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The Dark Side of Parenting: The Victim Experience of Parent Abuse

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Abstract

Parent abuse is perpetrated by children and adolescents and is directed toward their parents or caregivers. It is an area of family violence that has received limited attention from researchers in the past and very little qualitative research has focussed on the issue. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of parent abuse by victim's friends and families, social services, and government. This research adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the psychological experience of PA (Parent Abuse). Data was gathered from interviews with eight victims of PA and three super-ordinate themes evolved out of the analysis. As PA is a relatively unrecognised phenomenon in New Zealand it was important that prior to presenting these themes the psychological experience of victims was placed into context. An introductory theme therefore outlines some of the specific acts of psychological, financial, verbal and physical abuse that participants have been subject to. The three super-ordinate themes that followed are; Firstly, the emotional roller coaster of experiencing feelings of unconditional love right through to resentment and hatred toward their abusive child; secondly, blaming ones-self for the abuse occurring and fearing and experiencing blame and judgement from others due to the abuse; and finally, considering the father's responsibility for the abuse occurring and exploring the possible positive impact of a male role model. It is hoped that the current research will stimulate further research on PA in New Zealand and thus, impact practice, policy, and public awareness.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Violence within families is a significant issue that has been thoroughly researched over the last 20 years. This research has largely focussed on the two most common areas of family violence; child abuse and intimate partner violence. An area that has received limited attention but is a huge problem for many families is parent abuse. Parent abuse is abuse perpetrated by children or adolescents and directed toward their parents or caregivers. Parent abuse (PA) was formally identified in the 1970's and at this time was labelled battered parent syndrome (Harbin & Madden, 1979). Research on the topic slowly grew throughout the 1980's and 1990's however was limited by being reliant on small sample clinical and case-study papers, and contradictory and inconclusive findings (Coogan, 2011). This combined with its difficulty to detect has resulted in a perception that it is either not an extensive issue or not a problematic aspect of violence within families (Edenborough, Jackson, Mannix, Wilkes, 2008).

The following literature review explores the development of childhood aggression in order to better define parent abuse. Prevalence rates and defining characteristics of parent abuse are discussed along with the outcomes of qualitative research that has been completed. The assessment of parent abuse is then discussed and this is complemented by a review of current treatment recommendations and programmes. Finally, this literature review will attempt to shed light on where parent abuse fits in the field of domestic violence. Nonetheless, research to date has largely focussed on the identifying traits and circumstances of PA. There has been very little qualitative research in the area and therefore little is known about what it is like for victims to experience abuse at the hands of a child in their care. This has resulted in a lack of knowledge and awareness of the phenomena by society, practitioners, and policy makers. Moreover, there has been a complete absence of research on PA within New Zealand. The current research therefore wishes to explore the experience of PA using a New Zealand participant group.

Child Aggression

Before attempting to define PA it is first vital that there is an exploration of the notion of child development and more specifically, the development of aggression and conflict between parent and child. It is normal for occasional conflict to occur between individuals who reside together. Also, depending on the age there may be situations whereby aggression and violence is accepted as normal (Loeber & Hay, 1997). The following section

therefore briefly explores the current understanding of aggression, the development of aggression throughout childhood and more specifically the development of conflict between children and their parents or caregivers.

Aggression is generally understood in one of two ways. Firstly, aggression can be viewed as being a part of our personality which can extend to being disorderly or a syndrome. Secondly, aggression can be viewed as a response to a trigger that is with or without intention or an adaptive function (Reebye, 2005). The latter is obviously heavily implicated by social influences or surroundings, whereas the former is considered to be more an inborn or innate feature of an individual. Either way aggression is conceptualised, literature largely discusses two sub-types of aggression. Firstly, hostile aggression is referred to as 'hot' aggression and is manifest in an impulsive manner. It is said to be motivated by the desire to hurt someone. Secondly, instrumental aggression, also referred to as 'cold' aggression, is manifested in a premeditated manner. It is a more calculated form which has a means to an end. In saying that, aggression exhibited by children is defined as "an act directed at a specific other person or object with intent to hurt or frighten, for which there is consensus about the aggressive intent of the act (Shaw, Bell, Gilliom, 2000a).

When looking at the development of anger in children it is important to recognise that manifestations of aggression change dramatically over time and these changes are not consistent for each gender (Loeber & Hay, 1997). It is also imperative that when deciding what behaviour is developmentally appropriate and what is abnormal one requires significant knowledge about the onset of behaviours, changes in the prevalence of that behaviour with age and the continuity over time (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Therefore, not every child who hits or even injures a parent is being 'abusive' or victimising the parent (Gallagher, 2004). The need exists then to mark a clear boundary between PA and developmentally age-appropriate troublesome behaviours.

Primarily, during infancy it is common for signs of frustration and rage to be identified as young as three months old. For example, a baby that presents as irritable due to being tired. Following this, cognitive abilities are beginning to develop and therefore infants as young as six months and up to 12 months begin to understand cause-and-effect and thus associate the feelings of anger to a person or experience (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Following on from this, the temper tantrum of the 'terrible twos' is a universally accepted notion. The aggression associated with these tantrums (kicking, screaming and throwing things) is therefore expected and to some extent tolerated. At this age it is also common for children

to display instrumental aggression such as snatching toys or pushing a playmate. This is more commonly observed at this age due to finer cognitive skills developing. At late toddlerhood or after the third year it is said to be normal for incidents of aggression to steadily decrease (Brame, Nagin, Tremblay, 2001).

Once school age, gender differences in aggression are clearly observed. Boys tend to show higher rates of physical aggression (both instrumental grabs and personal force), whereas girls display more relational aggression (peer exclusion and gossip) (Loeber & Hay, 1997). As interpersonal skills develop with age these forms of aggression generally decrease. It is also at this age that symptoms of conduct disorder can be identified such as cruelty to animals and other children (Loeber & Hay, 1997). Moving into adolescence there are some major changes in the level and patterns of aggression. Direct physical aggression increases in both boys and girls. Therefore, the impact of aggressive acts is much greater; partly because of the increase in physical strength but also because it is common for weapons to be used at this stage. It is also typical for children to strive for independence and be separate from their parents at this stage. Therefore defiance and mild aggressiveness may be considered normal (Loeber & Hay, 1997).

Psychological perspectives on parent and child conflict tend to focus on the need for adolescents to separate themselves from their parents and conflict therefore arises due to this need to detach emotionally from parents or parental figures (Steinburg, 2001). Parents expect rebellion, identity experimentation, and a drive for emotional autonomy from their adolescent children and it can be considered indicative of stunted development if this conflict does not occur (Steinburg, 2001). Teenagers who are on route to healthy adult lives have to disengage from their parents in order to develop an independent identity (Steinburg, 2001). They become less accepting of their parents authority over them and more willing to openly disagree with their parents or parental figures resulting in increased conflict (Fuligni, 1998). The intensity of this conflict peaks during early to mid-adolescence and as independence develops decreases thereafter (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus, 2009).

Conflict generally arises due to disagreements over every day routine issues, such as chores and homework (Smetana & Gains, 1999), or after adolescents perceive that their privacy has been invaded (Hawk, Keijsers, Hale & Meeus, 2009). Furthermore, conflict with son's often revolves around behavioural issues such as acting out or hygiene. Conversely, conflict between parents and daughters is generally triggered by peer group issues, such as dating and friendships (Hetherington, Henderson & Reiss, 1999). On a larger scale, conflict

is most often recorded as occurring between mothers and their children (Montemayor & Hanson, 1985). This more than likely represents the higher level of contact mothers have with their children compared to fathers. Moreover, mothers are more often responsible for enforcing the house rules and therefore reprimanding their children which in turn can elicit conflict (Montemayor & Hanson, 1985).

The following sections will define parent abuse and explain how PA is different to normal parent-child conflict.

Definition and Terminology

The behaviour of interest in the current research goes beyond that everyday occurrence of children hitting out toward parents for various developmental, medical and situational reasons and falls within the abnormal and unacceptable range of abusive behaviour (Holt, 2013). There is no simple way to define parent abuse and in saying that there are no single accurate definitions of parent abuse (Coogan, 2011). PA was originally defined as a form of family violence and that it involves physical assaults and verbal or non-verbal threats of physical harm (Harbin and Madden, 1979). Over time however, this definition was seen to be very limited as it only focussed on the most obvious aspects of abuse. More modern definitions of PA begin to recognise that it is the motivating factors of power and control that puts PA in a field of its own.

With other forms of violence within families such as child abuse, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse, the perpetrators are viewed as holding both cultural authority and superior economic, political and physical power in relation to the victim (Holt, 2013). This is where PA is unique as this is not always the case when the child is the perpetrator. This has made it difficult for people to understand PA and therefore respond to it effectively. On that note, it is important to define PA as an abuse of power through which the child or adolescent endeavours to dominate, coerce, and/or control their parents or parental figures through the abuse.

Another important feature of PA to consider when attempting to formulate a definition is the continuity of the issue. It goes beyond a one off incident, more toward a pattern of behaviour that occurs repeatedly. In order for the significant aspect of power and control to be achieved through PA, the incidents of abuse need to be continual and cumulative (Holt, 2013). Therefore, not only is PA producing short-term distress for victims and their families but also on-going long term harm.

The lack of a single agreed upon definition has resulted in difficulties around identifying incidents of parent abuse and more so understanding this form of violence. This has had a huge impact on the awareness and therefore the practise, policy development, and research around parent abuse (Coogan, 2001). For the current research however two different definitions will be used to explain PA and the acts considered to be PA. Firstly, Cottrell & Finlayson (1996) describe PA as, “any act of a child that is intended to cause physical, psychological, or financial damage to gain power and control over a parent”. Edenborough (2007) uses a similar definition however builds on it by including examples of acts that are considered abusive. They define PA as “any behaviour used by offspring including property damage, intimidation, threats, sexual, verbal, financial, or social abuse, silent treatment, and/or physical violence which is intended to cause psychological, emotional, or physical harm in order to gain advantage, power, and control over the parent or parental figure”. The following table attempts to summarise behaviours that would be considered PA.

Table 1: Behaviours that constitute parent abuse, adapted from Kennair and Mellor(2007).

Types of Abuse	
Physical abuse	Hitting, punching, kicking, shoving, throwing things, and spitting
Psychological abuse	Intimidating the parent, making the parent fearful
Emotional abuse	Maliciously playing mind games, trying to make the parents feel as though they are crazy, making unrealistic demands, making manipulative threats
Financial abuse	Stealing money or parents’ belongings, selling family possessions, destroying the home or parents’ belongs, incurring debts the family must cover, demanding parents buy things, breaking things, punching holes in the walls

Eckstein's (2004) qualitative research asked victims of PA to rate the seriousness of these different forms of abuse. Unanimously, the parents rated verbal abuse as least serious and interestingly, psychological or emotional abuse as the most serious. Holt (2013) states that verbal abuse, although rated as the least serious form of abuse, is significant in that it is most frequently experienced by victims. Similarly to intimate-partner violence, it has the function of making victims feel worthless and insulted and is an on-going pattern of behaviour. Perpetrators generally use verbal abuse to demean the parental role by undermining or criticizing their parent's ability (Holt, 2013), for example, "He told me I was stupid and made him sick. He'd say things toward me to try and get a rise out of me, like; 'oh well, you're just a woman'" (Mother – Cottrell & Monk, 2004, p. 1082).

Commonly entwined in verbal abuse is emotional or psychological abuse. Emotional abuse is said to be the most difficult to come to terms with due to the underlying psychological dynamics (Holt, 2013). It is manipulative and often has a very obvious function, such as the child getting their own way. It elicits fear, anxiety, worry, blame and shame and therefore takes a real emotional toll on its victims (Holt, 2013). Emotional abuse is often very complex and circumstantial in that it can range from simple delivering verbal abuse with a smile or whilst laughing, through to life changing manipulation such as the following example. In qualitative research a mother described an experience of emotional abuse whereby her two sons "criticised and emotionally blackmailed me, telling me I was just a terrible person if I didn't agree to a divorce settlement ", that strongly favoured their father and left her with little (Stewart, Burns, & Leonard, 2007, p.187).

Financial abuse generally emerges shortly after verbal abuse (Holt, 2013). In Euro-American cultures it is common place for parents to be liable for all costs that may be incurred by their child (Holt, 2013). Therefore, perpetrators of PA are enabled to act abusively in a financial manner that would not be possible in any other relationship combinations (Holt, 2013). Victims of PA often report having money stolen of them by their children. This is the case for this mother who took part in qualitative research and stated, "I don't use a wallet because he would steal from me. He wiped my entire savings because he got hold of my PIN number" (Cottrell & Monk, 2004, p. 1080).

When Physical abuse occurs, the most easily identifiable form of abuse, victims truly become aware of the seriousness of the abusive dynamic between them and their child (Holt, 2013). The literature also suggests that it is when the size differential between perpetrator and victim increases that parents really do come to terms with their inability to

manage their abusive child and therefore the danger they are in (Holt, 2013). This growth differential generally occurs during the growth spurt of adolescence and results in a sudden shift in power, in favour of the child. This phenomena was discussed by a mother in qualitative research, “He picked me up and threw me across his bedroom, and then I was actually scared of him” (Mother, England, from original transcript – Holt, 2009).

Finally, although PA will only be discussed as and termed PA in the current research it is worth noting that terminology has not been consistent throughout time nor throughout literature. It is important to discuss terminology because each term serves to frame the problem in a particular way and this implicates how we conceptualise the problem and the methods we employ to study it (Holt, 2013). Specifying terminology is also important because without it people may not come forward to speak about it, seek support, or indeed participate in research (Holt, 2013). Therefore, things to consider when looking at the other terms for PA is the specificity of the direction of the abuse, and also the role of the people involved (Edenborough, 2007). Child-to-parent violence and adolescent-to-parent violence are the most common terms used across the literature (Holt, 2013). Child-to-mother violence, child-to-father violence, and child initiated family violence are also terms used across the literature (Edenborough, Jackson, Mannix, Wilks, 2008).

These popular terms refer to the issue as violence and as discussed earlier, not all abusive behaviour is violent and not all violence is abusive. These terms are limited in that light, therefore in the current research the issue will be referred to as parent abuse. As long as the parent or parental figure is identified as the victim and the child as the perpetrator, PA is seen to be the less cumbersome and all-encompassing term to use. Also, the parent will be identified as a victim in the current research and abusive child will be identified as their child, whether they are their biological child or not.

Is Parent Abuse Domestic Violence?

Gallagher (2004a) states that although PA is domestic and it is generally considered to be violent, it is not ‘domestic violence’ as usually understood. Similar to PA the occurrence of domestic violence was once silenced or hidden until the 1970’s when feminist research and activism exposed it (Wilcox, 2012). By the 21st century it was common place for domestic violence to be defined in policy and these definitions were slowly broadening to encompass not only a wider range of victims but also a wider range of violence other than physical assault (Wilcox, 2012). Four different forms of domestic violence emerged in time, these being; child abuse, intimate-partner violence, elder abuse and sibling abuse (Holt, 2013).

Each of these four types of domestic violence was recognised in policy, by procedures, and advocate and campaign groups (Holt, 2013). More pointedly, these four areas of domestic violence have had significant research attention with the links between each of them as a form of domestic violence being thoroughly addressed (Holt, 2013). Domestic violence researchers have set out to find links between acts of abuse within the family home. Tidefors et al. (2010) have found that witnessing domestic violence can be linked to child abuse and being abused as a child has been linked to future sibling abuse. In addition, sibling violence have been linked to future intimate partner violence (Simonelli et al., 2002) as has child abuse (Coid, et al., 2001).

Walker (1979) attempted to explain these links by developing the cycle of violence model. The most influential aspect of this model that emerged was that children who experience domestic violence will undoubtedly go on to become abusers themselves. Holt (2013) terms this phenomena secondary victimisation; whereby the primary victimisation of domestic violence has immediate and long term secondary effects which are not dissimilar to the initial victimisation. This idea was met with intense concern in the anti-domestic violence movement due to the implications of accepting such a deterministic model (Wilcox, 2012). In accepting this view, it is inevitably that not only victimised children form the belief that they are future aggressors but so will their family, society and practitioners. There are undoubtedly links however Holt (2013) cautions readers to consider the wider picture by claiming that the majority of witnesses or victims of domestic violence do not go on to be victims of victimisers.

So in saying that, literature is only just beginning to ascertain the links between domestic violence and PA. Moreover, literature has been attempting to establish the differences and similarities between PA and other forms of domestic violence and also consider why it has been so difficult to include PA as the fifth form of domestic violence's. Gallagher (2004a) claims that PA has been considered to be less dangerous than other forms of domestic violence in that serious physical injuries are less common. Furthermore, it is considered to be temporary as children either grow out of PA or move out of home putting a stop to the abuse. More psychologically complex reasoning's include PA being caused by parents, children are seen as victims or the medical model is applied to their abnormal behaviour and finally, PA does not fit into the feminist view of domestic violence (Gallagher, 2004a).

Gallagher (2004b) builds on these ideas by stating that a child's behaviour is seen to be directly caused by parenting, therefore parents are seen as responsible. This kind of parent

blaming means that it is impossible for parents to be seen as a victim thus PA would not be considered domestic violence. Parents are further blamed if their children have been exposed to domestic violence in the past or even presently as they inadvertently caused their child's behaviour through modelling. It is also very difficult to put parents or caregivers into a victim role when their abusive children are suffering from mental health or learning disabilities. If the child is in the sick role then they are unable to be viewed as victimisers by neither their parents nor members of the public. Moreover, child protective services always view the child as a victim and due to the child-saving movement a child is very rarely viewed as a victimiser. Wilcox (2012) also reiterates that victims of PA are generally more physically powerful than their abuser (compared to domestic violence) and therefore society and professionals have struggled to understand the possibility of a child being a victimiser.

Conversely, literature has explored similarities between PA and domestic violence. The obvious similarity is that the majority of victims are females or mothers. This is especially apparent between PA and intimate partner violence. Secondly, both domestic violence and PA involve a pattern of behaviour rather than one off events (Wilcox, 2012). Each form of abuse is defined similarly in that there must be an ongoing process of harm that requires day-to-day management rather than just single acts of aggression. Finally, domestic violence and PA involve everyday stressors which heavily impact the lives of all family members involved and significantly shape the victim's ability to parent effectively (Wilcox, 2012). Research completed by Walsh and Krienert (2009) used data derived from a data recording system developed by the American Federal Bureau of Investigation. Interestingly this system, namely the National Incident Based Reporting System records all 'child-initiated family violence'. Under this section all crimes committed that are considered to be child-parent violence (CPV) or parricide are reported. Therefore, when it comes to the recording of family violence in the United States, they have recognised that PA is in fact a form of family violence (Walsh & Krienert, 2009).

In the end, having PA considered a form of domestic violence would present clear advantages in terms of practice and especially the development of policy (Wilcox, 2012). This can be seen in the current understanding of domestic violence whereby a change in social values and norms have led to growing public awareness of abuse and violence within the home (Coogan, 2011). Along with increased awareness will come the emergence of policy, legislation and improved practice initiatives to protect all people within the family

home (Coogan, 2011). If researchers, policy makers and society are able to adjust their lens when considering family violence to include the complexities of PA this could be hugely influential in the development of policy and practice.

Prevalence Rates

Due to a lack of research, reported prevalence rates of PA are sparse and generally inaccurate. The prevalence rates that do appear in the literature on PA are generally estimates or ranges and are often flawed by poor methodology. The rates that do exist are also considered to be underreported due to the efforts victims go to to silence the issue (Jackson, 2003). Many victims of parent abuse fail to report their child's behaviour due to feelings of guilt or shame and their fears for what will happen to their child (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Social and cultural factors that may contribute to the invisibility of parent abuse are also present. These can be the belief that it is very uncommon and an apprehension from society to place responsibility on children for aggressive and violent behaviour (Coogan, 2011).

Early reports on the prevalence of PA stated that between 9.2% and 11.7% of all adolescents had assaulted their parents at least once in the previous three year period (Agnew & Hughley, 1989). Knowing what we know about the definition of parent abuse however, a one off incident, although still very serious, is not considered PA. A pattern of behaviour observed over a period of time is needed to be observed in order to ascertain a more accurate prevalence rate. Although more modern literature attempts to do this, rates are still flawed by response rates, sampling and poor methodology (Holt, 2013).

Parentline Plus, a telephone support service for parents in the UK, reported that 27% (or 22500) of long phone calls (over 20 minutes) between June 2008 and June 2010 were from concerned parents being physically or verbally abused by their children (Parentline Plus, 2009). Similarly, US literature has reported that 18% of two-parent families and 29% of single-parent families experience parent abuse (Walsh & Krienert, 2009) and in Canada these same figures were derived out of research conducted by Pelletier & Coutu (1992). Closer to home, 51% of Australian mothers have reported experiencing PA (Edenborough et al., 2008). Out of the 6000 surveys only 1024 were returned therefore leaving this rate as unreliable. Large scale surveys are the most appropriate ways of measuring overall prevalence rate however (Holt, 2013).

Although many of the rates available are dated, they still represent the most reliable rates available at present (Holt, 2013). Also, despite the difficulty in obtaining precise figures

about the prevalence of PA, it still remains clear that it is a feature of family life that affects a significant number of people and deserves attention from both research and intervention fields (Jackson, 2003).

PA Characteristics

The gender of parent abusers varies across the literature and across different research methodologies (Walsh & Krienert, 2008). For example, clinical, anecdotal, and forensic studies suggest boys are more often the offenders than girls (Walsh & Krienert, 2008). Whereas, Pagani et. al. (2004) found that 9.7% of girls were offenders compared to 8.8% of boys. Although their results were reported as being not statistically significant other literature consistently states that there are no clear gender differences in the offenders of PA (Bobic, 2002). The differences in gender are said to be in the types of abuse used. Males are more likely to be physically abusive (hitting, punching, pushing, damaging property), whereas girls are more likely to be emotionally abusive (making manipulative threats, playing mind games) and verbally abusive (screaming, swearing, insulting) toward their parents (Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2010).

The age of onset and peak age of offending also tends to vary depending on the methodology and sampling involved in research (Cottrell, 2001). In 1975 three to five year olds were seen to be the most common age group committing PA. It was later accepted that this was in fact a misinterpretation of normal developmental behaviour and not in fact PA (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). As time has gone on, literature has recognised that it is difficult to identify the exact age on onset and peak age due to parents not recognising their child's behaviour as abusive (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). It is not until the children becoming more threatening in size or their behaviour becomes more severe that it is identified by parents as abuse and not a temper tantrum. In saying that, literature reports that PA is most commonly identified between the age of 12 – 14 years (Kennair & Mellor, 2007; Cottrell, 2001).

Early literature on PA failed to identify differences in the ethnicities of families affected (Cornell & Gelles, 1982). It wasn't until the late 1980's and early 1990's that researchers began to find that PA was more commonly occurring within white European as opposed to any other populations (Agnew & Huguley, 1989). This is consistent with more recent data recorded by Kethineni (2004) where PA was reported in 68% of white families out of their sample, 24% Black, 5% Hispanic, 2% Asian and 1% other. Ultimately, PA is documented across Euro-American cultures, especially in Australasia, Europe, North America, Israel and

Japan. The absence of documentation on PA has been noted in India (Holt, 2013). While it is possible that PA does not occur in India, the silencing of it may also represent certain cultural practise regarding the management of family problems and disclosing these problems (Segal, 1999).

Parenting Style

A lot of literature on PA focuses on the 'profile' of a perpetrator and attempts to explain the cause or development of PA by establishing commonalities within perpetrator profiles. Family structure and parenting style has been identified as one of these commonalities. A change in the marital sub-system (separation, divorce, new marriage, etc.) can often be a risk factor for abuse by children. Divorce in particular involves emotional distress that affects the whole family. Parenting becomes more difficult resulting in strain in the parent-child relationship. Therefore it is not the divorce, rather the dysfunctional family environment which influences the child's behaviour (Pagani et. al., 2003). There is also a much greater prevalence of PA in single-parent families, especially where the mother is the sole parent (Ibabe & Jaureguizer, 2010). Conflict between parents over custody and financial difficulties are also said to deteriorate the relationship between parent and child which may lead to PA. Parents that are more stressed are also going to have less energy to react effectively to domestic conflict (Cottrell & Monk, 2004).

Parenting styles have also been found to influence the occurrence of PA. Research has found that PA is more likely to occur when parents are overly permissive, inconsistent in their rules and consequences, or overly authoritarian (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Permissive parents have an unconditional acceptance for their children and encourage them to be autonomous with few rules and boundaries. Any rules that are in place are agreed upon in negotiation with the child and in turn children are permitted to develop independence prematurely (Holt, 2013). Although during adolescence it is natural for a child to crave independence, if this is offered to them too early Gallagher (2004a) claims that these over-entitled children are often the ones that will become perpetrators of PA. The child will always crave structure and control and if they perceive that their parent is unable or unwilling to provide this a change of roles will occur. The children may become more authoritarian than their parent and this is positively reinforced when the child learns that their aggressive behaviour can be used to coerce their parents' compliance. The children will also develop a cost/benefit analysis wherein the rewards of the negative behaviour are perceived to outweigh the consequences (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Therefore, a pattern of behaviour then develops.

Single parents who are inconsistent in their rules and consequences, or two parents who are inconsistent in their parenting partnership are also at risk of PA. Children become frustrated with inconsistency and lose respect for inconsistent parents. Children may also perceive injustice due to inconsistency which fuels this frustration as well (Evans, Heriot, & Friedman, 2002). Where there are two parents, a child can become angry or resentful of the more firm parent resulting in PA or conversely, may utilise PA to intimidate the more lenient parent (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Conversely, authoritarian parents who are excessively controlling and forceful in their discipline are also at risk of PA. A parent who is completely non-negotiable with their rules and controls their child through punishment also runs the risk of preventing their child's development of autonomy all together (Holt, 2013). Parents who do not respond to their adolescents need for autonomy will be faced with a child who may become aggressive in order to acquire a sense of control (Cottrell & Monk, 2004).

Parenting with permissive or authoritarian style's can be the result of parental helplessness. Parent helplessness develops in parents who perceive that they have less power than their child (Holt, 2013). It is often in fact the case that they have less power than their child and is commonly the case for parents of children with severe behavioural problems. Parents who experience helplessness are often depressed which causes inactivity as a parent (Holt, 2013). A parent who does not put a stop to being abused will in turn lose their child's respect. The child can increasingly see their parent as helpless and the PA will develop in a consistent behaviour configuration (Gallagher, 2004a).

Exposure to Abuse

Physical aggression can be learned through either direct experience or vicarious exposure (Hong et. al., 2012). Therefore, if a child has been the victim of maltreatment from a parent or even witnessed abuse between parents it is possible that they learn that aggression is a legitimate way of interacting with others and therefore be more likely to develop an abusive pattern of behaviour (Hong et. al., 2012). Parents who reprimand their children in a physical manner such as spanking or do in fact physically or sexually abuse their children can foster an abusive behaviour pattern in their children (Hong et. al., 2012). Child maltreatment can result in poor emotional regulation, anxiety, depression, and behavioural problems. Children who witness domestic disputes and violence are also at risk of poor psychosocial functioning, externalizing behaviours and aggression.

Cottrell and Monk (2004) have found that when perpetrators of PA begin to present abusive behaviour this is often directed at the victimised parent in the domestic violence situation. This is generally the female and this abuse typically begins shortly after the violent adult (typically the male) leaves the home. In support of this idea, Ulmer and Straus (2003) also found that 60% of the children in their study had witnessed domestic violence and in turn were becoming aggressive toward their mothers. They explain this by suggesting this behaviour has been modelled by the father who has abused the mother and is also a presentation of anger toward the mother for failing to protect the children from the violence or aggression. Less commonly, in order to protect the victimised parent in a domestic violence situation, the child will perpetrate violence toward the abusive adult (Cottrell & Monk, 2004).

Children who were raised in abusive or neglectful environments also show poor parental attachment. Bowlby (1969) described attachment as a lasting psychological connection between people. Moreover, this connection is responsible for developing feelings of security, trust and empathy in children (Bowlby, 1969). Agnew and Huguley (1989) found that of 1,395 adolescents, those who engaged in PA were weakly attached to their parents. These results were also supported in later research that compared attachment between perpetrators of PA and non-abusive children. The children who did engage in PA reported being distant from their parents and having fewer emotionally rewarding interactions with them (Paulson, Coombs & Landsverk, 1990). As a result of feeling a constant sense of vulnerability and isolation their behaviour is used as an expression of anger toward their parent and more often as an attempt to create emotional attention from the parent (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Therefore, research also suggests perpetrators of PA have limited attachment to their parents (Agnew & Huguley, 1989). Researchers therefore generalise that appropriate emotional bonding between parent and child consisting of parental involvement in the child's upbringing and appropriate supervision and discipline will protect a child against anti-social and aggressive behaviour later (Hong et. al., 2012).

Personality and Mental health

Children who abuse their parents have been identified as having lower abilities to tolerate frustration, poor emotional regulation, display more oppositional and aggressive behaviours, and be more demanding (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). They are often described by their parents as stubborn or 'strong willed' (Gallagher, 2004b). Many children involved in PA suffer from learning disabilities, place little value on school learning, and are often bored in class or even truant. As well as having low self-esteem and low empathy, perpetrators of

PA are commonly diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Bipolar, Depression, Conduct Disorder, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (O'Connor, 2007; Holt, 2013; Nordstorm & Gunnar, 2003). Perera (2006) also found that 25% of perpetrators of PA have been diagnosed with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Gallagher (2004b) suggests that diagnoses have often been sought by parents whom are victims of PA as such labelling gives relief that hope that with diagnosis there is cure. Such belief is a dangerous illusion and has the detrimental effect of making the child themselves believe they are damaged and not in control of themselves (Gallagher, 2004b).

Elliot et al. (2011) speak about the concept of "mattering". They believe that a child's perception of how much they matter to their family can be a key risk factor in PA. If a child doesn't feel as though they matter within their family, they have little to lose by becoming violent or lashing out at a parent. Also the shame and frustration involved in these feelings of not mattering makes conflict an attractive method of conflict resolution. It is also a reflex from these children to lash out in effort to repair or restore a positive self-concept. Elliot et al. (2011) state that feelings of mattering combined with efficient self-esteem are two important protective factors against PA.

Substance Abuse

Literature suggests that PA very rarely occurs whilst the child is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs. Instead, acts of PA are often precipitated by a dispute with a parent regarding an issue associated with substance use (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Research also suggests that "asking patterns" instigated by the young person, for example making demand for money, often elicit PA (Holt, 2013). In fact, Evans and Warren-Sohlberg (1988) claim that 20% of PA occurs due to disputes around substance use.

Peer Influence

Research suggests that young people who are aggressive are more likely to associate with other aggressive young people (Deptula & Cohen, 2004). Building on this, Cottrell & Monk (2004) claim that perpetrators of PA socialise with peers whom display similar aggressive behaviours at home to achieve power and control. It is also common for these delinquent peers to endorse these abusive acts (Agnew & Huguley, 1989). In saying that, PA is more likely to be committed alone compared to other kinds of abuse that often take place with co-offenders (Snyder & McCurley, 2008). Moreover, Cottrell (2001) suggests that parent abuse may be more common if the parent and child are relatively isolated. If there is no one else around, these feelings of isolation can often encourage conflict and acts of abuse.

Perpetrators of PA can also use the abuse as a way of compensating for feelings of powerlessness that are brought about as a result of victimisation by their own peers. This therefore indicates the role of peer associates is particularly complex when attempting to understand PA.

Power

It is commonly understood that systems of power have a huge influence on the construction and shaping of broad social structures. These wider social structures in turn influence and shape the dynamic of power within families (Holt, 2013). It is an intriguing question to ask then; what kinds of power dynamics exist for a child to be able to abuse a parent? In response to this question, Holt (2013) claims that childhood and parenthood is not what it used to be. They are also not universal due to being a product of major shifts in social, historical and political outlooks. Children were once considered to be the property of their parents. They had little rights and were subject to a strict hierarchical familial power system where they were situated very much at the bottom. However, parent-child relations have greatly shifted and are characterised by much more democratic and egalitarianism notions these days (Holt, 2013).

Partly due to societies changing views around child abuse and increased awareness and conscientiousness around child abuse we have witnessed a 'child-saving movement'. With a focus on child welfare and protection, a large amount of policy and legislation has changed the way in which wider society and the justice system responds to how we raise our children (Holt, 2013). Children have been granted more rights than ever before and along with this more obligations are placed on parents to ensure these rights are espoused. Parents are therefore subject to increased surveillance and regulation and forced to parent within the guidelines of legislation (Holt, 2013). Although this legislation has been developed in the responsible light of protecting children, it can also be seen as taking power away from good parents and giving it to bad children.

Literature has also revealed that children are in fact abusing this protection by using it as a means to exert power over their parents or caregivers (Holt, 2013). Children are threatening their parents with false accusations of child abuse in order to achieve power and control in the home. Children are able to call emergency services and are taken very seriously if these allegations exist. Parents then have little power in this situation and their jobs, reputations, and relationships are at risk. There becomes too much at stake for a parent and therefore their previously reasonable parenting techniques disappear and they

begin to parent in fear. Children use the emergency services as a weapon against their parents and as a result, children have become more confident in the home with increased right and entitlement (Gallagher, 2004b). We have to stop overestimating the extent to which parents can exert power in relation to children. Likewise, we need to stop underestimating the extent to which children are able to exert power over their parents or caregivers (Holt, 2013). Holt (2013) states that it is arguable that parents are in no position to exert any more physical, legal, or social power than their children.

The socialisation of gender and power is also said to have a significant role in parent abuse. Many theories exist around how gender implicates PA but one thing is consistent and that is the role of power. For males, stereotypes of masculinity are said to influence the way in which they use power and control in relationships (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Young boys learn through social media and wider societal influences that it is acceptable to govern and dominate woman. As previously mentioned, these boys may have also had this behaviour modelled to them by fathers or their mother's partners. Conversely, young girls who abuse their parents are said to be attempting to create distance from the feminine stereotypes that have been ascribed to them (Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Young girls may view their mothers as weak, potentially due to witnessing domestic violence, and therefore use abusive behaviours against them in order to distance themselves from that image of female vulnerability (Cottrell & Monk, 2004).

Building on this, woman have been socialised to take responsibility for the family (Gallagher, 2004a). Additionally, it is understood that woman are culturally constructed as more ideal victims of abuse and therefore, men are constructed as the ideal perpetrators (Holt, 2013). The most obvious explanation for this is that men are generally larger than woman in size and stature and therefore stronger and more powerful. These cultural ideals are established and distributed through a range of networks such as mainstream media, education, and legal practises (Holt, 2013). Thus, due to men having greater status and authority outside of the home, it is understandable that this is also translated within the home. Also, single fathers are viewed as hero's that fulfil the roles of both a breadwinner and a child bearer. On the other hand, mothers are viewed as benefit bludgers and bad mothers fulfilling neither of those admirable roles (Holt, 2013). On the rare occasion that the father actually is the victim of PA, literature suggests that this is due to the son asserting himself as the man of the house. The son may view his father as being vulnerable

and therefore may practise what he considers to be a more legitimate performance of masculinity (Holt, 2013).

Harbin & Maddin (1979) briefly touched on the idea of children who are perpetrators of PA being over entitled. It is an explanation that hasn't been thoroughly discussed in the literature but it appears nonetheless. Research claims that victims of PA have often been well-meaning parents that are just trying too hard (Holt, 2013). In turn they produce children who expect to be entertained, chattered around, waited on, and more. These parents are more likely to manage their child's education, entertainment, and social life. These parents also perceive more risk outside of the home for the child when they are not around to protect them and often yield to the child's wishes. This yielding result in a child rarely having to practice postponing gratification and abuse begins to occur when entitlement starts to outweigh responsibility (Jackson, 2003). According to Gallagher (2004b) some single-mothers create high levels of entitlement in their children by trying to feel better about depriving that child of a father. A pattern of passive and permissive responses develops and is reinforced by subsiding feelings of guilt in the mother. The child's abusive behaviour is constantly reinforced as there is immediate pay off in terms of getting their own way and feeling powerful. They become ambivalent about their behaviour and both parent and child are ignorant to the pattern of behaviour going on.

So overall, parents who are victims of PA begin to find themselves parenting within a different role, one that includes a loss of power. This loss of power can be caused by a number of things however ultimately results in parents having to respond to abuse in a different manner. Eckstein (2004) states that parents whom are victimised by their children or a child in their care will begin to eliminate all challenges in the home. As PA generally develops out of verbal disputes, they will change the way they communicate with their abusive child to ensure that it is not interpreted as challenging. Secondly, parents will begin to find their methods of discipline ineffective. They then begin to feel unable to implement discipline and this is particularly the case when the perpetrators of PA are older and larger. Finally, parents will begin to parent with an acceptance of the abuse as normative behaviour. It becomes a normal part of the family's interactions and any outside influences such as counselling that endeavour to change this will prove ineffective (Eckstein, 2004).

Outcomes of PA: What does qualitative research tell us thus far?

Although little qualitative research on PA exists, many themes derived from speaking to victims of PA focus on the various outcomes of their experience. The emotional turmoil of

experiencing PA is something that appears in all qualitative literature. Victims often speak about experiencing fear, concern and worry, betrayal, self-blame, shame, resentment, loss and grief, hopelessness, and helplessness (Cottrell, 2001; Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Haw, 2010; Holt, 2013, Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Fear is commonly built upon in the literature with victims describing themselves as being in a constant state of self-surveillance in attempt to avoid triggering abuse (Haw, 2010). They found their relationships with their children going from relatively uncomplicated to strained and fraught with tension (Jackson, 2003). Participants involved in qualitative research spoke about fearing for their personal safety with some even creating safe and private places in their home by applying locks to their bedrooms (Jackson, 2003).

This generalised anxiety results from parents feeling as though they are walking on egg shells, living in fear of not knowing when their child will become abusive (Edinburgh et. al., 2008; Cottrell & Monk, 2004). Holt (2011) found that parents experiencing PA often described their capricious child as a lit fuse, pointing out the inevitable explosion that is unpredictable and thus a constant threat. Parents describe their abusive children as being calculated in their unpredictability. Participants in Holt (2011) claim their children are able to turn on the charm when needed and say all the right things. They build on this explanation by stating their children are morally divided and in conflict between good and bad. This causes parents to become torn between nurturing and caring for their child and resenting them because of their behaviour (Edinburgh et. al., 2008). By putting the child in this light of unpredictable and therefore uncontrollable, parents or caregivers inadvertently make them less culpable. As a result, victims of PA begin to experience feelings of guilt. Parents believe that as they are unable to feel unconditional love toward their children they have transgressed from good parenthood which results in inevitable feelings of guilt.

Furthermore, this guilt results from or is even reinforced by parents or caregivers believing that they are a bad parent due to experiencing PA (Holt, 2011). These feelings of failure mean that victims of PA attribute responsibility and blame to themselves for the abuse occurring. These feelings are reinforced by the child and a personal fear of being blamed publicly (Holt, 2011). Victims have also stated that the shame that would inevitably result from feeling blamed by outsiders can have the terrible outcome of preventing victims from seeking help (Holt, 2013). This silencing of the abuse is also utilised by victims to prevent the family secret from being found out as parents will distance themselves from family,

friends and neighbours (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Parents who are victims of PA also report withdrawing from social engagements and therefore feeling increasingly imprisoned and isolated (Holt, 2013).

Parents began to describe their children as increasingly menacing, threatening, intimidating, belligerent and hostile (Jackson, 2003). They describe their children as becoming increasingly uncaring and rough toward them with this escalating to physical abuse (Holt, 2011). Parents report this trajectory commonly coincides with the physical size of their abusive child meaning that eventually their attempts at dealing with acts of violence become ineffectual (Jackson, 2003) Participants often speak about their experience of PA as being a constant battle consisting of an ongoing difficulty with maintaining discipline and administering consequences (Holt, 2011). Adding salt to the wound, victims have also talked about not only being in fear of their own abusive child but their child's peers as well (Holt, 2011). Holt's (2011) participant's stated that they often returned home to a house full of intoxicated youth, waking up to find intoxicated youth in the house and some were even stood over, threatened or abused by peers of their abusive child.

Qualitative research has also asked victims of parent abuse to report on how they have responded to abuse from a child in their care and comment on their experiences of seeking help. Participants in Holt (2011) reported responding to abuse from their children with physical retaliation. These parents spoke about slapping their child's face or hitting them back with one stating that they were ashamed to admit it but they felt they had reached a breaking point. Other participants in Holt (2011) spoke about using self-defence to block punches and kicks from their violent children as well as trying to reason with them by warning them of the possible consequences of their behaviour. Victims of parent abuse also spoke about threatening to kick their child out of home or asking their child to leave in response and many also resorted to calling the police (Edenborough et. al, 2008; Holt, 2011). The literature states that by calling police, victims are telling us that they frame the issue as a criminal offence rather than a dysfunctional family issue (Holt, 2011). Building on this, parents reported that they called police when they feared for their safety and often this was a deterrent for their abusive children (Edenborough et. al., 2008; Holt, 2011). Unfortunately however, some victims of PA have been disappointed by police responses to their victimisation by not feeling listened to, demeaned and angered by having their experience downplayed (Edenborough et. al., 2008).

Parents who have experienced PA have also approached mental health agencies and counselling support in response to the abuse. Edenborough et al. (2008) found that mothers who had a belief that their abusive child was mentally ill were likely to be more supportive, protective and tolerant of the abuse. In saying that, these same participants reported having to beg for support from mental health services often to no avail. They were often told that their children were either “not high end enough”, or believed that their child, “acted sweet and innocent” in assessments to fool practitioners (Edenborough et. al, 2008; Holt, 2011). Many participants in qualitative research on PA reported on their experiences of attending counselling themselves or having their abusive child attend counselling. Victims have spoken about the challenges they faced attempting to get their child to actually attend counselling sessions to begin with and then being unimpressed with what was actually addressed in the sessions (Edenborough et. al., 2008). Either the content of the counselling was not efficient or some participants in research even reported their child manipulating and lying to the therapist so that the real roots of the issues were never discussed (Edenborough et. al., 2008). Finally, very few victims of PA have reported seeking help or support from family members or friends however many have stated that it would be helpful to have someone to debrief them after an abusive episode or would like an outsider to connect with their child in an informal mentoring type relationship (Edenborough et. al., 2008).

Assessment and Intervention

In order to put in place the most effect interventions to stop PA occurring within a family it is vital that a comprehensive and relevant assessment is conducted. Holt (2013) suggests an assessment framework that explores seven important areas. First, it is suggested that intrapersonal precipitating factors such as mental health, substance use and learning difficulties are assessed. Secondly, by assessing interpersonal family processes and dynamics such as attachment, parenting, and communication styles we can better understand the associations between PA and familial behaviours. This in turn helps us to determine whether the abuse is occurring in response to external pressures, interpersonal problems, or a crisis situation (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Hong et al. (2012) builds on this assessment recommendation by stating that it is imperative that the actions and influences of peers are considered. Also the child’s regard for authority and the degree of empathic interactions in the family need to be considered (Kennair & Mellor, 2007). Family history will also contribute vital information to an assessment on PA. Most importantly, one must

ascertain whether there has been a history of abuse modelled by parents or inflicted on children.

The fourth area that Holt (2013) recommends an assessment on PA addresses is the structural locations of family members. This involves collating data relating to gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Similarly, the fifth recommendation is that wider cultural issues that might require specialist input are considered. These wider cultural issues may be diversities in language and cultural or religious norms. Importantly, the sixth assessment area is the analysis of specific features of the abuse. An assessment needs to ascertain the emergence of the abuse, the rate of trajectory, consistent patterns of abuse, and what developmental stage the perpetrator is currently experiencing. Finally, Holt (2013) suggests that it is vital to ascertain what roads of support or intervention that the family have already been down. Having knowledge on what has or hasn't worked in terms of intervention for a family is required to prevent prescribing ineffective interventions. Furthermore, simple tick box assessments are not appropriate for PA, a detailed qualitative interview combined with observational data is most valuable (Holt, 2013).

It is portrayed in research that there is a major dearth of prevention and intervention programmes that specifically address PA (Hong et. al., 2012). Kennair and Mellor (2007) claim that this is due to the research focussing on the explanation of PA rather than identifying possible interventions. Furthermore, PA treatment options need to be derived from research and to ensure empirical practises are effective in reducing the negative outcomes of PA (Hong et. al., 2012). Research does however discuss particular areas of intervention that are in need of addressing when considering the development of interventions for PA. Micucci (1995) suggests four strategies to guide the treatment of PA. Most importantly, it is vital for therapists to support parental authority. Parents who are victims of PA are often powerless and helpless. Therefore, therapists need to install parents with more self-confidence by insisting parents take complete responsibility for what happens within and outside of therapy and by avoiding taking on an instructional role prematurely. If the therapist takes that role of the instructor prematurely the victim is unable to develop the confidence in themselves that they need to solve their own problems. Secondly, Micucci (1995) recommends that interventions must aim to repair dislocated relationships. The parent-child relationship needs to be attended to and positive parenting encouraged. Furthermore, the family need to facilitate the development of each other's strengths and talents and re-establish trust in each other. Therapists want to

encourage family members to listen in a non-reactive manner which means listening without feeling as though they have to defend themselves.

The third strategy suggested to guide treatment by Micucci (1995) is containing conflicts. By managing the cooperation of family members and reducing the emotionality and conflict between them therapy is able to continue to make gains. If conflict is not contained therapeutic gain will be compromised. Coogan (2011) states that intervention programmes that assist parents in becoming aware of their role in the (de)escalation of conflict are most promising. Finally, it is imperative that treatment is guided by the discovery and supporting of competence throughout the family. Furthermore, literature suggests that treatment programmes are gender appropriate and reinforce positive social skills and anger management in children (Hong et. al., 2012). It is also recommended that therapists assist parents in setting a non-violent example in the home by abstaining from corporal punishment and from modelling domestic violence (Hong, et. al., 2012). On that note, it is also important that interventions assist victims of domestic violence in overcoming the trauma and psychological distress inherent in these experiences (Coogan, 2011).

Although treatment programmes that specifically address PA are few and far between, literature has briefly reviewed those that do exist. Many of the interventions programmes that have emerged since the mid-1990's have been at a local level and therefore are constrained by budgets. Many of these thus operate as group programmes for parents and few with simultaneous child groups. Breaking the Cycle is an Australian based programme directed at Mothers who are victims of PA (Paterson, Luntz, Perlesz, Cotton, 2002). This programme features female peer support and the development of communication and conflict resolution. Who's in Charge is also an Australian programme with its roots in solution-focussed brief therapy and directed at all parents who are victims of PA (Gallagher, 2004a). This programme aims to reduce parental feelings of isolation, guilt, depression and powerlessness along with increasing a sense of hope and increasing assertiveness in victims. The MATTERS programme is the final programme delivered in Australia to address PA. Research has shown that it is effective in reducing acts of PA by having perpetrators become more accountable for their behaviour and having adults stand up to the behaviour (Sheehan, 1997). It comes from a narrative family therapy and psychodynamic theory background and makes families more aware of how processes within and outside of the family influence the occurrence of PA (Sheehan, 1997).

Break4Change is another solution-focussed brief therapy that is delivered to children and their parents in England (Munday, 2009). By using conversation, video, role play, self-reflection and creative sessions, it aims to reduce violence and develop more positive relationships in the home. The Stopping Aggression and Anti-social Behaviour in Families (SAAIF) programme is also delivered in England (Priority Research, 2009). It is a politically driven programme with a huge focus on risk management and a basis of functional family therapy (Holt, 2013). In the United States of America the programme Step-Up is a cognitive-behavioural skills based programme intervention within a restorative framework. It is an acronym that reminds parents and children to stop, take time out, evaluate, prepare, and use skills and patience. Research has found this programme to be successful in the reduction of abusive acts and much lower recidivism rates compared to a control group (Holt, 2013).

Finally, Non-violent resistance approaches are commonly employed in the United Kingdom to address PA (Weinblatt & Omer, 2008). Again this is a political approach to intervention and requires that parents commit to 'non-violence' and be more aware of the escalation of abuse and their role in this escalation. This is similar to the political approach to managing PA of Restorative Justice Conferences (Doran, 2007). Broadly speaking, the aims of these conferences are to repair the harm caused by the offence and to make the perpetrator accountable for it. Doran (2007) has found that, in four out of five cases the conference has been seen as positive largely due to the legal binding contract that enforces change under the presence of authority figures, not just parents alone.

Summary

In summary, PA is a very under-researched area of family interactions and furthermore the literature that does exist consists of very few qualitative pieces. It is defined as "any behaviour used by offspring including property damage, intimidation, threats, sexual, verbal, financial or social abuse, silent treatment and/or physical violence which is intended to cause psychological, emotional, or physical harm in order to gain advantage, power and control over the parent or parental figure" (Edenborough et. al., 2007). It is also important that parent abuse is distinguished from normal developmental aggression in children and normal parent-child conflict within the home. Researchers struggled in define Pa in the past due to victims silencing the phenomena along with certain aspects of it. This silencing has also implicated the recording of prevalence rates in the literature. Nonetheless, researchers report that PA affects between nine and 11 percent of all families with adolescent children

and regardless of these rates it is a feature of family life that is significant and worthy of attention.

Research on PA reveals that there are inconclusive gender differences between who is a perpetrator. It is however widely accepted that PA most commonly occurs when children are aged between 12 and 14 years old and a higher prevalence rate is reported in white European families. PA is also considered to coincide with parental conflict, separation or divorce, and inconsistent, over permissive or over authoritarian parenting. Perpetrators of PA are reported to have poor emotional regulation among other personality features and commonly have diagnoses of Attention-Deficit-Hyperactivity Disorder, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Perpetrators of PA often have poor or disorganised attachments with their victims and believe that they 'do not matter' to their family. PA can also arise as a result of conflicts around substance use, influence from peers who behave this way or conversely as a result of being treated poorly by peers. Research suggests that children may initiate PA within the home as a way of regaining the control they perceive they have lost within their peer group. Building on this, PA is largely implicated by gender and power stereotypes, over-entitlement, and the child-saving movement whereby children have significantly more rights these days.

There is a lack of qualitative research however what does exist has derived themes very much focused on the emotional turmoil entwined in PA. Participants in these studies have discussed their feelings of fear, guilt, anxiety and shame and their beliefs that they are either a good or bad parent. Furthermore, parents have spoken about their experiences of fighting back, self-defence, kicking their child out of home, calling the police, attending counselling and having their child's mental health assessed. In terms of assessing PA, researchers suggest comprehensive and holistic assessments that encompass the entire family. Furthermore, treatment must be guided by these assessments and focus on parental authority, repairing relationships, containing conflicts, and supporting competence throughout the family. These treatments are commonly delivered in a group format with some including the child as well as the parent. The treatment methods that are research based are mostly based in Australia, the United Kingdom and the States.

Finally, there would be huge benefits to families plagued with PA as well as practitioners and society if PA was considered to be a part of family violence and therefore receive the same research, policy making, and funding attention that the likes of child abuse and intimate partner violence do. At this stage, research suggests that PA is seen as less

dangerous and only a temporary feature of family interactions. People also struggle to view a child as a victimiser and a parent as a victim and therefore hesitate to consider it family violence. The FBI however use categorise PA as a form of child-initiated family violence in their National Incident Based Reporting System suggesting that it has the ability to be considered domestic violence.

The current research is an applied phenomenological analysis of the experience of parent abuse for victims in New Zealand. It endeavours to provide a broad explanation of how victims make sense of their experiences to readers. The following section introduces the method and methodology employed by the researcher.

Chapter Two: Methodology and Method

As discussed previously, parent abuse is a significantly under-researched area in New Zealand. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of parent abuse by victims, their friends and families, social services, and government. With family violence being a focus of so many community awareness campaigns it is imperative that research begins to support the need for parent abuse to be considered a part of it. This silent plague needs to be explored thoroughly in New Zealand and therefore this research projects endeavours to open the flood gates.

Participants have spoken about what it has been like for them to experience abuse from a child in their care. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from interviewing these participants and analysing consequent transcripts will increase awareness and understanding of parent abuse in New Zealand.

Ethical Considerations

The ethics process began with a research proposal being presented to the project supervisor. A full ethics application was then submitted to Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) after ethical risks were considered and measure to mitigate potential risks were arranged. MUHEC approved the study and the research process began.

Participants

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis research involves a detailed and time consuming case-by-case analysis. Therefore, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012) suggest that a smaller participant group is more manageable as long as it is relatively homogenous. In order to achieve data saturation I endeavoured to interview between six and 10 victims of parent abuse. In the end, this study involved eight participants which is said to be within the recommended range of participants needed for saturation of data using interpretive phenomenological analysis (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Turpin et al. (1997) also

support this size of participant group as clinical psychology doctoral programmes in Britain recommend having six to eight participants in research using IPA. For students doing research using IPA for the first time it is even suggested that three is a useful number of participants (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Participants were identified by programme facilitators at a non-governmental organisation in a provincial region of New Zealand. A large part of this programme addresses the drivers, cycles and triggers of anger and stress in the parent-child relationship and is therefore a fitting intervention for adults experiencing abuse from a child in their care. The participants had completed the programme primarily due to their child's anger and aggression and were initially approached by the programme facilitators who provided them with information about the research project. If the potential participants were interested in taking part in the research the programme facilitator passed on their contact details to me after gaining their consent. After making contact with the potential participants I provided them with the Information Sheet (Appendix A) outlining the purpose of the study and what would be required of them. All potential participants agreed to participate in the study and after addressing any queries they may have had informed consent was completed by having participants sign the Participant Consent Form (Appendix B). Interviews were subsequently arranged.

Participant criteria was very broad in that the only criteria was that the potential participant had experienced some form of physical, emotional, psychological or financial abuse from a child that was or is in their care. Therefore, the research was open to men and woman of all ages. Ultimately, all eight participants were woman with six being the mother of the abusive child and two being the grandmother of the abusive child. Seven out of the eight participants were involved in either part-time or full-time employment with one being retired. All but one participant still had the abusive child in their care at the time of their interview and these seven participants reported still experiencing abuse from that child.

Interviews

Participants were given the options for interviews to take place at either the NGO previously spoken of or at a location best suited to them. Participants were advised that the interviews should take place in an environment where they felt comfortable to speak freely and would be free from interruption. Consequently, four interviews were conducted in the participant's homes, two in the participant's place of employment, and two at the NGO offices. Supplementary to information provided to participants on the Information Sheet,

participants were reminded verbally that they could take breaks at any stage throughout the interview and withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty. I also confirmed that participants understood that if any harm should arise as a result of the interview the NGO whom had referred them to the study would assist in establishing support. I went on to reiterate the goal of the research and explained to the participants that although I had some set interview questions it was important to me that they share what they feel is important for people to know about their experience. I also explained to the participants a digital voice recorder would be used to record the interview which I would then transcribe.

Once interviews commenced I asked participants to start off by telling me a little bit about the structure of their family to help me form an idea of their situation and then tell me about their experience of abuse. I referred to The Interview Schedule (Appendix C) throughout the interviews however often the participants answered my questions implicitly while telling their stories. I also did not want my schedule to restrict any possible areas of conversation that participants may want to explore in the interview. Only one participant asked to have a copy of the schedule during the interview purely to ease her anxiety that she was sharing her story in a way that was beneficial to the study. Participants were advised that interviews would last between one hour and one and a half hours and they would be recorded on a digital voice recorder. Consequently, the shortest interview lasted 49 minutes and the longest lasted 75 minutes. There was a total of 405 minutes of data.

Due to my professional occupation I was comfortable with interviewing participants and therefore experienced in developing rapport and trust in the interview setting. I also found that because this was the first time someone had asked participants to tell their story specifically in relation to parent abuse they presented as grateful and willing. I was also very conscious of non-verbal communication and emotive behaviours in order to reassure participants, give them time, or ask if they needed a break.

At the completion of each interview, I explained to the participants that the next step would be for me to transcribe the interview which they will then have the opportunity to read through and make additions or alterations. Consequently, only one participant made additions to their transcription only due to feeling they went off track before fully answering a question and one participant asked that a small paragraph irrelevant to the research be deleted. Apart from these minor alterations no other issues were raised about the transcripts. Upon receiving their transcripts participants were asked to sign the Transcript Release Authority Form (Appendix D). Transcripts were then analysed using

interpretive phenomenological analysis to identify super-ordinate and sub-ordinate themes which I believed emerged from the data.

Data analysis

Qualitative research in general is concerned with how individuals make sense of the world, experience events, and what meaning they attribute to these phenomena (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012). Moreover, the qualitative researcher is more concerned with the qualities of particular experiences rather than the causal relationships that explain experiences. IPA was initially applied to problems in health psychology but has become a popular methodological framework in wider areas of qualitative psychology. It is concerned with trying to understand what a certain experience is like from the point of view of the participant. This means that while a participant attempts to make sense of their own experience a researcher is also involved in making a detailed analysis of these personal accounts and presenting these accounts in the form of experiential themes (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012). Therefore, it is said to be a dual interpretation process or a double hermeneutic. The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant making sense of their world (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

So in light of that there are two major aims of IPA for the researcher. The first being an attempt to try and understand the participants world and to describe what it is like. The researcher wants to understand what it is like to stand in the shoes of the subject however during this process understand that access to the participants experience is complex and only partial access is achievable (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012; Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). The researcher therefore cannot achieve a first-hand account of the participant's experience, instead only a third person account that is psychologically informed can be achieved in the form of a construction created by the participant and the researcher (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006).

In order to achieve a valid and accurate account of an individual's experience researchers are required to have intricate interviewing skills in research using IPA. Active listening, asking open-ended questions free from presumption, developing rapport and trust, and an ability to allow for silence are said to be vital expertise (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012). An interview plan that consists of questions that explore mental phenomena (e.g. thoughts, memories, fantasies, and associations), sensory perception, and individual interpretations are also vital to develop a valuable pool of data. A researcher that is aware of all non-verbal

or behavioural communications is also going to benefit with a more accurate account of participants experiences (Pietkiewics & Smith, 2012).

The second aim involves the researcher developing the interpretive analysis of the description of the participant's experience. The researcher is made to think about what it means for the participant to have made these claims and have expressed these feelings and concerns (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). This is when the researcher is allowed to comment on how the participants are making sense of their experience. This allows the researcher to deal with the data in a more speculative fashion as IPA recognises that the connection between a people's thinking and emotional state is complicated resulting in some people not being able to self-disclose (Smith, 2007). As a result the researcher must interpret peoples mental and emotional state from what is being said (Smith, 2007). Therefore, the researcher is seen to be moving between the emic and etic perspectives.

After interviewing participants, I transcribed the interviews myself over a period of weeks. This process was the first step in data analysis as it involved listening to the interviews clearly and repetitively thus familiarising myself with the content. For IPA the level of transcription needs to be at the semantic level (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Therefore I endeavoured to be detailed in my transcription by including all significant pauses in speech, laughing, crying, and other features I felt were worthy additions to the data. Once all eight interviews had been transcribed I read through each one highlighting interesting points in the left hand margin and noting possible themes in the right hand margin. Each time a possibly theme arose in an interview it was assigned a number and listed on a separate document. If this theme arose again in another transcript the corresponding quote would be labelled with the number of the theme. This process was completed for all 8 interviews and as a result 44 sub-themes evolved from the initial data analysis. This list of 44 sub-themes appeared in chronological order (Appendix E.), the order in which they came out of the transcripts.

Using a spread sheet, I collated how many times in all of the interviews a particular sub-theme arose and then considered how rich the data was in each of these sub-themes. This then identified a shorter list of 10 sub-themes that appeared most consistently throughout all of the interviews. I set out making connections between these 10 sub-themes in order to cluster them into fewer super-themes. In doing so I continually referred back to the transcripts to ensure that there was a link using the participant's actual words. Consequently, these 10 sub-themes were merged into three super-themes. It ended out

that two of those super-themes included clusters of sub-themes however one super-theme included only one sub-theme due to that sub-theme emerging with a great deal of support in the form of data. Finally, these themes were then written out into narrative accounts which make up the following three chapters, preceded by a chapter outlining the essence of the abuse allowing the reader to place the participants experience into context. At all stages in the analytic process constant reflection and re-examination of the interview transcripts was utilised to ensure that themes were built on using data that was in context and relevant. The following sections outline themes that arose from this data analysis.

Chapter Three: Findings

The Nature of the Abuse

In the planning stages of this research project it was never my intention to collect data on the nature of the abuse that the participants have been subject to. I was very conscious of staying true the initial goal of exploring the psychological experience of parent abuse; the thoughts and feelings created due to the abuse, not the act of the abuse itself. During the interview process however, it quickly became evident that these two phenomena were not mutually exclusive. Nonetheless, upon completion of the data collection it has become obvious that in order for readers to fully understand the psychological experience of parent abuse it needs to be placed in context. Therefore the findings of this research project are preceded by the following chapter that will explore the acts of abuse that the participants have been subject to. Firstly, I begin by talking about what it was like for these participants to recall such abuse.

During the data collection phase I found that the participants had distinct styles of telling their stories. Some participants found it easier to talk about the thoughts and feelings associated with their experience of abuse if first they spoke about the abuse itself. Perhaps they felt they needed to put it into context or perhaps reminiscing helped them to connect to those experiences and therefore recall the thoughts and feelings associated with it more clearly. In other cases, it was a part of the participants story and unprompted they felt that it was perhaps expected that they describe the acts of abuse.

Nonetheless, participants remained consistently descriptive in the ways they explained their experiences. Some tended to be straight to-the-point whereas others found that the share volumes of abuse experienced made it difficult for them to really pin-point and describe particular occasions of abuse. In addition, some participants found the emotional difficulty and anxiety involved in recollecting such traumatic memories impacted the ways in which their stories were told. Although each participant told their story differently the abuse uncovered in the narratives can be grouped into four themes. These are simply; verbal, physical, financial, and psychological.

Verbal abuse was most frequently experienced and was manifested as almost constant demeaning in the form of cold, calculating and consistent put downs. All participants reported experiencing this form of abuse from their child on a regular basis. Kerry spoke about the verbal abuse from her grandson being the beginning of his abusive behaviour toward her.

When he found that actually Nan wasn't going to give in then he started rebelling. Started swearing, and then he got quite abusive in the manner with which he swore, and he started threatening, and so he had lifted up the scale ya know. So it was abuse, swearing at me first, and then it was arguing swearing.

Cheryl spoke about the pain and hurt brought about by the way in which her son attacked her on such a personal level.

And he's nasty. I think that's more he's verbal, just horrible. He says nasty things to me ya know, like, 'Ya fat bitch', yea gets really personal, very personal.

...oh what did he call me, he goes, "you're a lazy bitch". Oh yea because I had had a sleep and he wanted to do something. And that's what he thinks, and I think, "Is that what you really think of me, do you think I'm lazy, cos man you make me tired". But he doesn't get it.

Louise spoke about the verbal abuse she endured from her Grandson with a numb sort of acceptance. She continually revealed throughout the interview that the verbal abuse she was experiencing was taking its toll on her and wore her down being an older woman.

I've been verbally abused to no end, I feel emotionally drained and abused, I've gone to my doctor and begged for some diazepam to try and get over the damn holidays...

It was also a blow to Louise's pride and self worth when her Grandson would verbally slate her, criticise her and degrade her. As a result Louise felt as though she needed to prove herself to her Grandson in order to gain some respect.

I said one day to him, "You know what we are going to do one weekend? I am going to take you out to that back shed and I'm going to show you all of my certificates and everything, and my university degree's and all that, and

you are going to sit there and look at them so you can see that your Nana isn't a stupid person and isn't just someone sitting around here cooking apple pie".

The participants spoke about a struggle to understand firstly where their child learnt such verbal slurs and secondly what motivated them to speak in such derogatory ways. It was difficult for participants to understand how their child could not only speak to them in that way but to actually have thoughts of that nature about them in the first place.

Less commonly than verbal abuse however with similar hurt and disappointment, participants spoke at length about various episodes of financial abuse which manifest itself in the form of damaging property and theft of material items or money. When Nicole's son would steal from her she felt as though it was a personal attack and as though her son was seeking revenge for something that had happened prior.

At times I did, particularly when he would take things that he knew meant something to me. Like the guys who used to be my bosses are more so my friends now than bosses ummm they gave me some really expensive perfume for Christmas and a couple of bottles of wine and he took the perfume. He swapped it for drugs I think. Just tough nothing, oh well he probably knew it would bug me but he was more interested in what he needed, but it felt like he was particularly attacking me.

Although his behaviour was motivated by the need to acquire drugs Nicole still felt as though he was stealing from her in a retaliatory way. Nicole spoke with pain and disappointment at the thought of her son taking things with meaning and value from her as a way to "teach her a lesson", or for selfish reasons such as supporting a habit. Similarly, Angela spoke of this same sadness and regret when her daughter would steal from her. Like being burgled by an unknown offender, Angela felt invaded and violated by her daughter.

Well I had an incident where Annie and her mate went through my wardrobe. And I just felt robbed. I think I felt robbed because she had done it with her friend, and it was like, it felt like a thief had been in (my) room and gone through it, it didn't feel like my own child had done it, it was horrible. And the feeling inside, I felt yuck.

Angela spoke about feeling as though she was "losing the plot", as one day things would be there and the next day they weren't. She spoke about feeling that nothing was safe and

eventually she got to the point where she wouldn't buy nice things fearing that her daughter would steal them. Over-riding that was the complete selfishness of her daughter's abuse that hurt Angela.

...she stole her brother's birthday money. I was so angry. I didn't realise it was missing until that night after I had dropped her off, because she had played up so I took her over to my brother's house, an ummm that night I discovered she had taken his \$20 out of my draw. But she had been through my draws; it's that sort of thing.

Louise briefly spoke about the financial abuse she has put up with from her Grandson in the form of property damage. At one stage during the interview she even took me around her house to show me holes that had been punched and kicked into walls and doors. She also spoke of monetary theft from her Grandson when he accessed her pin number after stealing her eftpos card.

...they decided to take my card and go up town to Wendy's...And the next night the card again goes missing. This time they grabbed a hundred bucks...so now the cards been all chopped up and taken off his computer because he charged two games on there for one hundred bucks each so the card has been chopped up and done away with.

Possibly the most devastating and disturbing form of abuse was physical abuse. Half of participants reported suffering from violent assaults at the hands of a child in their care. Carly spoke about having to call the police and eventually pressed charges on her son after he choked her to the point of unconsciousness.

I asked for my phone back, and then he grabbed me, twisted arm right back sort of thing, and then choking me, and then I must of passed out, I don't know, I think I did for a couple of seconds, and then I bumped my head on the bed, umm yea I had a big lump on my head. And then I went "STOOOP, Why are you doing this?", and then I sat on the couch, had a fag, and I was really nervous and stressed. He came back out with a knife and all that, threatened me with it. And then with the bump on my head he was banging it like that (taps finger against forehead). I'm sure I was concussed. And then he took off and I just bawled my eyes out."

Lauren spoke about her son "going to war" against his Mother.

...when I was living in ...a two storey house and I sent him to his room and he came back down all armed up for a fight. So he had put on a mesh rubbish bin over his head and had something as a shield and put something on his body and he had a sword and he came at me and he attacked me.

She talked about how simple daily routines can be a trigger for the physical abuse.

So yea sometimes he deals with getting ready in the mornings and sometimes he doesn't and this particular morning he just put himself back to bed. Said, "I'm not going to school", and basically said, "I'm not going to school and you cant go to work", ya know something like that. So then in the end I said, "Yes you are", and I went to move him along and that's when he lashed out at me. So yea that's when he punched me and kind of just laid into me really and I had to restrain him.

Kerry spoke about her Grandson being put through martial arts classes working on the theory that it would assist him in developing self-control and discipline. Unfortunately however this did not work in Kerry's favour

...yea good theory, doesn't always work. Then he started using that on me. So started with the kicks, almost broke my leg one day.

Kerry then spoke of a dark and disturbing day when her Grandson worked himself up into such a violent rage he caused thousands of dollars of damage to the house and attempted to attack her with a hammer and tomahawk axe.

And when he came at me with a hammer that was enough. He went to hit me and I stood there and he said, "Go on run, fucking run". "No, I'm not going to run". He said "I'm going to smash you". I said to him "well if that's what you want to do then go on do it". "If that's what it takes to calm you down do it". He threw the hammer and he ran off. So I said to myself, "Right what the hell am I going to do", so I rang the police and asked them for help... So he said "Alright then we are on our way out". So when they came out, he had just had a go at me with an axe. He came running into the house and my daughter stood up and pushed me out of the way because he came running and had the axe up, oh well it wasn't an axe it was a tomahawk, and he came running towards me and she pushed me out of the way and he ran passed her and into the house.

The psychological torment participants spoke about added a remarkable dynamic to the experience of parent abuse. Psychological abuse ran alongside the verbal, physical and financial abuse rather than being a stand-alone feature. It is a theme that I will build on more in the following chapters however it is important that the situations which bring about such emotional distress are considered prior as these provide valuable context for the impact of abuse and the ways in which the participants make sense of it. The following extracts provide a glimpse into the kind of psychological abuse participants experienced in the form of power and control and due to the use of intimidation tactics and threats.

The participant with who was experiencing abuse from a teenage child who was large in height and build, Sandra often felt intimidated when her son would use stand-over tactics toward her.

...overshadowing me with his height and build and that kind of stuff, it was, ya know cos now he is bigger than me there is nothing much I can do, but I stood my ground and he, I could see he wanted to hit me but he didn't. But yea I could see it was there and I was scared...I was shitting myself; I'm bracing myself for the hiding of my lifetime. That's basically it. You just sit there and your, it's almost like if he starts now at least it is going to finish...

Many of the participants spoke about feelings of anxiety at the prospect of their children becoming violent. Similar to a woman in a violent relationship with a man, these Mothers often feel like they are walking on eggshells around their children. This was so much the case for Sandra that she constantly planned escape routes within the house in order to get away from her oldest son when triggers were present and Lauren tries not to put pressure on her son by not asking him to do chores as this is a trigger for him.

Oh it makes me on edge because I'm always waiting for the next blow up. And it's almost like you are, you look, you think, "oh well if it blows up I will go out that door", it's like I have to have an escape plan before I do anything for the day. Sandra

But then when he is in a shit mood I do tend to, ya know he won't have to do a chore because I can't be bothered with the battle and I'm almost scared of the battle. I have to say that there are times when I am actually scared. I know it's going to turn to custard and I don't know how far it is going to go. Lauren

Angela, a woman who had been in a violent relationship previously, spoke about how having an abusive child was worse than an abusive partner. She stated that she could always make the choice to leave her violent partner, and that is what she did. Unfortunately however, when that violent person is your own child there is no way out.

I felt like a prisoner in my own home and that she was the one that was in control not me.

Similarly, both Angela and Cheryl spoke about how they felt a lot of their power as parents had been taken away from them due to the anti-smacking law. It must be clearly stated the Mothers didn't feel as though they needed to smack in order to parent their children, but more so because their children were aware of the law they therefore developed an exploitive kind of power over their parents. This is apparent when both Mothers spoke about their children threatening to report them for "child abuse" during moments when they were making rational parenting decisions to keep both themselves and their children safe. They also spoke about experiencing anxiety when attempting to parent their children in firm but appropriate ways and the feelings of hopelessness this dynamic of control brings about. Participants spoke about this form of psychological abuse leaving them with few options when it came to parenting their child.

Cheryl spoke about the psychological torment experienced as a result of her son acquiring power and control due to the rules society has put in place for parents. Added to this psychological abuse is the frustrating feeling of unfairness as she believes the treatment she receives from her son is the same treatment that the law is designed to protect him from.

The biggest thing is this blimmen no smacking law where you have no rights and more. Your kids have all the rights, they can torture you and treat you like absolute rubbish and there is nothing you can do about it. And this is what society is breeding. Cheryl

In order to place the following chapters in context I felt it was important to first report on the acts of abuse all eight participants spoke about experiencing. The abuse participants spoke about was grouped into four areas'; namely, verbal, financial, physical and psychological abuse. In summary, participants spoke about the verbal abuse they experienced being very personal and quite derogatory. The constant verbal slating from their children was draining for participants and took a toll on their self-worth. Many

participants also reported financial abuse in the form of damage to property or having money and property stolen by the child in their care. The physical abuse experienced by participants was disturbing and quite serious to the point where one participant's child was prosecuted in the Youth Court for the abuse he subjected his Mother to. Finally, the psychological abuse experienced added a complex dynamic to the experience of abuse. It manifested in the form of power, control, and intimidation tactics and was compared to intimate partner violence by some participants. The following chapters will present the themes resulting from how the participants made sense of their experience of parent abuse. More specifically, the next chapter will address the participant's thoughts and feelings toward the abusive child in their care.

Participants Feelings Towards Their Abusive Child

This theme is built on the descriptions of participants feelings toward their abusive child. Many referred to it as being an emotional roller coaster and all expressed unconditional love for their child. The participants showed that despite the way they have been treated by their child there is still capability to remain protective and loving toward that child. The emotional turmoil then results due to their efforts of love, advocacy and protection being in vain when their own child becomes abusive toward them. This brings on a dynamic of anger and resentment towards that child which in some participants is described as absolute hatred. This theme endeavours to not only portray how painful and confusing parent abuse is but also point out how forgiving participants are due to their unconditional and sustained love for their child. The chapter will be divided into two sections to reflect the conflict between feelings of resentment and feelings of unconditional love and protection toward their child.

Disappointment and Resentment

As expected the participants spoke about experiencing a plethora of negative emotions toward their children. These included resentment, hatred, disappointment and sadness. Participants spoke about the resentment resulting from feeling injustice due to their children treating them so poorly despite the years of care and protection they have provided to their child. For Sandra, it upsets her that she has made such an emotional investment in her child over the years and still experiences feelings of rejection due to the way her son treats her.

I was always going into bat for him, like I have spent most of my life being his advocate and then all of a sudden it was like yea, I'm the last person in the world he wants in his life. It's like it's all thrown back to me.

Lauren has similar feelings of anger and disappointment due to her love and care for her child being unreciprocated. Lauren believes that her child knows how invested she is in him however he still chooses to be ignorant in that regard. She speaks about the frustration and confusion involved in her attempts to make sense of why her son treats her this way.

I sometimes struggle to understand why he is so violent to me or why he has been violent towards me on those occasions all the while I'm the one that goes in to bat for him the most and I'm the one that will always be next to him when the shit hits the fan do you know what I mean. I'm the one that understands him the most and cares for him the most, and he knows that I'm the one that cares for him the most, he knows that...I would go to the end of the earth for him...I don't understand how he can hurt me so badly in that regard.

As mentioned earlier, the participants quite often related their emotional experience of parent abuse to riding a roller coaster. Lauren re-iterates how difficult the lows and conflicting feelings are after her son has abused her.

Yea ya know I'm like, "fuck I went into bat for ya and you're just a fucking asshole", ya know. Yea that's exactly how I feel, and then I think well fuck ya I'm not going into bat for you any more, but I do! Yea so it's just a never ending emotional bloody roller coaster really. It just consumes ya. And so yea it's bloody tough going.

This resentment brought about by feelings of injustice seemed to ring true with most of the participants. Angela often questioned her deservingness of the abuse.

...I'm just angry, yea very angry when she is taking my stuff...ya know it's like yea, "what have I don't to you for you to do this to me"?

Similarly, Cheryl suggests unfairness when speaking about how her son's disruptive and controlling abuse. After sacrificing her own time for her son she experiences anger and upset due to not being able to have her own needs met.

I have put in so much for him and given up so much for him and he's not going to let me have any...some time to myself. So I feel gutted, really gutted about that. I sort of live with it now. Have to I guess, I don't know. But yea I do get angry, I get upset and angry and yea.

Along with this disappointment in regards to the way they are treated by their children, the participants spoke about the anger and hatred felt toward their child. Lauren speaks about her feelings toward her son during those times when he is abusive toward her.

I think that I hate him. I hate him with a passion. I can't live with him anymore; I just really really dislike him. I'm really fucked off, excuse my language, but I get really pissed off that I live in a house with someone that does that to me. Like I have these feelings of hatred for him when he's violent or when he hijacks the family... Like I really flippen hate him when he's like that.

Throughout her interview, Sandra spoke about how she feels as though her son is not the boy she raised. She speaks harsh truth in regards to her feelings toward him when he is aggressive toward her.

Oh I don't like him...I don't like him. If he was a stranger in the street I wouldn't speak to him...You never stop loving ya kids but sometimes ya just don't like them.

Sandra also spoke about struggling to forgive her son for his abusive acts due to her feelings of anger and disappointment toward him. She speaks of a time when her son stole a considerable amount of money from the family and how this impacted their relationship.

Oh man did I feel stink. And I was really angry with him and I cancelled his birthday party, I was so angry with him, I didn't forgive him for ages and that was a big barrier between us for a long long time.

Many of the participants spoke about their child's abuse escalating to a point where as parents they had very limited options in terms of protecting themselves from their children. Angela speaks about being treated so poorly by her daughter and feeling so angry toward her that she was forced to call the police to deescalate the situation.

...well because I was at the point where I wanted to hit her, and I knew that I should ring them rather than hit her and go up on charges for hitting her.

Lauren, Louise and Carly speak about experiencing those similar feelings of rage toward their son's and being forced to practice a lot of self-control when being abused.

So at that point when he's actually hitting me I get fucked off, I get angry, I want to hit him back, but I know that I can't, I just want to lay into him, I just want to give him a hiding. Lauren

Ahhh when he's in those rages. I just want to ya know, hmmm I know you're not allowed to smack your kids and I don't smack anyway, but oh I just want to ring his neck and shake him out of it. Carly

It's not so much thoughts, its more feelings in here (points to heart), and they are just ahhh, I would just love to slap him, oh I would. Louise

Lauren speaks about an emotional plummet as a result of experiencing abuse from her son. Her feelings of anger peak during the acts of abuse but shortly after she speaks about being overcome with sadness. It is difficult for her to understand as she feels as though her son has the ability to stop treating her this way however he continues to and this is upsetting for her.

Like I get to the point where I'm in a bit of a rage and then I kind of calm down and I get really upset. So I, when he's actually hitting me I'm real agro and yea angry when the actual things happening. And then I kind of come down from that and afterwards I get really quite upset about it. So I will get quite emotional about it and about the fact that he has done it to me...and that will last, like that emotion will last up to like a day or two where I'm really sad about it all. He frustrates me because I know he's capable of not having these outbursts if he put his mind to it.

In her interview Cheryl spoke about crying a lot. Similar to Lauren, Cheryl claimed that she feels so frustrated and angry as a result of the abuse she experiences that this all manifests itself in the form of sadness and misery.

I'm more, umm I'm not a very agro person but when I do get angry or frustrated I cry rather than lash out. I guess that's the way of my emotions going, so that's what I do. I get very frustrated, very frustrated with it all.

After experiencing abuse from her Son, Cheryl struggles to accept his apologies knowing that although he may be sincere, it's not going to stop the way he treats her.

But I'm so over the, "I'm sorry's". It sounds horrible but I am. It's like here we go again, "you're sorry but you just keep doing it", and that's how I feel. When he gotten me to that stage I'm like, "Oh yea here we go again". And I do say that to him, "You say you're sorry but you just keep doing it so you're obviously not that sorry.

As a Grandmother, Louise often questions the position she is in raising her abusive Grandson. She is determined to be there for him and is making the most of her situation however she can't help but think how life would be if he treated her more kindly.

Sometimes you lose it, sometimes you lose it, and sometimes your stress level goes. You have had so much that you can't take anymore. And you go to say, "Oh well", and you go to give up. You go to give up because you can't handle it. It's too much for me. Why am I doing this too myself at my age, it's my golden years I should be sitting with my feet up, enjoying myself, enjoying my games, eating when I want to, not eating when I want to, go to bed when I want to, get up when I want to. Wouldn't that be so wonderful if I could just do the golden age thing? Well the only thing golden is my piss I think because I don't see too much gold here.

In summary, the participants spoke about experiencing resentment as a result of being abused by a child in their care. This resentment resulted from feeling as though their sacrifice of time and emotional investment for this child was not being reciprocated or was being rejected. The participants spoke about feeling certain levels of hate for their child at times and experiencing rage to the point where they felt urges to hit their children back when being abused. Rounding off the multitude of negative emotions the participants felt toward their abusive child, they spoke about being overwhelmed with sadness at times and consumed by thoughts of what life could be like if their child wasn't abusive.

Unconditional Love and Protection

Despite the abuse and negative emotions experienced by participants they spoke about maintaining a deep and unconditional love for their child. This theme was portrayed in various ways including speaking about their child having an inner goodness, showing

sadness for their child's struggles, going to dire lengths to help their child improve their own behaviour, protecting and advocating for their child, stating that they love their children no matter what and forgiving them.

Carly spoke about her child having remorse for the way he treats her and feels that despite his violence toward her he is a loving and kind person.

Oh he felt bad I think, cos he's got a good heart, hes got an awesome heart but yea just the violence, he needs to think.

Similarly, Nicole was shocked to see violence from her son as this was contrary to the feelings she has about his nature. She expressed unconditional love for him even though he was abusing her and as a result felt confusing. This confusion resulted from her having focus on his "inner good" and "potential" and her loving him for this despite the abuse he was subjecting her to.

Yea it was (a shock) because he's a gentle giant by nature really... I was quite confused actually, because I loved this kid and I could see huge potential but to see the reality of what is going on day to day was quite different to what I knew it could be.

During her interview, Lauren spoke about what her son is like when he is not being abusive toward her. She promotes her son by stating that he "can be" better than her other children and uses this as a way of justifying her unconditional love for him.

When he's going ok he is amazing. He is better than the other kids with his helpfulness and his empathy towards me and his care for me and all that, he's way above the other kids when he's good.

Like the other Mothers, Lauren also spoke about her son experiencing regret for his actions and to a certain level is distressed by his action and seeks comfort in his Mothers arms after an 'episode'. The interesting thing is that due to Laurens unconditional love for her son she is happy to provide that comfort. She also highlights hers son's remorse as a way of making sense of how she can be so loving and caring toward him despite the way he treats her.

He does understand that what he is doing is not ok and he does get concerned by it and he does care, he does have a care factor after the fact...He hates the fact that he does lose control. So he will be really really remorseful afterwards and we will have lots of time with hugging and

talking about it and things like that afterwards. So that doesn't really make it ok but he does understand that what he is doing is not ok ya know what I mean.

The participants spoke about feeling sorry for their abusive child. Most believed that their child's behaviour was a result of some kind of personal struggle; whether it being a health condition, a psychological disorder or trauma from an early age. They all spoke about a desire to go to the end of the earth to get help for their child. Kerry remembered watching her Grandson become violent in the home and trying to figure out what she could do to help him.

Ya know I was watching him and thinking, "how can I, what can I do to help you", and I was feeling really frustrated...I found that even the hospital, ya know, it takes for ever and ever to get an appointment...I would ring every day until I got an answer, and if it's not the answer I want I keep ringing until I get the answer I want... Keep going until you get what he needs. Don't give in at the first hard door you get to, keep going, and pushing it pushing it. That's what I found in his growing up that nobody listened. All I wanted for him was for people to listen.

Lauren found strength in knowing that her son's mental health condition was partly responsible for his abusive behaviour. As a result she became focussed on helping him cope even though she was the target of his impulsive and aggressive behaviour.

For me its not something that I can give up on, I cant give up on him. I just cant be negative to him all the time because it serves no purpose being negative all of the time. I just want to try and get him through. I try really hard with him, I really really try all the time with him. He has been born with this condition and he isn't as normal as other people but he has got lots of good points

Considering the participants were experiencing such unsavoury treatment from their children and feeling controlled by them as a result they still felt the need to protect their child and advocate for them as their parent. Carly spoke about how hard it was for her to call the police after her son had seriously assaulted her.

I rang up my sister from Australia and told her and she said I need to ring up the police. I was like, "Noooo I can't do that", (makes crying noise)

As a result of her calling the police, Carly's son had to be bailed to an alternative address due to police wanting to keep her safe from him. Not only did Carly give up her own home for him she stuck by his side during his court hearings and felt the need to support him through the whole process.

So he got bailed to my address with his brother, cos his brother moved back home. But I still wasn't allowed to see him, but I came to the house everyday to spend time with him and that... I had to stay at a friends place, which sucked ya know... I think after that two weeks. Oh I just wanted to come home. Just wanted to try and support him and what he's going through

When Nicole's son appeared in court for his offending against his Mother she spoke to the judge about her belief that her son was not the offender in this case. Despite being abused by her son she still felt the need to advocate for him in court and ultimately portray him as the victim that she believes he is.

Like I said to the judge at the last hearing, "I just wanted to say one thing, the wrong person has been locked up here and it should be me for not protecting him from my ex-partner and my ex-partner for doing what he did to him".

Lauren is very much aware of the stigma that goes along with parent abuse and as a result introduced an interesting topic to the theme of unconditional love. She spoke about protecting her son from the judgement of other people due to their inability to forgive him for his actions. She believes that only his father and her have that ability to move forward.

So yea I don't tell people because I know that people will judge him. And once you get that reputation it's very hard to shake it. Ya know I could go and keep saying, "he's the nicest kid in the world, he's the nicest kid in the world", but people will always remember that he hit me you know what I mean? So the people that really love him, they can move on from that, like me and his Dad and stuff. But yea like my friends and all that I just wouldn't tell them. Which is interesting isn't it?

For these victims of parent abuse, forgiveness seems to be inevitable as a result of them continuing to love and protect their child. Sandra speaks about the immediate effects of her son apologising for his behaviour.

It's like it is wiped clean in that moment. That's what it's like it's like its wiped clean and he is back to the boy that I know.

Laurens feelings of forgiveness are not as immediate as Sandra's however still exist. They represent an inner conflict and thus result in confusion.

So I, when he's actually hitting me I'm real agro...And then I kind of come down from that and afterwards I get really quite upset about it...And then I seem to be able to get over it. I seem to be able to go back to loving him like crazy...because he's my son ya know and that kind of doesn't change. Yea so it's really weird.

In summary, participants often referred to their abusive child as having an inner goodness and many found examples of this to support their unconditional love for that child. They explained how they felt sorry for their child at times due to various medical or mental health conditions and used these conditions to explain their child's behaviour. Participants often promoted their child and advocated for them in varying contexts, including Youth Court. Ultimately, for participants this meant that forgiveness is inevitable.

Overall, this theme addressed the ways participants reported feeling toward their child as a result of experiencing parent abuse. Many compared it to riding a roller coaster in that they quite regularly experienced an array of feelings from complete love to absolute hatred. Most of the participants explained how it was difficult for them to understand how their children could treat them this way and as a result felt rejection and resentment. The negative emotions felt for their abusive children peaked with some participants reporting that they often had urges to become abusive back to their child. At the same time however, participants spoke about feeling an unrelenting love for their child and often promoted their child's good qualities in their interviews. It was also common for participants to make sense of their child behaviour by connecting it to medical or mental health conditions. The participants also used these explanations as a way of justifying their need to provide ongoing love and protection for their child. Understandably, this emotional roller coaster that participants spoke about experiencing was described as being confusing and frustrating. The following chapter will build on this construction of the psychological experience of parent abuse by reporting on the participant's views of themselves and their feelings of how other people view them.

Judgement

This theme is built on participants feelings towards themselves as a result of being victims of parent abuse. Two sub-themes emerged and have been presented accordingly. Firstly, the participants reported overwhelming feelings of guilt and self-blame due to the ways in which their children are behaving. Most participants reported questioning their competency as parents, questioning their decision making and actions during the child's upbringing, and feeling as though they were partly responsible for the abusive acts themselves. As a result of this self-blame the participants reported feeling guilt for how the abuse has affected the wider family as well as feeling guilt for the way they feel about the abusive child. Secondly, participants described either feeling judged or having fears of being judged by members of their own family, the public, and the support services they accessed. Also the participants reported feeling shame or embarrassment due to their child's abusive behaviour in public or around visitors.

Self-Judgement

In an attempt to explain their child's abusive behaviour participants appeared to attribute a lot of responsibility to themselves and to question their ability to parent. Lauren's self-blame for her poor parenting resonated strongly throughout her interview. Although she has two other children who do not treat her poorly, experiencing abuse from her son has changed her views on what kind of parent she is.

I feel like I'm a less competent parent. I do. Like I feel like, I feel like the situation should not get that bad that he wants to hit me. Like I feel like I should be able to quash the situation before it gets so bad that he wants to hit me. That's how I feel; I don't feel like I'm competent at all really.

Lauren adds complexity to the direction of blame when she suggests that although she takes responsibility for the way she is parenting, she can't help but believe that this "poor parenting" is a result of the way her son treats her.

Yea I feel really bad, it's terrible. Like there's times when I over compensate for it and I'm just all over the show. I don't feel like I'm consistent, and the reason I'm not consistent, and the reason I'm not consistent is purely in regards to how he is.

Sandra not only blames herself for causing her son's aggression due to her stance on drugs but blames herself for her son's inability to control his aggression. She attributes blame to herself as she believes her son's inability to control his anger is a reflection of poor parenting.

It makes me feel like I have done the right thing by flushing his stuff but at the same time it makes me feel like a bad parent for him being the way he is and makes me wish I had done things differently. Because when he is angry why is that his way of dealing with it? Ya know other kids get angry at their parents but they don't do that.

Nicole felt that there were no noticeable improvements in her son's behaviour even though a considerable amount of intervention was being directed at him. She then began to question herself and attributed blame to herself. This self-judgement resulted in Nicole coming to the conclusion that she was more responsible for the abuse than she initially believed.

There were times where I have felt like, "oh god I feel like I'm going from one appointment to another and they are all about helping him but the actual problem is not going away". In fact I felt like it was getting worse and I was like what's going on here there's something not right. And that was probably when I was feeling the most mentally fragile, I felt more judged by myself actually, to be honest.

Not only did the participants blame their parenting ability for their child's abusive behaviour, many also blamed their actions and the decisions they made during the child's upbringing. Cheryl left her partner before her son's birth. She takes responsibility for her son's abusive behaviour because of this decision by

considering the possibility that his behaviour is associated with Dad's absence; an absence that she is partially responsible for.

Ya know and it's like I thought, "Oh maybe it's me", I do blame myself, I feel like I've made him like that because of his childhood with his Dad. He missed out on a lot, he never had a Father, well Dad never lived with us what so ever so he's never known what it's like to have his Dad at home

Cheryl also believes the guilt she feels due to her son's father not being present has resulted in her spoiling her son. She felt that this contributed to why her son treats her so poorly and therefore blame herself.

"If only you blimmen knew that I spoilt you rotten and that's half the reason you are like you are." Because I used to compensate for him a lot.

Throughout her interview, Sandra constantly questioned the decisions she made in the past as a wife and a parent. She believes there is a possibility that she has been at fault in the past and as a result of this uncertainty she experiences self-blame for the way her son is treating her.

I've felt guilty, like somehow it was my fault, like if I had done this or done that, had I been a better Mother, or maybe I should have left his Father sooner, maybe I shouldn't have left him. I second guess myself, I doubt myself.

Furthermore, although she tries to rule out the possibility, a part of Sandra feels guilty for exposing her son to domestic violence as she suggests his abuse towards her may be learnt behaviour. Again she is experiencing self-blame due to the uncertainty and doubt around decision making she has been responsible for.

Yea it feels like my fault, like I said I still question whether I should have stayed in the marriage, should I have left him with my husband, if I had stayed in the marriage would things be different. But I will never know now. But then again there is still that element where it is

still his choice, just because he has seen it, ya know he didn't live in a bubble, that was not the only relationship he saw growing up, he saw other relationships so yea.

Similarly, Nicole has felt she was answerable for the fact that her son has been placed in a residential centre for his abusive behaviour. She believes she failed to undertake her responsibilities as a mother and blames herself for the fact that her son is suffering due to her shortfalls.

I feel like I have let him down in the past through not listening when he called for help. And allowing somebody who's ... a prolific liar, to convince me that my son was the one who was lying. I have always been really honest and frank with myself and others and I wasn't this particular time and my son is paying the price for it all.

Similarly, Cheryl has lost trust in herself and blames herself for the way her son is today. Even though she has been told by professionals that she is not to take all of this on board she lives with a daily reminder of her parental deficiencies. This daily reminder, which is the abuse itself, is an experience that possibly overrides the fact that she is responsible or not in the eyes of herself and others.

But I have been through counsellors and talked to them and ya know they can't. As much as they say I shouldn't take that on board, it's not my fault, I still have to deal with the consequences from it. And that's what people sort of don't get.

Sandra spoke about watching her friends raise their children and being shocked at how strict they were. Now those children have grown up, finished school and either at university or in good jobs she questions her own parenting. She is uncertain about how her parenting has led to her son being in the situation he is today and explores the possibility that an aspect of blame could be attributed to herself.

Now I think maybe if I had been more like that (strict) he wouldn't have continued down the road that he has continued down. Umm his other best friend who I work with his Mother, he is at university and

it's like ya know, maybe I should have pushed harder for him to do his school work and pushed harder for him to do that

Carly spoke about being directly to blame for triggering the abuse she was victim to. This builds on the previous discussions around blame as there is more of a causal link here with Carly rather than an exploration of possibility. She considers that she is the stimulus that causes her son to respond with abuse in the moment rather than it being a history of her parenting actions and decisions that have contributed to his abuse.

I think I egg him on a bit ya know I just nag, nag, nag and that just pulls the trigger for him. Its like he just goes off, BOOM!

Similarly, Lauren feels as though she brings the violence upon herself. Not only does Lauren blame herself for causing the abuse she also feels as though this is a reflection of poor parenting.

So I feel a little bit responsible for the violence sometimes because of what some people might see as naggin. But I don't see it as nagging, its not like I'm in his face all the time ya know what I mean. But he says that I go on ya know, go on too much. Yea. So I feel, I feel, yea I do, I feel incompetent as a mother. Yea honestly I feel like a shit mother because I feel like I bring it on sometimes.

As a result of this self-blame developed due to feelings of inadequacy as a parent, many participants spoke about experiencing guilt. For participants this guilt was more complex in that it was a more broad form of guilt relating to various inadequacies and failures.

As a Mother, Lauren placed certain expectations on herself and therefore speaks about feeling guilty for not being able to create a desirable home setting. She questions her competency as a parent and as a result experiences guilt for the maternal failures.

I probably feel guilty. I feel guilty a lot actually about my family as a whole really. Because I feel that as the Mother I should be able to control, no not control that's not the right word, but be able to, I should be able to develop a harmonious kind of environment, ya know what I mean.

Building on this, Lauren speaks about feeling parental guilt due to taking responsibility for the impact the abuse is having her other children. More specifically she is disappointed in the way she is unable to have the relationships she wants with her other children and regrets that these relationships are disrupted by an abusive child. Again, this is about the maternal expectations she has of herself to nurture relationships within her family.

So yea I feel guilty about that, I feel guilty about not having a good relationship with my oldest daughter sometimes because of my son. I feel guilty about not being able to give my youngest daughter the time that she deserves because once again my son takes up so much time and energy just to keep life ticking over and keep the violent episodes at bay.

Similarly, Carly spoke about feeling guilt in regards to how the relationship between her and her other child has been impacted due abuse. This also developed into a deeper self-loathing free-floating guilt as a result of the way she began to view and feel towards her abusive son.

Oh I've felt real guilty, real bad, yea. Ya know, but ya know, I think that we're all are closer now

Kerry's guilt manifested itself as feeling as though she had failed her Grandson for not being able to help him work through his violence and aggression. Again this is an example of parental guilt brought about by her taking responsibility for "saving" him from himself.

I thought, I thought I had failed him that was my first thing, that I had failed him. I was the one that should have saved him, and I felt I had failed him.

Finally, Lauren speaks about the guilt she experiences in regards to the feelings of hatred she has toward her abusive son. This free-floating guilt comes about due to Laurens belief that it is wrong to have those negative feelings about her son. At the same time however this guilt serves a positive purpose for Lauren as it tells her that she does love her son.

I think that I really love him because I'm also guilty, like I feel guilty about how I feel about him other times.

In summary, participants spoke about feeling uncertainty or doubt in regards to their past parenting decisions and actions. As a result they believe that they are partially to blame for their children being abusive toward them. Although in most cases the participants only experienced abuse from one of their children they still applied a blanket of self-judgement to their parenting. For some participants, although they have received support from professionals who have told them not blame themselves; they are faced with a constant reminder of their inadequacies as a parent due to the abuse. Some even attributed blame to themselves for the abuse, claiming that they are the direct trigger of the abuse due to the way they interact with their abusive child. As a result of this self-blame the participants spoke about feeling broad forms of guilt. Many placed expectations on themselves as Mothers or Grandmothers to create a harmonious environment in the home and nurture familial relationships. The experience of parent abuse resulted in them feeling maternal failure. There was also guilt experienced due to the way some Mothers felt so negatively toward their children.

Judgement of Others

The participants often spoke about feeling judgement and shame as a result of being a victim of parent abuse. They spoke about experiencing judgement from their own family members. This was in relation to feeling as though their family

members believed the parent abuse was a result of their parenting style or ability and therefore victim-blaming.

When asked if she began to question her own parenting ability, Cheryl talked about feeling judged by her family.

Oh yea definitely. And other people did. My brother and sister they think that I'm not a good parent because of the way that he behaves.

Cheryl spoke about how it angers her that not only does her family feel as though they have the right to judge her but their judgement is due to ignorance. This has had a negative effect on her interactions with her family as she feels unease in their company due to feeling scrutinised. This shows that victimisation does not stop at being abused by a child the judgement and lack of support from family members also has considerable negative effects.

I don't spend a lot of time with them because I think that they are judging me. I feel judged by them, more so by my family than anybody actually. Ya know, I feel that they are judging me ya know and they think that I'm too soft on him ya know and that I need to harden up, but they don't know the kid. They are not in that same situation so I don't feel as though they have any right to judge but I feel as though they do. I guess in a way it has put a big strain on my family because I don't have a lot to do with them anymore because I can't be bothered with it. I can't be bothered with them. Thinking that they are watching my every move and commenting on what I should be doing and shouldn't be doing where as if I don't have anything to do with them they don't get the opportunity to be like that.

Similarly, Lauren speaks about feeling injustice due to the judgement of other people. She has managed this situation by silencing her experience of parent abuse due to fear of judgement.

It's just that judgement that we get for him and for me, we both get judged in a certain way by people that don't really have any right to

judge us. So yea I feel embarrassed because I wouldn't tell my friends because firstly because of their judgement towards me.

For Sandra, she feels she cannot tell friends or family about the abuse she experiences from her son as she chose to stay in a marriage where she was treated very similarly despite their encouragement for her to leave. She believes she will be judged for allowing this intergenerational abuse to develop and expects her friends and family will refuse to be understanding and supportive. Ultimately, she has silenced the abuse in order to avoid the "what did you expect" and "I told you so" that would come from friends and family displaying a complete lack of empathy and support.

Yea it's that, so I don't tell other people about what he's like because a lot of people who know me they say, "You should have left him, you should never have stayed". So if I say that my son is now like that from time to time it will be like, "well what did you expect", and in a way I can see where they are coming from, so in a way it's like a public shame thing. Do I have door mat on my head? Or just dumb when it comes to people?

Similarly, Carly feels judged by the people around her as she believes that they make sense of his treatment of her by labelling her as the cause.

Just people in general, I think they just look at me and think "oh you probably deserve of it because of the way you have treated him". You know, cos I'm used to a lot of yelling, yea, so.

Similar to the silencing of the abuse, some spoke about avoiding certain public situations due to experiencing parent abuse. Not only did they fear an abusive situation flaring up outside of the home, they feared the onslaught of judgement from bystanders that would undoubtedly follow.

Yea I just don't let those situations happen in public and if they do I leave, I will walk out. And I just say to him you go that way I will go

this way and I will see you at home. When things are bad with us we just don't go out in public anyway. Sandra

I worry that if I go out in public and people will go, "oh my goodness that mother really needs parenting lessons". Carly

Lauren speaks about how she has felt at times when the abuse has happened in public. She is conscious that people will judge her parenting competence which is difficult for her as it is something that she already has in questions.

Umm I feel like they think, they probably don't, but I feel like (they think) I'm a useless Mum because I've got this kid that's out of control and I can't control it. Lauren

The presence of self-blame or parental blame and victim blaming culminates in feelings of shame for the participants. Not only was this a result of feeling judged by themselves, family and friends but interestingly, some participants brought up how they even felt judged by the agencies they accessed help from. Some participants spoke about feeling shock and embarrassment when told by professionals that they could only offer parenting support to them. Lauren was frustrated and insulted when told that's it was parenting classes that she needed to stop the abuse.

Yea that's right and a lot of them make it out that it's a parenting problem, like it's an issue with the way your parenting.

Similarly, a slightly subtle form of victim abuse was spoken about when multiple participants addressed being dismissed by some support agencies or even the child's school when they have attempted to discuss the issue with others. Cheryl spoke about struggling with frustration and shame when trying to explain to the school the difficulties she was having with her son at home.

Like I feel like people think I'm lying because they don't see it, because people just don't see. It's bizarre.

Sandra found the process of asking for help shameful as she believed that as a mother she should be able to deal with these situations herself. This solidifies how

these Mothers take on responsibility due to the self-blame and victim-blaming and as a result feel embarrassment and shame.

It was good on one hand but embarrassing on the other. Because shouldn't parents be able to cope with everything? Like my parents did? In the old days everybody coped?

Her shame continues due to the fact that as a mother her child should not be able to exert power over her like he son is currently doing. She makes attempts to justify the situation but her belief is that she should have the upper hand as the parent.

It's like you kids should not have the power over you as a parent, so yea, it seems to be more shameful. I don't know why, I mean logically I think in my head, well why not he's taller than me and bigger than me why wouldn't he stand over me but yea. That is something else that I keep pretty private and haven't let anyone know.

In summary, participants spoke about feeling judged by family, friends, and professionals. They struggled to understand how friends and family could be so ignorant to their struggles and display a complete lack of empathy and support. As a result, participants' feared being judged and in order to protect themselves and their child from persecution, silenced the abuse. Most suppressed all communications about their experience of parent abuse due to past efforts of seeking support being faced with stigma. Participants even took a physical approach to silencing whereby they would avoid situations in which the abuse could happen in the public eye.

Participants spoke about facing discrimination when accessing help. To make things worse, many experienced shock and absolute shame after being told by support agencies that it is parenting support and education they need to cease the abuse.

Rightfully so, the participants assumed the victim role prior to seeking out help so to be told by professionals that they are in fact the cause of the abuse made them feel hopeless and helpless.

Overall, this theme explored the ways participants spoke about how their feelings and views of themselves have changed due to being victims of parent abuse. The theme identifies the actual experience of abuse as being the tip of the iceberg with many deeper and more complex struggles being present for victims to face. Most participants attributed blame to themselves in explaining their child's behaviour toward them. They spent a lot of time questioning the parenting decisions they have made over the years and how this could have resulted in their children becoming abusive. Leading on from this the participants addressed feelings of guilt in regards to their actions and thoughts or feelings towards their abusive child. Finally, this theme explored the participant's beliefs that they were being judged in regards to their parenting as a result of being a victim of parent abuse. Many participants believed that this judgement was unjust however it caused them shame nonetheless.

The Implication of the Male

There was considerable data from the interviews that supported the following theme. All of the participants spoke about the role of the male in their child's life and how this has affected their experience of parent abuse. The participants spoke about the male role model in their child's life and how this implicated the parent abuse. A male role model, mentor, or Father figure plays a vital part in childhood development and participants spoke about this in terms of that male being either present or absent and how they felt this has impacted their experience. Some participants attributed a lot of blame toward the father or other significant male in regards to the child becoming abusive toward them. Finally, in those cases where the Father is not present, participants spoke about how they felt this played a role in the experience of being abused by their child.

The Mentor

Many participants spoke about wanting a positive male in their child's life. The participants made sense of their child's abusive ways by speaking about their belief that the lack of the male role model was potentially the cause of the abuse. Therefore, they had a belief that having a male role model around may actually stop and/or prevent the abuse from happening.

Nicole grew up without her father present and believed that this was partly the reason why she struggled with her behaviour as a child. As a result she also believes her son is missing that relationship dynamic and sense of identity in his life. She uses this as possible explanation for his behaviour.

But yea, umm I think yea, what could have made things different, well actually the only thing, yea the only two things that could have made any difference would be if his father could have taken more of an active role because all of the family, well even my brother he could be a good male role model. His father may not be the best male role model but he would be able to get some sense of identity from him. Because I think that's what it is it's an identity thing, and I only say that because I grew up not knowing my Dad because until I was like 14 or 15.

She went on to speak about how she felt her son responded well to the professional men he has come across due to his poor behaviour and this reinforces how she has made sense of her sons abuse. She felt her son found a common interest in cars with the Youth Aid Officer that dealt with him. He developed a relationship with him, how a child would with his father, where by the Youth Aid officer was able to be hard when needed but soft and empathetic at the same time, similar to that of an active father. A male youth worker made the same gains with Nicole's son again reinforcing Nicole's ability to support the concept that he was craving that relationship dynamic in his life.

Kerry spoke about how she found her grandson benefiting from spending time around the men in his whānau.

A lot of the older guys, the koro's, and the uncles saw themselves in him so they would come and ask if they can take him fishing. That was really calming for him and he would be at one with the sea, with the

river ya know. They would sit with him and say, "What's the matter with you ay?" That boy stuff, that man stuff.

Cheryl spoke about how not only does she believe that her son's behaviour was suffering due to the lack of a father figure but her son also shared this belief with her.

And ya see this is the hardest thing you see. He see's all his friends and he goes to his friend's houses and their Dad is taking them out shooting or fishing or taking them on the motor bikes, and he doesn't have any of that. Ya know that night he lost the plot at my friend's I asked him what it was about and that was pretty much it, it was the fact that he doesn't have Dad and no one takes him anywhere, and I can't do everything, I'm doing my best, and I say to him, "I try my hardest son, I can't do it all ya know".

It was not easy for Cheryl to see her son upset about something that is out of her control and there is clearly guilt for the fact that she can't do much about that. She speaks about the frustration of not being able to fill that void but perhaps questions her efforts to fill that void as well. Similarly, Louise spoke about wanting a male role model for her grandson as she felt he was missing out on that important interaction in his life.

I wish I could have a man...yea I do wish I could have a man for him. A Male role model that he can role model with and go out with and do things with. Not his Father, his Father is no good, no good of an influence. I would like a good role model for him. Ya know to take him fishing or do whatever males do and talk male talk. He has never had that! He has all women in his life, he needs a man.

Louise does not want to be seen as diverting the responsibility. She points out here that although she may have been capable of doing these male orientated activities

with her Grandson, that is not what she thinks is important. Louise believes that it is the male interaction that is important not the activity.

I would like him to have someone maybe 24, maybe 25 or 26, that can teach him to go golfing and stuff like that. See I'm a good golfer, I could teach him to golf but I can't play anymore, I'm bugged. Otherwise yea I would take him. He doesn't have to talk to people there and strangle people. He could break his clubs maybe but they are pretty expensive to go breaking. Ya know somebody like that. Somebody that can come and take him out and do shit with him. A man.

Cheryl acknowledges the need for male interaction however goes on to suggest that its not as simple as people may think. She has had her son on the waiting list for a "Big Brother" for months. Its also something that cannot be pushed upon people, its something that should happen naturally.

It's just missing that male interaction. He needs to find someone that he is going to connect with that is going to be stable in his life and he doesn't have that ya know, it's real hard. But yea you can't push those things. But that's why I thought Big Brothers Big Sisters would be really good.

Sandra addressed the issue that although her child's father is in his life this does not mean he is a positive male role. As a result of this belief Sandra had her son see someone after she split with her abusive husband in order for him to experience a more positive version of the man/boy relationship.

I wanted to make sure he was ok and coping with it and if he was angry at their Dad I wanted him to have a safe place to talk about it. And it was because a lot of stuff came out. Also gave him positive male role models to look at.

Carly spoke about being frustrated with her son's Father. His absence meant that there was no male role model for her son. Interestingly, Carly does not talk about the possibility of someone else providing her son with that role model relationship. She puts all responsibility onto the father and spoke in quotation that shows how she has regret for him not choosing to be in his son's life

"Oh you should have been there for him", ya know. Being that male role model

Suggesting Blame

Many of the participants made sense of their child's abusive behaviour by suggesting that it had been caused by experiencing abuse from their father. No participant made assertive causal links however as previously stated, they tended to make suggestions as merely as though they were thinking aloud and this can be seen in the extracts as "I think...".

Carly infers that she experienced an inner conflict upon coming to the realisation that her son's behaviour could be a result of family violence. It was inevitable that Carly came to this conclusion as a way of making sense of why her son resembled his father at times of aggression and violence.

I was in a domestic violence relationship with his Father. I was looking back at his Father, thinking, "You bastard, you're just like your Father". So yea that stuffed me up a bit, I think it just goes back to his Dad. His whole body changes and his face.

Cheryl's experience was similar in that she was reminded of her ex-partners violent ways when her son would become abusive toward her. She has then built on this explanation of her son's abusive behaviour by suggesting that this is learnt behaviour her son is modelling from his father.

I see a lot of his Father in him and he has learnt a lot of his behaviour from his Father. So he sees the way his father used to, I think it's gotten worse as he's gotten older because his Dad doesn't really have any respect for me so it's been a learnt behaviour on his part because he thinks that, "oh if Dad can treat Mum like that then so can I".

Sandra also makes sense of her son's behaviour by suggesting that he has learnt this from witnessing her being a victim of partner violence. She infers blame by claiming that her son is very much his father's son.

I mean most people know about my husband and I like ya know. Its, there was some violence between me and him, it wasn't an everyday thing but my son grew up seeing it and it must of affected him in some kind of way. Because I have noticed that when he goes off he does the same thing. He doesn't go as far as his father used to but he is pretty much his Fathers son

Similarly, Lauren spoke about the possibility that her son witnessing family violence may have contributed to the abuse today. Again, she does not label this as the primary cause however suggests the idea in effort to make sense of her experience.

Ya know I think his Dad is part of the reason; his Dad was violent. So that was one of the main reasons why we split up because there was a reasonable amount of domestic violence there and I knew that I knew I didn't want my kids growing up in that. So he did see a bit of that violence growing up so. Yea he saw one particular incident that was really quite distressing for all of the kids so yea I don't really know whether that has triggered something in him ya know, who knows

Cheryl built on that idea by stating that not only did her son witness her being abused and may have modelled that behaviour, he has seen other violent things in

his Father home which she believes he is modelling. She is more sure about a causal link here and justifies her reasoning.

See I know that hasn't come from me because I just don't do that sort of stuff but I know his Father did which I don't know whether that sort of stuffs from that but I know the throwing thing and smashing stuff and things like that comes from him because he still does that now. So ya know up until ya know he left to go to Aussie they were still seeing that.

Nicole introduced how her son was experiencing psychological abuse from her ex-partner. She explained that the abuse was behind closed doors and even she was blind to it. Although she takes responsibility for her son becoming abusive toward her as she failed to pick up his cry's for help, she blames her ex-partner for treating him this way in the first place.

He came across to other people as real supportive of my son but the minute that every ones backs were turned he was bloody nasty. I knew, I saw it happening two or three times, but my son tells me that it was almost constant when I wasn't in hearing distance. I believe him too.

Lauren goes on to speak about how not only when the child's father was present he was causing issues in regards to the children but even more so now that he is not totally present. She is comprehensive in portraying her feelings of distaste toward the child's father and how he contributed to her current situation.

I blame their Father. He fucking pisses me off because he is a really inconsistent Father and I get angry about having to have a harmonious relationship with him; and I only do that for the kids because I think its more beneficial for the kids, but I get angry about having to do that after what he's put me through. Because he has put

me through hell and back and Im angry about that and I blame him for a lot of it as well. Ya know because whether it was what my son witnessed when he was young, ya know the fact that their Dad used to hit them, ya know what I mean, as a Father he hit

Carly talks about a similar struggle whereby her son's father has recently come back into his life and is causing more issues than when he wasn't around. Carly speaks about having to try and preserve her son's opinion of her in order to prevent further abuse. This isn't easy when his one influential male figure is encouraging his behaviour.

Oh yea and then his Father got involved sort of thing and stuffed up his head sort of thing ya know. Oh apparently my son rang him up and umm his Dad told him "oh your mums just a liar an she probably deserved it". Ya know no support. Yea he's a bit of a dick. Yea and now my sons a bit messed up because he's getting mixed up. I've told him my side of the story and his Father has just denied everything.

Some participants spoke about how the relationship between the father and son was potentially a cause of the abuse they were now experiencing.

Ya know I feel like a lot of his anger, even though he is very much like his Father, a lot of his behaviour is from his father. Because, like, if he was naughty his Dad would not buy him, like say he had a birthday, and this happened like probably four times. He wouldn't buy him anything and, like one year his brother got a play station and he got nothing. And you wonder why he's such an angry kid. Ya know. And he's physical and wants to get outside and play and his Dad will sit at home and play on the computer and does nothing with them. I had to force him to go to his Dad

Here Cheryl speaks about her ex-partner not bonding with one of his children. She infers that her son's aggression and abusive ways have been brought on by mistreatment and neglect from his father. This differs slightly from the dynamics previously discussed as violence hasn't been physically modelled rather it has developed due to accusations of unhealthy relationships.

The relationship between me and my husband has always been volatile. And it's sort of got more volatile after my son came along because he sort of got jealous of the baby, and that was a big thing, and I stood into the role of protecting the child all the time and he stepped into the role of trying to discipline the child all the time. So I was too soft and he was too hard. And yea ya know. My son said to me once, "I feel like the black sheep in the family, I feel like I can never win and argument with you and I feel like I'm always off side with Dad".

The Fathers Absence

Fathers of these abusive children were inconsistent or non-existent in their parenting. As a result, many of the participants commented on how this has affected their experience of parent abuse. For Carly, she felt as though her son had the right to have an active and cooperative mother and father in his life right from birth. There is resentment toward his father for not playing that role in his son's life and she believes that if her and her son's father could achieve this harmoniousness partnership he would benefit.

Yea he was there in the beginning but it was 15 years before he met him. Ya know he should have stepped up to the mark before then as a parent ya know. If he needs us he's entitled to that. This is what's going through my head, ya know, there should be a balance

Cheryl spoke about her son becoming violent toward her at times when she would leave him to spend time with other people. She makes sense of this situation by suggesting it is due to him only having attachment with her and fears of abandonment due to his father's absenteeism.

He gets very jealous of me spending time with other people and I don't know whether that's to do with him not having a relationship with his Dad and I've been the only thing that's been stable in his life and he doesn't like the fact that I'm going away.

Cheryl goes on to reinforce the idea that her son's behaviour is largely to do with his father's absence. She believes that her child's anger is a result of feeling unwanted by his own father.

I'm just sure Dad is the biggest thing. If we could change anything, I don't want a relationship with him but I want him to have a relationship with his children, because he doesn't. Ya know I want him to take them one night a week, ya know maybe take them for the night, and it's not hard. But then he never tries to keep in contact with them either so. And it's always been the same so, I think they feel that he doesn't really want them because when he was here they lived just around the corner and ya know they wouldn't only get to see them every second weekend and he wouldn't bother to contact

Nicole introduces the idea that the father of her child is the one that is missing out by not having his son in his life. She is disappointed that at a time when both her and her son were in need he was not interested in being there for either of them however she finds comfort in the fact that that is a poor reflection on him as a person.

I haven't told my son this but I rang him Father up either just before or just after he (her son) got locked up, and as soon as I mentioned that

my son really needed his help he spun out and slammed the phone down. Usually if I ring him just wanting a chat I can talk to him for an hour. Im like oh well it says more about him than it says about my son or I. At the end of the day he's gutless and selfish. If only he knew how much better off he'd be if he had him under his wing. Because he is so like his Father. Ya know they are both quite fun people.

The participants spoke about how not only the children would benefit from having their fathers in their lives consistently and actively but so would they as the primary caregivers of the children. Although it was very clear that Cheryl wanted her son to have a relationship with his father to improve his mood and identity it would also allow her some respite. She reflects on how it was when her ex-partner was still around to take her son for the weekend. There are clearly some feelings of guilt around admitting to needing to get away from her child for the weekend but Cheryl felt that overall she could be a better parent for her child if she had time to recuperate.

Every second weekend I knew I was going to have a break from him. And I know it probably sounds really mean and horrible, but honestly it was like my recharge, they would go on a Friday and I would just go to bed

Lauren stated that if her son's father was more active and consistent in his life she would go as far as saying the abuse would not happen. She makes sense of this by claiming that her son feels as though he has control over her however he does not with his father.

Lauren: And ya know with, yea so he doesn't do it, it's only when I'm on my own when he does this. He would never even dare to try and touch me when his fathers around. Yea so it's definitely that he feels like he has that control over me or he feels as though he is able to do that to me.

Interviewer: So the abuse stops when his father is around

Lauren: Yea it does, it really does. He wouldn't dare, and I don't know why that is. Like I don't know whether he knows or feels like he wouldn't get away with it.

Louise also refers to this:

See it's not that they are being raised by a single mother; it's that the male is gone. See if his Grandfather was still here he wouldn't be like this

Similarly, Cheryl believes that her son's father could make a real impact on her situation. Again she shy's away from making a confident causal link but believes it is something her son needs.

Interviewer: In an ideal world what would happen

Cheryl: In my ideal world, that something would change to him and he would become a bit, I don't want to lose all of his personality, but I would like it to calm down a bit.

Interviewer: What do you think would do that?

Cheryl: I don't know. Maybe is Father playing a major role in his life. I can't blame his Dad for the way he is but it certainly has contributed. Because that seems to be his biggest issue when he gets upset. When he calms down and we talk about it that seems to be the thing that comes up the most.

Angela offered a differing perspective from the other participants. She believes that whether there was a father in the picture or not the abuse would continue. She refers to the luxury of respite that a partner would provide however she does not think having a man in the nuclear family would improve her daughter's treatment of her.

Well yea I think so. Yea to a degree, but yea I think they are going to do what they are going to do anyway. I have seen it with two parents and their kids are playing up and they are two parents. With a partner you could leave them and you wouldn't have to worry but when it's your own child it's really hard. Sometimes you think oh man I wish I could just walk away from you guys, just walk away from them, but you can't. It's easier said than done. You just don't wish it on anybody.

This theme explored the various implications of a male on the participant's experience of parent abuse. All participants felt that an older male played a very important role in the lives of their children however it was mostly important that this was a positive male role model. Many participants believed that the lack of a male role model could possibly contribute to their child's abuse or conversely could stop or prevent the abuse from happening. The participants also attributed blame to the fathers of the children for various reasons. Most significantly however, was them subjecting their child to family violence or being inconsistent or absent fathers. The participants also felt that if the fathers of these children could be more active it would give them the respite they need to recuperate and parent more effectively.

Chapter Four: Discussion

The material presented above came from an interpretive phenomenological analysis of the experience of parent abuse. Due to the dearth of research on this phenomenon worldwide and the complete absence of any using a New Zealand participant group this project endeavoured to undertake a broad exploration of psychology of victims of parent abuse. The data revealed three themes preceded by a supplementary section that served the purpose of providing a context for the psychological experiences of PA. The three super-ordinate themes that evolved out of the data navigate the victim's psychological experience of PA and their views of themselves and others as a result. Furthermore, it explores their feelings towards their abusive children and the emotional roller coaster that they experience, and finally, their view of and feelings towards the father of the abusive child of how a male would implicate their experience of PA. In this chapter, these results are summarised and interpreted using what literature that does exist. The limitations of the current research are explored and future developments in research are suggested. Finally, there is discussion on how the results implicate current practices around PA prior to a final conclusion being presented.

Summary of Results in Relation to the literature

The 8 victims of PA who participated in this research project shared many of their experiences and reflections in semi-structured interviews. Through the double hermeneutic process of 1) them attempting to make sense of their experience in the interview, and 2) the researcher creating a third person concept of the experience of parent abuse, three themes resulted preceded by an introductory context setting theme. This introductory theme presented the different forms of abuse that participants spoke about experiencing and very briefly touched on the consequential emotions. Consistent with the literature, verbal abuse was most frequently experienced by participants in this research (Holt, 2013). The verbal abuse was explained as being constant demeaning in the form of cold, calculating and consistent put downs. Literature has stated that verbal abuse perpetrated by children is often characterised by the denigration of parenting abilities, general intelligence and appearance (Holt, 2013; Price, 1996). Participants also reported feeling emotional pain for the personal attacks directed at them by their abusive child and explained a struggle to understand where their child had learnt such verbal slurs. Furthermore, participants spoke about the emotional toll that experiencing verbal abuse has had on them. This is a development on existing literature whereby verbal abuse is not

only relevant in its frequency and being the first form of abuse in the development of PA (Holt, 2013) but it is also significant by being highly confusing and emotionally destructive.

Linked closely to verbal abuse in the current research and existent literature is psychological abuse, also understood as emotional abuse. Interviews revealed that psychological abuse was commonly entwined in other forms of abuse and was consistent with the literature in terms of its manifestation (Holt, 2013). The emotional abuse reported by these participants featured intimidation caused by the perpetrator using stand over tactics and using threats that heavily limited victims options in terms of parenting. It is these less obvious forms of passive abuse that participants explained were draining and most successful in making them feel worthless. This is consistent with the literature in which Holt (2013) states that psychological abuse perpetrated by children is most effective in ascertaining the power and control in the child-parent relationship. Participants in the current research also linked the psychological abuse experienced due to their children as being similar to that experienced when in a domestic violence relationship. Four of the eight participants reported being in a violent relationship at some stage and compared their relationship with the abusive child as being similar however worse in the respect that they had the option to leave their abusive partner however they cannot leave their abusive child.

The financial abuse experienced by participants in this research paper was described as being most disappointing and painful due to the selfishness of the perpetrator. It was commonly manifest in the form of the theft of property and money and the damage or destruction of property. In one case it was motivated by the need to support a drug habit and in other cases it was viewed by victims as being vengeful or retaliatory. Also, consistent with the literature (Cottrell & Monk, 2004, p. 1080), one participant refrained from purchasing valuable items due to the likelihood of it being stolen by her abusive daughter. The literature also links financial abuse perpetrated by children to that perpetrated by adults in intimate-partner-violence. Adams et al. (2008) explains that financial abuse tactics used by males to curtail a woman's economic position is similar to an abusive child's motivation to reduce his or her parents status. However, this link was not established by participants in the current research like it was with psychological abuse.

Finally, physical abuse was experienced by four out of the eight participants in this research. This physical abuse was so serious for one participant in that she pressed charges and had her son appear in youth court for his actions toward her. These prevalence rates

are slightly less than reported in the literature which is encouraging (Kazdin, 2002). Kazdin (2002) found that around 89% of children who are abusive toward their parents or caregivers engage in physical forms of abuse such as, hitting, kicking, biting or throwing things. Two out of the eight participants spoke being attacked with weapons by their son or grandson. Past literature found that this was uncommon and in fact female children were more likely to engage in abuse using household objects as weapons (Charles, 1986). More recent literature contradicts this however and is consistent with the current research suggesting that assaults on parents by male children are much more likely to involve weapons than female (Brezina, 1999).

These explanations of participants experiences of actual abuse served to provide a context for the super-ordinate themes that followed. The first theme that developed out of the data consisted of a broad analysis of participants feelings toward their abusive child. These descriptions offered by participants were narrowed down to present the interplay of two poles of emotions under the headings of disappointment and resentment and unconditional love and protection. Resentment was an emotion that resonated strongly throughout and this resulted from feelings that the sacrifice of time and emotional investment was not being reciprocated by the child. Holt (2013) recalls this as being a strong theme in Holt (2011) whereby resentment was produced by a perceived imbalance between parental love received and the parental responsibilities taken on. Reciprocation in the parent-child relationship is essential and therefore victims of parent abuse are often left feeling deprived (Holt, 2013). The current research also offered complimentary narratives on victims feelings of injustice where by participants often asked the rhetorical question of, “what have I done to you for you to do this to me”?

This theme also revealed participants frustration at the child-saving movement, as described by Holt (2013), limiting their options in terms of parenting an abusive child. Holt (2013) reports that literature shows an abusive child will threaten to call the police and accuse their parent of abuse if that parent attempts firm parenting techniques. It is recognised in the literature that this behaviour serves the function of gaining power and control over the parent. This function was not identified explicitly by the participants in the current research however the anger and frustration that this manipulative behaviour causes was talked about. This anger often peaked with participant’s experiencing a rage toward their child whereby they are actually tempted to hit them. This phenomenon has been discussed in qualitative research on PA however victims have often been unsuccessful

in curbing their physical retaliation and have actually hit their child in response to abuse (Holt, 2011).

Another complex aspect of the parent-child relationship that data in the current research revealed was the victim's difficulty in accepting their child's apologies and thus an inability to forgive them for their abusive actions. This is rarely addressed in the literature however is important in that it contributes to the feelings of resentment and disappointment as victims are often let down by their child's abusive behaviour continuing despite displaying remorse and promising not to do it again.

The second half of this theme provided an interesting development to literature on PA. This major finding was made up of participant's positive feelings of unconditional love and protection that they have for their child despite being abused by them. The data strongly suggested that although victims of parent abuse experience these intense feelings of disappointment and resentment toward their child, they are countered by ongoing unconditional love and the need to protect them. My findings suggest that women in New Zealand whom experience PA still view their abusive child as kind and loving and truly believe that they feel remorse for their actions. This belief could actually be seen as hypocritical of victims of PA due to them also sharing the belief that their abusive children are unforgivable due to the repetitive pattern of their abusive behaviour. However, research on forgiveness in domestic violence relationships indicates that individuals are more likely to forgive in the context of close relationships because of motivations to maintain their investments in these relationships (Fincham, 2000). The investment in the parent-child relationship could be considered the most intense of all relationship combinations and therefore a mother is much more likely to forgive her abusive child in order to return the home environment back to a functional place.

Moreover, domestic violence research also tells us that if a woman believes her partner is intentionally and maliciously hurting her she may be much less likely to forgive him (Gordon, Burton, Porter, 2004). Participants in the current research took the responsibility away from their abusive children by claiming that their behaviour was the result of some kind of personal struggle or medical condition. Therefore, if a victim of PA can believe that their child's behaviour is not intentional or malicious as it is due to a dysfunction or illness she is then permitted to forgive her child. Participants also used this focus as a way of justifying their unconditional love for the abusive child. This justification was interesting as

it suggested that victims of PA understand that it is not socially acceptable to love and protect an abusive person however it is ok to love and protect a sick person.

Furthermore, they constantly protect their child from judgement and stigma and often promote their good points. Having an awareness of the stigma involved with PA is valid for victims. Existent literature has explored the presence of stigma in PA however the focus has been on how it affects victims and more specifically how it silences victims from disclosing abuse (Holt & Retford, 2013). The current research builds on existent literature by suggesting that victims are also afraid that stigma will impact on their child's reputation. It was apparent that parents feared the possibility of their child being judged and therefore the desire to protect their child increased. For two participants this protection extended all the way to youth court whereby they advocated for their child and even framed the child as the victim rather than themselves. Research on the prosecution of parent abusers is limited however the literature base on prosecution in a domestic violence situation is extensive. Dawson and Dinovitzer (2001) claim that it is commonly understood that the low rates of prosecution of domestic violence cases can be explained by victims changing their minds about pressing charges, recanting their testimonies, or becoming non-cooperative witnesses. Although this is not entirely applicable to the current research on PA it suggests that there are intricate dynamics going on when a victim of abuse is faced with the option of prosecuting their own family member as an abuser. It could be suggested that victims of PA feel that as a parent they need to consequent their child for bad behaviour. It is just unique that the behaviour is at such an extreme level that this consequence involves the justice system.

My findings explored the experience of judgement and more specifically the participant's self-judgement and judgement by others. In an attempt to explain their child's abusive behaviour, participants consistently attributed blame to themselves. Data revealed that victims of PA felt less competent as parents. Even though in many cases the participants had other children and only experienced abuse from one, they still generalised their ability to parent in relation to the abusive child. Holt (2013) states that attributing blame to something or someone helps parents make sense of PA and therefore respond to it in a certain way. If parents believe their child's abusive behaviour is the result of mental health then they will seek a diagnosis and treatment. Likewise, if they believe their child's behaviour is innate and a part of their temperament then they will more than likely initiate their own strategies to curtail the abuse. This would then suggest that parents whom

attribute blame to themselves for their child's behaviour would approach this by seeking parenting assistance or attending parenting classes. Interestingly however, this was not something that resonated throughout the interviews, in fact only one participant commented on how she came to this conclusion after realising that her son was receiving significant intervention and nothing was changing, therefore the problem must lie with her.

A possible explanation for this was also discovered in the data. It has become very clear that victims of PA do in fact assume the victim role prior to seeking out professional support. They are therefore forced into feeling hopelessness and helplessness after being told by professionals that the problem lies in their parenting and that this is where intervention should initiate. Although this may be the case, the current research strongly suggests that this victim blaming is devastating for those who experience PA. More specifically, this could be recognised as mother blaming, a phenomenon that has attracted significant attention from research for decades. Feminist literature describes mother blaming as a sexist bias toward viewing woman as major contributors to their child's maladjustment or dysfunction whilst ignoring the father contributions (Jackson & Mannix, 2004).

Mother blaming is most common for mothers whom do not fit society's idealized view of motherhood, such as single mothers (Jackson & Mannix, 2004). The literature also suggests that woman internalize the mother-blaming attitudes of those around them and this contributes to their self-blame (Jackson & Mannix, 2004). Therefore, as reflected in the current data, those whom are victims of PA commonly blame themselves and this blame is reinforced by professionals upon attempting to seek help. Furthermore, this mother-blaming is recognised by victims of PA as being the view of their friends, family and members of the public as well as the professionals. Participants spoke about the views held by their friends and family as causing huge relationship barriers resulting in reduced contact with the individuals whom hold these views. Moreover, victims of PA believe that members of the public will also share these mother-blaming views. Fearing this, victims will avoid putting themselves and their abusive child in situations whereby they will be a risk of judgement.

In turn, the belief of a victim of PA that they will undoubtedly experience blame results in them silencing the abuse. Silencing is one of the most damaging outcomes of any form of abuse and literature states that it can be created and reinforced by the perpetrators, the victims, their friends and family as well as wider social institutions (Mills & Kellington,

2004). Herman (1997) argues that it is shame and blame that underlies silencing which is reinforced by feelings of humiliation, ridicule, and fear of possible retaliatory actions of the perpetrator. Domestic violence research also tells us that if a victim has reached out for help and has been ignored or had their experience downplayed, will feel deserted, blamed and ultimately silenced (Moe, 2007). Herman (1997) therefore argues that breaking the silence and encouraging the communication of victim's experiences of abuse is vital in relieving them of the burden of blame, shame and guilt and instead places this burden onto the perpetrator, where it rightfully belongs.

Blame also appeared in the third theme that evolved out of the data in the current research. This theme explored how the experience of PA can be impacted by the child's father or other significant male. The blame that was discussed in this theme however was specifically in relation to the perpetrators father and either his lack of presence in his child's life or inconsistent presence in his child's life. Furthermore, in some cases whereby the father was present in his abusive child's life some participants held them responsible and blamed them for exposing their child to domestic violence and modelling the behaviour that their child is now exhibiting. Ultimately, in making sense of their experience of PA, victims have explained their child's abusive behaviour by believing that it is a result of witnessing domestic violence and/or being a victim of child abuse. There are an increasing number of studies documenting the devastating effects of children growing up in a family where domestic violence is present (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). In short, the literature does tend to suggest that children who witness domestic violence or are direct victims of domestic violence exhibit problems in their social and emotional adjustments (Levendosky & Graham-Bermann, 2001). This research further suggests that early experiences of domestic violence can produce impaired cognitive functioning and social misconceptions that can lead to children believing that abuse and violence are acceptable forms of conflict resolution within family relationships (Carson, 2000; Holt, 2013). Several studies have also reported that PA is much more likely to be perpetrated by a son toward his mother in a context whereby the child has been exposed to father-to-mother abuse (Hong et. al., 2011). Furthermore, Cottrell and Monk's (2004) research also came to this conclusion and explained this by suggesting the abusive son is influenced by direct male role modelling, idealisation of an abuser, and finally, anger at the mother for failing to protect him from domestic violence.

Interestingly, participants in the current research had somewhat considered the impact of male role model not only in this negative light of the abusive father but also in an attempt to come up with what could have prevented their child from becoming a perpetrator of PA or what could curb their child's abusive behaviour. This theme strongly suggests victims of PA believe their abusive children are lacking a positive male role model and believe they actually crave this relationship dynamic. The participants felt frustration in not being able to fill this void as a woman and wished for their child to have this opportunity.

As previously discussed, attachment theorists claim that children construct cognitive representations of relationships during their early experiences with primary caregivers (Bretheton, 1985). Therefore one could argue that by witnessing domestic violence they develop an unhealthy concept of relationships. Likewise, one could argue that if that same child was offered the chance to engage in a positive male role model mentor/mentee relationship this concept could be challenged. The literature around mentor relationships is positive in that they are considered to be successful in improving school attendance and achievement, reduce drug use, and reduce incidences of violence. Furthermore, literature strongly suggests that a mentor relationship would be ideal for perpetrators of PA as it has shown to be successful in increasing adolescents more proximal parental relationships (Rhodes, Grossman & Resch, 2000).

Finally, this theme explored participant's beliefs that if the father of the abusive child was present or more consistently present things wouldn't be this bad. One participant even considered that her abusive child had abandonment issues due to his father leaving and therefore had developed an unhealthy attachment with his mother. Many mothers in the current research also wished that they could parent more harmoniously with the child's parent and this would in turn have a positive impact on their child's behaviour. Literature does tell us that PA can result due to inconsistent parenting so victims of PA are valid in their belief that it is important for them and their child's father to be on the same page. Furthermore, research has suggested that father absenteeism can have a negative impact on a child's cognitive and social development.

In summary, the current research presents three aspects of PA that are considered to significantly burden victims and consistently arise during each individual's experience. These are the emotional roller coaster of unconditional love tainted with resentment and hatred toward the abusive child; the experience of self-blame and judgement along with the judgement of others; and finally, holding the father partially responsible and the belief

that a male role model would have a positive impact. These findings have built on the existent literature pool by providing the victims experience of PA in qualitative form and also by showing certain consistencies or relativeness to wider domestic violence research. The following section will suggest how these results may implicate practitioners within the field of PA as well as exploring future research considerations.

Future Research and Treatment Implications

Current literature states that PA has always been an under-recognised form of family violence not only in general terms but also in regards to research. This is definitely the case in New Zealand with the researcher of the current study failing to find any literature using a New Zealand population; the closest generalisable data was from an Australian participant group. Therefore, any research on parent abuse using a New Zealand participant group would be a much needed development of literature on PA.

There is also a clear gap in literature in regards to research having perpetrators of parent abuse as the participant group. To avoid ethical difficulty it would even offer positive gains to the literature if research involved adult participants who were perpetrators of parent abuse as children. Qualitative research involving perpetrators would allow insight into the experience of parent abuse from the perpetrators point of view and could shed light on how such a family dynamic develops and could possibly be prevented or stopped.

Finally, the current research has identified consistencies and relationships between PA and other forms of domestic violence. To build awareness of the existence of PA within New Zealand it would be hugely influential if future research could ascertain more empirical relationships and thus move policy and practise toward recognising PA as a form of domestic violence.

In regards to treatment implications, the participants in the current research spoke positively of the intervention received prior to being involved in the research. A comprehensive evaluation of this intervention programme and other interventions addressed at victims and perpetrators of parent abuse in New Zealand would offer insight into the treatment of parent abuse. Also, after discovering how strongly the current participant group felt about their son's or grandson's need for a male role model in their lives, future research could also investigate whether this would be a successful method of intervention for families experiencing parent abuse.

Practitioners currently developing interventions or working with victims of parent abuse should consider the current research and its implications for treatment. Specifically, practitioners must recognise their client is currently in a victim role and therefore avoiding mother-blaming is vital. Moreover, this research offers some clear guidelines for supporting a victim of parent abuse such as reducing feelings of guilt and self-blame.

Limitations of the Current Research

The most obvious limitation of the current research group is that the participant group only involves females. Literature claims that females are at higher risk of being victims of parent abuse and this could therefore explain why only female participants were available to take part in the research. It would have also been more beneficial to the study if the researcher had collected more demographic data.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the following limitation was actually present in the study, however it is worth considering. The participants in this research were recruited from an intervention programme that they had attended to address the parent abuse. This programme is a 16 week programme where both child and caregiver receive one on one therapy and education as a result of child anger having a negative impact on the parent-child relationship. It is possible that the way in which these participants spoke about their experience of parent abuse was somewhat altered due to them completing intervention so soon before their participation in this research.

Although it is acceptable for research using IPA to have smaller participant groups it can result in not enough data being collected to support themes. It may have been beneficial for the researcher to propose follow-up interviews as a way of building on potential themes. It is also worth noting that data derived from interviews with participants is subjective.

Conclusion

This study is the first qualitative analysis of the experience of PA in New Zealand. It has highlighted three significant areas of Pa that victims consistently felt impacted by. These were; Firstly, the emotional roller coaster of experiencing feelings of unconditional love right through to resentment and hatred toward their abusive child; Secondly, blaming oneself for the abuse occurring and fearing or even experiencing the blame and judgement of others due to the abuse; and finally, considering the father's responsibility for the abuse occurring and exploring the possible positive impact of a male role model. These results were consistent with some past literature and also build on past literature. It is hoped that

the current research will elicit a snowball of research on PA in New Zealand and thus, impact practise, policy, and public awareness of the phenomenon.

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Appendix A



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

Participant information Sheet

Study Title: The Dark Side of Parenting: The Victims Experience of Parent Abuse

Researcher: Megan Laing

Phone: 027 549 4862

Email: paresearch@hotmail.co.nz

Research Supervisor: Associate Professor Keith Tuffin (School of Psychology, Massey University)

Purpose of the Study:

This research is being conducted for the qualification of a Masters in Science (Psychology).

This research project aims to increase the knowledge and awareness of parent abuse. You are being asked to participate in this study in order to share your experience of being verbally, physically, financially, and/or emotionally abused by your child or a child in your care. Staff at Te Manawa Services have identified that since completing the Youth-and-Parenting Programme you may be willing to participate and as a result have made contact with you. Should you consent to participating in the research the researcher will ask you to take part in an interview. She will ask set questions but you will also be given the chance to elaborate on your answers to ensure that a clear and accurate picture of your experience is created. It is hoped that at least 6 people will be included in the research in order to increase knowledge of how a parent or caregiver experiences being a victim of their child's abuse.

Procedure:

If you agree to participate the only procedures in this study will be collecting information from you on your knowledge of, and experience with, being abused by a child. After you agree to participate and sign an informed consent form, the researcher will collect information from you during an interview. The interview will be held at Te Manawa Services and is predicted to last one hour but may extend to 1.5 hours. Please allow 1.5 hours of your time to take part. You may bring a support person along to the interview with you however it would be best if you arranged care for you child as it would be unnecessary for them to attend the interview. If the child does turn up to the interview we will have to book the interview for another time. If both parents/caregivers are experiencing or have experienced abuse from a child it would be ok for both of you to attend the interview. Your interview will be audio-taped and will then be transcribed by the researcher. Before the information from your interview is analysed you will be provided with a copy of your interview transcript for the opportunity to make any changes that you feel are vital in order to tell your story more accurately.

As a participant you have the right to full confidentiality and anonymity; therefore, the audio-tape of your interview and your interview transcript will remain private and confidential with only the researcher holding the information that links your personal details to your interview tape and transcript. The information gained from you during this research project will be used only for this specific research project and all interview recordings and transcripts will be destroyed by the researcher 5 years after the completion of the research project.

You will be provided with a summary of overall findings upon the completion of the research project to advise you of the outcomes of the research.

Potential Risks:

Risks to you are expected to be minimal, even if you are currently experiencing emotional, psychological, financial, or even physical abuse from your child. If you are to experience discomfort in the interview you will be offered the opportunity to access Te Manawa Services for advice, take a break from the interview or leave the research process all together. You have the complete right to withdraw from the study at any time. Should it so be that you are still experiencing abuse from your child or you feel some distress as a result of the research process Te Manawa Services have agreed to offer support or refer you on to other local agencies that may be suitable should there be a waiting list at Te Manawa Services at the time.

Potential Benefits of this Study:

This rarely addressed dimension of family abuse is poorly understood and the majority of published literature attempts only to explain and define what parent abuse looks like rather than exploring how it is experienced and understood in the words of victims. This lack of understanding has created a basis for families and service providers to minimize the abused parent's experience. In saying that, it is hoped that this research will improve the understanding of parent abuse so that it can be made safer for victims to talk about their experience and agencies can improve their treatment provision to victims.

Costs to Participants

Participants involved in this research will be provided with a koha that endeavours to reduce costs that may be incurred in order to travel to the interview.

Again please not that you are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, please remember that you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study at any stage;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Additional information or Questions about this Study:

The researcher in this study is willing to answer any questions you may have about the study or about participation in research in general.

If you have further questions you can contact the researcher:

Megan Laing

027 549 4862

paresearch@hotmail.co.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, Application 13/11. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern A, telephone 06 350 5799 x 84459, email humanethicsoutha@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix B



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The Dark Side of Parenting: the victims experience of parent abuse

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded. *(if applicable include this statement)*

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me. *(if applicable include this statement)*

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Full Name - printed _____

Appendix C

Proposed Interview Structure

To begin the interview I will ask the participant to explain to me briefly the structure/dynamics of their family and the abusive child/children. This information will be the basic information that provides as the building blocks for the rest of the interview. If you like this information would act as the square base of the above triangular prism. The questions will include.....

1. Who are the members of your household, you do not have to use their real names but correct gender and age would be helpful for me to understand the structure of your family?
2. Who is the abusive child/ or children, again you can use a different name or just use their gender and age?
3. At what age did this child begin becoming abusive toward you/how long has the abuse been happening?
4. What forms of abuse has this child/children used, remember abuse can come in all different forms and it is what you understand and consider to be abusive that I am interested in? Describe to me specific occasions if that is easier for you.

1. Participants Story of Self

1. How do you think experiencing parent abuse has affected you psychologically? By this I mean, since your child has become abusive toward you have you ever felt depressed, anxious or otherwise? (more probing questions will be asked as appropriate to form an accurate picture of how the participants psychology has been impacted by the experience of parent abuse).
2. Has it changed your view on what kind of parent you are? By this I mean has experiencing parent abuse made you feel more or less competent as a parent? (explain competent or find another word)
3. Sometimes people who experience abuse from a child struggle with loving and caring for that child and at the same time resenting that same child for how they are behaving. Explain to me how you feel towards your abusive child and how this makes you feel?
4. Talk to me about the avenues you have been down to seek help?
5. How was this experience for you, was it difficult initially asking for help? How do you feel people responded to your requests for help? (more probing questions here will be asked to look into feelings of being judges etc)

2. Participants Story of Other

1. Do you know when your child is going to become abusive? If so, explain to me your thoughts and feelings around that time preceding your child becoming abusive.
2. Do you feel as though your child's abusive behaviour is motivated by anything? Do you spend time thinking about why your child acts this way or what might be motivating him/her to act like this?

3. Do you feel as though there is a reason as to why your child began to behave like this in the first place? Do you spend much time attempting to understand or rationalise your child's behaviour?
4. How do you feel your child has responded to interventions that you have sought for him/her?
5. Do you feel as though your child regrets his/her behaviour or feels upset/sorry about how he/she has treated you?
6. If applicable, do you feel as though you get enough support from the other members of your household when you are being abused by the child? Is there a co-parent that helps? (If applicable, more probing questions will be asked in relation to how either having a partner or not having a partner affects their experience of parent abuse).
7. How do extended family members react toward you, knowing that you are being abused by your child/children.

The interview will be concluded by asking the participant if there is anything else that they feel needs to be talked about. This is important because the participants need to feel as though they have accurately told their story of experiencing parent abuse. Also please note that this is a semi-structured interview; probing questions will be asked along the way to allow participants to provide extra information that they may feel is relevant however is not explicitly requested from the above questions.

Appendix D



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TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

The Dark Side of Parenting: The victims experience of parent abuse

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name - printed _____

Appendix E

Super-ordinate themes

1. Unconditional love, support and a willingness to make personal sacrifices for the child.
2. Linking present behaviour to up-bringing
3. Incredible frustration
4. The Dad/Male role model
5. Begging for answers
6. Fear of the abusive behaviour
7. Not being listened to by the professionals, frustration with the system, belief that they are not receiving help from the people they should be
8. Lack of support and understanding from the child's school
9. Time spent trying to figure it all out
10. Feeling sorry for the child
11. Good agency support/what works
12. Impact on the other children in the family
13. The hijacking essence of the abuse
14. The impact on the romantic relationship
15. The constant battle, exhaustion, helplessness
16. Appreciative of the schools efforts
17. Desensitization to the abuse
18. Separation of the child from the behaviour
19. Impact on the victims working life
20. Guilt
21. Medical explanations
22. Parent resiliency and forgiveness
23. Blame/failure
24. Wanting a like-minded support network

25. Domestic violence
26. Anxiety
27. Depression
28. Shame, judgement, isolation, embarrassment
29. Anger and resentment toward the child
30. Disappointment and sadness
31. Down playing their concern, not wanting to seek help
32. Impact on victims social life
33. Improve communication
34. Fear for the child's future
35. Self-help
36. What doesn't work
37. Specific direction of the abuse always being on Mum
38. Nastiness of the abuse
39. Lack of control over ones life
40. Impact on relationship with extended family members
41. Power
42. Government
43. Self-harm, suicide
44. The impact of having to call police