's concept of resilience requires a steady continuity of functioning, leaving no room for struggle. The findings of the present study directly contradict this idea. In unity with other resilience researchers that were mentioned in chapter 3 (e.g. Roisman, 2005; Peters et al., 2005; Montpetit et al., 2010), the participants constructed resilience as complex and dynamic – an experience that encompasses depth of character, a willingness to be vulnerable, and a need for social support and connection.

A review of the resilience literature failed to find any previous research that addressed or discovered struggle as a factor affecting the development of resilience. This is not surprising, as most resilience research is quantitative.

Quantitative research focusses specifically on factors that account for varying outcomes in response to particular struggles. Ungar (2003) noted that quantitative resilience research has two major shortcomings - the arbitrariness of outcome measures that are used to define resilience, and the challenge of accounting for the social and cultural contexts in which resilience develops. The present study has not only allowed for the social and cultural context of resilience to be examined, but it has also allowed for the investigation of resilience to extend beyond specific stressors and arbitrary outcome measures. One new insight that has been gained as a result of this unconstrained investigation is the conclusion that the development of resilience, as a general trait, depends on having been exposed to struggle and having gained confidence by overcoming past struggles. In most resilience literature, struggle is constructed as a risk – a problem to be feared, with the power to destroy one's mental health. However, some researchers have commented on the ordinariness of resilience. Masten (2001) describes resilience as the normal response of human adaptively, which is prevented only when the adaptive systems of development or connection are compromised. The participants I have interviewed communicated the pain of struggle, but they have also revealed an appreciation for it. They have constructed struggle as an ordinary human experience, to be accepted, rather than feared. They have imparted the common sense wisdom that life is not meant to be easy, and in most circumstances, people are strong enough to withstand even major crises without being crippled.

Like Masten (2001), the participants recognised that sometimes a person will not be able to withstand a particular hardship, often due to a failure in the protective system of that person's environment. The factors that I presented as affecting the tipping point for resilience are very similar to previous research findings related to protective factors and resilience. The most commonly cited protective factor in the academic literature is positive and supportive relationships. This was whole heartedly echoed by my participants. Participants described the support of family and friends, as well as the ability to provide support to others, as crucial motivating factors in the development of resilience. Participants also described biology, and a genetic predisposition to resilience, as a protective factor. This aligns with studies that have found factors such as intelligence and natural temperament to be predictive of resilience. Positivity is

another protective factor with support in the resilience literature. This relates to factors I found such as perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture and willingness to grow and change. Participants' flexibility and ability to use tools and techniques is indicative of good problem solving skills, another protective factor that has been cited in the resilience literature. Physical health and fitness is a factor that was identified in this study, which is not often mentioned in resilience literature. However, Shirom, Toker, Berliner, Shapira, and Melamed (2008) found that physical fitness is predictive of the emotional experience of vigour, which in turn, positively affects resilience and motivation. Similarly, Fox (1999) found that physical exercise has positive effects on one's ability to maintain physical and mental health, key components of the expression of resilience.

A particularly interesting insight from the resilience findings relates to a cultural value of personal comfort. While participants identified that their culture strongly values ease and comfort, they were also able to step back from this desire and note that while hardships are painful, they sometimes have a long term benefit. Another interesting point to note is participants' cultural critique of the Pākehā tendency to appreciate violent sports and contests of physical strength. At times these displays of brute strength and force may masquerade as resilience. Pringle and Hickey (2010) examined rugby culture in New Zealand, providing the argument that New Zealand sport cultures promote hypermasculinity, which affects the identities of New Zealand men by presenting an unhelpful norm. These researchers argue that the sport culture of New Zealand promotes aggression and violence. As the findings in this chapter have revealed, true resilience is richer and deeper than physical displays of strength. True resilience includes a value for others and a firm grounding in supportive communities.

The resilience findings provide an excellent base from which future research related to resilience in Pākehā culture can be developed. Resilience was a relatively small component of this research study, and a study that focussed primarily on resilience in New Zealand, or resilience in Pākehā culture, would be worthwhile. The discussion in this chapter has illustrated that being allowed to struggle is beneficial to the development of resilience, but that this is often not encouraged in Pākehā culture. It would be very interesting to see future research that examines how discourses within Pākehā culture promote the value of comfort

and freedom from struggle. Likewise, it appears that academic discourses within psychological research may promote this same value. It is well worth critically examining this, which could have implications as to how we conceptualise and respond to people we are trying to help. Finally, the social context of resilience, specifically within Pākehā culture, warrants further examination. I have found that struggle is normal, can be beneficial, and is not something to be feared. However, a sufficient support network is strongly beneficial to ensuring that a struggle becomes a character building experience, rather than a devastating blow to one's identity. Pākehā culture, along with many Western cultures, values individuality, which can, at times, prevent the establishment of support networks. Research addressing the social support networks of Pākehā New Zealanders would reveal understandings that could ultimately be used to enhance New Zealanders' resilience.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored resilience, as experienced and understood by the study's participants. Participants revealed a common discourse, which describes resilience as bouncing back from trials or adversities. Participants sometimes further described resilience as encompassing fortitude, conscious, determined choices, and strength.

Resilience has been found to be a complex concept, which is flexible, malleable, and develops slowly over time. Participants contrasted a false cultural ideal of resilience as rugged, individualistic toughness, with true resilience, which develops in supported relationships through a willingness to endure struggle.

The primary factor that was identified as affecting the development of resilience is struggle. Participants confidently and consistently attested that resilience cannot develop if a person is not challenged. Life's challenges, shame included, may be unpleasant, but they can ultimately result in growth. However, not all struggles result in growth. In order for struggles to build resilience, a combination of factors interlink to provide the endurance a person needs to overcome struggles.

Resilience is not merely an individual phenomenon; it can also be powerfully influenced by social and environmental mechanisms. Factors that affect resilience can include biology, upbringing, exposure to tools and

techniques, a solid sense of self, positive and supportive relationships, faith, flexibility, a willingness to grow and change, perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture, and physical health.

Chapter 8: Responses to Shame

The previous chapter introduced and explored resilience. Ultimately, it was found that it is possible to bounce back from trials, but the process of developing resilience is not an easy one. It involves experience overcoming struggle, along with other factors such as personality, relationships, and mental perspective. Resilience is a dynamic construct that develops in supportive relationships, over time, through struggle. Chapters 6 and 7 introduced the findings related to shame, first exploring participants' understandings of shame, and then addressing the sources of shame. It was found that shame is an invariably negative experience, but that the struggle with shame can, in some circumstances, be beneficial. Shame has countless situational triggers, but ultimately, the source of shame is closely linked with judgement. The present chapter will return to the topic of shame to discuss participants' responses to shame. The resilience findings will be integrated throughout the chapter in a discussion that aims to answer the final research question: What are the more resilient responses to shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?

Six primary themes were identified related to responses to shame. These can be separated into two groups. The natural responses to shame include avoiding shame, escaping from shame, and succumbing to shame. These responses and their effects will each be explored in detail. The alternative, more difficult, and more resilient responses to shame are to be vulnerable to shame, to be present with shame, and to be willing to change as a result of feeling shame. While it may be tempting to categorically split these responses into good and bad, or right and wrong, the chapter will explore the possible benefits of each response. While the latter group may be more likely to develop resilience in the long term, there are times when avoiding and escaping from shame can be the most fitting response.

Natural Responses to Shame

The natural responses to shame are to avoid situations that might trigger feelings of shame, to escape from shame when it is felt, and to succumb to shame, often ending in it crippling one's mental and social well-being. It is important highlight the name for this group of responses – natural, not bad or wrong. Shame is complex, and its responses are varied. The following responses are natural

defences against or effects of shame. These responses can be problematic, but in some situations they may be protective.

I have chosen the name natural for this group of responses because when talking with participants, it was clear that these responses occurred often and effortlessly in response to feelings of (or the anticipation of) acute shame. The term does not imply biological determinism. Rather, it is intended to reflect the common and inherently human aspect of these particular responses. Avoiding, escaping, and succumbing to shame are understandable reactions to the extreme state of distress that can accompany shame.

Avoid.

The first response to shame that will be explored is avoidance. “Avoid” is a word that came up over and over again in interviews, when participants were asked how they coped with or responded to shame. Most people, if it was possible, would not only avoid shame, but would in turn avoid any situation that might evoke shame. Lilia introduces this theme in the following exchange, where she is reflecting on shame she felt as a result of cheating on her boyfriend:

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame in that situation?

Lilia: I totally avoided him. [Laughter] And everything to do with him, and just went [cutting off gesture] and cut it and tried never to think about it again.

Researcher: And how do you feel that worked for you?

Lilia: Well, I wouldn't say it worked. [Laughter] I think you can probably only avoid stuff for so long

Lilia avoided shame both physically and mentally. She avoided her boyfriend, thus, avoiding any situations in which she would be reminded of her actions, the broken relationship, or her feelings of shame about the break-up. She also mentally “cut off” from shame, refusing to allow herself to acknowledge the shame because of the deep pain that it brought. While this temporarily silenced her shame, it did not help her to grow or learn from the situation.

Like Lilia, Peter avoids shame by physically avoiding situations where he will encounter people who he perceives will judge him. Peter says, “There are certain shops, areas that I won't go into, because I'll find more people who give me more judgement.” Peter clearly links his shame to the judgements of others,

and by avoiding situations where he could potentially be judged, he avoids shame. Kathleen shares another story, where she describes deciding to avoid a social gathering because a woman with whom Kathleen had a disagreement with would be present at the gathering. Kathleen says:

Two women in particular that, one just doesn't want to talk to me and the other one, she's had an issue with me through a very small incident but she just didn't want anything more to do with me. And I said to my husband, "I'm not going." And he said, "Why?" I said, "Because the whole time I'm there I'm going to feel bad." It makes me feel bad. And I don't understand why.

Kathleen anticipates feeling shame when confronted with the rejection of her former friend, and she fears being preoccupied with and disabled by the sense of shame if she attends the gathering. So instead, she withdraws from social contact. She avoids the gathering in an attempt to protect herself from shame, but the result is isolation and loneliness.

The discussion of avoiding shame has so far centred on physically avoiding situations in which one might feel shame in social relationships with others. Charlotte provides a different example of avoiding shame. In the following excerpt, Charlotte describes perfectionism as a mechanism for avoiding shame. Charlotte is reflecting on the effects of being excessively, outwardly shamed by her mother when she says: "It created in me to put high expectations of myself which were always unrealistic. So to never praise myself for the work I had done, but rather to go, it's just not good enough." Charlotte describes developing very high expectations of herself. This is in part the result of internalising her mother's high standards, but it also serves as an attempt to avoid shame. In response to shame, Charlotte constantly tried to work harder and do better, in order to avoid the feeling of not being "good enough."

Luke provides another glimpse into the human tendency to avoid shame when he responds to a question about experiences with shame by saying, "Ah, yeah, that would probably be the one that comes to mind that I'm prepared to verbalise at the moment." Even in the setting of a confidential interview, many participants, like Luke, were willing to describe some instances of feeling shame, but avoided others. A common tendency was for participants' to begin with relatively minor examples of shame experiences, and then to reveal deeper, more emotional memories later in the interview, as they felt more settled. Avoiding

shame, and avoiding talking or thinking about shame, appears to be an understandable, human response to an emotional experience that can sometimes be deeply distressing.

Many people used the word “hiding” when describing their responses to shame. Fitting with the hidden nature of shame discussed in chapter 5, hiding, as a means of avoiding shame, is commonplace. Elisabeth says: “How else do I deal with shame? Definitely hide.” Peter expands the theme of hiding from shame to reveal how he physically hides his face through the use of sunglasses, to avoid being recognised and consequently feeling shame in exchanges with others he may encounter. Peter says: “If I'm in that space, if I have to pop into the supermarket, I'll go to a different one, or I'll wear my sunglasses. Not that... I'm tall, people will still spot me, but I feel I'm hiding.” Peter finds comfort in feeling like he is hiding. His sunglasses provide a barrier between himself and others, which provides a perceived sense of protection from shame. While hiding in this way helps Peter emotionally, it would also serve to exacerbate his social isolation.

Michelle refers to hiding a specific action, in order to avoid feeling that shame that results from it. In Michelle's case, as a child, she was overtly shamed by her parents for wetting the bed. Michelle says:

If I didn't make it, I'd be up in the middle of the night, with the lights all off, and I was in the top bunk, so I had to do all this without waking my sister, and I used to take my sheet off and try and change the bed and hide the sheets in the washing machine - try and hide them from mum. [. . .] I'd just wake up in the middle of the night, change my bed, go and have a wash in the hand basin and try and clean myself up and go back to bed. It was horrible.

Michelle describes the loneliness of hiding and the fear of being caught. In this emotional recollection, Michelle describes the experience of cleaning and hiding her sheets as horrible. However, Michelle's shame, alongside a fear of punishment and further shame, was significant enough to motivate her into hiding.

A number of participants described an interesting way of hiding from shame – hiding behind a mask. Kathleen says, “You learn to put on masks. Which is bad - it's bad, I know, it's not good. But it's your coping mechanism. You know?” Rather than withdrawing and hiding physically and socially, Kathleen continued to be socially involved, physically visible, and connected. However, she refused to let her true thoughts and feeling show; she refused to be vulnerable.

By putting on a “mask” Kathleen was able to protect herself from shame, but at the cost of true connection with others. Kathleen constructs this response as “bad.” It is possibly due having realised the isolating effect of this response that Kathleen believes her response to be wrong or unhelpful, even though it is still a response she is driven toward.

Elisabeth elaborates on this idea in the following exchange:

Elisabeth: So, that lead me to hide. I either hid, I thought I was hiding, but to other people, I was the crazy up front girl. I threw myself in situations where I was the life of the party, but to me, I was hiding, because they weren't seeing my fear, they weren't seeing the language inside my head, they weren't seeing the fact that I was just desperately hurting. They were seeing this bright and bubbly person, but to other people it probably wasn't perceived as hiding.

Researcher: So it sounds almost like hiding behind a mask.

Elisabeth: Yeah, yeah, good.

Like Kathleen, Elisabeth felt she was protecting herself from shame by refusing to reveal her true feelings of fear and failure. She created a false persona, which was liked by others, but which prevented her true, vulnerable self from being known, and therefore, from being loved and supported.

A final method of hiding to be explored is avoiding shame and hiding through shrinking and making oneself invisible. Mark says that as a child, to avoid shaming situations, he would “survive through being quiet and trying to just be invisible or quiet and not make too much trouble.” If he was not noticed, he could not be shamed, and so hiding through “invisibility” was a protective coping mechanism for Mark.

Like Mark, Michelle refers to avoiding shame by making herself invisible. In the following exchange, Michelle reflects on the experience of making herself invisible. However, she also describes the pain that resulted from this response to shame.

Michelle: When I was a kid I felt shame at school... I'd even feel shame if I put my hand up and got a question right, so I stopped doing that. And I regret that big time.

Researcher: Tell me about that.

Michelle: I still remember one question, I was 11, I was at primary school, and the teacher drew an aeroplane on the chalk board, and it was this cool aeroplane, and I was sitting, this is the classroom, and I was right there, I remember what I was wearing, I remember how I smelt, I remember everything. He drew this aeroplane on the board, and goes, nineteen seventy something the aeroplanes were built, and they realised that they had to do something to improve them, what did they do? Straight away, I knew. I was like, well the nose was curved, they made the noses pointier to cut the sound barrier. I knew straight away, and forever he asked the question, it felt like hours, he asked all the kids in the classroom. And all the kids had all these ideas, better this, this, this, this. I knew what it was the whole time. I didn't put my hand up. Because I was too ashamed of getting it right, because if I got it right I'd get teased, and I don't want to get teased because it feels yuck. Because I was awful at getting teased, so if I could sit through a whole class, a whole lesson and not get teased, then that was good. I had to be invisible.

Michelle conveys a deep sense of regret for her response of hiding at school. She was extremely negatively affected by the shame of getting teased, and so she avoided it at all costs. She remained quiet in class, even when she knew the right answer to a question from the teachers, silently suffering and feeling torn. She wanted to participate, to connect with her teacher and classmates, but the shame of being seen and teased was unbearable. So, Michelle chose to become “invisible,” which protected her in one sense, but also caused its own measure of pain and despair.

Finally, concluding the discussion on avoidance as a response to shame, Mark describes the effects of avoiding or hiding from shame. He says:

All through elementary school, I always stole and stuff, because school was so fucking boring, so I just would steal things from cupboards. I'd steal...whatever. So, I've been in hiding for as long as I can remember, so I've always been hiding something. And that hiding or being alone, being alone in your own stuff - no one really knows what's really going on for you. Your parents definitely don't know. The school doesn't really care except... so, the definition of being in a sense shame is that sense of being in hiding. And I've been in hiding for as long as I can remember.

Mark reflects on shame he felt for stealing at school during his childhood. He hid to cover his shame, but hiding left him feeling alone – isolated and unsupported. I have previously suggested that shame's purpose is to alert us when our

relationships are under threat, so that we can attend to and restore social bonds. As in Mark's example, avoiding and hiding from shame often results in the avoidance of relationships – or at least the avoidance of authentic relationships. Responding to shame in this way ultimately inhibits and prevents interpersonal connection. This can result in short term protection from social dangers; however, widespread avoidance of shame can leave a person chronically isolated and unable to connect with or receive support from others. This ultimately hinders the development of resilience, which is greatly enhanced by supportive relationships.

Escape.

The next response to shame that will be explored is escapism. Most participants described a desire to avoid feeling shame – sometimes at all costs. However, when people are unable to avoid shame, the next natural response is to escape from shame. This can happen in many ways.

Run away from shame.

Many times, people respond to feeling shame by physically running away or fleeing. Kathleen introduces this sub-theme in the following exchange:

Researcher: Are there any other ways you cope with feeling shame?

Kathleen: Mainly sitting down and withdrawing. I withdraw; I run away. That is my... You know the fight or flight? I literally pull back.

Kathleen refers to the well-known fight or flight response when describing her response to shame. When exposed to stress, human nature is biologically driven to either defend itself or to run away fast. When Kathleen feels shame, her immediate response is to flee – to withdraw. It is interesting to note the contrast in Kathleen's actions and her description of the emotional process involved. While physically she responds by simply sitting down or withdrawing, a passive, low energy response, the emotional description of the fight or flight response is a very high energy response. Kathleen describes sitting down and pulling back – emotionally removing herself from a dangerous situation. This may leave a very high level of emotional volatility – unvented energy, which could then contribute to numerous other problems, such as anxiety or aggression.

Kathleen's description of running away from shame brings an image that is reminiscent to the image of hiding described earlier. When Kathleen has been

in a situation where she was emotionally exposed and left vulnerable to shame, feeling shame causes her to immediately withdraw back into hiding. She dodges the feeling, as much as she is able, and returns to a vigilant state of shame avoidance.

Similarly, Lilia describes physically running away and fleeing from shame. Lilia is referring to a situation in which she divorced her husband, and subsequently felt shame as the result of her parents' disapproval of the divorce.

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame in that situation?

Lilia: I ran away. [Laughter] I moved. I moved and avoided them. Seems to be what I do.

Researcher: So you avoided them as a way of avoiding the shame that you felt coming from them?

Lilia: Yeah, and I've done that my whole life, since I was old enough to get away from something like that, that's what I've done. [. . .] I started to recognise the feeling when I was a bit older, and it would be the same pattern. Something would happen and then I'd want to run away. And I'd, start looking for somewhere else to live in a different country to move to, and you know, I'd blimmin move country. [Laughter]

Researcher: Have you moved country before?

Lilia: Yeah, yeah, I went to America once, went to Aussie another time, went to China.

Lilia describes moving to another country to escape from the shame she felt when exposed to her parents' disapproval. She refers to at least three international moves that she made, each as an escape response to feeling shame in various situations. Mark describes a similar escape response in the following exchange:

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame in that situation?

Mark: I came to New Zealand. It wasn't planned, but it was miraculous. If I hadn't gotten out of there, I think would have just gone more and more back into substances and disappeared. I fear for where I'd be at. I'd either be dead or in jail probably. So New Zealand was my next reprieve.

Both Lilia and Mark position shame as the driving force behind immigrating to another country, which ultimately allowed shame the power to determine the long-term course of their lives. In Mark's case, escaping from shame by fleeing to another country is constructed as a positive, "miraculous" experience. It removed him from a religious culture in which shame was rampant. Being able to

physically escape from shame prevented him from emotionally escaping from shame through substance abuse, and he was able to build a new life in a new environment, which was a source of reprieve for Mark.

Lilia created a pattern of repeatedly running away from shame by relocating to new countries. This is likely to have left her isolated, and unable to establish adequate support networks. In contrast, Mark's decision to come to New Zealand distanced him from on-going sources of shame, which he was otherwise unable to deal with constructively, and allowed him a fresh start in a new place. This had a similar effect as the metaphor of resilience as a wall, which was mentioned in chapter 7. While connection is usually a valuable source of resilience, sometimes, remaining connected to unsupportive or unhelpful people can hinder resilience. As mentioned earlier, I am discussing natural responses to shame, which can often be problematic when used readily without conscious consideration. However, these natural responses to shame are not necessarily wrong responses. Mark's example shows that escaping from strong feelings of on-going shame can sometimes be beneficial.

Numb shame.

Many participants referred to having escaped from shame by numbing their shame – most commonly through the use of substances. John introduces this theme by describing a process of emotionally escaping from shame to various hiding places. John says, “Whenever I've had something like that happen in my life, I'll hide. And I used to have several hiding places, which were, alcohol, food, girls... So, I will just go into hiding.” Hiding as a response to shame was discussed earlier, when discussing avoidance as a response to shame. When a person is confronted with acute feelings of shame, a natural response is to escape the painful feeling by fleeing to the security of hiding places. Hiding through escapism differs from the hiding discussed earlier, in that to escape from shame back into hiding often involves a more active effort to flee from or numb the feeling of shame. Peter, when describing ways of coping with shame, mentioned, “Yes, and in between all of that there's just numbing yourself - alcohol, weed.” Often people consume substances to achieve this emotional numbing. John refers to alcohol and food, as well as girls, as places he goes, or methods he uses to hide.

Similarly, Mark reflects on his use of substances to numb shame in the following exchange:

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame?

Mark: Oh, as soon as I found substances, I did that. I used that. Absolutely, that was my big success in surviving it was finding substances, and getting stoned before school, and then just trying to get through with that, taking pills at school. Or just the knowledge that I'd be able to use when I got out, as soon as I got home. But I couldn't find any other way, there wasn't.

As a school student, in a shaming and abusive environment that he was unable to avoid or escape from physically, Mark used drugs and alcohol to numb his shame and his fear. Mark, with a tinge of sarcasm, reflects on this as a success, as in the short term, it allowed him to survive. However, relying on drugs and alcohol as a method of surviving had serious and negative long term effects.

Charlotte, when reflecting on the shame of having been left by a long term boyfriend, says:

Researcher: How did you cope with the shame in that situation?

Charlotte: I stopped eating and I drank alcohol [laughter], for about six months - and went to parties all the time and destroyed myself basically. [Laughter] Yeah, I think it was definitely escapism.

Charlotte expands the discussion on the use of substances as an escape from shame. In Charlotte's case, drinking alcohol was part of her escape, but she also refers to going to parties and destroying her body. It is possible that constantly going to parties served to numb some of Charlotte's loneliness and the shame of abandonment. Charlotte's self-destructive behaviour could have been an outworking of her shame, alongside being an attempt to emotionally flee from shame. As referred to in chapter 6, Charlotte's shame called her identity into question, causing her to deeply question her worth and value. Acting with reckless disregard for her physical health and wellness could have been a visible outworking of her damaged self-esteem.

Max continues the discussion of substances as an escape from shame in the following quote. He is referring to first being exposed to drugs when visiting his dad's house as a young teenager.

Me and my cousin, and there was this green stuff lying around, and we knew what it was, and we started smoking that, and then boom! That was it. We were both hooked. Yeah, we both thought it was amazing; it was just the perfect escape.

Max refers to the feeling of getting high for the first time, as “amazing,” “the perfect escape.” For some participants, substances gave them freedom from the harshly painful experience of shame, allowing them to escape into some form of happiness. However, this escape is temporary and carries significant dangers, such as inappropriate behaviour or addiction. Participants also reflected on the pain, difficulty, and long-term consequences they endured as a result of abusing substances to escape from their shame.

Another, less notorious but equally common escape that participants mentioned was through eating. When asked how she coped with feelings of shame, Elisabeth said: “What else do I do? Eat, I eat. I eat a lot. [Pause] Damn mechanism of eating when you're feeling bad. [Laughter]” Elisabeth describes excessive eating as a mechanism of escaping from shame, and other bad feelings. Likewise, Michelle, reflecting on how she has previously coped with shame, says:

I don't want to live all my life with it just popping up. And sinking into this deep pit of, oh I feel ashamed, so I'm to go and eat peanut butter sandwiches. Which is what I used to do. Oh, I feel stink, I need to eat! Not useful.

Researcher: So it sounds like eating is a way that you've coped with shame in the past?

Michelle: [Laughter] Oh yeah! And everything else as well! Oh I'm happy let's have a peanut butter sandwich. I feel so sad, I'm going to go have a peanut butter sandwich! I'm cross with you, you suck, I'm going to go and have a peanut butter sandwich! [Laughter] Seriously, it really has been. It's not anymore.

Michelle also refers to eating as a coping mechanism for shame. While eating would not necessarily provide the same degree of escape as drug or alcohol use, it appears that it can provide comfort and sooth painful emotions in the short term. However, overeating has its own negative long term outcomes, which can

exacerbate, rather than help, feelings of shame. A number of participants referred to feeling shame about their bodies related to being overweight.

It is interesting to note that Michelle refers to eating as a coping mechanism for any negative emotion, shame included. It is likely that overeating, as well as other forms of escapism, are not unique to shame. Rather, these may be common reactions to any form of distress that a person is not prepared to acknowledge and confront. However, the concept of hiding is more likely to apply specifically to shame. As shame is often triggered by the expressed or anticipated judgements of others, hiding is a response not just to the psychological distress of shame, but it is also a specific response to the threat of judgement and its resulting shame.

A final method of escaping from shame through substances is introduced by Jennifer. Jennifer refers to numbing shame through doctor-prescribed antidepressant and anti-anxiety medications. Answering a question about the emotional experience of shame, Jennifer says:

I think it just like pulls you down really. Like a big blanket over your head or something. But like I say, because I haven't really dealt with it, it has come in other ways. I've been to multiple doctors, as you can imagine, over the years. But it's never been dealt with. It's been covered up.
[Whispering] Drugs! [Laughter]

It may be controversial to suggest that medically sanctioned treatments may actually be an escape mechanism. However, it is interesting to note Jennifer's thoughts on the issues. Her experience is that drugs covered up, rather than dealt with, the issues she was facing. Prescribed medications provided temporary relief from acute feelings of shame, but she positions the doctors and the drugs as being unable to help her with her shame. Years of medical treatment kept her shame well hidden, but she was aware that the shame, along with other negative emotions, was still there lingering under the surface. The medication provided an escape from shame, not a cure.

In considering Jennifer's account, I am left wondering if the doctors themselves were attempting to avoid shame, alongside other difficult emotions such as depression and anxiety, by prescribing medication as a first response treatment. It is possible that like the participants, medical and psychological practitioners are motivated by a cultural value of personal comfort and ease. It

seems that Jennifer's doctors may not have felt comfortable with allowing her to struggle. I wonder if she would have been better served if the first response she received to seeking medical help was to accept and acknowledge her struggle, seek understanding, and offer support, rather than to immediately provide drugs as a means of escape.

Deny shame.

Lilia introduces the theme of denying shame in the following exchange. She is referring to an earlier quoted conversation, where she talks about escaping from shame by moving out of the country.

Researcher: Do you think that your ways of coping with shame have changed throughout your life?

Lilia: Not really. I can't physically run away now, because of my boy. I suppose I could, but I don't want to drag him around the country-side. So I guess I just don't think about it. I just try to cut that out. It kinda gets harder, when you can't use your coping mechanisms for things like that. You get really antsy. I felt stuck and I start to feel trapped if I can't get away from it. So that's probably why I've developed the sort of blocking it off method. [. . .] Now, I just block it out, because I know I can't move. Or, I don't want to for my son's sake.

Because of the value she places on her son's well-being and her desire to be a good role model for him, Lilia no longer allows herself to physically run away when she feels shame. Instead, she has developed the ability to emotionally deny, or cut off from, shame. This has developed out of a response to feeling trapped between shame and her desire to stay in one place for her son's sake. Her method of emotionally cutting off shame serves to distance herself emotionally, if not physically, from feelings of shame.

Max describes a similar ability to deny shame. He says:

I've gotten pretty good at learning to push things under the rug, and try not to think about them, because when I do think about them, I won't feel the best about myself. So, I just kind of... choose not to.

Max positions the denial of shame as protective, in that it allows him to retain a positive self-image. Focussing on his shame would threaten his view of himself through his negative judgements about his integrity and character. While this has the immediate benefit of boosting Max's self-esteem in the short term, remaining in denial of shame in the long term could restrict a person's ability to repair relationships and make changes to harmful behaviours.

Elisabeth, when referring to how much she was willing to share in the interview, commented that she thought there were areas of her life, specifically regarding her responses to shame, about which she was not even able to think clearly or be honest with herself. Elisabeth says:

There's even stuff that - things that I think or perceive or assume - that I'm [not] really even honest with myself about. Probably because of shame, or because of how that will make me feel, because I have some quite sophisticated survival kits as far as not allowing myself to even go there.

Elisabeth comments that she has “sophisticated survival kits” that protect her from shame or other negative emotions by preventing her from mind from “going there.” Elisabeth does not describe this as a positive or negative feature, simply as the way it is. Similarly, Lucy describes the difficulty in retrieving shame memories in the following brief exchange:

Researcher: Are there any other experiences of shame that we haven't talked about that you'd like to share?

Lucy: [Pause] None that immediately come to mind. [Pause] I think I, we all probably, sort of try to block off from trauma. [Laughter]

Lucy says that she cannot think of any further experiences with shame. However, she indicates an assumption that other memories of shame may be blocked out of her memory. Describing shame as traumatic, and laughing, possibly as a release of nervous tensions, Lucy indicates that she is either unwilling or unable to recall and share memories of shame that may be buried below the surface in denial.

Blame others.

Another way that participants described escaping from shame is by unloading their own shame onto someone else through blame. Elisabeth introduces this theme when she says, “Some ways I cope with feel... so, ignoring, shaming others [laughter] or blaming others - in myself, not actually to them!” Elisabeth describes shaming, ignoring, or blaming others as defensive responses to her own feelings of shame. While she qualifies that she does this in her own mind, not overtly toward the other person, it is reasonable to assume that sometimes people are overtly blamed as a result of another person's shame. Similarly, Drew responded to a question on coping with shame by saying:

I think I have the need to blame and shame Steve, because I feel he could have left much better and all of this could have been avoided. [. . .] I'd like to punch him in the face because that would hurt him, or blow his car up or something nasty. [. . .] Yeah, he's the person I've disliked the most in my life. So, that's been difficult. There must have been a lot of shame tied up in that...

Again, Drew refers to his internal fantasies, rather than physical actions of violence, but he clearly blames Steve for his shame. Drew's words display a physical building of energy, as his shame transforms into anger, which he gets emotional release from by imagining violent attacks.

Michelle provides another example of responding to shame with anger when she says:

As a result of being so horrible at school, or, being the horrible one at school, being the loser that nobody liked, got picked on, beaten up... As a result, when I was at home with my brother and sister, I was a bully. I was real mean, very physical, very angry.

Michelle is referring to the effects at home of being bullied at school. The shame she felt, which she could not defend herself against at school, was redirected and misplaced onto her brother and sister. Michelle suggests that she was physically violent to her siblings as a way of expressing her anger about the shame she endured from her peers at school.

Escaping from shame is a natural response to shame, which can lessen the immediate negativity of the feeling. However, escapism can have long term negative consequence. Escaping from shame through substance use can lead to addiction; both physical and emotional routes of escape can lead to social isolation. When someone escapes from shame, rather than acknowledges it, he or she is unable to attend to the feeling, to learn from it, and to deal with it constructively.

Succumb to shame.

The final natural response to shame is to succumb to shame. Jennifer introduces this theme in the following exchange, where we are discussing childhood memories, which are saturated with both past and ongoing feelings of shame:

Researcher: How did you cope with them when you didn't talk about them?

Jennifer: By having anxiety and not sleeping for years and years and years and years! [Laughter] So, I didn't cope with it.

Jennifer reports simply not being able to cope with shame. Anxiety and chronic insomnia were physical symptoms of her shame, which overwhelmed her for many years. Similarly, Sarah refers to her response to shame when she says: “‘Cause I used to not cope at all. I used to get depressed, chain smoke.”

Depression and a severe addiction to cigarette smoking were effects that Sarah attributed to her inability to cope with shame. Echoing earlier findings regarding the powerful and often debilitating nature of shame, Jennifer and Sarah speak with a sense of futility and helplessness about their past responses to shame. They had no means of dealing with shame, and it eventually overcame them.

Similarly, Mark reports emotionally succumbing to shame. He is referring to a previously quoted example of feeling shame in an abusive school environment. Reflecting on being told that he was going back into the same classroom with the same teachers for a second year, Mark says:

I just died. I mean, I was already dead, but then after they said it again, I just, I can't really remember, just dissociated it. And by then, they were already sick of me. They wanted to do it, but they were really extra pissed for seeing me for another year, even though they offered it, they just treated me with disdain even more.

Mark says that he “just died” inside, an emotional response to being completely overwhelmed by shame and fear. He reports a dissociative response and a disruption of memory. His words evoke images of being swallowed by shame, left alone, with no means to effectively deal with his situation.

Internalise shame.

One way in which participants reported succumbing to shame is by internalising shame. The internalisation of shame was introduced in chapter 2, and involves owning negative judgements about the self, and incorporating them into one's sense of identity. Elisabeth describes having internalised experiences of shame in the following text:

[Shame] probably has had detrimental effect on my marriage, for example, in that I've often doubted whether we will be given normal. I have an underlying assumption - and it's a misbelief and it's wrong. When I'm irrational, I think that I don't deserve normal, and therefore at some point he's going to leave, or things are going to change, or something is going to happen.

Elisabeth describes believing at a fundamental level that she is abnormal or unworthy of a “normal” life. When stressed, she doubts that her husband will stay with her, or fears that other bad, unforeseen changes will negatively affect her life and her family. This links back to a revelation Elisabeth made earlier about feelings shame as the result of her father dying when she was very young; she felt ashamed because her family was not “normal.” Elisabeth internalised this shame, which resulted in a long lasting image of herself as being different from others and her future security as being anomalous. This example illustrates the long term impact of succumbing to shame through internalising shame. In Elisabeth’s case, responding to shame in this way continues to affect her relationships well into adulthood. The internalised negative judgements about herself and her identity, believing that she is unworthy of a normal life, serve to inflict further, ongoing shame and fear. This may predispose Elisabeth to feeling shame in situations where others might have very different emotional reactions. For example, if, in the future, Elisabeth’s husband were to leave her, it appears very likely that she would feel an enormous amount of shame. In contrast, another person with a different background might respond with another primary reaction, such as anger.

Returning to an earlier quote from Caleb, the discussion on internalising shame is expanded. Caleb says:

And so, with whatever happened to me, my weaknesses turned into... as if they were terrible things. I'm fundamentally flawed and defective rather than I'm just needy, and I just need help, or I don't know how to do something, and it's a bad thing, it's bad about me.

Looking back on his life, Caleb describes how he internalised shame, believing that his weaknesses were terrible character faults, rather than normal human limitations. He believed that there was something “bad” about him, when he was unable to accomplish a task, rather than realising that needing help is an ordinary and acceptable feature of humanity.

Similarly, a previously quoted conversation with Charlotte illustrates how shame can be internalised and therefore create ongoing pain and insecurity.

Charlotte describes internalising the shame she felt when her long-term boyfriend left her, saying:

When my ex and I split up I felt a lot of shame, because he decided there was someone better. [Laughter] There's a lot of shame there. That probably also echoed a lot of those same feelings - like, well I'm obviously not good enough, I can't be what you need me to be. A lot of that hopelessness again. It echoed a lot of my mum's voice. [. . .] Yeah, that was probably quite a shaming season of life really. Had to spend my time trying to figure out if really I did have anything to offer. That shame probably created a sense of insecurity in me, like going, "Am I really that bad? Am I really that unlovable?"

As a result of her ex-boyfriend's behaviour, Charlotte concluded that she was "obviously not good enough" and was incapable of meeting his needs. She described a sense of insecurity that lived inside her. Charlotte provides a real example of the hypothetical scenario that was discussed earlier regarding Elisabeth's fears. Some degree of shame is a normal response to a severed relationship. However, Charlotte's shame was likely exacerbated by the internalisation of negative judgements about herself that occurred earlier in her life as a result of her mother's harsh and shaming parenting style. Questioning one's identity is an expected reaction to shame, but when those questions are chronically repeated, being internally answered with unrealistically negative appraisals, shame may have been internalised. This could lead to long-lasting insecurity that damages one's mental health and affects future relationships.

Resilient Responses to Shame

Avoiding, escaping, and succumbing are natural responses to shame, and in some cases, they can be protective. However, when used excessively and unbalanced, these responses hinder rather than help the development of resilience. The resilient responses to shame that were identified from participant discourses will now be discussed. These responses are to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change.

Be vulnerable.

The first of the resilient responses to shame is to be vulnerable. The natural tendency is to avoid any situation that might evoke feelings of shame. However, avoidance can result in social isolation and, eventually, in depression, anxiety, or despair. Alternatively, when people are willing to be vulnerable and

risk experiencing shame, their social connections can be strengthened and their well-being tends to increase.

Proactive vulnerability.

The first means by which a person can be vulnerable is more proactive than reactive. Rather than avoid any situation that might possibly cause shame, a person can choose to take risks, which leave himself or herself open to the possibility to feeling shame, but which provide experience that enhances growth and resilience. John provides insight into this form of vulnerability in the following text:

It seems like some people believe that fear, or shame... I.e., if I feel a sense of shame that I get up front, then I'll never do it, so then I'll always be safe. Or, I'll do it, but make sure I've practiced heaps, so it's going to make me a better person. So I see people who are motivated by shame quite often in training. "I better train so I can finish the race, because if I don't finish the race, I'm going to be ashamed." Or, I observe it in a different way, I deal with quite a few people, and they won't train, or they won't study, so that when they fail, they can say, "Oh, I didn't train anyway, so I don't really care." I see that a lot. It's a funny thing to me because I have a need for achievement, but I've seen that more than I ever expected to see it. I saw it in young people, and now I see it in adults. "Oh, I didn't train anyway; it didn't mean that much to me." But I really know it did. So it's like they use their shame to keep them safe so that they never have to experience what is possibly unbearable for them - failure or whatever the case may be.

So, I don't ever believe shame is helpful. If we lived in a culture that didn't have it, and someone failed, we just knew that that was... I mean, my beliefs are that if you're not failing, you're not alive. There's no shame in that, it's just part of being alive, it's part of breathing. Whereas, it seems that cultural belief, if you fail, you know, it's, "You're a failure, you're...", etcetera, etcetera.

John describes many slightly different examples of shame avoidance. He describes people avoiding taking risks, such as public speaking, in order to avoid the possibility of shame. He also describes people training hard or over preparing for a presentation as a means to avoid the shame of not finishing or failing. Conversely, he describes people choosing not to train or not to study as a means of protecting themselves against the full experience of shame. By not preparing for the event at hand, they block out vulnerability, and are able to rationalise and justify a failure, which can reduce the associated shame. John contrasts this behaviour with his own need for achievement, suggesting that one consequence of

avoiding shame, rather than allowing oneself to be vulnerable, could be a lack of achievement and progress. Another consequence could be an inability to grow and develop resilience. As noted in the previous chapter, pain is uncomfortable, but not necessarily harmful. Participants clearly constructed resilience as being born out of struggle, and of positive experiences overcoming struggle. Feeling shame is unpleasant, but it can strengthen a person. Avoiding shame at all costs results in avoiding achievement, connection, growth, and learning. In contrast, being vulnerable carries a risk of feeling shame, but it is also empowering and enhances resilience.

John notes in his argument that, “I don’t ever believe shame is helpful.” He says, “If you’re not failing, you’re not alive. There’s no shame in that.” While I agree that failure is a necessary part of human development, I do not see a complete lack of shame as realistic. Failure is helpful in that it can spur growth and change, but these effects require a person to be emotionally impacted by the failure. In other words, shame is the motivation that causes one to grow and change in response to failure. However, for shame to be constructive rather than destructive, it must not be internalised or overgeneralised, which results in a person succumbing to shame rather than being able to grow from it. John points out that Pākehā culture urges people toward avoiding or succumbing to shame, rather than being vulnerable to shame, being present with shame, and being willing to change as a result. I agree with John that failing is simply a part of being alive, and that failing does not mean you are a failure. However, as I will propose in the next theme, I believe it is important to recognise shame and be present with it, rather than avoid it or escape from it entirely.

Responsive vulnerability.

Another way that being vulnerable to shame can occur is through responsive vulnerability. Some participants suggested that when they feel shame, it can be helpful to admit the feeling of shame to oneself and to others, and to be vulnerable in connecting with others. Lucy introduces this theme in the following exchange:

Lucy: And I think being in connection over it, with other people, definitely helps reduce it. [Laughter] And I don't think I used to do that. I would just try and deal with it by myself, rather than talk about it.

Researcher: So you think it's helpful for you to talk about?

Lucy: Yeah, yep. Even, having said that, it's still difficult to go there. I do believe it's helpful. And, to read about it. To recognise that it's actually a really basic part of human experience, and it's not just me.

Lucy acknowledges the difficulty involved in vulnerably sharing feelings of shame with others. However, she also constructs vulnerable connection as “definitely helpful.” Lucy describes the helpfulness of being vulnerable with others as coming from being enabled to recognise shame as a normal and natural part of humanity. In the resilience findings, it was concluded that positive and supportive relationships foster resilience through creating a sense of knowing that you are not alone in your struggles. Likewise, being vulnerable with regard to shame allows Lucy to connect with others, to share experiences and understandings, to realise that she is not alone, and to ultimately build resilience.

Earlier in the chapter, avoidance and hiding were presented as natural responses to shame. However, it was suggested by Caleb that hiding from shame rather than allowing oneself to be vulnerable to shame can hinder someone from healing their shame. Caleb says:

You can't heal what you can't feel. You can't do it by yourself; it has to be a non-shaming face. It's through relationship that we get shamed, and so it has to be through relationship that we get healed [. . .]. You actually have to be loved by somebody in whatever it is that you feel shame about - and see it in their face, and see it in their demeanour, and hear it in their voice. You can't intellectualise your way out of it.

Caleb starts by saying, “You can't heal what you can't feel.” This insight relays an acceptance that avoiding shame at all costs is not useful, as avoidance ultimately prevents a person from listening to shame, learning from shame, and healing shame. In contrast, when someone acknowledges their shame, and divulges it to another person, their shame can be reduced. Caleb speaks about relationships having healing power. He says that being genuinely loved and accepted by someone else is the only true means by which someone can be released from being stuck in shame. Shame has earlier been described as a social emotion – the emotional awareness of a severed or threatened social bond. Shame is triggered by judgement, which can include the fear or imagination of someone

else's judgement. Freedom can result if a person chooses to be vulnerable, to expose a part of themselves for which they feel shame, and they receive acceptance and love in response, rather than rejection and shame. As Caleb says, no amount of intellectualisation or rationalisation on a cognitive level can compare to the power of secure social bonds in building resilience to shame.

Later, Caleb continues:

I'd like people to notice that the two great commandments – “Love the Lord your God with all your heart mind, soul and strength; love your neighbour as yourself” - are constantly quoted as together, and it's really likely that in Hebrew thought, they weren't even really thought of as that very separate - that's why they're always together. [. . .] My emphasis at this point in my life is to focus people of course on spirituality, but to focus on the nature of the interpersonal relationships as the vehicle for God's grace. The vehicle for God's grace is usually the face of somebody else, who can empathise and connect with stuff that we're going through, and find a way so that we can find a home for it in ourselves.

Caleb again constructs non-shaming, non-judgemental, loving interpersonal relationships as the most powerful antidote to disabling shame. Through risking vulnerability, and then receiving empathy from and connection with another person or people, Caleb describes being able to integrate shame. He is able to “find a home inside himself” for his fears and failures, so that they can be accepted and shared rather than hidden in shame and judged.

Michelle talks further about the power of being vulnerable and sharing things that she is ashamed of. In the following quote, Michelle is describing an experience at a church conference, where the attendees were encouraged to “confess sins” to one another. Michelle says:

So I stood in front of my best friend, with our hands on each other's shoulders, looking each other in the eye, and I shook for about half an hour - literally, half an hour. I couldn't say a word. Because I had it right there, and I knew she would still love me and I knew it wouldn't matter, but it took me half an hour or more to say it. And I just stood there saying, “I struggle with... I struggle with... I struggle with...” because I couldn't say it because I felt so ashamed, so awful and disgusting, and I eventually said it, and she goes, “Oh, that's alright, me too.” It was like, [deep sigh]. What? Really? All of that for a “me too”? And then I found out, apparently everybody struggles with it at some stage or other, and I discovered I wasn't the only one, and I wasn't evil or bad.

Michelle describes a particularly powerful and emotive example of painfully and vulnerably exposing a “sin” of which she was deeply ashamed. She then

describes the subsequent relief of being accepted, rather than judged, and realising that she was not alone in her issue. The acceptance she received from her friend, and then others, allowed her to correct a negative judgement that she had held about herself. She realised she was not evil or bad; she was normal.

A final example regarding the resilient power of allowing oneself to be vulnerable to shame comes from Sarah. When describing what has helped her with feelings of shame, Sarah says:

How it's really important to find shame buddies. [. . .] So, I've got my best friend and she's always ringing me too. And we've talked about it, I've trained her actually. So, when I feel ashamed, I feel really bad and that everything's terrible, and so, can I ring you, tell you, and then you have to say this. So now I ring her. [. . .] And it really helps me.

Sarah describes specifically training a “shame buddy” – someone whom she feels safe being vulnerable with, who can offer specific support when Sarah is feeling intense shame. Sarah’s choice to be vulnerable is selective, only with a couple of very close friends. However, she considers the support offered by this process of vulnerably engaging to be worthwhile and beneficial.

Be present.

The next resilient response to shame to be explored is to be fully present with shame. Caleb says, “The only way to heal the shame is to feel the shame.” As mentioned in chapter 5, shame gains a great deal of power from its silent and hidden nature. Often, through escapism, people hide shame even from themselves. As mentioned in the previous section addressing vulnerability, Caleb suggests that if one does not allow himself to feel shame, he will never heal from shame.

Lucy extends this discussion in the following conversation:

Researcher: In your opinion, what would be the most resilient response to feelings of shame?

Lucy: There would have to be acknowledging first. I guess this is talking about processing and having a cognitive awareness of that and the ability to step out of it, and not be overwhelmed by it. And deliberately using skills to integrate it. It would be nice to say I've got to a point where shame [laughter] is not really a factor any more, I'm that resilient to it. But, I don't think that's realistic. I think the most resilient response is working through it to a point where it's managed, accepted, and it doesn't define you.

Lucy highlights the importance of acknowledging shame, proposing that being consciously aware that she is feeling shame is important for being able to positively move forward and out of the experience, rather than to deny or escape from it. Lucy suggests that to be unaffected to shame is an unrealistic goal. In contrast, she proposes a healthy expectation for dealing with shame is accepting its influence, but refusing to allow it to define her identity.

Returning to an earlier quote regarding the difference between *feeling* shame and *being* ashamed, Caleb says:

Therapy being for me around feeling shame but not being ashamed. Having to feel it, but not needing to be it. You can't deny that it's there, but that makes... that's a big deal for me, feeling shame but not being ashamed.

Caleb's experience directly contrasts that of other participants (e.g. Kathleen and Sarah, as quoted in chapters 5 and 6) who construct themselves as completely helpless in response to shame's seemingly limitless power. Caleb describes being emotionally present with the experience of shame, but also being able to create healthy boundaries, which limit the power of shame. Like Lucy, Caleb accepts shame's unpleasant influence, but refuses to allow it to define his identity.

Max further comments on the necessity of accepting shame in the following quotation:

You just have to ride the roller coaster sometimes and say, "Yes, I did that, and I did that," when it comes up. Because certain things will trigger it off, and will trigger a thought and you'll remember that and then the emotions and stuff will come with that. Just gotta accept what you've done and then let it float out of your mind, just like it floated into your mind. 'Cause I mean, if you start obsessing about it, it's just really not going to help you at all. It's just going to further ruin your confidence and stuff like that. There's no point dwelling on the past too much. Sure, we all do things we are ashamed of, but it's learning how to accept it and move on and let it, it can be a positive thing, like something positive can come out of it if you let it. Not remould you, just learn from it - upwards and onwards.

Max says that the ideal response to shame involves simply acknowledging shameful memories or passing feelings of shame. He says that acceptance is the key to coping with shame positively. Rather than obsessing over feelings of shame or denying shame, if he can sit with shame and let it pass, Max believes

shame can have positive effects. It can foster learning, understanding, and growth.

Similarly, in the following exchange, John describes the ideal, resilient response to shame as acceptance.

Researcher: In your opinion, what would be the most resilient response to feelings of shame?

John: It is what it is. I have no need to judge it, to fix it, explain it, or control it.

Researcher: So just let it be?

John: Yeah, I can observe, I can learn, I can grow, I can use it to be a blessing to myself and to others as I experience, I can empathetically observe others and myself within it. But the moment I blame, shame, judge, split, I've gone right back into that shame thing. So, it is what it is.

John describes a simple state of letting shame exist. He describes being present with the emotion without trying to escape through fixing, explaining, projecting, or controlling it and without succumbing to it and internalising negative judgements. John's account gives a sense of power to the acceptance of shame. John describes that when one tries to escape from shame (for example, through blaming) he ultimately brings himself more shame. When one accepts shame, he can offer empathy to himself and others, and he can grow.

Michelle extends the discussion on being present with shame when she says:

Feel the feeling. Feelings aren't going to kill you, it's just a feeling. It's not poison, you've not been bitten by a snake, you haven't been hit by a bus, you're not going to die. It's just a feeling. So I feel it, let it be there, realise what it feels like, let it go through its whole thing. Eventually it stops feeling - like that physical, yucky, horrible feeling actually stops, and then I can engage my brain and find people and find help and ask God and ask my husband for help and eventually, it gets easier. And now, I feel strong. It still hurts, it's still yucky, but I can handle it. I guess I've built up that resilience. It's like an immunity.

Michelle describes how being present with shame, and accepting it as it inflicts an amount of suffering, can slowly build resilience. She points out that shame can be horribly painful, but it is not dangerous. While being present with the emotional experience of shame, Michelle is able to recognise her pain and seek help from

others. This willingness to be vulnerable serves to further increase resilience by strengthening Michelle's grounding in accepting, supportive relationships.

Sarah further describes how it is helpful to recognise when she is feeling shame, and to be able to name the feeling of shame:

Sarah: So that's a big improvement for me. Twenty years ago, I couldn't get over things, I didn't have that resilience. I couldn't let it go because I didn't know what it was that was upsetting me. Whereas now, because I can isolate exactly what's happened, it doesn't matter what it is. If it's shame, I know it's shame. So then I can process what's happened.

Researcher: So you think being able to name shame as shame has really helped you?

Sarah: Name the shame, that's the thing. Call it shame. Yeah.

Sarah says that when she could not understand her emotional response, she was not able to cope with it. However, now that she recognises shame, she can accept it for what it is and consciously choose how to respond to it. Being able to name shame, in Sarah's case, has lessened its power.

Caring for oneself through the shame.

Some participants suggested that an additional benefit to being present with shame, and being able to recognise and acknowledge it, is that it allows one to care for oneself through the shame. Self-care as a healthy variation of escapism was mentioned earlier in the chapter. While describing an experience with shame that occurred the day before the interview, Sarah communicated that she had been in severe emotional distress. However, she later said, "I'm okay today because I had a good night's sleep last night and processed it." Because she recognised and confronted shame, she was able to attend to her emotions, get needed rest, and process the experience enough to feel significantly better then next day.

Likewise, Lucy commented that one way in which she copes with shame is to care for herself through exercise. Lucy says, "I exercise regularly, and I think that that helps, to go out and do that, to be in my body [. . .]." Lucy takes a reprieve from the negativity of shame and refuels her energy through exercise. She constructs this as a healthy, helpful response. Lucy refers to being in her body and trying not to shove shame away. Being present with shame, staying aware of it, and physically looking after herself throughout the emotional

experience of shame empowers Lucy with a degree of control over shame. In actively responding to shame, she is able to contain its influence.

Distancing one's identity from shame.

Finally, in the following exchange, Lucy describes another benefit of being consciously present with shame. Being present with shame allows Lucy to consciously distance her identity from the temporary feeling of shame.

Researcher: Can you think of any ways in which your coping with shame has changed throughout your life?

Lucy: Yeah, I would definitely say I'm a lot more prepared. Well, first of all I recognise what it is and, and that helps me not make it me. I can observe it as much as experiencing it and being in shame. I can step out of it a little bit and be slightly more objective about it. So, if that's what you mean - not making myself bad because of it.

Here, Lucy refers to being about to “step out of” shame. She can observe it objectively, knowing what it is and noticing her reactions to it. This allows her to “not make herself bad because of it.” In other words, acknowledging shame and being present with its experience helps to prevent Lucy from internalising shame, and integrating negative judgements about herself into her identity. As mentioned earlier, the degree to which someone is affected by shame in response to a particular trigger, such as being abandoned by a relationship partner, may be dependent on the degree to which she has internalised previous experiences with shame. Thus, in order to achieve resilience to shame, it is important to prevent the internalisation of shame responses. On an individual level, this can be done by being present with shame, recognising it as shame, and actively attending to it. Implications for promoting shame resilience on a social and cultural level will be discussed later in the findings.

Similarly, Max refers to distancing his identity from shame in the following quote, “You just kind of like talk yourself up a little bit and try and feel good about yourself and then, even though the shameful thing did happen, it's not who you are, it's what you've done.” By recognising and being present with shame, Max is able to intercept negative judgements about himself and consciously counter those judgements with more balanced evaluations. He gains relief from the realisation that he may have done shameful things, but they do not define him as a person. When one escapes from shame, it usually happens

naturally, immediately, and without conscious processing. When one is willing to be present with shame, it enables the person to think clearly about the situation and to correct inaccurate judgements. As shame is associated with judgements that can specifically target one's identity, when the judgments become more focussed on a situation or specific behaviour, the feeling of shame can lessen, thus relieving it of the power to influence drastic or negative outcomes.

Be willing to change.

The final resilient response to shame is to be willing to change. This is closely related to being present with shame. Liam connects the discussion on being present with shame with being willing to change as a result of shame. He says:

Shame is quite a negative emotion. It drags you down, but I think in some ways it's possibly not possible to be quite so perfect in the face of it. Maybe a more realistic one is just to let it run its course on you. Just feel it and let it wash your sins away. Yeah, go through the wringer that you brought on yourself. You know, feel bad and feel crap about yourself and everything, rather than shut it out and be like, "Oh, I'm going to be a good person from now on," you should just ride it out. Take your medicine, and then at the end of that then, "Right, I'm not going to do that again." Maybe just welcome it into your life is actually a more realistic and healthy way to deal with it, rather than just sort of sense, "Oh, it's coming, I'm going to be a good person," and run away, perhaps.

A number of responses to shame are interwoven in Liam's description. He refers to being present with shame, and being willing to suffer as a result of it, rather than escaping from it. Referring to shame brought on oneself as the result of a moral failing, Liam says that feeling the shame and letting it "run its course on you" will allow it to change a person. This illustrates a response to shame that includes acknowledging and grieving for a loss of innocence. He affords shame the power to "wash sins away." It can provide the suffering necessary for growth and the experience necessary for learning. According to this position, if someone recognises shame as occurring as the result of his own choice and is willing to accept it and learn from it, then shame can empower him to make changes to his future behaviour. This will ultimately improve his behaviour, strengthen his relationships, and develop his character. Liam positions being present with shame as a necessary ingredient for genuine growth as a result of shame. Contrasting this with vowing to "be a good person" as a form of escapism, Liam paints a

picture of a person who has endured pain and suffering as a result of shame, been willing to accept this and engage with the struggle, and has emerged from the painful process a genuinely changed, more resilient, and wiser person.

Luke also describes being willing to change and to learn from shame as a positive, resilient response to shame. When asked how he copes with experiences of shame in ways that promote resilience, Luke says:

I guess trying to turn them into a learning experience - trying to find the positive in the situation rather than dwelling on the negative feelings. Trying to find the positive learning experience from, become a better person, and move on from there. Yeah, in the last dunno how many years, but over the recent years of my life, I've tried to take a more positive attitude to life. Life is short - as you get older you realise that [laughter] you don't live forever. So, it's a matter of taking that positive outlook, to making the most of life rather than letting experiences drag you down and have you focused on the negative. And I think as result of making those sorts of decisions for yourself then it has a flow on effect to those around you. You tend to be positive, then they tend to look at things more positively.

Luke describes a response of recognising that he is experiencing shame, but actively choosing to find a positive learning experience within the suffering, rather than to surrender or succumb to shame. Liam refers to positivity, a factor that was introduced in chapter 3 as being associated with high levels of resilience. He describes a process of becoming more positive throughout his life, as he has aged and has been able to step back and take a wider look at what is truly important in life. This echoes findings that were presented in chapter 7, which described perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture as enhancing resilience. Many factors beyond an individual's conscious response influence resilience; elsewhere, Luke references support and encouragement from his family and his faith as being crucial to the development of the positive outlook that is described above. However, it is also clear that in order to respond resiliently to shame, Luke has provided a willingness to grow, learn, and change as the result of negative experiences.

One aspect of being willing to change as the result of shame is being willing to right wrongs. Ultimately, this results in avoidance of shame. As a person corrects behaviour that is harmful to oneself or others, the likelihood of experiencing shame again for the same behaviour in the future is reduced. While avoidance of shame has been described in a negative light earlier in the findings,

it has also been noted that it can sometimes be a helpful response to shame.

Sophie introduces this form of positive avoidance and willingness to change when she says:

Like when I spoke to the woman at work, and I'm so horrified how I spoke to her, because it's just not me, that it makes me take a look at myself and think, "Why the hell did you do that?" and avoid doing it again. And learn from it, you have to learn from it.

Sophie evaluated her own behaviour - a negative way of speaking to a workmate - as being shameful. This led Sophie to question her choice to act in this manner and to make conscious changes to learn from it and avoid making the same mistake in the future.

Likewise, Michelle refers to avoiding shame by avoiding making commitments that she cannot keep. Michelle says:

If I can see a situation coming that might end in me feeling shame, I avoid it. When somebody asks me to do something, and if I can't do it 100 percent, I'll say no. 'Cause, if I say I'll do it and then I don't, or I don't do it properly or good enough or up to standards, or I have to pull out, the feeling of shame is *huge*.

Michelle mentions that she avoids shame by refusing to make commitments that she is not completely sure she can fulfil. Having damaged friendships in the past by failing to do work that she promised to do, Michelle now is careful and deliberate when making commitments. Having learnt from her past shame, Michelle now avoids future shame in the same area. However, it is unclear whether this avoidance is wise or excessive; it may be a blend of both. While it is sensible to value others' time and to maintain a good reputation by honouring commitments, Michelle says she must be "100 percent" sure that she can do a job and do it well, before she will be willing to agree to it. She emphasises that the shame of pulling out of a job is "huge." It is wise to hold good boundaries with one's time and to have realistic expectations of oneself and her limitations. However, being 100 percent certain is not always realistic, and needing to renegotiate an agreement or pull out of a job for valid reasons is not necessarily worthy of a "huge" shame response. In Michelle's case, it appears as if she has learnt from a past mistake and the resulting shame, but the changes she has made as the result may mean that she now errs on the side of excessive caution. While some changes made to avoid future shame would be warranted, avoiding shame at

all costs can hinder the development of resilience. Michelle's reluctance to make commitments could have undesirable effects, such as isolating Michelle from being able to give and receive support from others. Michelle's account is not detailed enough to categorically evaluate her response. It appears to have begun as a positive response to shame, being willing to change behaviour. However, even when shame is acknowledged and considered, the natural response to avoid shame is still powerful, and in Michelle's case, it may have resulted in her making changes that are more extreme than are justified.

A final note regarding responding to shame with a willingness to change, concerns empathy. Many participants noted that their experiences with shame made them more empathic toward others who were going through similar experiences. Michelle, when reflecting on the shame of wetting her bed as a child, says, "It does mean I can empathise when I hear of other little people who wet their bed. And they're like, 'Oh, you don't know what it's like.' And I'm like, 'Yeah I do. Yeah, I really, really do.'" By being present with and recognising her own shame, Michelle is able to genuinely connect with others, offering support to children who may otherwise feel they are suffering alone in their shame. Similarly, Luke offers the insight that having experienced shame himself in the past has caused him to reconsider his responses to others, in order to ensure that they are not harmed by shame. Luke says:

Well, I like to think that I'm a bit wiser in dealing with other people as a result of it. I don't like injustice, whether that's a result of shame experiences... When it comes to people with their peers, if I'm dealing with children or teenagers, I don't like to see them shamed in front of their peers. So, I would say it's made me a little slower to react in situations, to think things through - think of the consequences before dealing with something.

As discussed in chapter 6, Luke noted earlier in his interview that he feels shame is especially powerful in public situations. Having been affected by the potent influence of public shame, Luke is careful when dealing with vulnerable people to make sure they are supported and respected when discipline is necessary. The positive effect of shame in Luke's case, is that it has slowed his reactions and allowed him to carefully consider the effects of his words and actions, rather than reacting naturally, perhaps by avoiding his own shame through blaming others. His willingness to slow down may include a willingness to acknowledge and be

present with his own shame, which would likely occur alongside another's shame in a situation where the relational bond has been threatened. This would result in more helpful outcomes for both Luke and the other party.

Implications of the Findings

The findings described in this chapter have linked the investigation of shame with the findings related to resilience. In short, it is apparent that resilience results in part from an acceptance of struggle, and resiliently responding to shame involves acknowledging shame and being willing to struggle with shame.

The natural responses to shame that were identified in the participants' discourses were to avoid, escape, and succumb. Avoiding shame or other unpleasant emotions is intuitively a reasonable response to discomfort. Likewise, avoidance behaviour developing as a response to stress or stressors is well documented in psychological literature. However, while the prevalence of avoiding discomfort is unquestionable, it is also recognised that avoidance is not necessarily a helpful response. A prominent example of this involves anxiety. When people suffering from an anxiety disorder avoid situations where they might feel anxiety, their symptoms of anxiety actually increase rather than decrease (Ralston, 2008). Limited avoidance can allow people to actively control their coping, but often when people avoid anxiety, the relief they feel from avoiding an anxious situation serves to reinforce both the avoidance behaviour and the anxiety, resulting in the person feeling more anxious and being more likely to avoid the next trigger (Simos & Hofmann., 2013). It is reasonable to assume that a similar response could be found with shame. When someone avoids a situation out of a fear of shame, they will be more likely to anticipate shame and avoid similar situations in the future. Rather than avoiding shame, this could allow shame to take control of a person's life.

Schmader and Lickel (2006) quantitatively studied avoidance behaviour as specifically linked to shame and guilt. These researchers, utilising the guilt-theorist distinction between shame and guilt (Tangney et al., 1996, cited in Schmader & Lickel) argued that shame, as opposed to guilt, would be uniquely linked to avoidance behaviour. They found shame to be predictive of avoidance responses and guilt to be predictive of approach responses, but only when shame or guilt were triggered by others' wrongdoing. When triggered by one's own

wrongdoing, shame and guilt were both associated with avoidance responses, and circumstantial shame, that which results from situational triggers such as poverty or illness, was not studied. In the present study, I have investigated only shame, and have not clearly distinguished this from guilt, as the delineation between the two constructs is ambiguous and varies between individuals based on their experiences and contexts. Rather, I consider guilt, as described by Tangney et al. and Schmader and Lickel, to represent a form of shame that may be relatively mild, and perhaps associated with a threat to the security of one's relationships rather than an attack on the core of one's identity. It is clear from the findings of Schmader and Lickel that there is a strong link between shame, as I have defined it, and avoidance tendencies, but this link is not universal. It is possible for people to use mild shame as a motivator to repair broken relationships, and this is more likely to occur if one's identity is left intact. In other words, a person can respond more resiliently to shame if he or she has a solid sense of self, which echoes findings presented in chapter 7. Avoidance is a natural response to shame, but as described in the findings presented in this chapter, Schmader and Lickel suggest that being willing to right wrongs is a viable, resilient response to some instances of shame.

Escapism is another natural response to shame. Many participants reported physically fleeing from shame inducing situations, while others reported using substances, such as alcohol, drugs, or food, to emotionally numb the unpleasantness of shame. Excessive alcohol consumption is a well-known risk to individual New Zealanders and Kiwi society. Research has shown that 85 percent of New Zealand adults have had an alcoholic drink in the past year, and 62 percent of those people exceeded the recommended guidelines for alcohol consumption (Ministry of Health, 2009). One in six New Zealand adults shows a pattern of drinking that is considered hazardous – associated with individual health issues or safety issues for society, such as drunk driving (Ministry of Health, 2008). The Ministry of Health (2010) reported that one in six New Zealand adults used drugs during a time span studied of one year. For many of these people, as well as for younger people who used drugs, drug use caused problems with their relationships, employment or study, finances, or health. Additionally, overeating is clearly linked with obesity, which has been identified as one of the most important modifiable health risks associated with a number of

serious illnesses (Ministry of Health, 2004). The unhealthy and excessive consumption of substances is a significant problem in New Zealand culture. Substance use was identified by participants as often being used as an escape mechanism for coping with shame. While the above statistics are not directly linked to shame as a motivator, it is clear that substance use is problematic, and therefore, not an optimal coping mechanism for shame. As participants themselves said, substance use may numb feelings of shame, but it does not deal with them.

Another startling problem in New Zealand culture is the prevalence of violent crime and child abuse. Research shows that 27 percent of New Zealand adults were victimised by violence in a one year period, and out of 31 developed countries, New Zealand has the fifth worst child abuse record (Child Matters CPS, 2014; Ministry of Justice, 2014). Some participants described externalising their shame and dumping it onto others through blame or overt shaming. This was a way of coping with shame that was recognised as being unhealthy and unhelpful. While no participants reported being physically violent in response to their experience with shame, it is reasonable to suggest that shame may be a motivator in some cases of physical violence. The link between shame and violent behaviour, specifically domestic violence and child abuse, is worthwhile studying in future research. Understanding a relationship that may exist between shame and these issues may shed light on strategies that could prevent such violence from occurring.

The final natural response to shame that was identified is to succumb to shame. Participants referred to depression and anxiety as specific ways in which they had succumbed to shame in the past. Research has found the prevalence of anxiety disorders to be 14.7 percent of the adult New Zealand population, and mood disorders affect 7.7 percent of adult New Zealanders (Oakley Browne, Wells, & Scotts, 2006). Again, these statistics are not directly linked to shame, but the participants in this study reported that shame had a direct and negative influence on their mental states. Internalising shame through the acceptance of negative core beliefs about oneself is the means by which participants reported becoming depressed or highly anxious as a result of their shame. As negative core beliefs about oneself are a characteristic feature of depression, it would not be surprising for depression to be closely related to chronic feelings of shame.

In contrast to the above natural responses to shame, participants reported three more resilient responses to shame – to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change. Very little research has specifically combined the investigations of resilience and shame, but as introduced in chapter 2, some researchers have targeted shame resilience. Brown (2006) specifically referenced vulnerability as associated with shame resilience. However, her connection between vulnerability and resilience is slightly different than the one I am making. Brown found that people who acknowledge their own personal vulnerability, that is to say they are aware of their limitations and expect to encounter difficulties in life, are more able to cope resiliently in the face of shame. This may be closely linked with the response of being present with shame. People who recognise their limitations, and are willing to acknowledge and accept them, are more able to proactively build resilience in their lives. In contrast to Brown's link, I have found that people who are willing to be vulnerable, to take risks and to expose themselves to potential shame, rather than avoid it at all costs, are more able to display resilience. As they allow themselves to struggle, they allow themselves to learn and grow. Brown also argued that reaching out is crucial to developing shame resilience. This aligns nicely with my findings, as reaching out for help when feeling shamed is an inherently vulnerable choice. While difficult, reaching out and sharing one's personal and vulnerable feelings enables one's social connections to be strengthened, thus providing a positive building block for resilience.

Van Vliet (2008) also linked social connection to shame resilience. In addition, Van Vliet argued that acceptance of shame is crucial to developing shame resilience. This connects with my finding that being present with and acknowledging shame is a resilient way of responding to shame. Brown (2006) proposed "speaking shame" to be crucially important to the development of shame resilience. This links the concepts of being present with shame and being vulnerable. When one actively acknowledges shame within oneself, he or she is then able to speak about the experience and vulnerably share it with others. This not only creates personal resilience, through the process of creating meaning and understanding about one's experience and gaining support through difficulty, but it could also enhance community wide resilience. The more people talk about shame, the more others will be able to recognise and acknowledge shame. This

will enable people to become more aware of shame's influence in their lives and more proactive in responding to it.

The final resilient response to shame is to be willing to change. Being willing to change, and specifically, being willing to accept responsibility for one's actions and right wrongs, is crucial to being a positive and resilient member of society. It is important to note that resilience to shame, as well as resilience in general, is not an individual phenomenon. It occurs in a social and cultural context. The findings in this chapter have primarily related to developing resilience to shame on a personal level, but it is also useful to discuss the implications of the findings with regard to promoting shame resilience on a social and cultural level.

These findings hold interesting implications for psychological practice. Linking the previous chapter's resilience findings with the findings specifically related to shame resilience, it is clear that positive and supportive relationships are important for the development of resilience. The findings suggest that having a safe space to acknowledge shame and vulnerably share one's experiences with shame is beneficial to overcoming shame and building resilience. From the perspective of clinical practice, this suggests that regardless of the particular modality of therapy, seeking help from a practitioner who is accepting and non-judgemental of the person, as well as their feelings of shame, would be helpful in promoting individual level resilience. For someone who has experienced long-lasting internalised shame, a cognitive-behavioural approach to therapy may be useful in addressing negative core beliefs that have led to enduring and debilitating shame experiences. For someone who has become increasingly isolated as the result of avoiding or escaping from shame, a therapist may need to provide long term stability and support in order for a genuine relationship to build in which the person feels safely able to vulnerably connect. For someone who is not at risk of being overwhelmed by internalised shame, a mindfulness approach may help the person to be present with shame, increasing their awareness of the shame and enabling them to mindfully consider options for change. Bearing in mind the considerable diversity of shame experiences, we should be flexible in our approach to the issue of shame, carefully considering the individual history and context of each person with whom we work.

It is vitally important for practitioners to be able to safely attend to issues of shame in individual therapy. However, as Sedgwick and Frank (1995) point out, relegating shame to the therapy room may actually reinforce the avoidance of talking about shame in other settings. Another important implication of the findings for psychological practice involves the necessity of promoting shame resilience on a more widespread level.

Being willing to be vulnerable and reach out for help is an important individual response to shame, but without people in the community to reach out for help *from*, this would not be possible. It is important to proactively encourage social support and acceptance of others. For someone who is being marginalised or stigmatised by others, there may be no safe options where he or she can go to receive support. On a community level, we must remain aware of shame and be mindful of its potential power when displayed to others. Thus, being present with shame is not merely an individual response but also a potentially beneficial social value. In our critical reflections of our culture and our society, being aware of shame, naming it, and discussing its influence may go a long way to relieving shame of its negative power. Both on an individual level and a wider, social level, we need to start talking about shame and recognising it for what it is. Reducing its hiddenness may reduce its negative effects. By directing our attention to shame, we will be better equipped to proactively deal with it.

Summary and Conclusions

This chapter introduced and discussed responses to shame. Six responses to shame were identified, which were divided into two broad themes. The natural responses to shame are to avoid, escape, or succumb. Participants reported avoiding shame by avoiding any situation that might evoke shame, or escaping from shame through physically running away from shame or through the emotional numbing of substance use. When avoiding or escaping from shame was not possible, the next, natural response to shame was to succumb to shame – most commonly through debilitating anxiety or depression. While natural responses can sometimes be helpful in the short term, they tend to be associated with negative long term effects.

Participants also described three more difficult, more resilient responses to shame. These were to be vulnerable to shame and willing to take risks, to be

present with shame, actively acknowledging its influence, and to be willing to grow and change as a result of struggles with shame. These resilient responses to shame, while described by participants on an individual level, may also be applicable on a wider, community level. By actively acknowledging shame within New Zealand society, we raise awareness of a powerful issue. If we are willing to discuss shame, to be non-shaming and accepting of others who are experiencing struggle, and to challenge and change ways in which we have inadvertently promoted shame, we can encourage shame resilience on a widespread level.

Chapter 9: Positioning the Findings

The previous four chapters have presented the research findings, describing insights that were offered by participants, analysing their meaning, and interpreting their significance. At the end of each chapter the implications of the findings were discussed, beginning the process of positioning the findings by linking the conclusions of the present study with previously established research findings. Shame has never before been studied qualitatively in a New Zealand context, and qualitative shame research is rare in any cultural context. As a new area of research, the bulk of this thesis is weighted toward the study's findings, which offer insightful descriptions of an important and often unrecognised topic. The implications sections of the findings chapters linked the findings to previous research that is relevant and comparable to the present study. In many instances, this link is somewhat loose, as directly relevant research could not be found. These sections presented research that related specifically to the concepts introduced by participants and interpretations being presented with regard to the particular research questions relevant to each of the findings chapters.

This chapter will further explore the link between the present study's findings and those of previous research. The aim of the chapter is to position the study and its findings within the broader landscape of academic research. However, the study does not fall within a specific, narrow area of previously established research. This study linked shame and resilience, two broad constructs with almost entirely separate research bases. The study of both of these constructs was located in Pākehā culture – an under-investigated cultural experience. Neither shame nor resilience has ever before been studied specifically among a sample of Pākehā New Zealanders. Thus, as in the literature review chapters, the discussion in this chapter will be very broad, discussing the findings as they relate to a wide range of existing academic research.

The chapter will begin by presenting an overview of the findings chapters - summarising the main conclusions and particularly noting the implications of the findings with regards to links to previous research. Following this review, the findings will be discussed in more general terms, and linked back to previous research, much of which was first presented in chapters 2 and 3. First, the present study's contribution to the area of shame research will be explored. Then, the study's resilience findings will be positioned with respect to previously

established resilience research. Next, the study's cultural findings will be summarised and explored, linking these findings to the scant literature that has previously explored issues related to Pākehā culture. Finally, these various areas will be linked, and final conclusions will be presented.

Summary of the Findings Chapters

The four findings chapters explored a number of specific areas related to shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. General understandings of shame were described and analysed, and the sources of shame were investigated. Resilience was introduced and explored. Finally, responses to shame were identified and discussed, and these responses were specifically linked to the exploration of resilience. Ultimately, the research question was answered, "What are the more resilient responses to shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?"

Chapter 5 presented an overview of participants' understandings of shame. Shame was described with a number of specific characteristics. Shame was found to be: invariably negative, powerful, intrinsically human, hidden, enduring, often debilitating, physical, social, and sometimes unremarkable. Many of these characteristics were recognised in previous shame research. For example, the hidden nature of shame is extensively documented and theorised, as is the social nature of shame. The invariably negative nature of shame is often left unacknowledged, but is an underlying assumption behind the constructiveness dilemma of shame, which was also discussed in chapter 5. Because shame can feel *so* horrible, many people (researchers included) are sceptical that it can provide any benefit to humanity. The powerful nature of shame is implied in research findings that link shame with significant psychological and social problems; however, there is a lack of research specifically exploring the power associated with shame, how it becomes so readily able to debilitate people, and why it is such an enduring and pervasive experience for some.

Chapter 6 explored sources of shame, finding enormous variety in situational triggers for shame, while linking the underlying, seemingly universal source of shame to judgement. Shame was found to be associated with judgements that targeted one's identity or threatened the security of one's relationships. It was noted that many participants recounted childhood memories when reflecting on particularly powerful experiences of shame. Theoretical

explanations were offered as to why childhood experiences were particularly potent examples of shame (such as Erikson's developmental model), and some research was cited that confirms shame to be a common experience in childhood, and in some particular childhood circumstances (such as for victims of childhood sexual abuse). However, no research could be found that explored the phenomenological experiences of shame among children. Likewise, very little research has qualitatively investigated the experiences of shame among adults. This is a significant lack in the research base, which this study has contributed toward filling.

Arguably one of the present study's predominant conclusions was presented at the end of chapter 6. In contrast to the guilt-theorist philosophy that shame is universally unhelpful, my findings suggest that shame can sometimes be beneficial. While some researchers describe shame as a construct synonymous with the statement "I am bad" and guilt as a construct synonymous with the statement "I have done a bad thing," I have argued that these links are flawed, as they are not universally agreed upon expressions. While internalising shame as the negative core belief "I am bad" is certainly unhelpful, this does not mean that shame itself is never useful. Participants described shame as a painful experience, but one that is experienced in various intensities and can be responded to in different ways. Shame can serve as the felt awareness of a severed or threatened social bond, or as the felt awareness that one's identity is being called into question, perhaps by behaviour that violates the morals of oneself or society. It was found that in attuning to shame, rather than dismissing and avoiding it, we can benefit from increased social awareness, which may ultimately result in strengthened social bonds.

Chapter 7 shifted directions, beginning the process of exploring the findings related to resilience. Resilience was found to be a complex and flexible construct, with more tension and uncertainty in its expression than was initially identified by simple, surface level descriptions. While participants almost uniformly gave descriptions of resilience as bouncing back from adversity, many subtle complexities were revealed when questions were asked about what bouncing back or being resilient looks like. The notions of true and false resilience were identified. Participants contrasted a false veneer of strength with true resilience, which is deeper, often messier, and more painful to attain.

A key finding related to resilience, as presented in chapter 7, is that resilience is birthed from struggle. Without struggling, participants suggested that it is impossible to build resilience. Previous research corroborated many of the descriptions of resilience provided by participants, as well as factors that affect resilience (including biology, upbringing, and positive and supportive relationships, among others). However, the necessity to endure struggle in order to build resilience was not explored in any of the previous research that was reviewed. This appears to be a significant gap in the phenomenological understanding of resilience, and this study's findings provide a starting place from which this feature of resilience can be further explored. The importance of this finding is apparent when specifically relating shame to resilience. Shame was found to be invariable negative; its experience is accepted as being a hardship or struggle. While some researchers argue that its painfulness is unquestionably devastating and no one can benefit from feeling shame, I have countered this argument. I propose that shame is painful, but useful and sometimes necessary. It is experienced as a struggle, but as the resilience findings suggest, struggles are often opportunities for growth. As a result of struggling with shame, we can ultimately become more self-aware, more socially grounded in stable relationships, and more resilient.

Finally, chapter 8 discussed responses to shame, particularly focussing on identifying which responses to shame are more resilient than others. Six specific responses to shame were identified; these were grouped into two categories. The natural responses to shame were to avoid shame, escape from shame, or succumb to shame. Participants reported avoiding shame by avoiding situations that may provoke shame, and escaping from shame by running away from shame physically, or emotionally fleeing from shame, often through substance use or substance abuse. When avoiding or escaping from shame is not possible, many people succumb to shame – often by internalising shame as negative core beliefs, and eventually being debilitated by the trauma of shame. This can often take the form of depressive or anxiety disorders. These three responses are understandable and sometimes reasonable. However, they are problematic when used excessively. The more resilient responses to shame are to allow oneself to be vulnerable to shame by vulnerably connecting with others, to be present with the

emotional experience of shame, and to be willing to change as a result of one's encounter with shame.

While very little research directly addresses responses to shame, the research base recognises many current psychological and social problems in New Zealand that have established links to avoidance behaviour or substance misuse. Likewise, mental illness is common among New Zealanders (Oakley Browne et al., 2006). With the widespread occurrence of shame and the tendency for Pākehā New Zealanders to report succumbing to shame through mental illnesses, it is reasonable to suggest that shame may have an influence on the high mental illness rates in New Zealand.

As discussed in chapter 8, the resilient responses to shame that were identified in the present study are similar to and consistent with the results of the few research studies that have previously investigated shame resilience. However, the specific constructs presented in this study's findings are new. To be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change are in many ways fresh ideas, worthy of further investigation, consideration, and scrutiny by future researchers. As discussed in the resilience findings, chapter 8 concludes with the recognition that struggle, while uncomfortable, is not terrible. Being willing to endure pain, to mindfully reflect on it, and to change as a result of it, shows a profound strength of character. In a society that values ease and personal comfort, to promote consciously engaging with shame may seem counterintuitive. However, the results of this study suggest that an increased willingness to respond in this radical way to shame may result in greater health and stronger communities.

Revisiting the Shame Literature

It is useful at this point to reconsider research that was presented in the literature review chapters and to reevaluate this literature in light of the present findings. Chapter 2 introduced a broad range of shame literature, and additional literature was introduced throughout the implications sections of the findings chapters. Specifically linking this literature together with this study's findings will allow for a coherent understanding of where this study's findings fit within the current foundation of psychological research.

The present research study found six responses to shame, which were separated into two broad categories – natural and resilient responses to shame. In

chapter 2, it was introduced that shame has two well-established and recognised responses – the internalisation of shame and the externalisation of shame. The internalisation of shame is essentially synonymous with the response that I have termed succumbing to shame. Fowke et al. (2007) outlined the well-established links between internalised shame and mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorders. This was echoed by participants in the present study who attributed their mental health issues (namely depression and anxiety) to chronic experiences of shame.

Interestingly, Claesson and Sohlberg (2002) and Chan et al. (2005) specifically linked high levels of internalised shame and mental illnesses in adulthood with childhood maltreatment. Many participants in the present study recalled feeling intense levels of shame during childhood. While they did not necessarily link their ongoing experiences of shame to childhood neglect or abuse, it is worth considering that they may have become particularly susceptible to shame as a result of childhood maltreatment. As described late in chapter 6, previous researchers have linked high levels of shame proneness to hostile childhood environments (Gilbert & Andrews, 1998). The issue of why some people are more susceptible to succumbing to (or internalising) shame than others is outside the scope of the present investigation. Future research could further address this issue, exploring in greater depth the link between adverse childhood experiences and the tendency to succumb to shame.

When considering the internalisation of shame, or succumbing to shame, it is interesting to note that del Rosario and White (2006) argued that shame in its legitimate form is merely a transient feeling of discomfort. As described in chapter 6, participants in the present study reported a wide range of intensities in the emotional experience of shame. Many participants reported being debilitated by overwhelmingly powerful sensations of shame, while others positioned shame as being unremarkable. As suggested by Moore (1997), I believe that shame must be balanced with a healthy and humble sense of pride in order for it to have protective benefit. There is no benefit to succumbing to shame to the extent that one's identity becomes saturated with shame. This is clearly a negative and problematic effect of shame. As reported by Fowke et al. (2012), Claesson and Sohlberg (2002), and Chan et al. (2005), and echoed by participants in the present

study, succumbing to shame through the internalisation of negative core beliefs is strongly associated with psychiatric symptomology.

The externalisation of shame is the second well documented response to shame that was introduced in chapter 2. Ahmed and Braithwaite (2005) introduced externalisation of shame as a dangerous response, whereby an individual who is unprepared to cope with feelings of shame subconsciously transforms his or her shame into anger or rage. While this was less readily reported among participants in the present study than the internalisation of shame, some participants did show signs of externalising their shame through blaming others or acting out through criminal activities. I considered the externalisation of shame to be a way of escaping from shame, and in chapter 8, I have described participants' externalisation responses as a subsection of "escape" as a shame response.

As presented in chapter 2, reintegrative shaming theory holds that as opposed to externalising or internalising shame, acknowledging shame is the most beneficial response to shame (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2005). This aligns closely with the response to shame that I termed "be present," as described in chapter 8. Ahmed (2001) argued that acknowledging shame is vital for healthy psycho-social functioning. This was echoed by participants in this study who reported finding healing through being able to accept and sit with shame, rather than trying to fix, change, or avoid it.

It is worth noting that many previous researchers have gone to great lengths to define the distinction between shame and guilt. In chapter 2, I outlined the various theoretical perspectives within that debate. Elison (2001, cited in Elison, 2005) found that in empirical studies, participants did not consistently distinguish between guilt and shame. Likewise, in the present study, many participants differentiated between the constructs of guilt and shame, but these distinctions were varied and inconsistent. Many participants were familiar with and agreed with the guilt-theorist distinction, which defines shame as "I am bad" and guilt as "I did a bad thing." However, other participants either did not distinguish between the two constructs, or distinguished them differently. For example, Sophie reported guilt to be crippling and excruciating, whereas she considered shame to be more manageable, constructing it as a learning opportunity.

Notably, Elison (2005) argued that shame is a basic affect, while guilt is a legal state. So, shame is considered to refer directly to a specific emotion, whereas guilt, when expressed as an emotion, represents a more varied range of experiences. According to Elison, when someone says “I feel guilty,” they are typically understood to mean “I feel how one usually feels when one is guilty.” This is influenced by culture, social grounding, and individual variation, and it may often involve feeling some degree of shame. I found Elison’s argument to be convincing and logical; thus, it influenced my conceptualisations of shame and guilt from the start of the research process. However, I also recognised that the debate between precise definitions of shame and guilt is largely semantic. As argued in chapter 2, these concepts are actively socially constructed in different ways at different times to suit different purposes. While interviewing participants and analysing the data, I remained convinced that Elison’s approach to this debate was reasonable. Participants did not always use the same linguistic expressions to describe their experiences. However, recognising that words are flexible social constructions allowed me to see that the participants’ experiences could all have been conceptualised in this way, even if the participants themselves described them slightly differently. Adopting this perspective in conceptualising shame and guilt enabled me to remain open toward accepting the protective function of shame, as presented by previous researches (e.g. Moore, 1997; Nathanson, 1992) and reiterated in the present study’s findings.

It is important to pause at this point to consider a note of caution. A central conclusion of this study is that shame is not always harmful; it can be a protective mechanism that promotes integrity and helps to solidify social bonds. However, it is vitally important to remain aware of the limitations of shame’s benefits. As del Rosario and White (2006) asserted, protective shame is a mild form of discomfort. Numerous researchers, along with the present study’s participants, agree that chronic, internalised shame is profoundly unhelpful. This conclusion is the likely motivation behind guilt-theorists’ passion to obliterate shame, replacing it with a constructed variation of guilt that seems much tamer. While I do not necessarily agree with the logic behind these researchers’ conclusions, I appreciate their intent, as I interpret it to be, and I share the goal of minimising the harsh consequences of unexamined, unhelpful, or unwarranted shame. Ahmed (2001) argued that shame has a protective function, but cautioned

that stigmatising shame is always counterproductive. Likewise, Deonna and Teroni (2008) cautioned that “shaming” is never helpful. These researchers constructed shaming as involving deliberate acts of humiliation, and argued that this often leads to rage or self-condemnation (i.e. internalised or externalised shame). Participants in the present study echoed public humiliation as a strong source of shame. As Nina noted, shame is “better to come from within than without.” Participants also reported that social support serves as a protective factor that enhances resilience. While I do not think it is helpful to avoid shame at all costs, I do think it is crucially important for people experiencing shame to be supported, protected, and respected.

Revisiting the Resilience Literature

A wide range of resilience literature was introduced in chapter 3, and additional literature related to resilience was presented in the implications sections of chapters 7 and 8. The present study offered new contributions to the field of resilience literature. It is useful at this point to specifically consider how the study’s findings fit in comparison to conclusions from previous resilience research.

A number of contradictory operational definitions of resilience were presented in chapter 3. Bonanno (2004) defined resilience as the stable continuity of relationships and functionality throughout a period of trauma. This definition was opposed by participants in the present study, who emphasised the complexity of resilience. Participants in this study painted a picture of true resilience being a concept that is difficult to attain and sometimes tumultuous, but which ultimately results in regaining what was lost – be it mental stability, relational security, or other, subjective, “resilient” outcomes. Roisman (2005) constructed resilience as a flexible construct that is context dependent. Roisman’s conceptualisation is much more consistent with my findings than that of Bonanno. Participants in this study, like Roisman, pointed out that resilience is context dependent; it can occur in the face of some forms of adversity and not others.

Participants in this study also agreed that true resilience does not equate simply with strength. In fact, participants considered superficial displays of strength to be false forms of resilience, while true resilience was found to involve a willingness to be vulnerable and to seek support in adapting to struggle and

change. This finding fits with that presented by Jain et al. (2012), who argued that resilient individuals are not invulnerable. Rather, they experience normal stress responses, but they are able to recover over time in a constructive manner.

Chapter 3 presented a number of factors – both internal and environmental – that are recognised in the literature as able to affect the ability to attain resilience. Chapter 7 presented another list of factors that affect resilience, as described by participants in the present study. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, a key finding of this research study is that struggle was described by participants as the factor most influential in the development of resilience. Participants overwhelmingly asserted that without experience overcoming struggle, it is impossible to develop true resilience. The implications of this finding are discussed in detail in chapter 7. However, it is worth noting again that this is a new insight that is worthy of future research attention. Much of the previous resilience literature is quantitative, focussing on resilience in response to particular risk factors or forms of distress. With these research designs, it is assumed that participants have encountered a particular struggle, and this assumption is often unacknowledged and unexamined. The present research facilitated the discovery of struggle as an important factor in the development of resilience by allowing participants the freedom to reflect and elaborate on their understandings and experiences of resilience in a general sense.

The implications section of chapter 7 links each of the factors described by participants as affecting resilience with relevant, previous research. While some factors are named and categorised differently by other researchers, each of the factors identified in this research were able to be consistently linked to discoveries of other researchers in other contexts. Notably, positive and supportive relationships were a key factor described by participants in the present study - a finding that receives an abundance of support from within the field of resilience research.

A few factors were described in Chapter 3 as having been established as protective factors by previous researchers, which were not specifically mentioned by participants in the present study. It is worth briefly mentioning each of these factors at this point – namely hardiness, self-enhancement, and repressive coping.

Hardiness was described by Bonanno (2004) as a consistent personality trait that affects resilience. Using Bonanno's conceptualisation, hardiness is a

complex trait, consisting of a commitment to find meaningful purpose in life, the belief that one can influence one's own circumstances and life outcomes, and the belief that one can both learn and grow from positive and negative events. While participants in the present study did not describe a single trait that encompassed the breadth of this description of hardiness, elements of its expression were present in various aspects of participants' descriptions. Participants described a willingness to grow and change as affecting resilience, which is similar to part of Bonanno's description of hardiness - a belief that one can both learn and grow from life events. Bonanno's description of hardiness is also consistent with participants' reports that resilience is affected by perspective and the ability to see the bigger picture. Maddi (2005) describes hardiness as the courageous and determined choice to confront stressors accurately. This conceptualisation encompasses both the notion of perspective and the description of resilience as a determined choice, a common characterisation of resilience reported by participants. While elements of hardiness were described by the study's participants, I have chosen not to use this term to categorise their descriptions. This is because the term constitutes a broad notion, which was not specifically referenced by participants, and which was more fittingly described through the use of distinct categories.

Many resilience researches linked self-enhancement (positive exaggerations of one's own competence or features) to resilience (e.g. Bonanno, 2004; Lonngvist et al., 2008; Coleman, 2011). While participants in the present study did not describe self-enhancement, many participants reported that a solid sense of self is an important factor that helped them to develop resilience. It is worth noting this distinction, as participants would have been unlikely to recognise and report their conceptualisations of themselves as being inaccurately positive. It is clear from both previous research and the present study is that a healthy self-concept and positive self-image are building blocks for the development of resilience. However, participants in the present study noted (usually when referencing others rather than themselves) that they do not consider someone to be resilient if the person is displaying what is interpreted to be an arrogant or superficial façade of strength. While a solid sense of self has been found to be important in the development of resilience, it appears that self-enhancement may have limitations in its benefits. A limited degree of self-

enhancement may promote resilience, but excessive self-enhancement may actually compromise the development of true resilience, according to this study's findings.

Finally, it is particularly interesting to note that researchers have linked repressive coping to the positive development of resilience (e.g. Smeets et al. 2010; Eagle, 2000; Coifman et al., 2007). Repression, or the subconscious refusal to allow distressing content into one's consciousness, does not initially appear to be a healthy response. This is similar to a response described by Lilia, who was able to avoid shame by mentally cutting-off from the experience. In Lilia's case, her response to shame was conscious, which fits better with the term suppression than repression. As mentioned in chapter 3, Myers et al. (2004) questioned whether research relating to repressive coping is applicable to suppressive coping – a question which has not yet been convincingly answered. Lilia's specific method of cutting off from shame was described as a natural (as opposed to resilient) avoidance response, which may be protective in the short term, but is not desirable as a long-term solution to distressing amounts of shame. While some researchers argue that repressive coping is clearly and strongly protective (e.g. Coifman et al.), Eagle's findings were consistent with those of the present study. Eagle argued that repressive coping can facilitate successful adaptation in the immediate face of a traumatic event, but that it can negatively affect one's long term health. Eagle found that while repressive coping eased a person's anxiety, it was also associated with an increase in somatic symptoms over time.

This research is well-situated within a scaffolding of resilience research with similar conclusions. The present study has offered some noteworthy new findings. It is especially fitting to note the study's contribution of highlighting struggle as a necessary precursor to resilience. The study also filled a gap in resilience research by investigating resilience specifically in the context of shame, something few researchers have done before. Brown (2006) and Van Vliet (2008) have previously studied shame resilience. The findings of both of these researchers were specifically compared to the present study's findings at the end chapter 8.

The present study's findings are generally consistent with those of the previous, related research; however, this study has offered unique explanations and descriptions of participants' responses to shame, which fit with their own

accounts of their personal and cultural experiences. A notable finding regarding resilience in the specific context of shame relates to a previously mentioned finding – that shame is not necessarily a harmful or “bad” experience. I have concluded that being willing to feel, accept, and respond mindfully to shame is crucial to responding resiliently to shame. While care must be taken to ensure that shame is not passively succumbed to or internalised, it is also not helpful to avoid shame at all costs or anxiously escape from it. The resilient responses to shame, as reported in this study’s findings, are to be willing to vulnerably experience shame, to allow oneself to be present with the feelings of shame, and to be willing to change as the result of one’s encounter with shame.

Positioning the Research in a Pākehā Cultural Context

Research recognising Pākehā culture as a distinct cultural experience is scarce. Chapter 2 introduced a limited amount of research relevant to Pākehā experiences of shame, and Chapter 3 loosely linked resilience research to a small amount of research that was specific to Pākehā cultural experiences. While the present study was not designed to provide a comprehensive and definitive account of cultural aspects of shame and resilience, it did illuminate some culturally grounded aspects of shame and resilience that could be further explored in future research. Some participants in the present study mindfully critiqued their own cultural experience, which adds significantly to our ability to understand shame and resilience among these Pākehā New Zealanders. While these specific cultural insights are valuable, it is important to remember that the entirety of the findings chapters describes shame and resilience as experienced by participants from within their own cultural contexts as Pākehā New Zealanders. Even when culture is not specifically mentioned, participants’ accounts reflect numerous cultural assumptions and practices, which are often unacknowledged. Some of their experiences are common among members of other Western cultures, some are unique to Pākehā New Zealanders, and it is possible that some may be universal (although determining this is not possible within the current study’s methodology). The discussion will now turn toward specifically recounting and elaborating on the findings that provide understandings of shame and resilience from the unique cultural perspective of the study’s Pākehā participants.

Chapter 2 introduced literature that addressed shame in a Pākehā cultural context. However, research in this area is scant. The present study addressed experiences of shame for Pākehā more directly than any previous research, shifting shame research into a new direction. Future research could explore shame in Pākehā culture, utilising methodologies that are particularly suited to ethnographic research or cultural analysis. This could bring to light distinctive features of the Pākehā experience of shame, which are beyond the scope of present investigation.

While the study's findings did not contradict any previous research, it is worth noting that none of the specific situational triggers for shame that had been investigated in a New Zealand context were directly applicable to participants in the present study. As discussed in chapter 3, shame has been studied among female sex workers in New Zealand, women with BPD, sufferers of PTSD and OCD, and victims of domestic violence. Chapter 6 addressed sources of shame, concluding that the situational triggers for shame among the participants were diverse, extensive, and very difficult to effectively categorise. While data saturation was reached with regard to participants' understandings of shame and resilience and their responses to shame, each story that participants told about their experience of shame was unique and deeply personal. In spite of the vast differences in situational triggers for shame, it was found that data converged on judgement as the ultimate source of shame. Judgements that targeted one's identity or threatened the security of one's relationships were specifically linked to feelings of shame. Crowe (2004) found that women with BPD felt shame as the result of diminished self-worth. This finding fits with the conclusion that shame can be felt as a result of judgements that target one's identity. Plumridge and Thomson (2003) investigated shame among female sex workers in New Zealand, concluding that shame was a key to motivation that was often felt when the adequacy of a woman's story, or explanation for her life choices, was called into question. This relates shame to judgment from others that threatens the security of one's relationships. The other research addressing shame among New Zealanders did not specifically explore the sources of shame. While further research addressing sources of shame among New Zealanders is warranted, it appears that the conclusions of the present study fit with the limited pre-existing shame research that has been conducted within New Zealand.

The vast diversity of shame triggers described by participants has made it difficult to determine if there are specific triggers for shame that are particularly influential among Pākehā New Zealanders. However, a number of sources in which shame could be uniquely experienced or expressed within Pākehā culture can be offered. Each of these could be further explored in future research. Most notably, childhood was commonly reflected upon when considering sources of shame. Pākehā New Zealanders' childhood experiences and New Zealand school environments would be useful targets for future researchers to address. As mentioned in chapter 8, New Zealand has unusually high rates of child abuse compared to other developed countries. As shame was reported by participants to often exist in conjunction with abuse, this particular source of shame may be particularly relevant to New Zealanders. Religion and cultural conceptualisations of morality are also areas that were identified as sources of shame, which could be explored in future, culturally grounded research. Finally, failure was cited as a source of shame for some Pākehā New Zealanders. However, this was not a universal conclusion. Some participants reported interpreting failure through the lens of negative judgments about themselves, which could then be internalised as long-lasting negative core beliefs. In contrast, John said, "If you're not failing, you're not alive," positioning failure as a necessary precursor to growth – a finding that was reinforced by other participants who echoed the belief that resilience cannot be achieved without genuinely struggling. Cultural conceptualisations of failure, and their effect on experiences of shame among Pākehā New Zealanders, would be well worth researching more extensively.

The research participants were most readily able to reflect on and critique their cultural experiences with regard to the issue of resilience, rather than shame. Participants described a strong cultural ideal of resilience, which is individualistic and involves presenting a facade of strength. Many participants described this as false resilience – a remnant of an outdated view of Kiwi masculinity. Participant accounts suggested a growing awareness from within the Pākehā community that true resilience involves authenticity, vulnerability, and connection.

Phillips (1996) and Black (2010) recognised that the "Kiwi bloke" identity is strongly focussed on sport (rugby in particular) and rugged adventure. Fougere et al. (1989) found that this focus may be diminishing. Even 15 years ago, evidence was found by these researchers that the cultural ideal of individual

toughness may be less prevalent than it once was. The present study's findings reflect both of these conclusions. Participants were very well aware of cultural ideals of masculinity and strength, and reported these ideals to be influential over their experiences and perceptions. However, participants also possessed the awareness to critique these ideals, and some participants strongly disagreed with them. This suggests that the traditional Kiwi focus on sport, toughness, and individualism is still a part of Pākehā culture, but it is flexible, open to change, and it certainly does not define resilience for every Pākehā New Zealander.

Summary and Conclusions

This research study has explored shame and resilience from within the unique cultural context of the study's Pākehā participants. The study has linked the exploration of shame and resilience, two distinct constructs, each highly complex. The findings have been interpreted through a lens of cultural awareness, ensuring that the research is positioned within its appropriate cultural context. The research has provided a number of new insights, which fit within a wide body of established psychological literature. This chapter has positioned the findings within the previously established literature, considering how the present study's conclusions fit with previously established research findings.

The study's findings have diverged from the mainstream view that shame is universally unhelpful. Rather, I have joined with a growing number of researchers who are open to a possible constructive benefit to shame – namely, that it is useful for maintaining an awareness of the status of one's social bonds. Findings related to sources of shame have been consistent with previous literature, but this is an area that is worthy of further exploration, given the diversity of shame experiences for the study's participants. A key findings related to resilience is the idea that resilience must be birthed from struggle, an assumption that has gone unrecognised in previous research. Participants in the present study argued that struggle is painful, but it does not need to be damaging, and shame, like other forms of struggle, can ultimately facilitate the development of resilience. Finally, the study presented a fresh perspective on responses to shame, which was consistent with, but elaborated on, previous research findings.

Chapter 10: Conclusions

This research study has addressed the influential and broad constructs of shame and resilience. The study of these issues was specifically grounded in Pākehā culture – the dominant culture of New Zealand, which is not typically recognised in cultural research. Questions were asked and answered related to participants' understandings of shame, sources of shame, responses to shame, and understandings of resilience. Ultimately, the understanding of resilience was specifically linked to shame through a description of those responses to shame that are able to best enhance resilience.

For most of the participants, shame was found to be a powerful and extremely distressing experience. While it is recognised that shame can exist on a spectrum, from mildly unpleasant through to completely crippling, most participants tended to describe extreme examples of shame. This may be the result of the research appealing to those people who had been particularly powerfully influenced by shame. The participants brought to the interviews a depth of experience and insight that allowed for a collaborative process of discussion and analysis. I was touched by the participants' generosity and courage.

An investigation of the sources of shame revealed situational triggers that were diverse and intensely personal. However, the analysis converged on a single theme, which unified the otherwise extremely varied findings with regard to this particular issue. Beyond the diversity of the surrounding events or circumstances, the underlying source of shame was found to be judgement. The specific source of the judgement is not influential; it can come from oneself, the outspoken judgement of others, or simply the imagined or anticipated judgement of others. Judgements that were identified as being specifically linked to shame (as opposed to other negative emotions) are those that call into question one's identity or threaten the security of one's relationships.

A particularly interesting issue that emerged during the research process surrounds the debate on whether shame can have a constructive purpose. That is to say, can shame be useful? In my opinion, which differs from many previous researchers in the field, the answer is yes. Shame that is ostracising and stigmatising is never helpful. Shame that is internalised as negative core beliefs about oneself is also not helpful. However, transient shame, when experienced

mindfully and communicated respectfully, can have a protective function. I, along with some previous researchers (e.g. Moore, 1997; Nathanson, 1992; Scheff, 2001), have suggested that the purpose of shame is to act as a monitor on one's relationships, signalling when a valued social bond is under threat, and enabling a person to take needed action to restore and repair the relationship.

Another important contribution of this research study concerns resilience, which was found to be a complex process that is grounded in cultural experiences. Participants acknowledged that struggle is a necessary precursor to building resilience. This contrasts a cultural value that personal comfort is of paramount importance. Rather, participants reported that without past experience overcoming adversity, they would not have gained confidence to face new trials. Participants viewed struggle as something to be accepted, rather than feared. This serves as a timely reminder to the field of psychology, where unpleasant emotions tend to be constructed as problems to be diagnosed and treated. Participants accepted that sadness, anger, fear, and even shame can be intensely uncomfortable emotions, but they are necessary for developing character and building resilience.

Another important insight regarding resilience is that it clearly exists in a social context. It is difficult for an individual to build resilience in isolation. Rather, being receptive of the positive support and care of others ultimately facilitates the development of resilience. Participants were able to critique the downfalls of their culture's false ideals regarding resilience. It was suggested that in many situations, New Zealanders avoid failure and risk to such a degree that growth, and the development of resilience, is compromised. This often occurs in interpersonal situations, where emotional vulnerability is stifled. In another light, New Zealanders place marked value on physical adventure and dangerous sporting endeavours. Such activities celebrate strength, but, according to many participants, they do not recognise true resilience. Participants contrasted a false ideal of resilience prevalent in Pākehā culture, equating resilience with rugged, individualistic toughness, with true resilience, which develops slowly over time, in community, through struggle.

Finally, the analysis culminated in linking the constructs of shame and resilience, and examining responses to shame, particularly looking for responses to shame that facilitate resilience. Three natural responses to shame were identified – to avoid, escape, and succumb. Common among Pākehā New

Zealanders, each of these responses is natural, and can, to a limited degree, serve as a beneficial protective mechanism against severe instances of shame.

However, these responses do not effectively facilitate long term resilience. The resilient responses to shame that were identified are to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change. In many ways, these responses violate traditional cultural norms and values. It is natural to avoid discomfort; deliberately allowing oneself to be vulnerable requires courage. It is natural to escape from shame, but being present with and acknowledging shame allows a person to consciously and proactively attend to the distress. In some cases, succumbing to shame is inevitable. However, as we as a society increase our awareness of shame and work to promote resilience through offering positive care and support to others, through naming shame and creating shared understanding about it, and through examining our natural tendency to shame others as an inadvertent response to our own shame, we can empower people to be more able to make changes as a result of shame. Positive changes as a result of experiences with shame not only build and display individual resilience, but positive changes on a societal level could promote more widespread shame resilience in New Zealand culture.

Methodological Issues

When considering the research, it is important to take note of methodological issues that may have influenced the findings. As noted previously, the method of gathering volunteers for the study was through widespread advertising of the research, which specifically asked for volunteers who were interested in discussing their experiences with shame. This may have skewed the findings toward particularly powerful, strong, or severe experiences of shame. Also, as previously mentioned, most of the participants who volunteered for the study were educated, articulate, and confident in discussing their experiences. Many of these people showed a remarkable level of resilience, which was very useful for gaining an understanding as to what helped the development of resilience in people who had experienced significant shame. However, it is worth noting that the experiences and understandings offered by these people may be considerably different than those for whom shame was a less notable issue in their lives or for whom shame was permanently debilitating. Participants reported a tendency to hide shame. It is possible that those who were

willing to discuss their shame were actually less affected by it, or more distant from their experiences of shame, than others.

Another important methodological issue regards the wide age span of the study's participants. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 64, a range of 45 years. The stories participants told about their experiences with shame were not necessarily recent. As highlighted in chapter 6, most participants communicated vivid childhood memories of shame, and in some cases, these events occurred up to 60 years ago. Culture inevitable evolves and adapts over time, and throughout the research process, it became clear that participants' experiences of shame were culturally grounded not just in the sense of their ethnic experience, but also in the culture of the particular time. In future research, limiting participant selection to a narrower age range may allow for a more in depth examination of shame within a particular time period of Pākehā culture. Childhood memories from older participants provide a rich understanding of Pākehā history, which can help explain how current experiences of shame have evolved. The recent experiences of younger participants provide glimpses of insight into the present day Pākehā experiences of shame. The broad scope of this study prevented a thorough analysis of these issues, but future, more narrowly defined research could provide a more comprehensive account of the evolution across time of the experience of shame in Pākehā culture.

On a similar note, beyond the wide age range, the participants represented a variety of cultural backgrounds within the "Pākehā" label. Some participants were relatively recent immigrants from Western countries. Some of the stories these participants relayed about experiences of shame took place outside of New Zealand in other cultural contexts. Although the on-going effects of these shame events are being influenced by the participants' current grounding in Pākehā culture, the original shame was not. Likewise, New Zealand born participants had ancestors of various ethnicities, came from different religious backgrounds, and lived in different areas of the country. It is unclear how these sub-cultural differences affected participants' experiences of shame and resilience, as a comparative analysis of these issues was outside the scope of the current research.

Finally, it is worth noting that the research utilised a relatively small sample size of 17 participants. As noted in chapter 4, data saturation was reached, and this number was sufficient to explore a broad overview of shame and

resilience that was sought in the present study. Participants were selected for diversity - a mix of genders, ages, and backgrounds. This was also desired for the present study, which was intended to provide an initial overview of a new topic. The small sample size allowed for participants' experiences to be explored and analysed in depth. The participants provided a vast amount of data covering a variety of sub-topics related to shame and resilience. Future research could narrow the participant sample, focussing on shame among a particular age range, gender, or specific to particular experiences or backgrounds. Alternatively, future research could utilise a wider participant sample, with a larger sample size, but focus on a narrower topic. Potential areas that warrant further exploration will be described below.

Future Research Directions

The goal of the present study was to investigate shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. As this was the first study of its kind, the focus was deliberately broad. However, the findings of this study have shed light on specific areas that could be further explored with future research. Some suggestions for future research have been made throughout the findings chapters, chapter 9, and previously in this chapter. Additional suggestions for future research are as follows.

The research identified the possibility that shame may have a protective function – that it is useful for enhancing awareness of the status of one's social bonds. Future research could delve comprehensively into this single issue. Quantitative research could test the hypothesis that shame can have beneficial effects on social bonds. Further qualitative research could comprehensively explore the specific question of how shame works to restore or protect relationships.

This research identified a number of situational triggers for shame. The vast diversity of the data with regard to this question made it impossible to cover all of the situations in which shame is triggered. However, in chapter 6, some general themes regarding the sources of shame were outlined. Future research could address these specific areas of shame. Many participants recalled particularly potent memories of shame from their childhoods, which may have affected their ongoing experiences of shame well into their adult lives. Childhood

shame, and its long term effects, is an important topic that is worthy of future research attention. Also, while I discussed cultural issues that emerged throughout the discussion of sources of shame, it would be worthwhile conducting a specific investigation to look for sources of shame that may be unique to, or particularly powerful within, Pākehā culture. Shame was found to result both from one's own actions and from others' actions, but this distinction was often ambiguous. Further research could explore potential differences in the experience of shame depending on whether it originates from one's own actions or the actions of others. Finally, the source of shame was ultimately described as being judgement – one's judgments of oneself, judgement from others, or the anticipated judgement of others. Future research could explore this link between shame and judgement, investigating how judgement triggers shame (or shame triggers judgement).

Due to the broad scope of the study, the findings related to resilience were kept relatively condensed. Also, as the study was primarily addressing shame, even when asked to comment on wider experiences of resilience, participants were influenced by thinking of shame as a particular stressor. A study specifically targeted at investigating resilience in Pākehā culture would be beneficial, as it could expand and deepen the findings that I have presented, adding further insight into how Pākehā New Zealanders can develop resilience in response to diverse forms of adversity.

Each of the responses to shame that was identified warrants further research attention. It was identified that the natural responses to shame are to avoid, escape, and succumb. I briefly discussed how these responses may have developed, but future research could specifically investigate how and why these tendencies exist, which would shed light on how to prevent unwanted, negative effects of shame. In addition, each of the resilient responses to shame could be further investigated. The effect of vulnerability, presence, and a willingness to change on shame is well worth examining. Future research could also look for factors that prevent these responses and factors that enable these responses. Additionally, future research could further explore the link between shame and resilience, looking for other explanations for resilience to shame beyond those that I have considered. I have specifically examined how Pākehā New Zealanders' responses to shame affect their resilience, but it is worth considering that the

effects of shame are influenced by other factors beyond one's individual response to shame.

Finally, it is worth noting that this study was focussed specifically on shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. Pākehā New Zealanders are but one of New Zealand's many sub-cultures. The above suggestions for future research address how to further explore this very diverse topic, but it is also vital for the research to be expanded to include other sub-cultures within New Zealand. Shame and resilience among Maori, Pacific Islanders, Asian immigrants to New Zealand, and other sub-cultural groups are all recommended avenues of future research.

Closing Thoughts

As I have journeyed through the research process, I have been inspired by revelations of wisdom and insight, which came both from participants and from other researchers. These have had a deep impact on me. I chose this topic because I was not only interested in shame and its effects, but also because I was struck by the power of shame in my own life. I was touched by other researchers and teachers who were willing to engage with shame – to seek to understand it and to empower others, like myself, to be better equipped to deal with it. I wanted to make a contribution to the academic conversations about shame, to join with the small community of researchers studying this intriguing and important topic, and ultimately, to be able to offer new understandings that can help people to overcome negative experiences with shame.

When I first drafted a research proposal, I set about to conquer shame. I viewed it simply as bad. I wanted to overcome it – to figure out how it worked so that ultimately, it could be eliminated from our experience. I wanted to protect people, and to protect myself, from shame's destructive influence. Shame had caused intense pain for myself and people I care about it, and I was angry. In a very early draft of a research proposal, I described the project as “my own personal vengeance on shame.”

As is evident from the research conclusions, I am now aware that it is not that simple. I am learning to embrace, or at least accept, the complexity of the human experience. Shame and resilience are both fundamental components of the human experience, and I have endeavoured to write this thesis with a healthy

respect for their complexity. While I have not been reluctant in drawing conclusions from the data and offering opinions and insights into the subject matter, I also hope to have communicated the tensions inherent in the research findings. I hope you will join me in grappling with these issues. This thesis is but one discourse, the contribution from myself and my participants to the challenge of making sense of shame and resilience from within our culture. I hope that conversations about shame and resilience continue, among both academic researchers and ordinary people. I began the research process thinking of shame as a problem to solve. I no longer think it is either a problem or solvable. However, I believe that as we engage with shame and make meaning around it together, we will become stronger. As we attend to shame, in our personal lives as well as our professional pursuits, we may feel pain more deeply, but I believe it will benefit us.

During my time researching, I was introduced to the following poem by Rumi (1997). It resonated with me, and it speaks well to a personal lesson I have learnt throughout the research process.

The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes.
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

I believe there are a few universal truths – spaces in life where there is a clear good, bad, right, or wrong. However, mostly, in our day-to-day lives, we live in

state of tension. We balance the good with the bad; we balance our idealism with our humanness. We live in a world full of rich cultural and emotional experience. To be human, is to feel, to laugh, to cry, to suffer, and to grow. Without pain, there could be no pleasure. Without sadness, joy would be meaningless. And, without shame, we would not be capable of sensing a healthy and humble pride in ourselves, nor the satisfaction of connecting and belonging in human relationships. Shame is a tension that we must learn to balance and to hold. Shame is not bad, nor is it good. It simply is what it is. Shame exists as a painfully tangible aspect of our humanity. It can cripple us, or it can strengthen us. Our response to shame is grounded in our culture, our relationships, and our perspective. However, increasing our awareness of shame, and our openness to experience and struggle with it, can allow it to refine us – to change us for the better and to make us more resilient. If we welcome shame, in spite of the sorrow it brings, it can teach us, strengthen us, and ultimately, we may even be grateful for it.

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Appendix A: Information Letter

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study. The purpose of this letter is to inform you about myself, the study, and the reasons I am conducting this research. If at any time during or after the research process you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on the phone number or e-mail address below.

My name is Samantha Brennan. I am in my first year of a PhD programme at the University of Waikato. My prior degrees are in psychology, and I am particularly passionate about seeing people live fulfilled and content lives, unhindered by the many psychological problems that can cause people pain (depression, anxiety, or uncontrollable anger, to name a few).

I first became interested in the topic of shame when I heard a presentation by a researcher named Brené Brown. Shame was described as a powerful and intensely painful emotional experience, common to almost all of humanity, which has the potential to cause serious psychological and social problems. I resonated with the shame that Brené Brown spoke about it, recognising it in many areas of my life. From that point on, I became very interested in learning more about shame so that I could find ways of helping people gain freedom from its sometimes devastating effects.

Another topic, which I find just as interesting as shame, is resilience. Resilience is a term that describes the ability to thrive in the face of adversity. Research has found that even among people who have experienced significant hardships in their lives, some show remarkable levels of resilience. I am interested in linking the study of shame and resilience – in finding out what it takes to survive experiences of shame (and other difficult experiences) without damaging effects.

I am investigating shame and resilience specifically among Pākehā (European or white) New Zealanders. Shame and resilience are flexible concepts which, to be understood well, must be grounded in the cultural context in which they are experienced. Pākehā New Zealanders form the dominant culture in New Zealand. Researching shame and resilience in this context will shed light on the cultural context that is the “norm” for New Zealand (and therefore often is left unexamined in cultural research).

I would consider it a privilege to hear about your experiences with shame and your insights on the topic of resilience. The study has two main goals. Firstly, a goal is to study shame and resilience and to gain understanding about these interesting and complex topics. The second goal of the study is to get people talking about shame and resilience. In my opinion, both issues are critically important to all of us. The more we can discuss, debate, and strengthen our understandings about these issues, the more able we will be to confront them in a way that makes a positive difference to society.

I look forward to meeting you at our scheduled interview time to engage in discussion with you about this exciting topic! It is important for you to know, if you wish to withdraw from the study, you are free to do so at any point up until you have approved the transcript of your interview. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study. If you would like to bring a support person along to your interview, you are more than welcome to do so.

During the interview, we will be discussing powerful topics, and shame in particular can trigger painful memories and unpleasant feelings. If at any time during the study you feel upset and need to talk with someone, please feel free to ring me on the mobile phone number below. If I am not available, or if you feel more comfortable, Lifeline and Youthline are two agencies that offer round-the-clock, free telephone counselling support. Lifeline's phone number is 0800 543 354, and Youthline's phone number is 0800 376 633. If at any time you have any concerns about this research project, you may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 07 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz).

Thank you for your time and your willingness to participate in this exciting research.

Kind regards,

Samantha Brennan
Mobile phone: 021 148 0794
E-mail: sjb103@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The interview will cover four broad themes. These are briefly introduced below, followed by a list of sample questions which may be utilised within each theme.

Experiences with Feeling Shame

Following an initial introduction of the researcher and the research project, the interview will begin with an exploration of the participant's experiences of feeling shame. Some example questions include:

- Thinking back through your life, what do recall about feelings of shame?
- How does shame feel to you physically?
- How would you describe the emotional experience of shame?
- Can you describe a particular instance when you felt shame?
- How did that experience impact you?
- What other experiences of feeling shame do you remember?
- How have these experiences impacted you?

Responses to Shame

After grounding the interview in the topic of shame, the focus will move to the participants' responses to shame. Example questions include:

- How do you cope with feelings of shame?
- What are some other ways that you may cope with shame?
- What influences the way in which you cope with shame from one experience to another?
- Have your ways of coping with shame changed throughout your life, and if so, how?

Understanding Resilience

Following a thorough exploration of the issue of shame, the interview will move toward the topic of resilience. Some example questions are:

- What does the word *resilience* mean to you?
- How does the concept of resilience fit for you personally with your experiences of feeling shame?
- What does resilience look like?
- What causes people to become resilient?
- How did you become resilient in spite of difficulties you have encountered in your life?

Linking Shame and Resilience

Finally, the interview will conclude by exploring possible links between the concepts of shame and resilience. Specifically, the researcher will seek out the participant's understandings of how people can thrive in spite of significant experiences with feeling shame. Example questions are as follows:

- How do the concepts of resilience and shame link together for you as you reflect on the experiences we have been talking about?
- In your opinion, what would be the most resilient response to feelings of shame?
- How do you cope with experiences of feeling shame in ways which promote your resilience?
- Is there anything else you would like to contribute before we end the interview?

Appendix C: Consent Form



Research Project: Shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders.

Name of Researcher: Samantha Brennan

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Dr Neville Robertson and Dr Cate Curtis

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 07 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz).

Participant's Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix D: Follow-up Letter

Dear Participant,

Thank you for choosing to participate in the study addressing shame and resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. Your contributions have been valuable, and I truly appreciate the time you have given.

Enclosed you will find a transcript of the interview content. Please read over the transcript, ensuring that you are comfortable with this material being included in the study. Please note that all names and identifying details will be changed prior to the publication of the research. The interview transcripts will not be published in full, but short quotations may be used.

You are welcome to make changes to your transcript. If you wish to take this option, please write any corrections you wish to make on the transcript, and return it to the below address by *date that is three weeks following the date of the letter*. You may also still withdraw from the study at any point up until this date. If I do not hear from you within this time period, I will interpret the lack of a response as an indication that you are comfortable with the interview transcript and are still willing to participate in the study, as per the original consent form. However, if at any time in the future you feel any concerns about your on-going participation in the research, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss your options.

The address for returning the transcript is:

Samantha Brennan
School of Psychology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The University of Waikato
Private Bag 3105
Hamilton 3240

If you indicated during the research process that you wish to receive a summary of the research results, this will be sent to you at the end of the process of analysis, which is likely to be early in 2014. If you did not request a summary of results and would like to do so, please feel free to contact me on the details below.

Thank you again for your participation, and best wishes for the future.

Kind regards,

Samantha Brennan
Mobile phone: 021 148 0794
E-mail: sjb103@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix E: Thank You Letter

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the study investigating shame and shame resilience among Pākehā New Zealanders. I have appreciated getting to know you and hearing about your experiences, and your insights have made a substantial contribution to the research endeavour.

As a small expression of gratitude for the time and vulnerability you have given by choosing to participate in this research, I have enclosed a gift voucher to the Warehouse. Please enjoy!

Kind regards,

Samantha Brennan
Mobile phone: 021 148 0794
E-mail: sjb103@waikato.ac.nz

Appendix F: Findings Letter

Dear Participants,

I am very excited to be finishing the data-analysis stage of research, and I am now able to communicate with you the findings from the Shame Project. You are receiving this letter because you indicated during our interview that you would a summary of the research results. I have enjoyed the research process, and I especially appreciated being able to connect with each of you. Your contributions have been enlightening, and I am very grateful for your participation in the project.

Research Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of the study was to conduct a culturally grounded investigation of Pākehā New Zealanders' experiences of and responses to shame. Specific research questions included:

- How do Pākehā New Zealanders experience shame?
- What are the sources of shame for Pākehā New Zealanders?
- How do Pākehā New Zealanders respond to feelings of shame?
- How do Pākehā New Zealanders' responses to shame affect their resilience?

The study was grounded in previous research, which reveals that shame contributes to numerous social and health problems such as mental illnesses, relationship breakdowns, violent crime, and others. Shame is common. Almost everyone experiences shame, but some people experience devastating effects from shame. Simply put, the ultimate goal of the research was to discover why and how some people become resilient in the face of shame, while others are devastated by it. I sought to discover a resilient response (or responses) to shame.

Participants

I interviewed 17 people, ranging in age from 19 to 64. Each participant identified as a Pākehā New Zealander. Fourteen participants were born in New Zealand, while three were immigrants from other Western cultures. Eleven participants were female, and six were male.

I was struck by the intelligence and insightfulness of the research participants. It was apparent that those who chose to volunteer for the study were willing to engage in self-reflection, motivated with a desire for growth and understanding, and securely able to share vulnerable and often painful experiences. In short, I interviewed a very resilient group of individuals. This enabled me to gain valuable understandings into how resilience, and particularly resilience to shame, is developed.

Understandings of Shame

A number of characteristics of shame were described by participants. For simplicity's sake, these will be listed below, with a brief description following each characteristic.

Shame is:

- Invariably negative – Shame is an unpleasant emotional experience.
- Powerful – Shame can have the power to attack one's identity, drain one's energy, motivate decisions and behaviour, isolate a person socially, and to influence or control other emotions.
- Hidden – People have a tendency to hide their shame, which exacerbates the feeling and leads to social isolation.
- Enduring – The effects of shame can be long lasting, partly due to the tendency to hide shame rather than seek help in resolving it.
- Debilitating – Shame exists on a spectrum of varying intensities, but on the severe end, shame can completely debilitate its sufferer.
- Physical – Shame is an emotion with a physical component, sometimes including tightness in the chest or stomach, feelings of nausea or dizziness, and fatigue.
- Social – Shame not only has a profound effect on relationships, it also exists as a social emotion itself.

The last point is particularly interesting to note – the social nature of shame. Much debate exists in the academic literature about whether shame can be beneficial. I asked some participants their opinions on this, and for the most part, the resounding answer was no. As mentioned above, shame is an invariably

negative emotional experience, and it is hard to imagine how it could possibly be useful. However, some evidence was found that there may be a benefit to being able to feel shame. Shame acts as a monitor on our interpersonal relationships, letting us know when a social bond is under threat. This directs our attention to the threat and, in some situations, enables us to take action to rectify the problem. While negative effects of shame are abundant, I believe it is worth remaining open to the idea that shame may sometimes have a protective purpose.

Sources of Shame

Initially, when I began investigating sources of shame, I looked at the specific situations that triggered experiences of shame. These situations were countless. Participants told many unique stories about personal situations that had triggered them to feel shame. Very loosely categorised, these stories encompassed childhood memories of feeling shame, shame as the result of abuse, shame as the result of being openly and overtly shamed by others, shame as the result of one's own actions or failures, or shame as the result of circumstances (often related to not fitting in with cultural norms). This is far from a comprehensive list, as each story was unique, personal, and emotive.

Eventually, my analysis shifted to a different level, and I discovered that in spite of the variety of specific events or circumstances surrounding feelings of shame, a single unifying source of shame could be identified. This source is judgement. With the type of research I am doing, it is not possible to be certain whether shame causes judgement or judgement causes shame. However, I can say with certainty that shame and judgement live closely beside each other. Specifically, shame tends to be associated with negative judgements about the self that threaten a person's identity or the security of his or her relationships. It doesn't seem to matter whether the judgement is overtly expressed by others, whether it is an internal judgement made against oneself, or whether a person simply imagines or perceives that they may be judged by others. Any judgement that questions a person's identity or threatens one's relationships can result in shame.

Resilience

Resilience was found to be a complex, dynamic experience that develops slowly over time. Overwhelmingly, participants described the primary factor that affects a person's ability to become resilient as struggle. Without struggle, and the opportunity to gain experience overcoming struggle in a safe, supported environment, resilience has no chance to develop.

Responses to Shame

With the resilience findings in mind, I began to examine responses to shame. While these categories may be somewhat over simplified, for ease of communication and understanding, I have narrowed responses to shame to two broad categories, each encompassing three specific responses. The natural responses to shame are to avoid, escape, and succumb. These are generally the initial responses – what people tend to do when particularly affected by shame, and when they don't have the support needed to respond more resiliently. People avoid shame by hiding or withdrawing – refusing to take risks that might result in shame. People escape from shame by physically fleeing situations where they have felt shame, or by emotionally fleeing and numbing shame, often through the use of substances, such as alcohol, drugs, or food. Another method of escaping from shame is to blame others, pushing the burden of shame onto someone else. When avoiding or escaping from shame does not work, or is not an option, people often succumb to shame. They take on board negative judgments about themselves, and become physically paralysed by shame or emotionally unable to cope. This is when mental illnesses develop, relationships breakdown, and social isolation takes root.

The more resilient responses to shame are to be vulnerable, be present, and be willing to change. When people choose to be vulnerable rather than avoid shame, they may leave themselves open to pain, but they also allow themselves to grow. As mentioned earlier, true resilience cannot be developed without enduring painful struggles. Being vulnerable tends to result in being supported, encouraged, and uplifted, whereas avoidance results in isolation.

Acknowledging shame, and choosing to be emotionally present with its experience, also increases a person's resilience. Whereas escapism can damage the body, the mind, and can hurt others, being present with shame allows a person to deal with it consciously. Sometimes, shame brings an important message, signalling that a valued relationship may need attention. Other times, shame is simply an echo from the past or the unpleasant result of someone else's pain. Being present with shame tends to result in the feeling passing more quickly, and it allows it to be interpreted and explored, rather than ignored.

Finally, being willing to change is a necessary precursor to growth. Willingness is a key factor in the development of resilience, and being willing to learn from shame, to right wrongs, and to restore relationships is crucial to responding resiliently to shame. It is worth noting that shame often signals that a relationship is under threat, and restoring relationships is a positive effect of responding resiliently to shame. However, feeling shame does not necessarily indicate that the person feeling it is at fault. As previously mentioned, shame can result from the judgements of others, and if this judgement threatens the relationship, it can result in shame. Attending to relationship threats is complex, and specific to the particular people and circumstances involved. It is the willingness to engage with this process that is indicative of resilience, rather than the specific actions or outcomes.

I will conclude with a note of caution. I have outlined three natural responses to shame and three resilient responses to shame. It is tempting to view these as good and bad, or right and wrong, responses. However, it isn't that simple. There are situations where avoiding shame is the wise choice. For example, the threat of shame may assist in motivating a person to do a job well, or to restrain themselves from becoming violent when angry. Similarly, escaping from shame by distracting oneself with a good book, or relaxing with a glass of wine, may sometimes be good self-care, as a short term response to acute shame. These responses to shame are natural, not wrong. However, the resilient responses to shame encourage growth and enhance the development of resilience.

Closing Thoughts

If you would like to discuss these findings, or you have any comments, questions, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. Again, I am very grateful to each of you for your willingness to participate in this study. It has been a remarkable journey!

Kind regards,

Samantha Brennan

021 148 0794

sjb103@waikato.ac.nz