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The Gap: women's and men's perspectives on parenting in the context of domestic violence

A thesis

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Abstract

Domestic violence is a significant issue within New Zealand society. The purpose of this research was to explore parenting within the context of domestic violence, through men's perspectives, as perpetrators of domestic violence, and women's perspectives, as victims of domestic violence. The participants were recruited through their association with the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP), a coordinated community response to violence. The study aimed to gain understanding of the impact of violence on children, women, mothering and the batterer as parent; provide reflection on the men's stopping violence programme at HAIP in relation to abusive men's parenting; and examine the role of children in abusive men's motivation to change. Nine semi-structured interviews with men attending HAIP's stopping violence programmes were conducted, and two focus groups were held with ten women associated with HAIP. The key findings suggest that domestic violence has significant detrimental outcomes for children and women and significantly constrains women's ability to be an effective mother. The men were found to use negative parenting practices but to have limited understanding of the impact of their behaviour on either mother or child. The women reported various ways in which they were able to work around the abuser to protect their children and to be effective as a mother, at least some of the time. Although women generally supported the continuing involvement of the fathers in the lives of their children, such involvement often served to disrupt the process of healing from the violence for both children and women. This study provides recommendations for policy and practice with regard to fathering interventions for abusive men.

*'He tapu te tinana o te wahine no te mea he whare tangata'-
'Sacred is the body of women as it bears the house of mankind'.*

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Domestic violence is a significant issue within New Zealand, having been described as an “epidemic” and one of the most serious problems that needs to be addressed today (Hand et al., 2002; Kruger et al., 2004). In New Zealand, one in three ever-partnered women are found to have been the victim of domestic violence (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004) and in 2011, the New Zealand Police recorded that in 9 of the 11 homicides committed by an intimate partner, women were the victim (New Zealand Police, 2011). In a survey conducted using a representative sample of New Zealand women, lifetime prevalence of physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) was found to be more than 1 in 2 for Māori women (57.6%), 1 in 3 for Pacific women (32.4%) and 1 in 3 for European/Other women (34.3%). For Asian women, lifetime prevalence of IPV was significantly lower (1 in 10, 11.5%). When psychological/emotional abuse was included, 55% of women reported having experienced IPV in their lifetime (Fanslow, Robinson, Crengle, & Perese, 2010).

The high co-occurrence of IPV and child maltreatment will be discussed in the following chapter; however, recent statistics highlight the prevalence of child maltreatment in New Zealand. In the year ended June 2012, there were 78,915 family violence referrals made by police of the 152,800 Child Youth and Family (CYF) notifications and 21,525 substantiated cases of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect (Ministry of Social Development, 2012b). In 2011, New Zealand Police recorded 12 homicides of children and young persons who were under the age of 20 years (New Zealand Police, 2011) and 113 children and young persons who were hospitalised for serious non-fatal assault, perpetrated by a family member (National Health Board Business Unit, 2011). In a large study conducted by Clark et al. (2009), 10% of secondary school students in New Zealand

reported witnessing adults in the home environment physically hurting each other at least once in the last year.

Various policy initiatives have been implemented, with the key objective being the elimination of violence within families/whānau. The Ministry of Social Development launched *Te Rito: New Zealand Family Violence Prevention* (Ministry of Social Development, 2002) and established the *Taskforce for Action on Violence Within Families* ('the Taskforce') in 2005, advising the Family Violence Ministerial Group on how to make improvements in addressing family violence. As part of the New Zealand Health Strategy (King, 2000), the *Family Violence Intervention Guidelines* provide a framework for health providers in implementing intervention with victims of domestic violence (Ministry of Health, 2002). However, policy and practice in New Zealand predominately focus on domestic violence against women and children's wellbeing, as two separate issues (Murphy, Paton, Gulliver, & Fanslow, 2013b). Furthermore, current policy on 'vulnerable children' fails to focus on IPV or the implications of parenting in the context of domestic violence (Ministry of Social Development, 2012a, 2012b). It is well established that children's exposure to violence or direct maltreatment, as a result of living in an abusive environment, has significant negative consequences for their wellbeing, parent-child relationships and recovery in the aftermath of violence (Bancroft, Silverman, & Ritchie, 2012).

The purpose of this research stems from particular gaps in knowledge on the broad implications of parenting in the context of domestic violence. Specifically, the aim is to explore understandings of the effect of domestic violence on children and women, on women's ability to be a mother and on the batterer's parenting. The research was conducted through the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP), a coordinated community response to violence, which provides stopping violence programmes for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence and support and advocacy for women and children as victims.

In the following pages, I provide an orientation to the present research, including relevant terminology used throughout the thesis, a description of the researcher, the theoretical background to this research, an outline of cultural considerations in terms of whānau violence, and an overview of the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP); the setting for the current research.

Terminology

The terms domestic violence, family violence and intimate partner violence (IPV) will be used interchangeably, defined as any act of violence including physical, psychological or sexual, as well as broader tactics of power and control used by men against their current or former partner in the context of a domestic relationship.

The term ‘batterer’ will be used to define those men who are perpetrators of domestic violence. Bancroft et al. (2012) propose that this definition takes into account the variation that exists in abuse perpetrated, including different frequencies, severities and intentions. Although the term may suggest battering in the form of physical violence, it also encompasses psychological and sexual violence. Significantly, children may also be exposed to this violence to varying degrees.

A batterer is a person who exercises a pattern of coercive control in a partner relationship, punctuated by one or more acts of intimidating physical violence, sexual assault, or credible threat of physical violence. This pattern of control and intimidation may be predominantly psychological, economic, or sexual in nature or may rely primarily on the use of physical violence. (Bancroft et al., 2012, p. 4)

With regard to children, the terms ‘exposure’ or ‘witnessing’ will be used to describe children seeing, hearing, being directly involved in or being in an environment characterised by domestic violence.

The researcher

It is understood that as researcher, my position, assumptions, values and beliefs cannot be viewed as separate from the research. Rather, they must be understood as influential both in terms of reasons for undertaking this research and any biases or influences that may exist.

I am a 27 year old Pākehā female, who has lived in a variety of settings throughout New Zealand. Although I have not experienced domestic violence personally, my interest in the area of domestic violence stems from previous academic study, particularly in the areas of Family Law and Family Violence. Domestic violence in New Zealand is consistently represented within the media, statistics, research, and policy initiatives. Therefore, I have been made aware of domestic violence as a social issue requiring significant attention through a variety of modes.

I am also a clinical psychology student and therefore psychological theory regarding risk factors associated with violence and antisocial behaviour influence my understanding and perception of domestic violence. Although my training is grounded in psychopathology, the significance of social or environmental factors in understanding and responding to domestic violence are considered pertinent within this research and in conceptualising domestic violence within a New Zealand context. Furthermore, I consider it important to take a holistic view of domestic violence and associated health issues, including cultural perspectives of violence and the historical, social and political influences on health. Throughout previous study and current training, I have been active in the use of a bicultural lens and acknowledge contextual and cultural influences, as well as differing worldviews. As a Pākehā woman, I recognise that my lived experience will differ somewhat from the Māori and Pasifika participants in my study. Hence, I consulted with Māori advisors and Programme Coordinators to ensure the processes were appropriate and culturally safe.

Theoretical perspective

This research is grounded in a feminist analysis of domestic violence, focussed on the role of gender, masculinity, patriarchy and how we are socialised. Domestic violence is a gendered issue, based on the understanding that the majority of violence is perpetrated by men against women (Stark, 2007). It is acknowledged that women do perpetrate violence within intimate relationships and, occasionally, kill their male partners; however, men are more often the aggressor and women the victim in the relationship (Bancroft et al., 2012; Langford, Issac, & Kabat, 1999). Furthermore, physical or sexual violence within IPV, occurs seven times more often to women than to men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Compared to men, for women, IPV is more severe and leads to more frequent hospitalisations or contact with refuge services (CYF & Police, 2010; Families Commission, 2009). A feminist analysis of gender inequality highlights that women are vulnerable to the use of power and control by men due to their subordinate position within wider social structures (Adams, 1988; Arnold, 2009) and that the belief systems inherent in men who batter, stem from social reinforcement (Paymar & Barnes, 2007).

Furthermore, a social learning model of behaviour views domestic violence as a product of learnt or modelled behaviour and being reinforced by broader sociocultural processes. Therefore, it is ascertained that having learnt to be abusive, men can learn to be not abusive (Bandura, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993b)

A cultural perspective: Whānau violence

It is widely understood that Māori are substantially over-represented as both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence (Balzer, Haimona, Henare, & Matchitt, 1997; Erai, Pitama, Allen, & Pou, 2007; Lievore & Mayhew, 2007). The *E Tu Whānau Programme of Action for Addressing Family Violence (2013-2018)* has been developed by the Māori Reference Group for The Taskforce. It recognises the need for Māori to have self-determination in driving solutions and that whānau are the key to

eliminating violence (The Maori Reference Group, 2013). This aligns with the aspirations of Whānau Ora, a kaupapa Māori wellbeing framework focussed on Māori adopting healthy lifestyles, including being violence free and on guiding the analysis and practice of whānau violence prevention (Ministry of Health, 2011). The Mauri Ora framework for reducing whānau violence established the need to dispel the illusion that whānau violence is normal, remove the opportunity for whānau violence to be perpetrated and teach transformative practices based on Māori cultural imperatives, when analysing and approaching violence (Kruger et al., 2004).

It is important to acknowledge the historical and cultural context within which violence against women and children occurs. Māori family violence is viewed within the context of colonisation, where colonial ideologies have had a significant impact on the Māori way of life, including imported beliefs that sanctioned the subordination of women (Balzer et al., 1997). Māori traditional knowledge and practices have been undermined and marginalised, including whānau, hapu and iwi structures and traditional childcare practices (Kruger et al., 2004; Te Puni Kokiri, 2011). Balzer (1999) identified four ways in which colonisation has had a direct and causal impact on family violence: the denigration of Mana-Māori, the contravention of the Treaty of Waitangi, the breakdown of the tribal structures and subsequent fragmentation of the whānau, and the imposition of Western beliefs and practices, including infiltration of an ideology of male supremacy on Māori consciousness (p. 245). Ministry documents recognise the impact of colonisation for Māori and therefore highlight the need to take into account traditional whānau dynamics and social structures when addressing family violence through prevention and intervention strategies (Ministry of Health, 2002; Ministry of Social Development, 2002).

Violence towards women and children was not tolerated in traditional Māori society (Durie, 2012; Mikaere, 1994). Violence against an individual was viewed as transgression against the whole whānau or hapu and harming the atua (spiritual world) (Balzer et al., 1997; Milroy, 1996).

Māori viewed children as Taonga and there was no physical punishment or reprimand within traditional parenting practices (Jenkins & Harte, 2011). Māori children traditionally belong to whānau, hapu and iwi. Therefore, rights and responsibility for raising children were shared beyond the immediate family (Cram, 2012). The roles and relationships between women and men were important for maintaining balance and whanaungatanga, and were an essential part of the collective whole (Mikaere, 1994). The response to any whānau violence was a collective one, reflecting the interrelationships between whakapapa and whanaungatanga and links to whānau, hapu, iwi and the environment (Balzer et al., 1997).

In conceptualising violence within whānau, wider social, economic and cultural understandings must be considered. The Taskforce makes clear that Western conceptual frameworks of ‘family’ violence are different to ‘whānau’ violence, in that the former does not encompass the complexities of relationships within whānau (Kruger et al., 2004; Te Puni Kokiri, 2011). Erai et al. (2007) state, “Māori women’s experiences of family violence do not necessarily reflect those of mainstream descriptions of family violence due to the historical, cultural, economic and social context within which whānau Māori are located” (p.32). For instance, an assumption that women isolating themselves from a perpetrator will provide closure may not be appropriate for some Māori women, due to whanaungatanga and whakapapa (intertwined relationships). Rather, the whole whānau may need to be educated as a collective to support the woman. Therefore, recovery may not occur outside of the collective; the whānau as a whole needs to heal from the impact of violence and abuse (Kruger et al., 2004).

Domestic violence is recognised as a source of significant health inequality in New Zealand. Furthermore, social divisions, such as poverty, class and minority ethnic statuses create specific vulnerabilities to violence. This is particularly important given our knowledge that Māori experience significant disadvantage and are over-represented in negative statistics that constitute risk factors for domestic violence (Te Puni Kokiri, 2011; The Maori Reference Group, 2013). Therefore, domestic violence is viewed as a result of

multiple and complex factors. Social and economic disparities increase the risk that violence will occur within families (Ministry of Social Development, 2002). Thus, Māori whānau are doubly disadvantaged. Firstly, through colonisation, Māori have been alienated from cultural structures and practices which were protective against whānau violence. Secondly, their contemporary contexts are those of socio-economic disadvantage (Ministry of Health, 2002). This clearly produces a number of stressors and poses a threat to Māori identity (Te Puni Kokiri, 2011)

Setting: The Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP)

The current research was conducted through HAIP, an integrated criminal justice and community response to domestic violence. HAIP provides Stopping Violence Education Programmes for men, both tauwi (non-Māori) and Māori, which focus on stopping violent and controlling behaviour by challenging the belief system that supports it (Robertson & Busch, 1993). The majority of men are court-mandated to attend the programme, through the Family Court or Probation. However, some men are self-referred. Women's programmes are provided for Māori, tauwi and Asian women, offering support and education for victims of domestic violence. Women are informed by HAIP about the men's programme and are encouraged to attend the women's programme in order to maintain the victim centred approach and perspective on violence. This protects the autonomy of women and emphasises that violence is unacceptable (Furness, 1994; The Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project, n.d.).

The curriculum of the men's programme is modelled on the Duluth Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP), where violence is viewed as a tool to control women. The Power and Control Wheel and Equality Wheel are central components of the programme, used throughout the curriculum to expose dynamics of abusive relationships and the impact of violence on women. The Power and Control Wheel identifies eight tactics and is used throughout each theme to aid men in identifying abusive behaviour, the

belief systems that support such behaviour and the effect of violence on women and children. The Equality Wheel presents eight areas which assist in forming a positive, egalitarian relationship and provide the themes covered within the programme: Negotiation and fairness, non-threatening behaviour, respect, trust and support, honesty and accountability, responsible parenting, shared responsibility and economic partnership. The men's programmes operate as a rolling 25 week programme and therefore, men enter at different stages of the curriculum. The group programme is co-facilitated by both men and women in order to demonstrate a relationship of equality. Vignettes, role play and control logs are used as teaching tools to engage the men in a reflective process, challenging the perceived right to control or dominate women (Pence & Paymar, 1993b).

Parenting within the context of domestic violence is addressed, to a certain extent, within the Partnership theme. This theme consists of three subthemes: Responsible Parenting, Shared Responsibility and Economic Partnership, which are covered during a three week time-frame. The subtheme Responsible Parenting, in particular, addresses the importance of sharing parental responsibility and being a positive non-violent role model for the children. This provides opportunity for men to reflect on the impact of violence on women and children, and 'using the children as weapons' in the context of the parenting role. Although men do consider the role of father throughout the whole programme, the role of batterer as parent is not a *specific* focus within the programme curriculum or Duluth Model (Pence & Paymar, 1993a, 1993b).

Importantly, Māori family violence is acknowledged in the context of colonisation, where violence is conceptualised within a cultural framework of power, domination, and control (Balzer et al., 1997; Dominick, 1995). HAIP adopts a parallel development policy, where the curriculum has been culturally adapted in order to address Māori values and beliefs, cultural oppression, and to support and enhance Māori self-determination (Balzer, 1999).

CHAPTER TWO

Literature review

This chapter provides an overview of previous literature relating to the effects of domestic violence on children, the batterer's attitudinal and behavioural characteristics within the intimate partner relationship, parenting within the context of domestic violence, including the role of batterer as parent and the impact of violence on mothering, and recovery in the aftermath of violence. The majority of literature addressed is derived from studies in the United States and the United Kingdom as there is limited research in New Zealand which specifically addresses parenting in the context of domestic violence and associated issues.

The effects of domestic violence on children

It is well established that there is a high co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment (Appel & Holden, 1998; Edleson, 1999b; Straus, 1990). Children are at increased risk of being the direct intentional victim of physical, psychological and sexual abuse in families where there is domestic violence (Appel & Holden, 1998; Jaffe, Wolfe, & Wilson, 1990). The United States National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) study comprehensively measured exposure to violence in children and young people aged 0-17 years. The data showed that 34% of children who had witnessed IPV were also the victims of direct maltreatment in the past year. Over half (57%) of those children who had witnessed IPV were maltreated over their lifetimes (Hamby, Finkelhor, Turner, & Ormrod, 2010). Pregnancy is also a time when the risk for IPV may increase for women and in these instances the batterer may direct violence towards the unborn child (Humphreys, 2007).

Children may also be the direct unintentional victim, in situations when they are present during violent episodes (Mbilinyi, Edleson, Hagemester, & Beeman, 2007). For instance, children may become directly involved in violent incidents by physically intervening, verbally voicing their

concerns or by reporting violence to the authorities (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Mullender et al., 2002; Peled, 1998). Children may take an active role to oppose one of the parents, to protect the abused parent or prevent harm and alleviate their own experiences of distress at this time (Peled, 1998). In one study, 50% of mothers reported that children had attempted to intervene in violent incidents at some point, with 20% taking place on numerous occasions (Edleson, Mbilinyi, Beeman, & Hagemester, 2003).

Not surprisingly, children are not only at risk of being unintentionally harmed during assaults aimed towards the mother (Mbilinyi et al., 2007), but are at a higher risk of child fatality compared to children from non-violent families. (Edleson, 1998; Websdale, Town, & Johnson, 1999). In New Zealand, children are present in half of all family violence incidents or callouts to police (New Zealand Police, 2010). The New Zealand Family Violence Death Review Committee report that a pertinent factor contributing to a child victim in a family violence death was an 'extreme response to intimate partner separation' (Family Violence Death Review Committee, 2011).

Furthermore, children may be exposed to the physical, psychological and sexual violence used by the batterer towards their mother, but not become a direct victim (McGee, 2000) However, the exposure to violence is considered a significant form of child maltreatment in itself (Bancroft et al., 2012; Peled, 2000; Wolfe & McGee, 1994). Although psychological abuse is least examined, its effects are found to be as damaging as other forms of violence (Graham-Bermann, 1998). Some research suggests that children who are directly maltreated and children who are exposed to domestic violence alone, show similar levels of behavioural and psychological difficulties (McCloskey, GFigueredo, & Koss, 1995).

The effects of domestic violence on children are vast, including significant consequences for their behavioural, emotional and cognitive functioning, as well as their relationships with others. Children who are exposed to domestic violence experience higher rates of internalising and externalising difficulties (Sternberg, Baradaran, Abbott, Lamb, & Guterman,

2006), including depression (McGee, 2000), suicidality (Clark et al., 2009), developmental delays (Carpenter & Stacks, 2009), low self-esteem (Rathgen, 2008), learning difficulties, attentional problems, difficulties forming relationships, withdrawal (Osofsky, Cohen, & Drell, 1995), anxiety (Jaffe et al., 1990; McCloskey et al., 1995), fear (McGee, 2000; Mullender et al., 2002), aggression (McGee, 2000), hyperactivity and emotional detachment (Buchanan, 2008). Children exposed to violence are found to worry significantly more about the vulnerability of other family members and the harmful behaviour of the abuser, which is associated with child adjustment problems and externalising behaviours as a way to cope with their fear and anxiety. Therefore, acting-out behaviours may not always be learned behaviour but rather a coping strategy to overcome fear and anxiety about their fathers (Graham-Bermann, 1998).

Children who are exposed to violence often experience long term consequences continuing into adulthood (Howell & Graham-Bermann, 2011; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Research shows mixed support for clear gender differences between boys and girls in response to domestic violence. Some studies suggest that externalising behaviours are significantly higher for boys exposed to domestic violence, compared to girls (Evans, Davies, & DiLillo, 2008). However, others have found girls to be at higher risk for both externalising and internalising behaviours (Sternberg et al., 1993). In a meta-analysis examining 118 studies of psychosocial outcomes relating to the exposure of domestic violence, Kitzmann, Holt, and Kenney (2003) found no evidence of gender moderation for outcomes.

Post-traumatic stress symptoms are prevalent in children exposed to domestic violence (Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, Semel, & Shapiro, 2002; Osofsky et al., 1995), despite not all children meeting diagnostic criteria (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998). Mothers of children exposed to violence report that their children show poor concentration, have intrusive memories of violence, withdraw from socialisation, are prone to angry outbursts and have higher rates of anxiety related responses to external stimuli (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998). One study that assessed

post-traumatic stress symptoms in 64 children (7-12 years) who had been exposed to physical and emotional abuse towards their mothers in the past year, found that 52% suffered intrusive memories of the traumatic events, 19% displayed avoidance, 42% had experiences of traumatic arousal and 13% would meet DSM-IV criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Those with PTSD had significantly more internalizing and externalising difficulties (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998).

Children exposed to the batterer's violence may learn abusive behaviours through social learning processes, and consider violence to be an appropriate conflict resolution strategy (Margolin, 1998). Young children show higher rates of aggressive and oppositional behaviour (Levendosky, Leahy, Bogat, Davidson, & von Eye, 2006), and children display higher rates of aggression within their peer relationships (Gleason, 1995; Graham-Bermann, 1998). Furthermore, juvenile delinquency is perpetrated at much higher rates in both girls and boys who are exposed to domestic violence (Wolfe & McGee, 1994). Boys who are exposed to violence have an increased risk of being perpetrators of IPV in adulthood if they adopt the batterers' attitudes and beliefs (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). The more severe and frequent a batterer's emotional abuse towards the mother, the more likely children will believe in "the inherent superiority and privilege and men in the family and...that violence [is] an acceptable and even necessary part of family interactions" (Graham-Bermann & Brescoll, 2000, p. 609). The New Zealand based Christchurch Health and Development Study sheds light on the relationship between IPV, child maltreatment and anti-social behaviour. Within the Christchurch cohort, Boden, Fergusson, and Horwood (2010) found that adolescents with conduct disorder and oppositional defiant disorder were more likely to have been exposed to child maltreatment and IPV than children who had not been exposed.

In terms of a young person's social development, domestic violence is a significant factor in limiting achievement of adaptation and competence (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1995; Sternberg et al., 2006). Young children are more likely to have adjustment problems within this context

including difficulties with social development in their relationships with peers and parents (Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, Shapiro, & Semel, 2003). The emotional abuse of a child's mother, has been found to be the most significant predictor of social behaviour and adjustment problems in children (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1997). Furthermore, children may assume inappropriate levels of responsibility within the family environment, particularly when their mother is unable to fulfil this role due to the emotional dysfunction that may accompany abuse. Research shows that role reversal between child and parent is common in families living with violence, particularly concerning parentification. Parentified children may take on both instrumental and emotional responsibilities, beyond what is considered age appropriate, including household chores, caring for younger children, and supporting the emotional needs of their parents (Barnett & Parker, 1998). This has significant implications for children as they are often unsupported in these roles, become socially isolated due to age-inappropriate activities and experience an inability to live up to their parents high expectations. Therefore, the parentification phenomenon impacts on children's social adjustment with both peers and their parents (Earley & Cushway, 2002).

The effects of violence on young children must not be underestimated (Osofsky et al., 1995). The younger the child when he or she is exposed to domestic violence, the more deleterious the outcome (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Holden, Stein, Ritchie, Harris, & Jouriles, 1998). Children between the ages of three-six years are vulnerable to developing emotional and behavioural difficulties, including regressions in toileting and language, problems with cognitive functioning and physical health complaints, such as somatic symptomology (Howell & Graham-Bermann, 2011; Jaffe et al., 1990; Margolin, 2005). Young children may have difficulties with emotional regulation, most commonly presented as increased aggression and emotional outbursts, as well as separation anxiety. Children may have difficulty understanding social roles and deficits in recognising emotions and empathising in appropriate ways (Graham-Bermann &

Levendosky, 1997; Margolin, 2005). In a recent study conducted in New Zealand, four year old children showed higher prevalence rates of internalising, externalising and total behavioural problems in situations where mothers reported severe IPV, compared to any other age group (Paterson, Carter, Gao, Cowley-Malcolm, & Iusitini, 2008). Young children require their parents or caregivers to provide a safe, nurturing and predictable environment; this is significantly compromised when there is domestic violence (Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Attachment to parents is particularly strong during the early years of a child's development; violence has long-lasting effects if it prevents a child from forming a secure attachment to their mother (Buchanan, 2008; Levendosky et al., 2002).

It is recognised that there is variation in the way children are affected by domestic violence, particularly in considering the type of violence, the frequency of violence perpetrated, the intensity of exposure, and the interaction between these factors and the child's developmental stage (Margolin, 2005; Osofsky, 1998). It is important to recognise that children's exposure to domestic violence is a risk factor for other forms of adversity and negative life experiences (Hamby et al., 2010; Murphy et al., 2013b), including low socioeconomic status, negative parenting styles, exposure to substance abuse and the presence of negative relationships. Therefore, exposure to domestic violence alone is not the only variable operating (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2006) and the psychological effects of being exposed to multiple problems associated with IPV, may compound over time (Humphreys & Houghton, 2008). Children are often exposed to multiple traumas, including the trauma of losing a parent, the abuser, separation of parents and living with other family members who are traumatised (Bancroft et al., 2012).

There are a number of resilience factors that may protect children in high-risk families from negative outcomes (Graham-Bermann, 1998). One protective factor is forming a positive relationship with other adults, based on trust (Margolin, 1998; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). The negative impact of stress in itself can also be moderated by positive peer relationships

(Sameroff, 1995; Wolak & Finkelhor, 1998). This highlights the importance of children developing and maintaining a supportive relationship with the non-abusing parent, usually their mother. In many cases, a good mother-child relationship can provide the child with that stability (Bancroft et al., 2012; Howell & Graham-Bermann, 2011; Murphy et al., 2013b). Exposure to domestic violence is also moderated by positive parenting performance, where a child is provided with firm boundaries and limits, leading to greater resiliency in children (Graham-Bermann, 1996; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Hughes, Graham-Bermann, & Gruger, 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). I will elaborate on the implications for children whose mothers' parenting is also affected by domestic violence, when discussing the impact of violence on mothering specifically. However, it must be noted that abused women may have difficulty being emotionally available or responsive to their children's needs and may unintentionally place children in the position of being a protector (Levendosky et al., 2003; Osofsky, 1998).

Bancroft et al. (2012) assert that the numerous effects of domestic violence on children described above, are due to the batterer's perpetration of violence against the mother and exposing the children to that violence. Furthermore, these overwhelming effects of violence on children are considered to be a "reflection of his parenting capacity" (p. 49).

The batterer as partner

There are a number of attitudes and behaviours which are characteristic of the batterer's use of violence against his intimate partner. These characteristics are central in understanding the batterer's role as parent and in assessing his suitability to have contact with children (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Control within intimate relationships is the central behavioural characteristic of the batterer (Bancroft et al., 2012; Stark, 2007). Specific tactics used to achieve control include verbal abuse, economic abuse and isolation (Bancroft, 2003). The use of control is often perceived by the batterer to be justified: resistance, is considered to be evidence of a woman's

mental instability or as a way to control him (Dutton, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993b). Control is often used to undermine his partner's independence across all facets of her life, including her role as a parent (Bancroft, 2003). Control may increase when significant life events take place; such as pregnancy or the birth of a child (Bancroft et al., 2012). The coercion and control exhibited by batterers poses severe risk to children, who are often intimidated by them and reluctant to report abuse to others (Bancroft, 2003; Bancroft et al., 2012).

A batterer's sense of entitlement is considered the overarching attitudinal characteristic underlying his pattern of abusive behaviour (Adams, 1991; Bancroft, 2003; Bancroft et al., 2012; Silverman & Williamson, 1997). This sense of entitlement encompasses the belief that men have special status within society and accompanying privileges; his needs must be met (Pence & Paymar, 1993b). Batterers may view themselves as superior to women who are viewed as an object to be owned, and, often, to be deserving of the violence used against them (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). The batterer protects these beliefs through the use of violence, both physical and psychological, which serves as justification for his abusive behaviour towards women and children (Bancroft et al., 2012; Silverman & Williamson, 1997). If the batterers' physical, emotional and sexual needs are not catered for, they may characterise their partner as selfish and controlling, leading to retaliation and the further use control to reassert dominance (Bancroft et al., 2012; Pence & Paymar, 1993b). Previous studies highlight the propensity of abusive men to not report the full extent of their violence, reporting much less than their partners (Dutton, 1995; Edleson & Tolman, 1992). Family members who are the victims of violence, may take on responsibility for the abuse; blaming one another or themselves (Pence & Paymar, 1993b).

Women who experience domestic violence are found to have more long-term physical, psychological and sexual health problems compared to other women, including low self-esteem, depression, substance abuse, social isolation, posttraumatic stress, suicidal ideation, fear, anxiety and financial

hardship (Dolezal, McCollum, & Callahan, 2009; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Fanslow et al., 2010; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005; Lafta, 2008; Robertson et al., 2007). High levels of depression and low self-esteem have been found to be associated with higher levels of abuse. Furthermore, battered women may use ineffective coping strategies, including self-blame, which is correlated with increased hopelessness (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992). A New Zealand population based study reported that women who had experienced IPV were two times more likely to have accessed healthcare providers over a month than women who had not experienced such violence. IPV was also significantly related to increased health problems (Fanslow & Robinson, 2004). Women who are victims of domestic violence often report that psychological abuse has a more significant impact on them compared to physical violence, and this is a pertinent risk factor for continued detrimental effects both during and after the violent relationship (Edleson & Tolman, 1992). These vast and significant consequences of domestic violence for women also have important implications for their parenting and the children's wellbeing, as discussed in the following section (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Parenting in the context of domestic violence

In light of the numerous detrimental effects of domestic violence on children, their exposure to the batterer as parent must also be examined. Batters' abuse of their children, through exposure to violence or direct child abuse and neglect, are central to understanding their fathering role. Domestic violence has wide implications for family functioning, including parent-child relationships and in particular, the mother's ability to be a parent.

The batterer as parent

There has been little attention given to the role of the batterer as parent, with the work of Bancroft and Edleson being the main exceptions (Bancroft et al., 2012; Edleson & Williams, 2007). The limited research that does exist suggests a pattern of behaviour which is different to that of non-

abusive fathers (Bancroft et al., 2012). Furthermore, batterers' parenting is considered deficient by virtue of the violence perpetrated towards the children's mother. Therefore, it is important to examine the parenting styles characteristic of batterers and the impact such parenting may have on children.

Authoritarianism

Men who are abusive towards their partners have been observed as having rigid, authoritarian parenting styles, which are closely associated with their controlling nature (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Margolin, John, Ghosh, & Gordis, 1996). This includes expectations that children should obey their authority and intolerance if orders are met with resistance. The authoritarian parent may have unrealistically high expectations and fail to use age-appropriate expectations when managing their children's behaviour. When compared to non-batterers, men who batter have been found to more frequently show anger in their interactions with their children, use physical discipline twice as often, and respond to conflicts involving children with power-assertiveness (verbal and physical force) (Fox & Benson, 2004; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Holden et al., 1998). Furthermore, they are typically unable to accept criticism or feedback by their partner or the wider family and may perceive themselves to be a better parent than their partner. This may mean that these men are less able to modify their parenting practices to meet the children's needs.

An authoritarian parenting style can lead to behavioural and developmental problems for children (Bancroft & Silverman, 2004), notwithstanding children's emotional risk due to the trauma associated with violence in itself. This rigid parenting and lack of empathy can also be a risk factor for child abuse, despite the clear harmful effects this parenting style has itself (Milner & Chilamkurti, 1991). These rigid ideas about parenting mean that batterers are typically reluctant to reevaluate their parenting and/or to learn new ways of being a parent (Bancroft et al., 2012). This parenting style limits men's ability to develop their parenting skills and

consequently, they are far less likely to accept their partner's guidance in becoming effective or nurturing parents (Adams, 1991).

Under-involvement and irresponsibility

Batterers tend to be under-involved and neglectful of their children; instead they are typically preoccupied with having their own needs met (Bancroft et al., 2012; Lapierre, 2010). Research shows that under-involved fathers are less physically and emotionally available to their children (Holden & Ritchie, 1991), which often continues post-separation (Radford, Hester, Humphries, & Woodfield, 1997). Children may be viewed as a hindrance. Batterers may evade their responsibilities for the children and allow the mother to take care for the daily routines and general childcare (Adams, 1991). As part of this lack of responsibility and interest shown towards their children, they may have unrealistic and inappropriate expectations of children, based on their developmental age (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). However, Bancroft et al. (2012) report that the batterer may show an interest in the children when there is opportunity for public recognition of his fathering. When the batterer is present as a parent, he may use his power by not setting appropriate boundaries for the children and spending money on them generously, particularly on entertainment and fun activities (Erickson & Henderson, 1998). This can be used as a weapon against mothers, dividing the children's loyalties. Mothers may be unable to provide the children with the same level of enjoyment due to coping with trauma, the batterer controlling the finances and the burden of having the sole responsibility for the day-to-day care of the children (Bancroft et al., 2012). However, some research suggests that violent men's parenting is indistinguishable from non-violent men in terms of the amount of time spent with children (Fox & Benson, 2004).

Self-centredness

Just as batterers tend to be self-centred in their relationship with their partner, they may also be self-centred in their relationships with children. Children may be treated as possessions and the batterer may be

reluctant to modify his lifestyle to encompass the needs of his children and the responsibility of parenthood. Batterers who choose not to be involved with their children often believe this should not change their parental rights, reflecting a sense of entitlement (Bancroft et al., 2012; McMahon & Pence, 1995). Some batterers tend to choose to be a part of the lives of their children when it suits them. In this sense, the batterer may expect children to meet his needs. This may mean that children become burdened with their father's emotional needs. Men who batter may convey their worries to the children, expect them to provide company and make themselves available to them on their own terms. Some fathers may use manipulation of children to gain support for their side of arguments with their mother, further dividing the children's loyalties to their parents. This has significant implications for family dynamics, as children may collude with the abuser because they fear for their safety (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Manipulativeness

Some men are manipulative in their relationships with children, mirroring another characteristic of batterers in their behaviour towards their partner. Mbilinyi et al. (2007) found that 80% of battered women reported the abuser using the children to control or abuse them, with 49% of the cases reporting this as a frequent occurrence. This manipulation may be used to lead the children to believe that the non-abusing parent is responsible for the abuse. As will be explored in the following section, abusive men often use manipulation within custody disputes, including threats against women to seek sole custody of the children or to have child protection services remove the child from the mother's care (Bancroft et al., 2012). The batterer's tactics used both during the relationship and after it ends, can serve to undermine the children's resilience factors, such as the bond they have with their mother, reducing children's ability to heal. Children who protect their mothers from the abuser, both verbally and physically, show their resilience in the context of living with violence but conversely this further undermines the mother-child relationship (Mbilinyi et al., 2007; McGee, 2000).

These characteristics of the batterer as parent may have negative consequences for children, both during the abusive relationship and post-separation through contact arrangements. There are a number of tactics that batterers use directly or indirectly to undermine women's ability to be a mother and compromise the mother-child relationship (Bancroft et al., 2012), which will be addressed in the following section.

Mothering in the context of domestic violence

Historically, women have been seen as having to bear the primary responsibility for the care and wellbeing of their children. The notion of the 'good mother', as one who is nurturing, dedicated and devoted to her children, still influences the social construction of motherhood in Western societies (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). Despite previous literature considering the cultural and social meanings ascribed to motherhood, there is limited recognition of how IPV may shape the practice of mothering (Lapierre, 2008; Peled & Barak Gil, 2011). For battered women, the reality of the mothering experience is often different to social perceptions of motherhood (Peled & Barak Gil, 2011). Battered women may be presented as 'bad mothers' and blamed for failing to protect their children from abuse, particularly when women stay in the abusive relationship (Roberts, 1999). The construction of these women as deficient and failures as mothers is often emphasised and part of the insidious nature of mother-blaming discourses (Lapierre, 2008). These negative perceptions do not fully capture the complex nature of relationships that battered women have with their children and men who perpetrate violence against them (Semaan, Jasinski, & Bubriski-McKenzie, 2013). Mullender et al. (2002) argue that women who experience domestic violence are "doomed to fail" based on the social construction of motherhood and the abusive environment which is "unconducive to achieving even 'good enough' mothering" (p. 157).

Many women who are subjected to violence are responsible and nurturing parents, concerned for their children's welfare (Peled & Barak Gil, 2011; Semaan et al., 2013). In a study examining battered women's

perceptions of mothering, Peled and Barak Gil (2011) found the role of mother to be central in women's lives and the children's welfare was prioritised above all else. Many women perceived themselves to be the primary responsible caregiver of the children and the fathers as less capable of providing this level of care. Furthermore, their thoughts and behaviours centred on the provision of children's physical and emotional needs, including the protection of their children from exposure to violence. Several studies have examined women's concerns about the impact of violence on children, with findings suggestive of high levels of anxiety about the physical and emotional impact on children (DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Holden et al., 1998; Levendosky, Lynch, & Graham-Bermann, 2000). Parenting by abused mothers may resemble a preoccupation with protecting their children through a variety of means, such as controlling the children's behaviour to prevent this irritating the abuser or punishing the children themselves in order to prevent harsher punishment by the father (Bromfield, Lamont, Parker, & Horsfall, 2010; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Osofsky, 1998). Mbilinyi et al. (2007) found that 48% of battered women had been physically punished by the batterer for trying to intervene and protect the children.

Peled and Barak Gil (2011) found that battered women strove to maintain separation between the 'violent world' and the 'children's world', in an attempt to prevent violence from affecting their ability to be a mother. Studies have also found that the significant violation of the mothering role is often described by battered women as the catalyst for leaving their abusive partners (Mullender et al., 2002; Semaan et al., 2013). On the other hand, women have described the role of protecting their children as a main reason in any decision to stay with the abuser (Hilton, 1992). Therefore, in an environment where women have limited power, mothering may provide battered women with the means to assert themselves (Semaan et al., 2013). The mothering role can provide a positive sense of identity and self-worth for abused women, as often the only part of their lives where they can feel a sense of control and fulfilment (Peled & Barak Gil, 2011).

Deliberate and insidious tactics that serve to undermine the mother's parenting role and the mother-child relationship include the batterer telling children negative information about their mother, criticising or ridiculing her in front of the children (Hughes & Marshall, 1995; Mullender et al., 2002), discrediting her as mother by telling the children she is an unfit parent and blaming her for any detrimental outcomes for the children (Bancroft et al., 2012; Lapierre, 2010; Peled, 2000). Batterers may undermine women's parental authority, overruling decisions that she makes as mother. Batterers may also use violence to punish women for not parenting the children as they would see fit (Jouriles & Norwood, 1995; Mbilinyi et al., 2007). Some men may prevent women from meeting children's emotional needs, such as not allowing her to comfort her child in times of distress (Levendosky et al., 2000). In a study conducted by Holden and Ritchie (1991), 34% of battered mothers changed their parenting behaviour when the batterer was present, by becoming more lenient on the children or by using harsher parenting practices. Mbilinyi et al. (2007) found that because of the batterer's tactics, 90% of battered mothers had experienced an inability to care for their children as they would have wanted to, with half of these women reporting that they had used harsh punishment of their children due to stress from the abuse. However, some studies suggest that battered mothers have been found to be no more physically abusive toward their children in comparison to non-battered mothers (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Holden et al., 1998).

The batterer's denigration of his partner as mother can lead to the undermining of the mother-child relationship. As part of this, children may blame their mothers for the abuse (Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe et al., 1990; McGee, 2000). Children often develop resentment towards their mothers as they are perceived to have failed to meet their needs or failed to leave the batterer (Davies, 2009; Mullender et al., 2002). On the other hand, children may also resent their mother for leaving him due to the consequences this has for their relationship with their father (Peled, 1998). Bancroft et al. (2012) highlight a critical theme that underlies the impact of domestic

violence on family dynamics by drawing attention to “the typical ability of men who batter to shape the children’s views of both parents and to condition children to misinterpret the abuse that they observe in a way that leads them to blame their mother and minimise the abuse” (p. 87). The batterer is able to manipulate how he is seen as a father in the eyes of both the children and the mother (Bancroft et al., 2012; Holden & Ritchie, 1991). Some children may ally themselves with their father, in an attempt to reduce violence and in an attempt to win his approval and affection. Children often identify with the power of the abuser, distancing themselves from their mother (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; McMahon & Pence, 1995).

Studies have also shown that battered mothers experience significantly higher levels of stress in their parenting, compared to non-battered mothers (Edleson, Hokoda, & Ramos-Lira, 2007; Holden et al., 1998; Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 1998; Zerk, Mertin, & Proeve, 2009). Holden and Ritchie (1991) found that the single most important factor underlying behavioural problems found in children who are exposed to violence, is the mother’s level of parenting stress and not overall life stress. Some researchers suggest that battered mothers show higher rates of physical and psychological aggression towards their children, due to suppressing their frustrations associated with the abuse (Holden et al., 1998; Mbilinyi et al., 2007; Zerk et al., 2009). However, the likelihood that mothers will use aggression in their parenting of children is correlated with the level of parenting stress experienced (Holden et al., 1998). This may reinforce the children’s perceptions that their mother’s character was to blame for the violence and they may accept the batterer’s view that she is an unfit parent (McMahon & Pence, 1995). However, this increased conflict within the mother-child relationship must be considered in the context of the behavioural challenges often faced with children who are exposed to violence (Holden et al., 1998; Zerk et al., 2009). Furthermore, battered mothers may display timid and indecisive parenting practices due to the

fear and control experienced within their abusive relationship (Letourneau, Fedick, & Willms, 2007).

Research which has examined problems exhibited by children who have been exposed to domestic violence has tended to focus on mothers' perceived deficiencies and not the violent behaviour which underpinned these problems in the first place. Previous studies suggest that women who are the victims of domestic violence may become emotionally unavailable to children and unable to provide a nurturing environment, due to mental health difficulties associated with IPV interfering with their ability to parent (Levendosky et al., 2003; Levendosky et al., 2006; Margolin, 1998; Osofsky, 1998). It is clear that violence impacts on women's ability to function on a day-to-day basis. However, the notion that women are less available emotionally and physically to their children's needs, and uninvolved in their lives is not always supported (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Holden et al., 1998; Sullivan, Nguyen, Allen, Bybee, & Juras, 2000). Conversely, parenting by battered women may improve after separation due to their own healing from violence and rebuilding their autonomy as parent (Holden et al., 1998; Schechter & Edleson, 1994). Over time, in relation to the last time violence was experienced, mothers of children exposed to domestic violence have been found to increase positive discipline and less of a decrease in warm and nurturing behaviours compared to mothers of non-exposed children (Letourneau et al., 2007).

Overall, available research shows that domestic violence places significant constraints on women's functioning as a mother; however, a complex picture emerges in terms of women's perceptions of the impact of violence on their mothering and whether women's mothering is different to that of non-abused women. Battered mothers' often experience significant undermining of their parental authority and severing of the mother-child relationship. These factors impede women's and children's ability to heal. It is important to consider the implications of these factors in the context of access arrangements and relationships in the aftermath of violence.

Recovery in the aftermath of violence

Domestic violence does not end with separation; it is well established that men who batter may continue to use violence against women, and in some cases these tactics intensify post-separation (Bancroft et al., 2012). Women often continue to experience tactics of power and control that undermine their ability to be a mother, due to the batterer's involvement in the children's lives through day-to-day care and contact arrangements. These tactics include the direct maltreatment and deliberate endangerment of children to intimidate, using the children to maintain contact and using children to both monitor and control the women's behaviour (Bancroft et al., 2012; Mbilinyi et al., 2007; McMahan & Pence, 1995; Radford et al., 1997). Abusive fathers may also use children as weapons in an attempt to prevent women from leaving the relationship (Beeble, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2007). Researchers have continued to question whether children should have contact with an abusive parent (Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Johnston & Campbell, 1993), given our knowledge of abuse continuing post-separation, including children's exposure to violence and the high overlap between domestic violence and child maltreatment (Jaffe & Crooks, 2007; Shalansky, Ericksen, & Henderson, 1999). In this context, day-to-day care and contact arrangements become important factors in determining the exposure of both mothers and children to the abuser.

Day-to-day care and contact arrangements

Day-to-day care and contact arrangements provide the means for batterers to continue to assert power and control over women post-separation (Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe, Lemon, & Poisson, 2003). Batterers are found to threaten the use of Care of Children proceedings: this often takes the form of threatening to take the children from the mothers care if she were to leave him (Jaffe et al., 2003) and threatening to report her to child protection services, alleging she is an unfit mother (Doyme et al., 1999; Jaffe et al., 2003; Mullender et al., 2002). These retaliatory and intimidating behaviours provide an avenue for batterers to maintain control after

separation (Shepard, 1992) and battered women often delay leaving the abuser, because of fears of losing the children (Liss & Stahly, 1993). Batterers have been found to be twice as likely to apply for the day-to-day care of their children compared to separated non-batterers and are more likely to be successful in being granted full day-to-day care. This is often due to their use of manipulation to create a non-abusive image of themselves and discrediting the children's mother as ineffective (Doyme et al., 1999; McMahon & Pence, 1995; Zorza, 2009). As part of these tactics, men may highlight the negative characteristics of women, which are often directly attributable to the abuse they have suffered (Jaffe et al., 2003; Liss & Stahly, 1993; McMahon & Pence, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993b).

Batterers' sense of entitlement may fuel this desire of control as they believe they should have authority over their children and not lose parental rights (Jaffe et al., 2003). Women may be unjustly victimised by professionals who work within the legal system, including social workers, lawyers and judges, due to their failure to understand the continuation of abuse and how this constricts women's ability to parent. As part of this, battered women have been found to perceive the legal system as failing to understand fully the dynamics of power and control within intimate partner violence, and the significant link between abuse towards women and the abuser's relationship with his children. Ultimately, this can undermine the ability for healing to take place (McMahon & Pence, 1995; Shalansky et al., 1999; Zorza, 2009).

Legislative framework

The justice system in New Zealand plays a significant role in the protection of women and children from domestic violence, particularly in the determining whether abusive fathers should have contact with their children and in what capacity. The landmark case of 'The Bristol Killings', where three children were killed by their father while in his care, pursuant to an order made by the Family Court despite his violence towards their mother, sparked debate surrounding the relevance of the relationship between spousal violence and the welfare of the children in day-to-day care

and contact decision-making (Busch & Robertson, 1994; Chetwin, Knaggs, & Young, 1999; Davison, 1994). Judges were found to have viewed violence against a spouse as irrelevant in the determination of whether abusive fathers should have access to their children. One Family Court Judge stated:

While the man is a poor partner, if he is a good parent it would be wrong to deprive the children of the father as a matter of moral condemnation of him in respect of his conduct towards his partner. (Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992, pp. 239-240)

This reflects the view that a child should not be deprived of contact with a parent. In an inquiry into the Bristol killings, Sir Ronald Davidson recommended that The Guardianship Act 1968 be amended to include the rebuttable presumption that a person who uses domestic violence should not be granted unsupervised contact or day-to-day care of any children, unless the court is satisfied that the child will be safe in the presence of that person (Davison, 1994, p. 43). The Guardianship Amendment Act 1995 enacted this rebuttable presumption and represented a significant change in approach by the Family Court, which previously promoted conciliation and resolution between both parties (Busch & Robertson, 1997, 2000; Chetwin et al., 1999).

The Care of Children Act 2004 came into force on July 1st 2005, replacing the Guardianship Act 1995. Under the new Act, the court is required to consider allegations of violence in Care of Children proceedings. This Act made significant changes to previous legislation, in particular emphasising the rights of the child and encouraging co-operative parenting. Sections 58- 62 of the Act deal with parenting orders made within the context of domestic violence and prioritise the welfare and best interests of the child as paramount. Under this Act, where there is an application for the day-to-day care or contact of a child, the court must conduct a risk assessment if there is an allegation that one party has perpetrated domestic violence. Of importance is the rebuttable presumption under section 60(4), as described above Under section 61, matters to be taken into consideration, when assessing whether care or contact between a violent party and their

child will be safe include the nature and seriousness of the violence, its frequency, the likelihood of further violence, the physical or emotional harm caused to the child, whether the non-violent party considers the child to be safe or consents to the contact, views held by the child and steps taken to prevent future violence (Boshier, 2011; Chetwin et al., 1999; Jaffe et al., 2003). These provisions reflect a recognition that domestic violence continues postseparation, and what is known about the risk of the batterer to children and their recovery (Busch & Robertson, 2000).

There are a range of options that exist for day-to-day care and contact arrangements within the court system, with a general view that favours shared parenting and negotiated arrangements. It is acknowledged that shared parenting is not generally appropriate in families where there is domestic violence (Jaffe & Crooks, 2007; Scott, Francis, Crooks, Paddon, & Wolfe, 2007), as this may fail to take into consideration the significant power dynamics inherent in abusive relationships and increase the risk of further abuse for women and children during these processes. Supervised contact arrangements are perceived as increasing victims' safety. However, there are also multiple barriers which may undermine this intention, such as women's continual experience of abuse through the batterer's use of the children as weapons (Chetwin et al., 1999) and ineffective models for assessing risk to children. For instance, supervised contact arrangements are often lifted due to observation and assessment of the batterer's conduct during visitation, which is clearly not a reliable measure of safety in the absence of supervision (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Unsupervised contact also poses a number of risks to children: the risk of further exposure to violence towards their mother, which may increase post separation (Bancroft et al., 2012; Robertson et al., 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000); the risk of undermining the mother-child relationship, when recovery depends on the quality of this relationship; the batterer's use of negative parenting practices, (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Margolin et al., 1996; McGee, 2000); and children may be exposed to violence in their father's new relationship (Dutton, 1995). Whilst some studies show that

children's behavioural and emotional functioning improves when a battered women leaves the abusive partner (Holden et al., 1998), other studies report that those children who maintained contact with their father displayed fewer internalising difficulties (Stover, Van Horn, Turner, Cooper, & Lieberman, 2003). Despite the risks associated with continued contact with their father, it is acknowledged that children's contact with a father-figure can be beneficial in situations where this relationship does not interfere with healing processes (Bancroft & Silverman, 2004).

Women's perspectives

In considering the prospect of abusive men's involvement in the children's lives post-separation, battered women's perspectives need to be considered, particularly given the challenges women face in their role as mother (Lapierre, 2010; Letourneau et al., 2007). Post separation, battered women are often ambivalent about the role of the batterer in their children's lives. Some studies have found that battered mothers often desire the involvement of fathers in their children's lives (DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Tubbs & Williams, 2007), describing him as a 'good father' (Bancroft et al., 2012; Holden & Ritchie, 1991). An assumption that children's fathers *need* to have contact with their children has been found to guide battered mothers' decisions to facilitate father-child relationships post-separation. As part of this, battered women do not believe they have the right to disrupt the father-child relationship and that violence would be less likely to occur if they allow contact (Tubbs & Williams, 2007).

However, most often, battered women are concerned about being revictimised and unable to assert their parenting rights as a result of children's contact with their father. Furthermore, children may return from visitation with negative attitudes and externalising behaviours due to the abusive tactics children are exposed to whilst in their father's care (Tubbs & Williams, 2007). Battered women often experience fear for both their own safety and that of the children when there is shared day-to-day care arrangements (Shalansky et al., 1999). The perception that fathers ought to remain in their child's life may prevent women from leaving the violent

partner (Groves, Horn, & Lieberman, 2007). On the other hand, concerns about the impact of violence on their children often precipitates women's decision to separate and seek protection from the abuser (Robertson et al., 2007).

There is limited research centred on understanding the complexities of the mothering role and women's perspectives in situations where mothering may be undermined by way of children's contact with their father. Battered women may experience conflict between the pressure to support father-child relationships and the need to restrict father's involvement with children as a safety measure. However, battered mothers have been found to support the need for more programming focussed on fathering for men who batter (Peled, 2000), as discussed below.

The batterer's perceptions of fathering

There is little research that considers batterers' views on their role as father and healing processes that need to take place post-separation; however, what does exist reveals contention and ambivalence in the construction of fatherhood. Fox, Sayers, and Bruce (2001), in their qualitative study on the fathering of eight men attending a batterer intervention programme, revealed a complex understanding of the role of men as fathers. These men expressed guilt, shame, remorse and responsibility for the harm they had caused their family due to shortcomings in their fathering roles. 'Responsibility' was considered characteristic of the 'good father' image and important in accepting accountability for their actions. As part of responsibility and the reconstruction of being a father, reparation within the parenting relationship was considered paramount.

Perel and Peled (2008), conducted fourteen interviews with Israeli men who had been violent towards their partners, and found there to be a number of processes that shape their fathering. These men viewed the role as father as paramount and strived to attain the 'good father' image. However, a complex picture was found to emerge where "[f]athering-

sustaining forces compete with obstructing ones” (p. 464). A number of forces constricted the men’s fathering ability, including the quality and quantity of their involvement in their children’s lives. This included some men’s limiting of the father role to that of ‘the provider’ who is not emotionally available to the children and who predominately uses control and authority in their interactions with children. Furthermore, the men’s childhood experiences of their father modelling negative parenting practices were found to influence their own use of these practices. Despite these forces limiting their involvement in the children’s lives, men yearned for a close and warm relationship with their children.

In a study of batterers’ perceptions of fathering, many men expressed that they have a right to maintain contact with their children; however, none of the men acknowledged that children may be fearful of them and require time away from them to heal. Furthermore, these fathers suggested that their violence and abuse should not be taken into consideration when decisions are made for contact arrangements (Bent-Goodley & Williams, 2007). Although the literature on the fathering of violent men centres predominately on their perceived ‘rights’ to remain in contact with their children as a form of manipulation or a way to maintain control of the women in their lives (Bancroft et al., 2012), the literature on these men’s experiences of fathering provides a deeper understanding of the importance of children in their lives and the desire to rebuild their relationship with them as part of a healing process.

Children’s perspectives

Children’s views and feelings towards their fathers vary; however, they are most often confused and ambivalent with both positive and negative feelings (Groves et al., 2007; Peled, 2000). Children often report feeling fear, worry and terror in their relationships with their father, holding much resentment towards him; however, children may also express love and be attached to their fathers (Humphreys & Houghton, 2008; Peled, 2000). Peled (2000) suggests that children view their fathers as either the ‘good, loved father’ or the ‘bad, abusive father’. Children have been found to

often want continued contact with their father (Bancroft et al., 2012). However, children's views need to be assessed within the context of violence (Jaffe et al., 2003). An important element in assessing the bond between parent and child during Care of Children proceedings is the role of traumatic bonding. In relationships which involve irregular patterns of fear and love, the child's bond with their father may appear to be healthy and strong. However, in cases of traumatic bonding, the abuser is the same person who provides relief from the traumatic experiences, or positive regard, comfort and remorse, in the aftermath of violence (Bancroft et al., 2012; Dutton, 1995). Therefore, children may in fact form an unhealthy attachment and bond with their father, which is consistent with their ambivalence within the relationship. Children who are exposed to domestic violence, rather than a direct victim of abuse, may wish to identify with the batterer, due to his perceived power and control, and align themselves with him for protection (Peled, 2000). This may have significantly negative effects on the mother-child relationship, as children segregate themselves from her, to prevent future harm to themselves (Bancroft & Silverman, 2004; Peled, 1998)

Facilitating recovery

There are a number of factors which facilitate a healing environment for children. Creating a sense of safety for the child is important for children who have previously lived in a context of fear (Bancroft et al., 2012). Children need structure, limits and predictability which are often not provided for a child who lives with domestic violence based on the batterer's parenting (Holden & Ritchie, 1991) and the mother's authority being undermined (Hughes & Marshall, 1995). Children require a strong bond with the non-abusing, nurturing parent with research showing that the quality of the child's relationship with their mother is the best predictor of their ability to recover, and is an important contributor to their resilience (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998; Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Children must not be burdened with the responsibility of taking care of other adults (Bancroft et al., 2012); any contact that children

have with the battering parent must not interfere with their healing needs. These factors ought to be considered in arranging for the day-to-day care or contact with children where there is a batterer as parent. Importantly, Scott (2012) highlight that batterers are often connected to and continue to have contact with their children following domestic violence. When this factor is not addressed, women as mothers to the children ultimately bear the responsibility for their children's safety and in particular, the monitoring of the men's parenting.

Supporting the victims

Battered women's programmes and other victim organisations can contribute to the child's wellbeing and recovery by furthering the safety of the mother (Whitney & Davis, 1999). Interventions that focus on the mother's strengths and experiences, recovering from the effects of abuse, healing the mothering-child relationship and helping children to heal from the abuse, are considered paramount in facilitating that recovery (Levendosky et al., 2000; Radford & Hester, 2001). As has been outlined, children's resilience and well-being in the context of domestic violence are dependent on the quality of the bond they have with the non-abusing parent, most commonly their mother. Therefore it is important that intervention restores and supports the mother-child relationship (Murphy et al., 2013b).

Children whose parents separate may experience long-term impacts on their wellbeing and this is compounded when a child has also been exposed to domestic violence or is a direct victim of abuse. Therefore, these children are dually traumatised and this is important when considering their ability to heal from the trauma associated with these experiences. Children's ability to heal is dependent on understanding the sources of that trauma and being immersed in an environment that is conducive to emotional recovery (Bancroft et al., 2012). Children's groups are available to help children heal and process their feelings, pain and guilt within their mother and father relationships (Graham-Bermann & Hughes, 2003; Peled & Edleson, 1992). Programmes that offer psycho-therapeutic interventions

for children exposed to domestic violence, such as the Child Witness to Violence Project (CWVP) and the Child Trauma Research project (CTRP), provide children with a safe context to ameliorate the symptoms of trauma (Groves et al., 2007), re-establish their respect for their mother and believe that there is a social environment that supports their relationship with her (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Within these programmes, mothers are often involved; however, some researchers advocate for involving the father in children's treatment and process of healing, when this does not place children or women at risk and where the mother supports this involvement (Groves et al., 2007; Peled, 2000). Conversely, batterers have been found to oppose their children's participation in these programmes, interfering directly with their children's recovery (Peled, 2000). Although services are needed to support recovery for victims of domestic violence, it is also important to consider the current interventions available to men who batter and how best to facilitate these.

Interventions for men who batter

The effectiveness of various interventions and ways to coordinate both court and community system responses, remains an issue of debate (Gondolf, 1997). Evaluations of the effectiveness of stopping violence programmes for men have shown varied results; however, two reviews report that 50%-80% of men are free of violence six months after completing treatment (Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004; Feder & Wilson, 2005). While programmes for men are successful in reducing physical violence, their effectiveness in reducing the use of psychological violence, appear to be limited (Gondolf, 2004; Robertson, 1999). Some methodological factors to consider when reviewing evaluation findings include different definitions of what is considered to be successful change, reliance on self-report and reconviction data, and high dropout rates when these men inevitably represent the highest risk participants (Babcock et al., 2004).

Intervention programmes have been found to have unintended consequences for women and children, particularly in terms of their role in men's continued use of violence (Scott & Crooks, 2007). For instance, men may learn new abusive tactics through their association with other abusive males in the programme, and communication and assertiveness skills may be used to maintain power and control in the relationship (Furness, 1994; Robertson, 1999; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). Attending the programme alone may also serve as a means to control women. For instance, men may contrast their own violence to that of other men; thereby minimising their abuse as being less severe (Busch et al., 1992). The mere fact that the batterer attends the programme may also be used to bargain their way back into the relationship, claiming that they have changed (Furness, 1994). Despite this, judges may view the completion of a stopping violence programme as evidence that men are ready to have the day-to-day care or unsupervised contact with children (Robertson, 1999).

Fathering interventions

There has been a significant gap in research focussed on intervention with abusive men as fathers and how to support their parenting in the aftermath of violence. Batterers' intervention programmes predominately focus on men's relationships with women and the violence within those relationships, rather than on the batterer's role as father (Featherstone, Hooper, Scourfield, & Taylor, 2010). Many researchers highlight the need for fathering interventions for men who batter, to reduce the likelihood that a child's healing may be sabotaged, to enable children to continue to have a relationship with their father and to support women who both need to heal from violence and co-parent with the men (Jaffe & Crooks, 2007; Peled, 1998, 2000; Peled & Perel, 2007; Scott, 2012; Scott et al., 2007). Interventions for fathers who have battered further provides a model for promoting men's responsibility for their children, rather than holding women primarily responsible for their children's wellbeing and protection of those children (Scott et al., 2007; Strega et al., 2008).

Despite parenting interventions being in their infancy, there is some consensus among both researchers and practitioners as to the goals, content and facilitation of intervention for men as batterers. Internationally there are a number of pioneering parenting interventions for fathers who batter, such as the *Caring Dads: Helping Fathers Value Their Children* programme (Scott, Francis, Crooks, & Kelly, 2006). Scott (2012) identifies four common features of these programmes: focussing on men's desire to become good fathers and reflection on intergenerational patterns of violence, as a source of motivation to change; emphasising the importance of men ending violence towards the children's mothers, that is, men cannot be 'a lousy partner, but a good father'; ensuring that men are accountable for their past abuse; and addressing the men's use of harsh disciplinary practices. However, it is clear that some men will not be suited for parenting interventions, and some men may be too dangerous to continue involvement in their children's lives.

There is debate concerning how parenting programmes for men who batter relate to batterer intervention programmes, and the format and timing of these programmes. Some argue that the underlying attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of the batterers' pattern of abuse must be addressed first and foremost, before considering change as a parent (Bancroft et al., 2012; Peled & Perel, 2007; Scott et al., 2007). In particular, restricting access to parenting programmes for those men who have completed a batterer intervention programme is necessary for those who have been mandated to attend the programme (Scott, 2012). This view supports the notion that participation in parenting programmes for men who batter should be limited to those who have already completed or are concurrently completing a batterer intervention programme. Furthermore, Bancroft et al. (2012) state that improvement in the parenting of a batterer is inseparable from his progress in overcoming his abuse towards partners, as his problematic behaviours toward children spring primarily from the same source. However, others have questioned the limitations of this model when some men may be identified by other services, such as child protection

agencies, as perpetrating abuse against their intimate partners or children specifically, and therefore may benefit from attending a parenting programme for abusive men (Scott, 2012). Furthermore, this may mean there are lost opportunities for facilitating recovery within the father-child relationship, a factor that may add children's recovery also.

Scott (2012) recommends that decisions as to when men who are abusive in their intimate partner relationships and abuse or neglect their children, attend a parenting programme for men who batter, be made with regard to individual assessment of needs, recognising the heterogeneous nature of fathers who have battered. Recommendations for assessing men's readiness to address their parenting specifically and pursue healing within the father-child relationship have been proposed. These include, assessing the severity and nature of violence, considering the safety and well-being for the victims, and to addressing the family needs in priority order (Ver Steegh & Dalton, 2008). Furthermore, various criteria have been recommended for determining abusive men's readiness to pursue reparation and healing within the father-child relationship. Factors that are considered pertinent to these men becoming safe and responsible parents include batterers' ceasing to use abusive behaviours towards both women and children; modelling constructive behaviour and being a good role model to the children without disrespecting their mother; accepting consequences of their behaviour, including the potential rejection and loss of trust by their children; acknowledging the damage caused to the children; respecting the mother's parenting and authority; listening and validating their children's emotions in response to the negative experiences they have had; and recognising that change within the relationship takes time and must be on the children's terms. This reparative framework advocates that some fathers can heal relationships with children in a context of intervention, accountability, safety and healing (Arian & Davis, 2007; Bancroft et al., 2012).

As is the case with stopping violence programmes that address men's abusive behaviours in their intimate partner relationships, there may be

unintended consequences for men's involvement in parenting programmes. For instance, men may use their participation in fathering programmes as evidence in court proceedings for an increased ability to care for the children. Furthermore, these programmes may suggest that fathers have a 'right' to access their children and that this is a factor which takes precedence over their violence against the children's mother (Scott, 2012). However, the unintended consequences associated with batterers' attending standard parenting programme may be greater, as these fail to address the batterer's abusive behaviour and may lead to reframing their violent behaviour as deficient parenting (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Motivation to change

Research has shown a number of factors that are attributable to changes in batterers' violent behaviours, including external motivation relating to children. Fox et al. (2001) found that batterers used the relationship they had with their children and the perceived role as father as "a source of re-entry into the moral community" (p. 137). Some men experience a pivotal moment of self-confrontation, where the significance of their violent behaviour is recognised in the context of the impact on both women and children. The motivation to become a 'good father' has been found to be a significant factor in motivating change and this is reinforced by men's own experiences of being fathered by violent men (Fox et al., 2001; Perel & Peled, 2008). Scott (2012) emphasises that men's motivation to be a 'good father' provides essential opportunities for these men developing a motivation to change.

However, research shows that motivation to change may stem from many factors. For instance, a partner threatening to leave the relationship or in fact doing so may cause the batterer to re-evaluate behaviour and beliefs that support the use of violence (Pence & Paymar, 1993b; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). Behaviour changes in abusive men may also be associated with the consequences for violent behaviour imposed by wider systems, including penalties for non-compliance of orders (Bancroft, 2003; Gondolf, 1997)

Rationale for present research

Based on the literature reviewed, the focus of this research stems from an imperative to better understand parenting in the context of domestic violence. There is limited literature addressing the characteristics of batterers' parenting and even fewer studies focussed on understanding the batterer's experience of fathering and the meaning attributed to the fathering role. Similarly, little attention has been given to mothering within the context of domestic violence; the mothering practices and experiences of women as victims of IPV requires further in-depth understanding. Moreover, perceptions on parenting in the context of violence cannot be separated from understanding the impact of violence on children and women, they are intricately interwoven.

The aim of this research was to explore parenting within the context of domestic violence. There were four main research objectives which formed the focus of the study:

1. What are the perceptions of women, as victims of domestic violence, of the impact of violence on children, on their role as mother and on the men's role as father/parent?
2. What are the perceptions of men, who are attending HAIP, of the impact of violence on children, on the mother of those children, and on their role as father/parent?
3. To what extent is the programme curriculum at HAIP effective at positively changing the attitudes, perceptions and behaviour of men, with regard to their role as parent and the effects domestic violence has on children and the mothers of those children?
4. To what extent do children play a role in the motivation of men who are perpetrators of domestic violence, to participate in and/or complete the programme?

In addressing these objectives, it is understood that perceptions and beliefs regarding recovery processes or needs in healing from violence, may

surface. Finally, there will be the opportunity to reflect upon aspects of the men's stopping violence programme at HAIP, although this research is not intended to evaluate HAIP.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter provides a detailed outline of the methods used for the research. Qualitative methods were utilised for data collection and analysis, to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences, through focus group interviews with the women and semi-structured interviews with the men. Firstly, the process of consulting with key stakeholders will be addressed. Following this, the advantages of using qualitative research methods are outlined. The initial planning in terms of research design, recruitment, description of participants, and the interview and follow-up procedures will then be described for the focus group interviews and semi-structured interviews, respectively. This is followed by an outline of ethical considerations and finally, a description and justification of the method used for data analysis

Consultation with key stakeholders

The first stage in preliminary planning for the research consisted of consulting with key stakeholders and forming relationships, in order to determine research interests deemed important to the organisation and to gain organisational support. Initially this process involved being introduced to the organisation through my supervisor, Neville Robertson. At this stage I met with Roma Balzer (founding member) and Programme Coordinators (for Māori and tauwi men's and women's programmes) to discuss my research interests. During this time, the multiple discussions had with staff and the Trust Board, and my attendance at the National Network of Stopping Violence Regional Hui held at HAIP, enabled the identification of key areas requiring further research and where gaps and priorities lie. I observed the functioning of the organisation, including the tauwi women's and men's group programmes. These observations were invaluable in gaining insight into the facilitation of the curriculum, the processes that take place and the underlying philosophy that underpins the organisation.

The Trust Board received the research proposal, including participant information sheets, consent forms and the interview guides. The research proposal was formally accepted by the Trust Board, as evidenced by their acceptance letter (see Appendix A).

Qualitative research methods

Qualitative methods, both semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, were selected for the purpose of data collection, to capture the subjective experience of participants and reveal the way social realities are constructed. This provided me with the means to examine a specific topic through rich data collection, examine personal experiences and perspectives and explore the complex meaning that participants attribute to phenomena, using a small sample of participants (Patton, 2002). Therefore, this aligned with the purpose of this research in that the experiences and perspectives of women, as victims of domestic violence, and men, as perpetrators of domestic violence, were examined, allowing for complex exploration of the topic area. Qualitative methods are useful for obtaining information where little is known, as is the case with the current research, including our limited understanding of women's and men's perceptions of domestic violence in the context of parenting. Furthermore, participants may be selected purposefully within qualitative methods, as this generates useful information for the topic of inquiry. Although it is recognised that the participant sample does not represent the whole population, qualitative research seeks to include a range of participants within a population group to provide variation in perspectives (Patton, 2002). The participants in this research reflected a range of demographic variables, including age, gender and ethnicity.

Focus group interviews

Planning

Through the use of open-ended topics and group interaction, focus groups seek to examine the subjective experience of individuals who have

shared similar experiences. This allows for a flexible approach where participants are able to discuss issues or topics of importance to them, relating to a specific research area of interest (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests that focus groups provide a supportive, safe environment when discussing sensitive topics, if participants share similar experiences. Therefore, in terms of this research, I considered focus groups an appropriate method, recognising that women who have been victimised through domestic violence may be vulnerable. It was important that victims come to no further harm as a result of their participation. Furthermore, focus groups allow for an in-depth understanding of the social context and social fabric of the population group, where participants are able to contribute their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton, 2002) and social processes are able to be viewed in action (Savin-Bagen & Major, 2013). As part of this approach to data collection, I considered it important to maintain the current framework used by HAIP's women's group programmes and therefore, two focus groups were appropriate; tauwi and Māori.

An interview guide was developed prior to the data collection phase to provide a flexible format for addressing topics of interest (see Appendix E). The guide was intended to provide some focus in terms of addressing the research objectives. However, I had anticipated that further information would be elicited based on the conversation held within the group and through the use of prompts. There were three main components, as outlined in the interview guide:

The first component focussed on the impact of violence on children. This included understandings of what has happened to the children, how violence affected the women's ability to be a mother and what the (ex)partners were like as a parent/father. Some key questions which were used as prompts were:

- What did the children see/ experience?
- What about the children's behaviour?
- What was it like trying to be a mother?

- What was he like as a parent?

The second component focussed on understanding the role of the (ex)partner as a parent/father to the children now. Some key questions which were used as prompts were:

- How has his behaviour changed?
- Parenting ability?
- Access arrangements?

The third component provided an opportunity for further reflection or additional information.

Recruitment

The participants were recruited through the women's group programmes, their affiliation with the programme or their contact with the Women Advocates at HAIP.

The first stage of recruitment involved introducing myself and the research to women attending group programmes, both Māori and tauwiwi, and providing a forum for questions to be answered with regard to the research. Programme Coordinators, Facilitators and Women Advocates also introduced the research and distributed information sheets to those interested in participating (see Appendix B). The information sheet explained the research, introduced me as researcher, outlined the research process, explained participant rights, provided contact information, should participants require further information, and outlined the ethics committee that had approved the research (the School of Psychology Ethics Committee, at the University of Waikato). At this time, I informed potential participants of the criteria for eligibility to participate in this research: participants were required to be: *Women who have children, who resided with one of the parties during the abusive relationship. Children may be biological or the participant may be the parent/caregiver of the children.* This does not suggest that children had to be *physically* present during, and

witnesses to the violence (although this may be the case) but rather, that the children were living within the atmosphere created by the abusive relationship. Potential participants, if interested, were advised to contact the office at HAIP or inform the Programme Coordinator, Facilitator or Women's Advocate.

Once potential participants had expressed their interest in being involved in the research, the contact details for each (name and telephone number) were given to me by HAIP staff. At this point, I made telephone contact with each participant and gave them the opportunity to receive further information. I confirmed eligibility, based on the criteria above, and ascertained the women's availability for attending a focus group. When the groups of women, both tauwiwi and Māori, had been finalised, I made telephone contact with each participant to confirm the focus group date and time, inform them that there would be a shared lunch provided and further opportunity for discussion about the research, and that consent forms would be signed on an individual basis prior to the focus group commencing. All participants were aware that the focus groups would take place at HAIP in the usual group programme rooms.

Description of participant group

A total of ten women participated in one of two focus groups. The following table outlines the demographic information accessed through the HAIP database, via the Women's Programme Coordinators, regarding age, ethnicity, referral source and whether their (ex)partner had (at any time) attended a programme at HAIP. The participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Programme Group	Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Referral source	(Ex)partner attended programme
<i>Tauīwi women's group</i>	Katherine	42	Pākehā	Self-referral	No
	Sara	29	Pākehā	Self-referral	Yes
	Helen	39	Pākehā	Self-referral	No
	Belinda	23	Pākehā	Self-referral	Yes
	Jessica	24	Māori	Family Court	No
	Tanya	51	Māori	Family Court	Yes
<i>Māori women's group</i>	Deborah	29	Māori	Refuge	Yes
	Lucy	34	Māori	Refuge	No
	Sue	41	Māori	The Nest	No
	Michelle	44	Pākehā	Family Court	Yes

Table 1: Demographic description of female participant group

In summary, the female participants were aged between 23- 51 years, with five identifying as Pākehā and five as Māori. Four women were self-referred, two were referred through Women's Refuge, one through The Nest and three through the Family Court; identifying them as applicants of a protection order. Five women had (ex)partners who had attended the men's programme at HAIP (at any time) and five women did not have (ex)partners associated with HAIP. As is evident, some women who identified as Māori attended the tauīwi women's focus group and one woman who identified as Pākehā attended the Māori women's focus group. This reflects HAIP's policy in that women are given the right to choose which group they attend; whereas men are mandated to attend the men's programme, if they are Māori. However, prior to the Māori women's focus group commencing, permission was sought from participants regarding the possibility of an additional non-Māori joining the group.

Interviews

Prior to each focus group (Māori and tauwiwi) I shared lunch with the women. Over lunch we were able to introduce ourselves to one another. It was important to build rapport with the participants and address any queries or concerns. The female participants met with me individually during this time to receive and discuss the consent form outlining their rights as well as being given a second information sheet. I explained the process and reasons for audio-recording the research via dictaphone; namely, that this allowed for the focus group to be transcribed verbatim and ensure that stories and experiences were recorded accurately. When the participant was content with the research process, the consent form was signed (see Appendix C).

The women's focus groups (Māori and tauwiwi) were conducted in the room where the women's programmes are held, as this potentially enabled the women to feel safe and at ease with their surroundings. The tauwiwi women's Programme Coordinator and the Māori women's Programme Coordinator, each attended their respective focus group to provide support for the women both during the session, if they became distressed, and afterwards on a long-term basis. However, they did not directly contribute to the focus group discussion.

The usual group format was used to begin the session. For instance there was a Karakia for the Māori women's focus group. At this stage, I revised the information sheet, discussed any further questions and outlined participants' rights. Furthermore, I provided context in terms of the purpose of the focus group and my involvement as both a researcher and an advocate for those who are victims of violence. Additionally, I summarised the protocols for victim safety (Appendix D). The topics of interest were written on a white board before the focus group commenced, as reflected in the interview guide (see the focus group guide for detail; Appendix E) and each topic was described to the participants. However, this was only a broad guide and participants were informed that each component could be addressed in any order based on the conversation held within the group.

Furthermore, I explained that there might be substantial overlap between each component. The process was flexible in nature and the discussion evolved through participants' contributions, including stories and experiences that were considered relevant or important. I wanted the discussion to be as free and open-ended as possible, intervening only when necessary to ask a clarifying question or guide the discussion back on track. The focus groups were 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours in duration, including one break during each session.

At the end of the session, I gave the women an opportunity to ask questions or add additional information that had not been covered previously. Both I and the observing Programme Coordinators ensured that the women did not leave HAIP in a distressed state and understood that there was continued support available to them (see Appendix D for victim safety protocols).

Follow-up

The focus groups conversations were transcribed verbatim and a summary prepared. The women were offered the option to check the summary, which outlined the main areas discussed during the focus group, and to receive an overall summary of the research findings, as indicated on the consent form (Appendix C). I supplied the focus group summaries, an accompanying letter (see Appendix F) and a copy of the signed consent form, to the corresponding Programme Coordinator (in a sealed envelope), who organised for participants to receive this through group programme or collection from HAIP. The letter stated that they were able to contact me, within two weeks of receiving the letter, to discuss their personal contribution. If there was no correspondence made within this time-frame, the summary would be considered correct. Each of the women received a focus group summary and there were no requests for changes to be made. An overall summary of the research findings will be provided for participants via HAIP upon completion of the study.

Semi-structured interviews

Planning

Semi-structured interviews are a flexible approach to gathering information using open-ended questions to introduce the topics to be explored, without restricting participants' discussion of other areas deemed to be important. Face-to-face interviews provide the participant with a safe and trusting environment, where topics that are distressing or sensitive may be discussed (Patton, 2002). The researcher is able to observe the participant during the interview to ascertain the impact of this process on participants and adjust the structure of the interview accordingly (Savin-Bagen & Major, 2013).

I had prepared an interview guide (see Appendix E) which allowed me and the participant to interact in a conversational style. While it outlined predetermined topic areas, it allowed for participants' individual experiences to emerge (Savin-Bagen & Major, 2013). One limitation associated with using a highly structured interview guide is that issues salient to the participant may not be canvassed. Patton (2002) also suggests that the flexibility inherent in this approach may lead to the researcher obtaining substantially different information from each participant, due to the researcher asking different questions within each interview. However, throughout the interviews I employed a balanced, conversational approach where the interview guide structured the topics that were addressed and formed the basis of questions used in each interview. Any salient information that arose was explored with the participant during the interview. The following seven components represent the key areas covered in each interview guide:

1. How the participant came to be involved with HAIP. This included understanding the relationships within participants' family/whānau and whether children were biological or non-biological. The behaviour that led to participants either being court mandated to attend HAIP or self-referred was discussed.

2. The impact of domestic violence on children, their (ex) partner/ mother to the children and on the ability to be a parent or father
3. Current relationships with their children, including their parenting ability now, their role as father and the role of access arrangements within the context of parenting.
4. The role of children in motivation to complete or participate in the programme.
5. Whether any changes in parenting are attributable to the programme
6. Understandings of traditional child-rearing practices (for Māori programme participants), including the role of whānau in parenting.
7. Any additional information or further reflection.

Recruitment

The male participants were recruited through the tauwiwi men's programmes and the Māori men's programmes at HAIP. The Programme Coordinators and facilitators introduced the research in regular programme sessions and distributed information sheets to all group members. These sheets explained the research, introduced me as researcher, outlined the research process, explained participant rights, provided contact information, should participants require further information, and mentioned the ethics committee that had approved the research (see Appendix B).

At the time of receiving information about the research and/or the information sheet, the programme facilitators informed potential participants of the research criteria to be met for eligibility to participate in this research. Participants were required to be: *Men who have children, who resided with one of the parties during the abusive relationship. Children may be biological or the participant may be the parent/caregiver of the children.* As outlined above, this does not suggest that children had to be *physically* present during the violence. The men were advised to contact the office at

HAIP or inform the Programme Coordinator or Facilitator if they were interested in volunteering for the study.

The contact details (name and phone number) of potential participants were given to me via HAIP. I telephoned each participant and gave them the opportunity to receive further information about the study. Eligibility for participation in the study was confirmed and the number of weeks of programme completed was ascertained in order to select the appropriate week for interviews to be scheduled. An interview date and time was established for each participant, based on their usual allocated group programme time. However, some men expressed their desire not to miss any of the programme content: in these instances, I liaised with Programme Coordinators and the participant to ascertain the most appropriate time for an interview. It was important that the safety of the victims, who attend HAIP, were considered when scheduling the men's interviews. All participants were informed that the interviews would take place at HAIP in a designated room and that consent forms would be discussed and signed prior to the interview. I contacted participants a week prior to their interview, via telephone or through their contact with the Programme Coordinator, to remind them of the interview time and date and answer any further questions. The recruitment of participants was ended when it was established that data saturation had occurred and no new information was being generated.

Description of participant group

A total of nine men were interviewed. The following table outlines the demographic information accessed through the HAIP database, via Programme Coordinators, regarding age, ethnicity, referral source and whether their (ex)partner had (at any time) attended a programme at HAIP. The participants have been given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Programme Group	Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Referral source	(Ex)partner attended programme
<i>Tauwi men</i>	Christopher	29	Pākehā	Self-referral	No
	Billy	24	Samoan	Probation	Yes
	Sam	42	Pākehā	Self-referral	No
	Shaun	23	Pākehā	Probation	No
	Mark	38	Pākehā	Family Court	No
	John	45	Pākehā	Probation	No
<i>Māori men</i>	Geoff	50	Māori	Self- referral	No
	Derek	34	Māori	Family Court	No
	Patrick	31	Māori	Probation	No

Table 2: Demographic description of male participant group

In summary, the male participants were aged between 23- 50 years. Five identified as Pākehā, three as Māori and one as Samoan. Three men were self-referred, four men were referred through Probation Services and two men were referred through the Family Court. Only one of the men had an (ex)partner who had attended the women’s programme at HAIP. However; all of the men’s (ex)partners would have had contact with the Women Advocates at HAIP, as per HAIP’s policy.

Interviews

The men’s interviews (Māori and tauwi) were conducted in a designated room at HAIP. The respective Programme Coordinators facilitated introductions. The tauwi men attended the interview alone, whereas a Māori representative associated with HAIP, attended the Māori men’s interviews to support these men and allow for a more comfortable atmosphere when relating to a non-Māori researcher. However, the role of the Māori staff member was passive, in that they did not contribute to the

discussion. The interviews began with an introduction, where I focussed on developing rapport with the participant and discussed any concerns or questions that he had. The participants discussed the consent form with me and received a second information sheet. I explained the process and reasons for audio-recording the research via dictaphone; namely, that this allowed for the interview to be transcribed verbatim and ensure that stories and experiences were recorded accurately. When the participant was content with the research process, the consent form was signed (see Appendix C).

At the beginning of the interview, the men were asked whether there was a particular way they would prefer to begin the process, for instance Karakia. Although the interview guide provided the framework for participants' perspectives within each topic area, it was important that this research address changes in participants' attitudes, perceptions and beliefs attributable to the programme. Therefore, I informed participants that they would be asked to reflect on this throughout the interview. The interview process was flexible, where participants discussed their experiences and I used prompts to elicit further information if a topic was of interest and required more in-depth understanding. Open-ended questions were predominately used throughout the interview, enabling participants to respond with their unique perspective and relevant experiences. However, closed questions were used to clarify particular points, such as summarising information back to the participant and establishing background information. The interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 20 minutes duration. At the end of the interview session, the men were given the opportunity to add additional information not previously covered. The session was closed appropriately, as directed by the participant.

Follow-up

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Participants were asked if they would like to check their interview transcript and to receive an overall summary of the research findings, as indicated on the consent form

(Appendix C). The transcript, an accompanying letter (see Appendix F) and a copy of the signed consent form were given to the Programme Coordinators (in a sealed envelope), who passed them onto the participants either through the group programme or by post (with consent). The letter stated that I could be contacted within two weeks of receiving the letter, if any information needed to be added to, corrected or erased. Otherwise, the information would be deemed correct. Eight of the men requested their transcripts; however, there were no requests for changes to be made. Furthermore, all participants received a copy of their consent form. An overall summary of the research findings will be provided for participants via HAIP upon completion of the study.

Ethical considerations

A research proposal and ethical application was approved by the University of Waikato Psychology Research and Ethics Committee. The research proposal was also approved by the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (see Appendix A). Ethical considerations which were addressed in the initial stages of planning research were:

1. Informed consent. Participants were informed of the nature of the study, their rights and limits to confidentiality, as outlined in the information sheet that all potentially interested participants received (Appendix B). Prior to the interview or focus group, each participant was individually given the time to discuss the research, encouraged to ask questions and informed that there would be no repercussions should they refuse to participate and likewise, that participation in the research would not affect their involvement in the programme. These factors were discussed before participants signed the consent form which restated their rights (Appendix C). It was important at this stage to fully discuss the limitations of confidentiality, given the sensitivity of the research topic and the safety of women and children being paramount. Participants were informed that all information would be kept confidential unless there was evidence of risk of harm to self or others. Protocols for victim safety were

developed for this purpose and shared with both HAIP staff and participants prior to the interview or focus group (Appendix D).

2. Protection of participants' privacy and identity. Participants who had (ex)partners who attended HAIP (either men's or women's programmes) were not informed of their (ex)partner's participation in this research. In terms of the focus groups, participants were informed that the information shared ought to be kept private to those who attend the group. However, given the nature of group discussion and disclosure, it was made clear that privacy could not be guaranteed. The anonymity of participants was protected by removing potentially identifiable information from interview or focus group transcripts and by assigning each participant a pseudonym for presenting research findings.

3. Safety and welfare of participants is paramount. It was imperative that research participants were comfortable throughout the research process, and that the victims and their children came to no further risk of harm as a result of participation. It was acknowledged that participants reflecting on and discussing violence within their lives may be a difficult and emotional experience, particularly for the women. Therefore, to ensure that participants were supported, contact with the women was made in a safe environment (HAIP) or via telephone at a time that suited them, the women were monitored by the Women Advocates and Women's Programme Coordinators, and protocols were developed to support women should there be distress at any point during the focus group (Appendix D). The Programme Coordinators and Facilitators continued to provide support to participants after the focus group.

4. Culturally appropriate methods. With respect to Māori participants, support was provided by a Māori representative/advisor situated at HAIP. It was important that this research sought to respect wider whānau, hapu and iwi, and that research processes were deemed culturally appropriate.

5. Access to research findings. Participants were offered the opportunity to view the transcript of their interview (for the men) or the focus group summary (for the women) and discuss their contribution to the research. Furthermore, participants were offered a summary of the overall research findings.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inductive analysis formed the basis of the process, where patterns and themes emerged during the data analysis, rather than the researcher coding data based on pre-determined categories or theoretical interest in the research (Patton, 2002). Thematic analysis is described as a process to transform qualitative information into qualitative data sets (Boyatzis, 1998) and identify patterned responses within the data which capture something of importance in relation to the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). There were several phases of thematic analysis used in analysing data, as outlined in Braun and Clarke (2006):

- 1.** The interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim and I read and re-read each transcript, whilst noting initial ideas and potential coding schemes in the margin. This process ensured that I was familiar with the data and acquired an in-depth understanding of the content.
- 2.** Once I had become immersed in the data, each line or section of text was examined for interesting or prominent ideas (codes). A colour-coding system was generated for each code, using different coloured pens to highlight which extracts of text belonged to each code. At the end of the coding process, all data relevant to each code was collated.
- 3.** The codes were sorted into potential themes using a visual representation, a thematic map, to assist in identifying relationships

between codes, themes and subthemes. All relevant extracts for each theme were collated.

4. The process of reviewing and refining themes for each data set involved two levels: reviewing the collated extracts for each theme to determine whether it forms a coherent pattern and considering the individual themes in relation to the data set as a whole. Therefore, throughout this process some themes were found to have insufficient data to support them and other themes were merged or separated into subthemes. Furthermore, each data set and transcript was read to determine whether similar themes had emerged. This provided consistency in that the themes describe significant proportions of the data set.

5. The final stage involved producing clear definitions for each theme and inherent subthemes, generating names for each theme and overall, finalising the thematic maps. At this point I considered the importance of each theme, individually and in relation to others (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Furthermore, narrative analysis was used to contextualise the themes which emerged within the data sets. This encompassed considering each participant's individual 'story' or experiences in relation to the themes, to maintain the narrative context and in-depth understanding

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The focus group interviews conducted with the women and the semi-structured interviews conducted with the men, yielded results within five domains: the impact of men's violence on women, including women's ability to be a mother; the impact of men's violence on children; the batterer as parent; children's needs in healing from violence; and changes in parenting attributable to the programme. These five domains represent the perceptions and experiences of participants in considering parenting in the context of domestic violence. Within each domain, the women's perspectives will be explored first, followed by the men's perspectives. However, it is emphasised that it is not the intention of this research to make direct comparisons between findings presented for the women and men, particularly as they are not each other's intimate partners. A number of core themes were evident within each domain and each theme will be elaborated upon in the preceding sections, including subthemes which were also identified to further explain the complexity inherent in each theme. Evidence for each theme will be provided, followed by a summary of the findings for each section. It is understood and acknowledged that the themes are represented as mutually exclusive within each domain; however, the overall findings are intricately interwoven in understanding parenting in the context of domestic violence and the implications of this for women, children and men who are perpetrators of violence.

Section 1: The impact of men's violence on women

This section centres on perceptions of the impact of men's violence on women. The participants discussed the impact of violence on women in the general sense and separately to, the impact on women's ability to be a mother. However, it is understood that there are significant overlaps, in that any negative impact on women may affect the mothering role and impact on children's wellbeing.

As understood by the women

The women discussed factors related to the way violence had impacted on them generally, as well as how violence impacted on their ability to be a mother to the children. In discussing these experiences, women were aware of the intertwined nature of violence, in that any negative impact on them would also have significant consequences for the children's wellbeing and may indirectly interfere with mothering and the mother-child relationship.

Emotional impact

The impact of violence on women's emotional wellbeing was a prominent theme to emerge in women's reflections on the implications of violence in their lives. In reflecting on the significance and severity of the emotional impact of violence, women described feelings of worthlessness. Feeling "worthless" had implications for women's sense of identity, in that valued aspects of themselves had been taken away from them throughout the abusive relationship. A sense of hopelessness led to further disempowerment as women struggled with losing their independence, confidence and the strength to carry on.

Michelle: I was embarrassed, angry, humiliated, worthless and felt I couldn't go back, in the sense of being a normal person again...he left us all broken, me and my boys were all broken, hurt, trying to pick up the pieces.

A number of women discussed feelings of worthlessness relating to past thoughts of harming themselves and suicidal ideation. This highlights the significant mental health consequences as a result of on-going abuse. Concerns about children were interwoven with their experiences of suicidality. One woman described the onset of her suicidal ideation being her experience of giving a child away in order to protect them from the violent atmosphere created by her partner.

Lucy: I verbalised that I wanted to kill myself and how I was going to...I had it to that point where I pictured that rope. I looked at it, I want to put that around my neck because of that man...The first baby that I gave up, that was the first time I thought I wanted to kill myself...I'll admit I had mental issues from then on. Mine was psychological, to the point that I wanted to die.

Children were also perceived as contributing to women's strength and determination to carry on, reflecting the importance of being a mother and the responsibility they held as a key care person for their children.

Deborah: But all I thought about was my boys. Because if I go, who's going to look after them? But that's what stopped me from hanging myself...

Sue spoke of continued feelings of worthlessness due to the psychological abuse by her children, who had learnt these tactics through on-going contact with their father:

Sue: He's made me feel worthless...they put me down to the point where I sometimes feel like I want to give up and just be on my own. But just in saying that it hurts.

The experience of worthlessness and associated mental health impacts were perceived as deriving from psychological abuse, in that these tactics contributed to the long-term and enduring negative consequences for mental health. Physical violence was considered to have a short-term impact; women were able to recover from this form of abuse more readily, knowing that the physical act of violence was temporary. However,

psychological abuse was on-going and difficult to process within a short period of time, having accumulating consequences for their wellbeing.

Michelle: The psychological side of it, it played a big part. The physical...that was easy to get a hiding because then he'd just go away. If I get a hiding then I know he's not going to hit me up about it again.

Lucy: The whole psychological abuse I've endured, the whole mental games stuff, that was worse than being physically abused I reckon...So I've cleared up here [points to head]. Up there was the worst...that suffered the most.

In talking about the emotional impact of violence, women expressed feelings of guilt and self-blame, particularly in the context of their relationship with their children. Although women did not intentionally place their children in situations of harm, most women expressed guilt for their children's exposure to domestic violence. The guilt experienced relates to women's construction of motherhood in that they perceive themselves to bear the responsibility for their children's wellbeing. It was evident that women believed that they had *chosen* to be in an abusive relationship, and therefore, had *allowed* their children to be a part of that abusive environment. There was little, if any, blame placed on the abusive men. Feelings of guilt occurred both during the abusive relationship and subsequent to the relationship ending. Guilt weighed heavily on the women as part of being in the abusive relationship and the impact this had on the wellbeing of children.

Sara: My oldest watched as it started off nice and escalated...so the impact became his self-worth and for me to sit there and watch it and to let it go down made me feel guilty. I was allowing it...

Some women spoke of the guilt associated with seeing the direct effect of children's exposure to violence. The women blamed themselves for detrimental outcomes for their children, once again, failing to identify the abuser's centrality in any impact of violence on the children's wellbeing.

Deborah: It scares me because my oldest boy is showing real bad signs of anger issues and it scares me that I'm so dumb that I allowed them to be put through that and I feel so guilty. I carry guilt every single day for how my kids are.

Central to the mothering role was concept of protecting one's children. However, this proved difficult for women as they lived in a violent relationship and dealt with the complexities of being both a direct victim of violence and a mother to their children. For example, in failing to protect her children, Tanya feels that she has failed as a mother and now needs to make amends the emotional turmoil the children have been through.

Tanya: When I got out of the relationship, I felt I owed them for all the shit they had been through and I've spent all this time trying to make it up to them because I didn't protect them when I should have.

Furthermore, the women acknowledged that at times during the relationship, they blamed themselves for 'choosing' to be in an abusive relationship and for the abuse they experienced. It was evident that men were able to use psychological violence to further victimise the women; making them believe they deserved to be abused. Lucy spoke of being made to feel as though she were to blame for becoming pregnant as a result of being raped by her then partner:

Lucy: That guilt stuff that was the meanest- guilt being placed upon me. 'It's your fault, you opened your legs, you look after your kid. It's your fault, for everything that happens to you. You deserve the hiding'...I got raped by my ex-partner that resulted in my child...I felt like it was my fault that happened to me. That was some freaky stuff.

When violence impacts on women, it inevitably impacts on their role as mother and therefore, the children. This is explained by one woman who discussed the guilt she carried as a result of being in an abusive relationship and the impact of this on the mother-child relationship:

Katherine: For me the impact of the violence on the children and the violence to affect me to be a mother, kind of run together...because as part of living in that with my children is that I felt the guilt of being in that...I carried that being in there with them and so I parented them differently as well. Even when the relationship was apart, I still carried the guilt...

There were four main themes to emerge in considering women's views of the way violence impacts on their ability to be a mother. The women discussed the insidious nature of control, implications of violence for the mother-child relationship, experiences of suppressed anger and consequences for self-identity, as key ideas associated with the undermining of the mother role.

Control

A prominent theme to emerge was the women's loss of control and the significant undermining of the ability to be a mother. The women's parenting decisions were often undermined through control tactics, where parenting practices to be used and significant decisions with regard to the children were often dictated by their partner. Women changed their parenting practices accordingly, showing the extent of their disempowerment. Not surprisingly, many women developed timid or indecisive parenting styles as a result.

Katherine: ...he was able to go, well actually this is your job and this is what you need to do and I would go, 'okay' and I would just do it. So he was more like a parent to all of us...He was the one that made the decisions and I just carried through with them.

Some women discussed the harsh and punitive disciplinary style they were ordered to use with the children, reflecting the men's preference for these methods within the father role. Despite these strategies being incompatible with their own beliefs and perceptions of the role of mother, following such orders often prevented an escalation in violence and minimised the batterer's irritability. The women's compliance helped to

protect their children by circumventing the batterer's need to discipline them, something which may have resulted in more harm.

Helen recounts the significance of control within her abusive relationship when she pretended to discipline the children 'his way', to avoid having to follow through on his instruction to physically discipline their children. However, despite taking extreme measures to protect the children, Helen explained that they were still emotionally affected or traumatised by the situation.

Helen: My thoughts go back to when my [daughter] was about 6 months and she was sitting at her high chair and I didn't know anything about parenting. He decided, because she wasn't eating her food, that we were going to start smacking our children and that was going to be the rule...I said 'I don't think I agree with that' and so he picked her up and he walloped her multiple times until her bottom was basically purple and he said 'that's what you are to do and if you don't do it properly, I will be doing that'. I remember at times I would take the children to the bedroom and smack them, but hit myself instead and my children probably saw me hitting myself and that probably was really bad...they would always cry so it would seem that I had disciplined them. That was just one isolated incident of not being allowed to explore how it is that I could parent...

Despite Helen's use of this clever strategy to protect the children and her deep level of care for them in doing so, she still blames herself for placing the children in an emotionally confusing situation.

Another form of control occurred both during the relationship and after separation, in situations where the men had joint-custody of the children. Significant decisions were made with regard to the children without seeking women's input or consent. One participant, Helen, spoke of her frustration and disempowerment when her child was uplifted from their current school and placed at different school, without her knowledge. This

shows the sense of entitlement that some men possess when determining what is best for the children. The women's parental authority is completely disregarded. Sue explained her experience of having her decision-making power limited:

Sue: I was just there to be seen, never to be heard. That was how it was for me with him most of the time.

Mother-child relationship

Another prominent theme to emerge centred on the impact of violence on the mother-child relationship, and therefore, the ability to be a mother. The majority of women spoke of the complex interplay between assuming the role of protector and mother, and the ways they were isolated from their children. It was clear that there was ambiguity inherent within the mother-child relationship, particularly given the tendency for children to collude with the abuser.

Mother as protector. Becoming a protector for their children was a role that women entered as a result of the violent relationship, further defining and limiting the ability to be a mother. The role of protector was perceived as a natural part of being a 'good' mother on the one hand, and as a hindrance to a good mother-child relationship on the other, given the increased level of protection made necessary. The women strove to protect their children from being exposed to the violence against them and from abuse that children incurred as direct and indirect victims. There were a number of ways that children were protected from experiencing violence. For some women it involved comforting their children during violent acts the children directly witnessed, pretending that they were not affected by the abuse at the time.

Jessica: I remember a couple of the first times...the pushing around and stuff started, [I was] choked and held up against the wall, my kids are standing there staring. I'm trying to smile and laugh and say 'it's alright, mummy's alright', aggravating him more but trying to let them know it's okay, it's alright. But it wasn't.

Two women paid the ultimate price in order to protect their children from violence; losing contact with their children. Lucy spoke of her experience of giving her child to other family members to raise, having witnessed her ex-partner physically abuse their child. This is an example of battered women staying with the abuser and yet protecting their children.

Lucy: And she was the first child I gave away...to protect her from my husband. I saw him shaking her and she was only 6 months old. She could have brain damage from that, I don't know. But the fact that I saw him do that...I ripped her out of his arms and I punched his face. 'Don't you ever touch my fucken child ever again'. And I went to his brother and his sister-in-law and I said 'you need to take this baby off me, please, please take her', and they asked me 'why, why give this baby up, she's your baby...'. 'Because your brother just shook the shit out of her'.

For Sue, protecting some of her children meant having to sacrifice her relationship with the other children, as her ex-partner prevented her from leaving with their joint children.

Sue: When my son came to be that morning and said to me...'Mum, you need to make a decision, or I'm not coming back'. I told him, I said 'son it's not easy because he won't give me the kids'...I still walked away...I left my babies with him. I took my two big boys with me. I walked into this relationship with my two boys and I walked out of it without their brothers...But it broke me, to leave my babies, knowing what he did to me.

The role of protector was not isolated to experiences at the time of the violent relationship, but a survival strategy that women continued to use post-separation. Women continued to be a protector for children whose father's had access, particularly in terms of monitoring any abuse or neglect that occurred during those contact arrangements.

Isolation. The women explained various tactics used by the men to undermine their credibility as a mother and ultimately to isolate them from the children. Women were often disregarded as a mother in front of the children, through criticism and ridicule. The men used psychological tactics to create conflict in the mother-child relationship, severing the bond that women had with their children. False accusations of the women's role in the abuse, as the wrong-doer or deserving of the abuse due to any flaw, sometimes resulted in children aligning themselves with their father. Women felt that they were unable to regain the bond they once had with the children. One tactic used by batterers to further isolate women, was telling the children that their mother was mentally ill and therefore, both deserving of the abuse and unfit to be a parent.

Helen: ...he just walked past and kicked me or pinched me and I turned around to react and he said 'it's okay children, your mum's not right in the head, she's mentally ill'...it's really hard to counteract that and try to win your children back when they have all these messages that something's wrong with your mother...

Helen also revealed an example of being discredited as a mother when her ex-partner convinced her daughter that it was Helen, not him, who had broken her arm.

Helen: For about three months I didn't see her because he had decided not to let me see her. She had hurt her arm and when I did see her she said 'mummy you broke my arm'. I said, 'I didn't break your arm, I haven't even seen you'... the kids' dad convinced her that I had hurt her. She still believes that to this day...But how can I convince her when she's been told that I've damaged her...So it's affected my bond with her.

Blaming the women for any detrimental outcomes to the children further divides mothers and children, with limited opportunity to nullify the father's behaviours and accusations. Women struggle to regain the trust

within the mother-child relationship and are further isolated from their children and mothering role.

Another way that women became isolated from their children concerned instances where children had witnessed abuse against their mother. The resulting fear and uncertainty for the children led to their withdrawal from her. The following extract highlights this:

Jessica: I was beaten for about two hours and choked and passed out and nearly died. My son was in the same bed as me when that happened and he still to this day remembers it. My other son was only in a cot in the same room...he still says 'mum remember when you had a sore eye'. My kids didn't want to come near me. I wouldn't have come near me.

Jessica is aware that the children are fearful not only of what they have seen and heard but also of her physical appearance and she is able to identify with her children's feelings at the time of the violent episode. This provides some insight into the emotional impact of violence, particularly low self-worth, which abused women experience, in that, having been severely beaten, Jessica feels isolated and unworthy of even her own children's affections.

The court system and child protection services also served as a means for men to tarnish women's credibility as a mother and protect their own public interest. Manipulation tactics used by the men directly isolated women from their children; including threats to seek sole custody or have child protection services remove children from the women's care. Some women experienced significant abuse tactics during court proceedings which led to the men obtaining full custody. The women explained the frustration associated with only being able to see the children intermittently and feeling powerless as a mother whose children were in the custody of an abusive parent and living in an environment immersed in violence.

Sara: It's sad how the court systems...they are so blind to it all...I've lost my baby to an abusive male that would do so much shit to me

and then we go to court and I'm the bad one...He's been ripped away from his mother...I can't ring him on the phone because he will cry 'I want mum, I want mum'. And this is a two year old. He shouldn't even [say] to me on the phone 'mum, I'm sad'. And I know why he's sad, that poor child....I just have to wait and hopefully people will open their eyes.

For those women who had been through the Family Court system regarding the custody of their children, there was the perception that their voices and stories of abuse had not been heard. The women described their experiences of being discredited as mother and having to listen to the batterer use his tactics of power and control.

Helen: We went through the courts and he said that I was the violent parent who had issues against men and drinking and I was highly religious...all sorts of things to ensure that he had 50/50 shared care...he went and studied my lawyer in court- he went and sat in on one of her cases so he would know...how she operated.

The men's contact with children, post-separation, served as a means for continuing to isolate women from their children. Sue described her experience of eventually gaining custody of her children after learning they had been removed from the father's care through child protection services. Not only did her ex-partner fail to inform her that he no longer had custody of their children, but through phone calls to the children, he continued to use tactics to undermine her ability as mother.

Sue: He has shown me no changes... waits to lose them through the system and I was the one, nine months later, finding out that I had to fight for my babies back...And just most recently I lost them again because they had 'daddy tactics' in their heads...'If you don't get your way with your mother, just tell somebody whatever'...My three boys got taken away from me because my son had ruck marks on his arms from rugby boots from practice. My son used one of his dad's tactics. Couldn't get his way with me... So he went

to school and he told the teachers that I did this to him. Straight away, I got removed from my home.

Supressed anger

The third theme to emerge centres on women's parenting style subsequent to the abusive relationship and the impact of this on their ability to be a mother. The women perceived that an inability to express their emotions during the violent relationship led to increased anger directed towards their children. This was something about which they expressed immense guilt. The women described their parenting as being similar to that of the abuser during the violent relationship. It is only after the relationship had ended, that women were able to express their emotions; however, not always in a healthy way.

Jessica: I think that the impact of being in a relationship where I couldn't be angry, have an opinion- silenced, I think it has affected me being a mother now...I snap at anybody now and I hate that that's coming out in my kids and I think that I don't want to be treating them how I got treated.

Sara: I used to get angry at my son...just over stupid shit too...I'd ruin his day before he would even get to school, without even realising what I was doing because it had been adapted into my behaviour...I'd carried around this baggage of this anger...

Sue: I'm pretty harsh...what their father did to me, I took it out on the kids, my boys and it made me feel stink because they didn't deserve it.

Self-identity

The inability to be 'yourself' within the abusive relationship and the implications of this as a mother was another significant theme. There was a general consensus that an ability to fulfil the role as 'mother' was not attainable when functioning as an individual within an environment impeded by violence. In considering women's perceptions of the emotional

impact of violence, outlined above, becoming emotionally unavailable was a common experience.

Katherine: ...I was never allowed to be myself in the relationship, let alone be a mother in that relationship. So it had a huge impact on how my children were brought up...

Jessica: It affects your ability to be a mother because you can't be yourself either, let alone be a mother. The time that I got beaten up really badly, at the end of it I was told to 'get up, make this boy a bottle, go clean up your face, go change his nappy', you know, straight after I almost died. You still have to do that and make sure they are alright.

The women perceived their inability to be themselves as directly proportional to their inability to be the mother that they wanted to be. Women were unable to care for the children the way they wanted to when the power to make those decisions were removed from them.

Summary

The women identified that the experience of violence on them as an individual and a mother are intertwined, in that any impact on their wellbeing has significant negative implications for their ability to function as a mother. The emotional impact of violence includes feelings of worthlessness and guilt, arising within the mother-child relationship. Therefore, these factors indirectly interfere with women's ability to be a mother and the responsibility women assume for their children's wellbeing within this role. Women experience deliberate interference with their parenting or ability to be a mother through control of parenting decisions, adopting a protective role and becoming isolated from children, suppressed anger directed towards children, and the notion that one cannot fulfil a mother role when one's self-identity is significantly undermined.

As understood by the men

In comparison with the women's detailed accounts of the impacts of violence on them, the men were far more limited in their ability to convey how violence had impacted on the women, both generally and in their role as mother. As part of this, some men stated their reluctance to reflect on the women's experiences, in that they were not prepared to put themselves in the position of the women and discuss the impact of their violence, tending rather to use avoidance statements such as, "*I can't say because I'm not her*" and "*honestly, I can't speak for [her]*". However, the men did show some awareness of ways in which women were affected by their violence.

Fear

While the majority of men described an awareness of fear that had been instilled in the women, they were unable to reflect on what made the women fearful or the implications of their partner's fearfulness. For instance, it appears that these men merely believed that it was *likely* that women would be fearful of violent behaviour and that fear was evident in the way women became wary of what they said and how they acted when in their presence.

Billy: Obviously there would be some sort of fear instilled in her from how I have treated her and so on...I think that she's still got an amount of fear of me. I don't know how big or small it is.

John: Well the impact on her, it basically made her frightened of me. Which now looking back at it is something I've never wanted for a partner of mine to feel...Basically the impact on her would be her being edgy about what she says and how she says it which isn't right for a relationship really.

Some men described evidence of fear based on physiological symptoms commonly seen people who are scared or anxious. In doing so, emphasis was placed on the overall physical wellbeing of women.

Derek: She was afraid, she was really afraid of me...Before she used to come to my house she would be shaking and would have to try to calm her nerves down before she came home.

Psychological violence

The men did seem to have an understanding of the impact of their psychological violence and its' significant effect on women. The majority of men spoke of the verbal abuse used throughout the relationship, in the form of put-downs and name calling. This verbal abuse was understood as serving two functions: Firstly, men perceived this abuse as a way to gain or maintain control within the relationship.

Patrick: ...we used to argue quite a bit and I would put her down and make her feel bad. It just got to a point where I felt like I had no control over anything or situation and stressed, I just couldn't handle it.

Secondly, men perceived these tactics as a means to reassert power over women due to their own insecurities, which were considered a catalyst for using verbal abuse. It appears that the men often felt threatened by women who they perceived to be more intelligent, competent and therefore, more powerful than them. This reflects a belief system which legitimises men's superiority over women; men supposedly ought to be smarter and more able than women.

Mark...a lot of my verbal stuff was put down, my insecurities about myself...she was a smart and educated woman and perhaps I didn't think I was and had low self-esteem myself, so I would try to bring her down to my level. And in fact, one of the worst things...I said to her that I wanted to bring her down emotionally to the level that I felt. So that's a direct threat on a person's psyche, you know, their state.

Sam: I just want to say things to hurt her...I mean she's very intelligent and gifted too and I kind of, I feel not worthy, like I'm

way below her and I guess the only way that I can put it into reason is I'm trying to put her down to my level.

Some of the men minimised the impact of verbal abuse, which is reflected in the way they described disagreements as a reciprocal encounter.

Mark: ...I'd be verbally abusive and stuff like that, put downs...she would get upset quite easily. We would do a lot of yelling, so there would be a lot of competing for 'I'm right, you're right'...

The women were held accountable and at times blamed as the victim for perceived deficiencies in character. These tactics make women more vulnerable to being affected by the abuse.

Billy: ...it was usually just swearing and in saying that, I never called her names. Oh, well there was the odd occasion that I did but I was never critical of her appearance...she's quite sensitive to that sort of stuff but it was more swearing and the 'fucking this' or you know putting the F word here and there...

In contrast to the detailed descriptions given by the women concerning the impact violence had on their mothering, the men provided very little information. There was an apparent failure by the men to understand that their violence had had any negative implications for their partner's ability to parent, in fact many men stated explicitly that there had been 'no impact'.

Increased bond with children

Interestingly, when some of the men did acknowledge that their violence had had an impact, they cast it in a positive light. That is, they argued that the experience of being in a violent relationship increased women's bond with the children. Any negative consequences of mental health were often justified and rationalised to the extent that violence was perceived as creating the opportunity for women to gain strength as a mother and having positive consequences for the mother-child relationship. Therefore, women were considered stronger and more able mothers as a result of the abusive relationship.

John: No I don't think it has [affected her]...because she's always loved the kids and she's always been an excellent mother to the kids. She's always put the kids first, always and always will. I think it's made her stronger...It's made her more determined for the kids...she's got a real wicked bond with the kids.

Patrick: ...from what I've seen it made her even more determined to be a good mother, to be there for the kids and fuelled the fire within her to prove me wrong, and to prove to the children that I was wrong.

In discussing the increased bond with the children, the women's ability to put the children first throughout the relationship, despite the abuse, was perceived as providing evidence that they were able to maintain a mothering role and be a 'good' mother. When describing observations that the mother-child relationship was strengthened, the men did not acknowledge the possibility that women may, of necessity, be increasing their protection of the children.

Christopher: It has affected her but for the most part she wears it or more in the parenting sense. [Son] has always come first, so [son] has never gone without love or anything...She always put that first, [stepson] was always number one, so she's a great mum.

Shaun: No, she was a great mum, apart from a few episodes. But other than that, 95% of the time she was a great Mum, I'll give her that. There was always food, there were always clothes.

[Daughter] came first.

Children as weapons

The men acknowledged that they had used the children as a weapon against their partners and that this impacted on their ability to be a mother. Children were used as weapons in a variety of contexts. The two main functions of this tactic were to purposefully undermine the ability to be a mother and as a form of control to disrupt the mother-child relationship.

Some men held women accountable for any difficult behaviour seen in the children. Using the children as weapons against the mother in this way further undermined her ability to be a mother, by placing blame and sole responsibility on her for the children's development. Women had to cope with any negative behaviour seen in their children and with the psychological violence which followed. At the time of the abusive relationship, these men did not take responsibility for their own contribution to any negative outcomes for children, especially in considering the significant effects of violence on children.

Geoff: I'd blame her for the way the children have turned out or for the way they would do something. 'They do that because of you, you see, if you let me take care that day, they wouldn't be doing that', because I was instigating the fear, so I give shit to her, 'that's your fault'. Instead of just admitting it, I would blame her.

Children were also used as weapons as a means of controlling women. One way this control was asserted was by threatening to take the children away from her if she were to leave the relationship. This tactic was perceived as being effective, as it provided confirmation, in the men's eyes, that the women wanted to stay in the relationship. However, the reality is more likely that women stayed in the relationship to avoid losing the children. John's account of a recent situation shows the lack of insight into the effect of violence on women and children, and misperception as to reasons for his (ex)partner returning to the relationship.

John: Well I used to say to her, you can leave but you're not taking my kids...I look back and think, well it was a way for me to get back at her as well...I used to try and stop her from leaving because I didn't want her or the kids going but then one time I said 'right, fine, sweet, go, get' and yeah she packed up the car and everything [including the children] and went to leave but she said she couldn't. So yeah it's made me realise, yeah ok, she wants me and I've gotta change...she's packed the car up as if she is going to leave

*and then I think she thinks 'oh shit, I've got nowhere to go'
basically so she comes back.*

John's interpretation of his partner's return is contradictory. He attributes this both to her desire to stay with him and also the reality that she has no external support beyond the relationship. Furthermore, the on-going nature of John's control tactics and use of children as weapons is evident in the following extract which highlights the extent that children were exposed to the violence and the use of violence to sever the mother-child relationship. This is another example of using the emotional vulnerability of children and their love of their father to manipulate and exert power over their mother. This shows the inherent lack of commitment as a father to the children, in that John was adamant that he would punish his (ex)partner for leaving him by abandoning his own children.

John: ...when [ex-partner] says I'm going to leave...I'll say to the kids, 'well are you going to go live with nanna and poppa and you won't see dad ever again?'. Because she knows if she goes that's it...Basically I will just get away, just pack everything up and piss off. Yeah the reason why I think that is well, you've taken the kids away from me so I may as well just move away so that they don't see me...

Some men also used the children in a physical way, to prevent women from leaving, which at times led to children being placed in dangerous situations. Billy described an incident where he used his son in this capacity, as a way to control his ex-partner:

Billy: She was going to leave the house...and I was like, nah. I picked up my son and put him on the boot of the car just so that she wasn't going to drive anywhere while I went around and spoke through the window. And that's one of the occasions that the kids were around.

Summary

The men were predominately limited in their understanding of ways violence may affect women. In the general sense, the emotional response of fear was the most substantial or noticeable impact of violence and furthermore, the men identified psychological violence as the main form of violence used against women. Many of the men seemed to have no notion that their violence affected their partner's ability to parent-or at least no notion that they were willing to share with me. When they did consider their violence to have had an impact on their partner's ability to parent, they often cast that impact in a positive light, describing their partner as becoming more strong and capable in her role as mother. Using children as weapons in a variety of contexts served as a means to undermine women's ability to be a mother and disrupt the mother-child relationship.

Section 2: The impact of men's violence on children

This section focusses on perceptions of the impact of men's violence on children and has significant implications for how we view children's exposure to violence and contact arrangements post-separation. Interwoven throughout these findings is the impact of violence on the mother-child and father-child relationship.

As understood by the women

The women revealed a number of ways in which being a part of a violent atmosphere affected their children. As reflected in the previous section, there is a sense in which the women could not separate their own experience from that of their children. The women perceived that they were in the situation together with the children and therefore, the effects of violence were shared. The five main themes indicated were the significance of children's exposure to violence, the impact of violence on emotional functioning, social learning processes, and children entering new roles within the family.

Exposure to violence

A prominent theme centred on the women's views of the significance of children being exposed to the violent atmosphere, and consequently witnessing the abuse. In discussing the impact on children in general, all women referred to children witnessing violence as being a form of abuse in itself. The fact that children had witnessed violence was also interwoven with the other significant ways in which they perceived their children to be affected. Not only did children witness violence when their mother was in the abusive relationship, but they continued to witness violence through the on-going contact they had with their fathers. The effects of witnessing violence were described as the reason children continued to show dysfunctional behaviours.

Emotional functioning

The women described how children used dysfunctional means of communicating feelings or regulating emotions. Suppressing negative emotions associated with the violent environment served as a protection strategy for themselves, as well as their mothers, in that showing emotional responses often led to further abuse or conflict within the parenting relationship, or directed towards the children themselves. In some circumstances, this was a learned behaviour, as a result of witnessing their mother suppress her own emotions within the violent relationship, as reflected in the previous section. There were two main ways that women described children's suppressed emotions: internalising distress and externalising frustration. There was some evidence to suggest a gendered pattern, where boys were more likely to exhibit externalising behaviours and girls, internalise distress.

Some women perceived that their children displayed an inability to express emotions, in relation to the fear they felt in the presence of their fathers; these emotions were internalised in response to the fear. One function of withholding emotional responses to fear was to prevent them from saying or doing anything which might cause animosity within the child-father relationship. The following extract highlights how some children yearned for close, loving relationships with their fathers, despite the fear or trauma associated with his behaviour.

Katherine: I know my girls would not show their anger to their father. They will never show any of that...there's no way they want to break any sort of love from him. No matter how damaging that is, they would never show any of that behaviour to him.

It is interesting to observe Katherine's use of the word 'love' in the context of characterising the children's relationship with their father, considering her children's fear of him and in light of subsequent revelations that the children's father is under-involved and abusive in his parenting practices.

Another function of this fear was associated with the anticipated negative response of their father if they were to show their emotions and therefore, their fear of him. The following extract highlights the level of secrecy that children are prepared to go to in order to release emotions in a 'safe' way; however, significant social withdrawal behaviours are evident.

Helen: ...she said 'I went to the bedroom because I knew I wasn't allowed to cry' and that was just an unwritten thing. So she goes 'I cried a little bit and I was so scared that someone would come in and tell me off for doing it'. But because we talk a lot about releasing our emotions she knew she had to get rid of some stuff while she was actually there which was really good but it was still that fear.

Some children were reported to have become submissive and compliant. The children's submissive behaviour was intertwined with the fear they experienced and consequently, it appears that children entered this role, so as not to draw attention to themselves. This further reinforces difficulties with emotional regulation.

Katherine: She wanted to make sure she pleased everyone so she wasn't causing any trouble. So she became a complete pleaser, like to make sure she kept everything calm.

Helen: I had my other daughter go the opposite and become totally subservient...She is a very, very pliable child...she will not be rebellious or anything.

This behaviour was considered protective, in the sense that children were aware of the repercussions if they were to show any emotional response in front of their father. Other behaviours, such as toileting difficulties, were also perpetuated by the fear children had of their father and the anger he showed towards them in response to this behaviour.

Jessica: My son ended up having a problem with going to the toilet, my eldest son, he used to go to the toilet in his pants and that and he used to get, you know, growled at, yelled at, and smacked if he

ever done it and it made the problem worse...Same with my youngest, he used to pee the bed and get in trouble and they were quite ashamed and shy with things like that...they are quite inward children with their anger.

In response to not being able to express their emotions, some women explained the ways their children exhibited externalising behaviours, such as aggression and acting out. This included children physically hitting other people or objects as a way of communicating or releasing emotions, such as anger and fear.

Sara: He hits me and stuff and hits his brother because he's trying to show us that he doesn't want us to go...He doesn't know how to let me know what's happening because he's so little and when he gets taken away from me he screams.

Children's use of head banging was another trend described by some women as being directly related to emotional dysregulation. The psychological implication for such behaviour is significant, including risk of physical damage to the child in these instances, particularly head trauma.

Helen: ...at one point she visited and she started banging her head against the wall just because of the frustration of not being allowed to have any emotional response while she was living with her dad.

Social learning

The third theme to emerge centres on the way children learnt abusive behaviours and tactics through observing their father's violence. This was perceived as separate to the externalisation of behaviours due to emotional regulation difficulties, as outlined above. In this sense, aggression and acting out behaviours were considered a result of children witnessing violence and were not constrained to contexts where children were unable to express their emotions. Furthermore, violence used by children against the women was perceived as being a part of a broader belief system that children had adopted through social learning processes.

The women explained ways in which their children learnt to use aggressive behaviours against others. Anger and physical aggression was reported to be functional for children as they learnt that violence could be used to control those around them.

Sue: The impact of violence on my children, has been really, really harsh. They learnt to be very angry children... they learnt to fight...

Sara: My oldest became very angry, he'd smash my car, smash this, smash that, chuck tantrums at me.

The women spoke openly about their children using physically and emotionally abusive behaviours against them and their siblings. They were aware of their children learning tactics of power and control and expressed an effort to prevent this from happening by teaching children to respect women. However, the experience of having a child continue the pattern of abuse also contributed to the significant impact the violence had on women as mothers. These women experienced double victimisation through their violent partner and the children.

Jessica: My kids are seven and six and now my boys...now that I'm separated I'm drumming it in to them, don't be like that, treat women in a good way, if you are angry there are others ways. They throw stuff around the house at me from time to time.

Role reversal

Another prominent theme centres on women's experiences of children adopting different roles within the family, as a result of the violent atmosphere. The women revealed their children entering protective and parent roles, both during the abusive relationship and post-separation. It was apparent that women struggled with the conflict between needing someone to enter these roles and yet experiencing substantial guilt and self-blame for allowing this level of responsibility to be placed on their children.

Child as protector. The women explained ways that children entered the role of protector for their mother. Within this protective role, children voiced their concerns about abuse to their mother, supported their

mother by verbally defending her in front of the abuser and physically protected her during violent incidents.

Sara: I was pregnant at the time of an assault that happened that my son witnessed. He was very worried about me the whole way through. He became like my little protector which shouldn't have happened. I shouldn't have let my son become that for me...

Katherine: ...she started actually defending me with her dad....when he was putting me down when he was saying things, she would go 'no mum's not like that'.

Two women explained how their children protected them from the abuse by voicing their concerns about the way their mother was being treated. This shows the children were not only aware of tactics used by their fathers but also had increased insight into the subtle ways in which their mothers were unable to leave the relationship. These women consequently left the relationship due to their realisation of the impact on the children and the children's own voiced concerns.

Sue: One day he just woke up and said 'Mum, can't you see what that dickhead's doing to you?'...It just hurts me, even still today, that my son, my big boy had to tell me what to do'...he said 'mum, you need to make a decision, or I'm not coming back'. So I walked away.

Lucy revealed the catalyst for leaving the abusive relationship as being the day her children used physical force against their father, in an effort to protect her:

Lucy: What drove me to get away? Was when I saw my kids get up and they man-handled my husband. They're way shorter than my husband, but by golly they threw him against the wall like he was a piece of stick. That's when I clicked, I should have never ever, ever let you fellas do that, you shouldn't have done that for mum. It was my wakeup call.

Child as parent. During the abusive relationship, the women also revealed the ways children entered a parenting role and formed a working alliance with them. This was facilitated by the father's neglect of his parenting role, making it necessary for them to take on the responsibility of supporting their mothers. There were mixed perceptions as to whether this was appropriate, once again reflecting the conflict between need and guilt.

Sue: My big boy became the father figure to all me and my partners kids because he wasn't there and I put my son in a wicked position...

Katherine: She took on the parenting role with me as well...because I had a baby as well so she became this person who was the other parent I guess, beside me, helping me through what I was going through...

Sara: He's still the same; he still helps me with [baby]...He's good like that...counselling and that has switched him all up to being, 'I'm the man of the house, I love my mum and my brother and you can't tell me that'.

One woman revealed the way her daughters took on parenting roles when residing at their father's house. This further highlights the reticence of men to fulfil parental responsibilities in their on-going contact with children post-separation, as is evident in the following extract:

Helen: When my kids' dad got 50/50 shared care of my kids... he had my eldest daughter who at that point was 11, she on reflection became like a second wife. She was expected to clean, to cook, and she was allowed to drink, she was allowed to come and go as she pleased...she kind of took on a role of another parent. She was expected to look after the children and the same things happened now with my 12 year old...she is expected to babysit the children. When she was with me a couple of weeks ago, her hands were covered in eczema because she's cleaning so much.

Summary

The women highlighted that any detrimental outcome for children, as a result of violence, inevitably impacts on their own wellbeing and ability to be a mother. All children had been exposed to violence, whether directly or indirectly. Furthermore, children continued to be exposed to violence through their on-going contact with fathers. Children were reported as showing an inability to express emotions in appropriate ways, leading to the internalisation of distress and a raft of externalising behaviours. Children adopted the batterer's tactics of power and control, evidenced by their aggressive behaviours and use of violence towards the women. The way children adopted protective and parenting roles further impacted on the mother-child relationship, as women expressed conflict between both needing someone to fulfil these roles and experiencing guilt and self-blame for allowing this to happen.

As understood by the men

The men revealed a number of ways in which they perceived their children to be affected by the violent atmosphere. In doing so, there was a tendency for men to focus on their own feelings and hardship in relation to potential harm to the children. This may reflect their emotional connection to the children as part of the father-child relationship or this could be due to their limited insight into effects of violence on children. The five main themes to emerge include the children's fear, the use of psychological abuse, social learning processes, implications of abuse for the father-child relationship, and factors associated with young children.

Fear

A prominent theme was the men's perception of their children's fear in response to their abusive behaviour; the most significant pattern in discussing the effects of violence on children. Fear was described in terms of physiological and emotional symptoms, children's avoidance of them and in relation to specific tactics used to intimidate children.

The men recognised that children were 'scared' or fearful of them during the time of the abusive relationship and attributed this to a variety of reasons. Some men considered that children were scared for their own safety when in their father's presence, as a product of them witnessing the violence against their mother. There were also times when men perceived children to be scared for their mother's safety. This fear was described as being directly related to the child's concern about what may happen in the future and therefore, the unpredictable nature of violence within the family.

Patrick: ...they were quite scared. If I was to raise my voice slightly, the babies would freak out, which was even more of a shock to me and made me realise even more the impact that it had had on my kids and on the family.

Christopher: ...I know he has heard us arguing and he does get scared and worried for [mother's] safety.

John: Um, the kids? It would be just more or less fear, which now looking at it is just something that I don't wish upon my kids really, to be scared or fear their parents because yeah, we are people they shouldn't fear really.

A number of men considered emotional expressions, such as crying, to be evidence that children were fearful of him.

John: ...when we have arguments and that now, they just start crying. Because it's basically showing us that they're scared...they'll start crying and to me it's like they're thinking, what's mum and dad going to do next.

Patrick: Scared, worried. My oldest daughter, she's probably the most emotional out of everyone, she'd cry sometimes.

Another way the men perceived their children as fearful of them was recognising a certain look on their faces or in their eyes. Although this was potentially subtle and difficult to define, these men appear to have a heightened awareness of the impact that violence was having on the children at the time.

Sam: I've seen it in his face before, the fear, you know, that I'm going to go overboard again...because I saw his face and just he went all quiet...I saw the look in his face that I don't want to see again either.

Geoff: ...and the look in the kid's eyes. One day we were driving back from the petrol station and here was this guy walking down the road and I pulled over the car and turned around to the kids in the back and I said, 'do you want to see something freaky?', so I got out, walked across the road, beat the shit out of this guy...and I've always remembered the looks on the children's faces. It wasn't proud of dad, gee dad you're staunch, it was fear. I actually saw fear and I've never, ever forgotten that look.

Geoff also described the other significant consequences of his actions. Not only did he recognise the signs of fear at the time, but also acknowledged that these behavioural signs of fear are on-going in that they resurface when he has contact with his children.

...once I yelled at her and she wet herself, that's how terrified she was of me. And I could do things like point a finger and the kids would just freeze, because without even realising it, they've become petrified of me. Not so much as scared, but actually petrified...So yeah, the boy, he still occasionally wets the bed... the moment he gets to [my town], he starts wetting the bed again. It's because I used to say to him, 'what son, why don't you get up and go to the toilet, what's this shit', because I was cruel, what I did was outright cruel...

Some children were perceived as coping with their heightened emotional states by isolating themselves at the time that they experienced the fear. This avoidance also stemmed to the father-child relationship, as the men reflected on losing the bond that they once had with their children.

John: I find that if I growl at them then they're thinking that they are going to get a hiding. Or if they do something wrong, then they are going to be scared to let me know because of what I've been like in the past. So yeah in a way they would rather go talk to their mum before they come and talk to their dad.

Patrick: ...I could see her physically shy away from me, she didn't want to be around me...She got really quiet and yeah, she was scared.

Other than the general recognition that children were fearful due to the violence the men used, some men reflected on the specific use of body language and their appearance to intentionally intimidate both women and children. This was described as being related to the fear the children had of them and highlights the men's awareness of the violent and unpredictable nature of their behaviour.

Geoff: Yep, my even physical appearance, I could change even physically and I could see the intimidation in the children and I used to use that, like 'be careful', you know.

Mark: I remember one incident, I can't remember if my little boy or maybe my little girl was sitting on the seatbelt and I couldn't get it to come down and I just got so furious with it and whilst I wasn't yelling at her, I was swearing about the seatbelt not coming down and you know if you're a 5 or 6 year old kid and you've got your dad using all sorts of bad language and you can see him getting physically angry, that's an effect that they are going to have...

Psychological abuse

Another significant theme was the men's understanding of various tactics of psychological abuse which were detrimental to the children and considered to have the greatest impact. The men spoke extensively about various tactics of psychological abuse when discussing the impact of violence on children. In doing so, there appeared to be a general consensus that psychological violence was worse than physical abuse and had the greatest impact.

Although the men discussed using children as a weapon against the mother, as a way to undermine and control her, they also perceived this as having a direct impact on the children. The men showed insight into the potential effects on children who were often caught in the middle during disputes in the relationship. It appears that although men may use the children as weapons in a variety of ways to negatively affect women, they are conscious of these tactics having wider implications in that children become an active participant. The following extract highlights this; however, there is some minimisation of the severity of violence that children have witnessed, given Patrick's later account of children physically stopping violence.

Patrick: Although there has come times where we have argued and unfortunately they've been caught in the middle...they would be

played off between myself and [partner], forced to choose sides in the situation. It's really stuffed up, but there were times when that occurred.

It is interesting that on the one hand, these men appear to be more aware of the use of children as weapons than men who batter are generally considered to be, and that this may be viewed as positive. On the other hand, the fact that they recognised these impacts but used the children anyway, suggests a very self-centred view of the world.

Another significant form of psychological abuse described by the men stemmed from their children seeing and hearing the violence towards their mothers. The notion of children witnessing violence was interwoven with the other ways men perceived their children to be affected by violence and in some ways children being exposed to violence in this way was an inevitable precursor to the other negative effects the men discussed. However, the fact that these men discuss the notion of children witnessing violence as a form of psychological violence in itself, makes it clear that men consider this to have a direct impact on children. Therefore, they view it as not simply a consequence of living within a violent atmosphere.

Mark: ...whilst they weren't the direct victims in terms of me yelling at them, or emotionally abusing them, they were within earshot when it was happening to their mother, so yeah, it did have an impact on them.

Geoff: Yeah, they'd still get to hear it, so back to the psychological side of things again, They don't have to see, they can hear.

Social learning

A prominent theme to emerge was the men's perception of ways in which children were learning to use physical and emotional violence towards others. Although this was not always recognised during the time of the violent relationship, men were able to reflect on their children's behaviour and attributed this to the violence that children had witnessed. The men expressed regret for potentially passing on their violent behaviours

and were concerned that the cycle of violence could continue. The two main areas that were considered to be evidence of social learning were the use of physical violence and adoption of patriarchal beliefs. The following extracts highlight the men's awareness of the propensity for children to learn violent behaviours, in part due to their normalisation of those behaviours:

Geoff: ...a lot of the psychological things that had affected me, I had passed on without even realising it. It was just normal. Now that's something that I've contaminated him with, that I've got to hope as he gets older that he can distinguish that it was not good and not pass it on. Because children see and they do.

Sam: I think for me, a child only has to see that once and it's ingrained, it stays with them and it does scare me to think that I might do it again.

One of the more noticeable ways in which children displayed learnt violent behaviour, was physical violence towards their family members and peers. This behaviour was not gender specific, in that there was evidence of both girls and boys engaging in physical violence. Although it is difficult to contextualise this behaviour, given that this could be an emotional response or outlet with regard to the violence children have witnessed, the men attributed this physical violence to learnt behaviour.

Sam: [Daughter] tends to hit a lot...she's going through the terrible two stage as well...but she will throw things and you know, I'll be the first to admit that maybe part of that behaviour might come from the fact that she witnessed what she did.

Derek: ...it shows how bad my son actually got...He was beating up kids at school.

One participant, John, explained his children's use of physical violence; however, in doing so he attributed at least some of the blame to his partner:

Our one year old, he's just a real bully. He'll go up and hit the other two [siblings] for no reason or push them over and we've

both said, that's because they've seen us do it, that they think it's alright...My daughter, she'll go, 'you do it'. So then, yeah I can't say anything about that. So yeah, it's a bit hard at times. As soon as they don't see it and that then we can start teaching them the right way, showing them the right way but until that happens then there's really nothing we can do.

Violence as a learnt behaviour was also perceived by some men to include the child's belief system, in particular, the belief that men are superior to women and that men are privileged within the family system. Derek explained the way his son began to adopt a belief system, which centred on undermining women and displaying antisocial attitudes that condone the use of violence towards women or asserting dominance over them. This is particularly concerning given that a belief system of male privilege when experienced so young, has the potential to become ingrained, continuing a cycle intergenerational violence. The following extract highlights the stark reality of how powerful being exposed to violent attitudes can be:

Derek: The only problem is, it reflected on my boy, my boy started growing up and he started doing exactly the same thing. He actually hated women. He wouldn't listen to my mother. He would rather be around males...He was starting to be like me.

Father-child relationship

In discussing how children were affected by violence, men perceived difficulties within the father-child relationship as being a significant factor. These men considered that children becoming a protector of their mother had negatively impacted on their own relationship with the child and discussed various aspects of losing the bond they once had with their children. Rather than focus on the direct impact of their behaviour on their children, the men tended to focus on their loss of relationship with the child and their own difficulties in coming to terms with these changes. This

also reflects the men's view that children should have contact with their father and their belief in maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship.

The men discussed their awareness of children entering into a protective role for their mother and in ascribing meaning to this, perceived that their relationship with the children had become damaged. While some men appeared to acknowledge the fundamental unfairness of children adopting such a position and showed remorse, at times they perceived this behaviour as to be expected and evidence of normal development.

Christopher: Well, if he hears us even with raised voices, he comes out to check... But in the early years we found out that he used to sleep up stairs and come half way down the stairs and listen...He sort of stepped up to be the protector of [ex-partner], so he didn't really show that he was scared, more of a young adult point of view from it. He's very mature for his age.

One of the ways that children were described as most commonly protecting their mothers was through physically intervening during violent incidents. In order to stop the abuse, children were prepared to risk their own safety. Some men considered the children's protective role as evidence that they had formed an alliance against him, which was ultimately injurious to him and his relationship with the children.

Sam: My partner's son tends to be quite protective of his mother and he has sort of come up and pushed me once...

Patrick: You'll have to excuse me, I still find it quite hard talking about this, but when I assaulted my wife, it was my oldest daughter and my five year old that were physically stopping me from doing that. They were protecting their mother...I do remember my daughters, pulling me off...holding me back and so in that incident they were protecting their mum. We used to argue a bit and...it was always the children that would...try to stop the fighting, stop the arguing.

Another way in which the men considered children to be affected, involved losing the bond that they had with their children. In discussing this diminished bond, the men focussed on their own difficulties in accepting the changed relationship. The men were sometimes more remorseful for themselves in losing the relationship than for the damage they had caused the children. The importance placed on maintaining a healthy father-child relationship reflects their views that children should have a father with whom they can maintain contact. The men spoke of an awareness of losing this bond during the time of the violent relationship, when they had more contact with the children. Some men were also aware of this diminished bond after the relationship had ended and when they subsequently had less contact with their children.

One way that men perceived there to be a diminished bond, concerned their children withdrawing from them. This form of withdrawal was perceived as different to that of the avoidance strategies children used in response to fear; rather, this was a gradual process of the breaking down of the father-child relationship.

Geoff: He's more interested in coming over and visiting dad, than actually coming home...to stay with dad for the night. Like he was up here for six days or whatever and I only saw him twice and it was almost like we'd run out of things to say...He didn't seem like he wanted to hang with dad, I found him a little bit isolated.

In discussing the children's withdrawal and the subsequent diminished bond, comparisons were made between their relationship with the children and the relationship children had with their mothers. These men considered the children to be more loyal towards the mother and once again, the focus shifted to their own difficulties or emotional injuries and grievances

John: Like our youngest, I took him down to [town] for a week with me last year and we had a good bond and then she [partner] went up to Auckland last week with the kids and now the youngest one's

got a big bond with her and not with me. And, yeah it's hard on me...

In response to the perceived diminished bond, some men described how they themselves consciously withdrew from the children in response to the realisation of the full impact of their actions. The function of withdrawal was described as protecting the children from violence. However, this also has significant implications for their role as father, in that this may point to an inactive style of parenting and may be perceived by children as a form of rejection or neglect.

Sam: I could tend to want to stay away, I mean my boy, I only get to see him twice a week anyway and it's just the way it works out but there has been times when I've said to [partner] that maybe I just shouldn't be seeing him for a while. But then that's going to impact on him as well, but it's the lesser of the two evils kind of thing...

Geoff: Especially when I started realising that I was affecting the children, I started dissociating myself, thinking it would be better, for everyone, for me just to kick back.

Although there is at times a focus on their own hardship in coping with the aftermath of violence, some men considered what impact their withdrawal might have on the children.

Christopher: I probably did [withdraw] as well, because I felt like there was that barrier there. And I didn't know how to bridge it...Yeah I felt bad about it and seeing the impact of the actions I chose.

Young children

As men considered the impact of violence on children, there was at times a tendency for them to underestimate the serious effects of this violence, based on their belief that children who were young at the time, would not be as affected. It appears that this assumption is centred on their understanding of the children's developmental level and perhaps the

rationale that infants will not have the same capacity to remember violent incidents.

Mark: So yeah it's really hard for me to say that, I think my youngest boy, he was only 18 months when I left, so perhaps it's a memory that he won't have...

John: On the kids? The impact, see it's really hard because my daughter was young at the time.

Billy: The boy? I think he's too young to know what's going on. We never fought around him. We had the odd argument when he was there but I don't think it affected him.

However, one participant, Shaun, made the distinction that young children can still be affected:

Shaun: ...back then she was awfully young but kids aren't dumb you know. They still pick up vibes and what not.

Summary

In identifying the impact of violence on children, the majority of men discussed the notable fear in their children. Psychological violence was considered the main form of violence affecting children through using the children as a weapon and exposing children to violence against the mother. The men also revealed the significance of social learning, in that children were perceived to have adopted physical aggression and patriarchal belief systems. The resulting implications for the father-child relationship included children become a protector for the mother and the notion that violence led to a diminishing of their bond with the child. At times men underestimated the impact of violence, as evidenced by the belief that young children may not be affected and the tendency to focus on their own emotional injuries and hardship.

Section 3: The batterer as parent

This section focusses on perceptions of the batterer's parenting within the context of domestic violence. Although factors related to or impacting on men's parenting role are considered throughout all the findings; the particular parenting style used by the men during the violent relationship was considered specifically. It is understood that the parenting practices used by abusive men have significant implications for both women and children's wellbeing, parent-child relationships and contact arrangements post-separation.

As understood by the women

The women discussed their experiences of their (ex)partner's parenting during the violent relationship and post-separation. This included descriptions of specific parenting practices used by the men and revealed the parenting strategies which women believed were important for fathers to possess. Furthermore, the women discussed the impact of any detrimental parenting on the children. There were two main themes to emerge: under-involvement in parenting, and authoritarian parenting styles.

Under-involved parent

Many of the women described men's lack of interest and under-involvement in the children's lives and overall family functioning. As part of this, the men failed to form a working alliance with mothers, including the provision of children's basic needs. The men's irresponsibility, reluctance to set age-appropriate boundaries and the emphasis placed on fun activities, were the three main ways women perceived men to be under-involved parents. These men appeared to show a lack of commitment to their families and were focussed more on their own lives as separate to that of their children.

Lucy: What was my ex-partner like as a parent? Towards the children, very distant...he wasn't there...I felt like I was the only person in the marriage. I've always worked for my children...So I

was expected to do a bit more than I actually signed up for, basically. So I provided...I did all the house, paid the power, paid the rent, paid the bills all on my own...he always pleased others but not us. He never took care of us.

Helen: My child had cancer earlier on in our relationship...he basically started drinking really heavily so I had to leave. He was no help. He never visited my daughter. I think he visited my daughter twice over three years while we were in the hospital system...When he met his new partner, he pretty much ditched the whole lot of them, all his kids and pursued this relationship.

As part of the men's under-involved parenting, a number of women perceived them to be irresponsible parents. The men often neglected their parental responsibilities and were conditional in their approach to any time spent with the children. Men chose to involve themselves in the children's lives on their own terms and in an erratic manner. Irresponsible parenting was most evident at times where the parenting role may have posed more of a challenge. The mothers had to take on the majority of responsibility for the day-to-day care and parenting of the children at these times.

Lucy: He was good to my kids...and then when he couldn't handle them he goes 'fuck off to your mother'. That made me cry...'how dare you say that to them'...

Deborah: ...he's pretty good to an extent but when he can't handle it, yeah he's the same, 'fuck off to your mother, she knows what to do'. I just hated it. It just makes me feel like nothing.

In terms of access arrangements post-separation, some men continued to only see the children when it suited them, on their terms. The children had limited contact with their fathers for long periods of time which has serious implications for children, in that they may experience feelings of abandonment or rejection.

Katherine: ...he had supervised visits and yet he wasn't turning up to those on time and he was doing whatever he could. There was

no accountability for him to be there...it was over three months that he didn't turn up and for my eldest girl...that's when I had to put her into counselling because she found that that was incredibly hard...

Two women described their ex-partner's lack of responsibility in terms of paying child maintenance for the children and unwillingness to contribute financially to support the provision of necessities.

Deborah: I'm on the benefit and their father goes, 'I don't need to pay for stuff because I'm paying for you'. And I say 'in what'? and he says 'in taxes, I'm paying for your benefit'.

Katherine: ...he's still not paying child maintenance...I mean there's still nothing holding him accountable to being a father, whether it's monetary or emotional...

Furthermore, children were placed in potentially unsafe and risky situations by men. Some women reported that men neglected children by leaving them at home alone. This erratic and irresponsible parenting caused women grave concern for the children's safety. The neglectful parenting was not only evident during the violent relationship, but it continued post-separation through contact arrangements. This places children at an even greater risk, as the women are unable to effectively monitor the men's behaviour at these times.

Helen: I mean if he walked out and threatened to walk out, he would just leave for five days. He'd just disappear...I could never do that, because I was too fearful about what was going to happen if I took off. I'd just stay no matter what, because I couldn't have left my children alone.

Lucy: I still find myself getting still pukuriri [angry] at my ex-partner because I just recently let him have the kids and then they are texting me 'mummy, mummy my father's not here'. I'm thinking, what, it's like midnight...that night I rung a friend of mine who lives just around the corner... can you please go over to

this house at seven in the morning and go get my children?...The day after that's when I came down and I had it out with him. 'How dare you disrespect your children and choose other people over them when it was your time with them.'...That's like abandonment, you don't do that to people.

In considering the under-involvement of men in their parenting role, the women also referred to the men's reluctance to set appropriate boundaries for their children and to understand and engage them in age-appropriate activities. This reflects the men's lack of understanding of parenting and the under-involved nature of their role as parent. The women encountered difficulties post-separation in having to address and rectify the children's new-found freedom as a result of having no limits imposed on them.

Helen: I've had a really rocky road with my 13 year old daughter because she had unlimited freedom with her dad and when she moved back in with me she wanted that same freedom and I've had to slowly wind her back in.

Helen also revealed situations where developmentally inappropriate responsibility was placed on her children within the context of living with their father. There were not only limited boundaries imposed concerning the children's whereabouts, but these children entered into the role of parent and were allowed to engage in age-inappropriate activities, such as consuming alcohol. Significant responsibility was placed on these children, reflecting the similar position that Helen was placed in as a mother during the abusive relationship.

As part of the under-involved parenting, the women discussed that men were reluctant to take on responsibilities for their children, over and above engaging children in fun activities. When the men did choose to be involved with the children, they often did so in ways which created a 'fun father' persona. The women were not able to provide the children with these activities, as they had to maintain the basic workings of the home and

provide the children with the necessities. Also, the experience of being in an abusive relationship may have significantly limited the ability of the women to engage in such activities. It is also clear that some women had little financial control, further limiting their ability to provide the children with a similar level of entertainment. The children were more likely to look favourably upon their father, their loyalties were divided and the women felt undermined in their mothering role.

Helen: He can be loving and fun and show that side but I think there's always strings attached... he'll always put himself first in that equation. He's used that fun side to manipulate as well. For example, when we were doing the parenting arrangement he said 'well either you can go to your mums or you can come to Rainbows End with me' so it's kind of like a no brainer.

This further limits the ability for women to rebuild relationships with the children, as is highlighted in the following extract:

Jessica: They get to see the fun dad I guess...So now I have to be the grumpy mum. In the violent relationship I was kid orientated. I was getting the crap so I made everything happy, but now I've got to be the mum.

Authoritarian parent

A prominent theme to emerge was an authoritarian parenting style used by the men. The majority of women perceived the men to use harsh and rigid parenting practices, including verbal abuse and tactics of control. When men were active in their parenting role, children were expected to obey their authority.

Katherine: My partner as a parent, I guess I would say he was more like an authoritarian...all together when we were at home he hardly parented, unless it was to put a hard word on things...

As part of this harsh and strict parenting style, the women revealed the significant use of direct physical discipline against their children. Not only did these men condone the use of physical discipline, but as is

reflected in the above section concerning the impact of violence on mothers, some women were also instructed to use physical discipline. Today these women have to live with the repercussions of this abuse, as their children expect their mothers to behave in the same way and are therefore wary or fearful of them.

Summary

In considering the batterer as parent, the women identified a number of factors which were perceived as being related to the men's violent attitudes and behaviours. The under-involved nature of men in their parenting role often meant that women had to take full responsibility for the day-to-day care of the children. Men also presented themselves as 'good' fathers in front of others, reducing women's ability to gain support and credibility as a mother. The authoritarian parenting styles used by men revealed the significant use of power and control within the parenting role. Such factors limited women's ability to fulfil a mothering role as intended.

As understood by the men

In discussing the impact of violence on children, the men discussed perceptions of their own parenting style used during the abusive relationship or later contact with the children. In doing so, they reflected on the way they parented during that relationship, in comparison to how they view themselves as a parent now. Some men were limited in their ability to link particular elements of their parenting style with any impact on the children and mothers, including implications for the mother-child relationship. The three main themes inherent in men's views of their parenting were the tendency to be under-involved, an authoritarian parenting style, and the notion of being an inadequate father.

Under-involved parent

A significant theme was the men's perception of their passiveness within the parenting role. The men acknowledged their lack of involvement within the family unit as well as their overall propensity to be uninvolved in their children's lives. It was also apparent that these men easily withdrew from parental responsibilities for a variety of reasons. When the men were involved, they were more likely to engage in entertaining, pleasurable activities with their children. Another element of their parenting style was the reluctance to set boundaries for their children. Throughout the findings, aspects of the parenting role were described as being women's primary responsibility.

The majority of men discussed being non-committed to the parenting role, in the sense that they were more inclined to focus on themselves rather than being active as a father. This often meant that the mothers of the children had to assume more responsibility. The men spoke of being there physically in the family environment, but not being there emotionally for the children within that environment. Some men showed an awareness that their self-focussed behaviour had been detrimental to the children.

John: ...I used to have a bad habit of getting up in the morning between half past six or seven and jumping on the laptop and playing my games on that and not be worried about the kids. Whereas now, it's the kids first and then the laptop...Their needs and they come first before mine.

Geoff: Occasionally he'd take up things like soccer or cricket or things like that...and instead of me encouraging him, I said 'oh well, at least you gave it a go'...I didn't encourage my children stuff all with after school activities, sports or things like that. [He] used to spend all his childhood sitting down in front of the TV or PlayStation and I'd sit down with a beer, listening to my sounds and talking to my mates.

Patrick spoke of his beliefs about the role of men as providers and how this contributed to his justifications that he did not have to take an active role as father when he was at home; rather, this was the mother's role.

Patrick: ...I justified it to myself in the sense that I provided for them financially. I put a roof over their head, food, clothed them. I was there physically at times to physically take care of them...but just not consciously there.

Throughout the findings there was evidence of a vicious cycle: men's propensity to be an inactive parent and their abusive behaviour, leads to a diminished bond with the children and as a consequence of this, the men further withdraw, becoming even less active in their parental responsibilities. In considering their under-involvement, the men did not show insight into this potential cycle. Rather, they appeared to view their inactive parenting style as separate to their lack of involvement brought about by their withdrawal. The following extract highlights this conflict:

John: I just feel like if the kids don't want to know me, fine, you know. I'll be there for them but if they don't want to have anything to do with me, then I just won't have anything to do with them. I will let her do everything. I know it pisses her off just how she

thinks I can't be bothered with the kids...they take me as a joke and even my partner's told me that. They don't take me serious...It puzzles me... it gets to me and I'll just say, 'Oh well fine, you want to be like that then be like that. Do what you want, let your mother deal with ya'.

In describing the level of involvement with their children in a parenting role, it was revealed that the main activities the men engaged in with their children were those which were entertaining and would be considered to be 'fun'. Some men acknowledged that they were 'selective' in their parenting, whereas other men spoke of fun activities without acknowledging that they neglected to contribute to other aspects of the parenting role.

Sam: ...I'm sort of trying to do a bit more with them as opposed to just being there, so playing games, playing board games with [partner's son]. He likes stuff like that. Even though I think 'Oh, I don't really want to do it', I'll do it to try make an effort.

Billy: Yeah when I have them I take them out and take the skate boards down to the school and muck around or go to the park, that kind of stuff...

Some men also referred to their involvement with children in this entertaining capacity after the relationship has ended; during their contact arrangements. This level of involvement may reflect the current contact arrangements being restrictive on their ability to be involved in other activities within the home, particularly given the fact that some men are not permitted to have the children over to their house to stay the night.

Mark: I go out and see the kids at least, I mean even though I don't get them as much as I want...I went and visited them today at school at lunchtime, I have lunch with them and stuff like that, take them to sporting activities and afterschool activities, so yeah it's really good.

However, it is also appears that men consider these entertaining activities to be evidence of what a 'good father' should be.

Another element of the parenting style to emerge was an inability to set appropriate boundaries for the children. The men described ways that they were inactive in both setting rules for the children and disciplining the children for wrongful behaviour. This has implications for the mother-child relationship, in that it places the mother in the primary disciplinary role, as the enforcer of rules. This is also concerning given the nature of traumatic bonding where these children may be both fearful of their father, whose violence they are exposed to, and yet accepting of his parenting techniques where there are limited boundaries. Consequently, children may choose to become closer to the father, the non-restricting parent, distancing themselves from the mother and forming an alliance with him. When the children are disciplined for wrongdoings, it is likely to be unpredictable and punitive in nature, as outlined below. Although some men acknowledged their relaxed parenting, they discussed this as a positive part of their role as father and did not show an understanding of the implications for the mother-child relationship or the children.

Patrick: I am fairly cruisy. I'll let my kids away with quite a bit, especially my daughters...I'm not the discipline person in our family...I'll let a lot slide. [My partner] is probably the more dominant...when it comes to disciplining our children. I'm the one that they'll run to and try to get away with things...that's my role in our family.

Mark: I'm not going to be that parent that's over them every second saying 'don't do this, don't do that'. I've always let them make their own mistakes unless it's going to mean them breaking their leg or something like that.

Authoritarian parent

In what may seem to be a paradox, the second theme to emerge centres on the authoritarian parenting style the men perceived as being a significant part of the way they interacted with the children, when they did choose to be involved in the children's lives. In discussing parenting in the context of their violence, a number of men acknowledged the harsh and rigid parenting techniques they used, including unrealistically high expectations and physical violence, and the ways these may have negatively impacted on their children.

This stricter style of parenting was evident in the men's accounts of how they disciplined the children, often through the use of power assertion; both verbal and physical. It is apparent that there is a limited tolerance threshold for when children were reprimanded for wrongdoings. The men perceived the function of these harsh tactics as a means of control.

Derek: ...well my parenting way back...I was always swearing and like a raised voice and everything and I would threaten I was going to kick his arse and all that...Mine was quite rough, quite loud...a strong tone.

John: My parenting sucks, to be honest, it sucks. I will let them get away with a wee bit of stuff, but with me, if I see something they are doing that they shouldn't be doing, I'll yell at them, I'll just bang, fly at them...

Geoff explained his use of harsh parenting techniques as interwoven with his perceived efforts to protect his children from conflicts they encountered beyond the home. The role as protector was viewed as evidence for being a 'good' father. Rather than speaking to his children about the difficulties they were experiencing and discussing ways to cope with or respond to these, he took matters into his own hands and became a role model for confrontational tactics as a means to solve problems.

Geoff: ...there's a couple of times where I would actually go and see parents. I wouldn't stuff around with kids, I'd just track down

where the parents live and go and see them...I was the protector of my children, which for every man is a natural thing, or every parent.

A number of men referred to the use of physical discipline with their children both currently and in the past. The men explained a propensity to resort to physical violence in an unpredictable manner, which is particularly concerning given the use of punitive techniques. Men revealed a belief that corporal punishment is an effective means of gaining control of their child's behaviour.

Geoff: I had no qualms in smacking them round the arse if they did something real bad.

Some men referred to their partner's guidance on whether it was appropriate to physically discipline their children and consequently ceased using this form of discipline due to the mother's concerns.

Billy: Because I don't hit them. My oldest son...I used to give him the odd smack on the head but that was the styles that I was brought up with...so I thought I was being fine until [ex-partner] saw me do it for the first time and I could see she didn't look that pleased about it and I didn't do it from that day on.

Clearly, the implications from the 'odd smack on the head' in terms of the potential risk of head injury are not recognised by Billy here.

As part of the authoritarian parenting style discussed, some men also explained their propensity to have unrealistically high expectations for their children. This reflects the control these men strived to have over their children. The men showed some understanding that setting high expectations could be dysfunctional for children, particularly in terms of their developmental stage or inability for children to meet these expectations.

Geoff: I've given them unrealistic goals, like 'you should have done better at this, give me your report, what's the story here'? I dug

deep into their head...‘what’s this C+, you shouldn’t have got a C+, you should have got a B...I restricted them to the extent where they were too petrified to do anything, if it’s outside dad’s boundaries.

It was apparent that these high expectations included the belief that others should adhere to the men’s authority. One participant, John, explained how his children did not listen to his requests:

John: ...if I ask them to do something, they won’t do it. But if their mum speaks and asks them, bang they’re doing it straight away. I just get the feeling that it’s rather the way I’m talking to them and then I think, ok I’ll try and ask them in a different way. But they still ignore me and listen to her more...

John held the belief that his children must meet his needs and make themselves available to him at his request, an unrealistic expectation in the context of the abuse the children have witnessed.

In describing the use of an authoritarian parenting style, many of the men referred to the differences they perceived between their own parenting style and that of the mother to their children. The men recognised that the women’s parenting was less harsh and therefore, was perceived as a ‘soft’ way of parenting. Although the harsh parenting was considered to be appropriate at the time of the violent relationship, some men did later perceive the women’s style of parenting as better for the children’s wellbeing.

Billy: She’s very soft in parenting, whereas I can be more...slightly more harsh...especially because I have a deeper voice and it sounds a bit worse.

In making comparisons between their own parenting style and that of their partner’s at the time, all the men reflected on their upbringing and the parenting techniques used by their own parents. It is clear that these men believed their parenting style was directly related to the way they were themselves parented.

Sam: [Partner] and I have different parenting methods...my parenting style is to do what my parents did, which I'm trying to break that cycle too because we got a bit of a beating when we were kids and I don't believe in that way of parenting now...if the kids aren't doing anything that is going to harm them then she tends to let it go...I expect kids to behave the way they should behave.

Derek: ...I brought myself up since I was about 12 years old. So, the way I was bringing up my son, you don't stand down for anyone. If anyone gets in your face boy, you give them a hiding. You don't let anyone tell you what to do...and I was more of the rough way, the hard way. Whereas his mum was more the soft way, kinder when dealing with him...I don't want my son being brought up soft- you stand your ground. So, she was bringing him up the right way...

Inadequate father

Another theme which became apparent in the men's accounts of the way violence affected their parenting, was the overall perception the men had of themselves as not being a 'good' father. The men believed that the parenting techniques they used and the role of father they adopted in their relationships with the children, were not considered to be attributes of a 'good' father. It appears that the concept of 'good' father was formed retrospectively to the abusive relationship, in that looking back on their parenting practices and role within the children's lives, the men did not consider this to be the ideal fathering role. This reflects their thoughts on the effect of violence on children and their experiences of being genuinely sorry and remorseful as they realise the impact this had on their children at the time and on their relationship.

Sam: ...it definitely impacted on me being a good parent...sometimes I think to myself, I don't deserve to be a parent...so I have constantly thought, am I fit to be a father?

John: I was thinking and now I look back and think, well no father would do that or no father would let their kids see that or go through that. And looking at it now is yeah I'm slowly starting to be a good father. Well trying to be anyway, the best I can.

Patrick: It's quite shattering when your kids look at you and think you're superman, you're just the ultimate man and then to have that notion disappear. It's no longer there anymore because now they realise I'm not that person, I'm not the greatest thing ever. It's quite sad really.

Summary

The men revealed perceptions of their parenting style used within the abusive relationship or currently, during contact arrangements. The under-involved nature of the parenting reflected a lack of responsibility for the day-to-day care of the children and ability to set appropriate boundaries. There was a tendency to withdraw from the children in order to protect children from perceived deficiencies as a father and in response to losing a father-child bond. A harsh and rigid authoritarian parenting style was acknowledged and in doing so, comparisons were made with women's 'soft' parenting techniques. The concept of being an inadequate father contextualises the men's perceived deficits in parental ability and further defines their construction of the 'good' father.

Section 4: Children's needs in healing from violence

This section focusses on participants' perceptions of the children's needs in healing from domestic violence. As part of this, views on day-to-day care and contact arrangements are considered, in particular concerning whether men should have contact with their children after the violent relationship has ended and in what capacity. Also pertinent in discussing the recovery process for children, was what ought to have happened in order to continue a healthy parent-child relationship. In doing so, stories of recovery are revealed in the way both men and women view the healing processes and reparations which need to take place within both the mother-child and father-child relationship. As was the case in previous sections, this must be understood within the context of the significant impact violence has had on these relationships.

As understood by the women

The women revealed ways in which they perceived children's needs for healing in the aftermath of violence. Although the women referred to the many detrimental effects of violence on the children, as well as the negative consequences of the men's parenting style, they also spoke about what should happen for their children now, while considering the road to recovery. There were mixed views as to whether children should have continued contact with their father and in what capacity this contact should be. Some women also reflected on the continued abuse and the on-going effects on the children. As previously outlined, only some of the men referred to by the women have attended the programme at HAIP. This will be considered further in the next section focussing on changes in behaviour for those men who had attended the programme. The two main themes to emerge were the notion that men should have contact and on the converse, shouldn't have contact with the children.

Contact supported

A significant theme to emerge in considering the children's relationship with their father was the view that the men should still have

contact with their children despite the violence experienced. There were a number of reasons to support this view, including beliefs that children need fathers, children desire contact with their father and that there were notable changes in his ability to be a father now.

A number of women discussed their perception that children *need* fathers. The role of father was viewed as an essential element of the child's world, and one that a mother cannot ultimately replace. These women distinguished between the ways their (ex)partner treated them as spouse, as separate to the negative impact he has had on the children. This can be viewed in the context of the guilt and responsibility women held for children's exposure to violence, discussed in Section One. Despite the significant impact of violence on the children, there was still the belief that they deserved to have a relationship with their father and therefore, the opportunity to develop some sense of emotional healing.

Jessica: ...because I promised my kids right from the beginning, that no matter what happens I'd never stop them from seeing their father, never. No matter what happens, no matter what he was like. They need their father, they love their father.

Deborah: Because I will never stop them...just because of what he did to me, I will never, ever stop him seeing the kids because I want my kids to see their father. Because sometimes, even though he's an arse...the only good thing about him is when he takes the kids out to have their time...just to have their father-son bond.

These women did not reflect on the origins of their beliefs; however, it appears that the concept of restricting their children's opportunity to have a relationship with their father outweighed the significant abuse that women and children had experienced.

Whilst describing the notion that children need to have fathers in their lives, one woman referred to the significance of whakapapa. This was discussed in relation to the importance of one knowing their family, their extended family and their genealogy. This is an essential element in their

belief that children need to have connections to their cultural roots, where they are from and how this reflects who they are as a person. These connections facilitate recovery as the broader structures of whānau, hapu and iwi can provide the children with support in their healing. Therefore, knowing one's father and having a relationship with him is considered important and separate to the violence.

Lucy: ...it doesn't just look at me and what I see for my kids...I look at my whānau, my iwi and my hapu as examples so that my children have somewhere to go, someone to look up to, have someone to depend on...So their whakapapa is most important to me and they have every right to have a whakapapa and a relationship with their father and we allow those things to happen...I have quite a big network of whānau and friends. They are aware of my situation, where the kids are at...My whānau's gone right out and accepted my husband. They know he's dad...

Another aspect contributing to women's desire for children to have contact with their father, centred on the perspective that children want to maintain a relationship with their father. These women respected their children's wishes and gave them the autonomy to make their own decision about whether they want to be involved in their father's life, allowing them to develop and perhaps remedy the father-child relationship. Developmental considerations were also relevant, as the older the children are, the more autonomy the mothers gave them in making this decision. For some women, this poses a further problem in that they are powerless to prevent their children from living with the father. It is important to be aware of reasons behind children's desire to maintain contact with their father, given the risks of traumatic bonding, where children do not want to disappoint their father.

Katherine: ...their relationship with their father is still about his privilege and because they don't want to do anything to upset that, they want to have whatever contact they can and I'm not going to stop them...they're already questioning their relationship with

their father...I mean, she's only five, so for me that's huge and all I can do is sit and watch and support and help them...

Helen: ...my fourth daughter wants to go live there and she's worked herself up to such a state because she's not seeing dad at all...and if there was something I could put in place to legally prevent her from going I would, whereas I think I'm going to lose her at the end of this year in to an environment that's going to be unhealthy...it's sort of like you just have to wait for them to come back.

Some women revealed that they had negotiated access arrangements with the children's father, in order to suit their own needs. This was evident in cases where the men had supervised access but yet the women were allowing him to have unsupervised access to the children. This further supports these women's view that men should have contact with the children, despite the legally determined arrangements that are in place.

Jessica: ...my partner's only supposed to have supervised contact with the kids but we are doing our own thing, without their knowledge...He has them every second week and our communication is really good now and it works for us. My children's lawyer also said 'that's just your way of letting him have what he wants so it keeps the peace', which it is in a way too, but I am still able to say 'oh no they are busy this weekend' and he is okay with that and we work out another weekend.

As Jessica's experience highlights, it may be questionable as to whether women are able to make the decision to negotiate access autonomously, or whether there is an element of control still enforced on the women by the men. There is a suggestion that Jessica is bending to her partner's wishes as she fears that by not doing so, this could lead to some form of reprisal.

Contact unsupported

The second significant theme that emerged was the opposite view, that fathers should not have contact with the children post-separation or in the aftermath of violence. The majority of women spoke of the continuation of abusiveness by the men and the lack of evidence that his parenting had changed, as reasons for opposing his involvement in the children's lives.

A significant view held by some women centred on the observation and experience that the men had not changed and were still using tactics of power and control, continuing to abuse the women and, subsequently, the children. These women could do little to prevent their children from having contact with their father due to the contact arrangements. Instead, all they could do was support their children through this, realising the significant impact this might have on them. Although they wished to support their children in healing, this was proving difficult given that they were continuing to be undermined as mothers and the children were still being exposed to their father's abusive tactics. This continued abuse shows that these men were not able to support the restoration of the children's relationship with their mother. In fact, the abuse further diminishes the opportunity for any healing to take place within the mother-child relationship. The continued use of children as weapons highlights this continued abuse, as evidenced by the following extract:

Helen: ...that's probably the 2nd or 3rd time my boys seen him this year and he picked him up for his birthday and he took him out for a movie and things during the evening, but while he was with him he said 'mum and I are going to be together' and 'I love your mum so much', and my son came home absolutely distraught...

As was highlighted in discussing the women's perceptions of the impact of violence on children, many of the significant effects of the violence are on-going and still present for the children today. Some women considered the long term effects of children being exposed to violence at the time of the relationship and through their continued contact and exposure to the men after the separation. These on-going effects were

considered within a number of domains: the continued raft of emotional difficulties the children display, including an inability to express emotions, the use of learnt abusive behaviours, and entering inappropriate roles, such as the protector and the parent. It is clear that these women were concerned for their child's wellbeing when in his care, and perhaps more so, for the on-going detrimental impact this contact might have.

Sara: I'd be sad for my son, if he doesn't have a dad, but really, suitability to have contact with the kids?...It's going to have lifelong effects on him forever and I can only pick up the pieces and try to not let it affect my son. I will be amazed to see what he turns out like as a teenager...

Another way that the women discussed the continued impact of the violence on the children, was the counselling that women had to arrange for their children, in order to support them. This was not only necessary due to the trauma experienced in the abusive environment but also in order to cope with the on-going effects of both separation and inconsistent contact arrangements with the parents. It appears this counselling was a way of women enabling the children to begin a healing process, and represents the support the mothers had for their children on their journey to recovery.

Deborah: ...my boys were all broken, hurt, trying to pick up the pieces. But slowly and surely we're getting there through lots of counselling for all of them.

Sara: I have had to put him through counselling for him to deal with that on his own and realise that it wasn't his fault...

Any positive changes observed in their children were attributed to the lack of exposure to the violent environment and therefore, restricted contact with their father. These positive changes in the children's behaviour and overall demeanour were immensely satisfying for the women, who continue to support their children through this change process and healing. It is clear there is some relief and hope for the future, when the women witness these substantial and yet subtle changes in their children.

Sara: Now, he's so not angry, he's really a very placid little man, so it's actually quite amazing to see the difference in him...when the smokes gone and everything's clear...

For some women, the men's lack of involvement with the children was considered positive as this created space for the children to begin their healing process and allowed her to focus on rebuilding the mother-child relationship.

Katherine: Well I am actually really glad that he's moved out of the country, to be honest. It was harder when he was in the country. It was so much harder...it gave me room...to find me and to deal with my kids...

In reflecting on their views in support of the men not having contact with their children, the women also considered specific ways the men's parenting had not changed, highlighting his unsuitability to have contact with the children in a parenting capacity. The women's reasons for opposing contact reflected their concerns about the men's parenting and role as father outlined in Section Two. This demonstrates the way the men's progress in overcoming their underlying abuse issues is interwoven with any positive change in parenting.

Katherine: He sits in his place of male privilege, none of that has changed for him in his life...he still does that as a father and parent now to my children...I don't think he's changed as a parent or father at all.

Helen: I think he needs supervised access and I have always said... 'what a great dad' but actually, right now today he is going through another stressful period, he is resorting to the same tactics...he's a dangerous person to be around and that hasn't changed.

Sara: ... I don't think the partners as a parent can be a proper parent, not like us mothers can, they don't have the compassion like we do. If they had the compassion like we do they would care

what they were doing to the children or us is not ok because it's going to affect our kids in the future.

Another significant aspect related to the view that men should not have continued contact with the children, was the façade men used to appear to be a 'good' father in front of others. This tactic shows the degree of manipulation these men used to retain the 'good' father reputation within their wider social circle, including the women's families. This same façade is evident in the way they manipulated the court system, as referred to above, in order to undermine the women's credibility and ability to mother effectively. Such behaviour is ultimately destructive.

Katherine: ...unless we were out in public and then he was this amazing father, who could put any baby to sleep and was great with children. Everyone thought he was fantastic with children but it was totally different.

Women became isolated from their support networks, including family and friends. Sue described a situation where her ex-partner had portrayed himself as a good father in front of her family, despite the significant psychological and physical violence she experienced 'behind closed doors'. This led to her own family colluding with the abuser during her violent relationship and shunning her when she did eventually leave him.

Sue: My kids' dad just made it a bit hard for me because my family, they loved him because they saw him just as a good provider. But they didn't see what happened behind closed doors...when I chose to walk away, I tried to go to my whānau. There were no doors open for me. My own whānau.

This shows how powerful this façade can be when it occurs in conjunction with the use of manipulative tactics. Women can be left in a powerless and vulnerable position both during and after the abusive relationship. As a consequence, a number of women who did choose to leave the abuser found the social supports they did have, were no longer

there. However, there was also frustration given the men's ability to undo positive changes seen in their children, through the on-going contact they had with them. In this sense the men were seen to be preventing any possibility of healing.

Sue: He still puts shit in their heads...I hate that I had to give that phone call to their dad on father's day. He's telling them lots of things, lots of broken promises and stuff....

Lucy: It's so easy for them to do that, to undo all this good work that you do as a mum...I had a similar situation like that when my husband was given them for about two hours and he managed to fuck everything up.

Summary

The women discussed understandings of children's needs in healing in the aftermath of violence. In considering men's on-going contact with the children, there were mixed views and significant ambivalence as to whether this was appropriate. The notion that children should have a continued relationship with their father was supported by women's separation of the violence incurred during the relationship and children's right to know their father. On the other hand, the continued abuse experienced post-separation, a lack of evidence that men had become better fathers and the desire to maintain positive changes seen in the children, were reasons for opposing the men's involvement in the children's lives.

As understood by the men

In considering the impact of violence on others, as well as their perceptions of access arrangements, the men described their views on the children's needs in the aftermath of violence. As was the case with the women, there appeared to be mixed views with regard to whether children should have continued contact with them, particularly concerning unsupervised and supervised access. However, all of the men highlighted the importance of the father-child relationship. There was some evidence of remorse for their actions, which further shows their awareness of the significant impact of their violence, as well as the need to provide the children with an environment that enables emotional recovery. There were three main themes to emerge: the role of supervised access, the sense of a diminished bond, and remorse.

Supervised access

The men discussed the meaning of supervised access and whether they believed it was important to have these conditions imposed on them, given their violent behaviour in the past. The majority of the men revealed that they were not supportive of having contact conditions placed on them, despite the significant effects of violence on children and the detrimental parenting techniques previously identified. Losing full access to the children was considered the most significant consequence for their violent behaviour. The men revealed perceptions of entitlement to having contact with their children, a hierarchy for the degree of harm which would warrant supervised access, the importance of knowing the supervisor and for some men, reasons for accepting current access arrangements.

As part of disagreeing with the concept of supervised access, some men explained that they did not want to see the children, unless they were given unsupervised access. This reflects a sense of entitlement to having the system meet their needs, and additionally, these beliefs show that some men are still not accepting accountability for their actions. Particularly concerning, is the lack of insight into the negative impact of their own

behaviour in denying children contact. Rather, the 'system' imposing access conditions was perceived as being detrimental to the children.

Mark: My thinking was, and this is a common theme that comes up here, is that if I can't have my kids, unsupervised, then I don't want them at all...the system's telling me that I need to be supervised with my kids and I know I don't... so the reaction is 'fuck it'. If the systems gonna make my kids suffer, which is the way I saw it, then I'm just going to go along with it, until the system puts it right...there was a lot of blame on the system and not a lot of blame on myself and accountability.

As part of this sense of entitlement, some men discussed the notion that they were only comfortable seeing the children if they knew the supervisor; that is, they were not a stranger. When the men were allocated a supervisor that they knew, it made it more likely for them to follow through with seeing their children within the agreed timeframe. However, it is also apparent that some men were able to persuade the mother of the child, the victim, to be the supervisor. Although it appears that women may have agreed to these arrangements, significant coercion or power dynamics may have been used to manipulate the terms. The following extract highlights the use of an ultimatum in order to have needs met.

Derek: I hate strangers staring at me and always at me. I did it at Barnardoes for a while and I just couldn't do it. I told my lawyer and I said, nah, if this carries on then I'm out of here. I want my son on my own and I'm not carrying on with this. Get someone I know or otherwise I won't do it...I asked [son's mother] if she would do it and she agreed as long as there was no anger or with my attitudes and that.

It is interesting to note that Derek gives higher priority to having his own needs met and avoiding accountability for his actions than spending time with his son.

In disagreeing with the concept of supervised access, the men revealed a hierarchy in terms of circumstances where supervised access should be imposed. In doing so, these men compared their own behaviour to other men's on a continuum of severity, showing clear rationalisations for what makes one man worthy of having unsupervised access compared to supervised. It appears that these men distinguished between children who witnessed substantial abuse or were directly abused, and children who witnessed a lesser degree of abuse and were not directly abused themselves. According to this distinction, the former warranted supervised access, the latter did not. There was limited acknowledgement of the significant effects of children's exposure to violence, despite the men earlier showing insight of this when discussing the impact on children. Rather, there was a tendency to focus on their own hardship, as fathers.

Christopher: If it was a very volatile, violent relationship and the kids saw a lot of things go on, then that's a little bit different, especially if the children were being harmed in that incident. But for people that aren't in that extreme situation, then I think it can be a little bit rough on the children and the father as well.

John: For me I didn't need it because he wasn't in any harm...I'd never hurt him. So, they are for people that need them...Well someone who is abusive towards the partner and the kids...if they're not violent or abusive towards their kids then I don't see why they need supervised access...

John also elaborated on his view of what it would mean if children did witness violence within the relationship. His response is compelling given his previous recognition that his children have been witnesses and direct victims of both verbal and physical violence.

John: They are at risk for learning violence but if a person is physical to their kids well then they don't deserve to have the kids, as far as I'm concerned. If it was me and I was a partner, I wouldn't let my aggressive partner have anything to do with the kids.

On the contrary, some men expressed their acceptance of the access arrangements imposed, and the belief that supervised access is warranted for men who are violent towards women. It appears that these men were accepting of the court's decisions and the need for them to complete the programme at HAIP in order to show that they have made the appropriate changes which then allow them to have access to the children. They also showed an awareness of the need to have these conditions based on the women and children's safety.

Geoff: It depends on the circumstances. I've had good friends in those positions and if you have a violent father or a shady parent then shit yeah, supervised visits are heaps better because it's a danger to the children...children don't have to grow up seeing that crap. I've carried the legacy over and I'm ashamed of it.

Shaun: There's too many deaths with children in this country I think. I don't think it's over exaggerated or anything, it's completely necessary. Maybe not for all people, but for some.

Some men also stated that they agree with the court's decision to impose supervised access arrangements, despite their previous revelations that they do not strictly follow these conditions.

Derek: I choose it, because his mum wants to get the unsupervised visits and I said okay yeah, that's all good, I don't mind it but I don't want my son staying with me at my place until I know she's comfortable with it, I don't want her freaking out, I don't want her worrying about anything. I want to make sure she feels safe that my son's going to be alright with me. I mean that was another reason I didn't fight with his mum to get him back because I knew there was something wrong and she only did it for a reason, to take my son away...

Diminished bond

Another significant theme to re-emerge, but this time in relation to pathways of healing, was the men's perceived difficulties around the

diminished father-child bond. Having discussed the impact of this diminished bond on the children, as well as on them as father, the men reflected on the consequences of this and the steps they might need to take in order to remedy it. The men revealed their understanding of the need to re-establish a close and trusting relationship with the children because of the trauma the children had experienced, and of allowing healing to take place. At times it was difficult for the men to distinguish their need to re-establish the bond without focusing on their own emotional injuries and grievances. It appears that the men experience conflict between wanting to have contact with the children, as a father, and giving the children the space needed to allow for healing. The men revealed that they had noticed positive changes in their children and reflected on the importance of becoming a better father as part of the road to recovery. This also indicates the men's belief in maintaining a healthy parent-child relationship and overall, their desire to have on-going contact with their children.

In describing the perceived lack of bond the men had with their children, the men spoke of having a close relationship with their children before the bond gradually lessened. This belief that there was a close relationship, served as a benchmark in what a relationship with a child could be like and it provided the motivation to work towards regaining it.

John: It sort of pushed the kids away from me as well which has been hard on me because we were close and we sort of are slowly now getting our bond back...

Christopher: He closed off. We used to be real close...and I always give him a piggy back to bed and that sort of stuff...We still have a close relationship but it's gone up and down, and I've had to rebuild that with him, which isn't easy.

As part of this, the men explained an on-going process of having to work on regaining the children's trust. In describing their strong desire to rebuild the trust, the men spoke of the need for perseverance. This shows awareness that the children need space and time to heal.

Patrick: ...I know I'm slowly regaining their trust. It's a long road, I understand that. Action talks and bullshit walks, so I've got to man up and show them that I do love them and that they can trust me.

Sam: Yeah I have had problems trying to bond with them... It's just a time thing I spose and just working on it.

Christopher: I have to make it up to him as well, I haven't just hurt her, I've hurt him as well and I need to rebuild that relationship as well. So I guess I've always been conscious of that.

Intertwined with the diminished bond the men now have with the children, was the realisation of the positive impact *less* contact may have had. It is significant that the men were able to see that the children's behaviour had changed; demonstrating some understanding and awareness of the detrimental impact of their violent behaviour. Secondly, it is significant that the men acknowledge some accountability in this. However, there is understandably much conflict associated with this realisation. On the one hand the men yearn for more contact with their children and the opportunity to re-establish a closer bond but on the other hand, they are aware of the need to give the children the opportunity to heal from the aftermath of violence.

Geoff: He's changed, he's completely changed. He's become more mellow, more relaxed, more absorbent of things around him. He's a completely different boy and I'll be lying to say, it kind of hurts because it makes me look at how much I'd stuffed up, but I'm pleased to see how he is now.

Remorse

A prominent theme, as evident in Geoff's comment above, was the remorse the men expressed for the impact of violence on women and children. This remorse was apparent during the abusive relationship, when the men apologised to their children for the violence they had witnessed and the hardship they had endured. However, the men also showed remorse

and empathy when looking back on the significant effect of their actions on others, leading to both regret and shame. Although the admission of remorse may be the first step in helping the children to heal, it is not clear whether or not the men understand that part of feeling remorseful, includes the need to take active steps not to repeat the violent behaviour.

John: I think afterwards 'oh, heck I shouldn't have done that' and I apologise to them and explain to them, they're all good about it. But it's been hard on them...[I'm] sorry for the kids, that they've had to witness it. Because they are my life, I live every day for them.

Sam: I do try to make an effort to apologise to them for what's happened and maybe try to explain it a little bit.

Mark: ...well when you sit back and you think 'oh, that wasn't right' and if you do feel genuinely sorry for it, you make that apology. You talk about how you are going to make it right and not do it again and stuff like that...those are the things I never knew before, I apologised without being sorry...Now I know what sorry means, it means actually being sorry for your behaviour and not just sorry just to get rid of this bad situation.

As part of remorse the men also spoke of the significant regret they had for the way that violence has affected their loved ones. It appears that they were particularly regretful of not being a good father to their children.

Geoff: Well I definitely regret the father aspect, I stuffed up big time...all I had to do was shut up and listen and it would have saved a lot of healing.

Derek: That was my life. To me it was a game...if I really cared about my son then I would have stopped ages ago, years ago but I didn't.

Patrick: It was quite shocking and an eye opening and I feel real sad, real embarrassed, real ashamed for making them feel like that.

Summary

The men revealed a number of factors associated with children's needs in healing from violence. Supervised access was perceived as a barrier towards continuing a relationship with their children post-separation, rather as something that might help healing. Furthermore, a sense of diminished bond with the children resurfaced in the context of needing to heal the father-child relationship. Some men expressed remorse for past violence and the impact on women and children. There were mixed views about the capacity in which children should maintain contact. However, it appeared that continuing to have contact with the children and heal the father-child relationship was essential in the men's lives.

Section 5: Changes in understanding and behaviour attributable to the programme

This section focusses on perceptions of any changes in men's attitudes or behaviour, particularly with regard to parenting, that are attributable to the men's programme offered at HAIP. As previously outlined, parenting in the context of domestic violence is covered to a certain extent under the 'Partnership' theme of the curriculum at HAIP and in particular, the session focussed on 'Responsible Parenting'. Therefore, any perceived changes must be considered in the context of the limited programme content aimed at addressing parenting. It is, however, pertinent to reflect on any perceived changes in parenting behaviour and the implications of these for women and children. The views of the five women who had (ex)partners who had or were currently attending the programme at HAIP are included in this section. All men participants reflected on perceived changes in their understanding and behaviour that were attributable to their participation in the programme. As part of this, factors influencing motivation to participate in or complete the programme were revealed.

As understood by the women

The women considered any perceived changes in their (ex) partner's behaviour subsequent to participating in the men's programme. Although all women collectively considered changes in the men's behaviour in the previous section, focussed on children's needs in healing from violence, these women specifically considered any changes attributable to the programme. Some considered that the men's behaviour had changed: others that it had not changed.

Better father

A number of women perceived the men to be 'better' fathers, attributing this to their increased involvement in the children's lives through contact arrangements. In this sense, contact arrangements provided the means for men to undertake a fathering role separate to their

relationship with the women and therefore, separate to the violent atmosphere. However, in discussing this improved ability to be a father, any positive changes or increased responsibility for the children appear limited. It is also concerning that some women refer to their experiences of continued abuse within the family atmosphere.

Deborah: ...that's good about the kids' father, like he may be no good with feeding them, cooking and cleaning but he's good at just taking them out to the playground...For me, it's a good thing, because they need that time out of the house because all the violence and that shit that comes in when he comes over.

Due to the limited timeframe for contact with children, it appears that the men were only able to demonstrate some of the attributes associated with perceptions of a 'good' father when this contact occurred beyond the domestic setting.

Belinda: ...he's a much better father, the limited time he does have with her. He doesn't as much buy her love, but he makes that absolute most of it with what he's got and even though he's fighting for shared care and I'm not going to let him.

Communication

Increased levels of effective communication were also perceived as evidence for changes in behaviour attributable to the programme. This communication appeared to be positive in that it allowed for negotiations and understanding, not only in terms of the men's understanding of the significant impact of his violence on both women and children, but also as a mutual understanding of what is considered in the best interests of those children.

Belinda: I've been doing HAIP... and my partner started about three weeks before me. We meet up once a week and we talk about our past and what we went through and relate it back to what we've learnt here and it's really good...I mean we're still fighting through court, so we have two different things going on but we can

sit back and say, right, this is what we want for [child]. It's about [child] now, not about our shit...

However, while some women could point to ways their (ex)partner's parenting had changed, others felt that the programme had failed to make any difference in this regard. In considering evidence that men's behaviour had not changed, some women reported the use of contact arrangements to continue their abuse. In particular, women experienced tactics of power and control, including using children as weapons, to further undermine their ability to be a mother. These views are reflected in women's reasons for opposing children having contact with the men, as discussed in Section three. Furthermore, some women considered the men to be under-involved and irresponsible parents, reflecting the concerns women had about the men as parents, discussed in Section Two.

One significant way that women perceived continued abuse was due to the men's participation in the programme itself. In this sense, men were reported as misusing or manipulating the programme content or processes to protect their entitlements and shore up power and control. A part of this appears to be the men's readiness to collude with other abusive men they associated with during the programme. This allowed for violent behaviours to be normalised to a certain extent. Some women expressed their concerns about the men's ability to form friendships with other abusive men attending the programme and by doing so, placing women and children in further danger.

Sara: ...the only thing I've realised about HAIP is that they will manipulate it, they learn it...they start to realise that they are the business...It's funny to watch them all band together, they start to realise, 'oh there's many like me, so I'm not the only one that's fucked up, they're fucked up too so it means we're normal, so I was hanging out with these men because they are normal like me'. So they start to form relationships within the groups and start smoking drugs with each other. He would bring them back to my

house when I was pregnant, and I would get to meet these abusive men.

This highlights the potential dangers of group programmes, in that participants are placed in an environment where they may further develop tactics of power and control through their association with other batterers. It may place women and children in situations of on-going risk of harm.

Summary

The women's perceptions of changes attributable to the programme reflect those views held by the women collectively in the previous section, in that there are concerns about the men as both partners and fathers. The group were divided, in that some women thought there to be positive changes where men were considered to be better fathers and have an increased ability to communicate effectively within the relationship and as parents to the children. However, the general consensus was that the continuation of abuse perpetrated by men, including the misuse of programme content and processes, and the limited changes in the area of parenting, provided the grounds for concern for the men's on-going involvement in the children's lives.

As understood by the men

The men reflected on changes in understanding and behaviour associated with their parenting, attributable to the programme. In doing so, a degree of insight was needed considering their parenting style and the application of their newfound knowledge concerning the impact of violence on children. It appears that the men consciously made changes in order to parent their children in constructive ways rather than the previous detrimental ways, outlined in reflecting on their parenting within a violent context. Although the majority of men were able to make links, some men could not apply the programme content to their parenting. The five main themes to emerge were communication, increased involvement, the concept of parenting programmes, no application to parenting and key factors contributing to motivation to change.

Communication

The men spoke of an ability to communicate effectively with their children, and with the mothers of those children, as a newfound skill learnt during the programme and which could be applied to their parenting. . These communication tools were described as being used to speak to children in constructive ways, rather than using verbal abuse. Furthermore, these skills provided alternative ways to discipline their children without reverting to the use of power and control tactics or an authoritarian parenting style. However, any increased ability to communicate must be viewed critically in that men becoming better communicators in the absence of changing abusive patterns of power and control may pose a risk to both women and children. A more effective communication style may lead to an ability to better communicate justifications for entitlement.

Geoff: Well my parenting way back, ages ago, was always swearing and a raised voice and everything and I would threaten I was going to kick his arse and all that. Well, I don't do none of that now. It's more, just 'mate, if you don't do as you're told, if you don't listen to your mum, then I'm going to have to take that off you'...It's not

hard or anything like that, it's more just nice and firm, nothing compared to what I used to be.

Communication was also viewed in the broader sense, in that this strategy could be used as a way for children to communicate their feelings within a family context.

Patrick: We still talk, talking and communication is big time. We have family meetings now, it's quite out of it...just giving them that chance to speak and to feel free to say whatever, that's pretty cool.

Communication skills were considered an essential tool for use within intimate relationships, as a way to deescalate conflict in situations where they may have previously reverted to violent behaviour. This has positive consequences for children who are exposed to that environment; they are less likely to be exposed to violence-fuelled interactions and are given the opportunity to experience constructive interactions between their caregivers.

Billy: Just the ways to learn how to speak to people without being disrespectful, abusive and controlling and that kind of stuff.

Patrick: The big thing I've got out of HAIP is communication is everything in a relationship...Screaming, yelling and fighting with each other was not going to solve the issue that we're talking about...So, we're at a point now where I don't need to use timeout anymore, we can talk calmly about issues and sort them out rather than yell and scream at each other...we can communicate constructively together and come up with solutions moving forward.

Increased involvement

Another way that men perceived changes in parenting techniques, associated with the programme, was an increased involvement in the children's lives. The role of being an involved parent included spending more time with the children, despite various access arrangements that may have restricted contact. As has been highlighted in Section two, focussed on

parenting styles used by men, the majority of men engaged predominately in entertaining activities with their children. However, in considering changes, the men spoke of a noticeable shift in focus; thinking less about themselves and becoming flexible in time spent with children, including non-entertaining activities. It appears that these men perceived this increased involvement in their children's lives as seminal to the construction of fatherhood, including the role of the 'good' father.

John: Basically instead of pushing them away...including them in more things that we do and setting aside sort of days or times when I spend it just with the kids...whereas before I never used to worry about that...and their needs and they come first before mine.

Derek: He likes that I spend time with him, that I can talk to him and we can do things together...My parenting is better than it has ever been.

Geoff: ...I've thrown them down...whereas now I actually help them, because my daughter wanted to actually be home schooled and we actually gave it a go. It was bloody good and it brought her and I closer...things are entirely different.

One participant, Derek, made an interesting comparison between the construct of 'father' versus becoming a 'dad', in reflecting on his increased involvement as parent. This shows the level of insight some of the men had in terms of broad changes they have made with regard to their parenting specifically, and therefore the ability to apply the programme content not only to their understanding of the impact of violence on children but to behaviour within a parenting role.

Derek: ...see back then I was only his father, I was never being a dad to him. But now it's more of a dad, it actually feels good to be a dad to him and not a father- just a figure. Now I interact with him more, spend time with him and he's loving it. It's quite good to see that I can actually sit down and talk to him and do his

homework and that. I never used to do any of that...But that's all I do now, I spend the time with him like a dad should, not a father...

In considering the concept of a 'good father', some men also reflected on whether they were a good role model for their children. Based on their style of parenting and the impact of their violent behaviour on that parenting, these men were able to distinguish the difference between simply being a father, in the sense of actual relationship, and the wider construction of fathering as an active role model.

Mark: Probably to be a 'good' father, or a good role model as a father...if I was to look at my behaviour back then and to think if this was someone that I want my son to model his behaviour on when he gets older, no way. So, I think anyone can be a father, it's just the level or the behaviour that you exhibit being a father that is the important stuff. And I didn't have the skills to, or the tools to be able to recognise bad behaviour and implement the good stuff.

As part of being an involved parent, the men also emphasised the use of listening skills with their children, to show them that they are attentive to their needs and interested in being a part of their lives. The men referred to their awareness of not listening to their children in the past, instead being more likely to talk over their children and disregard their needs. Therefore, engaging in active listening appears to be used as a way to validate children's needs and allow for understanding between parent and child.

Geoff: My biggest thing would be to listen. To actually listen and give them their own identity, instead of trying to push it down their throats with what they should deal with...I never used to listen. I'd be more tended to lash out...

Parenting programmes

As previously outlined, parenting is not specifically included as a component of the men's programme at HAIP; however, a number of men considered their views on the worth of a parenting programme as part of

their road to changing abusive behaviours. Some men believed that learning more about parenting would be a useful contribution in becoming more effective fathers and link in well with the programme content, which focussed on their violent behaviours. There were mixed views as to whether parenting should be covered separately to a stopping violence programme or should be a component within these programmes; therefore mandatory. Some of the men had considered attending a parenting programme, irrespective of their involvement at HAIP and believed this to be a useful contribution to their development and increased capability in being a non-violent parent to their children. On the other hand, some of the men believed that not all men who are mandated to attend HAIP would also need to attend a parenting programme as they are 'good' fathers who have not abused the children directly, which reflects these men's views that not all abusive men require supervised access, even when children had been exposed to their violence.

No application

Although the men referred to a number of ways that the programme content could be related to their parenting specifically, or in fact was related to changes made in parenting techniques, some men still held contradictory views as to whether their learning could be directly applied to parenting. As identified in the section concerning the 'Impact on children', it appears that a number of the men were able to reflect on how violence had affected their children and acknowledged the insight gained in this area through participation in the programme. However, other men thought that the contribution of the programme to their developing competence as a parent lay less in formal sessions addressing the impact of violence on children and more on specifically applying general ideas from the programme to their parenting.

Mark: Not so much around parenting itself but around awareness of what behaviour impacted on different people. So I would have to say not as directly as such in terms of parenting...we do talk about

the children and we talk about them in situations, the effects and stuff like that but it's not specifically 'here's a parenting tip'.

Two of the men perceived that the programme content was not applicable to their children, despite the curriculum of the men's programme providing opportunity to consider the impact of violence on children, within a variety of contexts.

Billy: ...my parenting has never really changed too much...but in saying that I think it could have been applied if it was a badly affected area...Most of what we do in the class hasn't been about children.

Christopher: Yeah there is not a lot I can really say, not a lot to me that really stands out that I've learnt from group when it comes to [child].

Motivation

A significant element associated with making any changes in behaviour, particularly those associated with parenting, was factors facilitating motivation for participating in or completing the programme. Some men placed equal weight on the women and children as motivators for change, whereas others alternated between women or children coming first. There were three factors that the men considered as being essential in their motivation to change: the victims, the relationship and themselves.

The victims were considered by some men to be a key factor in developing a motivation to change. In discussing this, some men spoke of both the women and children as intertwined. Part of this motivation was the repercussions for not completing the programme or more specifically, not making changes in their behaviour. These repercussions were centred on losing involvement in their family's lives. These men were intent on maintaining and rebuilding relationships within the family, as well as making reparation for the harm they had caused.

Patrick: ...but ultimately I am doing it for my family, for my kids, for my wife. But to help them I've got to help myself. That's what

I'm doing...I started to realise that they are worth turning my life around for and making a change.

Some men also considered the importance of becoming a 'better father' and remaining a part of their children's lives post-separation as a main motivating reason for change in abusive behaviours:

Patrick: The motivating thing for me moving forward is to learn to be a better husband and father for my children and to move forward in my life together with them.

Derek: I realised that I was losing my son and that's the only thing that made me want to change.

Maintaining the relationship the men had with their (ex)partner was also a specific motivator for change. This included the belief that participation in the programme would convince her that he had changed. For these men, the programme was a means to re-enter their intimate partner relationship. This level of motivation could be seen as a way to bargain with the women and use the programme as reason to justify change, without necessarily having to show any change directly through their actions.

Billy: ...she was mainly the reason why I wanted to finish because I wanted to be back with [ex-partner] and our son and I know that this is one big thing that can help me if I let it help me.

Two men who were self-referrals, also initially entered the programme on the basis of wanting to change their behaviour in order to 'save' their relationship. Although both men's relationships subsequently ended during their participation in the programme, they continued to attend, reflecting their commitment and level of motivation to complete the programme. The following extract highlights this view:

Geoff: I initially did it to try and rescue a relationship I was in, just to try and prove to my partner that I was genuine to make an attempt to better things...because I physically hit her and that's

why I decided it was better that I walked in... I was prepared to make a change but it didn't make any difference, she still left...I came into HAIP to prove to her that I was willing to give anything a go to save our relationship, and I'm still going to complete my course because it's not just that, it's how I have to change, the way I look at things and the way my children look at me...

In order to actively participate in the programme, motivation to change also rested heavily on the belief that they must do this for themselves. A number of men made the distinction between changing for the good of others and changing on the basis of becoming a better person.

Mark: I thought 'I've got to complete this to be a better person'. And taking care of that, well everything else will fall into place...if I know I can control my anger or have a different method for dealing with it, or have the tools for dealing with it then...it will all fall into place.

Two men who were self-referred to the programme highlighted that their participation showed they already held themselves accountable for their actions, perhaps more readily in comparison to other men who were mandated to attend.

Geoff: ...the good thing is they're changes I've made because I want to. Knowing that you 'have' to is one thing, but unless you can make the changes yourself it doesn't matter how much people are going to babble in your ear, you've got to take it on, take responsibility for it.

Christopher: I guess being a self-referral, it does make a certain element of it a lot easier because I do want to be here, I do want to learn, I do want to change my behaviours and actions. So I can see within the other people in the group it takes a while or they don't care.

Summary

In reflecting on any changes in understanding and behaviour related to parenting, the men perceived a number of factors to be relevant. An increased ability to communicate effectively was perceived as a valuable tool in engaging in conversation and disciplinary practices with children. The men talked of increasing involvement in their children's lives, including the notion of being less centred on themselves and more active in the day-to-day care of children. As part of this, men spoke about this level of involvement as central to the construction of a 'good' father. Parenting programmes were described as a potentially valuable addition to their development and change within the area of parenting. Despite some men being able to apply the current curriculum to their parenting, there was still difference of opinion as to whether the programme could be applied to parenting specifically and of concern, to children's wellbeing in general.

Chapter Summary

There were a number of themes evident within each of the five domains. While these domains are presented as being mutually exclusive, there is significant overlap between participants' understandings of parenting within the context of domestic violence. In terms of the impact of violence on women, negative implications for both the general ability to function in adaptive ways and the ability to be a mother to the children were revealed. The male participants showed a lack of insight into the implications of violence for women, particularly in the mothering role, and some even thought that their violence had had positive consequences for the mother-child relationship. The implications of violence for children are vast, including their emotional and behavioural functioning. Furthermore, children were exposed to substantial levels of both psychological and physical violence and importantly, many of these children were also the direct victims, both intentional and unintentional. The batterer's parenting style was perceived as being harsh and punitive, under-involved and largely detrimental to the children's wellbeing. Both the women and men participants considered healing processes that need to take place and how

best to facilitate recovery both for the children and women, and within mother-child and father-child relationships. It was clear that there is ambivalence concerning the role of fathers in children's lives post-separation. Despite the programme at HAIP not being centred on the batterer as parent, participants were able to relate ways that learning could be applied specifically to parenting. Overall, the women participants provided detailed accounts of their experiences of violence for themselves and children, in comparison to the men who were far more limited in their ability to reflect on and understand the ramifications of their violence. When reflecting on this, the women discussed the impacts of violence on self as intricately interwoven with those of the children, whereas the men often resorted to expressing their own emotional injuries and hardship relating to the consequences of their violent behaviour. Therefore, there appears to be a 'gap' between the women's and men's experiences and understandings of the impact of domestic violence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This chapter focusses on the research findings with regard to the impact of violence on women and children, the batterer as parent, recovery in the aftermath of violence, and changes related to parenting attributable to the programme at HAIP. First, the findings of the current study will be discussed with reference to previous literature reviewed in Chapter One. The implications of these findings for policy and practice in New Zealand will then be discussed.

Discussion of findings

In considering the findings of the current study compared to previous research in this area, there are a number of factors which are consistent; however, there are also some ideas that challenge previous findings. The findings will be discussed within five key domains: the impact of violence on women, including mothering; the impact of violence on children; the batterer as parent, recovery in the aftermath of violence and programme considerations with respect to parenting and the role of father. Within each of these domains, the various themes will be discussed for both the women and men participants in this study. However, as has been consistently highlighted throughout this study, the findings are interrelated and must be viewed as a whole in order to gain in-depth understanding of the vast implications of domestic violence.

The impact of domestic violence on women

In the present study, some women experienced harsh physical violence, whereas other women experienced predominately psychological abuse. First the general impact of violence on women will be discussed, which centres on mental health consequences. This will be followed by the impact of violence on mothering, including consideration of the construction of motherhood.

Mental health consequences

In terms of mental health problems associated with IPV, previous literature shows evidence of depression, suicidal ideation, low self-esteem and anxiety, as a select few of the detrimental outcomes that are highly prevalent for women (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Dolezal et al., 2009; Fanslow & Robinson, 2004; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2005; Lafta, 2008). These listed negative outcomes were quite evident in the women's accounts when describing the psychological and mental health consequences for battered women. The women participants discussed feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness as both disempowering for general day-to-day functioning and as a significant factor contributing to low self-esteem. At the most extreme end of the scale were the accounts of women experiencing suicidal ideation and thoughts of harming themselves. This is consistent with previous literature suggesting that higher levels of depressive symptomology and low self-esteem, including accompanying suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, are associated with more severe levels of IPV (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992). The male participants, by comparison, seemed to have a much more limited conception of the impact of their violence on women, highlighting mainly perceived fear and anxiety. This fear was described as being related to the notable lack of trust and distancing experienced within their intimate partner relationship.

In the current study, women participants explained the way their (ex)partners blamed them for the abuse they experienced, a factor contributing to their feelings of guilt and self-blame. One of the most shocking recollections was one woman's experience of being blamed by the batterer for conceiving their child, a result of the sexual violence perpetrated against her by the batterer. Research has shown that women who are abused often use ineffective coping strategies, such as self-blame, which is correlated with increased feelings of hopelessness (Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby, 2004). This is supported by findings in the current study, as women expressed significant levels of guilt and self-blame within the context of their children's exposure to violence; a factor contributing to the

overall negative impact of violence on their wellbeing. Guilt is viewed in the context of negative mental health outcomes for women; however, this is also intertwined with perceptions of the mothering role. As previously outlined within the literature (Bancroft et al., 2012; Levendosky et al., 2006), the mental health difficulties associated with IPV may interfere with women's ability to parent. Although these findings may appear to support the notion that abused women are less available emotionally and physically due to the emotional impact of violence, they must be viewed within the context of complex relationships and the processes that shape the women's role as mother. The significance of guilt will be discussed further below, in considering the construction of motherhood.

Many women participants discussed the notion that psychological violence contributes to long-term, enduring detrimental outcomes for women's mental health and wellbeing. As highlighted by Edleson and Tolman (1992), psychological violence is often perceived by victims of domestic violence as being more detrimental to wellbeing compared to physical violence and this was highlighted by participants in the current study. In contrast, the men seemed less aware of the long-term impacts of psychological violence. However, this should not be taken as suggesting that they were naïve in this regard. On the contrary, they clearly understood psychological violence as a purposeful action, a means by which they were able to control their partners and reassert power within the relationship. This reflects our knowledge of the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of abusive men, including control and sense of entitlement (Adams, 1991; Bancroft et al., 2012; Silverman & Williamson, 1997; Stark, 2007). Interestingly, in the present research, some male participants perceived their use of psychological violence as being related to their own personal insecurities. Power and control was used to assert their dominance over women in situations where they perceived themselves to have diminished control. This may be explained by current understandings of batterers' sense of entitlement and belief system which legitimises men's superiority over women; the belief that men have a special status within

society (Pence & Paymar, 1993b). Therefore, these beliefs are protected by the use of violence and in this sense justified, as inherent in the current findings (Silverman & Williamson, 1997).

Although these findings appear to suggest that women may have been less emotionally and physically accessible to their children due to the mental health consequences associated with domestic violence, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that this is the case, particularly when considering the positive and nurturing parenting practices used by women in the mothering role.

Mothering in the context of domestic violence

In discussing the impact of violence on mothering, the men were limited in their ability to make connections between their abusive behaviour and their (ex)partner's role as mother. Yet whether they understood the connection or not, it was clear that most had undermined women's parenting both directly and indirectly, a finding often noted in previous research (Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe et al., 1990).

Isolation

The women participants experienced multiple tactics used by the batterer to undermine their credibility as a mother, severing the bond they had with their children and marginalising her role as mother. As outlined in previous literature and consistent with the current findings, battered women are often ridiculed in front of the children, discredited as a mother through children being told she is unfit as a parent, and blamed for any detrimental outcomes for the children (Cunningham & Baker, 2007; Lapierre, 2010; Peled, 2000). As a result of these tactics, women participants experienced significant ambiguity within the mother-child relationship through children colluding with the abuser and distancing themselves from her. This may be explained by previous studies which highlight the batterer's ability to manipulate the children's perceptions of violence, leading them to blame their mother for the abuse (Bancroft et al., 2012) or children's tendency to align themselves with the batterer due to his

perceived power and in an attempt to win his approval and affection (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Johnston & Campbell, 1993; McMahon & Pence, 1995).

The current findings show that women's parenting continued to be undermined post-separation, as is consistent throughout previous literature (Bancroft et al., 2012; Mbilinyi et al., 2007; Radford et al., 1997).

Furthermore, batterers' use of the court system and legal proceedings to assert power and control and discredit women as mothers was also evident in the findings and supported by previous research (Doyme et al., 1999; Jaffe et al., 2003; Liss & Stahly, 1993). The women participants revealed their experiences of being manipulated to stay with the batterer by his use of threats to have children removed by child protection services or by men obtaining joint or sole custody of the children; often the result of women being significantly discredited as an ineffective mother. This may reflect the batterers' sense of entitlement to the children and the belief that they should not lose any parental rights (Jaffe et al., 2003). The male participants' accounts of using the children as weapons to prevent women from leaving the abusive relationship, further supports this view and previous findings (Beeble et al., 2007). In doing so, some men divided children's loyalties by threatening to not remain in the children's lives should the women leave the relationship.

Many women in the present study revealed their distrust of the legal system; perceiving there to be a lack of understanding of the significant overlap between the abuse they experienced and the effects of violence on children. This supports research which highlights that women are often unjustly victimised through systems when professionals fail to understand the continuation of violence post-separation and the impact of this for children's wellbeing and ability to heal (McMahon & Pence, 1995; Shalansky et al., 1999; Zorza, 2009).

Mother as protector

All of the female participants strove to protect their children from being exposed to violence or becoming a direct or indirect victim of violence. The strategies used to protect children ranged from comforting the children during abusive episodes to leaving the batterer or physically giving children to other family members to ensure their safety. As suggested by Peled and Barak Gil's (2011) findings, battered mothers do strive to protect their children from violence, reflecting their desire to nurture and provide for their children's physical and emotional needs. However, violence places significant constraints on women's ability to fulfil the role as protector, undermining the mothering role and the mother-child relationship. One participant explained her experience of being prevented from comforting her children after they had witnessed substantial physical abuse against her. This shows the batterer's ability to prevent women from meeting their child's emotional needs during times of distress (Levendosky et al., 2000). The women participants expressed guilt for not being able to completely protect their children from the violence and for placing the children in a position where they had to protect their mother, as discussed further below. Furthermore, some female participants stayed with the abuser out of fear that they would lose their children, as found in previous research (Liss & Stahly, 1993).

Parenting practices

Previous literature suggests that battered women may change their parenting behaviour when the batterer is present, by undertaking the punitive practices themselves in order to prevent harsher punishment by the batterer and therefore, reduce his irritability (Bromfield et al., 2010; Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Osofsky, 1998). This was consistent with the present findings, in that some women participants reported using physical discipline against their children in order to protect the children from an escalation in violence or the batterer carrying out the discipline. The use of physical discipline practices was not supported by the women. For instance, one woman protected her children by hitting her own body instead of the

children, which often resulted in children being emotionally distressed and thereby providing evidence to the batterer that she had followed through with the discipline. However, despite there being a protective element in the women's use of physical discipline, the batterer frequently specifically instructed them to use harsh discipline. Although these findings do pose a challenge for previous research, which suggests that battered women do *not* use more punitive practices compared to other women (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Holden et al., 1998; Sullivan et al., 2000), they must be viewed within the context of the significant power and control which underlies their use of physical discipline.

The female participants did, however, report their use of aggression directed towards the children both during the relationship and post-separation, expressing guilt for placing their children in this position. Previous research highlights that battered mothers may show increased rates of physical and psychological aggression towards children, due to their inability to release their frustration as a result of the abuse they have experienced (Holden et al., 1998; Mbilinyi et al., 2007; Straus, 1990; Zerk et al., 2009). This is consistent with current findings; however, participants only reported the use of verbal aggression and not physical, which supports their disapproval of physical disciplinary practices. Furthermore, studies have shown that battered mothers experience higher levels of stress compared to non-battered mothers and that the level of parenting stress is correlated with the likelihood that mothers will use aggression (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Holden et al., 1998). The female participants did not specifically discuss stress in relation to their parenting; however, the distress associated with the significant undermining of their ability to be a mother is evident and therefore, this may be linked with their propensity to use aggression.

The construction of motherhood

There is limited research on the way intimate partner violence shapes the practice of mothering (Lapierre, 2008); however, the present findings lend support to those of Peled and Barak Gil (2011) and Semaan et

al. (2013). In discussing mothering in the context of domestic violence, the women, as victims of domestic violence and men, as perpetrators of domestic violence, ascribed meaning to the social construction of motherhood. The role of mother was described as central to the women's lives and many women perceived themselves as the primary caregiver of the children, in part due to their (ex)partner being an irresponsible parent. It appears that these women conceptualise 'the good mother' as one who is nurturing and devoted to her children, which is consistent with westernised social constructions of motherhood (Douglas & Michaels, 2004). However, many women in the present study revealed the significant constraints placed on mothering as a result of IPV and their perceived inability to fulfil the role as 'the good mother'.

Peled and Barak Gil (2011) describe battered women's struggle to separate 'the children's world' from 'the violent world'. This was evident through the women participants' preoccupation with protecting their children from violence and restraining the abusers behaviour, in an effort to function as a mother. The role of protector was perceived as central to the women's ability to be a 'good mother'; however, this was at times unattainable due to the ongoing violence in their lives. The women's guilt and self-blame, expressed throughout the findings, appears as a significant by-product of not being able to fully protect the children from domestic violence or consistently meet their needs. Women blamed themselves for 'choosing' to be in an abusive relationship and consequently, the detrimental outcomes for children's wellbeing. They placed little, if any, blame on the abuser for their role in this, reflecting the notion that women perceive themselves as the responsible caregiver. This may be explained in the context of mother-blaming discourses which tarnish women as deficient and failures as mothers, for not protecting their children and staying in the abusive relationship (Lapierre, 2008; Roberts, 1999). The women focussed on their failings in fulfilling or attaining the 'good mother' role. However, Peled and Barak Gil's (2011) findings are challenged to a certain extent, as the women in this study did not perceive their mothering role as a source of

positive sense of identity and self-worth, or perceive themselves to be a 'good mother' amidst the violence. To the contrary, women described their loss of self-identity as directly proportional to their inability to fulfil a mothering role. The impact of violence on their functioning was disempowering, to the extent that all of the women were unable to parent their children the way they wanted to (Mbilinyi et al., 2007).

The mothering role has been found to provide battered mothers with a sense of control and the strength to assert themselves, in an environment where there is limited power (Semaan et al., 2013). The main way the women participants asserted control was through the protection of their children and as discussed above, this was often hampered by the batterer's violence. On the other hand, some men participants, in discussing the impact of violence on mothering, perceived their (ex)partners as gaining strength and empowerment within the mothering role, consistent with previous findings (Semaan et al., 2013). The men in this study perceived women's increased bond with the children, placing children first and ability to continue to be a 'good' mother despite the violence, as evidence for women's strength and resilience within the mothering role. Although not specifically referred to by the men, it appears that their perception of women as strong and able to protect their children contrasts with their perception of women as weak and lacking in power, as a result of their violence. There is also the possibility that in claiming the women have gained strength in their ability to be a mother, the men may be avoiding responsibility for 'damaging' their (ex)partner and even justifying their violence because of the perception that they have 'done her a favour'. The men's perceptions of mothering ought to be considered within the context of the decreased bond that these men perceived within the father-child relationship, as discussed below.

The impact of domestic violence on children

The findings highlight the significant impact of violence on children's behavioural, emotional and cognitive functioning. Children were reported as being both intentional and unintentional victims. Additionally, some children experienced direct physical abuse and physical discipline as part of the parenting strategies used. In this regard, my research is consistent with previous findings (e.g. Holden & Ritchie, 1991). Previous research highlights the prevalence of children's exposure to IPV and the notion that this is considered a substantial form of child maltreatment in itself (Bancroft et al., 2012; McGee, 2000). This was consistent with this research, in that all women and most men participants revealed their children's exposure to substantial levels of physical and psychological violence used against women. The severity and extent of the children's exposure to violence and accounts of children being direct intentional victims, is supported by the literature suggesting a high co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment (Appel & Holden, 1998; Edleson et al., 2003; Edleson, 1999a). The children's exposure to violence was perceived by the participants as being the main reason for any detrimental outcomes seen in their children.

The male participants perceived their psychological violence towards their (ex)partner as being the main form of violence children were exposed to during the abusive relationship. However, these men discussed the varied ways in which children were used as weapons in order to control and undermine their (ex)partner and considered this as a form of direct abuse against the children, as outlined in previous findings (Bancroft et al., 2012; Jaffe et al., 1990). These men perceived this form of violence as having more significant impacts for children, compared to physical violence. These views are not supported by current understandings of detrimental outcomes for children, where children who are directly maltreated and those who are exposed to domestic violence alone, show similar psychological and behavioural difficulties (McCloskey et al., 1995). Additionally, some male participants showed a lack of understanding as to developmental

considerations for children who are exposed to domestic violence. Research has consistently shown that the younger the child when first exposed to violence, the more deleterious the outcome (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Osofsky et al., 1995) . A recent New Zealand based study found that children aged 4 years showed higher rates of internalising and externalising problems in situations where mothers reported severe IPV, compared to any other age group (Paterson et al., 2008). In light of this, the male participants' perceptions that younger children may not be as affected by exposure to violence, due to their developmental level and inability to comprehend the violence, reflects a lack of insight into child development.

Emotional functioning

The impact of violence on children's emotional functioning includes higher rates of internalising and externalising difficulties (Sternberg et al., 2006). Children who live in an violent environment often experience intense fear and anxiety (McCloskey et al., 1995; Mullender et al., 2002), and this is also associated with post-traumatic stress or trauma related symptomology (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998). This was evident in both men and women participants' perceptions of children's significant fear and anxiety. In describing emotional impact of violence on children, the women reported the way children suppressed their emotions in the presence of the batterer in response to fear. Internalising emotions was perceived as a protective strategy, serving two separate, albeit related functions: firstly, to reduce the likelihood that the batterer may use violence or increase the severity of violence towards the children and their mother, and secondly to prevent animosity within the father-child relationship. Internalisation of distress is often a coping strategy used by children; however, this may have long term negative consequences for children's emotional development (Graham-Bermann, 1996; Jaffe et al., 1990). The majority of male participants identified fear and anxiety as the most significant way children were affected by violence; however, they placed emphasis on children showing physiological signs of fear. Although these men had some awareness of their children's experiences of fear, they did not discuss their

own response to this, including the possibility of increased use and severity of violence towards children.

Externalising difficulties, such as aggression and acting-out, are also higher in those children exposed to violence (McGee, 2000). Graham-Bermann (1996) suggests that children's worry or anxiety about harm to their mothers and siblings, in the context of domestic violence, is significantly associated with externalising behaviours. This suggests that acting-out behaviours may not always be learned behaviour but rather a coping strategy to overcome fear and anxiety about their fathers (Graham-Bermann, 1996). This was a common finding in the women's experiences of children releasing their frustration in aggressive and physical ways, particularly through head-banging and hitting behaviours. Although many of the participants discussed externalising behaviours in the context of social learning, the women conceptualised some externalising behaviours to be related to emotional regulation difficulties. Two participants revealed their children's regressions in toileting, as a response to the fear induced by living in a violent environment. Previous research highlights these behavioural difficulties as common in young children who are exposed to domestic violence (Howell & Graham-Bermann, 2011).

Parent-child relationships

Within the context of domestic violence, children's relationships with their fathers are often marked by ambivalence (Peled, 2000). Previous studies report that children are both fearful of their father and yearn for a close relationship with him (Humphreys & Houghton, 2008; Peled, 2000). This was a common theme in the current research, where the women explained the way children showed both fear and worry in relation to their father's behaviour and yet altered their behaviours and emotions in order to preserve a positive image of themselves in their father's eyes. Although not specifically discussed by participants, children's submissiveness and compliance as a result of fear, may be due to a desire to align themselves with the batterer based on his perceived power in the relationship (Peled, 2000). This can significantly impact on the mother-child relationship as

children may form an alliance with the abuser (Bancroft & Silverman, 2004; Peled, 1998).

Children have been found to socially withdraw in response to being exposed to, or the direct victim of, violence (Graham-Bermann, 1998) which has significant implications for the parent-child relationship. Women and men in the current study discussed children's propensity to withdraw and isolate themselves from the batterer in response to fear. However, the male participants discussed further the implications of withdrawal for the father-child relationship. These men described their own emotional injuries and grievances when discussing the experience of losing their bond with their children. Some men coped by withdrawing further from the children in order to 'protect' the children for any harm done. These findings support the view outlined by Bancroft et al. (2012), that batterers have a tendency to be self-centred in their relationships with children and reluctant to meet children's needs or fulfil the responsibility of parenthood.

Social learning

It is well established throughout current literature that some children learn the batterers' tactics of power and control through social learning processes. Children may learn that violence is a functional tool to have their needs met and a useful form of conflict resolution (Margolin, 1998). Evidence of social learning was a common theme in the current research. The majority of both women and men participants discussed children's use of aggression and physical violence as a result of being exposed to the batterers' tactics, and separate to externalising behaviours discussed above in relation to emotional dysregulation. One particularly detrimental outcome for battered mothers is their children's use of learnt behaviours against them, both in terms of physical violence and using control tactics (Dutton, 1995; Holden & Ritchie, 1991), which was a common theme in the present study. The women participants revealed children's use of violence and control against them, further undermining their ability to be a mother and leading to double victimisation. Furthermore, these behavioural difficulties commonly seen in children who have been exposed

to domestic violence create additional stressors for women in their parenting role as they endeavour to manage this behaviour (Levendosky et al., 2003).

These learnt behaviours were conceptualised by both men and women participants as being a part of children adopting the batterer's attitudes and belief system, a finding highlighted in previous research (Graham-Bermann & Brescoll, 2000; Silverman & Williamson, 1997). This is particularly concerning given the knowledge that boys in particular show an increased risk of becoming perpetrators of IPV in adulthood (Silverman & Williamson, 1997). Exposure to violence is also more likely to lead to antisocial and delinquent behaviours, including oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder (Boden et al., 2010). In the present study, it is clear that a number of children were displaying learnt behaviours and attitudes that support the subordination of women, and are therefore at risk of continuing a cycle of transgenerational violence (Wolfe & McGee, 1994). Furthermore, these violent behaviours often lead to children withdrawing emotionally from their mothers due to their inherent disrespect for her as a mother (McGee, 2000; McMahon & Pence, 1995). In the current study, this finding was supported by one man's account of his son undermining *all* women and colluding with men who held a belief system of male privilege.

Role reversal

Role reversal is a common phenomenon in families where there is domestic violence; however, this often leads to detrimental outcomes within the mother-child relationship. The current findings supported previous research, suggesting that children often enter a protector role for their mother through both direct physical intervention and verbally standing up to the batterer during abusive episodes (Fantuzzo & Fusco, 2007; Mullender et al., 2002; Peled, 1998). Although this shows children's resilience in the context of violence, conversely this undermines the mother-child relationship (Mbilinyi et al., 2007). The men participants, in describing their experiences of children entering the protector role, tended to focus on the detriment of this for their *own* relationship with the

children, perceiving this to mean that children had formed an alliance against them with the mother. As previously outlined above, these men focused on their own difficulties related to this perceived loss of connection with their children and were preoccupied with having their own needs met (Bancroft et al., 2012).

It is also apparent that children may adopt a parentified role where they assume inappropriate levels of responsibility for the physical running of the house or day-to-day care of younger siblings (Barnett & Parker, 1998). Furthermore, in the parentified role, children may become emotionally responsible for their mother and siblings; supporting them in times of need or turmoil due to violence (Earley & Cushway, 2002). This was consistently found in the women participants' accounts of parentification within their lives. However, children assuming a parenting role was perceived as being related to their (ex)partner's inability to fulfil this role, rather than solely due to their own emotional dysfunction associated with the abuse. Interestingly, one female participant also discussed her concerns over children being placed in parentified positions during their contact visits with their father. This reflects previous findings which suggest that batterers may have inappropriate expectations of children for their developmental age (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998), neglecting to set age-appropriate boundaries for their children (Bancroft et al., 2012). This will be explored in more detail below when considering the role of batterer as parent. In discussing experiences of role reversal, women participants expressed significant conflict between both needing someone to support them in this role and immense guilt associated with 'allowing' their children to assume these positions.

As supported by Peled and Barak Gil's (2011) findings, it appears that the guilt experienced was related to the women's construction of motherhood, in that the mother role encompasses both the protection of children and provision of their physical and emotional needs. Therefore, in an abusive environment, these women were unable to always fulfil the role as protector or prevent their children from taking on responsibility within a

parentified role. This violated their perceived role as mother, and resulted in significant guilt and self-blame. Furthermore, previous research shows that violation of the mothering role has led to battered women leaving their abusive partners (Semaan et al., 2013). This was evident in the current study, where one female participant reported that her children's physical intervention against the batterer, in an effort to protect her, provided the catalyst for leaving the relationship.

The batterer as parent

There is little research that focusses on the characteristics of batterers as fathers with the work of Bancroft and Edleson being the main exceptions (Bancroft et al., 2012; Edleson & Williams, 2007), and even less on understanding the experience of fathering for violent men. The findings from the current study provide in-depth information on perceived characteristics of abusive men as fathers. Furthermore, the men participants' perceptions of their fathering role and the meaning ascribed to fatherhood are explored. The research findings largely support Bancroft and colleague's work (2012), outlining adverse parenting styles by men who batter.

Under-involved parent

Batterers have been found to be under-involved in their children's lives and less available physically and emotionally to their children (Bancroft et al., 2012; Holden & Ritchie, 1991). As part of this, these men typically evade their responsibilities for the day-to-day care of the children (Adams, 1991). These factors were common in the women participants' accounts of parenting styles used by their (ex)partners both during the abusive relationship and post-separation, and in the male participants' reflections on their own parenting style. The majority of women reported that men were largely under-involved throughout the abusive relationship, often neglecting parental responsibilities and choosing to see the children only when it suited their own needs. The male participants also perceived their parenting during the abusive relationship as centred on their own

needs and not those of the children. This may be viewed in terms of the self-centredness which is found to be characteristic of batterers in their relationships with their children, in that these men may not modify their own lifestyle in order to encompass the needs of their children or the responsibility of parenthood (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Children were often reported, by both women and men participants, as being neglected and placed in risky situations. Furthermore, men showed an inability to provide age-appropriate boundaries for their children, as is consistent with previous findings (Jacobson & Gottman, 1998). The men's failure to set boundaries undermines the mother-child relationship as this often places women in the disciplinary role. When men did choose to be involved in the children's lives, this often centred on engaging in fun and entertaining activities, a finding which is also consistent with Bancroft et al's (2012) findings. However, this conditional parenting and the men's focus on 'entertaining' activities undermined women's ability to be a mother as they had to continue to run the household, had little financial control and because children were more likely to collude with the abuser as the 'fun dad' (Bancroft et al., 2012).

Authoritarian parent

Bancroft and colleague's (2012) findings, that abusive men are observed as being rigid and authoritative, were consistently supported by participants' experiences. The parenting style used by batterers included setting unrealistically high expectations for children, frequent episodes of verbal abuse and power-assertiveness in their interactions with children, and expectations that their authority should be adhered to (Fox & Benson, 2004; Holden et al., 1998). The majority of women participants reported their concern over the use of physical disciplinary practices by the men, consistent with women participants' disapproval of this in their own parenting practices. However, as Holden and Ritchie (1991) have found, many men were physically punitive, in an unpredictable manner. Although male participants did not openly endorse the use of physical violence against their children in the context of discipline, it appears that some men

continued to use these practices. To the contrary, some men emphasised that the women's 'soft' way of parenting is better for the children's wellbeing compared to their harsh parenting practices. All of the male participants reported that their own 'harsh and rigid' parenting style was due to their upbringing and the parenting style used by their own fathers.

These findings support the literature highlighting children's ambivalence within the father-child relationship. In an environment where children are exposed to IPV and where fathers are unpredictable in terms of both use of harsh disciplinary practices and their involvement in their lives, the risks of traumatic bonding are high (Groves et al., 2007; Peled, 2000). Children may view their father as both the 'good loving father' and the 'bad abusive father'. These irregular patterns of fear and love may present as a strong bond. However, the abuser is the same person who provides the child relief in the aftermath of violence (Dutton, 1995).

Fathering experiences: The construction of fatherhood

The findings provide an understanding of the unique fathering experience for men who are violent in their intimate partner relationships as well as the forces and processes that shape this experience. These findings are found to be largely consistent with fathering experiences described by Perel and Peled (2008) and Fox et al. (2001). Throughout the male participants' discussion of their violence and its impact on the lives of children, mothers and their ability to be a parent to the children, the fathering role was perceived as important, at least in retrospect. However, these men were also constricted within their fathering role and their relationships with the children, as a result of their violence. All of the men referred to the notion that their own fathering reflects that which was modelled by their fathers, showing the significance of transgenerational violence in these men's lives and supported by previous findings (Perel & Peled, 2008). This provided some men with further motivation to change their own parenting style.

Although violent men have been found to consider themselves as 'good fathers' (Perel & Peled, 2008), the male participants in my study perceived their fathering as ineffective and considered that they were unable to attain the 'good father' status during the abusive relationship. Many of the men reported feeling inadequate and insecure in their fathering ability. The main restriction was their use of violence within the family and their perceived negative parenting practices, as discussed above. Throughout the findings, the men constructed an image of the 'good father' and wanted to attain this status. This included the notion that good fathers have warm and close father-child relationships. This contrasted with the under-involved parenting and lack of bond they had with their children, and which many men perceived as characteristic of their fathering during the abusive relationship. The men discussed their tendency to withdraw from their children's lives in response to perceived detrimental outcomes for the children due to their abusive behaviour. Therefore, as discussed previously, men used the perceived diminished bond within the father-child relationship as reason to further distance themselves and become less active in parental responsibilities. In explaining factors contributing to under-involved parenting, one male participant explained his previously held belief that a 'good father' is someone who provides material needs for the children and does not need to be emotionally available to the children.

The men's yearning for close and warm relationships with their children was a significant factor influencing the fathering experience for the male participants and further supports previous literature (Perel & Peled, 2008). This arose in the context of the remote and constricted relationship that the men referred to, including the children's notable withdrawal and avoidance of them. Throughout the current findings, the men referred to their experience of losing the strong bond that they once had with their children due to their violent behaviour. In doing so, the desire to rebuild this relationship and bond with their children is apparent. The men referred to their own emotional grievances, reflecting the significant pain associated with losing the father-child relationship. Fox et al. (2001) found that

batterers express guilt, shame, remorse and responsibility for the harm they have caused their family and shortcomings within their fathering roles. The current findings support this view, as these men expressed remorse for the impact of violence on others, particularly their children who are portrayed as the unintended victims. Therefore, violence was seen as violating an important aspect of their lives; the role of father. The fathering role has also been identified as contributing to men's sense of self; providing purpose and significance in the men's lives. All of the men participants stressed the significance of fathering in their lives, as supported by their motivation to continue to work towards becoming 'good' enough fathers. The motivation to become more involved in their children's lives and make reparations within the father-child relationship, provided part of their motivation to complete the programme at HAIP and participate fully. Many of the men perceived their journey to 'becoming a better dad' as a process which would take place over time as children heal from the violence. However, the emphasis and value placed on the role as father at this point is interesting given the negative parenting practices they used within the abusive relationship.

Recovery in the aftermath of violence

Many men who have been violent in their intimate relationships continue to have contact with their children through day-to-day care and contact arrangements, whether or not this access is supervised. Researchers have consistently questioned the risks to children when batterers continue to be involved in their lives (Jaffe & Crooks, 2007; Shalansky et al., 1999), particularly when there is an increased risk of exposure to violence in unsupervised access arrangements (Robertson et al., 2007; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). However, many of these men do continue to have relationships with their children in various forms. The on-going contact and involvement of fathers in the children's lives was discussed by participants, including their views on the children's needs in healing from violence. This research presents two discourses on the nature of the batterers' involvement in the children's lives post-separation: the view that men should continue to

have contact with their father and that there are exceptions to the batterers' involvement in the children's lives.

Studies have found that battered mothers support the continued involvement of fathers in the children's lives (DeVoe & Smith, 2002; Tubbs & Williams, 2007). In reflecting on their (ex)partner's role as father post-separation, approximately half of the women participants supported this view. The concept that children *need* fathers and that women should not disrupt the father-child relationship was a common finding and lends support to previous findings (Tubbs & Williams, 2007). The women participants appeared to view the fathering role as unique and distinguishable from the mothering role. Furthermore, these women viewed the men's abusiveness towards them during the relationship, as separate to their children's relationship with their father. This is consistent with Peled and Barak Gil's (2011) findings, where battered women have been found to separate the 'violent world' from the 'children's world', as discussed above. The women's self-blame for their children's exposure to violence, evident throughout the findings, may have additionally supported the view that children ought to have a continued relationship with their father.

Some women participants placed emphasis on respecting their children's desire to remain in contact with their father, as reasons for why the men should have continued contact. Although children have often been found to desire a continued relationship with their father (Jaffe et al., 2003), children's wishes need to be viewed within the context of violence, including the detrimental outcomes for children exposed to violence, authoritarian parenting practices and the ambivalence that exists in their feelings towards their father (Bancroft et al., 2012). In respecting their children's wishes, the women participants were concerned about the safety and wellbeing of the children. Additionally, the older the children were, the less likely the women were to be able to prevent their children from spending time with their father, even though there were significant concerns regarding their welfare. Therefore, as found in previous literature, battered women are conflicted between both the desire not to disrupt the

father-child relationship and their concerns over being revictimised or their children being unsafe in their father's care (Bancroft et al., 2012; Tubbs & Williams, 2007).

The majority of men participants perceived access arrangements, including conditions imposed on them, as restricting on their ability to be a father to the children. It appears that these men believed that they had a 'right' to have unsupervised access to their children and therefore many men disagreed with having supervised access conditions. A number of the male participants' said that they would disassociate themselves from the children should they not be able to have unsupervised access. Furthermore, the men in this study perceived there to be a clear hierarchy, where men who are physically abusive towards their children or exposed their children to substantial violence, should be the only cases where access should be supervised. This is related to the sense of self-entitlement and desire for control characteristic of abusive men; the belief that men have the 'authority' over their children and should not lose parental 'rights' (Jaffe et al., 2003; Silverman & Williamson, 1997). The sense of entitlement was also evident in both women and men participants' reports of negotiating access arrangements, whereby men were spending time with the children unsupervised, despite parenting orders which required supervision. In other cases, the 'supervision' was being provided by the man's former (victimised) partner. This may be due to the batterers' ability to use manipulation tactics to further control women post-separation (Bancroft et al., 2012); however, this also may reflect some women's intention to protect their children by making themselves available during contact times.

It is well established throughout previous research and the current findings that violence continues post-separation through the batterers' contact with their children, including the undermining of women as mothers, the use of children as weapons and children's exposure to various tactics of power and control (Mbilinyi et al., 2007; McMahon & Pence, 1995; Radford et al., 1997). Approximately half of the female participants reported that a significant factor in their belief that men should not have continued

contact with children, stemmed from the continuation of abuse experienced. This abuse undermines the ability of women and children to heal, including within the mother-child relationship (Shalansky et al., 1999). The batterers' undermining of mothering post-separation, which women in this study experienced and which men participants also referred to, has implications for the children's ability to heal. Previous research highlights that the quality of the mother-child relationship is the best predictor in their ability to recover and develop resilience (Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). The women participants were also aware of the long term impacts of violence on children and the inability for children to heal if they are continually exposed to abuse. Furthermore, both male and female participants discussed their realisation that the children's lack of contact with the men has positive implications for the children's wellbeing and recovery, as supported by previous research (Holden et al., 1998). For the men participants, this awareness shows at least some understanding of the impact of violence on children; however, this also poses a challenge for men as they yearn for closer contact with their children. The women participants perceived their (ex)partners lack of involvement in the children's lives as positive in this respect, as this allowed for children to heal, while not being exposed to further tactics of power and control. However, at times positive changes in children are sabotaged when children do spend time with their fathers.

As has been previously identified, the batterers' parenting style may also pose a threat to children's wellbeing and their ability to heal in the aftermath of violence (Bancroft et al., 2012). Another main factor contributing to the female participants' concerns and resistance over their children's contact with their fathers was the continuation of the detrimental parenting practices used by men, including authoritarian parenting practices, being an irresponsible parent and placing children in substantial risk of danger. It is clear that these negative parenting practices are not consistent with the nurturing environment needed to facilitate recovery. Children need to have structure, limits and predictability which have been

found to be lacking in environments where batterers are parents (Holden & Ritchie, 1991; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). The current study also shows that batterers are able to manipulate their parenting in situations where there may be public recognition of fathering (Bancroft et al., 2012). Some of the female participants became isolated from support networks, such as family and friends, due to men putting on a façade of being a ‘good’ father in their presence. This further undermines battered women’s ability to gain support and therefore, to recover from violence, particularly when there is no support available from those who are closest.

Children’s needs in healing

In the current study, the male participants focussed on the need and desire to re-establish a close bond with the children. However, in doing so, many of these men lacked insight in to how best to work towards making reparations within the father-child relationship. It is clear that these men experience conflict between wanting to have contact with the children to repair the damage and show them that they are able to be non-violent parents, and allowing the children space and time to heal. Furthermore, there were a number of contradictions evident throughout the male participants’ talk about the role as father post-separation. Firstly, some men yearned for close relationships with their children and yet would be prepared to withdraw their involvement in children’s lives if supervised conditions were to be placed on them. Secondly, all of the men who believed they should have *unsupervised* access rather than supervised access had in fact exposed their children to significant violence and in some cases, directly abused the children. However, many did not acknowledge the effects of their violence on children or the need for children to heal in these cases, as is consistent with previous findings (Bent-Goodley & Williams, 2007)

As previously identified in findings by Bent-Goodley and Williams (2007), it is difficult to establish whether these men were minimising the impact of violence on women and children when emphasising their rights and desire to have continued contact with the children, and discussing the

significance of fatherhood. However, the majority of men expressed remorse for their violence towards the mother of their children and for their children's exposure to that violence, a finding supporting by previous research (Fox et al., 2001). This appears to be positive in terms of aiding the men's understanding of children's needs in healing. However, due to the significant contradictions, as outlined above, it is not clear whether these men were prepared to sacrifice their own contact with the children if this were to be in the children's best interests.

The female participants were divided in their opinions of what role men should play in the children's lives post-separation. However, for all of the women the safety of the children was considered paramount despite their own continued experiences of abuse through contact arrangements.

Cultural considerations

In the present research, the children's needs in healing and the recovery within parent-child relationships must be considered with regard to specific cultural understandings. As highlighted by Erai et al. (2007), "Māori women's experiences of family violence do not necessarily reflect those of mainstream descriptions of family violence due to the historical, cultural, economic and social context within which Māori whānau are located" (p.32). It appears that for some of the Māori women participants, whakapapa and the importance of knowing ones whānau supported their perception that children need to have a relationship with their father. Kruger et al. (2004) suggest that for Māori, recovery may not occur outside of the collective and therefore, the whole whānau may need to heal from the impact of violence and abuse. This was apparent in one female participant's explanation that the whānau, hapu and iwi structures provide children with the support they need in healing; however, the father's involvement in his children's lives is an essential element of that healing process. In considering processes such as giving children to other family members and children adopting parenting roles, we need to consider traditional whānau structures where this may be the norm in collective

cultures. However, the Māori women and men in this study all expressed significant pain and guilt associated with these processes.

Changes attributable to the programme

In the current study, the men reflected on their parental abilities, responsibilities and the father role, whether current or prior to participating in the programme, which provided a setting to discuss their perceptions of any changes in attitudes and behaviour that may be specifically attributable to the programme. Furthermore, the five women who had (ex)partners who were currently attending or had previously attended the programme, were able to explain their experiences of any changes in the men's parenting. Although it is made clear that HAIP's curriculum does not specifically focus on fathering by violent men, there is room for men to reflect on the fathering role, co-parenting with the children's mother, and their responsibility for the children's wellbeing.

The female participants whose (ex)partner's had attended the programme, perceived the men to be better fathers, particularly with regard to increased involvement in the children's lives. However, it is difficult to distinguish changes that are attributable to the programme specifically from the fact that these women had separated from the abuser and when the men did have contact, they had to make 'the absolute most of it'. The male participants also reflected on their motivation to increase their involvement in the children's lives in an active way with the day-to-day care of children, rather than merely 'being there' or only spending time with the children when it suited their needs. This reflects these men's desire to become a 'good father' and role model, as aligned with the construction of fathering discussed above. It appears that some men were able to apply generic programme content to their fathering role specifically and reflect on previously used negative parenting practices that restricted their ability to be a 'good father'. Furthermore, many of the men explained a notable change in their ability to listen to the children as a direct comparison to their propensity to be self-centred and irresponsible in their parenting

before attending the programme. As stated by Arean and Davis (2007), listening and validating children's emotions is considered an important factor in facilitating recovery within the father-child relationship.

One area that both female and male participants discussed as evidence for changes in parenting was men's ability to communicate in constructive ways. Communication was promoted as allowing them to have open-dialogue within with intimate partner relationship regarding the best interests of the children. In a broad sense, participants perceived effective communication within the intimate relationship as a tool to deescalate tension in situations where previously the men may have resorted to violence. This was explained as having positive consequences for children who then do not witness violent interactions and instead are exposed to constructive conflict-resolution strategies. This may be beneficial for children who have previously been exposed to the batterer's use of violent tactics to resolve conflict. The men participants also discussed the applicability of communication tools to their parenting, including a greater ability to effectively communicate to children that their behaviour is not acceptable, rather than using verbal abuse or harsh physical discipline. Although these communication strategies may be viewed as positive for women and children's healing and overall wellbeing, they must also be considered critically. As previous researchers have emphasised, batterers' may be better able to communicate their violent behaviours and attitudes, without actually changing those abusive attitudes and behaviours (Robertson, 1999; Tolman & Bennett, 1990).

The majority of participants discussed factors which are suggestive of there being no changes in the men's negative parenting practices. The female participants' experience of continued abuse and lack of change in negative parenting practices supported their belief that the men should not have contact with the children post-separation. Of particular concern was some of the women's experiences of men using the programme content and their participation in the programme to further manipulate the women. As is consistent with previous findings, men were found to collude with other

abusive men during the programme, placing women and children in unsafe situations and minimising their abuse as being less severe as other men's behaviour (Busch et al., 1992; Furness, 1994; Robertson, 1999). Not only does this suggest that these men did not change their abusive attitudes and behaviour, but this also meant that these men were considered unsuitable to be parents.

A number of men participants emphasised that the programme did not specifically address parenting in the context of their abusive behaviour and that any learnt skills that could be applied to the role as father was a reflection of changes in abusive attitudes and behaviours. Some men perceived the insight gained with regard to the significant effects of their violence on children as a catalyst for change and re-evaluation of the father they wanted to be in the future. However, two men explained that they were unable to apply the programme content to the children's wellbeing. This is concerning in light of the format and delivery of this programme, where men consider the impact of various tactics on children for each theme within the course. Interestingly, many of the men were open to undertaking a parenting programme as a useful contribution to the journey of becoming a better father.

The majority of men showed limited understanding of the impact of their violence on women, both in the general sense and perhaps more so, when considering the role of mother in a violent environment. This has implications for children and their mother's ability to heal. The batterer's acknowledgement of the damage caused to children and consequences of disrespecting their mother are considered pertinent in facilitating recovery within the mother-child relationship, particularly if men are to have continued relationships with their children (Arean & Davis, 2007; Bancroft et al., 2012). As has been found in other studies (Bancroft et al., 2012; Pence & Paymar, 1993b), many men in the present study minimised and justified the use of their violence towards the children's mothering, further supporting the notion that these men may not be considered ready to be a safe and responsible parent.

Motivation to change

In discussing motivation for change, the impact of violence on the victims and making reparations within these relationships were considered to be motivating factors for the majority of men in this study. For those men who were still in the intimate relationship, changing was essential to maintain their involvement as part of the family. Becoming a 'better father' was a significant source of motivation for male participants in this study, which is consistent with previous findings (Fox et al., 2001) and supports the men's yearning and desire for on-going involvement in children's lives and reparation within the father-child relationship. These men ascribed significant importance to being 'good fathers', and used their own experiences of being fathered by abusive men as a source of increased motivation, as was found in Perel and Peled's (2008) research.

The findings in the current study also support those of previous researchers who pose that batterers' motivation to change may be fuelled by ulterior motives to stay in or bargain their way back into the relationship (Pence & Paymar, 1993b; Tolman & Bennett, 1990). For instance, some men participants reported that their participation in the programme provided evidence to their (ex)partner that they had changed; rather than reflecting on actual changes in attitudes or behaviour. Not surprisingly, two men who were self-referrals entered the programme on the basis that this may prevent their (ex)partner from ending the relationship. There appeared to be a distinction between those men who were mandated to attend the programme and those who self-referred, in that the latter described themselves as being more readily motivated to learn and make changes upon entering the programme, compared to mandated men whose motivation to change often fluctuated between being a better partner or father.

The Gap

As was evident throughout the findings, this research has revealed a 'gap' between women's realities and observations about the impact of violence on self and children on the one hand, and men's limited understanding of the impact of their behaviour, on the other. The 'gap' was particularly evident in the way the men had very limited understanding of the impact of violence on mothering. Despite being the victims of domestic violence and in part due to the responsibility and guilt they felt for allowing their children to live in this situation, the women placed emphasis on protecting and nurturing their children rather than considering their own needs. This may have contributed to their ability to reflect in more detail about the complex world they inhabited. In contrast, although the men did show some understanding of the impact of violence on others, at least retrospectively, they did at times tend to focus on how the detrimental outcomes of their own violent behaviour had impacted on them rather than their victims. This suggests a need for consideration of measures to close this 'gap' through policy and practice.

The implications for policy and practice

This research supports the large body of literature showing the numerous detrimental outcomes of violence for women and children, the negative parenting practices used by batterers and the negative impact of violence on parent-child relationships. Furthermore, the complexities of facilitating recovery and in what capacity men, as perpetrators of domestic violence, ought to be involved in the children's lives is marked by ambivalence for both women and men. However, the reality is that the majority of men who have been abusive in their intimate partner relationships continue to have contact with their children, regardless of whether they are separated from the children's mother. There are of course severe cases where men do not have any contact with their children; however, the on-going involvement of abusive men in their children's lives may be positive where children are safe and there is the opportunity to

promote healing within the father-child relationship. As is reflected in the current findings, many children continue to be exposed to violence and negative parenting practices through the contact arrangements with their fathers or by virtue of exposure to violence directed towards their mother. Therefore, as suggested by Scott (2012), it is necessary to consider how to address the abusive men's parenting and their role as father, as an adjunct to becoming non-violent partners.

Current international examples of interventions for fathers who batter tend to focus on motivational approaches, continuing to address domestic violence, the men's accountability both for their violence and for their role as father, and teaching these men to avoid using harsh discipline. As outlined by Scott (2012), there are a number of areas that are consistently addressed in international examples of parenting programmes for men who batter. The current findings support the need for abusive men to end their violence against the children's mother. The participants in this study reported the continuation of violence post-separation towards the children's mother, including undermining of women's ability to be a mother. This on-going abuse impedes women's and children's ability to heal within their relationship and also individually from the trauma of violence. This is particularly important given the fact that children require a strong bond with the non-abusing and nurturing parent. This is a strong contributor to children's resilience and the best predictor of their ability to recover (Graham-Bermann & Levendosky, 1998; Jaffe & Geffner, 1998; Margolin & Gordis, 2000). Therefore, it is pertinent that men are taught not to disrespect or abuse the children's mother as this also affects the children. Furthermore, addressing the importance of respectful co-parenting is another essential element for child-development. This is one area which is currently covered during the 'Responsible Parenting' component of HAIP's men's programme.

Other elements for inclusion in fathering interventions, as supported by the current findings, is the need for men to be held accountable for the abuse towards their children without the use of justification or

minimisation. Although many of the male participants showed insight into some of the effects of violence on children, there were at times justifications or women-blaming discourses which suggests that their understanding of the significance of trauma is not particularly deep. In terms of facilitating motivation to change, drawing on intergenerational experiences of violence is another area which is supported by the male participants' experiences and understandings of violence. All of the men in the present study discussed the significance of their father's use of violence and harsh parenting practices as both a reason for their own use of these practices and as a source of motivation for change, to end the cycle of violence. Finally, the harsh and punitive disciplinary practices found to be used by men who batter is clearly an area which needs to be addressed and is supported by the current research.

Unintended consequences of fathering interventions ought to be considered, as is the norm for current batterers' intervention programmes which focus on men's abusive behaviour. However, it appears that given our knowledge of the on-going contact children often have with their fathers and the use of violence and harsh disciplinary practices in this setting, a fathering intervention programme specifically for abusive men is an opportunity to engage these men and prevent other, and perhaps more severe, unintended consequences. For instance, many of the men in the current study had contemplated attending a regular parenting programme either simultaneously with the programme at HAIP or subsequently. However, this may lead to men being viewed as 'better fathers' by the court system and other professional groups, in the absence of changing their underlying abusive attitudes and behaviours, and may be used to gain increased access to children through court proceedings in particular.

In terms of the format and timing of fathering interventions for abusive men, it is suggested that the underlying attitudinal and behavioural characteristics of the batterer's pattern of abuse should be addressed first, through a batterer intervention programme (Bancroft et al., 2012; Peled & Perel, 2007), particularly when men have been mandated to attend these

programmes. However, whether or not this entails men undertaking a parenting programme when they have already ‘successfully’ addressed or are in the process of addressing, their abusive behaviour through a batterer intervention programme, or whether this limits the scope and availability of parenting intervention for abusive men, is an area of debate (Scott, 2012). Furthermore, some researchers have suggested that positive fathering and a reparative framework for children and fathers, may be able to be incorporated into batterer intervention programmes as a separate but related component (Arean & Davis, 2007).

Throughout all of this, there needs to remain a focus on supporting healing and recovery for women and children. As is evident in the current study, many women experience conflict between safety concerns and continued experiences of abuse and the pressure to not restrict men’s involvement based on the view that children need and desire contact with their fathers. It is important to include the women’s perspectives in any stage of assessment and intervention for abusive men. The children’s perspectives on continuing to have contact with their father need to be taken into consideration within the context of violence and risk of traumatic bonding (Jaffe et al., 2003). Providing programmes for women which focus on strengths and facilitate recovery within the mother-child relationship are essential, particularly in terms of children’s ability to heal from the trauma of violence. Furthermore, providing programmes for children that promote healing within mother and father relationships are also recommended. In the case of the present research, many of the women who took part in a focus group discussed the healing nature of this experience as their voice was heard in a safe environment. It became apparent that some women had discussed parts of their lives and experiences that had previously not been shared with anyone, particularly concerning the impact of violence on children, their current concerns of continued abuse and their (ex)partner’s negative parenting practices. Therefore, this further supports the importance of providing women with a forum to have their voice and perspectives heard.

It is important to acknowledge that throughout the current research, Māori experiences of whānau violence must be considered in the context of traditional whānau dynamics and social structures. As highlighted above, restoration processes and healing within mother-child and father-child relationships need to be understood in relation to cultural meanings ascribed to whānau and interrelationships between whakapapa and whanaungatanga. Although the findings provide some insight into Māori women's and men's experiences of domestic violence and views on reparation within the whānau system, it is essential that solutions are driven by Māori and therefore are consistent with the Whānau Ora, kaupapa Māori wellbeing framework (Ministry of Health, 2011; The Maori Reference Group, 2013). As is highlighted in many of the existing policy documents that address domestic violence in New Zealand, any response to both prevention and intervention strategies, need to be culturally appropriate, particularly for Māori, Pasifika and other ethnic populations.

It is well established throughout various policy initiatives in New Zealand that domestic violence is a significant issue and there needs to be on-going efforts to respond to and eliminate domestic violence. However, it is clear that parenting within the context of domestic violence has been given little attention. As supported by Murphy, Paton, Gulliver, and Fanslow (2013a), the recent White Paper on Vulnerable Children (Ministry of Social Development, 2012a, 2012b) addresses family violence. However, it is limited in its discussion and recognition of the co-occurrence of IPV and child maltreatment and furthermore, the implications of violence for batterers' parenting. Policy in New Zealand needs to give greater attention to supporting children and women within a recovery framework, strengthening the child's relationship with the non-abusing parent and considering how to address batterers' parenting in the context of their abusive behaviour and propensity to use harsh, punitive parenting practices. The international examples of fathering interventions ought to be considered within a New Zealand context. This also needs to be a part of a co-ordinated community response to domestic violence and in that sense, a

multi-agency approach. Fathering interventions offer increased opportunities for recovery within family and whānau, by opposing the undermining of mothering and continued abuse post-separation, developing batterers' respect for the mother-child relationship and promoting safe and healthy father-child relationships.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to explore the implications of domestic violence for parenting and specifically for children, women and the role of parent. The experiences of women who are victims of IPV and men, who are currently attending HAIP and have perpetrated violence in their intimate partner relationship, provided a rich source of information in relation to these areas of inquiry. Currently, there is limited research and understanding of parenting in the context of domestic violence. This has important implications for how domestic violence is conceptualised, assessed and addressed through policy and practice. A better understanding of the experiences of mothering and fathering in a violent environment, including post-separation when children have contact with their fathers, is needed to inform practice and particularly, recovery in the aftermath of violence. Whilst previous international research has begun to focus on the issue of abusive men's parenting and victims' recovery in light of contact arrangements these men have with their children, we need to consider how this ought to be understood in New Zealand and in relation to specific cultural understandings of violence and parenting practices.

Reflection on the process of research

I consider it necessary to reflect on the process of conducting this research. There are a number of experiences particularly worthy of mention which may inform future researchers' investigations in the area of domestic violence.

One of the challenges of the research was interviewing the men. As perpetrators of domestic violence, they were quite resistant to participating in this research. This is understandable, given that the men were attending a stopping violence programme as a result of their use of violence in intimate partner relationships and many men were in a process of being held accountable for that violence. In the initial stages of recruitment, I

anticipated their possible hesitation or wariness of the research. However, it became clear that allowing more space and time for potential participants to contemplate their involvement might have helped. Ideally, it would have been useful to have introduced myself personally to the men's programme groups; however, for both reasons of my safety and the men's anonymity, this was not deemed appropriate by the hosting organisation. Furthermore, due to participation in the research being on a voluntary basis, the research depended largely on the role of the organisation, HAIP, in supporting the facilitation of the research. As is inherent throughout the research process, when working within the structure and constraints of an organisation, their protocols, processes and needs must be understood and respected at each stage.

Notably, many of the men who were interviewed were wary of me as a researcher and my interest in interviewing them. Therefore, it was important to discuss the purpose of this research in an open manner until they were comfortable with the process. Of course, another factor which is important with this particular population group is my own safety when conducting interviews with men who have been violent towards women. This was particularly so with the tauwiwi men, who attended the interview alone. It was important to monitor or observe reactions, conversation and interactions during the interview. Whilst some men were quite animated and expressive during the interviews, albeit in a non-threatening way, others were noticeably agitated and distressed at times. Therefore, I found it important to respond appropriately by slowing down the interview questions and checking to see whether a break was required. Being aware of my own personal reactions during the interview was equally important. I needed to remain non-judgemental when information was disclosed which provoked negative or defensive emotions and yet not collude with the men by agreeing with their views.

Turning now to the women, I was surprised by the level and richness of personal disclosure the women were willing to make. Many of the women reported that information was shared during the focus group which had

previously not been shared with anyone else. Moreover, women also explained that the process of discussing this particular subject matter was a healing experience. This reinforced the importance of having adequate victim safety and support protocols in place prior to undertaking the research and running the focus groups. Furthermore, ethical appropriateness and the safety of women and children had to remain paramount throughout the research process. I personally found the women's stories and experiences to be particularly central to my own increasing realisation of how domestic violence can destroy lives, and the unjust nature of some current policies and practices in New Zealand. In this sense, although I had been a 'researcher' and immersed myself in the literature on this subject, the experience of hearing the voices of the victims themselves was crucial to deepening my understanding. Therefore, as other researchers have highlighted, it is important not to leave unexamined the victims' perspectives when conducting research that seeks to examine batterers' perspectives on any subject.

Limitations

As with any study, this research has a number of limitations which need to be acknowledged. Firstly, there is a relatively small sample size of participants. This is due in part to the scope of the present study, where participants were recruited through one community agency (HAIP) and because the research only included those participants who had children that were present during the time of the abusive relationship. It was difficult to recruit the male participants for this study, particularly those attending the Māori men's programme. It was anticipated that introducing myself to the men's programme groups was an essential part of reducing their anxieties or hesitation in taking part in the research; however, as mentioned above, I was advised that this would not be appropriate. Although introductions took place at HAIP prior to the interview or confirmation of participation in the research, the process could have been made more comfortable had there been more time available.

The small sample size has implications for the generalizability of the results and it is acknowledged that the participants' views do not represent the experiences of all victims or perpetrators of domestic violence in New Zealand. Furthermore, the majority of participants in this study were from Pākehā or Māori cultural backgrounds and therefore, these results may not be consistent with other cultural experiences of domestic violence and parenting in this context. If the demographic background of participants had been explored further, this may have also revealed insight into experiences of those from different socio-economic backgrounds. The experiences of the male participants in particular, may have been different for those men who did not choose to be involved in this study.

In terms of the process of data collection, the Māori men had a Māori support person attend the interview, whereas tauwiwi men were interviewed alone. This may have affected the responses of the Māori men as the support person was affiliated with the programme and therefore these men may have restricted their responses to questions or exaggerated their progress. Another methodological limitation is that the male participants had completed varied components of the rolling programme at HAIP. Therefore, although they had all completed at least two-thirds of the programme, the components (themes) covered in the curriculum would have varied for each participant. Additionally, the men were asked to reflect retrospectively as to their attitudes and behaviours prior to attending the programme and whether the programme was attributable to any positive changes in behaviour. Therefore, some men may have had better insight into past abusive behaviours compared to others. It would have been useful to have interviewed the men both prior to the programme attendance and subsequent to completion; however, time constraints for this project did not allow for this.

Due to the scope of this research, the women and men who participated were not each other's (ex)partner and therefore, cross-comparisons could not be made. This may have provided more accountability for those men who justified and minimised their use of

violence. However, it would also have raised ethical implications, both in terms of gaining consent for participation in the research and more importantly, with regard to victim safety.

Finally, my own cultural background, as a Pākehā female, who had not directly experienced domestic violence, may have influenced participants' willingness to reveal experiences and stories. However, I took precautions to ensure that participants were comfortable throughout the process by liaising with a cultural advisor, remaining culturally sensitive to the need to allow for time and space, giving opportunities for Karakia or prayer, and providing lunch for the women as part of the process of getting to know one another.

Recommendations for future research

As is reflected by the limited research in the area of the batterer as parent, mothering experiences, and fathering experiences in the context of domestic violence, further research is necessary to extend on the findings of this study and those at an international level. The following suggestions are offered:

As previously outlined, it would be useful to conduct a comparative study examining the perspectives of men and women who are each other's (ex)partner, in order to examine differences in perceptions on parenting. Furthermore, research focused on the children's perspectives on the mother-child and father-child relationship, including their father's role in their lives post-separation, their needs in healing and experiences of parenting practices, would also be beneficial.

Future research could further explore the variables that are common in fathers who batter compared to non-battering fathers, including greater understanding of specific child-rearing practices used by men who are abusive in their intimate partner relationships. Unless the impact of these practices is well understood, decision making in regard to the care of children may fail to adequately protect children. Such research might eventually lead to the development of better ways of assessing whether men

who have engaged in domestic violence are ready to engage in fathering interventions and/or have contact with their children.

While the current research did identify the importance of whakapapa in parenting in a Māori context, more research is needed on culture-specific features of parenting in the context of domestic violence and the role of abusive fathers in their children's lives. Such research needs to focus not only on Māori but also on other cultures currently not well represented in the research. Culturally-nuanced studies are also needed to better understand the factors which enhance recovery for women and children, and to better understand what types of parenting programmes would be effective within diverse New Zealand contexts, both for perpetrators and victims of domestic violence.

Final word

The present research supports the existing body of knowledge, suggesting that children who are exposed to domestic violence face significant emotional, behavioural and cognitive challenges. Domestic violence is found to have detrimental outcomes for women, particularly for their psychological and emotional functioning. Not only does this impede their ability to fulfil the 'good mother' role, it also undermines their ability to be a mother in numerous ways. 'The gap' between the women's and men's perceptions on parenting in the context of domestic violence was a significant feature of this research. Importantly, this study supports previous findings that violence occurs post-separation and can be just as damaging as during the abusive relationship. The notion that attitudes and behaviours characteristic of batterers in their intimate partner relationships are also inherent in their role as parent was supported by the current research. This suggests a pattern of negative and harsh parenting practices used by these men, a significant finding given the limited avenues in which the batterer's parenting can currently be addressed through intervention. Notably, both the batterer's use of violence and his negative parenting

practices place restrictions on children's and women's ability to recover in post-separation circumstances.

The process of recovery was complicated by the desire to allow children continued contact with their father post-separation. However, retrospectively, and due to their participation in the men's stopping violence programme at HAIP, some men used their drive to become a 'better father' as a source of motivation for change. Conversely, many of the men in this study showed limited understanding of the significant impact of violence on mothering, and the children's needs for recovery. In a situation where many children will have on-going contact with fathers who have been abusive towards their mother, there needs to be reflection on how policy and practice in New Zealand is able to support the recovery process for the mother-child and father-child relationship. The outcomes of this research is the recognition that fathering interventions ought to be considered as a part of that process of recovery and reparation, particularly if we are to facilitate the best outcomes for children. Therefore, this research provides further knowledge and understandings of the significance of domestic violence for New Zealand children, an area which has been overlooked in current prevention and intervention strategies. Unless we better understand the *continuing* impact domestically abusive men have on their children, on their partner and on their partner's ability to mother, we are likely to continue to expose children to conditions which, at best undermine their recovery, and at worst, expose them to risk of injury or death.

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APPENDIX A: Research acceptance letter



Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project


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25 September 2012

The Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project Trust Board confirms acceptance of the research proposal made by Claire Troon for her Masters of Social Science qualification at the University of Waikato.

This is to be completed part-time over a two year time frame (January 2012 to December 2013).

Toni Welch
Co-convenor

 (General Manager)
Lawrence Jensen
Co-convenor

APPENDIX B: Participant information sheets

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Research on the effects of domestic violence on the role as parent, on children and on the mother of those children

Information for Women's focus groups

Who are the researchers?

I am a post-graduate student from the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. As part of my Masters thesis I am undertaking research in the area of family violence. I will be supervised by Neville Robertson and Cate Curtis. Their contact details and mine are provided at the bottom of this information sheet. Please do not hesitate to make contact if you have any questions regarding this research.

What is the project about?

This research focusses on understanding more about the effect that domestic violence has on the role as a parent, on children and on the mother of those children. I am interested in learning about your views on the impact of your (ex) partners violence on the children, on his parenting and on your parenting. I will also be interested in your thoughts on his suitability to have contact with the children. This research will also evaluate how the Men's programmes facilitate learning and understanding in these areas in order to improve the effectiveness of these programmes.

Why am I being asked to participate?

I believe that you can help this project by sharing your experiences, thoughts and opinions. The perspectives you have will be useful for developing further understanding of family violence and how to improve the programmes that HAIP offers.

What will I be asked to do?

I would like you to join in a group discussion with other women who are associated with HAIP. This will be held at HAIP at a time that suits us all. The focus group will run for an hour to two hours and during the focus group I will ask you about your thoughts and opinions on topics covering parenting and children. I will be interested in learning about your story and the experiences you have had.

What will happen with my information?

The conversations that we have will be audio taped so that I have an accurate account of the views and opinions. I may also take some written notes during this time. Any information will be kept in safe storage and will be destroyed three years after completion of the thesis. The discussion we have will be added to information that I am collecting to write my research for my university thesis. The information may also be contained in journal publications. The thesis and

any journal article are potentially accessible to the public. There will be the option to check the focus group summary and to receive a summary of the overall findings.

Will other people know who I am?

I will ensure that all interviews and discussions will remain confidential and will also use a pseudonym (fake name) so that you will remain anonymous when I write my research. I will also omit any potentially identifying information. However, I reserve the right to breach confidentiality if someone is at risk or in imminent danger.

What are my rights as a participant?

If you choose to participate in this research, you can:

- Decline to answer specific questions during the interview.
- Withdraw from the research at any point during the focus group. However, it will be difficult to withdraw your contribution of information after the focus group.
- Understand that privacy of information disclosed to other members of the focus group will be expected but cannot be guaranteed.
- Request that the information you have provided be added to or corrected.
- Contact myself or my supervisors if you have any questions, concerns or would like more information about this study

What next?

If you would like to participate in this study then please contact the office at HAIP or your Programme Facilitator or a Women's Advocate at HAIP.

Contact details

Neville Robertson	Cate Curtis	HAIP (Office)
School of Psychology	School of Psychology	135 London Street
University of Waikato	University of Waikato	Hamilton
(07) 838 4466 ext 8300	(07) 856 2889 ext 8669	(07) (07) 834 3148

This research project has been approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the School of Psychology. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the convenor -Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz

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Research on the effects of domestic violence on the role as parent, on children and on the mother of those children

Information for HAIP's Men's Programme members

Who are the researchers?

I am a post-graduate student from the School of Psychology at the University of Waikato. As part of my Masters thesis I am undertaking research in the area of family violence. I will be supervised by Neville Robertson and Cate Curtis. Their contact details are provided at the bottom of this information sheet. Please do not hesitate to make contact if you have any questions regarding this research.

What is the project about?

This research focusses on understanding more about the effect that domestic violence has on children, parenting and on the mother of those children. The aim of the research is explore how men perceive domestic violence in these contexts. I am interested in learning more about how men view their relationships with their children. I will also evaluate how the Men's programmes facilitate learning and understanding in these areas in order to improve the effectiveness of these programmes.

Why am I being asked to participate?

I believe that you can help this project by sharing your experiences, thoughts and opinions. Through your association with HAIP, you may also develop new perspectives through the programmes offered. The perspectives you have will be useful for developing further understanding of family violence and how to improve the programmes that HAIP offers as they try to support men and their whānau.

What will I be asked to do?

I would like to interview you near the end of the 26 week programme at HAIP. This will be an individual interview and will take place during a usual programme session time at HAIP, in a separate room. The interview will take about an hour. During the interview I will ask you about your thoughts and opinions on a range of topics covering parenting and children. I will be interested in learning about your story and the experiences you have had.

What will happen with my information?

The conversations that we have will be audio taped so that I have an accurate account of your views and opinions. I may also take some written notes during the interview. The discussion we have will be added to information that I am collecting to write my research for my university thesis. The information may also be included in journal publications. Information will be kept in safe storage and will be destroyed three years after completion of the thesis. The thesis and any journal article are potentially accessible to the public. There will be the option to check your interview summary and to receive a summary of the overall findings.

Will other people know who I am?

I will ensure that all interviews and discussions will remain confidential and will also use a pseudonym (fake name) so that you will remain anonymous when I write my research. I will omit any potentially identifying information. However, I reserve the right to breach confidentiality if someone is at risk or in imminent danger.

What are my rights as a participant?

If you choose to participate in this research, you can:

- Decline to answer specific questions during the interview.
- Ask for the audio device to be turned off
- Withdraw from the research at any point during the interview or up to two weeks after the interview.
- Request that the information you have provided be added to, corrected or erased up to two weeks after the interview
- Contact my supervisors or myself if you have any questions, concerns or would like more information about this study

What next?

If you would like to participate in this study, then please contact the office at HAIP or your Programme Facilitator.

Contact details

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APPENDIX C: Consent forms

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FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM- Focus Groups

I have read the information sheet and understand that:

- I consent to the interview being recorded
- I can decline to answer any question and can withdraw from the focus group at any time. However, it may be difficult to withdraw your particular contribution to the discussion after the focus group has taken place.
- I can ask any questions about the research during my participation
- It will be anticipated that information shared at the focus group will be kept private to those who attend this group. However, this cannot be guaranteed.
- There are limits to confidentiality of the information
- I have the right to check the information in the focus group summary up to three weeks after the focus group
- Information will be used for a Master's thesis, journal articles and presentations
- My identity will remain anonymous and be protected by a pseudonym unless I state otherwise

I wish to receive a summary of the findings YES / NO

I wish to check the focus group summary YES / NO

I (your name) _____ agree to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet

Participant : (sign) _____ Date : _____

Claire Troon : (sign) _____ Date : _____

If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM- Interviews

I have read the information sheet and understand that:

- I consent to the interview being recorded
- I can decline to answer any question, terminate the interview and can withdraw from the research up to two weeks after my interview
- I can ask any questions about the research during my participation
- Privacy of information will be kept at all times
- There are limits to confidentiality of the information
- I have the right to check the information in my interview transcript up to three weeks after the interview
- Information will be used for a Master's thesis and in journal articles/presentations
- My identity will remain anonymous and be protected by a pseudonym unless I state otherwise

I wish to receive a summary of the findings YES / NO

I wish to check my interview transcript YES / NO

I (your name) _____ agree to participate in this research and acknowledge receipt of a copy of this consent form and the research project information sheet

Participant : (sign) _____ Date : _____

Claire Troon : (sign) _____ Date : _____

If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee (Dr Nicola Starkey, phone: 838 4466 ext.6472, e-mail nstarkey@waikato.ac.nz)

APPENDIX D: Protocols for victim safety

- 1. The safety and wellbeing being of the women and children involved in this research will be considered paramount.**

- 2. Women's focus groups: Distress**
 - a. The participants will be fully informed at the beginning of the group session that should they feel uncomfortable at any stage, they can let one of the programme co-ordinators know and leave the room.
 - b. Support will be immediately available for any participant who wishes to withdraw from the focus group.
 - c. The women who participate in the focus group will also be monitored by the women advocates situated at HAIP after the interview has taken place. This will ensure that the women have continued support.
 - d. There will be breaks during the focus groups group session which will enable women to take some time to relax.

- 3. Victim safety: Disclosures**
 - a. In the event that information is disclosed which suggests that children and/or women are at serious risk of harm and where there is reason to believe that non-disclosure will endanger another person, the information will be disclosed as per the limits of confidentiality.
 - b. The first step would be to consult with my supervisors
 - c. I will then talk to appropriate staff members and adhere to their protocols that are currently in place
 - d. At all times, it will be necessary to consider the consequences of alternative courses of actions and the risks and benefits.

APPENDIX E: Focus group and interview guides

Interview Guide for Women's Focus Groups:

- *Before focus group begins with individuals:*
 - Explain information in the consent form and ensure that participants understand the recording of the information
 - Confirm/sign the consent forms
 - Thank participants for taking part in this research
 - Introduce myself to the group
 - Ask the supporting persons and the group members to introduce themselves (will use the usual protocol for starting a session at HAIP)
 - Go through information sheet and ask if any questions or concerns
 - Ask for information to be kept private to those who attend this group
1. Firstly, I would be really interested in hearing about the impact of violence on the children. This may include not only what has happened to the children but how the violence affected your ability to be a mother and generally how your (ex) partner was as a parent
 - What did the kids see/ experience?
 - What about the children's behaviour?
 - Their health?
 - What was it like trying to be a mother?
 - What was he like as a parent?
 2. I would also like to know more about your (ex)partner's role as a parent /father to the children *now*
 - How has his behaviour changed?
 - Parenting ability
 - Access arrangements
 3. Is there anything else that anyone would like to add or reflect on
 - Close the focus group appropriately (will use the usual format for closing group sessions at HAIP)
 - Thank group for their participation
 - Ask whether there were any concerns and reaffirm the confidentiality of data
 - Remind the group of withdrawal from the project provisions
 - Ensure that the women know that both HAIP and myself are able to be contacted and if at any stage they feel they need to talk to someone about what was discussed today, not to hesitate in contacting me

Interview Guide for Semi-structured Interviews:

- Thank participant for taking part in this research
- Introduce myself and ask interviewee to introduce self
- Go through information sheet and ask if interviewee has any questions or concerns
- Explain information in the consent form and ensure that interviewee understands the recording of the information
- Confirm/sign the consent form
- Ask participant if there was any particular way they would like to begin with the interview (i.e. Karakia, Whakatauki, prayer)

Throughout the interview participants will be asked to reflect on whether their views have changed due to their participation in the programme at HAIP

1. Firstly, I would like to know how you came to be involved with HAIP:
 - Relationships with family/whānau members
 - Children (biological or partners' children)
2. Could you tell me about the impact of violence on your children and (ex)partner, and on your relationships with them?
 - Impact on:
 - children
 - mother of children
 - parenting/ being a father
3. What is your relationship like with your children at the moment?
 - Parenting now
 - Access arrangements
 - How do you feel about current access arrangements?
4. Are your children a reason for doing this programme or completing it?
 - In what ways?
5. Are there any ways in which the programme has changed the way you are as a parent?
 - In what ways?
6. *For Māori Men's Programme:* What are your views about traditional child rearing practices
 - Role of whānau in parenting
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?
 - Thank the interviewee for their participation in research
 - Ask whether there were any concerns and reaffirm the confidentiality of data
 - Remind participant of withdrawal from the project provisions

APPENDIX F: Post focus group and interview letters

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Please remember to keep the contents of this document confidential

[Date]

Dear [participant]

Thank you for taking part in my research and in particular, the *focus group* that was held on the [date]. The focus group was an opportunity for you to share some of your thoughts and stories about the way that domestic violence affects children, your role as mother to those children and the ability of your (ex)partner to be a parent/ father.

The following is a summary of the information that was provided by the group. I thought that it would be best to consider this information collectively and I have highlighted the themes that appear to exist within this information:

» [Summarised data]

If you wish to talk to me about your personal contribution to the focus group, then please do not hesitate to contact me by speaking to one of the Women's Programme Coordinators at HAIP.

This will need to be within two weeks of receiving this letter. After this time I will consider the information to be correct.

Once again, thank you for the thoughtful contributions that you have made for the purposes of this research. Please remember that if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact either myself or one of my supervisors (see below).

Claire

Contact details

Neville Robertson
School of Psychology
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(07) 838 4466 ext 8300

Cate Curtis
School of Psychology
University of Waikato
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Please remember to keep the contents of these documents confidential

[Date]

Dear [participant]

Thank you for taking part in my research and in particular, the interview that was held on the [date]. This interview was an opportunity for you to share some of your thoughts and stories about the effect that violence has on children, the mother of those children and on your parenting. The interview also involved reflecting on aspects of the programme at HAIP.

Please see attached the *transcript* of your interview. If you wish to request that any of this information be added to, corrected or erased then please do not hesitate to contact me by speaking to one of your programme facilitators or your programme co-ordinator. ***This will need to be within two weeks of receiving this letter.*** After this time I will consider the information to be correct.

Once again, thank you for the contributions that you have made for the purposes of this research. Please remember that if you have any questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact either myself (through HAIP office) or one of my supervisors (see below).

Claire

Contact details

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